

# Transaffirmative Narrative Exposure Therapy as Trauma-informed Literacy for Transgender Students in Pakistan

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Several studies have been done on the low literacy rate of transgender people across South Asia, however, the understanding of trauma in a learning environment is lacking. When transgender people are expected to assimilate into a standardized learning experience, it is vital to note that their history of trauma compels them to experience the classroom differently - leading to a rift in the building of a relationship with their peers and teachers and a sense of acceptance that carries learning. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between literacy and better mental health, and higher self esteem. Hence, minority students like the transgender community need an education system that is sensitive to their needs and background. Many studies are done on the low literacy rate of transgender population, but there is a lack of research that proposes solutions to this problem. I want to fill this gap: connecting mental health issues of the transgender community with educational practices in the context of Pakistan. To do that, I want to focus on trauma-informed literacy practices.

Most of the studies on trauma-informed literacy focus on the refugee children where they propose that language teachers have more scope to address and possibly heal traumas of their students than any other teacher (Medley, 2012), and without addressing their trauma language learning can be more challenging. Hence, in order to provide for them, it is vital for a teacher to use trauma-informed literacy to integrate gender minority students in the education system. The purpose of this study is to assess how a trauma-informed literacy can help lessen the high drop-out rate of the transgender students in Pakistan. For this, I want to adapt psychotherapy's evidence-based intervention of trans-affirmative narrative exposure therapy (TA-NET) as trauma-informed literacy. Narrative exposure therapy (NET) is an evidence-based intervention for people who have experienced trauma. It is a short term treatment for trauma where the survivors, with the help of a psychotherapist, write their life stories in which the traumatic event is put in context rather than viewing it in isolation. Trans-affirmative narrative exposure therapy (TA-NET) is a modification of narrative exposure therapy (NET) adapted by Tiffany Lange (2020) to include affirmative care as an integral part of NET for gender minority populations.

## Research questions

- To what extent trauma-informed literacy can make learning relevant and engaging for the transgender students in Pakistan?
- How can writing teachers adapt trans-affirmative narrative exposure therapy (TA-NET) to help transgender students heal from their trauma and retain them in the education system?

## Methods

I will adapt trans-affirmative narrative exposure therapy (TA-NET) for trauma-informed literacy. I will conduct 8—12 one-on-one TA-NET sessions with four transgender participants. These sessions will be conducted bi-weekly that will last for one hour.

For this study, 4 participants will be invited from my social network in Lahore, Pakistan. To make my sample diverse, I will select two transmen and two transwomen from different socioeconomic background. Participants' age will range from 18—40.

The interviews will be conducted individually over the course of 2 to 3 months. Participants will be offered appropriate monetary benefit for their time and effort. By the end of their sessions, participants will have produced their life stories in a text form.

## References

- Lange, T. M. (2020). Trans-affirmative narrative exposure therapy (TA-NET): A therapeutic approach for targeting minority stress, internalized stigma, and trauma reactions among gender diverse adults. *Practice Innovations*, 5(3), 230–245.  
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- Medley, Michael. (2012). A Role for English Language Teachers in Trauma Healing. *TESOL Journal*, 3, 10. 1002/tesj.6.