

Sexual Health and Alienation Among Gay and Transgender Adults

Rhea Bose* Dr. Karsan Chothani**

Abstract

*In today's modern world everyone is bound to feel alienated due to certain lifestyle choices, preferences or decisions they make. Alienation occurs when a person withdraws or becomes isolated from their environment or from other people. **Objective:** The present research was under taken to study the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender subjects with regards to their sexual health. **Method:** The total sample was of 60 participants comprising of 30 gay and 30 transgender subjects. Purposive sampling technique along with snowball technique was used to collect the sample. Alienation Scale by Hardeo Ojha was used as a tool to measure the level of alienation. To analyze and interpret the data, mean, standard deviation and T- test were used. **Results:** The results of the present study indicate that there exists a significant difference with regard to the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender subjects. Also with regard to their sexual health, there exist significant differences among gay and transgender subjects.*

Key words: Gay, Transgender, Alienation, Sexual health

About authors:

* Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Psychology, Gujarat University

** Supervisor, Professor, Head of Department of Psychology, C.U. Shah Arts College

INTRODUCTION

Sexual orientation as defined by American psychological association means,"an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes," ranging "along a continuum, from exclusive attraction to the other sex to exclusive attraction to the same sex." Therefore, human sexuality is a complex concept which accepts the distinction between desire, behaviour and identity and acknowledges the the multidimensional nature of of sexuality. Sexual orientation is defined in many ways, including heterosexuality (attraction to the opposite sex/gender), homosexuality (attraction to one's own sex/gender), bisexuality, polysexuality, or pansexuality (attraction to two, multiple, or all sexes/genders respectively), and asexuality (no sexual attraction to any sex/gender).

Gender as defined by WHO means,"Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed."

These gender roles vary from society to society and can be rigid or fluid depending on the progressive or regressive nature of the societies.

The term transgender refers to persons who do not fit in the clear cut categories of male and female. Transgender is often used as an

umbrella term to signify individuals who defy rigid, binary gender constructions and who expresses or present a breaking and blurring of culturally prevalent stereotypically gender roles. It includes pre-operative, post-operative and non-operative transsexual people who strongly identify with gender opposite to their biological sex (UNDP India Report, 2010).

Alienation

Human alienation is not a feeling just restricted to the past present or future, it has been there since times immemorial and depends on the social, legal and cultural context (Bhakti ,2009). Alienation is seen as an individual's inability to establish contact with the personal dimension, so that interaction with the world remains guided by biological needs and social norms, rather than by the individual's personal values and aspirations. It refers to to a sense of estrangement and an absence of social support and meaningful social connection (Mau,1992). Horowitz (1966) has described three meaning for alienation: first, alienation as intense separation from world; second, alienation as separation from people; and third, alienation as separation from others' ideas toward the world. The researches done on LGBT community with regards to their mental and physical health indicate that they suffer from a sense of alienation in more pronounced ways than other social groups owing to their gender identity.

A study by Michael Sullivan and John S. Wodarski (2002) titled "Social Alienation in Gay Youth", suggests that gay youth are at a high risk of psychological damage due to heightened sense of isolation.

Cathy Kelleher (2009) did a similar study on "Minority stress and health: Implications for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) young people" and found that minority stress is linked to psychological distress among the LGBTQ community.

Measures assessing three components of minority stress (sexual identity distress, stigma consciousness, and heterosexist experiences) were administered online to LGBTQ youth aged 16–24 years (N = 301). Results suggest that the oppressive social environment created through sexual/transgender identity-related stigma negatively impacts on the well-being of LGBTQ youth.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD)

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is another area in which prejudice and discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual people have had negative effects. Early in the pandemic, the assumption that HIV/AIDS was a "gay diseases" contributed to the delay in addressing the massive social upheaval that AIDS would generate. The association of AIDS/ HIV with gay and transgender community disproportionately affected their mental health and stigmatized them.

In a research done by Aiyden I. Scheim and Rob Travers titled "Barriers and facilitators to HIV and sexually transmitted infections testing for gay, bisexual, and other transgender men who have sex with men" says that Transgender men who have sex with men (trans MSM) may be at elevated risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI), and therefore require access to HIV and STI testing services.

New CDC analysis suggests gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) are at increased risk for extragenital STDs [i.e., chlamydia or gonorrhea in the throat or rectum] (April 11, 2019)

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) have been rising among gay and bisexual men, with increases in syphilis being seen across the country. In 2014, gay, bisexual, and other men

who have sex with men accounted for 83% of primary and secondary syphilis cases. Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men are 17 times more likely to get anal cancer than heterosexual men. Men who are HIV-positive are even more likely than those who do not have HIV to get anal cancer.

Toibaro JJ, Ebensrtejin JE, Parlante A, et al. (2009) did a study on "Sexually transmitted infections among transgender individuals and other sexual identities". His study and other previous reports indicate that this community has a high prevalence of HIV and STIs. The prevalence of syphilis was 42.3% in transgender group and 18.1% in non-transgender individuals.

Sahastrabuddhe S, Gupta A, Stuart E, et al. (2012) did a study on "Sexually transmitted infections and risk behaviors among transgender persons (Hijras) of Pune, India." The objective of this cross-sectional study was to determine the prevalence of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI) in Hijras (self-identified transgenders of South Asia), study associated risk factors, and compare the prevalence with that in heterosexual men and men having sex with men (MSM) in Pune, India, between 1993 and 2002. The prevalence of HIV was higher in Hijras as compared with heterosexual men and MSM; whereas that of genital ulcer disease was lower.

Ganesan, Elangovan and Murugaiyan (2013) found through their study that socially-excluded people or groups of people are not able to participate in societal mainstream activities. This exclusion often deprived them of basic facilities like health care thereby aggravating their problem of alienation and stigmatization even further.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To study and compare the role of alienation among the transgender and gay group with regards to their sexual health.

HYPOTHESES

1. There will be significant difference in the feeling of alienation among gay subjects with regards to their sexual health.
2. There will be significant difference in the feeling of alienation among transgender

subjects with regards to their sexual health.

3. There will be significant difference in the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender subjects with regards to them being infected with STD.
4. There will be significant difference in the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender subjects with regards to them not being infected with STD.
5. There will be significant difference in the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender who are not infected by STD with gay and transgender subjects who are infected by STD.
6. There will be significant difference in the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender subjects with regards to their sexual health.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Keeping in view the nature of the present study, descriptive survey method was used.

Sample

The aim of the present study was to investigate the level of alienation among the transgender and gay groups with regards to their sexual health. In the present research, the researcher approached 30 gay and 30 transgender subjects for the collection of data. The sample collected via purposive sampling and snowball technique from the major cities of Gujarat.

Variables

In the present research, variables have been classified as under:-

• Independent Variable

RESULTS

Table 1: Shows the mean, standard deviation and t-ratio for testing and comparing the feeling of alienation among gay subjects with regards to their sexual health

Gay	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Level of Significance
Infected with STD	15	11.8	1.939	28	13.396	0.01
Not infected with STD	15	3.666	1.192			

Sexual Preference and Identity: Gay and Transgender

Sexual health: Infected with STD or disease free

• Dependent Variable

Scores on Alienation scale

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Only people in the age range of 20 – 50 years were selected as sample for the present study.
2. Equal number of gay and transgender subjects were selected.
3. Equal number of gay and transgender subjects were selected who were suffering from any form of sexually transmitted disease and those who were disease free.
4. Only subjects who had got themselves checked for any sexually transmitted disease and were aware about their sexual health status were included.
5. Subjects knowing basic hindi to understand and respond to the questionnaires were included.

Tool Used

In the present study Alienation Scale(2010) by Hardeo Ojha was used to access the feeling of alienation among transgender and gay population. Reliability and validity of the scale as reported was 0.83 and 0.77 respectively reported on the basis of Kuder-Richardson formula for internal consistency and test-retest reliability.

Statistical Tools Used

To analyze and interpret the data, the investigator will use mean, standard deviation and T- test as statistical techniques.

Table 2: Shows the mean, standard deviation and t-ratio for testing and comparing the feeling of alienation among transgender subjects with regards to their sexual health

Transgender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Level of Significance
Infected with STD	15	12.2	1.423	28	13.245	0.01
Not infected with STD	15	4.266	1.730			

Table 3: Shows the mean, standard deviation and t-ratio for testing and comparing the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender subjects with regards to them not being infected with STD

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Level of Significance
Gay	15	2.266	1.123	28	1.384	N.S
Transgender	15	3	1.632			

Table 4: Shows the mean, standard deviation and t-ratio for testing and comparing the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender subjects with regards to them being infected with STD

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Level of Significance
Gay	15	3.6	2.0591	28	1.591	N.S
Transgender	15	4.733	1.691			

Table 5: Shows the mean, standard deviation and t-ratio for testing and comparing the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender who are not infected by STD with gay and transgender subjects who are infected by STD

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Level of Significance
Not Infected	30	29.766	7.233	58	5.333	0.01
Infected	30	56.866	26.391			

Table 6: Shows the mean, standard deviation and t-ratio for testing and comparing the feeling of alienation among gay and transgender subjects with regards to their sexual health

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Level of Significance
Gay	30	27.4	5.148	58	6.944	0.01
Transgender	30	59.233	24.140			

DISCUSSION

The t scores obtained for the gay population with and without sexual infection was 13.3369 and the t scores obtained for the transgender population with and without sexual infection was 13.245, with the level of significance at 0.01, which shows that there is a significant difference in level of feelings of alienation among both gay and transgender population.

But, there is no significant difference in the level of feelings of alienation between gay and transgender population not infected by STD's. Same is the result in case of the comparison between gay and transgender population infected with STD's, which shows no significant difference in their feelings of alienation.

A comparison of the mean, standard deviation and t scores of gay and transgender population regarding their health status (infected and not infected) shows a significant difference in feelings of alienation of the infected group with the non infected group.

Finally, a comparison of the mean, standard deviation and t scores of gay and transgender population with regard to their sexual health shows a significant difference between gay and transgender population. The transgender population is at higher risk of feelings of alienation.

The results find support from the study of Michael Sullivan and John S. Wodarski (2002) who did a study on "Social Alienation in Gay Youth" and found evidence that suggests that gay and lesbian youth are at high risk for isolation and subsequent psychological damage that results from social alienation.

Similarly, Toibaro JJ, Ebensrtejin JE, Parlante A, et al. (2009) did a study on "Sexually transmitted infections among transgender individuals and other sexual identities".

They found that the prevalence of syphilis was 42.3% in transgender group and 18.1% in non-transgender individuals. These data show that this population has a very high prevalence of HIV-1 and STI and their social isolation is much higher owing to their negative health condition.

The results also prove that factors contributing to social exclusion like poverty, non-dominant social identities (eg transgender, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, racial and religious minorities etc); social locations (migrants, refugees); demographic features (occupation, educational level); and health conditions, (e.g. disability, stigmatized diseases, such as HIV and AIDS), enforces deprivations of the basic amenities of life.

Finally, the results prove the hypotheses that there will be significant difference in the feeling of alienation among transgender subjects with regards to their sexual health.

The feelings of alienation are much higher amongst transgenders infected with sexual diseases as compared to gays infected with sexual diseases and this could be due to the fact that the transgender identity is more visible in a social setting than a gay identity (one cannot comprehend whether a person is gay or not just by looks and behaviour but one can easily identify a transgender by appearance). Thus, feelings of alienation are more pronounced amongst transgender population because there is both-internal and external rejection (rejection by self and others), whereas in case of gay population the rejection could be just internal.

CONCLUSION

Once a topic for the occasional off-color joke or put down or the relatively obscure movie or theatrical production, homosexuality has moved to center stage in our public discourse. Despite the raging debates around the topics of sexual orientation -as a culture we remain ill informed about the topic.

In the book titled 'Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why: The Science of Sexual Orientation' neuroscientist Simon LeVay summarizes a wealth of scientific evidence that points to one inescapable conclusion: Sexual orientation results primarily from an interaction between genes, sex hormones, and the cells of the developing body and brain.

Through this pathbreaking study we can easily know and understand that one is not directly responsible for one's sexual identity and orientation. Hence, discrimination on the bases of

one's sexual identity or orientation is a gross violation of human rights.

Martha Nussbaum a distinguished professor of law and philosophy at the University of Chicago, in her book, "From Disgust to Humanity: Sexual Orientation and Constitutional Law", states that discrimination against the LGBTQ community stems from the politics of disgust, which tries to establish that the prevalent political and cultural view is the only correct view about life and living.

Combining rigorous analysis of the leading constitutional cases with philosophical reflection about underlying concepts of privacy, respect, discrimination, and liberty, Nussbaum discusses issues ranging from non-discrimination and same-sex marriage.

The level of alienation of the sexual minority, specially the ones suffering from sexual diseases is so high that it often results in suicides.

With the changes in law one hopes to see the politics of disgust change to politics of humanity, based on love and mutual respect.

SUGGESTIONS

A specialised field of study should be introduced at higher education to study, understand and explore the issues of identity, citizenship, human rights, public health etc and the relationship of these issues with policy making, social structuring, individual dignity, social and personal security and freedom etc in our contemporary world.

The new discipline of study should include, "Emerging Identities," which maps the ways in which social, cultural, legal and medical developments shape new identities on both an individual and collective level. Rather than simply reflecting social change, these shifts would work to actively construct contemporary identities.

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