

To Study the Attitude and Knowledge Towards Homosexuality among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Aim- To perform a cross sectional study on adolescent male and female population to study and compare the attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents. **Methodology-** It was a cross sectional study where a group of adolescents, males and females, were selected, ranging from age 12 to 18 year. Two scales, i.e., ATLG Scale (Attitude Towards Lesbian and Gay Men Scale) and SEKHQ Scale (The Sex Education and Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire), were provided to participants and data was collected. **Results-** The study highlights no significant difference between the domains of attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality. Independent T test was used to statistically understand whether the difference between male and females in the domain of attitude and knowledge is significant or not. The value obtained was $p > 0.05$, hence showing no significant difference. Also, Correlation pearson-r was used to find if there is a correlation between attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality, and the correlation was significant at the 0.01 level, hence showing a positive correlation between attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality.

Keywords: *Homosexuality, Attitude, Knowledge, Adolescents*

The study investigated adolescents' attitudes and knowledge about homosexuality. The main considerations of this study are whether adolescents attitudes towards homosexual relationships/groups are positive or negative, and their understanding of homosexuality. With reference to previous studies and researches, it can be seen that LGBT groups were not accepted by society when they were officially recognized worldwide. The facts show that adolescents do not respond well to the LGBT community and know very little about the same background. Researchers tried to reconcile knowledge and attitudes about homosexuality. A group of adolescents (including men and women) were selected as the study participants to measure the participants' attitudes and knowledge about homosexuality.

Significance of the study

In recent years, the topic of homosexuality has become a frequent topic of conversation. Understanding people's attitudes and knowledge about homosexuality is critical. Low-level

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knowledge can additionally lead to negative attitudes. This study aims to evaluate the attitudes and knowledge of adolescents towards homosexuality.

Adolescents

The APA dictionary describes adolescents as the period of human development that begins from adolescence (10-12 years) to the end of physical adulthood (approximately 19 years), although the exact age range varies from person to person. Adolescence is a period of transition between early life and adulthood. It includes some major changes in the body. At some point in this time, there will be many physical, sexual, cognitive, social and emotional changes, which will bring expectations and anxiety to children and their families.

Early Adolescence (Ages 10 to 13)-

At this stage, children often begin to grow rapidly. These physical changes stimulate some children's curiosity and anxiety, if they don't know what will happen or what is normal. Some children may also question their gender identity at this time, and the arrival of puberty may be a difficult time for trans children.

Middle Adolescence (Ages 14 to 17)-

Physical changes from puberty continue during middle adolescence. At this age, many teens are more interested in romantic and sexual relationships. The brain continues to change and develop in this stage.

Late Adolescents (18-21, and beyond)-

At this stage, children usually have completed physical development and grown to their full adult height. They usually have more impulse control by now and may be better able to measure risks and rewards accurately.

According to the World Health Organization, adolescence is the stage of human development that occurred against childhood and adults, and is from 10 to 19 years. It is a period of biological, cognitive and social changes that occur rapidly, and is associated with a number of health-related problems including depression, eating disorders, substance abuse and dependence, risky sexual behaviour, antisocial and delinquent activity.

Adolescence is also known as the second main door and the risk of opportunity development. This evidence indicates that parents have many differences. This difference works through the nature of its ideal bonds with children.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality is a romantic, sexual attraction or sexual behavior between members of the same gender and sex. According to APA, sexual orientation is defined as a permanent pattern of men, women, nor men and women, emotional, romantic and / or sexual attraction of women.

First, in 1952, when the APA announced the first diagnosis and statistical manual of mental disorders, homosexuality was included as a disability. However, study and research did not have an empirical or scientific basis for labeling homosexuality as an abnormality. Therefore, many medicine experts, mental health and social and behavioral sciences concluded that it is not ethical to disorder to label homosexuality as a mental disorder.

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In recognition of the scientific evidence, APA removed homosexuality from the DSM in 1973, stating that homosexuality does not imply any impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities. APA requested all mental health professionals to take the lead in removing the stigma of mental illness that has long been associated with homosexual orientations. The same policy was followed by The National Association of Social Workers.

Homosexuality has its historical base in India; it has been elaborately explained in Rigveda. The carvings and depictions in the famous temples of Khujarao, Konark and Puri are the proof of the same. India is also the birthplace of Vatsanaya's Kamasutra that includes a complete concept referring to homosexuality. Thus, Hinduism has always been open to various ideas of sexuality in the ancient as well as medieval times. Although, most other dominant religions are known to discourage homosexuality and consider it as a sinful and unnatural behaviour.

Nature and nurture also play a role in defining one's sexuality. It has been argued whether homosexuality is a result of nature or nurture. Various researchers have conducted studies in support of the nurture argument, while several others support the nature argument. Based on these studies, it was concluded that both nature and nurture play an important role in determining an individual's sexual orientation.

Knowledge

According to Plato, Knowledge is defined as perception or sensation; a true belief; and a true belief accompanied by a rational ground.

Knowledge is referred to as familiarity, or understanding of someone or something (facts, information, descriptions, or skills) which is acquired through either experience or education by perceiving, discovering, or learning. Knowledge is also known as the theoretical or practical understanding of a particular topic.

Characteristics of Knowledge

- knowledge is the basic understanding of physiological, emotional, cognitive, and social determinants of behaviour.
- Basic understanding of the various disciplines in psychology as well as major theories and history of psychology.
- Familiarity and experience with psychological research methods, including data collection and analysis.
- Specific knowledge and abilities related to your concentration (e.g., Cognitive, Neuroscience, Developmental, etc.)

Types of Knowledge

- Declarative knowledge (substantive knowledge) focuses on beliefs about relationships among variables.
- Procedural knowledge focuses on beliefs relating sequences of steps or actions to desired (or undesired) outcomes.
- Tacit knowledge includes insights, intuitions, and hunches.
- Explicit knowledge refers to knowledge that has been expressed into words and numbers. We can convert explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge.

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- General knowledge is possessed by a large number of individuals and can be transferred easily across individuals.
- Specific knowledge, or “idiosyncratic knowledge,” is possessed by a very limited number of individuals, and is expensive to transfer.
- Technically specific knowledge is deep knowledge about a specific area.

Nature of Knowledge

Abstract nature: Knowledge is shared understanding; it is either a justified truth or an agreement between two concepts.

Social nature: Knowledge is socially shared understanding, as it is developed through collective pursuit of the society members. People acquire a great knowledge from their own experience; simultaneously they build up the knowledge through association with the people surrounding them. Therefore, the knowledge is acquired and built up in society.

Knowledge is Cumulative: It is cumulative in nature as it is socially preserved and transferred from one generation to the future generations. It continuous to grow and develop in generations with the help of new understanding of reality.

Attitude

According to MICHEAL HOGG, attitude is a negative or positive assessment of an object which influence human’s behaviour towards that object.

According to MARTIN FISHBEIN, attitude is a n acquired tendency to respond to a certain situation/ or people in a favorable or unfavorable.

Factors Affecting Attitude

- Psychological: Psychological factors like ideas, values, beliefs, perception, etc. shapes and determines a person's attitude.
- Family: Family plays an important role in the primary stage of attitudes held by individuals. A person develops his/her attitude from his family members, i.e. parents, grandparents, siblings. There is a high degree of relationship between parent and children in attitudes found in them.
- Society: Societies play an important role in shaping the attitudes of an individual. An individual’s attitude is influenced by his/her culture, tradition, language, etc.,
- Economic: A person's attitude also depends on issues such as his salary, status, work environment, work as such, etc.

Components of Attitude

- The cognitive component of a social attitude consists of a person’s system of beliefs, perceptions and stereotypes about the attitudinal object.
- The affective component of social attitude refers to the emotional aspect of the attitude which is very often a deep rooted component and resists most to change.
- The behavioural component of social attitudes indicates the tendency to react towards the object of attitude in certain specific ways. In other words, it is a predisposition to act in a certain manner towards the attitude object.

Characteristics of Attitude

Attitudes give a direction to one’s behaviour and actions.

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Attitudes are not innate but learned, acquired and conditioned. Attitude is never neutral. It can be either positive or negative, favourable or unfavourable, palatable or unpalatable.

Attitude is an evaluation of things in terms of liking or disliking, favor or unfavor, positive or negative. Different people can have different attitude towards a same thing or an idea.

For instance, There are people who think use of internet for students is a positive thing which helps them in their studies and knowledge building, while some people think it is a negative thing as it wastes lot of time in useless activities. This negative or positive evaluation of an object is known as attitude.

An attitude is a relatively enduring organisation of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols.

It is a psychological construct, a mental and emotional entity that inheres in, or characterizes a person. They are complex and are an acquired state through experiences. It is an individual's predisposed state of mind regarding a value and it is precipitated through a responsive expression towards oneself, a person, place, thing, or event.

Attitude and Knowledge Towards Homosexuality

Different cultures and historical periods have very different attitudes towards homosexuality. Adolescents' perception of homosexuality plays a crucial role in the stigmatisation of the homosexual. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community is vulnerable to poor health and social outcomes because of marginalisation, stigma and normative pressure against sexual and gender minorities. They face personal and inter-personal challenges. Unlike other ethnic minorities, homosexuals cannot count on the support of their parents or relatives, so they are particularly vulnerable.

The LGBT community became the target of verbal and physical violence. Therefore, compared to the general population, they have experienced a high degree of psychological distress and are at increased risk of depression, anxiety, body image, and eating disorders. A person's sexual orientation affects the attitudes of others towards them. In today's world, heterosexuality has become the norm and most minority groups (including gays and lesbians) are stereotyped. The population of LGTB Community ranges from 4 to 17%.

This gives rise to two terms, i.e., Homophobia and homonegativity. Homophobia is known as an irrational fear or dislike of homosexuals, while homonegativity includes negative attitudes, values and beliefs of the heterosexual community towards homosexuals.

Living in a heterosexual society will inevitably bring challenges to non-heterosexual people. Mays & Cochran stated that many lesbians, gay, and bisexual people face social stigma, heterosexuality, violence, and discrimination.

According to Herrick, heterosexuality is an ideological system that denies, slanders, and slanders any form of non-heterosexual behavior, identity, relationship, or community. Heterosexuality is known as a belief system that believes that heterosexuality is more natural than homosexuality.

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Herek introduced the term "sexual prejudice" to express negative attitudes towards gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people who are sexually stigmatized. Sexual prejudice is called a negative attitude based on sexual orientation.

Thus, Homophobia, stigma, and discrimination against gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men still exist in the many areas of the world and it negatively affect the health and well-being of this community.

These negative beliefs and behaviors will affect the physical and mental health of the gay community. These health barriers need to be addressed at different levels of society, such as medical institutions, workplaces, and schools, to improve the life-long health of gay and bisexual men.

Homosexuals are also more likely to be rejected by their families, increasing the likelihood of homelessness. About 40% of homeless youth are LGBT. A study conducted in 2009 showed that homosexuals were strongly rejected by their families.

Objective-

The study has following four objectives:

- i. To assess the attitude towards homosexuality among adolescents.
- ii. To assess the knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents.
- iii. To assess the difference in male and female in the domain of attitude towards homosexuality.
- iv. To assess the difference in male and female in the domain of knowledge towards homosexuality.
- v. To find the correlation between the domain attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality.

Hypothesis

- H1- There will be a positive attitude towards homosexuality among adolescents.
H2- There Will be a high level knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents.
H3- There will be a significant difference in between male and female in the domain of attitude towards homosexuality.
H4- There will be a significant difference in between male and female in the domain of knowledge towards homosexuality.
H5- There will be a positive relationship between attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality.

Research Design

The research design is cross sectional for this study. The sample size will be 67.

Sample

After having conceptual framework, reviewing the literature, framing the objectives and hypotheses, the next step was to select a representative sample on which the proposed variable can be studied. The sample of the present investigation was selected using the stratified random sampling of 67 respondents (32 male, 35 female). The age range of the adult sample was from 12-18 years.

Names of tools

- 1) Socio-demographic data sheet

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- 2) ATLG - The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale
- 3) SEKQH- the sex education and knowledge about homosexuality questionnaire.

Description of scales

1. (ATLG) Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale is used to measure the attitudes of heterosexuals toward homosexuals. It consists of 20 items, the first 10 about lesbians and the next 10 about gay men. Items are scored using a 5-point Likert scale, end points being “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree”. The total scale score ranges from 20 to 180, with higher scores indicating more negative attitudes.

2. (SEKHQ) The Sex Education and Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire is used to measure the knowledge of heterosexuals about homosexuality. It consists of 32 statements with three responses- TRUE, FALSE, DON'T KNOW. For every correct answer, a score of 1 is given, and for every Wrong and Dont Know answer, a score of 0 is given. The scoring ranges from 0-32, where score 32 indicating all answers correct and high level of knowledge.

Data Analysis

For analysing the collected data, Mean, Independent T test, and Pearson correlation have been used to test the framed hypotheses using SPSS 20 IBM.

RESULT TABLES AND DESCRIPTIONS

The present study was focused on adolescents, at this age one has started to develop with puberty and ends with physiological maturity. This study was designed to study the difference in attitude and knowledge about homosexuality among adolescents. Further the results are interpreted and discussed below,

Table No. 1 showing descriptive analysis (Mean, St. Deviation) of Attitude Scale (ATLG_SC):

Scales	Gender	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ATLG_SC	Male	32	64.7500	6.61377	1.16916
	Female	35	64.9429	4.95831	0.83811

Table No. 1 indicates that the Mean of male and female in Attitude Scale is 64.7500 and 64.9429 respectively.

Table No. 2 showing descriptive analysis (Mean, St. Deviation) of Knowledge Scale (SEKHQ_SC):

Scales	Gender	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SEKHQ_SC	Male	32	9.7188	5.30511	0.93782
	Female	35	13.3429	5.30229	0.89625

Table No. 2 indicates that the Mean of male and female in Knowledge Scale is 9.7188 and 13.3429 respectively.

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Table No. 3 showing the difference between male and female in the domain of attitude among homosexuality. (Independent t-test):

Scales	Gender	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
ATLG_SC	Male	32	64.7500	6.61377	1.16916
	Female	35	64.9429	4.95831	0.83811

	Levene's test for equality of Variances								
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% of Confidence Interval of Difference	
								lower	upper
ATLG_SC									
Equal Variances assumed	1.676	0.200	-0.136	65	0.892	-0.19286	1.42030	-3.02940	2.64368
Equal Variances not assumed			-0.134	57.260	0.894	-0.19286	1.43853	-3.07317	2.68746

Table No. 3 indicates that there is no significant difference between the male and females in the domain of attitude.

Table No. 4 showing the difference between male and female in the domain of knowledge among homosexuality. (Independent t-test):

Scales	Gender	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SEKHQ_SC	Male	32	9.7188	5.30511	0.93782
	Female	35	13.3429	5.30229	0.89625

	Levene's test for equality of Variances								
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% of Confidence Interval of Difference	
								lower	upper
SEKHQ_SC									
Equal Variances assumed	0.439	0.510	-2.794	65	0.007	-0.362411	1.29718	-6.21476	-1.03345
Equal Variances not assumed			-2.794	64.460	0.007	-0.362411	1.29722	-6.21524	-1.03298

Table No. 4 indicates that there is no significant difference found between male and female in the domain of knowledge.

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Table No. 5 showing the relationship between attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents using Correlation Pearson-r.

		ATLG_SC	SEKHQ_SC
ATLG_SC	Pearson Correlation	1	0.501
	Sig. (2 tailed)	-	0.000
	N	73	73
SEKHQ_SC	Pearson Correlation	0.501	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.000	-
	N	73	73

Table No. 5 indicates that there is a positive correlation between attitude, and knowledge.

DISCUSSION

Homosexuality is romantic attraction, sexual attraction, or sexual behaviour between the members of the same sex or gender. As a sexual orientation, homosexuality is an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to the people of the same sex.

The term homosexuality in itself triggers the images of people protesting, pride parades, pink pages, people holding placards asking for equal rights, in our minds.

Therefore, this study was planned to study and compare the attitude towards homosexuality, and knowledge towards homosexuality between males and females. It was a cross sectional study where a group of adolescents (males and females) were selected for participation and correlation between the two measures i.e. attitude towards homosexuality and knowledge towards homosexuality was studied. The two Questionnaires namely, Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale, and The Sex Education and Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire, were provided to the samples and data was collected from adolescents between the age-range of 12-18 years.

The first objective was to assess the attitude towards homosexuality among adolescents, with the hypothesis stating there will be a positive attitude towards homosexuality among adolescents. According to the results, Table No. 1 shows there is a positive attitude towards homosexuality among adolescents, hence proving the first hypothesis. It was seen in earlier research by Sahni, Gupta, Nodiyal, and Pant that a group of adolescents who were in contact with homosexuals showed a positive attitude towards homosexuality.

Similarly,

the second objective was to assess the knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents, with the hypothesis stating there will be a high-level knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents.

According to the results, Table No. 2 shows there is a low-level knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents, hence rejecting the second hypothesis.

The third objective was to assess the difference in male and female in the domain of attitude towards homosexuality, with the hypothesis stating there will be a significant difference between male and female in the attitude domain. According to the results, Table No. 3 there is no significant difference between male and female in the domain of attitude towards

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homosexuality, as the value obtained was $p > 0.05$, showing no significant difference hence, rejecting the third hypothesis.

The fourth objective was to assess the difference in male and female in the domain of knowledge towards homosexuality, with the hypothesis there will be a significant difference between male and female in the knowledge domain. According to the results, Table No. 4 there is no significant difference between male and female in the domain of knowledge towards homosexuality, as value obtained was $p > 0.05$, showing no significant difference, hence, rejecting the fourth hypothesis.

The fifth objective was to find the correlation between the domain attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality, with the hypothesis stating there will be a positive relationship between attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents. According to the results, Table No. 5 shows a positive correlation between attitude, and knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents, as the correlation was significant at the 0.01 level, hence, accepting the fifth hypothesis.

This study concluded that adolescents poses a positive attitude towards homosexuality, but have low level knowledge towards homosexuality.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter will give a brief overview of the findings of the present study and their relationship to previous work in these areas. The main findings with regard to the objective and proposed hypotheses are summarized and general conclusions presented.

Conclusion

This study was planned to study attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality between males and female. It was a cross sectional study where a group of adolescents, males and females, were selected, ranging from age 12 to 18 year.

This study highlights that the attitude towards homosexuality among adolescents is positive, and on the same hand, they bear a low level knowledge about homosexuality. A comparative study was conducted between male and female participants and no significant difference was found in the domains of attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality. Independent T test was used to statistically understand whether the difference between male and females in the domain of attitude and knowledge is significant or not. The value obtained was $p > 0.05$, hence showing no significant difference. Also, Correlation pearson-r was used to find there is a correlation between attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality, and the correlation was significant at the 0.01 level, hence showing a positive correlation between attitude and knowledge towards homosexuality.

Homosexuality is still a topic which is considered as a taboo in this era.

Lot of participants denied to participate in this study as they were not comfortable discussing their thoughts related to this particular topic. Therefore, it is very important that proper education is provided to the adolescents through a proper channel. Family members, teachers and elders should discuss these points in detail to increase knowledge of adolescents.

Limitation

1. The survey is targeted towards adolescents only.

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2. Sample sizes are small.
3. Sample was almost from urban areas.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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