

“LIKE WE DON’T JUST DO IT FOR FUNSIES” A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE BINDING PRACTICES OF TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE ADULTS

Lee A¹, Simpson P², Haire B²

¹ UNSW, ² The Kirby Institute

Background: Within the transgender and gender diverse (TGD) community, binding, the non-invasive compression of breast tissue, is often used to facilitate a more comfortable expression of individuals’ genders prior to or in lieu of surgical intervention.

This study supplements the minimal literature on binding and aims to provide insight into the ways in which TGD individuals perceive the health impacts of, and ascribe meaning to, their binding. It also explores how individuals currently seek and perceive information and support around this practice.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine TGD individuals over the age of 18 and living in Sydney, who currently or previously engaged in binding practices. Participants were recruited via social media and community organisations. Data was collected and thematically analysed by a peer researcher and a community centred approach was employed throughout.

Results: Three main themes were identified:

1. Negotiating (dis)comfort: despite physical discomfort and negative health outcomes, binding was perceived to be an important part of participants’ lives due to the social and psychological comfort it conferred. This negotiation was seen across the gender spectrum and regardless of the frequency of binding.
2. Diversity: binding is practiced by both binary and non-binary individuals and for many participants, was independent from any desires to “pass” in society.
3. Navigating healthcare practitioners: interactions with healthcare practitioners are shaped by participants prior experiences. While insensitivity of practitioners was seen to generate distrust, positive experiences were often shared throughout community networks

Conclusions: These findings have implications for the way binding should be approached by healthcare practitioners. Approaches require culturally competent care and appropriate harm reduction strategies which take into account the importance of binding in individual’s daily lives as well as the diversity of experiences.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: N/A