IT HURTS WHEN BEING JUDGED: AN EYE TRACKING STUDY IN TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

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Background

The need to belong, to be accepted and to be loved is a universal human need, and being thwarted in this desire can elicit negative emotions. Transgender people are more vulnerable to social rejection, potentially leading to more interpersonal pain. The main goal of this study is to determine the underlying mechanisms that maintain poor health in transgender persons.

Hypothesis: Transgender individuals will fixate longer on the self and/or feedback during negative feedback relative to cisgender comparisons.

Methods

The first impression paradigm provides explicit feedback of people how desirable or likeable individuals are. By exposing cisgender men (M_age=25.91, SD=6.29, n=24) and cisgender women (M_age=30.12, SD=9.65, n=33) versus transgender men (TM; M_age=32.22, SD=13.26, n=18) and transgender women (TW; M_age=36.46, SD=10.14, n=13) to positive and negative social evaluations, differences in emotional attention towards the self, the evaluator and social evaluative information (i.e., AOIs) were investigated.

First Impression Paradigm

4 blocks * n = 18 trials, N = 72 trials in total, duration each block: 5min, total duration of task: 20min

Results

Significant AOI × group effect for average fixation duration, F(6,15877.3) = 78.31, p < .001.

Pairwise comparisons showed that TM focused their attention longer towards the social evaluation, compared to cisgender men.

Conclusion

- Biased attention towards social evaluative information may reflect a mechanism through which transgender people experience more interpersonal distress.
- The biased attention may be due to the lower emotion regulation of transgender individuals.
- Our preliminary result is showing an increase in vulnerability of TM towards social evaluations.

References

