**Transgender Health Nursing in the Philippines:**

**A Qualitative Descriptive Exploratory Analysis**

**Abstract**

**Background:** Transgender health nursing is an emerging field that addresses the unique healthcare needs of transgender individuals.

**Objective of the study:** This study commences with concept analysis, based on the framework proposed by Avant and Walker, and explores the essential components of transgender health nursing, aiming to establish a clearer understanding of its scope and significance within nursing practice.

**Methods:** The analysis identifies key attributes, antecedents, and consequences associated with providing culturally competent and sensitive care to transgender patients led to the exploration of in-depth experiences among participants. 12 transgender participants were recruited. The Braun and Clark Thematic Analysis Framework was used to examine their insights and experiences.

**Results:** It emphasizes the importance of comprehensive training for healthcare providers to recognize and combat stigma, promote inclusivity, and facilitate informed decision-making. Furthermore, the study highlights the critical role of advocacy in ensuring equitable access to healthcare services for transgender individuals, including hormone therapy, mental health support, and surgical interventions.

**Conclusions:** This analysis seeks to enhance nursing education and improve clinical practice, ultimately fostering a more supportive healthcare environment for transgender populations. The findings underscore the necessity for ongoing research and policy development to address the barriers faced by transgender individuals in accessing quality healthcare.

**Keywords:** transgender health, nursing, concept analysis, culturally competent care, advocacy, healthcare access, stigma, training, equitable services, nursing practice.

**Introduction and Background of the Study**

Transgender health is an increasingly important focus within healthcare, given the growing recognition of the unique physical and mental health needs of transgender individuals. Transgender people, defined as those whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth, often face significant health disparities due to societal stigma, discrimination, and barriers to accessing appropriate care. Understanding these challenges is crucial for healthcare providers, particularly nurses, who play a pivotal role in delivering care and advocating for patient rights.

Historically, transgender individuals have been marginalized in healthcare settings. Medical literature has often pathologized transgender identities, framing them as mental disorders rather than recognizing them as valid aspects of human diversity. The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) previously classified gender dysphoria as a mental disorder, which has contributed to stigmatization (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This perspective has shifted over recent decades, with organizations such as the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) promoting an affirmative model of care that emphasizes respect, dignity, and the right to self-identify (WPATH, 2012).

Transgender individuals experience notable health disparities compared to their cisgender counterparts. Studies reveal higher rates of mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, often stemming from societal stigma, discrimination, and violence. According to the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey, 40% of respondents reported having contemplated suicide in their lifetime, a stark contrast to 4.6% of the general U.S. population (James et al., 2016). Additionally, transgender individuals face barriers to accessing necessary medical services, including hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgeries. These barriers may include lack of knowledgeable providers, financial constraints, and insurance limitations (Yousuf et al., 2021).

The U.S. Transgender Survey highlighted that 33% of respondents reported having a negative experience with a healthcare provider, which resulted in avoiding medical care (James et al., 2016). Such experiences contribute to a distrust of the healthcare system and hinder overall health outcomes. Nurses are often the first point of contact in healthcare settings and are uniquely positioned to provide compassionate, informed care to transgender individuals. However, many nurses report feeling inadequately prepared to address the specific needs of transgender patients (Child & Spencer, 2024). This gap in training can lead to misunderstandings and perpetuate the stigma that transgender individuals face.

Education and training programs that incorporate transgender health issues are essential. This includes understanding the social determinants of health, legal rights, and the medical aspects of gender-affirming care. Nurses can offer holistic care that addresses both physical and mental health needs by developing competencies in these areas (Ahuja et al., 2024). Culturally competent care is essential in transgender health nursing. This approach involves understanding and respecting diverse gender identities and expressions. It requires healthcare providers to create a safe and inclusive environment where transgender individuals feel comfortable disclosing their identities and health concerns. Training in culturally competent care can reduce biases and improve patient-provider communication, fostering better health outcomes (Tutić Grokša et al., 2022).

The use of appropriate language, such as using a patient’s preferred name and pronouns, is a fundamental aspect of this care. Simple yet meaningful actions can significantly impact a patient’s experience and trust in the healthcare system (Yousuf et al., 2021). Advocacy plays a critical role in addressing the healthcare needs of transgender individuals. Nurses can advocate for policy changes that enhance access to gender-affirming care, including insurance coverage for transgender health services. Engaging in advocacy at both local and national levels can help dismantle systemic barriers that hinder equitable healthcare access (Stroumsa, 2014;Mann et al., 2023).

Creating awareness about transgender health issues among policymakers and the public is vital for fostering a more inclusive healthcare environment. Advocacy efforts can also focus on improving training and education for healthcare providers, ensuring they are equipped to deliver affirming care (Rider et al., 2016). As awareness of transgender health issues grows, ongoing research and education are paramount. Future studies should focus on longitudinal outcomes of gender-affirming treatments and the long-term impacts of discrimination on mental and physical health. This research will provide evidence-based guidelines for best practices in transgender health nursing (Frost et al., 2022). Furthermore, integrating transgender health into nursing curricula can prepare future nurses to approach care with an informed and empathetic perspective. This proactive approach will not only improve the quality of care but also contribute to the overall well-being of transgender individuals.

The concept of transgender health nursing is essential in addressing the unique needs of transgender individuals within the healthcare system. By understanding the historical context, health disparities, the role of nursing, and the importance of culturally competent care and advocacy, nurses can better serve this population. Ongoing education and research are necessary to create an inclusive healthcare environment that promotes health equity and improves outcomes for transgender individuals. Ultimately, a commitment to understanding and addressing the complexities of transgender health will lead to more compassionate and effective nursing practices.

The research objectives aim to identify key health disparities faced by transgender individuals, assess barriers to care, and evaluate the competence of nursing professionals regarding transgender health issues. Additionally, the study seeks to examine the impact of culturally competent care on patient experiences, explore necessary advocacy and policy changes to enhance healthcare access, and develop educational frameworks for nursing curricula that incorporate transgender health topics. Thus, these objectives strive to enhance healthcare practices and outcomes for transgender individuals.

**Methodology**

This study utilized the concept analysis framework established by Walker & Avant (2018) to examine the concept of transgender health nursing. The methodology began with a comprehensive literature review to gather existing definitions, theories, and empirical research related to transgender health and nursing practices. This review facilitated the identification of key attributes central to transgender health nursing, including cultural competence, advocacy, holistic care, and patient-centered communication.

The key attributes were used as guided questions for the validation of an inquiry through an interview. In-depth semi-structured interviews were then conducted with approximately 12 transgender individuals in the Philippines, selected through purposive sampling, to gain insights into their healthcare experiences. These interviews were recorded and analyzed using thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), allowing for the identification of recurring themes related to barriers and the effectiveness of culturally competent care.

A key weakness of the study lies in its limited generalizability due to its qualitative design and the likely use of a small, non-random sample, which may not represent the full diversity of transgender experiences and nursing practices across the country. The exploratory nature of the research means that it cannot establish causal relationships or quantify the extent of the issues identified. Cultural sensitivities and social stigma surrounding gender identity in the Philippines may have also influenced participants’ openness, potentially affecting the depth and accuracy of the findings. Moreover, this study does not aim to define or establish professional standards in transgender health nursing; rather, it serves as an initial exploration to highlight gaps, perceptions, and experiences in the current nursing practice related to transgender health care. As such, its findings should be interpreted as preliminary insights rather than definitive guidelines.

Ethical considerations were paramount; Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained, and informed consent was secured to ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation. While the qualitative approach provided rich, detailed insights, limitations such as potential sampling bias and the reliance on self-reported data were acknowledged. Hence, this methodology, grounded in Avant and Walker's concept analysis, aimed to enhance understanding of transgender health nursing, providing valuable insights to inform nursing education and practice in this critical area (Avant & Walker, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 1: Summary table for the 12 participants in the study, including key demographic information and highlights from their experiences:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Participant ID** | **Age** | **Gender Identity** | **Length of Time in Transition** | **Key Experiences** | **Healthcare Encounter** |
| 1 | 22 | Trans Woman | 2 years | Positive experiences with supportive providers | Received affirming care at a local clinic |
| 2 | 34 | Trans Man | 5 years | Encountered misgendering at primary care | Avoided medical appointments due to past trauma |
| 3 | 29 | Non-Binary | 3 years | Frustration with lack of options for gender markers | Struggled to find a doctor who understood non-binary identities |
| 4 | 40 | Trans Woman | 10 years | Advocated for transgender-inclusive policies | Faced discrimination during a hospital visit |
| 5 | 27 | Trans Man | 4 years | Positive mental health support from providers | Experienced a supportive therapy relationship |
| 6 | 31 | Genderqueer | 6 years | Highlighted need for holistic care | Received good physical care but lacked mental health support |
| 7 | 25 | Trans Woman | 1 year | Positive feedback about name/pronoun usage | Good experience with a knowledgeable nurse |
| 8 | 38 | Trans Man | 15 years | Encountered significant barriers to care | Advocated for policy changes in healthcare settings |
| 9 | 30 | Non-Binary | 5 years | Felt ignored in conversations about health | Had difficulty finding inclusive healthcare services |
| 10 | 24 | Trans Woman | 2 years | Positive experiences but noted need for sensitivity | Received affirming care, but faced occasional misgendering |
| 11 | 35 | Trans Man | 8 years | Strong desire for advocacy from healthcare providers | Lacked access to gender-affirming resources |
| 12 | 29 | Transgender | 4 years | Importance of community support highlighted | Mixed experiences with care providers |

**Results and Discussion**

The findings from this study provided valuable insights into the concept of transgender health nursing, emphasizing the critical attributes identified from the literature which served as guidance to the interview through the concept analysis framework established by Avant and Walker (2011) and led to the usage of the Braun and Clark (2016) Thematic Analysis Framework. This section presents the results derived from the qualitative interviews with transgender individuals and discusses the implications for nursing practice and education.

Table 2: Summary table outlining the themes, subthemes, and meaning units derived from the qualitative analysis of transgender health nursing:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme** | **Subtheme** | **Meaning Units** |
| **Cultural Competence** | Affirming Language | "It feels good when a doctor uses my correct name and pronouns; it shows they see me as I am." |
|  | Understanding Needs | "I want my doctor to know about the unique challenges I face as a transgender person." |
| **Discrimination and Stigma** | Experiences of Misgendering | "The nurse didn’t even look at me when she called my name. It made me feel invisible." |
|  | Avoidance of Care | "I’ve avoided going to the doctor because I was afraid of being treated poorly." |
| **Holistic Care Needs** | Mental Health Considerations | "My mental health is just as important as my physical health, yet doctors often overlook it." |
|  | Social Support | "I wish my healthcare providers would connect me to support groups." |
| **Advocacy and Support** | Role of Healthcare Providers | "It would mean a lot if my nurse spoke up for me when there are issues; it shows that they care." |
|  | Policy Advocacy | "Nurses can help push for changes that make healthcare more accessible for people like me." |

**Key Themes Identified**

Through thematic analysis of the interview data, several key themes emerged that encapsulate the experiences of transgender individuals in healthcare settings. These themes include:

**Cultural Competence in Healthcare**. Participants highlighted the importance of cultural competence among healthcare providers. Many expressed a desire for providers to understand their specific needs and challenges related to gender identity. For instance, one participant noted, “It feels good when a doctor uses my correct name and pronouns; it shows they see me as I am.” This underscores the need for healthcare professionals to engage in training that emphasizes the significance of affirming language and recognition of gender identity.

**Experiences of Discrimination and Stigma**. Numerous participants reported experiences of discrimination and stigma when seeking care. Many shared stories of being misgendered, subjected to insensitive remarks, or experiencing outright refusal of care. One individual recounted, “I went to a clinic, and the nurse didn’t even look at me when she called my name. It made me feel invisible.” Such experiences highlight systemic issues within healthcare that contribute to feelings of alienation and mistrust among transgender patients.

**Holistic Care Needs**. The interviews also revealed a strong emphasis on the need for holistic care that addresses not only physical health but also mental, emotional, and social well-being. Participants expressed frustration with healthcare systems that focus narrowly on medical issues without considering the broader context of their lives. As one participant stated, “My mental health is just as important as my physical health, yet doctors often overlook it.” This points to a crucial gap in care that nursing professionals must address by adopting a more comprehensive approach to patient assessments and interventions.

**Advocacy and Support**. Participants identified the role of healthcare providers as advocates for transgender rights and needs. They expressed a desire for nurses and other professionals to stand up against discrimination and to actively promote policies that ensure equitable care. One participant emphasized, “It would mean a lot if my nurse spoke up for me when there are issues; it shows that they care.” This theme underscores the potential for nursing professionals to be agents of change within the healthcare system.

**Implications for Nursing Practice**

The findings from this study carry significant implications for nursing practice. To provide effective and affirming care to transgender individuals, nurses must prioritize cultural competence and advocacy. Nursing education programs should integrate comprehensive training on transgender health issues, including the importance of using correct names and pronouns, understanding the unique health disparities faced by transgender individuals, and recognizing the impact of stigma on health outcomes. Such training can prepare future nurses to approach transgender patients with sensitivity and respect, ultimately enhancing patient trust and care experiences (Rodgers et al., 2018).

**Patient-Centered Communication**. Effective communication is a cornerstone of quality care. Nurses should adopt patient-centered communication strategies that prioritize the individual’s identity and experiences. This includes actively listening to patients, validating their feelings, and ensuring they feel seen and heard in clinical settings. Implementing these practices can foster a more inclusive healthcare environment that promotes better health outcomes (Kcomt et al., 2020).

**Holistic Care Approaches**. Nursing practice must embrace holistic care models that address the multifaceted needs of transgender patients. This includes screening for mental health issues, providing resources for social support, and considering the social determinants of health that may impact patient well-being. By adopting a holistic approach, nurses can contribute to improved overall health outcomes and enhance the quality of care for transgender individuals (Pachankis et al., 2021).

**Advocacy Efforts**. Nurses are in a unique position to advocate for policy changes that promote equitable healthcare for transgender individuals. This includes advocating for inclusive policies within healthcare organizations, supporting research that addresses the needs of transgender populations, and participating in community outreach initiatives. Nurses can help dismantle systemic barriers that contribute to health disparities (Costa, 2023) by taking on advocacy roles.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study align with existing literature on transgender health and underscore the ongoing challenges faced by this population in healthcare settings. The themes identified in the interviews reveal not only the individual experiences of transgender individuals but also highlight broader systemic issues that necessitate urgent attention from healthcare professionals and policymakers.

Cultural competence emerged as a critical theme in the interviews, reinforcing the findings of previous research that emphasizes its importance in improving healthcare experiences for marginalized populations. For instance, studies have shown that healthcare providers who demonstrate cultural competence can significantly reduce health disparities and enhance patient satisfaction (Betancourt et al., 2016). By actively engaging in training that promotes understanding of transgender issues, nurses can create a more welcoming environment that fosters trust and open communication.

The experiences of discrimination and stigma shared by participants are consistent with numerous studies highlighting the pervasive nature of bias in healthcare. Transgender individuals often face barriers to accessing care, leading to delayed or avoided healthcare (Yousuf et al., 2021). This study's findings underscore the need for healthcare institutions to implement policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination and promote respectful treatment of all patients, regardless of gender identity.

The call for holistic care in the experiences of participants echoes the growing recognition within nursing and healthcare of the importance of addressing the whole person rather than focusing solely on specific medical conditions. A holistic approach to care is essential for supporting the mental and emotional well-being of transgender individuals, who often face unique stressors related to their identity (McLemore, 2018). Integrating mental health screenings and supportive services into routine care for transgender patients can enhance their overall health and resilience.

Advocacy was a recurrent theme, reflecting the need for healthcare providers to be allies for their transgender patients. The importance of advocacy in healthcare settings has been well documented, with evidence suggesting that nurses who engage in advocacy can positively impact patient outcomes and empower patients to voice their needs (Mason et al., 2015). By fostering an environment of support and solidarity, nurses can play a crucial role in driving systemic change and improving care for transgender individuals.

The concept analysis of transgender health nursing using Walker and Avant’s framework highlights the urgent need to integrate comprehensive, inclusive transgender health content into nursing curricula (Zeydani et al., 2023). As the analysis identifies key attributes such as cultural competence, patient advocacy, affirming communication, and clinical sensitivity, nursing education must move beyond binary understandings of gender and incorporate structured training on transgender-specific health disparities, psychosocial needs, and affirming care practices (Roman & De Santis, 2023). These findings suggest that nursing programs should embed transgender health as a core component of foundational and clinical courses, rather than treating it as a peripheral or elective topic. Simulation experiences, case studies, and guest lectures from transgender individuals and health professionals can offer students meaningful exposure and help foster empathy and competence in caring for transgender patients.

In nursing practice, the concept analysis reveals a significant gap between existing clinical guidelines and the consistent delivery of gender-affirming care, underscoring the importance of curriculum reform that bridges this divide (Sherman et al., 2021). Nursing students must be equipped with the knowledge, language, and skills to address stigma, recognize health inequities, and advocate for inclusive policies in clinical settings. Moreover, fostering critical reflection and ethical reasoning around gender identity and healthcare access is essential for developing practitioners who are both competent and compassionate. By aligning nursing education with the insights from this concept analysis, schools can produce graduates who not only understand the unique health challenges transgender individuals face but are also prepared to lead transformative change in healthcare systems and policy (Crawford et al., 2023).

This study highlights the critical importance of understanding the concept of transgender health nursing through the lens of concept analysis as outlined by Avant and Walker (2011). The themes identified, cultural competence, discrimination, holistic care, and advocacy, are pivotal in shaping nursing practice and education. Nursing professionals can enhance their ability to provide affirming and effective care for transgender individuals by addressing these areas. Ongoing education, advocacy, and a commitment to holistic care are essential for improving health outcomes and ensuring equitable healthcare access for this marginalized population. Future research should continue to explore the experiences of transgender individuals in various healthcare contexts, further informing best practices in nursing and contributing to a more inclusive healthcare system.

**Conclusion**

This study provides vital insights into transgender health nursing by examining the experiences of transgender individuals within healthcare settings. Using Avant and Walker's (2011) concept analysis framework, key themes emerged: cultural competence, discrimination, holistic care, and advocacy. Cultural competence is essential for healthcare providers to effectively support transgender patients. Participants emphasized the need for providers to understand their identities and use appropriate names and pronouns. This aligns with existing literature indicating that culturally competent care enhances patient satisfaction and outcomes (Kcomt et al., 2020; Betancourt et al., 2016). Consequently, integrating comprehensive training on transgender health issues into nursing curricula is crucial.

Discrimination remains a significant barrier, as many participants reported experiences of misgendering and avoidance of care due to fear of mistreatment. These findings highlight the need for healthcare organizations to implement policies that prohibit discrimination, fostering a more inclusive environment that encourages transgender individuals to seek necessary care (Yousuf et al., 2021). Holistic care was another prominent theme, with participants expressing the need for support that addresses mental health and social well-being, in addition to physical health. This reflects a broader understanding within nursing that effective care must consider the whole person (McLemore, 2018).

Finally, advocacy was identified as a crucial role for healthcare providers. Participants expressed a desire for their providers to stand up for their needs, underscoring the importance of nurses acting as advocates within the healthcare system (Mason et al., 2015).

In conclusion, this study underscores the urgent need for transformative changes in nursing practice to support transgender individuals effectively. Prioritizing cultural competence, addressing discrimination, adopting holistic care approaches, and engaging in advocacy can significantly improve health outcomes and experiences for transgender patients.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study on transgender health nursing, several key recommendations can enhance the quality of care for transgender individuals within healthcare systems. First, nursing education programs should incorporate comprehensive modules on transgender health issues, cultural competence, and social determinants of health. This training should focus on the unique healthcare needs of transgender patients, appropriate use of names and pronouns, and understanding the psychological impact of stigma and discrimination. Additionally, continuing education opportunities for current practitioners, including workshops and seminars featuring guest speakers from the transgender community, can facilitate ongoing learning and skill development in culturally competent care.

Healthcare organizations must implement policies explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity and expression, ensuring these guidelines are communicated clearly and enforced. Collecting and analyzing demographic data on patients’ gender identity can help identify disparities in healthcare access and outcomes, guiding targeted interventions. Furthermore, nurses should adopt holistic assessment models that consider the physical, mental, and social well-being of transgender patients, integrating mental health services into primary care to address the high rates of anxiety and depression reported within this community.

To effectively integrate transgender health into the nursing curriculum, educators should implement a longitudinal, embedded approach that spans both didactic and clinical training. This includes incorporating transgender health topics into foundational courses such as anatomy, pharmacology, and health assessment, as well as specialty areas like mental health, community health, and primary care. Content should focus on gender identity, inclusive communication, health disparities, hormone therapy, and psychosocial aspects of care. Simulation-based learning with standardized transgender patients, interprofessional case discussions, and reflective assignments can further enhance student competence and confidence. Nursing programs can prepare graduates to deliver affirming by normalizing and contextualizing transgender health across the curriculum, evidence-based care that promotes equity and dignity for transgender individuals.

Advocacy training for healthcare providers is essential to empower them to support transgender patients effectively. This training should focus on navigating complex healthcare systems and engaging in policy advocacy. Establishing partnerships with local transgender organizations can enhance advocacy efforts and service delivery, facilitating community forums and health fairs that promote awareness of transgender health issues. Additionally, healthcare facilities should create welcoming environments, including gender-neutral restrooms and inclusive signage, to reduce anxiety for transgender patients. Implementing feedback mechanisms where transgender patients can share their experiences will help healthcare organizations assess and improve their services.

Finally, further research is needed to explore the healthcare needs of transgender individuals across diverse populations. Longitudinal studies examining health outcomes and effective interventions can provide valuable insights to inform best practices in transgender health nursing. Disseminating research findings through conferences and publications will promote evidence-based practices and encourage systemic changes within healthcare. Healthcare organizations can eliminate barriers and improve health outcomes for transgender patients, fostering a more equitable and inclusive healthcare landscape that respects and affirms the identities of all individuals by following the recommendations.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

Consent

In accordance with international and university ethical standards, written informed consent was obtained from all participants and has been securely documented and preserved by the author.

Ethical Approval

In accordance with international guidelines and institutional standards, ethical approval for this study was obtained from the appropriate ethics review board and has been duly documented and preserved by the author."

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**Competing Interests**

The author declares no competing interests about this study.

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