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Minority Stress, Family Dynamics, and Wellbeing Among Transgender Men in Albania: A Qualitative Study

Briseida Andoni , Rea Goga , MSc

European University of Tirana, Albania

Abstract

Transgender men in Albania navigate minority stress within a sociocultural context marked by stigma, social surveillance, and limited access to gender-affirming healthcare. This qualitative study explored how distal stressors (prejudice, discrimination, misrecognition) and proximal stressors (anticipation of rejection, concealment, internal conflict) intersect with family dynamics to shape psychological wellbeing and identity narratives. Five in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with transgender men (ages 18–28) living in urban Albania and recruited through community referral networks. Data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, complemented by a narrative lens to examine meaning-making and self-positioning across relationships and time. Preliminary themes highlighted (1) chronic social monitoring and institutional misrecognition, including barriers linked to documentation and healthcare; (2) family control, moral language of “normality,” and psychological or physical intimidation; (3) a recurrent relational climate described as emotionally intense/enmeshed maternal involvement alongside paternal emotional absence; and (4) coping through chosen support networks, strategic concealment, and efforts toward self-authorship. Findings underscore the need for culturally attuned, minority-stress-informed mental health services and community-based pathways that reduce isolation while addressing family-mediated pressures.

Keywords: Albania; Family Dynamics; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; Minority Stress; Transgender Men