GENDER IDENTITY DISORDERS IN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: A CASE REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

A person with gender identity disorder often experiences great discomfort regarding actual anatomic gender. They may express a desire to alter their bodies. Negative attitudes towards transsexuals often accompany certain religious philosophies or social values. Some of them are raised in faiths that condemned their actions as immoral or wrong. Eventually sufferers usually stay in stress when they feel themselves trapped in the wrong body. The need for treatment is emphasized by higher suicide rate among untreated transsexuals than in the general population.

Brunei Darussalam is a small country with a population of 375,000. The prosperous kingdom is an Islamic state. The majority of Bruneians are the Muslim Malays. An example which classically illustrates GENDER IDENTITY DISORDER is the case of a young Muslim man from Brunei Darussalam, who was seen and treated. This presentation will highlight the cultural and religious perspective of this disorder.

CASE REPORT

Mr. A was called up, but surprisingly Miss. B entered into the consulting room. He clarified that since last year he has changed his physical appearance by using hormones. This was his 4th contact to Psychiatric unit. He was presented with severe depressive symptoms.

Mr. A was born 28 years ago as a male. His father is a retired Army officer. He is the 4th among 3 sisters and 2 brothers. He belongs to a strict religious observant family. After finishing primary education his father sent him to a religious boarding school to memorize Holy Quran. He couldn’t manage to do it and left that school. With the time he stopped pray to God and the other religious rituals. Since child hood he always preferred the company of females. At the age of 13 years he was referred firstly with history of depressive symptoms and sexual identity disturbances. At age of 20 years relapsed of Depressive Illness. All through those days, there was no heterosexual contact, but admitted that he enjoys in homo sexuality as passive partner without having any transvestite’s behavior. He was still feeling himself as feminine although he was not wearing women’s clothes.

After another 5 years, he appeared with depressive symptoms again. He believed himself misfit in the society. There was no intention to commit suicide but he had fear of it. This time he started believing himself woman actually. He went overseas to get some hormonal treatment, which helped him to change his outlook as female. He couldn’t go for sex reassignment surgery, although he wanted to do that as well.

He was investigated for anatomical abnormalities. Hormonal assays were in normal range and no organic cause was found for his sexual preference. He was informed about risk and consequences of sex reassignment surgery, and was helped to review his decision for sex change operation. He was advised for continuous follow up.

DISCUSSION

The relationship between transgenderism and religion varies widely around the world. Religions range from condemning any gender-variant behavior, to honoring transgender people as religious leaders. Brunei Darussalam is a small Islamic country where the people are close to each other. The society is influenced by culture and superstitious believes.

In Islam, the term MUKHANNATHUN is used to describe gender-variant people, usually male-to-female transsexuals. A mukhannath is the male who carries in his movements, appearance and language the characteristics of a woman. The status of mukhannathun in Islam has been partially based on their inability to have penetrative sex with women, whether by inclination or due to anatomic interventions. They were allowed to mix up into families but ejected if they displayed sexual interest in women.

There are many Islamic issues and aspects of transsexuals. The inability to fit into the male/female box causes many problems. The one most often mentioned is, which bathroom to use. Which section of the mosque to use for prayers? How to address their civil and sexual rights and responsibilities? Employment, eligibility to participate in games, vote, casting, and heir ship issues, are usually main legal concern of people with gender identity disorder. There are other issues like after the death, how the prayer will be performed, heir ship issues according to Islamic law, and the day of judgment would they be considered male or female. Off course that judgment is for God- not man and we are told often of Gods mercy. Religious scholars would need to be taken into consideration to address this important Psychiatric issue among Muslims.

It is unfortunate that most local media depict transsexuals in a negative light. Public view upsets the psychological and emotional state of a transgender, given that most face a unsympathetic atmosphere and consider them as deviant in culture that are unable to play a constructive role.

CONCLUSION

This critical situation of victims with Gender Identity Disorder among Muslims, and high rate of mental health problem especially high suicidal risk among untreated transsexuals necessitates further research looking at this serious situation. There is need to share concern for understanding and discussing this topic from various perspectives, including an Islamic perspective. This contribution will highlight the psycho-social, cultural, and religious aspects of persons with GID.

REFERENCES
7. Transgenderism and Religion (on Line)Wikipedia.org/wiki