

A Study on Adolescent Students Understanding on Gender Variance: Bijoyini Tafteesh Resilient Community

Introduction

Bijoyini Tafteesh Resilient Communities Team is consists of 8 members from Bijoyini Survivors collective from North 24 PGs that work for the betterment of gender variant individuals from North 24 Pgs. Like earlier Orientation Drive, this team also conduct quantitative research on school going adolescent youths of Taki Bhabonath HS School from Taki, near Hasnabad Block to explore the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of adolescent students in school settings towards gender variant individuals. The primary objective of the study was to understand the levels of awareness, acceptance, prejudice, and behavioral tendencies exhibited by adolescents when interacting with or discussing gender variant peers.

Like earlier intervention, this time the research involved a mixed-method approach, combining orientation on the gender variance & quantitative surveys through a Questionnaire format prepared by the team with students aged 13 to 16 who are exploring gender identity. Key variables examined included personal beliefs about gender identity, exposure to gender diversity education, peer influence, and the role of school culture in shaping student attitudes.

Findings indicate a broad spectrum of responses, with a notable portion of students expressing supportive or neutral attitudes towards gender variant individuals, on the other hand the study also identified persistent stereotypes, instances of bullying and misconceptions prevalent in schools lacking structured gender education.

Methodology

This study employed the same qualitative and quantitative approach, utilizing the same structured questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection. It has been found that this methodology followed a multi-phase process which ensure both clarity and reliability in gathering student perceptions.

As the team had already developed a questionnaire for data collection, they directly approached the participants and provided clarification of the terminologies used in the questionnaire

Terminology Clarification with Participants

Before administering the questionnaire, a preliminary engagement was conducted with the student participants. This phase involved open and guided conversations to explain the key terminologies and concepts used in the questionnaire — such as “gender variant,” “stereotype behaviors,” and “kind & unkind behavior pattern” etc. This step was critical to ensure that all students, regardless of background or prior exposure, had a clear and shared understanding of the language used.

These clarification sessions helped minimize misinterpretations and provided an opportunity for students to ask questions, reflect, and become more confident in their responses.

Data Collection

Following the clarification phase, the finalized questionnaire was administered to the students. Responses were collected individually to promote honest and unbiased input. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured to encourage authenticity in the answers.

Finding

Overview

Bijoyini TRC team has started the School Orientation drive earlier with three school students to explore their approach, understanding, and behavioral patterns towards individuals with gender diversity. This small-scale, in-depth inquiry aimed to gain preliminary insights into how adolescents perceive and engage with the concept of gender beyond the traditional binary framework. Simultaneously this team aimed to gather knowledge on the where-about of gender variant adolescent youth in communities so that they can reach to support. After the first orientation drive, the team members had an in-depth understanding what to look after in participants who are engaged in the research study.

During the research, the team found few students who had a relatively informed understanding of gender diversity, recognizing that gender identity can differ from assigned sex and acknowledging the existence of transgender individuals, whereas few students exhibited limited awareness but showed openness and curiosity, often relying on media or peer discussions as their primary sources of information and the team also explored few students who expressed confusion and discomfort around the topic, indicating a lack of exposure and the presence of subtle biases shaped by family or cultural beliefs.

Like earlier observation it also has been found that all these three categories students reported having limited direct interaction with gender-diverse individuals, which influenced their ability to empathize or respond confidently in related situations. While two categories of students expressed a neutral or accepting attitude in principle, their language and examples suggested a lack of inclusive practice in real-life settings. The third category students' responses reflected uncertainty and hesitation, often resorting to stereotypes or misconceptions.

Purpose & Design of the Study

As part of the study, a structured quantitative questionnaire comprising 15 carefully designed questions was developed and administered to gather insights into students' understanding and perceptions of gender variance. The objective of the questionnaire was threefold:

Understanding of Gender Concepts

The first segment of the questionnaire aimed to assess students' knowledge of gender variance, particularly their ability to distinguish between gender-typical and gender-diverse individuals. Questions in this section focused on Awareness of Adolescent Changes in Gender Variant Individuals, specifically emotional, physical and mental changes and if gender typical students are acknowledging that these changes may differ from their own experience. This

segment includes basic definitions and awareness of gender identity and expression, familiarity with common terms related to gender variant identities (e.g., transgender, non-binary) and comfort levels in social or academic interactions with gender-diverse peers.

Attitudes and Behavioral Responses

The second segment explored how students respond to gender diverse individuals in real-life situations. It examined: Students' personal attitudes (supportive, neutral, biased, etc.), observed behaviors and reactions from peers or schoolmates and from others in community and perceptions of inclusion or exclusion based on different behavior pattern of gender diverse individuals in the school environment or in family or community setting.

Identification and Support

Finally, the questionnaire also included questions designed to gather anonymous data on gender variant individuals within the student population. This section was aimed at: Encouraging self-identification in a safe and confidential manner, helping the TRC team identify students who may benefit from further support or outreach & establishing pathways for inclusive counselling, mentoring, or resource sharing.

Analysis & Discussion

In the first segment of the questionnaire there is seven questions with optional responses. The findings of each question is as follows:

Question 1: " Gender of Students Interested in Study?"

Total Respondents: 87 students.

Response Option	Nos. of Students	Percentage
Male students	76	87.36%
Gender does not affect interest in Studies	11	12.64%
Female Students	0	0%
Gender variant individuals	0	0%

Interpretation:

A large majority (87.36%) of students believe only male students are interested in studying.

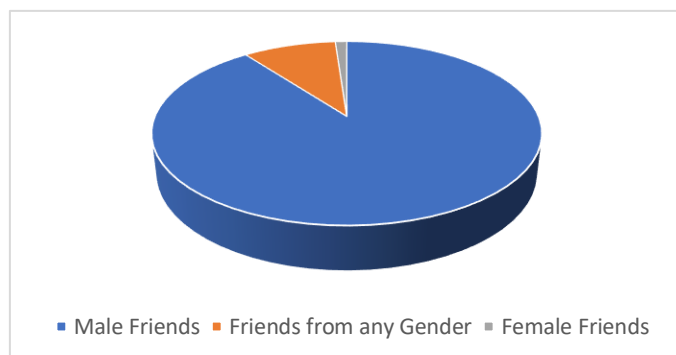
12.64% students provided inclusive responses, stating that all students, regardless of gender, can be interested in study.

Notably, no students mentioned girls or gender-variant individuals as being interested in study, which gives a sense of possible deep-rooted gender bias in perceptions of educational interest.

Question 2: "What is the gender of your friends?"

Total Respondents: 87 students.

Response Option	Nos. of Students	Percentage
Have Male Friend	78	89.66%
Comfortable with Any Gender	8	9.20%
Comfortable with Female Friends	1	1.14%
Mentioned Gender variant individuals as Friends	0	0%



Interpretation:

Majority of students (89.66%) reported having male friends, reflecting strong gender homophily and possibly restricted peer interaction across genders.

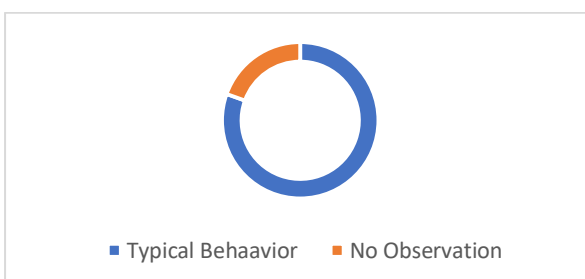
Only 1.14% of students mentioned being comfortable with female friends, which may highlight possible social stigma or discomfort in opposite-gender friendships.

9.20% of students showed a more inclusive approach, stating comfort with friends of any gender, which is a positive sign toward acceptance. Again, it has been noted that no student mentioned gender-diverse individuals (GV) as friends which reflects lack of awareness, acceptance, or visibility of GV individuals in their peer groups.

Question 3: "Did you notice any behavioral differences in your close/intimate friends during adolescence?"

Total Respondents: 87 students (Including non-responses)

Response Option	Nos. of Students	Percentage
Typical behavior Change	70	80.46%
No Observation Made	17	19.54%



Interpretation:

80.46% of students observed typical behavioral changes in their close friends during adolescence which indicates that students are observant and aware of the developmental

changes among peers where as 19.54% of students either did not notice or did not respond to the question which indicates limited peer interaction, lack of awareness, or discomfort in discussing changes.