

## A comparative study of sexual attitudes towards lesbianism and homosexuality with reference to age and gender

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to find out whether age and gender have an influence on the sexual attitudes of people. The following components of sexual attitude were studied namely: Attitude towards lesbianism and homosexuality. The sample consisted of 100 subjects in which 50 were from the age group of 18-28 years further divided equally with respect to gender (25-male, 25-female) and the other 50 in the age group of 50-60 years similarly divided into male and female. 2x2 Factorial design was used as the research design for the present study. The sample was first divided in two groups on the basis of age and then further on the basis of gender. Personal data sheet and a questionnaire titled 'Sexual Attitude Scale' developed by Amit Abraham was used for data collection. Gathered data was calculated and analysed by F-test (ANOVA). The results revealed that subjects in the age group of 18-28 years had a favourable sexual attitude and 50-60 years had an unfavourable sexual attitude. On the basis of gender, males showed a favourable sexual attitude over females. While studying the interaction of age and gender on sexual attitudes it was found that males in the age group of 18-28 years had the most favourable sexual attitude whereas the females in the age groups of 50-60 years had the least favourable sexual attitude.

**Keywords:** *Sexual Attitudes; Homosexuality; Lesbianism*

**H**omosexuality was never accepted happily in the society specially in the Indian context. People still hold an orthodox approach towards different sexual orientations. For a good amount of time homosexuality was considered a mental illness. But in the recent times the social picture is starting to change. Youngsters are more open to embrace their homosexual friends, family, and colleagues, and adults care enough to make an effort to understand that their world is not wrong but a little different from us.

(Almeida, Johnson, Corliss, Molnar, & Azrael, 2009) talk about how the homosexual individuals face emotional distress more than the heterosexual individuals. This is alarming because young people facing severe emotional distress due to their sexual orientation is not favourable for their growth or their emotional and social development. (Meuher, 1995) has talked about the influence of one's sexual orientation on their suicidal tendencies. The rates have been higher in the bisexual and homosexual individuals which also directs us to know

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that homosexuals are more prone to several mental illnesses. The cause of this has deep roots in the social treatment given to them at their home, in schools, in workplaces, and more. It is important for people to stop treating them differently just because of their sexual orientation. (Saewyc, 2011) has talked about the several health disparities homosexuals go through. He has also focussed on the development of them. The studies found that homosexuals develop similar to the heterosexuals individuals. Their cognitive, motor, or sensory development is not influenced by their sexual orientation.

With the amendments in section 377 last year, the government has taken a step forward in accepting the queer community. (Narain, 2019) has talked about the various perspectives about the recent section 377. The articles focusses on the practical implications of the section 377 amendment. One of the perspectives say that this verdict has broken the queer movement because the more privileged in the queer community do not want to be involved in more fights now. Others have pointed out that the amendment was legal but the society is yet to go a long way in accepting them and their sexual orientation. Some have also told that the verdict has made people more receptive of their sexuality and many people have come out to their friends and family about their sexual orientation. Coming out at their workplace has also been easier for them.

There are several problems faced by the homosexuals. This research paper is focussed on the sexual attitude of people towards lesbianism and homosexuality.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

(Herek, 2004) has talked about the homophobia that prevails in the society. He has also focussed on the sexual stigma that has been haunting the members of the society since the last 19<sup>th</sup> century. This paper focuses on the stigma and the discrimination of the homosexuals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This paper gives the base to studies considering the in-depth work done on the people's sexual attitude towards homosexuality and how homophobia is a result of the same. It also talks about constructs like sexual stigma, heterosexism, and sexual prejudice. Internalized homophobia is also a concept in focus in the paper by the author.

In their paper (Day & Schoenrade, 2000) talk about sexual orientation and the anti-discriminatory policies in the work places. The paper had three major variables, namely, sexual orientation, anti-discrimination policies, and top management support for equal rights with relevant work attitudes. All the variables were related to the affective organization commitment and an individual's conflict between work and home. However the anti-discrimination policies and the top management support are more related to the job satisfaction experienced by an individual. It was found that 'closeted' homosexuals did not face much issue at the workplace. However, it was seen that human resource professionals try to bring in a safer work attitude for homosexuals by educating the top managers first. This is important since they influence a larger workforce that works under them.

In a research study (Jorm, Korten, Rodgers, Jacomb, & Christensen, 2018) have talked about the influence of an individual's sexual orientation on their mental health. One group consists of the homosexuals and the bisexuals, whereas the other group consists of the heterosexuals. The community survey was conducted on 4825 adults in Australia. The survey focussed on topics such as anxiety, depression, suicidality, alcohol misuse, positive and negative affects and many other factors of poorer mental health. The results of the research indicated that the

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bisexuals scored highest on anxiety, depression and the negative affect. Homosexuals scored higher than heterosexuals but lower than bisexuals putting them between the two groups.

(Marshall, et al., 2008) have talked about the influence of sexual orientation on the adolescent substance use through a meta-analysis and a methodological review. The aim of the paper was to clearly define the substance abuse ratios and the substance use disorders rates among the youth based on their sexual orientation. The results of the research studies showed that the LGB (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual) adolescents showed higher substance use in their daily life than the heterosexual teenagers. The results were even more staggering when the subpopulations were considered. The substance use rates were higher in women by 400% and the bisexuals reported a 340% higher substance use than the homosexuals. The aggregated LGB group showed a 190% higher consumption of various substances than the heterosexuals.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### ***Sample***

A sample of 100 subjects was selected for the research. They are first divided on the basis of Age; that is, 50 subjects under the age group of 18 to 28 years and 50 subjects under the age group of 50-60 years. They are further divided on the second level on the basis of gender. In the age group of 18 to 28 years the subjects are divided further on the basis of gender; that is 25 males and 25 females. Similarly, in the age group of 50 to 60 years the subjects are divided further on the basis of gender; that is 25 males and 25 females. The sexual attitude scale by Amit Abraham was administered to them.

#### ***Instruments***

**Two measures were used in this study,**

**1. Personal Information**

Personal information was gathered from all the subjects like their name, age, gender, education qualification, profession and religion.

**2. Sexual Attitude Scale (S.A.S.)**

Sexual Attitude Scale developed by Amit Abraham, was a lecturer at the Department of Psychology in St John's College, Agra. The Sexual Attitude Scale measures an individual's attitude towards five aspects separately, namely premarital sex, monogamy, pornography, lesbianism and homosexuality. Each of these are considered as individual scales. Lesbianism and Homosexuality sexual attitude scales were used for this research study.

#### ***Procedure***

The purpose of the present investigation was to study the sexual attitudes of people in two different age groups. For this study it was decided to select 100 subjects (50 – 18-28 years of age; 50 – 50-60 years of age). Initially a list for all the categories of subjects was prepared.

To prepare the list of subjects randomization technique was used.

In this way two groups were prepared. In the beginning 100 subjects in each group were randomly selected on the basis of their response on our online google forms which were distributed to 215 samples randomly. Out of these, 100 forms with complete responses were selected as the research sample. Among these were 50 from the 18-28 years of age (25-male; 25- females) and same for the other age group. Sexual attitude scale was administered, and the information was collected. The investigator obtained helping getting necessary co-operation from the subjects and assured them that responses would be kept strictly

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confidential and would be utilized for research purposes only. After that the data were collected according to their convenience.

**RESULTS**

*Attitude towards Lesbianism*

**Table 1 Shows Anova Results on LS**

SOV	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Significance
SSA	1	1089	1089	9.93	**
SSB	1	817.96	817.96	7.46	**
SSAB	1	2435.96	2435.96	22.21	**
SSE	96	10521.84	109.64		
SST	99	14864.76	150.14		

**Table 2 Shows Mean Scores And Mean Differences Between Age And Gender On LS**

Independent Variable	N	Mean	Mean Difference
Age group (18-28)	50	37.48	6.6
Age group (50-60)	50	30.88	
Male	50	37.04	5.72
Female	50	31.32	

**Table 3 Shows Mean Scores of Interactions Between Age And Gender On LS**

LS	Age 18-28 years (A1)	Age 50-60 years (A2)
Male (B1)	38.04	36.04
Female (B2)	36.92	25.72

**LS with reference to age (18-28 & 50-60 Years)**

The results of ANOVA on sexual attitude score Table 1 is consulted and it is found that F-ratio for age groups is 9.93, which is significant at 0.01 levels. This means sexual attitude in people from 18-28 years of age differs significantly from sexual attitude in people from 50-60 years of age. Table 2 shows the mean scores of the age group 18-28 years as 37.48 and of the age group 50-60 years as 30.88. The difference between the mean scores is 6.6. It is clearly said that significant difference existed between the age groups of 18-28 years and 50-60 years on their sexual attitudes. Thus, the null-hypothesis is rejected.

**LS with reference to gender (Male & Female)**

The results of ANOVA on sexual attitude score Table 1 is consulted and it is found that F-ratio for gender is 7.46, which is significant at 0.01 levels. This means sexual attitude in males differs significantly from sexual attitude in females. Table 2 shows the mean scores of males as 37.04 and of females as 31.32. The difference between the mean scores is 5.72. It is clearly said that significant difference existed between males and females on their sexual attitudes. Thus, the null-hypothesis is rejected.

**LS with reference to interaction of age and gender**

So the present research decided to go for identifying such interactive effect between the age and gender on the total score of sexual attitude in the subjects.

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There are four interaction effect were found, these are A1B1, A1B2, A2B1 and A2B2. The result of ANOVA on sexual attitude is consulted and it is found that F-ratio for sexual attitude towards lesbianism with reference to interaction of age and gender is 22.21 which is significant on 0.01 levels. According to Table 2, there are significant mean differences in all the four interactions given above.

In the first interaction A1B1 and A1B2, it consists of males and females in the age groups of 18-28 years of age. Table 3 shows that the mean score of males in the age group of 18-28 years of age group is 38.04 and the mean score of females in the age group of 18-28 years of age group is 39.62. The mean difference here is 1.12 which is not significant. This shows that in the age group of 18-28 years there is no significant difference in the sexual attitude towards lesbianism with reference to gender.

In the second interaction A2B1 and A2B2, it consists of males and females in the age groups of 50-60 years of age. Table 3 shows that the mean score of males in the age group of 50-60 years of age group is 36.04 and the mean score of females in the age group of 50-60 years of age group is 25.72. The mean difference here is 10.32 which is clearly significant. This shows that in the age group of 50-60 years of age there is significant difference in the sexual attitude towards lesbianism with reference to gender. This means age and gender interacts with each other on sexual attitude towards lesbianism.

In the third interaction A1B1 and A2B1, it consists of males in the age groups of 18-28 years of age and 50-60 years of age. Table 3 shows that the mean score of males in the age group of 18-28 years of age is 38.04 and the mean score of males in the age group of 50-60 years of age group is 36.04. The mean difference here is 2 which is not significant. This shows that males in the age group of 18-28 years of age and 50-60 years of age have no significant difference in the sexual attitude towards lesbianism with reference to age. This means that males in both the age groups interact with each other on sexual attitude towards lesbianism.

In the fourth interaction A1B2 and A2B2, it consists of females in the age groups of 18-28 years of age and 50-60 years of age. Table 3 shows that the mean score of females in the age group of 18-28 years of age is 39.62 and the mean score of females in the age group of 50-60 years of age group is 25.72. The mean difference here is 13.9 which is clearly significant. This shows that females in the age group of 18-28 years of age and 50-60 years of age have significant difference in the sexual attitude towards lesbianism with reference to age. This means that males in both the age groups interact with each other on sexual attitude towards lesbianism.

### *Attitude Towards Homosexuality*

**Table 4 Shows Anova Results on HS**

SOV	Df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Significance
SSA	1	767.29	767.29	8.58	**
SSB	1	193.21	193.21	2.16	NS
SSAB	1	1915.31	1915.31	21.43	**
SSE	96	8576.7	89.34		
SST	99	11452.51	115.68		

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**Table 5 Shows Mean Scores and Mean Differences between Age and Gender on HS**

Independent Variable	N	Mean	Mean Difference
Age group (18-28)	50	31.7	5.54
Age group (50-60)	50	26.16	
Male	50	30.32	2.78
Female	50	27.54	

**Table 6 Shows Mean Scores of Interactions between Age and Gender On HS**

LS	Age 18-28 years (A1)	Age 50-60 years (A2)
Male (B1)	30	30.64
Female (B2)	33.4	21.68

**HS with Reference to Age (18-28 & 50-60 Years)**

The results of ANOVA on sexual attitude score Table 1 is consulted and it is found that F-ratio for age groups is 8.58, which is significant at 0.01 levels. This means sexual attitude in people from 18-28 years of age differs significantly from sexual attitude in people from 50-60 years of age. Table 2 shows the mean scores of the age group 18-28 years as 31.7 and of the age group 50-60 years as 26.16. The difference between the mean scores is 5.54. It is clearly said that significant difference existed between the age groups of 18-28 years and 50-60 years on their sexual attitudes. Thus, the null-hypothesis is rejected.

**HS with Reference to Gender (Male & Female)**

The results of ANOVA on sexual attitude score Table 1 is consulted and it is found that F-ratio for gender is 2.16, which is not significant. This means sexual attitude in males differs significantly from sexual attitude in females. Table 2 shows the mean scores of males as 30.32 and of females as 27.54. The difference between the mean scores is 2.78. It is clearly said that significant difference existed between males and females on their sexual attitudes. Thus, the null-hypothesis is accepted.

**HS with Reference to Interaction of Age and Gender**

The present research decided to go for identifying such interactive effect between the age and gender on the total score of sexual attitude in the subjects. There are four interaction effect were found, these are A1B1, A1B2, A2B1 and A2B2. The result of ANOVA on sexual attitude is consulted and it is found that F-ratio for sexual attitude towards lesbianism with reference to interaction of age and gender is 89.34 which is significant on 0.01 levels. According to Table 2, there are significant mean differences in all the four interactions given above.

In the first interaction A1B1 and A1B2, it consists of males and females in the age groups of 18-28 years of age. Table 3 shows that the mean score of males in the age group of 18-28 years of age group is 30.64 and the mean score of females in the age group of 50-60 years of age group is 30.64. The mean difference here is 0.64 which is not significant. This shows that in the age group of 18-28 years there is no significant difference in the sexual attitude towards homosexuality with reference to gender.

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In the second interaction A2B1 and A2B2, it consists of males and females in the age groups of 50-60 years of age. Table 3 shows that the mean score of males in the age group of 50-60 years of age group is 30.64 and the mean score of females in the age group of 50-60 years of age group is 21.68. The mean difference here is 8.96 which is clearly significant. This shows that in the age group of 50-60 years of age there is significant difference in the sexual attitude towards homosexuality with reference to gender. This means age and gender interacts with each other on sexual attitude towards homosexuality.

In the third interaction A1B1 and A2B1, it consists of males in the age groups of 18-28 years of age and 50-60 years of age. Table 3 shows that the mean score of males in the age group of 18-28 years of age is 30 and the mean score of males in the age group of 50-60 years of age group is 30.64. The mean difference here is 0.64 which is not significant. This shows that males in the age group of 18-28 years of age and 50-60 years of age have no significant difference in the sexual attitude towards lesbianism with reference to age. This means that males in both the age groups interact with each other on sexual attitude towards homosexuality.

In the fourth interaction A1B2 and A2B2, it consists of females in the age groups of 18-28 years of age and 50-60 years of age. Table 3 shows that the mean score of females in the age group of 18-28 years of age is 33.4 and the mean score of females in the age group of 50-60 years of age group is 21.68. The mean difference here is 11.72 which is clearly significant. This shows that females in the age group of 18-28 years of age and 50-60 years of age have significant difference in the sexual attitude towards homosexuality with reference to age. This means that males in both the age groups interact with each other on sexual attitude towards homosexuality.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Attitude Towards Lesbianism**

#### ***LS with reference to age (18-28 & 50-60 Years)***

In the present study results revealed that people from 18-28 years of age had a liberal and favourable sexual attitude towards lesbianism and people from 50-60 years of age had a rigid and unfavourable sexual attitude towards lesbianism. There were several causes which had an impact on these results. Let's see some of the causes as follows:

1. Homophobia has been very prevalent in the Indian society for a very long time now. People and the society has had a big problem accepting people with a different sexual orientation other than heterosexuality. They have believed that true love can exist only between a man and a woman. An acceptable sexual relationship can exist only between a man and a woman. This homophobia is much more prevalent in the elder generation i.e. for people in the age group of 50-60 years of age as homosexuality was never discussed openly in almost their entire lifetime which results in the unfavourable sexual attitude they have for lesbians.
2. Youngster i.e. people in the age group of 18-28 years of age have a favourable sexual attitude towards lesbianism is because they have seen discussions and debates talking openly about homosexuality. They have seen people come out openly about their sexual orientation and have sensitized to the same, resulting in the favourable sexual attitude towards lesbianism.

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### **LS with reference to gender (Male & Female)**

In the present study results revealed that males had a liberal and favourable sexual attitude towards lesbianism and females had a rigid and unfavourable sexual attitude towards lesbianism.

There were several causes which had an impact on these results.

1. Females have an unfavourable attitude towards lesbianism because of the deeper inhibition exhibited by the society. Since the olden times, female sexuality has not been given as much importance. Females never had the right to enjoy their sexuality and did not have a say in the same. Even in heterosexual relationships females were always seen as to satisfy the sexual needs of her male partner and not to satisfy her own. Female sexuality was never as much acknowledged in a heterosexual relationship. Henceforth, a lesbian relationship is far away from the questions of the society. It could never be accepted by the society that two females are together in a sexual relationship to consider and satisfy their sexual needs. Lesbianism has always had more criticism than homosexuality because of this factor.
2. Gender bias also came into the picture as males felt of no use when they heard of lesbian relationships. It is always the male partner who is the head of the relationship and the family in the Indian society. This image and norm is distorted is a lesbian relationship which is not acceptable by the society as a whole.
3. Females also have an unfavourable attitude towards lesbianism because of the mindset created by the society that it was bad for a girl to enjoy sex. Sex was seen as something dirty or a sin. Males were exempted from this mindset. Females were taught that they were being married to a man and it is her duty to satisfy his sexual needs. This norm was internalized by the women of the society centuries ago. Now this shows up in their sexual attitude towards lesbianism.

### ***Attitude Towards Homosexuality***

#### ***HS with Reference to Age (18-28 & 50-60 Years)***

In the present study results revealed that people from 18-28 years of age had a liberal and favourable sexual attitude towards lesbianism and people from 50-60 years of age had a rigid and unfavourable sexual attitude towards homosexuality. There were several causes which had an impact on these results. Let's see some of the causes as follows:

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2. Youngster i.e. people in the age group of 18-28 years of age have a favourable sexual attitude towards lesbianism is because they have seen discussions and debates talking openly about homosexuality. They have seen people come out openly about their sexual orientation and have sensitized to the same, resulting in the favourable sexual attitude towards lesbianism.

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### *HS with Reference to Gender (Male & Female)*

It was observed that gender did not have a significant influence on the sexual attitude towards homosexuality in all age groups considered. This can be due to the societal influence and the stereotypical gender roles that have been imposed on individuals.

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### *Conflict of Interest*

The author declared no conflict of interests.

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