

A study of homophobia in relation to personality, social desirability, aggression and social dominance among heterosexuals

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to gain an insight to correlate homophobia with personality, social desirability, aggression and social dominance among male and female heterosexuals of urban and rural livelihood of Ambala. Homophobia is traditionally defined as “fear, disgust, anger, discomfort and aversion that individuals experience in dealing with gay people”. However, it has been understudied whether there are significant differences in homophobia, personality, aggression and social dominance among male and female heterosexuals of urban and rural livelihood. Also study includes the correlation of homophobia with personality, social desirability, aggression and social dominance of heterosexuals.

The study was conducted on 300 heterosexuals out whom 75 male were from urban livelihood, 75 male were from rural livelihood, 75 female were from urban livelihood and 75 female were from rural livelihood. Standardized tools namely homophobia scale (Wright, Adams, and Bernat 1999), Big Five Inventory (John et al. 1991), Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale-Form C (Reynold, 1982), The Buss – Perry Aggression Questionnaire (Arnold Buss and Mark Perry, 1992), Social Dominance Orientation⁷ Scale (Arnold K. Ho, Jim Sidanius, Nour S. Kteily, Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington, Felicia Pratto, Kristin E. Henkel, Rob Foels And Andrew L. Stewart, 2015).

Results revealed that there are non-significant differences in homophobia among male and female heterosexuals of urban and rural livelihood. Personality, social desirability and aggression are negatively correlated to homophobia whereas social dominance positively correlates with homophobia in heterosexuals of urban and rural livelihood.

Keywords: Homophobia, Heterosexuals, Personality, Aggression, Social Desirability, Social Dominance, Urban and Rural Livelihood

Homophobia is a term coined by Weinberg (1972) was originally defined as the dread of being in close quarters with homosexual men and women as well as irrational fear, hatred, and intolerance by heterosexual individuals of homosexual men and women.

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It is a modern social scientific term cast in the field of psychology to report negative attitudes toward non heterosexuals and non heterosexuality. It has been distinguishing in a multitude of ways along with aversion, disgust, fear, or hatred of homosexuals (gay men and lesbians) and homosexuality. Prior to 1973, this resulted in homosexual individuals being declared 'mentally ill' according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) which proclaimed that homosexuality was inherently associated with psychopathology (Bayer, 1987; Minton, 2002).

The term homophobia continues to be an invaluable tool in addressing sexual inequalities. Even though the word homophobia literally means fear of man, it is accepted to mean fear of male and female gays. Also, phobia technically means an irrational fear of a particular object. Instead, homophobia refers to the emotion of anger more than to fear. Homophobia is not a mental illness; it is a phenomenon of antigay hostility. Gays and lesbians experience incidents of homophobia in terms of attacks including verbal assaults, threats, physical and sexual assault, and cyber bullying.

Personality

The word personality itself arises from the Latin word persona, which referred to a theatrical mask worn by performers in order to either project different roles or disguise their identities. Almost every day we describe and assess the personalities of the people around us.

"Although no single definition is acceptable to all personality theorists, we can say that personality is a pattern of relatively permanent traits and unique characteristics that give both consistency and individuality to a person's behaviour." -Feist and Feist, 2009.

"Personality refers to individuals' characteristic patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms -- hidden or not -- behind those patterns." - Funder, 2001. Personality also has an influence on the degree of prejudice and, therefore, homophobia. Simpson & Yinger (1972:77). The authoritarian personality, already described by Adorno et al in 1950, is found to be more prejudicial (Cullen, Wright & Alessandri 2002:122). Authoritarian personalities impose their will on others (Ray 1988:303-316) and generally exhibit traits such as hostility, destructiveness and cynicism which are also found in racial prejudice.

Social Desirability

The social desirability response set is the tendency to respond in a socially desirable manner. Social desirability is usually defined as "the tendency of individuals to present themselves favourably with respect to current social norms and standards" (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). This response set may contribute to bias assessments when using self-report questionnaires (Paulhus, 1991).

Aggression-

Aggression refers to a range of behaviours that can result in both physical and psychological harm to self, others, or objects in the environment. This type of behaviour centres on harming another person either physically or mentally. Aggression and violence directed toward homosexuals has been attributed to homophobia. It can be a sign of an underlying mental health disorder, a substance use disorder, or a medical disorder.

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Aggression plays a vital role in an individual's homophobic nature as people can be homophobic in many different ways. Homophobia takes the form of insults, discrimination and even includes violence. Such abuse is motivated purely on the fact someone is of a different sexual orientation. This bullying is born out of ignorance, fear and, in many cases, immaturity.

Social Dominance

It is a measure of an individual support for group based hierarchies in general, as well as beliefs about whether one's own group should dominate other groups. People with high social dominance orientation believe that society should be lead by some high class people whereas people with low social dominance orientation believe in equality.

Social dominance orientation explains an aspect of prejudice that is not accounted for by other constructs, such as right-wing authoritarianism or political conservatism. Most researchers nevertheless agree that the orientation functions as a mechanism through which the aforementioned factors produce individual differences in prejudice and hence institutionalized discrimination and oppression.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Weinberg, (1972) originally referring to gay men, the term homophobia was coined to describe "the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals". Today, the term describes the hatred and fear of lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men that contributes to levels of oppression in society Appleby & Anastas, (1998).

Herek (1994) showed that there were distinct demographic characteristics that were likely predictors of homophobia. There were higher levels of homophobia among individuals living in the U.S. South, in the Midwest, or in rural areas. Additionally, individuals who were older and/or less educated were also found to be more homophobic than individuals who were younger and/or more educated. Furthermore, past research shows that heterosexuals who scored high on authoritarianism had higher levels of homophobia (Herek, 2000).

Jenifer M Cullen, Lester Wayne Wright, Jr Michael Alessandri (2002) Investigated personality and demographic variables of homophobic and non-homophobic individuals. Variables explored included the personality characteristics Neuroticism, Extroversion, and Openness to Experience. The following demographic variables were also explored: gender role beliefs, gender, and personal contact. Total no. of participants included in this research is n=123. Results revealed the variable contact as the most critical predictor of homophobia, followed by gender, and the personality variable Openness to Experience. In addition, those who had not had previous contact with a homosexual individual and men were significantly more homophobic. No significant differences were found among gender roles in relation to self-reported indices of homophobia. The results provide attitudinal and behavioural differences that differentiate individuals who are intolerant of homosexuality from those that are more accepting of alternative lifestyles.

According to Manalastas and Del Pilar (2005) in a secondary analysis of national survey data, the LGBT are only tolerated by the public, and there is still an underlying stigma against them. Around 28% of the Filipinos felt that being gay or lesbian can never be justified.

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The study examining attitudes toward homosexuality and aggression toward homosexuals using a laboratory procedure (San Miguel & Millham, 1976) found that heterosexual men who advocated a high degree of repression of homosexuals responded more aggressively toward a homosexual than heterosexual confederate. However, the study was clearly limited because it used an aggression measure of dubious validity (i.e., negative evaluation) and defined homophobia in terms of intellectual beliefs about social repression rather than in terms of affective and behavioural responses toward homosexuals.

A lot of studies have indicated that people who have a high social dominance orientation show negative attitudes toward different groups such as ethnic minorities (McFarland & Adelson, 1996; Altemeyer, 1998; Duriez & Van Hiel, 2002; Hodson, 2008; Kteily, Sidanius & Levin, 2011; Havermans, 2011). A similar positive correlation emerged between social dominance and prejudice toward homosexuals (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994; Whitley, 1999; Poteat, Espelage & Green, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted on heterosexual population of Ambala (urban and rural both). The study area is selected purposively. Purposive selection of the area is due to the fact less studies have been conducted in this area. The researcher also selected this topic to find the perception and acceptance of homosexuals in the societal set-up. A survey approach was used, because the primary objective of the study was to assess homophobia in heterosexuals.

The research design chosen for this particular study is descriptive correlation design, where the researcher has attempted to describe the variables and the relationship between the variables.

The sample is a group of people that represents the population of interest. In the present study, the sample consisted of heterosexuals drawn from urban and rural areas of Ambala. The sample size in the present study comprised of 300 heterosexuals (75 male and 75 female from urban area, 75 male and 75 female from rural area). Hence the total sample under the study was 300 (N = 300). Heterosexuals were all in the age ranging from 18 – 23 years belonging to upper middle class families, studying in various reputed colleges and institutes of the city.

The sampling technique is stratified random sampling. The adolescent boys and girls were purposely and randomly selected.

Tools Used

The selection of tools was done keeping in mind the objectives of the study and the efforts were made to ensure that tools have adequate psychometric properties. While conducting the particular research the researcher chooses different tools, those are given in table no.1.

Table 1, Tools used to measure different variables of the study

Sr.No.	Variables	Tools
1.	Socio – demographic profile	Schedule developed by the investigator
2.	Homophobia	Homophobia Scale (1999)
3.	Personality	The Big Five Inventory (1991)
4.	Social desirability	Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Reynolds's)

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Sr.No.	Variables	Tools
		Form C) (1982)
5.	Aggression	Aggression Questionnaire (1992)
6.	Social dominance	Social Dominance Orientation Scale (2015)

Statistical Analysis

The obtained data was coded, tabulated and analyzed. Keeping in mind the objectives of the study, the appropriate statistical tools were used to draw meaningful inferences.

Karl Pearson’s Coefficient of correlation was applied to find out inter- correlation among different variables of the study.

RESULTS

Table 1: Inter-correlations between homophobia, personality, social desirability, aggression, and social dominance orientation among Heterosexual Population

Variables		Homophobia
		Correlation value
Personality (Big Five Inventory)	Extraversion	-.230**
	Agreeableness	-.348**
	Conscientiousness	-.086**
	Neuroticism	-.177**
	Openness	-.406**
Social Desirability		-.118*
Aggression	Aggression	.057
	Anger	.014
	Physical anger	.072
	Hostility	.072
	Verbal anger	-.013
Social Dominance Orientation		.422**

* Correlation is significant at level 0.05 (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (2-tailed)

It is evident from the above table that there exists a negative correlation between social desirability and homophobia at 0.01 level. Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Openness (sub variables of big five inventory) were negatively related with homophobia at 0.01 level. It means that higher the level of social desirability, and personality lower the level of homophobia among heterosexuals. Aggression shares positive relationship with homophobia but at non- significant level. Whereas the relationship between social dominance orientation and homophobia is positive and significant at 0.01 level. It means higher the social dominance orientation higher will be the homophobia among heterosexual population.

The current study found that there was positive relationship between the homophobia and social dominance orientation. Homophobia shares negative correlation with social desirability and Personality. Also the study depicts that homophobia shares non significant relationship with aggression.

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Table 2: Inter- correlations between homophobia personality, social desirability, aggression and social dominance among heterosexual population of urban and rural livelihood

Variables		Homophobia	
		Urban Heterosexuals N=150	Rural Heterosexuals N=150
Personality (Big Five Inventory)	Extraversion	-.205*	-.526**
	Agreeableness	-.308**	-.241*
	Conscientiousness	-.058	-0.47
	Neuroticism	-.167*	-.088
	Openness	-.459**	-.318**
Social Desirability		-.198*	-.131
Aggression	Total Aggression	-.005	-0.12
	Anger	.037	-.236*
	Physical Anger	.047	-.085
	Hostility	-.021	.327**
	Verbal Anger	-.072	-.069
Social Dominance		.394**	.312**

*Correlation is significant at level 0.05 (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (2-tailed)

It is evident from the above table that there exists a negative correlation between social desirability (-.198*) and homophobia at 0.05 level in urban heterosexuals whereas in rural heterosexuals the social desirability (-.131) share negative correlation with homophobia but at non-significant level.

It is seen from above table that there is negative correlation between agreeableness (-.308**), openness (-.459**) with homophobia at 0.01 level of significance among urban heterosexuals. Extraversion (-.205*) and neuroticism (-.167*) of urban heterosexuals reveals that there is negative correlation with homophobia at 0.05 level. Whereas in rural heterosexuals extraversion (-.526**) and openness (-.318**) negatively correlate with homophobia at 0.01 level. Agreeableness (-.241*) of rural heterosexuals negatively correlate homophobia at 0.0 level of significance. Conscientiousness (-.047) and neuroticism (-.088) of rural heterosexuals negatively correlate with homophobia at non-significant level.

The above table reveals that correlation coefficient between homophobia and aggression in urban heterosexuals; verbal anger .037, physical anger .047 which means that these variables share positive relationship with homophobia at non-significant level and total aggression -.005, hostility -.021 and verbal anger -.072 share negative correlation with homophobia at non-significant level. In case of rural heterosexuals hostility .312** is positively correlated to homophobia at 0.01 level, anger -.236* is negatively correlated to homophobia whereas total aggression -.012, physical anger -.085 and verbal anger -.069 share negative relation at non-significant level.

It is seen from above table that social dominance is positively correlated to homophobia among urban (.394**) and rural (.312**) heterosexual population.

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Table 3: Inter- correlations between Homophobia and Personality among heterosexual population of urban and rural livelihood

Personality – (Big Five Inventory)	Homophobia			
	Correlation Value			
	Urban Male Heterosexuals N=75	Urban Female Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Male Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Female Heterosexuals N=75
Extraversion	-.217	.096	-.526**	.003
Agreeableness	.011	-.254*	-.241*	-.420**
Conscientiousness	.087	.053	-.047	.069
Neuroticism	-.300**	.085	-.088	.018
Openness	-.250*	-.467**	-.318**	-.286*

* Correlation is significant at level 0.05 (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (2-tailed)

An inspection of Table reveals that correlation coefficient between homophobia and personality trait among urban male heterosexuals in extraversion is -.217 which indicates toward negative relationship and non significant. Agreeableness and conscientiousness in urban male in relation to homophobia is .011 and .087 which means that the variables share positive relationship with homophobia but the correlation is not significant. It is evident from the above table that there is negative correlation between neuroticism (-.300**), openness (-.250*) with homophobia at 0.01 and 0.05 level which means that higher the level of openness and neuroticism the lower the level of homophobia.

The above table reveals that correlation coefficient between homophobia and personality trait among urban female heterosexuals; extraversion .096, conscientiousness .053 and neuroticism .085 means that the variables share positive relationship with homophobia but not at significant level. Agreeableness -.254* and openness -.467** share negative correlation with homophobia at 0.05 and 0.01 level respectively.

The above table reveals that correlation coefficient between homophobia and personality trait among rural male heterosexuals; extraversion is -.526**, openness -.318** which means that variables share negative relationship with homophobia at 0.01 level. It means higher the level of extraversion or openness lowers the level of homophobia. Agreeableness -.241* share negative correlation with homophobia at 0.05 level. Conscientiousness -.047 and neuroticism -.088 share negative relation with homophobia at non- significant level.

The above table reveals that correlation coefficient between homophobia and personality trait among rural female heterosexuals; agreeableness is -.420** which means that share negative correlation with homophobia at 0.01 level. Extraversion .003, Conscientiousness .069, neuroticism .018 which means that variables variable share positive correlation with homophobia without any significant level.

TABLE 4: Inter- correlations between Homophobia and Social Desirability among heterosexual population of urban and rural livelihood

Social Desirability	Homophobia			
	Correlation Value			
	Urban Male Heterosexuals N=75	Urban Female Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Male Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Female Heterosexuals N=75
	-.062	-.131	-.131	-.045

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An inspection of the table reveals that social desirability and homophobia are correlated negatively in urban male heterosexuals, urban female heterosexuals, rural male heterosexuals and rural female heterosexuals.

The above results reveal that homophobia and social desirability are negatively correlated in urban male heterosexuals ($r = -.062$), urban female heterosexuals ($r = -.131$), rural male heterosexuals ($r = -.131$) and rural female heterosexuals ($r = -.045$). The correlation is negatively significant at any level.

Table 5: Inter- correlations between Homophobia and Aggression among heterosexual population of urban and rural livelihood

Aggression		Homophobia			
		Correlation Value			
		Urban Male Heterosexuals N=75	Urban Female Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Male Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Female Heterosexuals N=75
Total Aggression		-.218	-.092	-.012	.126
Sub-Variables Of Aggression	Anger	-.030	-.070	-.236*	.023
	Hostility	-.108	.103	.327**	.175
	Verbal Anger	-.208	-.275*	-.069	.140
	Physical Anger	-.236*	-.068	-.085	.042

* Correlation is significant at level 0.05 (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (2-tailed)

An inspection of table reveals that there is negative correlation between aggression, anger, hostility, verbal anger with homophobia at non-significant level among urban male heterosexuals aggression -.218, anger -.030, hostility -.108, and verbal anger -.208. Physical anger (-.236*) share negative correlation with homophobia at 0.05 level of significance.

The above table reveals that correlation coefficient between homophobia and aggression among urban female heterosexuals; aggression -.092, anger -.070, physical anger -.085 which means that variables share negative relationship with homophobia at non-significant level. Hostility -.275* share negative correlation with homophobia at 0.05 level of significance.

The above table shows that correlation coefficient between homophobia and aggression in rural male heterosexuals; aggression -.012, verbal anger -.069, physical anger -.085 which means that these variables share negative relationship with homophobia at non-significant level. Anger -.236* and hostility -.327** share negative correlation with homophobia at 0.05 level and 0.01 level respectively.

It seen from the above table that correlation coefficient between homophobia and aggression in rural female heterosexuals; aggression .126, anger .023, hostility .175, physical anger .140, and verbal anger .042 which means that variable share positive relationship with homophobia but at non-significant level.

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Table 6: Inter- correlations between homophobia and social dominance among heterosexual population of urban and rural livelihood

Social Dominance	Homophobia							
	Correlation Value							
	Urban Male Heterosexuals N=75	Urban Female Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Male Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Female Heterosexuals N=75	Urban Male Heterosexuals N=75	Urban Female Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Male Heterosexuals N=75	Rural Female Heterosexuals N=75
	.311**	.396**	.312**	.363**				

* Correlation is significant at level 0.05 (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (2-tailed)

An inspection of above table reveals that social dominance orientation and homophobia share positive and significant correlation with homophobia at 0.01 level of significance. It means that if one increased then other would also increase.

The above table reveal that in urban male heterosexuals ($r = .311^{**}$), urban female heterosexuals ($r = .396^{**}$), rural male heterosexuals ($r = .312^{**}$) and rural female heterosexuals ($r = .363^{**}$). The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

DISCUSSION.

Inter-correlations between homophobia, personality, social desirability, aggression and social dominance among heterosexual population

In heterosexual population Homophobia is negatively correlated to all the sub-variables of personality i.e. extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness at 0.01 level of significance and social desirability is negatively correlated to homophobia a 0.05 level. Also social dominance is positively correlated to homophobia at 0.01 level of significance whereas sub-variables of aggression i.e. total aggression, anger, physical anger, hostility and verbal anger are positively correlated to homophobia but at non-significant level.

Inter-correlations between homophobia, personality, social desirability, aggression and social dominance among male and female heterosexual population of urban and rural livelihood

In urban male heterosexual population sub-variables of personality i.e. neuroticism $-.300^{**}$ and openness $-.250^{*}$ are negatively correlated to homophobia at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance respectively. Whereas in rural male heterosexuals openness $-.318^{**}$ and extraversion $-.526^{**}$ are negatively correlated to homophobia at 0.0 level of significance and agreeableness $-.241^{*}$ is negatively correlated at 0.05 level.

It was observed that social desirability is negatively correlated to homophobia at non-significant level among male and female heterosexual population of urban and rural livelihood.

Similarly in aggression negative correlation was seen between homophobia and sub-variables of aggression i.e. total aggression, anger, hostility, verbal anger and physical anger. Among male heterosexual population of urban livelihood physical anger $-.236^{*}$ is negatively correlated to homophobia at 0.05 level while in rural male heterosexuals anger $-.236^{*}$ is negatively correlated at 0.05 level and hostility $.327^{**}$ is positively correlated at 0.01 level. In urban female heterosexuals verbal anger $-.275^{*}$ is negatively correlated at 0.05 level.

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Whereas in rural females all the sub-variables were positively correlated to homophobia but at non-significant level.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The result of above study has highlighted the homophobic behaviour of heterosexuals as related to personality, social desirability, aggression and social dominance. It was seen that people were homophobic irrespective of gender and livelihood. The study can also contribute to the research being conducted in the area of homophobia, personality, social desirability, aggression and social dominance among heterosexuals. The ongoing researches on this area can be benefit from this research.

The research can help the community to eradicate all the negative thoughts about homosexuals because homophobia actually makes the heterosexual population suffer in one or other way. It may change their views, perceptions and beliefs about the homosexual individuals.

This research can provide empirical feedback to the professionals and NGOs to plan and organize intervention strategies and programs so that homosexuals can also get their due place in society.

Findings of the study would be useful for psychologists, counsellors, policy makers and researchers to understand the impact of homophobia on personality, social desirability, aggression and social dominance.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

- More in depth studies may be conducted by taking into account other variables which includes psychological factors like behaviour, religion and contextual factors like socio-economic status, type of family and educational qualifications.
- Comparative study can also be conducted on heterosexuals of age group 35-40 years of age or adolescence v/s adulthood.
- Role of family in homophobic behaviour among heterosexuals.
- Self – acceptance of sexual orientation among adolescents.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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