

Abstract:

Experiences of transgender individuals in South Africa have largely remained marginalised and silenced by a discriminatory, gender binary and prescriptive society, in spite of progressive legislation within the constitution. The literature reviewed substantiated such experiences both within and outside of the South African transgender communities, further illuminating the need to deepen the understanding of transgender and gender identity dynamics. Through in depth face-to-face interviews with five self-identified adult transgender participants, the present study documented experiences identified as they navigated their gender identity and expression from dissonance towards gender congruency. The interviews were analysed using thematic content analysis. The results of the qualitative interviews revealed multiple beneficial factors as well as challenges whilst navigating gender congruent identity and expression. As a result, seven overarching themes were identified broadly defined as: (1) gender identity and dissonance; (2) gender expression; (3) challenges to gender congruency; (4) protective factors and coping strategies; (5) 'coming out'; (6) toward gender congruent expression and (7) activism.