



**Portrait of psychological well-being in individuals who have coming out as
gender dysphoria**

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ABSTRACT

Choosing to be a gender dysphoria is quite difficult to voice yourself in behavior, expression, even in dress, good and bad responses always come. In Indonesia, it is still fairly sensitive to talk about gender deviation. Individuals who have been diagnosed as gender dysphoria by psychologists/psychiatrists could probably feel uncomfortable in society. Some of them who have come out in the environment but have not been fulfilled in terms of psychological well-being due to several factors. Based on the phenomenon that occurs, researchers want to examine the portrait of psychological well-being, both through dimensions and factors in individuals who have come out as gender dysphoria. The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive phenomenology. The data collection process is carried out by using observations, interviews, and documents. Data analysis is performed using interactive data analysis methods. The results of this study show that in general gender dysphoria individuals who have come out have been fulfilled in the picture of psychological well-being for themselves and the surrounding environment, where it appears that participants have fulfilled the dimensions and factors of psychological well-being theory of Ryff and Keyes (1995). Researchers also found a new factor that affects psychological well-being, namely the self-love factor.

Keywords: Psychological well-being; gender dysphoria; coming out.

ABSTRAK

Di Indonesia masih terbilang sensitif jika membicarakan penyimpangan gender. Individu yang telah didiagnosa gender dysphoria oleh psikolog/psikiater belum tentu dapat coming out di lingkungan sosial. Beberapa individu gender dysphoria yang telah coming out pada lingkungan masih belum tercukupi secara kesejahteraan psikologisnya karena beberapa faktor. Peneliti ingin mengkaji gambaran kesejahteraan psikologis, baik melalui dimensi dan juga melalui faktor-faktornya pada individu yang telah coming out sebagai gender dysphoria. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu kualitatif fenomenologi deskriptif. Adapun proses pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan pengamatan, wawancara, dan dokumen. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode analisis data interaktif. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa secara garis besar individu gender dysphoria yang telah coming out sudah tercukupi pada gambaran kesejahteraan psikologis bagi dirinya dan lingkungan sekitar, dimana terlihat bahwa partisipan sudah memenuhi dimensi-dimensi dan faktor-faktor dari kesejahteraan psikologis teori Ryff and Keyes (1995). Peneliti juga menemukan faktor baru yang mempengaruhi kesejahteraan psikologis yaitu faktor self-love.

Kata Kunci: Kesejahteraan psikologis, gender dysphoria; coming out.

1. INTRODUCTION

Humans may possibly change their gender identity in order to achieve a well-being in life as a manifestation of the dreamed thing. A person who experiences differences in himself towards gender identity and biological sex can be categorized in a mental disorder called gender dysphoria (Cooper et al., 2020). Apeiranthitou et al (2019) state that there is a significant increase in the prevalence rate of about 1 in 12,000 men in biological sex and 1 in 30,000 biological women experiencing *gender dysphoria* in Western states. Then the prevalence in gender dysphoria based on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-5TM)* in 2013 found that there were 0.005-0.014% for adults of the male sex and 0.002-0.003% for adults with female sex.

Ryff and Keyes (1995) characterize individuals who are mentally healthy and fulfilled psychologically well-being through several dimensions namely self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, personal growth. Individual happiness over the fulfillment of psychological well-being is a form of expression of a healthy life, through various factors that are expressed, one of which is demographic factors such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and culture; social support factor from each individual by various sources of the surrounding environment; factors in the evaluation of life experiences; and Locus of Control (LOC) or a general expectation regarding the reinforcement of certain behaviors (Ramadhani et al. , 2016).

Based on preliminary study data with 5 participants who were classified as gender dysphoria of adult age, it can be said that behavioral deviations of the biological sex are only depending on the form of the sense of comfort that they manage to show and their self-expression that cannot be suppressed due to social sanctions. This is also what makes psychological well-being still unfulfilled. The results of research and phenomena can be said that individuals who have gender dysphoria is not easy (Dyla et al., 2020).

Study conducted by Rabito-Alcón and Rodríguez-Molina (2016) showed that the dysphoria gender group had a lower value on self-satisfaction with the scale of life and psychological well-being than the control group. Matud et al, (2019) stated that most who can accept themselves as a change in gender characteristics experienced are men, while some women are still struggling with the impact of their social problems and low self-acceptance. Considering those phenomena, the authors want to review the picture of psychological well-being in individuals as gender dysphoria since the reality of the phenomenon that occurs where some individuals still put aside and look down on or contempt for someone who is struggling to find their happiness as gender dysphoria.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is the level of individual ability to accept himself as he is, form warm relationships with others, be independent from social pressures, control the external environment, have meaning in life, and realize his potential continuously (Huppert, 2009).

Psychological Well-Being according to Ryff (1995) is a dynamic concept that includes subjective, social and psychological dimensions as well as behaviors related to well-being. It must be explained through an integrative understanding that is beneficial from life development, mental health and clinical perspectives. Psychological well-being does not only discuss happiness, but it can be the result of a good life. Dimensions that can be expressed as a good life or psychological well-being include positive relationships with others, environmental mastery, autonomy, purpose in life, personal development and self-acceptance.

2.2. Gender Dysphoria

Gender Dysphoria (GD) represents a condition where a person's gender assigned at birth and the gender with which they identify themselves are incongruent (Bizic et al., 2018). In the DSM-IV (4th edition; DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) the diagnostic terminology is changed and transsexualism becomes "Gender Identity Disorder" but focuses on its relation to one's gender. Despite an update on this category in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-5TM) gender dysphoria or as it was previously called, gender identity disorder is a mental disorder experienced by some individuals when their psychological and emotional gender identity is not in line with gender biologically.

3. METHOD

The method used in this study is a qualitative approach to descriptive phenomenology. Data collection was obtained based on an interview guide that refers to the theory of psychological well-being. Participants involved in the study were early adult individuals with an age of 21 years old, each male who had information from psychologists/psychiatrists as gender dysphoria and have declared themselves or come out on the gender status of dysphoria in the surrounding environment and are willing to be the subject of research by filling out Informed Consent. Participants were selected based on snowball/chain sampling. Data collection techniques in this study used observations, interviews to collect in-depth data, and

documents. This interview was conducted face-to-face and also by phone on several social media platforms (*WhatsApp, Google meet, Zoom Meet*). Researchers also use probing techniques to be able to get in-depth information. The auxiliary instruments that researchers use is stationery and recording devices, after which the data from the interview will be analyzed.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings

4.1.1. Participant Description 1 (P1)

P1 born in Bandung, West Java, is a student of the faculty of social and political sciences at a private university in Bandung. As the last child, P1 had an older sister. Starting from junior high school, P1 began to feel a change in himself from the behavior that appears that is slightly deviated from the behavior that should be in line with the sex biologically, like a sense of comfort playing with friends of the opposite sex, accustomed to being more open and accepted by female friends biologically, and using beauty or skincare products. Gradually P1 felt that he was more comfortable and accustomed to character and behavior that was more inclined to feminine. Now at the age of 21, P1 is still comfortable and has fully accepted himself and behavior that deviates from the character of the biological sex as a man. P1 is accustomed to appearing with those distorted characteristics, entering in the stage of adolescence whose relationship environment is getting wider, P1 begins to question himself in expressing something, and think what if he is more comfortable in a different gender than his biological sex.

4.1.2. Participant Description 2 (P2)

P2 is final year student in one of the provinces of South Sulawesi. In kindergarten, P2 was used to playing with female friends and tried on women's clothes. In the 4th grade in elementary school, P2 could already slowly accept himself with the changes occurred and felt comfortable with it. Currently, P2 has more courage to dress differently from his gender. P2 does not think much about the others' response, so the decision that has been chosen as gender dysphoria is for its own comfort. This is because when P2 was still in kindergarten, the family fulfilled what P2 wanted so that the character and behaviour were formed to be more feminine. P2 is quite strong enough to focus on self-goals and acceptance. When he was in 4th grade in elementary school, P2 had accepted the situation. Nevertheless, P2 is still not fully able to accept the critics of the social environment. P2 tried to care himself while not harming others by presenting a positive atmosphere. Slowly the environment can appreciate P2 because of his good attitude that made his friends comfortable even though P2 was labeled as gender dysphoria until now.

4.1.3. Dimensions of Psychological Well-Being

P1 (Participant 1)

The first time P1 realized that about his biologically deviant behavior started in 3rd grade of junior high school and experienced a falling point when he was in line with the environment in senior high school. When he went to university, P1 can only come out as gender dysphoria by accepting himself. *"I feels like ouh it turns out that I am*

different since maybe 3rd grade junior high school, well when senior high school, just entering a complicated stage after senior high school, because it may often be said that being much fighting with myself is true, but coming out. At first, it was difficult to be the first one, I continued to struggle, cried a lot, but since I chatted and read articles a lot, I realize that the one who turned back, who accepted about yourself what it would be like even though you didn't have to go into the conception that existed in the crowd environment".

P2 (Participant 2)

The age of self-acceptance that occurs in P2 is quite young, that is was in the 4th grade of elementary school. The process that occurs according to P2 is because many women female from the environment play with P2. *"Eee maybe in the process from the environment, because my friends used to be all of them, who are real women".* P2 believed that accepting oneself is to be oneself without anything being faked, *"Must accepts myself, accepts myself and we can be accepted by others, then if, you already know we are deviant, just do like, like positive, vibes are positive, like for example, ee eee what yaa, like is this, if a like person has this, like a success person".*

P1 (Participant 1)

Gradually P1 had positive friendships for him. P1 was a bit hesitate at first, but now P1 is getting used to telling stories with his friends. *"My friends now already know, how do I dress, who I date with. At first, I told them doubtfully, if not wrong when third semester, when we were sharing, usually deep talk moments, I confess, so then they are, what I tell a story so it turns out that the two perception alhamdulillah is like that".*

P2 (Participant 2)

For P2, talking about himself is very difficult. P2 often has a thought of being rejected if he told about gender, especially to his family. *"Once, often, in fact, getting the first was like, because in the past I was closed person, but the more you come here, the more you find yourself, the point is that the family should not be like that, until you are shy about a wealthy family, for example, selling yourself, for example, being like, doing negative things that damage the family name".*

P1 (Participant 1)

Departing from the problems that are used as learning for P1, there is a separate way of controlling social pressure when approaching, in the form of expressions that P1 appears in the surrounding environment. *"I don't know what if I'm coming out, and turning out I'm suppose that like one, I feel I must do something. I was afraid at the first time, almost cried, suddenly run out of the stories, like when the story, continue during the story my hands are wet, continue to often dry palms, while shaking and often messing with nails, for example friends saw like already like so that means again fear for the story to be like, yes, you don't have to force it today to like to be like, they like to make it so even now".*

P2 (Participant 2)

P2 overcomes many sneers and problems by ignoring people's words. *"Eee don't listen to people's words anyway"*. When social pressures come a lot, P2 control oneself that is imposed in his life, through the thoughts he directs so as not to hurt himself. *"Eee I think it's like that netizens are hanging from me, wanting to get into my heart because, if I'm the one who wants to get into the heart, it's me who hurts myself but if I'm the one who doesn't let them into me then there's no problem"*.

P1 (Participant 1)

When the environment no longer plays a positive role, P1 has its own way of sorting out through its own benchmark of the environment that will not always favor human life. *"For example, if there is a feeling of being like, there is always that, because with time I am sure, whether I am the one who changes, whether other people have also changed, so the benchmark I am now like if for example there is a feasibility for people changing about how I have told yeah maybe maybe the time should be like this"*.

P2 (Participant 2)

If it is not conducive to the environment in a silent way, P2 tried to not listen too much to negative arguments, not to get caught up in the coming out process. *"Ee is more about being quiet, yes, more silence, then you have to listen to the people's words are the most important, if you want to listen to the people's words are like, we will be trapped continuously.... you can, you can appreciate yourself because we are stuck with people's talk, now a lot of makes me uncomfortable, like what you do, or why your fashion like that, and bla bla bla, how come you said bla bla bla, yes already you want to say, like this also does not affect me at all because I do not accept what you are talking about"*.

P1 (Participant 1)

P1 hopes that the surrounding environment or people out there can see the potential and advantages that are possessed even if the person is a gender dysphoria. *"I want to show that indeed with the deviations that exist in this world, it is not something that can be accepted and normalized just like that but after this it must also be remembered we are like this, there is something superior too, I regret that there is someone who is like this, we also have to see how he is, show him the lead, how does he show ee and what, making a lot of relationships with feasibility-feasibility that people have already closed make if for example people like me, for access that, going into access anywhere may be difficult because the percentage is definitely the assumption of the stigma of people will also be different and the target must be different"*.

P2 (Participant 2)

P2 is well aware that he must have a purpose in life for the future, though whatever happens in the future, there is already setted. P2 only needs to run it as well as possible. *"There must be a lot of pros and cons like, what will you get married like, what do you want to become, right, I said yes, yes, we will see it in the future, right now we live in this time, so what is discussed is this time first, the future is that no one knows, so yeah"*

just live as well as possible". The role that P2 performs in interpreting life to be more focused on its life goals. "The point is to do your best in this life, because we live only once so there is no need for repetition but it needs renewal".

P1 (Participant 1)

Through a positive environment and supporting the potential, P1 is able to manage it effectively and sustainably. *"In come to a supportive environment from, for example, there is an environment that will also accept or reluctant, that's how I will be in blending in it, well I don't know, because I have been MC a lot, often meet a lot of people so I took, what is it called, take some of these jobs, for example in organization or find information by self which is often the MC to meet and interact directly with people so from public speaking, from the intelligence efforts that I have".*

P2 (Participant 2)

P2 said that he developed the existing potential by going about his days as usual, without much thinking of it. *"If that's the case, maybe I'm more into my life goals, I have to be more directed, if the methods are not enough, I just live my life like that, not like in details".* For P2, it is enough to maintain good friendships and harmonious family relationships, and use accounts on social media wisely. *"Eee the important thing is, take care of the environment, friends, keep in harmony with family, keep ee what, use social media wisely".*

4.1.4. Psychological Well-Being Factors

P1 (Participant 1)

Apart from environmental factors, as for the factor of gender where P1 feels that he is more comfortable when talking to the female sex biologically. This is what makes him more open to exchange opinions. But that does not mean that P1 does not have male friends. His friends are quite *supportive* with the presence of P1. *"Eem maybe junior high school but if from the age its 13 years old, I don't tend to be more into comfortable if I'm talking to women for example, that's the first thing, because it's more like being safe to me. Alhamdulillah, my fellow guys, if you say supportive, it's quite supportive".*

P2 (Participant 2)

Unlike P1, P2 felt that as a kindergarten child, he got used to it and was finally comfortable to play with biological opposite sex friends, until his clothes slowly changed from his gender identity. *"Eeeee from.. Kindergarten, from a small age, maybe is not myself, then when I was a child, I was also like, yes, the toys were women's toys, all clothes also fit kindergarten only it was already a woman, the toys were already like women and until now".*

P1 (Participant 1)

The support that P1 feels comes from the social environment and his current college friends. *"I feel from the insights of friends and the social environment that I saw it turns out that the stigma and skepticism of people related to people like me is not only shown in bad form, just bad figures, it turns out that I can get it and also I can what it is*

called, reach out good things also so that's where the role of friends and the role of the social environment that I get around me affect me at all in the good way".

P2 (Participant 2)

According to P2, the perceived social support starts from itself through a sense of comfort, so from this it will present a good atmosphere and the surrounding environment with a positive atmosphere if you get along with him. *"Maybe from, own behavior maybe, the point is that if you want to be like this, don't harm others, so like a lot of people are happy, continue to be humble as well as people care, continue to look for things that positive".* P2 still has the role of social support from his close friends. P2 thinks everything comes back from him. He can be himself and not harm others, and friends will still like P2 as he is. *"I don't think my friend supports it, right, because it's ourselves, it's automatically if the friend is ee, yes, it's your business, it's like that's the point, I don't harm you, I become myself, yes, it's fine".*

P1 (Participant 1)

During the process, P1 constantly asks himself about his existence in order for the environment to accept. *"You have a process of evaluating yourself very often, couple times, a hundred times, if for example it is said that it is very often, sometimes if you copy it again by yourself, if you copy again, there are many thoughts, sometimes there are just, what is it called, ee kaya feasibility questions, and also feasibility, the worst possibilities that I thought suddenly".* Although it is quite difficult, P1 still does it in the form of an evaluation of itself based on the process it has gone through. *"I have tried it several times and we have to find out the results when it is not as expected, I will try to evaluate it again on the next occasion"*

P2 (Participant 2)

According to P2, every human being has his own problems and struggles. And it is the evaluation at night that P2 likes to do for the actions that happen to him. *"If often anyway, because I am like, ee whatever happens today, ya live, if at night sometimes overthinking comes to me, trust issues, eee sometimes crying myself, like think I really this, why does it happen to me, it's so like that".* P2 said that if the evaluation is not fully impactful or not as planned, P2 will improve it by evaluating it to be better for the future. *"If we evaluate ourselves, we definitely have to be from ourselves, our minds continue to our hearts, and what happened in our past, then the impact may be a little bit off from what we evaluate, but yes, it must be evaluated again, again and again to make it better in the future".*

P1 (Participation 1)

The existence of gender dysphoria experienced by P1, does not rule out the possibility that P1 still has goals and expectations. To control it, P1 has his own way. *"I always have a reference, how do people see my figure not from my ee sight profile that turns, not from the deviant sight profile, but how do people see what ee like, invisible assets that I have from how I socialize first, then from my intelligence that I have, and how do I ee, how to influence the crowd people".*

P2 (Participant 2)

In addition, P2 has expectations that focus on himself. P2 tries not to listen too much to others' responses and hopes to be enough to be himself. *"Eee if I'm the hopes, yes, I'm like, well, you don't have to hear what people think, the point is to be yourself, that's it"*. P2 also argues that expectations are managed, but the environment cannot match expectations P2 tends to choose to be silent and find out where it lies wrong by evaluating itself. *"Eee may be like more into silent again, continue to evaluate again, and find a way again"*.

4.2. Discussion

P1 and P2 have similarities in a positive attitude towards oneself and its past that can then renew to their lives as self-acceptance in Ryff and Keyes (1995) theory. It was seen in both participants who were more confident and adaptable by building good relationships within the circle of friendship after struggles over gender identity in their past. From the surrounding environment, P1 responded through consideration of suggestions when *sharing* with close friends and P2 responded by prioritizing self-thought, without accepting the negative feedback. Nevertheless, both of these participants have the same form of self-acceptance, P1 and P2 accepting themselves by starting to love all things about oneself (Maharaj & April, 2013a).

When self-acceptance has been fulfilled by each participant, it will indirectly be carried away to a positive environment and trust each other, especially for oneself (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). P2 starts relationships by himself first, not from the suggestions of various points of view of people around that may give input from different points of view.

Similarly, when regulating and managing one's own behavioral abilities independently of social pressure, P1 expresses it with the behavior of trembling hands and sweat, otherwise it is restrained P1 brings it up by crying. Related to the ability to overcome themselves from social pressures, P2 tends not to care about it and in other words does not bother arguments from the social environment so that the behavior presented produces a positive atmosphere. Individuals who have negative perceptions or thoughts about themselves tend to behave negatively as well, according to their perceptions, and vice versa (Asmara & Valentina, 2018).

There are many difficulties when wanting to realize, the need for trust and commitment to oneself (Aulia et al., 2021). P1 emphasizes that her who is labeled as gender dysphoria has a justice on social inequality by showing potential, while P2 currently has a life goal for the future, but in its realization, it is more oriented to enjoy the situation that is happening by renewing his life.

Personal growth that occurs in each individual brings a person into mature growth (Wibowo, 2021). According to Ryff and Keyes (1995) with personal growth, individuals develop their potential by managing activities over time to be effective. Here, P1 develops potential in its personal growth by entering into an environment that supports its potential, as a container for P1 flourish. In contrast to P2, where the growth experienced has not been fulfilled effectively in managing the capacity and potential of oneself on a daily basis.

Ryff and Keyes (1995) revealed that age in individuals affects the dimensions of psychological well-being, especially in the dimensions of personal growth and self-acceptance. When P1 was 13 years old, she began to feel a difference in gender identity,

where the gender that P1 felt comfortable was different from gender biologically. Through the age factor, P1 was quite shocked and questioned the truth about himself, plus P1 at that time was in the stage of a teenager who was looking for his identity (Suyadjid, 2010). Unlike P2 where he starts to feel comfortable with a biologically different gender when he is in kindergarten, P2 is used to toys and also the opponent's clothes the kind and the tipped is comfortable.

According to Matud et al, (2019) a positive relationship through culture and the role of social support is one of the triggers for factors of psychological well-being in individuals with gender dysphoria. As happened to P1 when he felt he was more able to reach out to new things thanks to insights from his circle of friends who were willing to support and accept gender dysphoria status it, so that it presents a positive and open atmosphere. However, P2 thought that the role of friends in positive support begins if oneself can bring out good behavior and care, then the surrounding environment will also follow.

The ability to control an expectation or expectation formed in oneself is included in one of the factors of psychological well-being, namely the locus of control. According to Sarirah and Apsari (2019) the locus of control is the expectation of the individual about the events that occur within himself, either controlled through oneself or controlled from the environment outside. It can be seen how P1 controls these expectations by thinking in advance of the worst risks of what you want to do, while P2 were more likely to be silent. However, P1 and P2 have something in common if the expectation has already happened about the self-evaluation stage by looking for better ways to in the future.

As a gender dysphoria that has come out in the midst of its social life, P1 has been much better that he already determines about his future and be himself to adapt in the environment. Likewise, P2 has its own way of struggling. Over time P2 was quite enjoyable and comfortable in her role at the opposite gender. When demographic factors take a fairly impactful part, in the age that is still considered children (Hijriati, 2021).

In theory Ryff and Keyes (1995) in the dimension of psychological well-being, for the current state P2 is already fulfilled and already fully has a good self-confidence so that it can control an expectation and control itself from the environment that has a bad impact. When viewed through factors that affect psychological well-being and based on the results of the analysis, P2 is lacking in social support factors in the form of relationships with surroundings. This is caused by his affection for himself, so what P2 uses first is how to feel comfortable from oneself and support from oneself. P2 feels not afraid if people around him leave because his advice is not heard, P2 is also more focused in himself to fulfill happiness even though it is not accompanied by people around. As explained through the theory of Maharaj and April, (2013b) where self-love is a form of self-acceptance through shortcomings and advantages, and feelings affection for himself, more focus on his goals, and live happily through the efforts made. Therefore, researchers draw a new factor from the results of the P2 analysis through a portrait of psychological well-being in individuals who have declared themselves as gender Dysphoria is a factor of self-love that moderately affects psychological well-being.

5. CONCLUSION

Researchers draw some conclusions regarding the portrait of psychological well-being in individuals who have come out as gender dysphoria. Each individual during the course of

life processes, there are times when experiencing anxiety about his self-perception with the perception of those around him, considering how he is seen and judged by the environment. Starting from a sense of comfort, then becoming a habit, and finally it has become a character to act as the gender he wants and the opposite of the type her biological genitalia. After declaring themselves to people around about the gender status of dysphoria, there is a visible picture of psychological well-being where they are much more confident to voice arguments/ideas from his point of view and no longer have a feeling of fear of relating to the surroundings. Based on the conclusions obtained, then as an individual who has come out and labeled gender dysphoria should never hesitate to choose a choice in a decision life, because every risk and opportunity exists, focus on a positive atmosphere so that psychological well-being can always be fulfilled. Apart from that, there is also a new factor in the results of this study, namely the self-love factor, the existence of this factor in psychological well-being arises from the results of the answer to one of the participants, where self-love allows individuals to appreciate and understand themselves more so as to present a positive atmosphere towards the surrounding environment, this is what makes the formation of self-love can affect individuals with gender dysphoria who have come out on this study.

The research that has been done by the author is still fairly rudimentary and there are still limitations in the systematics of writing from this study. Therefore, there are suggestions for future research or those who want to make research on the same topic, in order to expand the reach of participants again to obtaining a sufficient number of participants, through some relationships with the gender deviance community or so on. And it's good if researchers can then process data by including new factors (self-love) in the interview guide through a qualitative approach or the next researcher can also process this research with a quantitative approach through the gender dysphoria community to get more detailed and accurate results.

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