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Attitude of youth towards LGBTQ in Manipur

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Abstract

An individual's attitude is a mental and emotional entity that inheres in or characterizes a person, or it is their personal view about a person, thing or object. A person may hold a positive or negative attitude towards a person or thing based on the life experience and upbringing. When a person has negative attitudes towards the LGBTQ it leads to stigma and discrimination. The present study was conducted in the Lamphelpat block, Manipur to assess the youth attitude towards LGBTQ and to identify gender difference in attitudes among the youth towards LGBTQ. Four educational institutes were selected for the study with higher number of enrollment. Samples were selected randomly through probability proportional to size (PPS) method. The study was conducted on 225 numbers of youth in the age group 19-22 years. A standardized tool was used to collect the required information from all the respondents. The collected data were coded and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The study revealed that most of the youth had positive opinion and are aware of the issues faced by the LGBTQ since the youth were found to be more open minded about traditional gender roles, less religious, more supportive about same-sex related issues etc. There was no significant gender difference in attitudes towards LGBTQ community among the youth.

Keywords: Attitude, gender difference, youth, LGBTQ

Introduction

An attitude refers to the set of emotions, beliefs and behaviours towards a particular object, person, things or event. Attitudes are often the result of experience or upbringing. The concept of gender has been taught since childhood and young people are expected to behave which is deemed appropriate with their assigned gender at birth based on their biological sex. Male child are expected to be masculine, brave, protective, independent etc, whereas female child are expected to be gentle, affectionate, emotional and modest. People who do not conform to this gender norm are given different treatment and they are ostracized by society and they are looked down upon. Even though society has come a long way in accepting diversity, many young people still have uneasy and ambivalent attitudes toward non-heterosexual lifestyles (Sharpe, 2002) [39]. As a result of these attitudes, the LGBTQ community are vulnerable to various forms of discrimination, despotism and physical and verbal abuse which have contributed to their marginalization and made them subjected to a range of health issues. The homosexual may experience a range of unfavourable emotions and psychological issues, including loneliness, depression and anxiety (McNamee *et al.*, 2008; Szymanski, 2009) [27, 44]. Homosexuals may use or abuse substances like tobacco, alcohol, and narcotics as a coping mechanism for these unfavourable emotions and the accompanying emotional suffering (Marshall *et al.*, 2008; Valles *et al.*, 2008) [25, 34]. More significantly, homosexuals may have a propensity for intentional self-harm and suicide. Gender non-conformity increases the likelihood of maltreatment and exclusion from society, including verbal and physical abuse; sexual assault; drug misuse; and depression (Lombardi *et al.*, 2001; Nolle *et al.*, 2006; Denny *et al.*, 2007) [24, 6, 9].

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in the Lamphelpat block of Manipur. A multistage sampling design was used to carry out the study, where a sample of 225 numbers of youth from four educational institutes of Lamphelpat block of Imphal west district were drawn randomly from 1st, 2nd and 3rd year graduation students, who belong to the age group of 19-22 years.

Tools used: A standardized tool (California State University, Northridge Attitudes toward LGBT Issues) developed by Dr. Gina Masequesmay was used to assess the attitudes, beliefs and practices of youth toward LGBTQ.

Scoring: Mean, Standard deviation and Median was used to assess the youth attitudes and Z-

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score was used to identify gender difference in attitude among youth towards LGBTQ. Mean, Standard Deviation and Median was calculated by using Microsoft excel.

Results and Discussion

Distribution of information on Youth attitudes towards LGBTQ

Table 1: Distribution of youth opinion about traditional gender role

Opinion on traditional gender role	Number of respondents (n=225)		
	Frequency	Percentage	Median
Agree	92	40.89	15
Disagree	133	59.11	

The result revealed that 59.11 per cent of the youth disagreed with the statements adhering to traditional gender role. This may be because youth views on traditional gender role are changing more quickly than that of their elders. Nowadays youth are more open-minded about gender roles. Female are no longer restricted to what was once considered traditional such as house chores and care-giving. In addition, men who were considered the bread winner, they are taking up roles as care-giver in their families as they are becoming comfortable in the understanding that these tasks do not necessarily need a gender restriction. Based on the findings of Tinklin *et al.* (2005) [45], 16–17-year-old people believed that it is beneficial for both genders to obtain higher qualifications and good careers and that childcare should be a joint responsibility of both the parents.

Due to women’s increased participation in higher education it can be seen that women are working in different prestigious jobs. Women are not only confined in household work but are taking up roles that was earlier meant only for men. Because of dual earning their is distribution of household chores among men and women. According to Sas (1984) [37], due to women’s employment, gender stereotypes and gender roles have been changing, and some traditional masculine features have also been taken up by women, but only those with high qualifications and mainly in cities.

Inglehart and Norris (2003) [16] stated that socioeconomic development (the shift from agrarian societies to industrialised societies, and the shift from industrial towards post-industrial societies) transforms cultural attitudes towards gender equality. As a result of modernization, the traditional family model is declining, and there has been a rise of gender equality.

Table 2: Distribution of respondent’s level of comfortableness in interacting with LGBTQ

Level of comfortableness	Number of respondents (n=225)			
	Mean	SD	Frequency	Percentage
High			60	26.67
Average	23.65	8.63	145	64.44
Low			20	8.89

Results from table 2, indicates that 64.44 per cent of the youth had an average level of comfortableness while interacting with LGBTQ. Youth level of comfortableness is often affected by their level of knowledge about LGBTQ community. Youth who have a clear knowledge about different sexualities have positive attitudes towards LGBTQ community. Youth who believe that sexual orientation is due to the biological mistake and the person have no control over it; have more tolerant views on homosexual, bisexual and

transgender. This can be supported by study conducted by (Swank and Raiz, 2010; Rutledge *et al.*, 2012) [35, 43] where it was found that people who believe that sexual orientation is determined by genes are more comfortable with gays and lesbians.

Youth were found to be more comfortable if they had close friends or close schoolmates who were gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. Youth who are friends with LGBTQ use to discuss and talk about their sexuality, how they feel, what they are going through, the discrimination they encounter etc. This conversation helps to motivate the heterosexual person to maintain the relationship and to change his or her attitudes towards LGBTQ. Swank and Raiz (2007) [43] found that social work students in the US who had good friends and schoolmates who were gay were affected by their contact with this group and had more positive attitudes towards homosexuality.

Table 3: Distribution of youth opinion towards LGBTQ

Opinion towards LGBTQ	Number of respondents (n=225)		
	Frequency	Percentage	Median
Positive	118	52.44	24
Negative	107	47.56	

Table (3) indicates that highest percentage (52.44%) of the respondent had positive opinion towards LGBTQ. Youth who are less religious tend to have more positive views about the LGBTQ community. Religion plays a major role in shaping the attitudes of youth towards LGBTQ because most of the religion taught and preaches that homosexuality is against God and when it is discussed, it is discouraged or actively forbidden. In the present study it was found that majority of the youth were raised in a less religious house due to which youth were found to have more modern and positive views about homosexuality. Studies show that if people’s religion has relatively conservative basic doctrines, then their attitudes towards gays and lesbians are more negative (Swank and Raiz, 2007) [42]. Plugge-Foust and Strickland (2000) [33] noted the existence of a direct relationship between Christians’ conservative ideology and homophobia in the US.

Table 4: Distribution of youth opinion about origin of sexuality and gender

Origin of sexuality and gender	Number of respondents (n=225)		
	Frequency	Percentage	Median
Agree	119	52.89	16
Disagree	106	47.11	

From the above table (4) it was found that highest percentage (52.89%) of the respondent agreed with the statement about origin of sexuality and gender. This may be because youth perception about the origin of sexuality and gender has changed. Majority of the youth belief that one is born as homosexual, bisexual, straight and transgender and it is not merely a personal choice. Adolescents and young adults who had greater knowledge and are aware that homosexual orientation is not a disorder but is as normal as heterosexuality and is biologically based, inborn, and established early in life had more positive views of homosexuality (Feng *et al.*, 2012) [11]. Various research studies have found that acceptance of a biological basis to homosexuality was related to respondents’ positive attitudes toward homosexuality (Altemeyer, 2001; Landén and Innala, 2002) [1, 21].

Several studies also stated that positive attitudes towards homosexual are associated with the belief that its origin are biological, whereas negative attitudes are associated with view that its origin is personal choice (Schneider and Lewis, 1984; Whitley, 1990; Jayaratne *et al.*, 2006; PEW Research center, 2003; Wood and Bartkowski, 2004) [38, 48, 17, 49].

Table 5: Distribution of youth opinion about issues pertaining to LGBTQ

Issues	Number of respondents (n=225)		
	Frequency	Percentage	Median
Agree	77	34.22	28
Disagree	148	65.78	

The findings revealed that majority (65.78%) of the respondent disagreed with the statement about issues pertaining to LGBTQ people. Youth are becoming more aware about the issues faced by the LGBTQ community. Maximum numbers of the youth were found to be in favour of same sex marriage, right to have children, equal opportunity

Table 6: Respondent’s acceptability of public display of affection

Display of affection	Number of respondents (n=225)					
	Between a man and a woman		Between a woman and a woman		Between a man and a man	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
Holding hands	210	93.33	187	83.11	128	56.89
Hugging	199	84.44	186	82.67	151	67.11
Friendly kiss(e.g., kissing on the cheek)	175	77.77	131	58.22	97	43.11
Romantic kiss	111	49.33	42	18.67	38	16.89

From the table (6) it can be said that majority of the youth accept normal public display of affections like hugging and holding hands. They are aware of the fact that kissing in public is a taboo. Youth are well aware that public display of affection is socially unacceptable. In our society we do not express our feelings, thanks or love through public display of affection like kissing, intimate hug etc. Since such behaviour are not accepted in our society, youth also learned that public display of affection such as kissing, a peck on the cheek etc. is considered vulgar and a sexual offence by the public. So youth also find it hard to readily accept public display of affection (i.e., kissing, a peck on the cheek etc.) from any gender. This can be supported by study conducted by (Anderson *et al.*, 2010; Soysal, 2010) [3, 40] where they found that people feel more comfortable expressing public display of affection in countries where friendships and displays of thanks are expressed through public display of affection, such as in the United Kingdom, while other countries have more conservative attitudes.

Distribution of information on youth beliefs and practises

Table 7: Distribution of respondent’s belief towards religious practices

Level of religious practice	Number of respondents (n=225)			
	Mean	SD	Frequency	Percentage
High			58	25.78
Average	6.00	1.73	117	52
Low			50	22.22

From the table (7) it was revealed that highest percentage (52%) of the youth had an average level of belief towards religious practices. It may be due to decline in religious service attendance and not following the religious practices.

for employment, and they should be allowed to work with children. This may be because younger people tend to be more open minded than older people. Younger people tend to have more accepting attitudes towards sex-related issues in general (Finke and Adamczyk, 2008) [12] and homosexuality in particular (Becker and Scheufele, 2011; Gerhards, 2010; Kuntz *et al.*, 2014) [4, 13, 20].

Media also played a major role in shaping the attitudes. Youth who are exposed to gay or lesbian through media tends to have more positive opinion. Most of the youth who had personal contact with LBGQT individual; this also increases the chances of having more positive opinion towards the issues faced by LGBTQ community. For a variety of reason including the coming out movement, most of the youth today personally know someone who is LGBTQ. Studies have found that knowing someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is associated with more supportive attitudes (Herek and Capitanio, 1996; Lewis, 2008; Stotzer, 2009; Becker, 2012; Walch *et al.*, 2012) [5, 23, 41, 5, 47].

Majority of the youth expressed that due to the busy schedule and packed activities in the college they find it hard to attend religious service and follow the preaching on daily basis. Some of them failed to attend religious places such as temple and church due to lack of time and other facilities. Moreover, the family context is extremely important in ensuring continuity and future religious commitment. Youth are considered more prone to abandon religion if they do not develop appropriate religious habits at home. In the present study, it was found that majority of the youth was raised in a less religious household. This can be supported by Pew Research Centre study (2016), which showed that people raised in a home where religion was valued are more likely than their peers to affiliate with their family’s faith.

Table 8: Distribution of respondent raised in religious household

Raised in religious household	Number of respondents (n=225)		
	Frequency	Percentage	Median
High	34	15.11	4
Low	190	84.44	

Results indicates that majority (84.44%) of the youth was raised in a less religious household. This may be due to urbanisation and modernization. Due to urbanisation joint families were gradually replaced by nuclear family. In most of the household both parents were working and it is very difficult to follow the traditional rituals and practices. Earlier in joint family this practise are being carried out with the supervision of the elderly or grandparents. An analysis of religious trends from 1981 to 2007 in 49 countries showed that people become more religious (Norris and Inglehart, 2011) [16]. But from 2007 to 2020 an overwhelming majority (43 out of 49) of these same countries became less religious. This can be supported by the study conducted by Menhas *et*

al. (2015) [28] where they found that modernisation causes decrease in percentage of offering prayers, reduction in recitation of religious books and decline in religious practises.

Table 9: Distribution of youth opinion regarding religion’s support for LGBTQ

Religion’s support for LGBTQ	Number of respondents (n=225)		
	Frequency	Percentage	Median
Agree	107	47.55	8
Disagree	118	52.44	

From the table (4.13) it was revealed that highest percentages (52.44%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement regarding religion support towards LGBTQ and revealed that their religion does not support LGBTQ. It may be due to the fact that religions authoritative scriptures and theology view homosexuality negatively, ranging from strongly discouraging homosexual activity to explicitly forbidding same sex sexual practices among believers and actively opposing social acceptance of homosexuality. Spiritual leaders welcome homosexual, bisexual but teaches that sexual relations between men are forbidden and such behaviour is sinful. This can be supported by study conducted by (Yarhouse and Tan, 2005; Kubicek *et al.*, 2009) [50, 19] where it was found that in many religions, scripture and doctrine are interpreted to strictly prohibit any form of homosexuality.

Table 10: Distribution of youth opinion about initiative to be taken by educational department for LGBTQ

Opinion	Number of respondents (n=225)		
	Frequency	Percentage	Median
Agree	189	84	32
Disagree	36	16	

From the table (4.14), it can be interpreted that majority of the respondent (84%) agreed that educational department should take initiative for the LGBTQ, because bullying is a major issues that every pupil faced in educational institute and it can be challenging for anyone. LGBTQ youth too faces an alarming amount of bullying and harassment. Many LGBTQ youth are treated unfairly by other pupil because of their identity. Even heterosexual youth also experience homophobic and biphobic bullying if someone thinks that they are LGBTQ individual. So, youth feels that there is a need for the educational department to conduct seminars and workshop about sexuality, gender issues and bullying so as to make the youth more aware and create a safe and friendly environment for the LGBTQ community. Duyan and Duyan (2005) [10] found that students with formal education on sexuality had more positive attitudes towards gays and lesbians.

Youth also feels that there is a need for the educational department to provide gender neutral bathroom. Because the bathrooms are the least secure areas in education institute. They serve as location for verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. So providing a gender neutral bathroom may reduce the bullying and victimization of LGBTQ. A United States Transgendered survey (2015) found that 59 per cent of trans adults had avoided toilets at schools, work or in public places, with 12 per cent experiencing harassment or assault in toilets, and 31 per cent limiting drinking or eating in order to avoid toilets.

Table 11: Distribution of respondents families’ and friends’ opinion on LGBTQ

Opinion on LGBT	Number of respondents (n=225)		
	Frequency	Percentage	Median
Positive	123	54.67	12
Negative	102	45.33	

From the table (4.15) it was revealed that highest percentage (54.67%) of the respondent’s families’ and friends’ had positive opinion about LGBTQ. This may be due to increase public support for LGBTQ. It is generally assumed that this shift is largely because younger supportive generations are replacing less supportive older ones. In particular since the mid 1990s, the positive impact on attitudes from increased LGBTQ visibility from more LGBTQ people being out, the growing number of LGBTQ characters on television, and the national discussion and policy advances toward marriages equality has appeared rapidly to increase support among people of all ages. According to Pew Research centre (2020) many counties have increased acceptance of homosexuality. In many of the countries surveyed in 2002 and 2019, acceptance of homosexuality increased by double digits. This includes an increase of 21 points since 2002 (33%) – 2019 (54%) in South Africa and a rise of 19 points (25% - 44%) during the same period in South Korea. India also showed a 22 point improvement from 2014 (15%) – 2019 (37%) as well.

In the present study it was also found that respondents were raised in a less religious household which also indicated that their family are less religious and are more supportive towards LGBTQ people. Several studies have found that more conservative or fundamentalist belief is associated with stronger anti-homosexual attitudes (Herek and Glunt, 1993; Kirkpatrick, 1993; Marsiglio, 1993; Wagenaar and Barton 1977; Cotton-Huston and Waite, 1999) [15, 18, 46, 7].

Table 12: Distribution of respondent’s use of derogatory word

Words	Always		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Gay	47	20.89	72	32	49	21.78	29	12.89	28	12.44
Fag or faggot	0	0	4	1.78	49	21.78	68	30.22	104	46.22
Queer	0	0	13	5.78	65	28.89	54	24	93	41.33

From the table (4.16) it was found that a few percentages (32%) of the youth often use the word gay in a derogative manner. The use of the word “gay” as a synonym for dumb or lame or stupid has become prevalent in the recent years. The more prevalent it became the more negative its connotations. But this entirely does not mean that youth are more homophobic than ever before. This can be supported by the study conducted by Lalor and Rendle-Short (2007) [22], where they found that some young people refrain from using the term gay because of its negative connotations, others find it difficult not to use it among their peer groups due to its proliferation in conversations, even though they realize it is politically incorrect to use the term.

Information related to youth familiarity with LGBTI

From the table (4.17) it was found that 54.22 per cent of the respondents do not have co-worker or classmates who are LGBTI whereas 16 percent of the respondents have one LGBTI classmate. It was also revealed that 43.11 percent

respondents do not have friends who are LGBTI and 17.78 per cent have one LGBTI friend.

Data revealed that majority (83.11%) of the respondents do not have any family members or relatives who are LGBTI and 10.67% of them have one family member or relatives who are LGBTI. The reason may be due to less visibility of LGBTI youth in the institute and in real life because a large portion of LGBTI youth does not disclose their sexual identity or gender identity openly. This hampers or decreases the chances to come across and have an interaction with the LGBTI youth.

Another reason may be because the LGBTI individual are still in the closet i.e. they haven't come out as gay lesbian, bisexual or transgender, some are still in the confusion state while some LGBTI youth are not disclosing their identity due to the

fear and the consequences they may face after coming out. It may also be due to the fact that LGBTI people are more comfortable with their friends. Therefore they exposed their sexual orientation or gender identity more with their close friends rather than co-worker /classmates or family members and relatives. They also have fear that if they disclose about their sexual identity or gender identity they will be rejected and that might affect their workplace. This can be supported by the study conducted by (D'Augelli and Hershberger, 1993; Savin-Williams, 1998), where they found that most LGBTI first confide with their peers and friends as friends and peers are more likely to accept their sexual orientation, thus reinforcing their own self-acceptance.

Table 13: Distribution of respondent familiarity with LGBTI

LGBTI	Number of respondents (n=225)									
	None		One		Two		Three- five		Six or more	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Co-worker or classmates who are LGBTI	122	54.22	36	16	31	13.77	27	12	9	4
Friends who are LGBTI	97	43.11	40	17.78	37	16.44	27	12	24	10.67
Family members or relatives who are LGBTI	187	83.11	24	10.67	11	4.89	3	1.33	0	0

Distribution of information on gender difference

From the table (4.19) it was found that the calculated value of Z as 1.85, which being less than that of the table value 1.96. Hence, there is no gender difference in attitudes of youth towards LGBTQ. This can be supported by the study conducted by Anarfi *et al.* (2014) [2] where they found no significant gender differences in attitudes toward homosexuals in Ghana.

Table 14: Distribution of information on gender difference in attitudes towards LGBTQ

Gender	Mean	S.D	Z
Female	188.66	20.48	1.85
Male	173.61	21.99	

Conclusion

Although progress in terms of LGBTQ rights has been made, and attitudes towards LGBTQ people have changed in the past few decades, there is still some biasness prejudice and discrimination in the society. Even if the youth had broader views on traditional gender role and positive opinion about the LGBTQ community majority (64.44%) of the youth had an average level of comfortableness while interacting with LGBTQ. The reason may be due to religious negative views on homosexuality and less familiarity of the LGBTQ youth due to less visibility and not coming out publicly. So effort should be made from every aspect such as media, religion, educators and policy makers to change the outlook toward the LGBTQ community and understand that sexual orientation is due to complex interplay of biological and environmental factors and it is not a personal choice.

Recommendation for future research

To create positive attitudes among youth, awareness should be created by educating the youth about different sexual orientation, gender identity, its causes and issues encounter by LGBTQ people.

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