

FACTORS OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION AGAINST TRANSGENDER WOMEN IN PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

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The fifth and eighth goals of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, which highlight gender equality and decent work for all through inclusive and sustainable economic growth on the basis of full and productive employment, seem to be difficult to achieve in Thailand. Despite the implementation of the Gender Equality Act in 2015, discrimination against trans-women still persists, even emerging as a unique challenge in their employment opportunities. Thus, this study aims to explore the extent to which factors affect gender discrimination against trans-women employees at work in Bangkok's private organizations. By utilizing offline and online surveys based on quantitative method, the research hypotheses have been tested via organizational factors (level of recognition of the 2015 Gender Equality Act and the presence of policies and procedures that support gender diversity and a positive organizational environment for gender diversity in the organization) and individual factors (the internalized elements of trans-women on the basis of the level of self-stigma and avoidance of being a discriminatory target); moreover, the levels of the steps of transitioning and sexual disclosure were theoretically examined among 437 trans-women employees working in Bangkok's private organizations. Findings show that 59.5% of trans-women have experienced self-stigma and avoided being a discriminatory target in working situations, and 48.3% of them had a negative experience because of being a trans-woman. Not all people in organizations are moderately open toward transgender; in fact, more than 50% of Bangkok's private organizations do not have a gender diversity policy that could enhance the work environment of trans-women workers. Furthermore, the recognition of the 2015 Gender Equality Act within organizations is only at 48.5%. These organizational factors presumably reflect the circumstances of gender discrimination at work against them. Thus, this research aims to increase and highlight empirically extended factors from this problem of unbreakable glass ceiling that limit Thai trans-women's job opportunities; furthermore, this study proposes necessary recommendations that could influence government policy approaches, private and public stakeholders, and individual improvement.

Keywords: Gender discrimination; transgender; trans-women; job opportunity; stigma

1. INTRODUCTION

“No one left behind” represents the main theme of commitment to equality and non-discrimination. Achieving gender equality and providing decent work opportunities are part of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) and therefore essential to the human development agenda (United Nations Development Programme & International Labour Organization [UNDP & ILO], 2018). Discrimination in the workplace on the basis of the different attributes of employees, such as race, religion, gender and gender orientation, age, and disabilities, has become a persistent problem. Given that transgender women belong to the marginalized sector, most of the questions as regarding gender discrimination against workers can sometimes bring about adverse circumstances.

In Thailand, the 2015 Gender Equality Act is the only institutional law that protects all people from gender-based discrimination. UNDP and ILO (2018) compiled this law to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender expression, gender identity, and sexual characteristics. Trans-women have significantly benefited from this act, despite other inclusive practices missing (Jeffries et al., 2023). For example, gender recognition and sex characteristics laws that allow the change of name titles, the marriage law that supports gender diversity, and anti-discrimination in employment-related legislations to protect diverse gender employees were never implemented in Thailand. Furthermore, the lack of mechanism to protect transgender employees against workplace discrimination indicates that no progress has been made through the formulation of corporate policies. This form of structural discrimination impacts trans-women’s everyday life through several discriminatory situations, especially in terms of turnover, job commitment, job satisfaction, mental well-being, and personal anxiety (Farber, 2023).

In terms of job opportunity, despite having a good level of educational attainment, trans-women have frequently encountered the glass ceiling in other mainstream occupations, as they have been stigmatized to work in the entertainment and beauty industry. These circumstances demonstrate strong social exclusion that leads to barriers that significantly challenge trans-women employees in the workforce (Winter & Udomsak, 2002). In terms of job screening, trans-women employees often experience discriminatory practices in the recruitment and selection processes when their official documents are exposed. Gender-based discrimination against Thai trans-women exists, from the interview stage to the selection part of recruitment; this explicitly illustrates that trans-women employees have less opportunities for employment compared to other gender. Recently, the number accounting for denied transgender employees in South-East Asia has shown that the percentage of job candidate applicants who received a negative response or refusal to hire in all business sectors is high (Winter et al., 2018). The empirical evidence obtained by UNDP and ILO (2018) from the requirements included in job advertisements, especially in China, the Philippines, and Thailand, explicitly demonstrates that sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics of LGBTQI people exclude or disqualify them from getting a job. LGBTQIs’ dilemmas often expose them to workplace discrimination and harassment, making them easy victims of bullying by their peers and thus result in low level of job satisfaction. Thai trans-women have become a vulnerable group, with the highest percentage of gender harassment and discrimination in the workplace. More than half of the survey’s respondents, who identified themselves as transgender persons, have been discriminated against in terms of employment. Gender discrimination against trans-women employees at work is a very crucial issue in many social settings and structures. A career development ceiling exists in many industries, which limits the job opportunities for trans-women employees. Furthermore, trans-women have viewed this common occurrence as a cycle and a social norm (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2020).

This article emphasizes the implications of three consistent theoretical perspectives, namely, stigma, doing gender, and the institutional theory of organization. The independent variables associated with gender discrimination against trans-women at work are theoretically scrutinized from the stigma framework and institutional theory, especially the individual and organizational factors. Trans-women’s gender identity based on their levels of sexual disclosure and transition steps also serves as the key mediator in doing gender, which have been explored in connection with how gender is fundamentally constructed in social situations (Butler, 2004; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Finally, experiences in employment cycles are also investigated before and during employment using the index of UNDP and ILO (2018). Through the stigma perspective, one of the gender-based discriminatory elements is frequently hypothesized on the concepts of physical difference, perceived character deficiencies, and tribal elements (Goffman, 1997). Stigmatization, which is the action or process of considering someone unfairly, can often fuel gender discrimination at work against gender diversity and trans-women persons, as the mechanism of gender stereotyping is driven by people’s bias against unnatural, mentally ill, sexually promiscuous, dishonest, and immoral persons (Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health [APCOM], 2013). Owing to these stigmas, trans-women confront difficult situations of social exclusion in various settings, especially in the workplace (Catalano et al., 2007).

Interestingly, the stigma framework of Herek (2007), which incorporates its processes into two distinctive manifestations of structural and individual stigma, has elaborated on how stigma can result in gender discrimination. Structural stigma arises from social institutions and ideological systems that legitimize human roles based on a binary gender system, while individual stigma refers to an individual's suffering from sexual stereotyping in a given situation. With little support from societal resources, like institutional practices, such as religion, law, and medicine, trans-women individuals are often at a disadvantage at work. Thus, ideas involved in structural elements, which the study refers to as the recognition of the single state law (the 2015 Gender Equality Act), and the presence of gender diversity inclusion policies in organizations, which can possibly lessen gender-based discriminatory practices against trans-women employees, must be determined. The following hypotheses: 1–7 were tested.

In addition, individual stigma such as self-stigma, internalized transphobia, or internalized transphobic stigma occurs when the feelings, beliefs, and behaviors of members of a devalued group toward themselves result in gender-related victimization, rejection, and discrimination from society. The magnitude and consequences of stigmatized experiences can foster trans-women's negative attitude toward their gender identity, resulting in self-blame and low self-esteem (Bockting et al., 2020; Corrigan & Watson, 2002; Herek, 2007). Thus, this study also attempts to explore how the concept of self-stigma and a particular behavior that leads to avoidance are a discriminatory target with regard to hypotheses 4 and 6: *the individual factor has a negative effect on trans-women's sexual disclosure and transition steps* that could interfere with trans-women whose gender identity is an element affecting gender discrimination at work. With respect to gender identity along with sexual disclosure and transition steps, these key intermediates have been associated with the outcome of gender discrimination in organizations as gender norm ideologies are known to influence how other people react, which reflects a negative interaction toward individual trans-women (Anderson, 2020; Brewster et al., 2014; Dispenza et al., 2012; Schilt & Connell, 2007; Varshney, 2022). Hypotheses 1 and 2 regarding trans-women gender identity based on their level of sexual disclosure and transition steps must be investigated to determine whether they have a negative effect on gender discrimination at work. However, the causal model of gender discrimination at work was examined through hypothesis testing via SEM analysis. This study aims to test *whether the organizational factor has a negative effect on gender discrimination at work (hypothesis 3) and a positive effect on trans-women's sexual disclosure and transition steps (hypotheses 5 and 7)* as it involves a mechanism that influences such negative circumstances.

Consequently, positive contributing factors must be identified to seek particularly positive approaches that can enhance the organizational climate for all. LGBTQI inclusions are now popular in the private sector, as many multinational corporations have implemented policies and adopted practices that support the recruitment and retainment of LGBTQI talents to stimulate a diverse gender market. Moreover, the more diverse the inclusions provided, the higher the country's per capita and levels of well-being (Badgett et al., 2014). However, to make a beneficial contribution to the transgender community in Thailand, this study attempts to identify the factors related to gender discrimination against trans-women employees at work in private organizations in the Bangkok metropolitan area to gain empirical evidence of such circumstances and provide recommendations to the corporate sector.

2. METHOD

This study employed the quantitative research method to explore the cause of gender discrimination at work against trans-women who have worked in private organizations in the Bangkok metropolitan area. In total, 437 trans-women employees were included in this analysis and were subjected to online and face-to-face questionnaire surveys. This study project was conducted from October 28, 2020 to August 17, 2022 after receiving a certificate of approval (COA No. 2020/0082) from the Ethics Committee in Human Research of the National Institute of Development Administration.

2.1 Population

The target population was recruited based on the following criteria: Thai trans-women aged 18–60 years who have worked in the private sector. The unit of analysis was the individual level of 437 trans-women who have worked in private organizations in Bangkok. For the sampling frame, the list of trans-women employees of each organization was used. The researcher has also utilized *purposive* or *judgmental sampling* or *non-probability sampling* to select a sample based on the knowledge of a population, its elements, and the purpose of this study. Before conducting the survey, the researcher also tested its validity and reliability through conducting a pilot test with 30 trans-women employees. The result of all the variables, such as organizational factors, individual factors, gender identity, and gender discrimination at work, shows a high reliability of 0.772–0.940 (Cronbach alpha above 0.70).

2.2 Questionnaire

The research questionnaire had five parts, following the demographic information: organizational factors, individual factors, sexual disclosure, steps of transitioning, and employment and gender discrimination experiences at work in employment cycles. Three styles of measurement, namely, close-ended question (yes or no), a nominal scale, and an ordinal scale, were employed to examine these proposed factors. With the use of the nominal scale of measurement, the survey obtained the participants' demographic information, which covers self-gendered identification, age, education, region, current address in Bangkok, religion, status, and income per month. The organizational factors were covered by three main questions (12 sub-questions altogether) and two closed questions, which are related to the three sub-variables of this factor. The three questions were mainly drawn from *the extent of their recognition of the 2015 Gender Equality Act* (four sub-questions), *the presence of gender diversity policies and procedures* (four sub-questions), and *the presence of a positive organizational environment for gender diversity in the organization*. Individual factors were covered by two main questions with respect to internalized elements among trans-women. The first question (with eight sub-questions) refers to *the extent to which self-stigma is used to avoid any discriminatory situation*, while the second one (with two sub-questions) associates *the extent to avoidance of being a discriminatory target*. Meanwhile, Likert scales, with choices ranging from *strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, to strongly agree*, were utilized to examine trans-women's perceptions toward the two independent factors.

For the mediating variables, the trans-women's gender identity was obtained through sexual disclosure and steps of transitioning using seven main questions. The Likert scales of openness and acceptance were adopted to determine the mediators. The questions highlight the following: *the extent of openness with your real gender identity in your daily life, the extent of openness with your real sexual orientation in daily life, the extent of openness with your gender identity and sexual orientation to your family and friends, the degree of acceptance for your gender identity you receive from your family and friends, the extent of openness to your gender identity and sexual orientation in organizations (in your present or previous job), and the extent of transitioning in your gender identity or sexual orientation*. As the dependent variables of this research, trans-women employees' work and gender discrimination experiences in the employment cycle were finally examined through 17 questions that comprised of 13 closed questions and 4 questions using the Likert scales of agreement and frequency. Regardless of the employment experience, the closed questions placed emphasis on the trans-women's job position, job industry, duration of their present or former job, approximate salary, job engagement, and reconsideration of negative situations in employment on the basis of their gender identity. Therefore, according to this rating scale, the four main questions dealt with job satisfaction, attitude toward transgender and gender diverse employees, positive/negative experiences on the grounds of trans-women's gender identity, and sexual orientation before employment.

2.3 Validity and reliability

Conventionally, validity is used to determine whether the concept can be measured in an empirical field (Babbie, 2007). *Content validity* was employed to expose the range of meaning of gender discrimination at work against trans-women employees and the factors affecting these situations within the scope of this present study. The researcher has established these concepts by reviewing and revising relevant literature to determine whether this study is well and accurately defined.

Furthermore, the *index of item-objective congruence* (IOC) was used to evaluate the content validity at the item development stage. The subject matter experts were approached to rate the objectives as 1 (clearly a measure of an objective), -1 (clearly not a measure of an objective), or 0 (undecided whether the item is a measure of an objective.) to help determine whether an item is congruent with its objective. However, the statistical significance of the IOC values cannot be determined through the collection of judgmental data, but the use of the scores of this index to separate "good" from "bad" items can be based on the absolute standard according to specific proportions of perfect ratings for the items. To illustrate this, if half of the experts rated the items to be a perfect match to the objectives, while the others could not decide, then the value of the index would be 0.50. Consequently, the researcher would then know that the minimum values are at least 50% of the experts' rating of the items (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977; Sireci, 1998; Turner & Carlson, 2003). The process involved the assessment of the content experts of a particular area. The process, in turn, was considered by three content specialists who have extensive experience and background in the transgender issues in Thailand. These experts are LGBTQI advocacies and activists, namely, the president of the Rainbow Sky Association of Thailand, the vice president of the Transsexual Female Association of Thailand, and the vice president of Thai Transgender. Thus, the IOC's value of this present research based on the ratings of the three experts is 1 or 100%, which is above the minimum value.

The pre-test, which was used in the preliminary survey with 30 trans-women employees to determine any revisions and adjustments before the actual data collection, was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program to measure the study dimensions. The results of all the variables, namely, the organizational factors, the individual factors, gender identity, and gender discrimination at work, showed a high

reliability of 0.772–0.940 (Cronbach alpha above 0.70). In addition to *construct validity*, factor analysis was performed to classify the variables, as this process is a statistical instrument commonly used to reduce the number of variables and eliminate vague measure questions. After analyzing the variable groups, the effectiveness of the constructs of the researcher's intentions to study increased. Nevertheless, varimax rotation was applied in this factor analysis. Thus, the factor loading that produced a score below 0.5 was eliminated.

2.4 Data collection

The researcher used two strategies to collect the data of trans-women employees in the Bangkok metropolitan area. The first strategy involved the distribution of an online questionnaire survey using the URL link of the Google Forms. The respondents were informed of the objectives and purpose of this study. To eligibility or inclusion criteria used in this study were as follows: the respondent is a trans-woman and works or has recently worked in a private organization in the Bangkok metropolitan area. Online feedback was received from 195 trans-women employees based on purposive and snowball sampling. The second strategy was face-to-face recruitment of respondents to avoid the complication of their transgender identity in organizations because the electronic forms of the survey might be deleted. In this mode, 242 trans-women employees responded to the questionnaire. Additionally, the 5% of the sampling frame based on the Yamane population sampling technique strategy approximated 24,070 units are to be employed to avoid incomplete and unresponsive data error. Therefore, in total, 437 respondents (trans-women) were recruited for this analysis through the two approaches used.

3. RESULTS/FINDINGS

3.1 Characteristics of respondents

As shown in Table 1, 187 trans-women responded via online, while 250 trans-women responded to the survey through the offline or face-to-face approach. The largest percentage of the respondents belong to the age group of 26–35 years (66.8%), followed by the age group of 18–25 years (20.1). Data shows that all the respondents are Thai nationals (100%). The majority of the respondents hold a bachelor's degree (65.9%), have hometowns in the central region (65.0%), are Buddhists (89.9%), and are single (89.5%). Most of the respondents are reportedly in the income group of 15,001–25,000 THB (38.2%), followed by 25,001–35,000 THB (20.6%).

Most of the respondents stated that they are not aware of the Gender Equality Act (2015) (51.5%), whereas 48.5% recognize this act. Of the sample group, 55.6% stated that most organizations do not implement gender diversity supportive policies and procedures, whereas 44.4% shared that their workplace implemented these policies and procedures. Majority of the respondents (59.5%) have self-stigma and avoid being a discriminatory target in working situations.

Majority of the participants have work experience (95.2%), are currently working in a private organization (82.8%), are full-time employees (67.7%), are service staff/laborers (34.8%), worked in technology industry (16.7%), worked for 1–3 years (37.8%), had a neutral level of job satisfaction (40.0%), and are not seeking a new job (55.4%).

Over 50% of the respondents perceived moderately open attitudes toward transgender and diverse gender people from their organization. The respondents stated that they did not suffer any negative experience for being a trans-woman (51.7%), whereas 48.3% stated they had negative experiences. The majority of the respondents did not report discriminatory issues or problems in private organizations (70.3%), and if in negative situations, they often report to a supervisor (31.8%) or not report to anyone at all (31.8%).

Table 1: Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics of the Respondents (n = 437)	Frequency	Percentage
Age (In Year)		
18–25	88	20.1
26–35	292	66.8
36–45	55	12.6
46–60	2	0.5
Nationality		
Thai	437	100.0
Non-Thai	-	-
Education Level		
Secondary school/Vocational certificate	58	13.3
Diploma/High vocational certificate	57	13.0
Bachelor's degree	288	65.9
Master's degree	33	7.6
Doctoral degree	1	0.2

Table 1: Characteristics of the Respondents (Continued)

Characteristics of the Respondents (n = 437)	Frequency	Percentage
Hometown (Region)		
Northern region	60	13.7
Central region	284	65.0
Eastern region	54	12.4
North-eastern region	12	2.7
Southern region	2	0.5
Western region	25	5.7
Religion		
Buddhism	393	89.9
Christian	19	4.3
Islamic	16	3.7
Hindu	1	0.2
No religion	8	1.8
Status		
Single	391	89.5
Married	2	0.5
In a relationship with partner	44	10.1
Income		
<9,000 THB	20	4.6
9,000–15,000 THB	76	17.4
15,001–25,000 THB	167	38.2
25,001–35,000 THB	90	20.6
35,001–45,000 THB	32	7.3
>45,000 THB	52	11.9
Recognition of Gender Equality Act 2015		
Yes	212	48.5
No	225	51.5
Gender Diversity Supportive Policy in Organization		
Yes	194	44.4
No	243	55.6
Self-Stigma and Avoidance of Being Discriminated in Working Situation		
Yes	260	59.5
No	177	40.5
Work Experience		
Yes	416	95.2
No	21	4.8
Currently Working in an Organization		
Yes	362	82.8
No	75	17.2
Employment Status		
Part-time employee	53	12.1
Full-time employee	296	67.7
Employer/Business owner/Self-employed employee	45	10.3
Working in family business	23	5.3
Others	20	4.6
Position		
Entrepreneur/Business owner	64	14.6
Director/CEO/CFO	70	16.0
Manager/Supervisor	55	12.6
Professional	57	13.0
Administrative staff	4	0.9
Intern	31	7.1
Volunteer	4	0.9
Service staff/Laborer	152	34.8
Industry		
Agriculture	8	1.8
Sports	8	1.8
Finance/Banking	22	5.0
Law/Business consult	1	0.2
Transportation and logistics	9	2.1
Education	21	4.8
Advertising	31	7.1
Human resource management	6	1.4

Table 1: Characteristics of the Respondents (Continued)

Characteristics of the Respondents (n = 437)	Frequency	Percentage
Mass and media communication/Journalism	18	4.1
Retail	3	0.7
Foods	27	6.2
Real estate	26	5.9
Technology	73	16.7
Entertainment	20	4.6
Research and development	27	6.2
Engineering/Construction	8	1.8
Energy	4	0.9
Manufacturing/Supply chains	4	0.9
Health/Medical services	24	5.5
Arts and design	34	7.8
Environmental conservation	20	4.6
Tourism	5	1.1
Mining	1	0.2
Others	37	8.5
Length of Work Period		
<6 months	77	17.6
6 months–1 year	81	18.5
1–3 years	165	37.8
3–5 years	60	13.7
5–10 years	34	7.8
>10 years	20	4.6
Job Satisfaction		
Very dissatisfied	20	4.6
Dissatisfied	50	11.4
Neutral	175	40.0
Satisfied	138	31.6
Very satisfied	54	12.4
Attitude Toward Transgender and Diverse Gender People		
Hostile	43	9.8
Not open	51	11.7
Slightly open	82	18.8
Moderately open	146	33.4
Very open/Accepting	115	26.3
Seeking a New Job in the Last 6 Months		
Yes	195	44.6
No	242	55.4
Negative Experience Because of Being a Trans-woman		
Yes	211	48.3
No	226	51.7
Had Reported Discriminatory Issues		
Yes	130	29.7
No	307	70.3
Who Had to Report If Facing Negative Experience		
Not report	139	31.8
Supervisor	139	31.8
HR department	49	11.2
Executives	27	6.2
Ministry of Labor	10	2.3
National Human Rights Commission of Thailand	73	16.7

3.2 Hypothesis testing

The research hypotheses were considered by assessing the full model, that is, both measurement and structural models. Next, the causal model of gender discrimination at work was also analyzed. As elaborated in Figure 1, the independent variables of individual and organizational factors referring to *self-stigma* and *avoidance of being a discriminatory target* were conceptualized from the stigma theory, which is the interaction of transgender individuals with other people. Stigma at multiple levels by Hugto et al. (2015) was thoroughly conceptualized to describe the stigma's mechanisms against transgender people, as it deals with social norms, environmental conditions, and institutional practices that influence gender-based discrimination against trans-women. As an individual factor, trans-women may avoid and conceal stigma to reduce the risk of facing these kinds of situations. These variables were developed through internalized homonegativity and

internalized transphobia subscales (Austin & Goodman, 2017; Mohr & Kendra, 2011). In addition, the organizational factors, which measure the variables according to the recognition of the 2015 *Gender Equality Act* and *Gender Diversity Supportive Policies and Procedures*, involve the concepts of institutional theory and stigma perspective, such as social norms, environmental conditions, and institutional practices, in terms of examining organizations that limit the opportunities of transgender individuals and, in turn, negatively affect their well-being (UNDP, 2018; World Bank Group, 2018). Each variable was developed through the degree of workplace heterosexist experiences questionnaires and the LGBTQI inclusion index of the World Bank and UNDP (Badgett & Sell, 2018; Waldo, 1999). For the mediating variables, *sexual disclosure* and the *steps of transitioning* were theoretically derived from the level of transgendering processes of Ekins and King (2006) and the transgender congruence scale of Kozee et al. (2012) in order to determine how trans-women's gender is constructed on social situations at work. Ultimately, *gender discrimination before and during employment* was explored using the construct developed by UNDP and ILO (2018) and World Bank Group (2018).

The latent variables, which contain more than one observed variable (including the individual factors, the organizational factors, and gender discrimination at work), were assigned a fix value of 1.00. The latent variables only have one observed variable, which must be fixed by using the following equation: the error variance must be calculated by multiplying (1-reliability) by the variance (Brown, 2015). In the initial SEM analysis, the hypothesized model indicated a poor fit ($\chi^2 = 227.18$, $df = 21$, $p = 0.000$, CFI = 0.89, NNFI = 0.81, GFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.150, SRMR = 0.080). The adjusted model was then tested by deleting a path of steps of transitioning to gender discrimination at work (non-significant) and adding a path of steps of transitioning to sexual disclosure. The steps of transitioning might have an indirect effect on gender discrimination at work via sexual disclosure. After modification, this model was able to provide a better fit ($\chi^2 = 19.56$, $df = 13$, $p = 0.107$, CFI = 1.00, NNFI = 0.99, GFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.034, SRMR = 0.026), as shown in Figure 1.

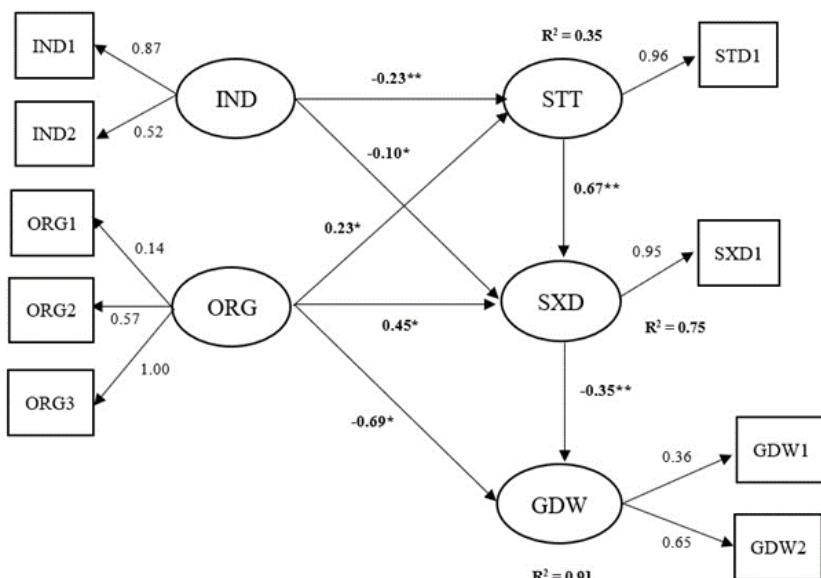


Figure 1: Full Model of Gender Discrimination Against Trans-women at Work

Note:

IND = Individual Factor

ORG = Organizational Factor

SXD = Sexual Disclosure

STT = Steps of Transitioning

GDW = Gender Discrimination at work

IND1 = Self-Stigma

IND2 = Avoidance of Being a Discriminatory Target

ORG1 = Recognition of the 2015 Gender Equality Act

ORG2 = Gender Diversity Supportive Policies and Procedures

ORG3 = Positively Organizational Environment of Gender Diversity

SXD1 = Sexual Disclosure

STT1 = Steps of Transitioning

GDW1 = Before Employment

GDW2 = During Employment

The results of the hypotheses testing, as shown in Table 2, are illustrated as follows:

H1: Sexual disclosure has a negative effect on gender discrimination at work. The standardized path coefficients are -0.35, and the p-value (<.01) is less than 0.01. This result shows that the negative effect of

sexual disclosure on gender discrimination at work is statistically significant. Sexual disclosure could significantly decrease gender discrimination at work. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

H2: The steps of transitioning have a negative effect on gender discrimination at work.

According to the SEM analysis, the steps of transitioning and gender discrimination at work are deemed insignificant, and this model provides a poor fit. After removing this path, all the fit indexes show an improvement to a better fit. Transgender employees often undergo the transition process, such as deciding to make a physical transformation, for their physical bodies to fit with their gender identity (Magalhães et al., 2020). The internalization process might be irrelevant to gender discrimination at work. Acceptance by others is determined a key point in the transition process (Verbeek et al., 2020). The transition process has an effect on the acceptance by others, which then associates with gender discrimination at work.

H3: The organizational factor has a negative effect on gender discrimination at work. The standardized path coefficients are -0.69, whereas the p-value (<.05) is less than 0.05. This result reveals that the negative effect of the organizational factor on gender discrimination at work is statistically significant. Organizations that recognize the 2015 Gender Equality Act, support gender diversity policies and procedures, and build a positive environment for gender diversity could significantly lessen gender discrimination at work. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

H4: The individual factor has a negative effect on sexual disclosure. The standardized path coefficients are -0.10, while the p-value (<.05) is less than 0.05. This result reveals that the negative effect of the individual factor on sexual disclosure is statistically significant. Trans-women employees who have self-stigma and avoid being a discriminatory target often have significantly low self-esteem in disclosing their sexuality. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

H5: The organizational factor has a positive effect on sexual disclosure. The standardized path coefficients are 0.23, and the p-value (<.05) is less than 0.05. As can be noted in these results, the positive effect of the organizational factor on sexual disclosure is statistically significant. Organizations that recognize the 2015 Gender Equality Act, support gender diversity policies and procedures, and build a positive environment for gender diversity could significantly increase trans-women employees' sexual disclosure. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

H6: The individual factor has a negative effect on the steps of transitioning. The standardized path coefficients are -0.23, while the p-value (<.01) is less than 0.01. This result shows that the negative effect of the individual factor on sexual disclosure is statistically significant. Trans-women employees having self-stigma and avoid being a discriminatory target can significantly contribute to the difficulties of the transitioning process. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

H7: The organizational factor has a positive effect on the steps of transitioning. The standardized path coefficients are 0.45, and the p-value (<.05) is less than 0.05. As per these results, the positive effect of the organizational factor on the steps of transitioning is statistically significant. Organizations that recognize the 2015 Gender Equality Act, support gender diversity policies and procedures, and build a positive environment for gender diversity could encourage trans-women employees' transitioning process. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

Moreover, after the model was adjusted, it is possible that the steps of transitioning of transgender women had direct effect on their gender sexual disclosure. There was a new adding to path: **The steps of transitioning have a positive effect on sexual disclosure.** The standardized path coefficients are 0.67, and the p-value (<.01) is less than 0.01. As per these findings, the steps of transitioning can positively and significantly affect sexual disclosure. Trans-women employees who were able to have a successful transition process are more inclined to be open about their sexuality. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R^2) also shows that individual and organizational factors could explain the variance of the steps of transitioning by 35% ($R^2 = 0.35$), and individual factors, organizational factors, and the steps of transitioning could explain the variance of sexual disclosure by 75% ($R^2 = 0.75$). Finally, all the factors could explain the variance of gender discrimination at work by 91% ($R^2 = 0.91$).

Table 2: Conclusion of Research Hypothesis Results

Research Hypotheses	Standardized Path Coefficient	P-value	Result (Support/Reject)
H1 SXD → GDW	-0.35	<.01	Support
H2 STT → GDW	Delete Path	-	Reject
H3 ORG → GDW	-0.69	<.05	Support

Table 2: Conclusion of Research Hypothesis Results (Continued)

Research Hypotheses		Standardized Path Coefficient	P-value	Result (Support/Reject)
H4	IND → SXD	-0.10	<.05	Support
H5	ORG → SXD	0.23	<.05	Support
H6	IND → STT	-0.23	<.01	Support
H7	ORG → STT	0.45	<.05	Support
ADD	STT → SXD	0.67	<.01	Reject

4. DISCUSSION

The two perspectives on gender discrimination at work and its determinants, including its impact toward trans-women's employment in private organizations in the Bangkok metropolitan area, were examined through 437 satisfactory cases. In the development of the research's framework, the factors affecting gender discrimination against trans-women employees at work were used to elucidate the organizational factors, the individual factors, and the mediator variables, particularly trans-women's gender identity in terms of sexual disclosure and steps of transitioning. These variables were used to prove that the negative challenge in their employment opportunity is at the moderate stage, illustrating discriminatory situations in the organizations.

4.1 Organizational factors

As per the quantitative analysis, the results theoretically include the institutional theory of organization by examining the laws and regulations that organizations need to comply with (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Here, these determinants refer to policies and practices of gender diversity inclusion, such as the recognition of the 2015 Gender Equality Act, the level of gender diversity supportive policies and procedures, and the level of positive organizational environment of gender diversity for trans-women employees in the organizations. The statistical data supporting the hypotheses of this study were drawn from the survey, namely, the organizational factor has a negative effect on gender discrimination at work (hypothesis 3), and the organizational factor has a positive effect on sexual disclosure (hypothesis 5). These hypotheses are accepted because the organizational factors were determined to significantly decrease gender discrimination at work against trans-women employees; moreover, organizational factors were found to encourage sexual disclosure and the steps of transitioning of trans-women employees. From the research data, the value of factor loading in organizational factors indicates that private organizations in Bangkok have only 0.14 % awareness of the 2015 Gender Equality Act in terms of building future policies and procedures that would benefit trans-women employees. Internally, even though organizations have cultivated a positive environment for gender diverse employees of approximately 1.0, the supportive policies and procedures for gender diverse employees have a moderate value of approximately 0.57, which is slightly on the average side. These factors have a negative effect of approximately 0.69 to influence gender discrimination at work against trans-women employees. Meanwhile, organizational factors could have a positive effect on trans-women's gender disclosure and steps of transitioning if each is provided in the organizations. This finding is consistent with that of a previous study that the greater the concern is on organizational factors through formal policies and procedures to support trans-women employees, the fewer the gender discrimination will be at work (Srikummoon et al., 2022).

It was determined that 51.5 % or more than half of the sample group are not aware of the 2015 Gender Equality Act. Although this state law was enacted to protect people of all genders from any unfair situation, public awareness to this law seems to be lacking, as reflected on the findings of this study. Moreover, the data shows that 55.6% of the private organizations in Bangkok where trans-women employees have been working do not provide gender diversity supportive policies and procedures, including building a positive environment for gender diverse employees. However, over 50% of the organizations have a moderately open attitude toward trans-women employees, though 48.3% of the trans-women employees encountered negative experiences at work.

To clarify, the 2015 Gender Equality Act is perceived as a good start to combat unfair situations based on gender, not just in terms of employment. However, this law has an inactive role in governmental agencies, despite its supposed role in promoting understanding throughout society. Policy information lacks the follow through of public communication in terms of legislative usage, user benefits, and processes of the law. The concern from the private sector toward the law is even less, indicating that problematic situations of downplaying trans-women's rights in employment still persist. In addition to the 2015 Gender Equality Act, gendered terms are difficult to interpret in detail, particularly about which gender can apply the law. Given the lack of adequate social communication, people do not understand how the legislative processes can be used in general.

4.2 Individual factors

In relation to stigma theory, trans-women's self-stigma has a factor loading of approximately 0.87, which is considered of high value; this could affect their sexual disclosure and steps of transition, leading to gender discrimination at work. These mediating factors are connected to the research hypothesis of whether the individual factors of self-stigma and avoidance of becoming a discriminatory target have a negative effect on sexual disclosure and the steps of transitioning of trans-women employees (hypotheses 4 and 6). According to the characteristics of the respondents, 59.5% of trans-women employees tend to suffer from self-stigma and the avoidance of being a target of gender discrimination as per the quantitative finding. In this case, trans-women employees would often suffer from self-stigma unless people in the organizations accept their sexual disclosure and exhibit some gender affirmation. In this sense, trans-women employees tend to limit themselves, which corresponds with the gender stereotyping they have experienced from their society for a long time (Mak & Cheung, 2010). This negative judgment based on their gender identity forces them to be involved in informal occupations, which could recursively produce prejudice toward trans-women individuals.

4.3 Trans-women's identity

Sexual disclosure and steps of transitioning along with the mediators of the research framework are implicated by the concepts of doing gender by West and Zimmerman (1987) and undoing gender by Butler (2004). These perspectives of people's gender have their own characteristics that influence gender discrimination at various facets of social settings (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Used for the mediators to test the research hypotheses in a quantitative process, the trans-women's gender identity along with the concepts of sexual disclosure factor and steps of transitioning factor played a major role in hypotheses 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7. The factor loading shows that trans-women have similar values on steps of transitioning and sexual disclosure. Consequently, the value of sexual disclosure and steps of transitioning are 0.95 and 0.96, respectively; these findings only indicate that the trans-women employees consider these factors as necessary elements in their lives. Moreover, the quantitative results linked to these determinants show that the sexual disclosure of trans-women employees can reduce gender discrimination at work. However, hypothesis 2 eliminates the path of the steps of transitioning to gender discrimination at work because of its poor fit and instead relates to the acceptance of other people. The additional steps of transition to sexual disclosure on the basis of the factor loading value of 0.67 imply that trans-women employees consider these two essential elements to accept themselves and other people. Thus, these factors can elaborate the variance of gender discrimination at work.

In relation to gender perspectives, the characteristics of the respondents show that 437 trans-women employees commonly identify their gender identity and expression as a trans-woman according to gender norms of cisgender women. For the steps of transitioning, these factors often have a positive relationship on trans-women's gender disclosure after testing the hypotheses. Thus, transitioning is the internalization process through which trans persons show affirmation to their gender to ensure that their lives proceed smoothly after their transition (Devor, 2004; Kuper et al., 2018). This factor involves the process of hormonal usage and sex reassignment operation, including aesthetic treatments to transition to womanhood. The steps of transitioning are necessary for trans-women, even though each step entails economic costs. In this case, the acceptance of people in organizations is presumed as an important mechanism to produce discriminatory situations toward trans-women employees. To clarify, a trans-woman relies on organizational policies, which more than half of the private organizations have hardly formulated, to support them in their transitioning process.

Therefore, employees' gender identity should not be a condition for employment. Trans-women participants working in this kind of workplace might encounter low chances of gender discrimination in the screening process. By contrast, gender identity involves direct or indirect discrimination during the job application and interview process. Introduced by the top management, some private organizations' policies create a hidden agenda for trans-women candidates. After trans-women disclose their official private information, such as ID card, address and education transcript, and passport, the HR department would later respond to the applicant, refusing them a job with an unclear rationale. Clear-cut reasons for denying employment based on trans-women's gender identity may be an informal policy hidden in organizations to protect corporate image, lawsuits, and social arguments. Moreover, trans-women employees' gender identity has been prejudicially viewed as a personnel indicator of low creditability and career advancement. Thus, they are mostly rejected from jobs before employment and encounter problems during employment for being given the job due to their gender identity.

5. SUGGESTIONS

As per the findings of this research that examined more than 400 private organizations in the Bangkok metropolitan area, some factors were determined to influence gender discrimination at work. However, the proposed solutions in this part concentrate on the *national*, *organizational*, and *individual* levels.

From the national level, the government administration is considered the most important factor in terms of providing public facilities across the country. The 2015 Gender Equality Act is the inclusive product for reducing gender inequality issues in the society, but it is deemed insufficient to protect trans-women's rights. More importantly, the basic laws for identifying and protecting trans-women have not been determined. Few legal protections against gender discrimination among trans-women have been completely enforced. The obscure route for trans-women to receive legal documents according to their gender identity, especially the title name within official documents, has left numerous barriers to their basic rights. For instance, they often confront discrimination and exclusion when the situation requires identification cards, passports, and other documents, which do not match their gender identity. Excluded from education, healthcare service, employment, housing, and financial well-being, trans-individuals are often stripped off of their basic needs for a secure life in Thailand (UNDP, 2018). Laws, such as "The Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act¹," that embrace the basic human rights of trans-women should be established. In relation to transgender terms, the title name confirms the problematic issues after uncovering that the official documents for particular transactions do not match their SOGIESC²; this only reinforces gender discrimination at work. With the core purpose of the basic human rights principle, the legal gender recognition enacted with respect to the right to be legally approved and the right to be protected from unlawful medical treatment, including the right to obtain standardized healthcare, should certainly be enforced for transgender individuals. The other need for trans-women and employment is "The Equal Marriage Law³," which directly affects fair tax payment of trans-women in terms of tax reduction. Furthermore, the career benefits for same-sex or heterosexual couples in the workplace will be equal.

At the organizational level, organizational areas can initiate better inclusive practices and environments in the corporate world. Based on the research results, the level of awareness and recognition of organizational factors, such as the 2015 Gender Equality Act, gender diversity inclusive policies and procedures, and positive environment, are lower than average. Thus, the proposed recommendation to increase the visibility of trans-women employees should be improved according to these elements. The LGBTQI inclusive disciplines, especially the necessary policies and the implementation of practices and related programs of trans-inclusive campaign, including building allyship to gender diversity advocacies, can serve as a blueprint to enhance trans-women's career paths. Developing trans-inclusive policies and practices within the organizational level inevitably initiates a clear vision and mission to make an explicit direction to foster trans-women employees' careers. These certain routes that are connected to the real action of organizations can bring about positive changes for trans-women and in their careers.

Finally, the individual level focuses on self-development, self-respect, self-esteem, and building an alliance with gender diversity advocacies. For instance, empowerment is significant for LGBTQI individuals who have been excluded from socially sensitive issues, such as identity development, disclosure, social stigma, and discrimination. In general, empowerment emerges when gender advocacy helps maintain a positive self-concept and provides the basic needs, especially for employment and social justice. According to this concept, trans-women employees should also encourage themselves to realize their full capacity to display excellent performance to their employer and colleagues within the organization (Chattopadhyay, 2017). In other words, empowerment and self-development should be realized by trans-women in order to highlight their capabilities at work. Moreover, trans-women employees should not allow self-stigma to take precedence over deciding on how to spend their life. Bozani et al. (2019) identified self-respect and self-esteem as the sense of a person of their own value, and confidence based on their ability to achieve their goals is a mentally powerful element in terms of increasing self-development. Against this backdrop, self-esteem influences employees' self-efficacy and well-being, which can advance one's employment status and occupational status, including income. Self-esteem also improves job performance, job satisfaction, organizational performance, work skills, and the ability to cope with stress. If the workplace has positively inclusive actions, trans-women employees' self-esteem will be enhanced to develop their career settings. However, allyship engagement should be considered among trans-women employees because state laws and organizational policies and practices have not entirely secured

¹ In Thailand, official documents always require the use of name titles, which is based on gender at birth. Transgender people and other gender diverse people face difficulties in expressing themselves in any situation.

² SOGIESC refers to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics.

³ The Equal Marriage Law to revise Section 1448 of Thailand's Civil and Commercial Code by replacing the terms "husband" and "wife" with the word "spouse" and "man" and "woman" with "person".

their identity, influencing discriminatory issues at various settings of society. Furthermore, allyship can result in beneficial outcomes, such as personal growth and positive change to people's attitudes and behaviors toward the minority group. Identified as a kind of relationship with particular groups of particular support and advocacy for the oppressed population, allyship can build a continuum of diversity and inclusion's momentum, to encourage trans-women (Fletcher & Marvell, 2023; Fontana & Siriwichai, 2022). To propel such a drive toward career opportunities, trans-women employees should consider an allyship for the transgender advocacies on their community.

6. CONCLUSION

Discrimination against individuals on the basis of their gender identity has become a problematic issue in all dimensions of life in many countries worldwide. Transgender persons who identify their gender identity with incongruence to their sex at birth are empirically determined as the people who face the most in terms of barriers from gender discrimination in their lives (Bränström & Pachankis, 2021). Stripped off of their rights as a human being for belonging to the LGBTQI population, they thus confront numerous problematic situations that bring about gender discrimination from public agencies' ignorance and personal bias toward gender diverse people. Insufficient state laws to protect transgender rights, such as the gender recognition law or the equal marriage law, are being highlighted across many countries, especially in Thailand. However, people's prejudice toward transgender persons, particularly on trans-women, remains rigid because they have been excluded from the mainstream system of the gender binary. Similarly, in the professional world, the so-called glass ceiling on trans-women's career opportunities probably limits their future well-being and, in turn, restricts them to informal employment.

As aforementioned, several academic studies related to gender discrimination against trans-women at work show that trans-women employees confront barriers in employment more than the other genders (Fontana & Siriwichai, 2022; Mishra & Negi, 2021; Singh et al., 2014). Even though Thailand enacted the Gender Equality Act in 2015 to protect the rights of people of all genders from unfair discrimination, it has still been met with low public awareness. Established through structural hierarchy, social and legal institutions exacerbate the negative situations toward trans-women in many settings, especially employment (Pravattiyagul, 2022). As there have been a few academic studies highlighting the causality of gender discrimination against trans-women at work in Thailand, this study was therefore conducted to investigate the factors that significantly affect gender discrimination against trans-women employees at work in Bangkok's private organizations and seek plausible solutions and increase their visibility in our country.

Several perspectives regarding gender discrimination at work in organizations place emphasis on the institutional theory of organizations, which have been separated into two dimensions. The first spectrum determines an organization through the lens of institutional logic, which can institute established orders, such as rules or regulations, formal or informal structures, values, and beliefs. Moreover, the counterpart of the institutional aspect interprets the institution as the environment that formalizes the conformity and acceptance of other organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The coercive isomorphism of Stavrou and Ierodiakonou (2018), as legitimate accounts, has become the assumption by which a legitimate setting rationalizes procedures and practices toward trans-women and LGBTQI employees. The legitimized mechanism affecting the core of gender discrimination at work in this study considers relevant rules of organizations, the awareness and recognition of the 2015 Gender Equality Act, the gender diversity supportive policies and procedures of organizations, and the positive environment of organization for gender diversity as a formal mechanism to encourage trans-women's employment and work life in the organizations. Given that the corporate sector is less concerned than the public sector, trans-women employees are often faced with negative challenges in employment. In other words, organizational factors can have a negative effect on gender discrimination at work. The quantitative findings prove that more than half of all private organizations with trans-women employees have a moderate level of awareness and recognition of these organizational factors. Thus, private organizations should focus more on inclusive projects with actual implementation and policy assessment. Organizations should facilitate learning by doing initiatives supporting gender diversity awareness and internal and external understanding. More importantly, the public sector should enact other inclusive procurements, such as the gender recognition law and the equal marriage law, to enhance trans-women's opportunities in all settings.

For the individual elements, the factors posited on self-stigma and avoidance from being a discriminatory target are accepted. Stigma is identified as a type of relationship between attribute and stereotyping, which are often judged through social construction with a three-dimensional distinction, namely, physical difference, deficient character, and tribal element (Goffman, 1997). Stigma has been explored in depth in the organizational framework after Herek (2007) classified it in multiple terms. For instance, enacting sexual

stigma is identified as an explicit action expressing an overt behavior interconnected with the negative aspects of an inferior status that are inconsistent with heterosexism. Particularly, internalized stigma is a feeling associated with perceived acceptance. These perspectives were developed in the aspect of the trans-women's interaction with other people while concealing their self-stigma in order to reduce the risk of discriminatory scenarios. Based on the quantitative findings, all of the hypotheses are accepted, as more than half of the trans-women employees tend to make self-stigma and avoid being a target of gender discrimination because of their views on their flaws of being transgender. Therefore, trans-women employees could avoid any situation, if people in the organizations do not accept their gender identity. Thus, trans-women may fear the job application process. Finally, trans-women's gender identity based on their level of sexual disclosure and steps of transitioning was determined to have a negative effect on gender discrimination at work because gender is itself specific, but some of the people's perception may expect trans-women's gender identity to be what their gender should be. This idea enables a paradox of thinking that limits the gender terms of people whose gender is incongruent to their sex at birth or the gender norms. The people in this area are referred to as trans-women who confront the negative challenges in their employment because of their gender identity in which sexual disclosure and steps of transitioning are the key factors considered in the work environment.

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