



Short Communication

Perceptions and attitude towards homosexuality among the college students in India

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Abstract

Perception and attitude determines our way of life and behaviour. Attitudes towards homosexuality are influenced by several factors: religion, media, family, peers, gender and contact with homosexual individuals. The present study aims to assess the perception and attitude towards homosexuality and homosexual individual among the college students in India.

Keywords: College students, homosexuality, perception, attitude.

Introduction

Attitudes and perception of others towards the individual affects the sexual behaviour¹. In present day scenario, heterosexuality has become a norm, and the minority groups which includes gay and lesbian are subjected to stereotypes. The population of people involved in same-sex attractions ranges from 8 to 12%².

Different research papers have used different terms to indicate aversion, dislike, antipathy or opposition directed towards lesbian women and gay men. Generally people who do not accept homosexual behaviour have homophobia which makes them to have an irrational fear for homosexuals; some people even have homonegativity which encounters negative perceptions, attitudes, opinions and values of the heterosexual individuals largely towards the homo sexual couples, ending up with the negative feedbacks towards lesbian women and gay men.

Ethical issues such as discrimination against lesbian women and gay men were recognized as possible obstacles in this context. Researchers and Psychiatrist has proposed that sexual identity related distress can play an important role in influencing and affecting the overall personality including the physical and mental health status of lesbian women and gay men, which can further results in short or long term health-related problems or incidences of depression and suicide. Talking about this to an individual makes him/her to get a negative perception on the person who initiates the talk. In the present scenario it is very difficult for an individual to reveal his/her identity of being a gay or lesbian. People who gets attracted towards same sex are sometimes are confused with the thought that whether being a homosexual is good or not. People often browse into different sites searching for the symptoms of being homosexuality. In this paper, an attempt has been made to assess the perception and attitude of college students on homosexuality.

Materials and methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted among college students in the age group of 18–35 years. A total of 84 engineering students from different branches, years and from different parts of India were included in the study. A questionnaire was framed and directed to all the students where they had to answer all the questions without revealing their identity. The paper tried to assess the knowledge, perception and attitude of the students regarding homosexuality and also their awareness about it. The study also covered the Religion, region, reasons, acceptance, broadcasting, complications, role of government, and overall attitude towards homosexuality.

Results and discussion

A total of 84 students were administered the questionnaire, 38 (45.2%) males and 46 (54.8%) females. Among the 84 people, 77 (91.7%) people belonged to the age group of 18-25 and 7(8.3%) people belonged to age group 26-35.

The majority of the students 72(85.7%) were from Hindu community while other religion carrying almost the same percentage of nearly 3%.

The majority of the students 81(96.4%) belong to a religious family, and 88.1% (74) among them believe that religion takes a hold on the insights of people on homosexuality and also influence the minds of people in one way or the other. However, 10(11.9%) students disagreed on it.

Opinion on the reason for homosexuality: Table-1 says 38(45.2%) of students believe that homosexuality is a choice and 37(44.04%) say "It just happens". None of the respondents who took the survey think that people do it for seeking the

attention of others. 9(10.7%) students didn't have any opinion on homosexuality.

Table-1: Opinion on the Reason for being Homosexual.

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
A Choice	38	45.2
Attention Seeking	0	0
Just happens	37	44.04
No opinion	9	10.7
Total	84	100

Male And Female Homosexual Acceptance: When questioned on acceptance of more of gay or lesbian, (1.1%) student was in favour for gay, 10(11.9%) were for lesbian and 67(79.7%) equally for both. However, 6(7.2%) student were not ready to accept homosexuals at all.

Distinctiveness of Behaviour: Only 8(9.5%) participants accepted on the idea that there is a difference in love and affection between homosexuals and heterosexuals whereas 33(39.3%) disagreed and 43(51.2%) were not clear on this particular aspect.

Table-2: General Perception of Respondent about Homosexuality.

General perception	Yes	No	Can't Say	Total
Identification of homosexuality on the basis of behavior	41 (48.8%)	37 (44%)	6 (7.1%)	84 (100%)
Dislikeliness of gays/lesbians for opposite sex members	4 (4.7%)	55 (64.7%)	26 (30.6%)	84 (100%)
Homosexuality as a unpleasant thing	5 (6%)	54 (64.3%)	24 (29.8%)	84 (100%)

17(20.2%) people felt offended on public display of affection by homosexuals and 67(79.8%) didn't have any issue on that. 72(87.8%) people have no problem in instilling the blood from a homosexual and 10(12.2%) people.

General Perception: The above Table-2 shows reviews of respondents about the mentality of people and their perception about homosexuality. It shows that almost 48% respondents can easily decide about the person being a homosexual just by looking at their behavior. It also states about the majority of respondents were not feeling uncomfortable in the vicinity of homosexuals.

On being asked on instillation of blood from a homosexual person for their need, 72(87.8%) were ready to draw while 10(12.2%) refused to do so.

Meagre 5(6%) students felt uncomfortable in the vicinity of homosexuals while majority of them 54(64.3%) were fine with it. And, 24(29.8%) people have nothing to say about it.

Awareness and Broadcasting: On being asked about the awareness of homosexuality by their parents, only 5(6%) students accepted. 79(94%) students were never introduced about issues like homosexuality by their parents. 65(77.4%) students accepted on watching T.V. shows and movies depicting homosexuals and 19(22.6%) disagreed. Out of the 84 students, only 11(13.1%) said "yes" for watching the movies and T.V shows depicting homosexuals purposefully, while 73(86.9%) said "no".

Table-3: Opinion of Respondents on Same Sex Attraction.

Same sex attraction	Yes	No	Can't Say	Total
Attraction towards same sex person	12 (14.3%)	72 (85.7%)	-	84 (100%)
Are you a homosexual?	1 (1.2%)	80 (95.2%)	3 (3.6%)	84 (100%)

Homosexuality as an Abuse: Use of terms like "Gay" and "Faggot" is an insult and are derogatory is agreed by 22(26.2%) while 62(73.8%) people disagree. Only around 12(14.3%) people get offended on being asked about their homosexuality and most of them 72(85.7%) don't mind on being asked.

Effect on Morals: 3(3.6%) students strongly agreed, 8(9.6%) agreed, 30(36.1%) disagreed, 25(30.1%) strongly disagreed and 18(20.5%) remained neutral on being asked whether acceptance of homosexuality in our society is aiding in deterioration of morals.

Discrimination: All the students 84(100%) believe that the homosexuals are being discriminated in our society.

In analysing the conflict between homosexuality and family values, 14(16.9%) students strongly agreed, 24(28.9%) agreed, 18(20.5%) disagreed, 13(15.7%) strongly disagreed and 15(18.1%) remained neutral.

Measures to be taken: 57(9.3%) respondents believe that homosexuality is an important topic for discussion, 8(9.5%) disagree and 19(22.6%) are unsure about it. On the issue of legalization of homosexuality, 64(76.1%) were in favour of it, 5(5.9%) disagreed and 15(17.9%) were still unsure about it.

Effect of Legalization: 16(9.3%) students strongly agreed, 31(37.3%) agreed, 8(9.6%) disagreed, 5(6%) strongly disagreed and 24(27.7%) remained neutral on being asked whether the legalization of homosexuality by the government will lead to its encouragement.

In analysing the opinion towards the introduction of legislation to eradicate discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the field of education e.g. school admission, etc., 31(36.9%) students strongly agreed, 33(39.3%) agreed, 6(7.1%) disagreed, 4(4.8%) strongly disagreed and 21(25%) remained neutral.

Acceptance of family and friends being a Homosexual: On questioning the level of acceptance of family being a homosexual, 34(40.5%) students termed it strongly acceptable, 35(41.7%) acceptable, 2(2.4%) unacceptable, 4(4.8%) strongly unacceptable and 9(10.7%) remained neutral.

On questioning the level of acceptance of friend being a homosexual, 27(32.1%) students termed it strongly acceptable, 38(45.2%) acceptable, 0(0%) unacceptable, 7(8.3%) strongly unacceptable and 12(14.3%) remained neutral.

Discussion: The aim of the study was mainly to analyze and assess the perception, attitude knowledge and awareness of the engineering college students about Homosexuality.

Our study shows that most of the students had heard about homosexuality but none of them received any point of discussion from their parents. Equivalent numbers of people have a belief that people take it as a choice to be gay or lesbian and it naturally occurs in an individual which shows their awareness in the field. The majority of the respondents who took the review belong to a religious family, and they believe that religion takes a hold on the insights of people on homosexuality and also influence the minds of people in one way or the other. It shows that almost respondents can easily decide about the person being a homosexual just by looking at their behavior. It also states about the majority of respondents not feeling uncomfortable in the vicinity of homosexuals. Majority of the respondents equally supports the person being any of them. While a bunch of people doesn't accept any of the two and are strictly against homosexuality. On the contrary the people in support of homosexuality are more towards acceptance of lesbians. Respondents feel offended on public display of affection by homosexuals while a meagre number stated that there is a difference in love relationships between homosexuals and heterosexual and even refuse to draw blood from them. Use of terms like "GAY" and "FAGGOT" have become commonly used words to abuse now days and most of them don't feel offended on being called by them but few others feel bad when called by others.

And also, few people felt offended if they were just asked whether they are homosexual or not. Most of the people take it as a fun and do nothing about it. It clearly shows how the use of these terms has become common in our lives and people are not bothered about it. Only people stand on the decision of taking a reaction for the abuse. When asked, whether our society discriminates against the homosexuals, astoundingly 100% percentage of the people agreed to the fact that homosexuals are being discriminated in our society and they personally feel that

legalization of their rights will add up in changing the mentality of the people being stereotype on this matter. Apart from the other social matters, homosexuality is an undermined topic for discussion and majority of the respondents accounting for it feel the necessity of having a debate on this matter. They see it as a positive thing. Almost majority agree on legalization of homosexuality and majority also feels that the legalization will act as an encouragement for the homosexuality which may lead to the decline in discrimination in the field of education. Majority of the people are in the favor of accepting homosexuals. It shows the transformation in the mindset of the people which they have gone through. They consider it as a totally personal choice. Only a minimal number of respondents still are unaccepting and feel it like a disgrace.

Conclusion

The study highlights the perception and attitude of the Indian college students towards Homosexuality. Interacting and communicating with homosexual individuals has become an acceptable behaviour of the study population and also study proves the expression of discrimination towards homosexual individuals has drastically come down and positive and rational attitude towards homosexuality and homosexual individuals among the students is clearly evident from the study.

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