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INPLASY registration number: INPLASY202530004

Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 1 March 2025 and was last updated on 1 March 2025.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective The aim of this scoping review is to provide an overview of the prevalence of alexithymia and its role in the biopsychosocial functioning of transgender and non-binary individuals, among both adolescents and adults. Therefore, two following questions will be examined: (1) What is the prevalence of alexithymia in gender diverse people?; (2) How does alexithymia affect biopsychosocial functioning (e.g., mental health problems, well-being) of gender diverse people?

Background Alexithymia has been widely studied in the general population and is recognized as a transdiagnostic risk factor for various mental health conditions, including anxiety, depression, and psychosomatic disorders. Research indicates that alexithymia is more prevalent in males than

females, yet little is known about its prevalence and impact among gender diverse individuals, including transgender and non-binary populations (i.e., people whose gender identity does not correspond with their sex assigned at birth). Given that gender identity and expression are closely linked to emotional awareness and mental health outcomes, understanding alexithymia in this context is crucial. Despite the growing body of literature on the mental health of transgender and non-binary individuals, the specific role of alexithymia remains underexplored. Current studies on alexithymia primarily focus on cisgender individuals, leaving a gap in knowledge regarding its prevalence, contributing factors, and effects on the biopsychosocial functioning of gender-diverse populations. Additionally, while some studies examine emotional processing difficulties in transgender individuals, no scoping review has comprehensively synthesized this evidence. A

scoping review is necessary to map the existing literature, identify gaps, and provide a foundation for future research. This review will consolidate available findings to help healthcare providers, researchers, and policymakers better understand the implications of alexithymia in gender-diverse individuals. The insights gained from this study could inform clinical practices, improve mental health interventions, and contribute to the development of targeted psychological support strategies for this population.

Rationale Alexithymia is a multidimensional psychological construct that includes: (1) difficulties in recognizing one's own emotions, (2) difficulties in describing one's emotions and (3) an externally oriented thinking. Moreover, there is an ongoing debate on poor fantasy life, being the fourth dimension of alexithymia. In the general population, high levels of alexithymia are more common in males (9–17%) than in females (5–10%). However, little is known about the prevalence of alexithymia among transgender and non-binary individuals (i.e., the ones, whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth).

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis The following search keywords will be included in the review: alexithymia AND gender-diverse; alexithymia AND transgender; alexithymia AND non-binary. The following scientific databases will be scanned: EBSCOhost, MEDLINE (via EBSCOhost), PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science. The data synthesis for this scoping review will be conducted using Microsoft Excel to systematically organize, analyze, and summarize findings on alexithymia in gender-diverse individuals. A standardized Excel spreadsheet will be created for data extraction, capturing study details, sample characteristics, measurement tools, and key results. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and central tendency measures, will summarize quantitative data, while qualitative findings will be categorized using an Excel-based thematic coding framework. Pivot tables and charts will be used to visualize trends, and cross-tabulation will aid in identifying patterns across studies. This structured yet flexible approach will ensure a transparent synthesis of data, facilitating the identification of research gaps and key findings in the field.

Eligibility criteria We have established a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. To be included, studies must meet all of the following inclusion

criteria: (1) publications in the English language; (2) original, peer-reviewed articles; (3) studies focusing on gender-diverse individuals, including but not limited to transgender, non-binary, genderfluid, and genderqueer people; (4) research that investigates and measures alexithymia with the common alexithymia measures, such as the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) or Perth Alexithymia Questionnaire (PAQ), as a primary or secondary focus in gender-diverse populations. The exclusion criteria are as follows: (1) studies that do not specifically address alexithymia in gender-diverse individuals or (2) studies that fail to distinguish this population from cisgender groups.

Source of evidence screening and selection

The selection process will involve two stages: (1) title and abstract screening and (2) full-text review. Two independent reviewers will screen studies for eligibility using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. In the first stage, titles and abstracts of all identified records will be screened to remove irrelevant studies. In the second stage, full texts of potentially eligible studies will be reviewed for final inclusion. Any disagreements between reviewers at either stage will be resolved through discussion. If consensus cannot be reached, a third independent reviewer will be consulted to make the final decision. The selection process will be documented using a PRISMA-ScR flowchart to ensure transparency and reproducibility.

Data management All identified references will be recorded and organized using Microsoft Excel. Duplicate records will be manually identified and removed. Screening decisions, including inclusion and exclusion at both the title/abstract and full-text stages, will be documented in an Excel spreadsheet. Extracted data will be systematically recorded in a structured format, including study characteristics, population details, methodology, and key findings related to alexithymia in gender-diverse individuals. Two independent reviewers will extract data, and any discrepancies will be resolved through discussion. If disagreements persist, a third independent reviewer will be consulted. Regular backups of the Excel file will be maintained to prevent data loss and ensure data integrity.

Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence The results of this scoping review will be presented in a structured and descriptive manner. Study characteristics — including author, year, country, study design, sample size, and population demographics — will be summarized in tables. Key findings related to alexithymia in gender-diverse individuals will be categorized based on themes

such as prevalence, contributing factors, mental health associations, and interventions. Quantitative data will be summarized using basic statistics, while qualitative findings will be grouped into common themes. Gaps in the literature and areas for future research will be highlighted. The final synthesis will be aligned with the research objectives to ensure clarity and relevance.

Presentation of the results The results of this scoping review on alexithymia in gender-diverse people will be presented through a combination of tables and narrative synthesis. Tables will summarize the key characteristics of the studies included, such as study design, sample characteristics, findings on alexithymia, and identified themes. Additionally, a narrative synthesis will be provided to interpret the findings, identify patterns, and highlight gaps in the existing literature. These presentation methods will ensure a clear and comprehensive overview of the current state of research on this topic.

Language restriction Only articles published in the English language will be considered for inclusion.

Country(ies) involved Poland.

Other relevant information All violations regarding the research procedure and manuscript preparation described in this protocol will be noted and explained in the submitted manuscript

Keywords alexithymia; anxiety; depression; gender-diverse; LGBTQ+; non-binary; quality of life; transgender; well-being.

Dissemination plans The scoping review will be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal focused on mental health and gender studies. Additionally, the results will be presented at relevant psychological academic conferences. These platforms will provide opportunities for engaging with researchers, clinicians, and advocates in the field.

Contributions of each author

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