

## Exploring Suicidal Behaviors among Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Youth in China

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**Abstract :** Suicide is a global public mental health issue and is the tenth leading cause of death globally. Approximately 75% of suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). Compared to the general population, transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) young people have higher suicidal risks. Research has shown that the prevalence of suicidal behaviors among TGNC populations was high in both the United States and China. However, studies were mostly embedded within Western cultures. Limited data and research were available to assess suicidal behaviors among TGNC youth in LMIC countries and to consider various types of TGNC youth. The goal of the current project is to 1) investigate the prevalence of lifetime and past-year suicidal ideations, plans, and attempts among Chinese TGNC youth, 2) explore the relationship between gender identity and suicidal outcomes among TGNC youth in China, 3) identify individual, school, and family level risk and protective factors for suicidal behaviors. The study used data from a cross-sectional survey conducted by Beijing LGBTQ Center in 2021. The survey was the largest TGNC population study in China to understand the health conditions of TGNC individuals. Of the 7612 individuals who completed the survey, a total of 5632 youth (aged 10 to 19) was included in the final analysis. 2259 (40.11%) participants were categorized as transfeminine youth, 1034 (18.36%) as transmasculine youth, 1169 (20.76%) as nonbinary youth AFAB, 568 (10.09%) as nonbinary youth AMAB, 344 (6.11%) as questioning youth AFAB and 258 (4.58%) as questioning youth AMAB. Suicidal behaviors were assessed by asking about lifetime suicidal ideation and attempts, past 12 months suicidal ideation, plan and attempts, and suicidal methods. To achieve the aims, we conducted statistical analysis in Stata/SE 17.0 to 1) describe the prevalence of suicidal outcomes and 2) assess the relationship between gender identity and suicidal outcomes by performing crosstabs, bivariate and multivariate logistic regressions, and adjusting for covariates. The lifetime prevalence of suicidal ideations and attempts for the whole sample was 85.13% and 51.7%. Transfeminine youth had a significantly higher risk for lifetime suicidal ideations (Odds Ratios (OR) = 1.67, CI:1.28,2.18) and attempts than transmasculine youth (OR=1.66, CI: 1.35,2.03), adjusting for age and past year binge drinking, known risk factors of suicide behavior. Past-year prevalence of suicidal behaviors was also high among TGNC youth, with 75.69% in suicidal ideation, 88.77% in suicidal plans, and 57.96% in suicidal attempts. Transfeminine youth, among six subgroups, had the highest risk for past-year suicidal ideations and attempts compared to transmasculine youth. Non-binary youth, regardless of sex assigned at birth, also had a significantly higher risk for suicidal ideations. The prevalence of lifetime and past-year suicidal behaviors was alarming among TGNC youth in China. Among different categories of TGNC youth, transfeminine youth reported the most elevated suicidal risk. The findings indicated a compelling need for researchers and practitioners to address the mental health risks for this specific group and target interventions for TGNC youth in China.

**Keywords :** child and adolescent mental health, gender minority health, cross-cultural perspective, preventing suicide in youth

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