

Research Paper

Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals

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ABSTRACT

Gender and sexuality are viewed as cultural constructs in queer theory. The Queer Theory examines heteronormativity, patriarchy, and heterosexuality. It addresses deviant genders, sexualities, and sexual expressions in society. Coming out publicly as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (commonly shortened as LGBTQ) can be difficult. LGBTQ students in India face sexual harassment, bullying, gender dysphoria, anxiety, depression, and slurs from peers. After this humiliation, students lose confidence and feel sad. Negative teacher and administrator interactions hinder children's socialisation. Students should attend impartial schools. Bullied LGBTQ students often commit suicide. This article examines marginalised LGBTQ students and their safety in Indian schools. The authors recommend improving LGBTQ student conditions in schools, colleges, and universities, especially in India.

Keywords: *Queer, Sexual Minorities, Gender Dysphoria, Bullying, Sexual Harassments, Mental Health*

Every person is born into a specific gender, and this is reflected in their sexuality and gender identity, which are referred to together as LGBTIQ. The word "LGBTIQ" is used to cover all of these bases. Although they may sound the same, "sex," "gender," and "gender identity" all have distinct meanings, as does the lengthy acronym LGBTQ. Sexual orientation is implied by the first three letters of LGBTQ. Lesbian is denoted by an "L". They are females who are drawn to other females. Then "G" denotes Gay. They are males who enjoy males in general. The word Bisexual is denoted by the letter "B". They are individuals drawn to both men and women. Trans is a term that centers on gender identity and begins with the letter "T". Its foundation is the assumption that sex and gender are distinct. That's why it's important to remember that the term "girl" or "boy" refers to a social construct rather than a biological one. However, there are individuals for whom these binary characteristics are inaccurate. They want society to recognise that they identify as a gender other than that of their sex. Therefore, if a person's gender and biological sex are different. A trans woman or trans man is what we refer to. However, there are people who

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Received: June 03, 2023; Revision Received: July 18, 2023; Accepted: July 21, 2023

Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals

don't fit neatly into either of these binaries and must instead seek out their own (Nigudkar J. R., 2020) unique sense of self.

Non-binary is the proper phrase, and there is as wide a range as there are persons on the planet. Intersexuality is represented by the "I" some people do not have definite biological sex at birth. Surgery may be performed on intersex children in order to change their sex and, as a result, identify a particular sex. The name "Queer," from which the letter "Q" derives, is an umbrella term for this very contentious interference with the personal bodily of intersexual persons. which. Anywhere on the sexual orientation continuum is covered by it. The LGBTQ community as a whole, as well as sex, gender, and identity owing to intersexual people's rights. Recently, several nations added a third gender to the definition of male and female. The traditional definitions of sex have been re-examined in today's more inclusive culture. Between these extremes, there is a wide range of possible methods for an individual to express and live out their gender identity (Explanatory Channel, 2022).

LGBTQ Students in Educational Institutions

A well-educated population is essential to the growth and stability of any society. Therefore, it is essential that we should work to enhance conditions in all educational institutions for better learning for all. We can only reach our goal if schools are safe and welcoming places for individuals of various races, economic statuses, and different sexes. Notwithstanding this, enforcing the law in classrooms can be challenging due to a lack of resources (such as security, adequate training, and on-site counsellors). There is a growing number of sexual minority students attending schools, colleges and universities. As LGBTQ students, they face numerous challenges in their daily lives, whether in the classroom, outside of the classroom, in their living area, in public places, and so on. Here, various studies related to LGBTQ students' challenges in educational institutions are given below: -

Some of the challenges faced by LGBTQ students in educational institutions are bullying and harassments exposure to derogatory slurs assault harassments etc.

LGBTQ Students' Experiences in Educational Institutions

LGBTQ students who go to college or university face problems that are unique to them, especially if they come from a low-income or economically marginalised background. The fact that college graduates have a higher average age than the overall population and seem to be consequently more prone to being unemployed exacerbates the difficulties of making a living. They feel even worse about requesting their parents' financial support so often when other young people their age have jobs and can provide for themselves. Their life after reaching the University level becomes more hostile for those of the LGBTQ community who are members of underrepresented groups, such as those who are low-income, economically marginalised (LIEM), or members of a minority race or religion. According to a study conducted by Truong et al. (2020), 40% of 1,534 black LGBTQ students had been the target of biological sex, gender identity, and/or race-related discrimination or abuse, with black gender nonconforming students being the most frequently targeted demographic. A systematic literature review and recommendations for prevention and intervention on cyberbullying with LGBTQ students who have been persecuted, but the findings are inconsistent and do not reveal their concerns (Abreu & Kenny, 2018; Stoll & Block, 2015).

Bullying and harassment are more common among LGBTQ adolescents than among their straight and cisgender counterparts at school (Kann et al., 2016; Abreu & Kenny, 2018; Kosciw et al., 2020). Consider the following as an illustration of my point: Kosciw and his

Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals

colleagues discovered that during the past academic year, 95% of LGBTQ students heard homophobic slurs and 92% heard negative comments about their appearance at school (2020). A third of LGB students attempted suicide in the previous year, and another 40% seriously contemplated it (Kann et al., 2016). Transgender and genderqueer teenagers had more negative school experiences than their cisgender straight and cisgender sexual minority peers. In 2018, Day and his colleagues investigated 398 transgender children. The research indicates that these students are more vulnerable to being mistreated and have a negative outlook on their classroom setting (Day, J. K., Perez-Brumer, A., & Russell, S. T., 2018).

Exposure to Derogatory Slurs and assault experiences at School

As per the 2019 National School Climate Survey three-quarters of LGBT students reported that they were regularly subjected to homophobic or sexist statements at school. Eight out of ten students report hearing the word “gay” used negatively by a teacher or another student at least once every week. The great majority of children reported receiving homophobic comments or behaviours from school officials. According to kids, school personnel did not interfere less than 20 percent of the time when they heard homophobic or insulting remarks about gender presentation. Approximately forty percent of children have heard peers make racist remarks. The absence of “masculinity” among students was criticised more often than their lack of “femininity” (Joseph G. Kosciw, 2011).

According to the 2019 National School Climate Survey reports those students who identified as LGBTQ were the targets of bullying and violence because of their sexuality. Eighty-plus percent of students reported being verbally abused at school because of their sexuality, and over 65 percent reported being assaulted because of their sexual identity. Approximately 40% of children who report being physically bullied because of their sexual orientation at school are transgender (pushed or shoved). One in five kids reported being the target of sexual orientation or gender identity-based violence at school in the previous school year. This included being attacked, punched, or injured with the weapon. Girls were more likely than boys to be victims of relationship hostility (being purposefully ignored by peers or spreading malicious rumours). Over half of the students experienced cyberbullying last school year (Joseph G. Kosciw, 2011).

School Safety

According to the National School Climate Survey, 2019 indicates 72 percent of LGBT students have regularly faced homophobic or sexist slurs at school. At least once a week, eight out of ten youngsters report hearing a pejorative use of the word “gay” at school, either from a teacher or a classmate. The majority of the students reported homophobia from instructors and other staff members. Students indicated that school staff did not intervene less than 20 per cent of the time when they heard homophobic or disrespectful statements about gender presentation. Around 40 percent of students report hearing racist remarks from their classmates. More frequently than their lack of “femininity,” pupils’ lack of “masculinity” was criticised (Ibid.).

Reported Harassment and Assault in Schools

Most of the LGBTQ youth who experienced bullying or abuse at school did not tell an adult about it. Students’ concerns that staff would not appropriately manage the problem or that reporting would escalate the situation were the most frequently cited reasons for not reporting occurrences of harassment or violence to school employees. Only about a third of students who were bullied or harassed and told school officials about it thought the problem

Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals

was solved well. The vast majority of students who were polled on how staff reacted to reports of victimisation said that nothing was done (Joseph G. Kosciw, 2011).

Article 377: Drafting and Revocation

In accordance with British-era Section 377, anyone who knowingly engages in sexual intercourse outside of the bounds of nature with another human being or mammal shall be punished with capital punishment or with confinement of either sort for a time that might also exceed 10 years and shall be liable for a fine. Furthermore, life in jail should be the penalty for anyone who knowingly engages in sexual activity with more than one human or animal in a manner that is not within the confines of nature. (Grace Jeyramani vs. E. P. Peter, 1982) A penetrating touch is all that is needed to count as sexual intercourse for the crime described in this section.

Before revocations of IPC Section 377 and pending jurisdiction on LGBTQ issues, it was considered a serious offense. However, this is only possible after a laborious procedure has been carried out in its entirety. Therefore, Kennedy authorized anti-sodomite violence and illegal acts against cis women for the benefit of trans women. To paraphrase Justice Kennedy's opinion in the Lawrence case, "the state cannot devalue their lives or dictate their fate by labelling their intimate sexual behaviour as a felony" (Gupta, 2012). This was said because anti-sodomy laws have such a negative effect on the lives of sexual minorities. It was necessary to modernise India's legal system so that same-sex couples wouldn't have to live in fear of discrimination.

The pervasive atmosphere of crime that Section 377 fosters pose the gravest threat to the dignity and rights of a sizeable minority in India. If sodomy were decriminalised, this would mean removing a barrier not only to the sexual act itself but also to the lives of real people whose lives are intertwined with that action. The courts would need to be conscious of this fact. Decriminalizing 377 would be beneficial for people who identify as homosexual, bisexual person, lesbian, transgender, or hijra since it would help them feel more accepted, comfortable, confident, and proud of who they are. The LGBT rights movement would benefit from coming out of the closet and engaging with the mainstream of civilized society on a more equal basis if decriminalisation were made mandatory to prevent another Khairati and another Lucknow (Gupta, 2012).

Homophobic organisations in India persecuted sexual minorities under Article 377 of the IPC, 1860. Although Indian society has generally embraced homosexual activity, homophobia is not new. Look at ancient Indian literature's more open and positive depiction of human sexuality. India's politics and culture have been shaped by several foreign rulers. Muslims and the British consider heterosexual sexual activity a "sin against nature" and a serious violation of God's law. The LGBT community and others who sought to have Section 377 removed from the Indian Penal Code, 1860, from its addition in 1860 to its repeal by the Supreme Court of India on September 6, 2018, are exemplified by this campaign.

LGBTQ Students' Safety in Educational Institutions

It is right to say that the only thing that schools owe LGBTQ students is a safe environment in which to learn. Schools must prioritise student safety while considering how to best encounter the wants of sexual minority groups students. It is essential, but not enough on its own (Sadowski, 2016). In my opinion, the theme's security should be fool proof. That all

Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals

children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, should feel welcome in the classroom was an unarguable given. It is crucial that young people who identify as LGBT feel safe at school. Students in classrooms should speak up more often. The panel voted down the proposal, citing the debate over the “Children of the Rainbow” curriculum in New York City schools as its rationale. Educator activists came to the urgent and accurate conclusion that daily oral and physical harassment of LGB students led to a lack of safety for these students, which in turn had a severe impact on their academic performance, physical health, and mental well-being (Sadowski, 2016). Antibullying programmes and regulations have been incredibly helpful for students who identify as LGBTQ or who are at risk of being bullied because of who they are (PFLAG).

Gender Dysphoria

Dr. S hekhar Seshadri, a psychiatrist and professor at the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at NIMHANS, Bengaluru, states that children as young as five or six can feel as though their emotional and psychological identity does not correspond with their biological sex. This is called gender dysphoria. It is dependent on how they are taught to look at ‘men’ and ‘women’ as a gender category. Some kids who say they have gender dysphoria start to see it more often. The second set is those to whom he adds, “Not everyone who plays with opposite sexes has a trans identity.” In other words, “they could finally accept my homosexuality now that I’m an adult.” This is what the International Professional Association for Transgender Health says should be done.

WPATH’s Quality of Care says that almost all children get over gender identity disorder before or soon after they hit puberty. But when they hit puberty and get secondary sexual traits, these feelings get stronger for some kids, and body abhorrence starts or gets worse. One study concluded that strong gender deviance in adolescence was linked to gender identity disorder that lasted through late adolescence and into young adulthood. Still, a lot of adults and teens who have gender identity disorder say they don’t remember ever playing non-traditional gender roles. This is why, as the article says, “parents, other household members, relatives, and members of the community may be surprised when a young person’s disorder first shows up in childhood.” Professionals in mental health talk in more detail about how they can help the teen, their family, and themselves the most during this time of change.

Transgender youth, according to Dr. Seshadri, ought to have spent at least two years in their preferred sex before transitioning to the gender they were assigned at birth. The data is used to make predictions, and patterns are checked to see if they hold up. Parents will sometimes bring their child to therapy if they notice problems at home that have to do with gender. He says, “That evidence also needs to be looked at.” Even though he thinks tolerance and understanding are slowly spreading through society, he says, “There are numerous teenagers who do not wish to be tied to the binary because it makes it hard to understand the diversity of human sexuality.”

Sexual Harassment

Studies have shown a correlation between sexual abuse and increased rates of suicidality and emotional distress in the overall population of different countries (Devries et al., 2014), Despite the prevalence of sexual abuse, little is known about its consequences for LGBTQ youth. Studies have shown that LGBTQ students who have experienced sexual harassment as compared to other children were more likely to consider suicide when adult (Clements-

Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals

Nolle et al. 2018). Instances of sexual abuse are more common among young people who self-identify as sexual and/or gender nonconforming (Friedman et al. 2011). U.S. researchers discovered that sexually harassed LGBTQ youth were more likely to show signs of depression than their non-harassed classmates (Hatchel, Espelage, and Huang, 2017).

Bullying`

In present time suicidal attempts are increasing in schools, colleges, universities, hostels and homes because of several reasons. Bullying is one of the issues which affects students' life physically, psychologically, and socially. These consequences increase the level of stress, anxiety, lack of confidence, and suicidal attempts tendency among LGBTQ students. Students who identify as LGBTQ have increased anxiety due to bullying in school (Payne & Smith, 2013). LGBTQ Students are disproportionately affected by the societal issue of bullying. A person's privacy and reputation are both protected by anti-bullying laws but there exists lack of awareness regarding these legal tools. Bullies are children whose cruel and hostile actions toward LGBTQ students go unpunished by schools and families. Equal treatment of students is a must in all schools (Walton, 2010). There is no specific law against bullying in India (Payne, 2007). Negative impressions of Bullies are created among LGBTQ students who are already at a disadvantage because of their aggressive behaviour (Payne & Smith, 2012).

Story of Bullying Suicide

Several cases of excessive peer-to-peer harassment, some of which were linked to student deaths, have received widespread national attention in recent years. Government of different nations at all levels have implemented or enhanced anti-bullying policies as a result of this publicity. In September 2011, it was revealed that a high school kid in a Buffalo suburb of USA had committed suicide as a result of years of anti-gay bullying. "I always explain how bullied I am, but no one listens," he said on Tumblr immediately before committing suicide.

Mental Health

The number of students on campus diagnosed with a significant mental illness and the number of students who have sought out mental health care for themselves have both increased dramatically in recent years (Hunt and Eisenberg 2010). Recent international studies indicated that 33 per cent of undergraduates have seriously considered suicide at least once in their lives. (Mortier et al. 2018). Mortier (2018) investigates several hypothesised contributors to mental health glitches and suicidal tendencies rates among LGBTQ students. These contributors include both LGBTQ-specific and more universal aspects. It mainly focused on college and university students because of the high prevalence of mental health problems in the sexual minority group of the student's population, the existence of potentially helpful university-related risks or variables, as well as the potential utility of the educational setting for providing LGBTQ-specific therapies (Ibid.).

Bisexuals are more likely than any other LGB group to have mood swings and anxiety (Lucassen et al., 2017; Plöderl and Tremblay, 2015). It was found that the LGBTQ community shares many of the same factors that lead to suicide, self-harm, and poor mental health as the overall population. The use of mental health care, the presence of current mental health issues, suicidal tendencies are high, and self-harm is just some of the risk factors previously found in LGBTQ children. In multivariate studies, it was found that each of these risk factors was independently linked to the fact that the person was female (Ibid.).

Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals

Sexual Minorities

Gender variations in the experience of sexual minority stress may help explain why female LGBTQ students are more inclined to attempt suicide than male ones (Lewis, Kholodkov, and Derlega 2012). People who are attracted to women of a similar sex are more likely to experience mental health problems as a result of the dual stresses of being a woman and a member of a sexual minority (Szymanski 2005). Previous research revealed that sexually marginal girls have a higher risk of depression and suicide than their heterosexual counterparts (Lewis, Kholodkov, & Derlega, 2012). It has been shown (Marshall et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION

According to IPC Section 4 (Right to Education), all citizens who are enrolled in public or private educational institutions have the right to an education. After the removal of Section 377 of the IPC in 2018, a large group of members of sexual minority groups who had been criminalised for a long time was released. They can now declare their sexuality and speak out. They can choose spouses of the same gender, which was traditionally considered unnatural. Now, these people can join open spaces, workplaces, academic institutions, etc. with dignity and respect. As is commonly known, there are various types of people in sexual minorities group with different interests and needs. Normally, who recognised by a variety of labels, but they all fall under the LGBTQ canopy. LGBTQ youth groups are asserting their rights after being labelled minorities. LGBTQ students need age-appropriate education. These, LGBTQ category students experience many challenges at school from peers, teachers, and staff due to their fluctuating gender identity. We know that “the beauty of nature lies in diversity,” and these minority-sexed students are like a rainbow of colours. Considering the sensitivity of their target group, government and non-government agencies, politicians, educationalists, academicians, policymakers, activists, and media houses should actively safeguard LGBTQ minority group students’ rights in public places and educational institutions. Additionally, societies must be made aware of sexual minority groups through campaigns, workshops, seminars, conferences, and promotional endeavours to encourage education. Due to a lack of awareness of their fluid gender identities, the safety of sexual minority students is a major issue. After coming out, some students committed suicide. They face stress, sadness, bullying, slurs, ignorance, and discrimination in schools nationwide.

Public transit and dedicated seats for LGBTQ students should be free and reserved for them. Moreover, a healthy educational atmosphere can be created for them by providing some special rights. Bullying and eve-teasing should be considered severe offences against LGBTQ people. Residential educational institutions should really have separate toilets and rooms. Sensitizing academic and non-academic school, college, and university workers to LGBTQ students through education and training Sex education, including LGBTQ sensitivity, is undoubtedly important and should be incorporated into all school levels curricula. The LGBTQ community needs representation in sex education curricula at all ages and stages.

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Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals

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Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Kumar, A., Gill, R. & Verma, N. (2023). Sexual Minorities Students in Educational Institutions: Identity and Other Challenges Faced by LGBTQ Individuals. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), 863-871. DIP:18.01.082.20231103, DOI: 10.25215/1103.082