

Eating and Exercise Behaviours in Trans and Gender Diverse Adults

Research Summary

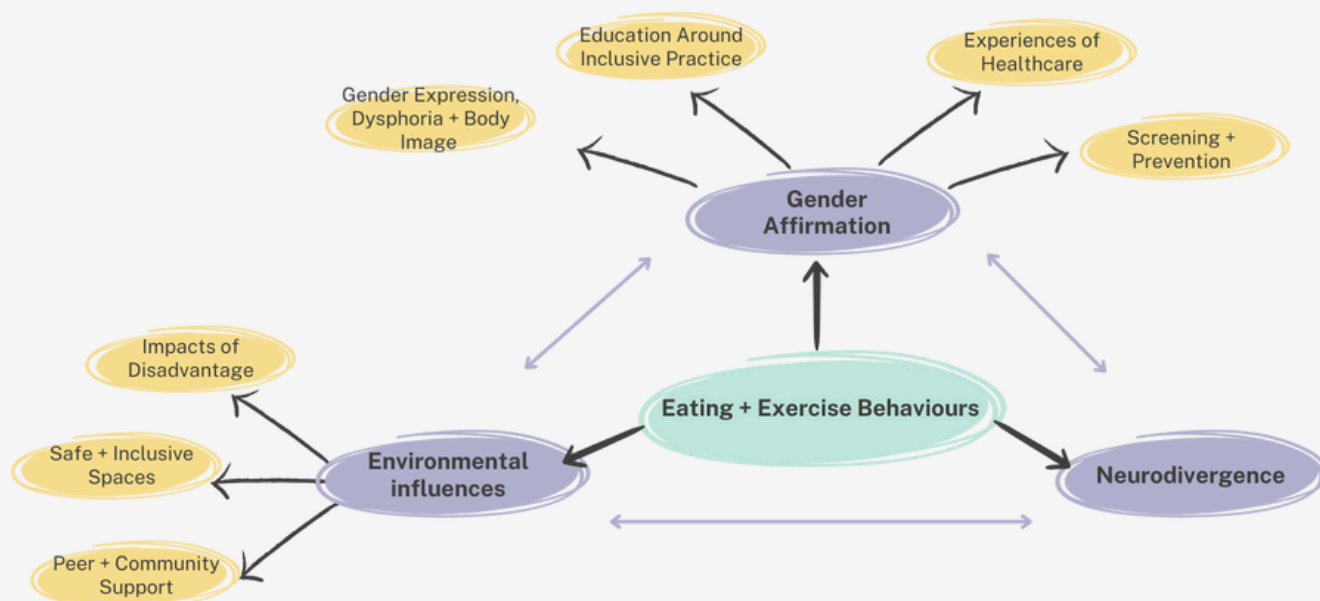
The experiences of trans and gender diverse people (TGD) around eating and exercise are deeply influenced by their unique socio-environmental and personal challenges. A recent study by [Schweizer and peers \(2025\)](#) published in the International Journal of Transgender Health, sheds light on these experiences, emphasising the importance of inclusive and supportive approaches to promoting healthy behaviours in the trans community.

Methods

The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 participants: 12 TGD people sharing their lived experiences and 13 healthcare professionals involved in supporting TGD communities, with 6 participants in both groups. Participants were recruited from various community networks, healthcare settings, and social media.

Results

The data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, allowing researchers to identify key themes that shape eating and exercise behaviours and motivations. Analysis resulted in identification of three themes: (1) gender affirmation, (2) neurodivergence, and (3) environmental influences



Key Findings

Gender Affirmation

Participants described exercise and eating as tools for gender affirmation. For example, exercise helped some trans men build muscle, aligning their bodies with their gender identity. However, societal pressures to conform to binary gender norms sometimes led to disordered behaviours, such as excessive exercise or restrictive eating.

Neurodivergence

A significant portion of the sample identified as neurodivergent, with presentations including ADHD or Autism influencing their eating and exercise patterns. This interplay of identities highlights the need for tailored support.

Environmental Influences

Systemic barriers such as food insecurity, stigma in fitness spaces, and lack of inclusive healthcare were frequently reported. Participants emphasised the need for safe, affirming environments to promote healthful practices.

“Having exercise and movement opportunities and groups that are specifically for trans and gender diverse young people where there’s going to be all gender change rooms and the avoidance of specific gendered language and focus on body parts. Spaces that are informed by an affirming lens.”

“I’ve noticed in more my more binary friends, they, they really care about self-image, how they present themselves tells how the world sees them. And a lot of that is informed by the social construct that we already have. Like a woman needs to look this way. A man needs to look that way.”

“I didn’t know about top surgery or hormone replacement therapy. The only conclusion I could come to is the only way I can change my body to reflect how I want people to treat me, and my inner world is by starving it.”



Scientific & Community Implications

TGD people often navigate unique challenges, including high rates of disordered eating and exercise behaviours linked to societal and internal pressures.

Healthcare providers must adopt gender-affirming and person-centred approaches, considering both the physiological and psychosocial aspects of eating and exercise for TGD people. The authors advocate for multi-disciplinary teams involving dietitian, exercise professionals, and mental health experts to address these needs.

Community-led initiatives, such as inclusive fitness programs and accessible nutrition resources, can further mitigate barriers.

Acknowledging the lived experiences of TGD folks is critical to shaping effective, respectful interventions.

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For more information & updates:

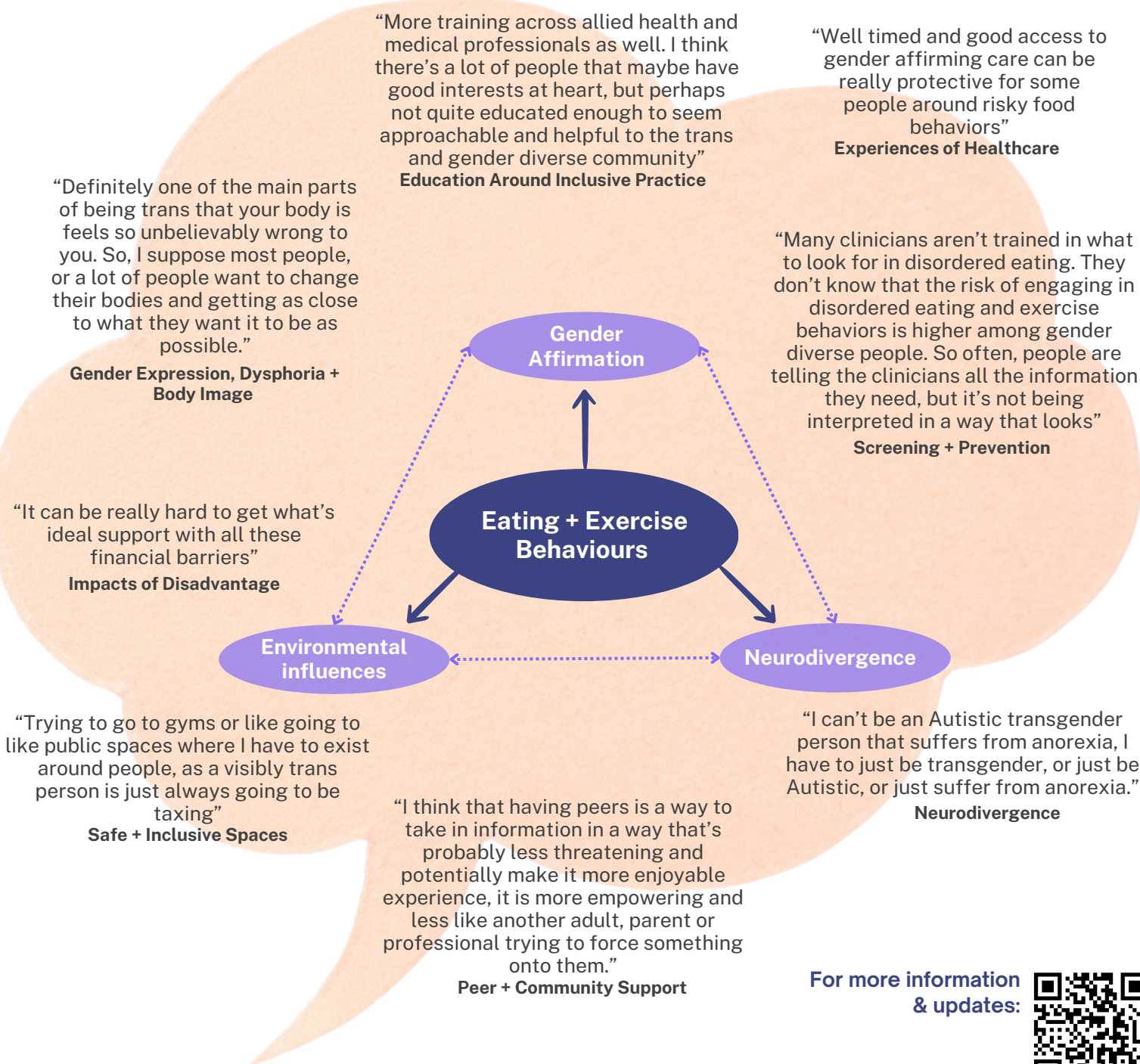


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Participant Responses



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