

Did We Cross the Boundary of Acceptance?? An Analysis of Knowledge and Attitude of Young Adults Towards LGBTQ Community

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ABSTRACT

Background and objectives: Various studies showed that medical interns, health care professionals and non-medical professionals have a negative attitude towards LGBTQ community. Our aim is to analyse and compare the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of young adults (Medical and non-medical students) towards LGBTQ community. **Methodology:** A cross sectional study among 200 students, (100 medical and 100 engineering) studying in Bhaskar medical college and JBIET college, conducted between October- November, 2020, and were assessed using Riddle homophobia scale. **Results:** Our study indicated that the majority (72.5%) of the study population and more females (81.6%) were having positive attitudes towards LGBTQ community. And more medical students showed positive attitudes towards LGBTQ community than engineering students. **Conclusion:** With the social stigma and resulting ongoing difficulties faced by the LGBTQ community, it is our responsibility, to educate the younger generation appropriately and let them be educated in their respective professional colleges about the appropriate behaviours and attitudes.

Keywords: LGBTQ Community, Young Adults, Knowledge and Attitudes

LGBTQA refers to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Asexual or Ally. The initialism LGBT is intended to emphasize a diversity of sexuality and gender identity-based cultures. It may be used to refer to anyone who is non-heterosexual or non-cisgender, instead of exclusively to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender [1]. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) has already recognised that it is not a disorder. Awareness about this topic and acceptance has increased in western countries over the past few decades, but it is still a taboo in most parts of India.

Homosexual intercourse was made a criminal offense under section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. In 2009, the Delhi high Court revoked Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code,

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which criminalised consensual acts of same sex adults in private, and held that it violated the fundamental right of life and liberty and the right to equality as guaranteed in the Constitution [2]. However, the Supreme Court of India overturned this verdict in December 2013. Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. v. Union of India through Secretary Ministry of Law and Justice is a landmark decision of the Supreme Court of India in 2018 that decriminalised all consensual sex among adults in private, including homosexual sex.[3]

In researching attitudes towards homosexuality, it is important to keep in mind that there are limited studies available. A study that of polls in the US in the early 2000s found that a majority of US residents reported that advancement of LGB rights, such as legal recognition of same-sex marriage, clashed with their religious beliefs [4]. The research reviewed indicated that homosexuality is still something that is disapproved in society, even though it is more visible in the public domain [5]. Medical students may feel comfortable with LGBT issues in theory but the reality may be different. This cognitive dissonance may create problems for clinicians when managing patients with a homosexual orientation. [6]

A study done on integrating LGBT content into undergraduate medical education by Gina M. Sequeira et al in New Orleans, LA, validated the underlying assumption that LGBT educational sessions are meaningful to and valued by medical students.[7] Another study done on LGBT related content in undergraduate medical education by JO Maliver et al in 2011 in Canada and the US, found that the median reported time dedicated to LGBT-related content in medical school in 2009-2010 was 5 hours, but the number of hours in the required curriculum, as well as number of LGBT-related topics covered, varied widely. In many schools, deans of medical education endorsed dissatisfaction with their institutions' coverage of LGBT-related topics and provided potential strategies for increasing curricular content.[8] Study done on The effects of educational curricula and training on LGBT-specific health issues for healthcare students and professionals by AO Sekoni et al in 2017, found short term improvement in knowledge, attitudes and practice of healthcare students and professionals with regards to sexual and LGBT-specific healthcare. However, a unified conceptual model for training in-terms of duration, content and training methodology was lacking.[9] Study done in third and fourth year medical students in New York university school of medicine concluded that the medical students with increased clinical exposure to LGBT patients tended to perform more comprehensive histories, hold more positive attitudes toward LGBT patients, and possess greater knowledge of LGBT health care concerns than students with little or no clinical exposure.[10]

The hesitancy of the Indian Medical and Legal establishments to fully support LGBT rights exposes their subscription to prevailing societal prejudices. [11]

This is one of the most criticized communities and discussion of their lifestyle and rights is one of the most debated topics in the current scenario. With this background, the current study is taken up to assess the attitude of young people towards the issue.

Aim

This study aims to analyse and compare the knowledge, attitude and behavior of young adults (Medical and Non- Medical students) towards LGBT community.

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Objectives

1. To evaluate the knowledge of young adults belonging to medical and non-medical stream towards LGBT community
2. To ascertain the attitude of the study population towards the issue.
3. To compare the attitude and knowledge among both the study groups.

A cross-sectional study was conducted amongst young adults between ages (18-23) in engineering college and a medical college, in Hyderabad. The study was conducted for 2 months (October 2020 - November 2020). A total of 200 students (100 medical and 100 engineering) were considered for the study. An informed consent is taken from the respective college authorities. Those students who are not willing to give consent were excluded from the study.

Firstly, the students were given a brief introduction to the topic and objectives of research so as to acknowledge them of what is expected from them. Then each of them were given a questionnaire to be filled.

The questionnaire given to them is 'the riddle scale'.

The Riddle homophobia scale was developed by Dorothy Riddle in 1973-74 while she was overseeing research for the American Psychological Association Task Force on Gays and Lesbians.[12] The questionnaire contains 16 questions.

The scale is frequently divided into two parts, the 'homophobic levels of attitude' (first four terms) and the 'positive levels of attitude' (last four terms).

All the data obtained was analysed using SPSS 23 software for statistical analysis. The data obtained was compiled, tabulated and statistically analysed using MS Excel and Epi Info software.

A total of 200 respondents were included in the study. Study included 100 medical students and 100 engineering students. Study participants mean age was 22 +/- 4 years. Majority of study participants (73.5%) were in the age group of 18-22, only 26.5% of study participants were in the age group of 23-26 years, 45.5% were males and 54.5% of females. (**Table 1 and Table 2**)

Table-1: Sex Distribution of study participants (n=200)

Sex	Number (n=200)	Percentage (%)
Male	91	45.5
Female	109	54.5

Table-2: Age distribution of study participants (n=200)

Age distribution	Number (n=200)	Percentage (%)
18-22 years	147	73.5
23-26 years	53	26.5

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Around 82% of medical students were having positive attitudes towards LGBTQ community, 18% of medical students were having negative attitudes. Among engineering students, 63% of students were having positive attitudes, 37% of students were having negative attitudes. Among the total study participants, most (72.5%) were having positive attitude towards LGBTQ community, and 27.5% of the total study population were showing negative attitude. **(Table-3)**

Table-3: Attitude of study participants towards LGBTQ community (n=200)

Profession	Positive attitude	Negative attitude
Medical (n=100)	82 (82%)	18 (18%)
Engineering (n=100)	63 (63%)	37 (37%)
TOTAL(n=200)	145 (72.5%)	55 (27.5%)

Among 145 students who had positive attitudes, according to the Likert scale questionnaire (Riddle scale), 94% of medical students and 92% of engineering students were found to show Pity, 83% of medical students and 96.8% of engineering students have shown Tolerance, 96.3% of medical students and 87.3% of engineering students have shown Acceptance, 97.5% of medical students and 95.2% have shown Support, 89% of medical students and 92% of engineering students have shown Admiration, 70.7% of medical students and 80.9% of engineering students have shown Appreciation, 91.4% of medical students and 84.1% of engineering students have shown Nurturance.

Among the gender groups, 91% of male and 84.2% of females study subjects showed Pity, 83.9% of male and 82% of female study subjects showed Tolerance, 94.6% of male and 84.2% of female study subjects showed Acceptance, 91% of male and 87.6% of female study subjects showed Support, 76.7% of male and 91% of female study subjects showed Admiration(which is a significant difference among the groups in this category), 67.8% of male and 70.7% of female study subjects showed Appreciation, 75% of male and 76.4% have showed Nurturance

Among the age groups, 91.17% of 18-22 years old subjects and 88.37% of 23-26 years old subjects showed Pity, 85.2% of 18-22 years old subjects and 95.3% of 23-26 years old subjects showed Tolerance. 96% of 18-22 years old subjects showed 81.3% of 23-26 years old subjects showed Acceptance, 92.15 % of 18-22 years old subjects and 79% of 23-26 years old showed Support, 77.4% of 18-22 years old subjects 65.11% of 23-26 years old subjects showed Admiration, 82.35% of 18-22 years old subjects and 88.37% of 23-26 years old subjects showed Appreciation, 90.1% old 18-22 years old subjects and 95.3% of 23-26 years old subjects showed Nurturance. **(Table-4)**

Table-4: Different characters among Positive attitude

Character of positive attitude	Medical (n=82)	Engineering (n=63)	Male (n=56)	Female (n=89)	18-22 years (102)	23-26 years (43)
Pity	77 (94%)	58 (92%)	51 (91%)	75(84.2%)	93(91.17%)	38 (88.37%)

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Character of positive attitude	Medical (n=82)	Engineering (n=63)	Male (n=56)	Female (n=89)	18-22 years (102)	23-26 years (43)
Tolerance	68 (83%)	61 (96.8%)	47(83.9%)	73 (82%)	87 (85.2%)	41 (95.3%)
Acceptance	79 (96.3%)	55 (87.3%)	53(94.6%)	75(84.2%)	98 (96%)	35 (81.3%)
Support	80 (97.5%)	60 (95.2%)	51 (91%)	78(87.6%)	94(92.15%)	34 (79%)
Admiration	73 (89%)	58 (92%)	43(76.7%)	81 (91%)	79 (77.4%)	28 (65.11%)
Appreciation	58 (70.7%)	51 (80.9%)	38(67.8%)	63(70.7%)	84(82.35%)	38 (88.37%)
Nurturance	75 (91.4%)	53 (84.1%)	42 (75%)	68(76.4%)	92(90.1%)	41 (95.3%)

In our study we analysed association between sex, age group, profession with attitude of the study participants towards LGBTQ community. We found significant association with sex and profession (Medical and engineering fields) ($p < 0.05$) but no significant association was found with their age. ($P > 0.05$) (**Table-5**)

Table-5: Relation between sex, age group, profession with attitude of the study participants

S.No	Variable	POSITIVE ATTITUDE	NEGATIVE ATTITUDE	Chi square & P- value
Sex	Male (n=91)	56 (61.5%)	35 (38.5%)	10.062 P<0.05
	Female (n=109)	89 (81.6%)	20 (18.4%)	
Age group	18-22 years (n=147)	102 (69.3%)	45 (30.7%)	2.69 P>0.05
	23-26 years (n=53)	43 (81.1%)	10 (18.9%)	
Profession	Medical	82 (82%)	18 (18%)	9.05 P<0.05
	Engineering	63 (63%)	37 (37%)	

**Significant- $p < 0.05$; *Highly significant- $p < 0.001$, Not significant- $p > 0.05$.*

The primary aim of this study is to describe the knowledge, attitude and behaviour of young adults towards LGBTQ community.

Majority (82%) of medical students and only 63% of engineering students in our study showed positive attitudes towards LGBTQ community. Whereas an earlier study done by FDK Yertutanol et al,[13] in Turkey, showed that physicians and medical students have negative attitudes towards homosexuals and that medical training on sexual health issues should be improved.

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Compared to our study, in an earlier study done by Dr Gurappa Puttanna Gururaj et al [14] in Kolar, India showed 88.8% of medical interns showing Pity towards LGBTQ community, 88.8% of them showed Tolerance, 70% of them showed to have Acceptance towards this community, 100% interns showed support, 72.5% interns showed Admiration, 91.3% of interns showed Appreciation, and only 35% interns showed Nurturance towards LGBTQ community.

More numbers of females were having positive attitudes (81.6%) towards LGBTQ community. This stereotypical attitude has not only been reported in India but also in European countries, the study done on medical students in Zagreb, Croatia, where 5th and 6th year medical students were assessed for homophobic attitudes and knowledge towards homosexuality in 2009-2010, found that male students had more negative attitudes towards homosexuality than female students. [15]

The profession of the study population also had an influence on their attitude & behaviour, more number of Medical students (82%) showed positive attitudes towards LGBTQ community than the Engineering students. A study done on Medical students' perspective on LGBTQ health by Julie A Christensen et al, in Philadelphia, US, found that, A focused gender and sexuality curriculum appears to impact medical student attitudes regarding LGBTQ patients. [16]

A study done on specific LGBT healthcare education in medical school by Vishnu paramesh, BC Cockbain et al among UK medical students found that Most participants would not clarify gender pronouns or ask about gender or sexual identity in mental health or reproductive health settings and that addressing gender identity and sexuality issues within medical curricula may remove barriers to accessing health care and improve encounters for LGBTQ patients.[17]

CONCLUSION

Majority of the study population (72.5%) were having a positive attitude and more females (81.6%) were having positive attitudes towards LGBTQ community. The profession of the study population also had an influence on their attitude & behaviour, more number of Medical students (82%) showed positive attitudes towards LGBTQ community than the Engineering students.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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