

Initial Validation of the Attitudes Toward Transgendered Individuals Scale in the Philippines: A Look at the Role of Friendship and Origin Beliefs

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The Attitudes Toward Transgendered¹ Individuals (ATTI) Scale aims to assess transgender-related stigma in the general population. Higher scores on this scale reflect more positive attitudes toward trans people. This study seeks to establish the validity of this scale in the Philippines through measuring its reliability; testing its correlation with related measures; replicating established gender differences; correlating it with a contact measure (i.e., number of trans friends); and comparing the attitudes of people with different beliefs about what causes one to be transgender. Two hundred high school teachers answered the ATTI scale, along with the Genderism and Transphobia Scale (GTS), the Homopositivity Scale (HPS), and the Homonegativity Scale (HNS), and some demographic questions. It was shown to be a highly reliable scale ($\alpha = .95$) that was significantly correlated with the GTS and the HNS, but not the HPS. Women were found to be more transpositive than men. Number of transgender friends was significantly correlated with attitudes toward trans people. Lastly, people who believed that being transgender was mainly due to “nature” scored higher on the scale than those who believed that it was mainly due to “nurture.”

Keywords: attitudes, transgender, transphobia, homonegativity, origin beliefs

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¹ More recent scholarship done after the publication of this scale (e.g., Green & Maurer, 2015) recommend using “transgender” instead of “transgendered.” I thus use “transgendered” only in mentioning the title of the scale under study

As calls to end widespread prejudice and discrimination toward transgender people are made (e.g., Grant et al., 2010; Turner, et al., 2009), further efforts in documenting and measuring attitudes toward trans people are also underway. This is especially important in postcolonial Christianized countries like the Philippines, where indigenous transgender identities have been denigrated by introduced religions, such as Christianity (Tan, 1995). As a result, trans people remain excluded in important spheres of society, such as the law, healthcare, and education (Abesamis, 2022). They are also common targets of physical, verbal, and emotional abuse from their own families, communities, and larger society (Joseph, 2012; Restar et al., 2021). These stressors have been seen to contribute to the significantly higher prevalence of mental health difficulties among trans people and other sexual and gender minorities (SGM) (Tan & Saw, 2022).

One of the most common and straightforward ways of determining attitudes toward trans people are standardized self-report, pencil-and-paper, Likert-type measures with multiple items, like the Transgender Belief Questionnaire (TBQ) (Rye & Elmslie, 2001) and the Genderism and Transphobia Scale (GTS) (Hill & Willoughby, 2005). However, the diversity of beliefs and attitudes toward trans people in different parts of the world begs the question of whether one measure developed in a certain culture can be used effectively in another culture.

In particular, the Attitudes Toward Transgendered Individuals (ATTI) Scale, a 20-item self-report measure developed in the United States by Susan E. Walch and her colleagues in 2012, “aims to measure attitudes toward transgender individuals [by tapping] into cognitive evaluations and affective reactions to transgender individuals and transgenderism and [excluding] items assessing overt behavioral expressions of stigma and discrimination” (Walch et al., 2012, p. 1284). Walch and colleagues assert that it is a more trans-specific instrument as compared to existing transphobia measures, such as the GTS which is more about gender nonconformity. The ATTI Scale also does not focus on behavioral items, unlike the GTS. It was subsequently validated in Thailand by Ngamake and colleagues in 2013. Like Thailand, the Philippines possesses ancient (Brewer, 1999) and contemporary (Johnson, 2020; Winter et al., 2007) transgender traditions that are very different from those in North America, traditions such as

early transition with family/community support (Winter, 2009) and inclusion in religious practices (Yorong et al., 2021). The Philippines therefore is fertile ground for a validation study.

This present study aims to establish the construct validity of the ATTI Scale in the Philippines by determining its relationship with Darryl B. Hill and Brian L. Willoughby's (2005) Genderism and Transphobia Scale (GTS), a measure twice validated in the Philippines (Macapagal, 2013; Willoughby et al., 2011). Since transphobia and homophobia have been seen to be related attitudes (Macapagal, 2013; Nagoshi et al., 2008), convergent validity can also be determined by administering the ATTI Scale alongside other measures of attitudes toward gay people, like the Homopositivity Scale (HPS) (Morrison & Bearden, 2007) and the Homonegativity Scale (HNS) (Morrison et al., 1999). With higher scores indicating more positive attitudes toward trans people, it is hypothesized that ATTI scores will significantly correlate negatively with the GTS and the HNS, and positively with the HPS. Also, a behavioral validation (i.e., their number of trans friends) will be included. Drawing from the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954), it is hypothesized that people with more trans friends will score higher on the ATTI Scale. Furthermore, the well-established finding that women are more transpositive than men (Bukhari et al., 2016) will be substantiated. Lastly, the relationship between origin beliefs of being transgender and attitudes will be investigated, which thus far has not been considered in the local context. In consonance with previous findings in the sexual orientation literature (e.g., Dunn, 2010; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001), it is hypothesized that people who believe in immutable origins of transgender identities (i.e., due to nature, rather than nurture) will be more transpositive than people who believe in mutable origins (i.e., due to nurture, rather than nature). Because friendship with trans people and origin beliefs about being transgender have been seen to be sources for acceptance and transpositivity, this study puts extra focus on these two variables.

While the importance of the social environment of schools in the development and well-being of trans students has been well-established (e.g., Garvey & Rankin, 2015), studies on trans discrimination in schools mostly focus on peer-to-peer relations and usually fail to investigate the roles of teachers (Kurian, 2020). As such,

this study aims to fill this gap by determining the attitudes of high school teachers (i.e., secondary school teachers in the Philippines), specifically.

Method

Participants

Participants were 200 high school teachers, with a mean age of 33 years old ($SD = 9.0$). When asked about their assigned sex at birth, 97 answered male and 103 answered female. With regard to their sexual orientation, 193 reported being heterosexual, while 7 reported being either gay or bisexual. No one reported to be transgender (i.e., an individual whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth).

Measures

Attitudes Toward Transgendered Individuals (ATTI) Scale

The ATTI Scale, developed in the United States by Walch and colleagues in 2012, is a 20-item English measure for attitudes toward transgender individuals. Permission to use the scale for research purposes was obtained from the lead author. Sample items included: “Transgendered individuals are a viable part of society” (+) and “Transgenderism is a sin” (-). The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree), with 3 as the midpoint (neutral). To get the total scale score, the ratings on each of the items (reversed when appropriate) were summed up. Higher scores indicated more positive attitudes toward trans people. For this sample, the scale demonstrated a high internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.95.

Genderism and Transphobia Scale (GTS)

The participants also completed the GTS, a 32-item English measure developed in Canada by Hill and Willoughby in 2005. Sample items included: “God made two sexes only” (+) and “Children should be encouraged to explore their masculinity and femininity” (-). The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly

disagree), with 3 as the midpoint (neutral). To get the total scale score, the ratings on each of the items (reversed when appropriate) were summed up. Higher scores reflected more negative attitudes toward gender nonconformity. The scale also demonstrated a high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94.

The Homonegativity Scale (HNS)

The participants were also asked to take the HNS, a 6-item scale intended to measure "negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians" (Morrison et al., 1999, p. 111). Sample items included: "Homosexuals are immoral" (+) and "Homosexuals should not be allowed to work with children" (+). The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree), with 3 as the midpoint (neutral). To get the total scale score, the ratings on each of the items (reversed when appropriate) were summed up. Higher scores on this scale reflected more negative attitudes toward gay and lesbian people. The scale showed good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85.

The Homopositivity Scale (HPS)

Lastly, the participants were administered the HPS, a 9-item scale which measures people's "endorsement of positive stereotypes about gay men" (Morrison & Bearden, 2007, p. 63). Sample items included: "Most gay men have very stylish homes" (+) and "Straight men can learn a thing or two from gay men about how to treat a woman" (+). The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree), with 3 as the midpoint (neutral). To get the total scale score, the ratings on each of the items (reversed when appropriate) were summed up. Higher scores on this scale indicated more positive attitudes toward gay people. The scale showed a good level of internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89.

Contact Measure

As a measure of contact with trans people, the respondents were also asked this question: "I have this many transgender / transsexual friends (please give an exact number) _____." This measure was also used in previous studies on attitudes toward gender nonconformity (Macapagal, 2013; Willoughby et al., 2011). Thirty-three respondents did not answer the question.

Origin Beliefs About Being Transgender

Participants were also asked whether they believed nature or nurture was the main cause of a person being transgender. The item was stated as: “I believe that a person is transgender mainly due to (please choose only one option): ☐ nature ☐ nurture.”

Seven people gave invalid answers (i.e., they checked both options), and were thus excluded from the analysis.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through personal and professional networks, mainly via convenience and snowball sampling. The questionnaires, which were printed on paper, were completed by the participants in their own time. Participation was kept anonymous, as they were not asked to write their names nor to provide any identifying information on the questionnaires.

Data Analysis

t-tests were performed to compare the mean scores between the women and men in this sample. Interscale correlation was then measured to establish convergent and divergent validity between the ATTS and the GTS, HNS, and HPS. A correlational analysis was also conducted to determine whether number of trans friends and origin beliefs were related to attitudes towards trans people.

Results**Birth-assigned Sex**

As expected, women had significantly higher mean ATTI scores than men (see Table 1). Men, on the other hand, scored higher on the GTS than women, which was a significant difference. Men scored just marginally higher than women on the HNS, but it was not a significant difference. Women, however, scored significantly higher than men on the HPS.

Scale Intercorrelations

Consistent with the study’s main hypothesis, the ATTI was significantly correlated with the GTS and HNS in the theorized

Table 1. Differences Among Males and Females in the ATTI, GTS, HNS, and HPS (N=200)

| Scale | Male | | Female | | t | p |
|-------|-------|------|--------|------|------------------|--------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| ATTI | 84.8 | 25.0 | 93.5 | 21.9 | $t(198) = -2.60$ | .01 |
| GTS | 115.9 | 34.5 | 103.1 | 29.3 | $t(195) = 2.81$ | .005 |
| HNS | 22.0 | 8.7 | 21.5 | 7.0 | ns | – |
| HPS | 32.2 | 11.4 | 38.0 | 10.1 | $t(197) = -3.80$ | ≤ .001 |

direction (see Table 2). ATTI scores were negatively correlated with GTS scores. That is, people who scored higher on the ATTI also scored lower on the GTS, and vice-versa. ATTI scores were also negatively correlated with HNS scores. That is, more transpositive people are also less homonegative, and vice-versa. However, the ATTI did not significantly correlate with the HPS.

Table 2. *Intercorrelations of the ATTI, GTS, HNS, and HPS, and Correlations with the Contact Measure*

| Scale | ATTI | GTS | HNS | HPS |
|-----------------|--------|---------|--------|-------|
| ATTI | — | -.828* | -.780* | -.036 |
| GTS | -.828* | — | .780* | .019 |
| HNS | -.780* | .780* | — | .210* |
| HPS | -.036 | .019 | .210* | — |
| Contact measure | .262* | -.206** | -.301* | -.075 |

* $p \leq .001$

** $p = .008$

Friendship with Trans People

As seen in Table 2, ATTI scores were found to be positively correlated with number of trans friends, $r(167) = .262, p \leq .001$. That is, participants with more trans friends were found to be more transpositive. Moreover, the HNS [$r(166) = -.301, p \leq .001$] and GTS [$r(164) = -.206, p = .008$] were found to be negatively correlated with the number of trans friends. There was no significant correlation found with the HPS.

Origin Beliefs About Being Transgender

Participants who mainly considered “nature” as the cause of being transgender were shown to have significantly more positive attitudes toward trans people than those who thought that being transgender was due to “nurture” ($M = 92.3, SD = 22.8$ vs. $M = 86.6, SD = 32.3$; $t(190) = 3.938, p = .02$).

Discussion

The results presented above provide initial evidence of the validity of Walch and colleagues' Attitudes Toward Transgendered Individuals Scale (2012) in measuring attitudes toward trans people in the Philippines. First, men were found to be more transnegative, less tolerant of transgender individuals, and less homopositive than women. This demonstrates the well-established finding that men hold more negative attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities (SGM) than women. This has been explained to be related to how male gender transgressions are less tolerated than female gender transgressions (Sirin et al., 2004), primarily because traditional gender roles are more entrenched in men (Swank & Raiz, 2010; Whitley, 2001). Nagoshi and colleagues (2008) also mention that this gender difference may be due to how men's heteronormative assumptions about self-identity (e.g., men are supposed to be macho, while women are supposed to be meek and gentle) are particularly threatened by transgender people. This finding highlights the need to diversify gender roles, especially among men, in order to reduce negative attitudes toward gender nonconformity and trans people.

Second, the ATTI's strong significant negative correlation with the GTS and the HNS provides evidence of convergent validity. These results provide more evidence for the strong relationship between transphobia and homophobia that has been seen in earlier studies (e.g., Amigo-Ventureira et al., 2023; Costa & Davies, 2012). These results also provide initial evidence of the validity of the ATTI in the Philippine setting, given that it shows convergent validity with the GTS, which has already been validated for use in the Philippines (Macapagal, 2013; Willoughby et al., 2011).

Third, a contact measure (number of trans friends) was included in this study and was seen to be significantly correlated with the ATTI. This finding is consistent with previous studies (e.g., King et al., 2009; Reyes et al., 2024; Tee & Hegarty, 2006) wherein people who have had previous contact or acquaintance with trans people showed less transnegativity. This finding provides evidence in support of programs that increase transpositivity through constructive interactions with trans people and their experiences, such as in Michelle Tea's "Drag Queen Story Hour" for children (Naidoo, 2018).

Fourth, this study has given preliminary evidence that origin beliefs about being transgender are related to one's attitudes toward trans people. Echoing previous findings in the homophobia literature (e.g., Dunn, 2010; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001), people who ascribed natural or uncontrollable causes to being transgender were more tolerant of (and behaved more positively toward) trans people (Cura et al., 2025). This finding provides impetus for disseminating more accurate information on the biological origins of gender identity, in order to reduce social stigma attached to trans identities (O'Hanlan et al., 2018).

The results gleaned from this study provide initial evidence that the ATTI as a whole is a suitable measure of Filipinos' attitudes toward transgender people. By utilizing a non-university teacher sample, this study contributes to the generalizability of studies which aim to measure transphobia in the general population. In order to be able to measure the attitudes of the many Filipinos who can comprehend the national language but not English, a Filipino version of the ATTI should also be developed. It should also be complemented by factor analytical studies to determine the structure of these attitudes within the local context. Moreover, predictive studies which investigate whether higher ATTI scores lead to more instances of transpositive behaviors are worth exploring, given the encouraging evidence from the use of a basic contact measure in this study. Finally, since this study was done with high school teachers, who serve as crucial influences in the well-being of many trans youth, future research should endeavor to investigate how to foster more transpositive attitudes among teachers and school officials. In consonance with the results of this study, these efforts will have to include creating more opportunities for positive interaction with trans people and the LGBT community and teaching more nuanced lessons about the biological origins of gender identity in classrooms around the country.

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