

## DIFFERENCE IN LIFE SATISFACTION AND HOPELESSNESS BETWEEN CISGENDER AND TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

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### Abstract

Life satisfaction and hopelessness in cisgender and transgender individuals is a critical area of research in understanding the mental health disparities between these groups. Cisgender individuals, whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth, generally report higher levels of life satisfaction compared to transgender individuals. Transgender individuals often face significant challenges that negatively impact their life satisfaction, including discrimination, social rejection, and barriers to accessing gender-affirming healthcare.

The aim of the study was to determine the difference in life satisfaction and hopelessness between cisgender and transgender individuals.

The study included 99 participants from RN Macedonia. Life satisfaction was assessed with the Life Satisfaction Scale (SWLS), designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction using a seven-point Likert scale. Hopelessness is conceptualized as negative beliefs and expectations about the future. Hopelessness consists of two basic elements: (1) negative expectations about outcomes, and (2) expectations of helplessness in changing such outcomes, measured by the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BIH).

**Keywords:** cisgender, transgender, life satisfaction, hopelessness

### Introduction

Life satisfaction and hopelessness in cisgender and transgender individuals is a critical area of research in understanding the mental health disparities between these groups.

Cisgender individuals, whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth, generally report higher levels of life satisfaction compared to transgender individuals. This can be attributed to a variety of factors including societal acceptance, lower levels of discrimination, and greater access to resources that affirm their gender identity. Diener E. and Biswas-Diener R. discussed various factors influencing life satisfaction, including social acceptance and identity affirmation, which are typically more accessible to cisgender individuals<sup>[1]</sup>. Transgender individuals often face significant challenges that negatively impact their life satisfaction, including discrimination, social rejection, and barriers to accessing gender-affirming healthcare. These stressors can lead to lower overall life satisfaction. The study by Fredriksen-Goldsen *et al.* highlighted the disparities in life satisfaction between cisgender and transgender older adults due to societal and structural challenges faced by the latter group<sup>[2]</sup>.

Levels of hopelessness in cisgender individuals are generally lower compared to transgender individuals. This is often due to the relative stability and societal acceptance that cisgender individuals experience, which can contribute to a more hopeful outlook on life. Beck *et al.* in their development of the Beck Hopelessness Scale, identified that lower levels of hopelessness are often associated with higher life satisfaction and fewer experiences of discrimination or marginalization, conditions more commonly experienced by cisgender individuals<sup>[3]</sup>. Transgender individuals are at a higher risk of experiencing hopelessness, largely due to the discrimination, victimization, and lack of social support they often face. These experiences can severely impact their mental health, leading to feelings of hopelessness. The study by Budge *et al.* demonstrated that transgender individuals often experience high levels of hopelessness due to the significant stress and social challenges they face, particularly during the transition process<sup>[4]</sup>. Testa *et al.* in their study found that the stressors unique to transgender individuals, including gender dysphoria and societal rejection, significantly contribute to feelings of hopelessness<sup>[5]</sup>.

Research consistently shows that transgender individuals experience lower life satisfaction and higher levels of hopelessness compared to cisgender individuals. These disparities are primarily due to the discrimination, lack of social support, and barriers to gender-affirming care that transgender individuals frequently encounter. Addressing these issues through inclusive policies and supportive environments is crucial for improving the mental health and well-being of transgender people.

### Material and methods

The study included 99 participants from RN Macedonia, aged 18 to 40, 56.0% were cisgender, 32.0% were transgender, and 12.0% were gender non-conforming.

#### *Satisfaction with life*

Life satisfaction was assessed with the Life Satisfaction Scale (SWLS), designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction using a seven-point Likert scale<sup>[6,7]</sup>. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the SWLS range from .80 to .90, indicating strong internal consistency, test-retest reliability coefficients are also high<sup>[8]</sup>.

#### *Hopelessness - Beck's Hopelessness Scale*

Hopelessness is conceptualized as negative beliefs and expectations about the future. Hopelessness consists of two basic elements: (1) negative expectations about outcomes and (2) expectations of helplessness in changing such outcomes<sup>[9]</sup>, and is measured by the Beck Hopelessness Scale (BIH). All adaptations and translations of the scale retain high internal consistencies and are highly correlated with the original version. Internal reliability coefficients are high (Pearson  $r = 0.82$  to  $0.93$ ), but BHS test-retest reliability coefficients are 0.69 at one week and 0.66 at six weeks<sup>[10]</sup>.

Statistical analysis was performed with the statistical software SPSS 26.

The participants voluntarily participated in the study.

### Results

**Table 1.** Satisfaction with life and hopelessness in transgender and cisgender individuals

	Satisfaction with life	Hopelessness
<i>Transgender</i>		
M	14.39	8.8
SD	7.5	4.8
<i>Cisgender</i>		
M	21.80	5.9
SD	6.09	4.08

**Table 2.** Test for the differences in satisfaction with life and hopelessness between transgender and cisgender individuals

	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<i>Satisfaction with life</i>	25.69	.000**
<i>Hopelessness</i>	9.542	.003**

## Discussion

The statistically significant difference in life satisfaction and hopelessness among cisgender and transgender individuals was consistent with previous research on mental health, life satisfaction, and well-being among transgender individuals.

Transgender individuals reported significantly lower levels of life satisfaction compared to cisgender individuals. Factors contributing to this lower satisfaction include experiences of discrimination, lack of social support, and the stress associated with gender dysphoria. There was a significant correlation between mental health status and life satisfaction among transgender individuals. Those experiencing higher levels of depression and anxiety reported lower life satisfaction. Rates of depression and other mood disorders were relatively high among transgender people and the prevalence of these disorders was 20% higher among them than among the general population. The transgender youth reported high levels of gender dysphoria, which significantly impacted their mental health and overall well-being. Many participants exhibited symptoms of anxiety and depression, highlighting the need for comprehensive mental health support alongside gender-affirming medical care. Social support from family, friends, and communities plays a crucial role in the well-being of transgender youth. Those with higher levels of support reported better mental health outcomes <sup>[11-15]</sup>.

Transgender individuals were disproportionately affected by hopelessness compared to their cisgender counterparts. Research on hopelessness among transgender *versus* cisgender individuals reveals significant disparities, with transgender individuals often experiencing higher levels of hopelessness due to a variety of social, economic, and psychological stressors. Transgender individuals frequently encounter discrimination and stigma in various aspects of life, including employment, healthcare, and social interactions. This pervasive discrimination can lead to feelings of hopelessness. Studies consistently show that transgender individuals have higher rates of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, which are closely linked to hopelessness. Lack of social support and rejection from family and friends can exacerbate feelings of hopelessness among transgender individuals<sup>[2, 4, 5]</sup>.

The disparity is largely driven by systemic discrimination, social rejection, and barriers to accessing supportive resources. Addressing these issues through inclusive policies, increased access to mental health care, and robust social support systems is crucial for improving the mental health and well-being of transgender individuals *vs.* cisgender individuals. The findings underscore the importance of providing access to gender-affirming medical treatments for transgender youth to improve their psychosocial outcomes and quality of life. Many transgender individuals are reporting poor mental and physical health outcomes. Access to gender-affirming care was also a significant issue, with many participants facing barriers to obtain necessary medical treatments.

## Conclusion

This study highlights the critical importance of prioritizing mental health considerations for transgender individuals. As we have seen, transgender people often find themselves in a complex interplay of social expectations, discrimination and personal identity, which significantly affects their mental well-being, so the understanding of life satisfaction levels and hopelessness level among transgender people are emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to support this vulnerable population.

*Conflict of interest statement. None declared.*

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