

When the Context Rows Against:

Voicing Parents of Transgender Children and Teenagers in Italy: a Qualitative Study



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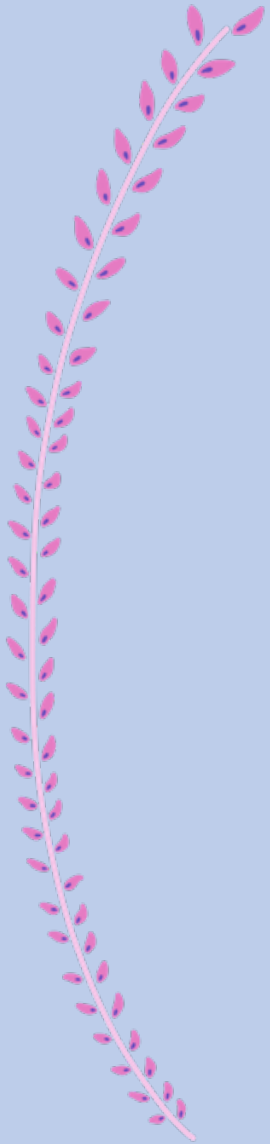
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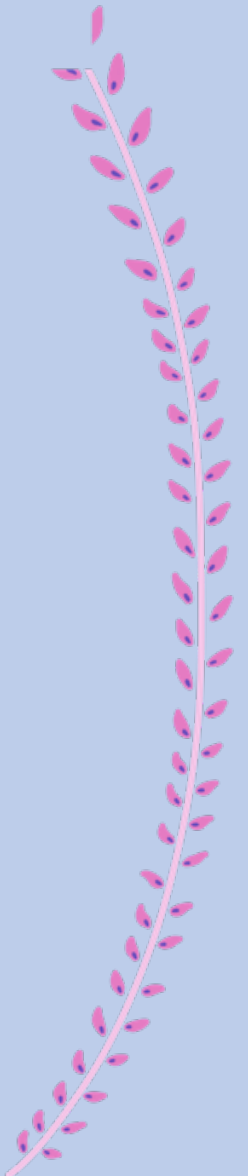


Italy is the country in Europe with the highest number of murders of transgender people. Moreover, the majority of transgender persons declared in surveys they are not openly out.

In this socio-cultural context the experience of parenting transgender and gender variant (TGV) young person is already difficult.

- In Italy there is very little accessible information on gender variance, in particular regarding this experience during childhood and adolescence.
- There are no studies published in scientific journals which give voice to the experience of TGV children and teen's parents only in Italy.
- There is a legislative and politic lack in medical, educational, and social areas.

Therefore, we decided to interview the parents of TGV young people, with the aim of **giving voice to their experience, and underlining how parenting a young TGV person is not *it itself* an experience which creates problems, but it becomes one due to the socio-cultural context.**



Here we suggest some steps to address some of the important obstacles faced by parents during the journey of the TGV child or teenager in Italy:

1. The lack of easily accessible information and in the Italian language on gender variance in childhood and adolescence



we think that it **is necessary to create and spread more knowledge on gender variance, and in doing so to combat the current pathological view of this experience**

Moreover, **we believe that it is important to co-create this knowledge with those directly concerned by the issues**, and to disseminate it in all levels of our society, in accessible and inclusive forms, including through awareness-raising campaigns aimed at the general population.





2. The health **profession's incapacity** to support TGV young people's parents, and a widely present **lack of knowledge** among professionals on this issue

(especially among paediatricians, and psychologists in public family counselling centers, who were identified as the first interlocutors for the parents of TGV young people)



Gender variance issues need to be included in all the curricula,

and not exclusively as the study of gender dysphoria.





3. The **difficulties** encountered in the **school system**

(non-inclusive educational programs which perpetuate gender stereotypes, and lack of knowledge on the existence of policies to protect TGV students among school employees)



- **The school's ability to welcome families with TGV students must be strengthened** (by providing a specific course to the educational professionals)
- creating specific policies to make the school an **inclusive space** (through advocacy action),
- **openly contrasting homobitransphobic phenomena**, and
- **hearing the needs of the families and the students** (using participatory-action-research processes)

Moreover, it **is fundamental that every school establish a policy which easily provides the possibility for TGV students to use their chosen names.**

Not having their own identity respected in school increases the risk of developing depression, anxiety, and dropping out of the educational system.





4. **Supporting the creation and the existence of networks and support groups for the parents of TGV children is fundamental**, as the participants highlighted. They are source of emotional support, of knowledge, and give the parents the opportunity to help other people with similar experiences through advocacy.



Being the parent of a TGV person in Italy is a difficult experience, one where obstacles are faced from the very start of the journey.

The parents we interviewed are actively involved in fighting discrimination, contrasting stereotypes, and fighting to obtain the respect of their children's rights.

This **research has as its aim to support the voices of the parents of TGV young people and to amplify them.** The long-term goal, one which unites the researchers and participants of this project, is **promoting social change on the theme of gender variance and parenting issues.**

