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A Study on the Attitude of College Students towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues

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ABSTRACT: Discrimination and oppression of the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) community is still very prevalent in society, as well as on college campuses. Reported is the study of the attitude of college students toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues. Objective of the study was to find out attitude of college students toward students with LGBT according to their demographic features of the sample. This study investigated attitudes toward LGBT individuals by surveying 50 university students in five different majors on campus. Students' attitude towards Lesbian and gay men scale was used. This scale was developed by Nanda (2018). Scale consists of 32 items of Likert's 4-point scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). Data were tabulated and analysed for drawing conclusion. Result showed that female respondents possess more favourable attitude than male respondents, rural habitat possess more favourable attitude towards LGBT students than the respondent urban habitat.

KEYWORDS: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, College students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Despite a society that is moving forward in acceptance of differences, many young people still maintain uncomfortable and confused attitudes towards non-heterosexual lifestyles (Sharpe, 2002). It is essential to gain a greater understanding of how certain attitudes are developed, such as those towards homosexuality. Attitudes towards homosexuality influence how people interact with members of the homosexual community. Negative attitudes have been associated with hate crimes directed towards homosexual individuals, while positive attitudes have been associated with social activism for the homosexual community attitudes toward gay men and lesbians are multidimensional and that to fully understand anti-gay prejudice, these different aspects of people's attitudes and perceptions should be considered (LaMar & Kite, 1998; Kite & Whitley, 1996). Because attitudes toward homosexuality can serve different functions for different people (Herek, 1986); anti-gay prejudice can best be understood by considering these differing perspectives (Mary E. Kite, Ball State University). Gay couples (two men) may try to find a surrogate mother to carry a child for them but this can be expensive and legalities can make this complicated for all persons in the relationship (Lobaugh, Clements, Averill & Olguin, 2006).

According to American Psychological Association (2015), "Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviours, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions. Research over several decades has demonstrated that sexual orientation ranges along a continuum, from exclusive attraction to the other sex to exclusive attraction to the same sex".

Evans and D'Augelli (1996) found the campus environment to be unwelcoming and hostile towards lesbians and gay men. Wong, McCreary, Carpenter, Engle and Korchynsky (1999) reported that heterosexual students have negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. Herek and Capitanio (1995) found that, although negative attitudes toward homosexuality are widespread in the Black community, homophobia does not appear to be more prevalent among Blacks in comparison to Whites. In different studies it was established that the professionals' faces difficulty offering, competent and supportive services to LGBT client as the professionals possess a negative stance toward homosexuals (Barrett & Mc. Whirter, 2002; Krieglstein, 2003; Saulnier, 2002).

Herek (1988) defined heterosexism as "the ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship, or community". Research regarding the attitudes toward gay men and lesbians often used the term "homophobia" to characterize a negative attitude schema towards homosexuals (Herek, 2004). However, recently the term has come under criticism due to its implication that anti-gay prejudice is



based on fear (Herek, 2004). As a result, Herek (2004) has introduced the term “sexual prejudice” to more accurately represent negative attitudes toward sexually stigmatized groups such as gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender individuals. Sexual prejudice is operationally defined as negative attitudes based on sexual orientation. The people are living in a heterosexual society male, women and third gender (LGBT). Therefore, the people should be ready to accept to all types of sexual orientations heterosexuals and homosexuals and they should not show any kind of social stigma, heterosexist, violence and discrimination towards the people of third gender (Osamanga,2015). Winer and Siegel (1990) observed that psychologists even less likely accept and counselling towards LGBT clients (Berkman & Zinberg, 1997 ; O’ Hare et.al, 1996; Ryan, 2000). Negative attitude towards LGBT people are prevalent in America and Canada (Herek&Glunt 1993). Research showed that the people show a lack of helping behaviour (Tsanga, 1994), malicious comments, verbal harassment and sometimes outright, physical violence toward LGBT people (D’ Augelli& Rose, 1990; Herek 1989; Herek&berrill, 1992).

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To study the attitude of college students towards students with LGBT on the basis of their Age.
- ii. To study the attitude of college students towards students with LGBT on the basis of their gender.
- iii. To study the attitude of college students towards students with LGBT on the basis of their habitat.
- iv. To study the attitude of college students towards students with LGBT on the basis of their educational qualification.
- v. To study the attitude of college students towards students with LGBT on the basis of their family structure.

III. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H₀₁ There would be no significant mean difference between the 18-21 years old students’ and 22-25 years old students’ attitude towards LGBT on the basis of their age.

H₀₂ There would be no significant mean difference between the male students and female students’ attitude towards LGBT on the basis of their gender.

H₀₃ There would be no significant mean difference between the urban areas’ students and rural areas students’ attitude towards LGBT on the basis of their habitat.

H₀₄ There would be no significant mean difference between the Under-Graduate standard students’ and post-Graduate standard students’ attitude towards LGBT on the basis of their educational qualification.

H₀₅ There would be no significant mean difference between the attitude of students from nuclear family and joint family’s students towards LGBT on the basis of their family structure.

IV. POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

All the college student of West Bengal were considered as the population of the study.

For collection of data the investigator selected 60 college and university students as sample in different colleges of Kolkata Metropolitan City, West Bengal. The investigator adopted purposive sampling technique for sample selection. 30 male and 30 female students were taken as the sample of the study.

V. VARIABLES

- Independent Variables: Age, Gender, Habitat, Family Structure, Educational Standard.
- Dependent Variables: Attitude of the college students.

VI. TOOLS

Students’ attitude towards Lesbian and gay men scale was used. This scale was developed by Nanda (2018). Scale consists of 32 items of Likert’s 4-point scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree). There are 20 positive items and 12 negative items. Item no. 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,14,15,16,18,24,25,27,28,29,30,31,32 items are positive and item no. 9,10,11,12,13,17,20,22,23,26 are negative. For positive items scoring key will be 4,3,2,1 for strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. For negative items the scoring key will be 1,2,3,4 for strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. The maximum possible score is 128 and minimum possible score is 32. Higher score in this scale indicates more negative attitude toward Lesbians and Gay men scale-Short form (Herek, 1988).



VII. COLLECTION OF DATA

For the collection of data, the investigator helps the sample to answer in the questionnaire as needed. The questionnaire was collected personally by the investigator. Collected answer sheets were then scored, cleaned as much as possible and tabulated systematically for further analysis and interpretation.

VIII. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

H₀₁. There would be no significant mean difference between the 18-21 years old students’ and 22-25 years old students’ attitude towards LGBT on the basis of their age.

Table showing attitude towards LGBT of college students on the basis of their age.

Variable		Total no.	Total score	Mean	SD	Chi-square test	df	Sig (0.05/0.01)
Age	18-21	28	2623	93.68	10.24	25.40	1	Sig at both
	22-25	32	3001	93.78	11.95			

Table no: 1

Interpretation:From the above table it was noticed that 22-25 years old students possess more favourable attitude than the 18-21 years old students towards LGBT. Though the mean difference is significant at both level of significance. So, null hypothesis is rejected

H₀₂ There would be no significant mean difference between the male students and female students’ attitude towards LGBT on the basis of their gender.

Table showing attitude towards LGBT of college students on the basis of their gender.

Variable		Total no.	Total score	Mean	SD	Chi-square test	df	Sig (0.05/0.01)
Gender	Male	30	2775	92.50	12.81	0.98	1	Not-significant
	Female	30	2849	94.97	9.12			

Table no: 2

Interpretation:From the above table it was noticed that female students possess more favourable attitude than the male students towards LGBT. Though the mean difference is not significant. So, null hypothesis is accepted.

H₀₃ There would be no significant mean difference between the urban areas’ students and rural areas students’ attitude towards LGBT on the basis of their habitat.

Table showing attitude towards LGBT of college students on the basis of their Habitat.

Variable		Total no.	Total score	Mean	SD	Chi-square test	df	Sig (0.05/0.01)
Habitat	Rural	27	2559	94.78	8.78	45.52	1	Sig at both
	Urban	33	3065	92.88	12.76			

Table no: 3

Interpretation:From the above table it was noticed that the students from rural areas possess more favourable attitude toward LGBT than the students from urban habitat. Though the mean difference is significant at both level of significance. So, null hypothesis is rejected.

H₀₄ There would be no significant mean difference between the Under-Graduate standard students’ and post-Graduate standard students’ attitude towards LGBT on the basis of their educational qualification.



Table showing attitude towards LGBT of college students on the basis of their educational qualification.

Variable		Total no.	Total score	Mean	SD	Chi-square test	df	Sig (0.05/0.01)
Educational qualification	Under graduate	37	3458	93.46	12.73	296.81	1	Sig at both
	Post graduate	23	2166	94.17	8.03			

Table no: 4

Interpretation:From the above table it was noticed that post graduates’ students possess more favourable attitude than the under graduate students toward LGBT. Though the mean difference is significant at both level of significance. So, null hypothesis is rejected.

H₀₅ There would be no significant mean difference between the attitude of students from nuclear family and joint family’s students towards LGBT on the basis of their family structure.

Table showing attitude towards LGBT of college students on the basis of their family structure.

Variable		Total no.	Total score	Mean	SD	Chi-square test	df	Sig (0.05/0.01)
Family structure	Nuclear family	37	3413	92.24	12.22	256.90	1	Sig at both
	Joint family	23	2211	96.13	8.71			

Table no: 5

Interpretation:From the above table it was noticed that the students from joint family possess favourable attitude than the students from nuclear family towards LGBT. Though the mean difference is significant at both level of significance. So, null hypothesis is rejected.

IX. FINDINGS

- i. College and university students in the age group 22-25 years possess more favourable attitude toward LGBT students than the respondent in the age group 18-21 years.
- ii. When the gender of the respondents was considered, it was notice that female respondents possess more favourable attitude than male respondents.
- iii. Respondents from the rural habitat possess more favourable attitude towards LGBT students than the respondent urban habitat.
- iv. When family structure of the respondents was considered, it was noticed that the respondents from joint family possess more favourable attitude towards LGBT students than respondents from nuclear family structure.
- v. Students from post graduate class possess more favourable attitude than students from under graduate class towards LGBT.

X. DISCUSSION

In the present study it was noticed that the female respondents possess more favourable attitude toward LGBT students. Lehman and Thornwall (2009) accepted the result of the present study as they obtained that male respondent possess less favourable attitude than the female respondents. Wellings, Field, Johnson and Wadsworth (1994) found a higher prevalence of negative attitudes toward homosexuals in heterosexual men than women. Similarly, Herek and Capitanio (1999) found a consistent tendency for male students to express more hostile attitudes toward homosexuals than female students. Interestingly, results showed that more female respondents overwhelmingly agreed that they were supportive of the homosexual community than males. The literature supports this concept that females are more accepting of homosexuality than males (Verweij et al, 2008; Raiz, 2006). Women might display more empathy for the social status of lesbians and gay men because of women’s greater care-giving roles, as well as their subjective experience of sexism (Greene, 1997). Johnson and Greely (2006) noticed reverse result because in their study male respondents possess more favourable attitude towards LGBT. Schieman (1998) found in his sample of university

students that, heterosexual men reported significantly higher levels of social distance and homophobia towards gay men than towards lesbians.

In the present study it was noticed that the older aged students possess more favourable than the younger aged students. Lambert, Venturea, Hall and Cluse (2006) noticed that upper-level students had more positive views on many of the attitudinal major toward LGBT. Vukadin (2016) noticed that age is a statistically significant predictor of attitude towards lesbians. In the study of Jones (2003) it was noticed that in America 61% of young adults aged 18-29 years were found to support gay marriage in 2003.

Regarding educational qualification of respondents, it was found that post graduate students possess more favourable attitude. The same result was established in the study of Lambert et. al. (2006). Although their no shortage of data showing negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Kite and Whitley (1996) recent research has indicated that attitudes are shifting in a more liberal direction especially among adults (Rostow, 2001).

Gender-roles and gender, self-esteem, education level, race/ ethnicity, religiously, geographical area of residence, political preference, income level and exposure to homosexuals can influence people's feelings about homosexuals. Overall, women are more accepting of homosexuality than men. Men are people who have self-esteem; a higher level of education; higher income; more exposure to homosexuals; who are less active in organized religion; who are identified as being politically moderate or liberal; who are not of an ethnic minority, and who live in less conservative areas of country and in more urban settings.

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