



GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALITY

Social Science

R. Indhumathi

M. Phil Scholar, Department of Psychology, Women's Christian College, Chennai.

ABSTRACT

Current literature has examined differences between men and women's attitudes. One of the most consistent findings is that heterosexual males manifest more anti-gay hostility on average than do heterosexual females. Researchers point to a number of factors that may explain why but the difference is not studied in the Eastern context. The current study looks at the influence of gender and see how it reflects on the various domains of attitudes towards homosexuality, taking into account that the Supreme Court has legalised homosexuality in India and people are under the compulsion to accept them as a social group. The study was done on 60 young adults (21 – 24 years). Measures of attitudes toward homosexuality – Tolerance, Contact, Morality, and Stereotypes were obtained and studied for gender difference. Results showed that there are no significant gender difference in attitudes.

KEYWORDS

Attitude towards homosexuality – tolerance, contact, morality and stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

With the Supreme Court decriminalising gay sex, India joined the other 25 countries where homosexuality is legal. More than ever before homosexuality has become a topic of discussion in scientific, medical, political, and social circles. Heterosexuals' evaluations of gay men and lesbians are influenced by a generalized gender belief system. According to this model, people's expectations about gender reflect the belief that gender-associated attributes are bipolar: What is masculine is not feminine and vice versa (Deaux & Kite, 1987). Beliefs about homosexuality are influenced by this generalized gender belief system. Men who are described in stereotypically feminine terms are more likely to be judged homosexual than are men described in stereotypically masculine terms. To a lesser extent, women described in stereotypically masculine terms are more likely to be judged lesbian than women described in stereotypically feminine terms (Deaux & Lewis, 1984). Similarly, gender-based judgments of gay people reflect the belief that male homosexuals are similar to female heterosexuals and that female homosexuals are similar to male heterosexuals (e.g., Kite & Deaux, 1987; Storms, Stivers, Lambers, & Hill, 1981). As Kite (1994) has argued, separating gender-role beliefs from attitudes toward homosexuality is extremely difficult and perhaps impossible. Kite and Whitley (1996) argued that gender-associated beliefs should be more likely to influence some components of attitudes toward homosexuality rather than other components. The results of their meta-analysis showed that ratings of homosexual persons appeared to be based on the gender belief system. Much of the current literature has examined gender differences between men and women's attitudes, and what accounts for these differences toward homosexuality. One of the most consistent findings is that heterosexual males manifest more anti-gay hostility on average than do heterosexual females (Brown & Amoroso, 1975; Glassner & Owen, 1976; Gurwitz & Marcus, 1978; Hansen, 1982; Kite, 1984; Laner & Laner, 1979; Millham, et al., 1976; Minnigerode, 1976; Steffensmeier & Steffensmeier, 1974; Storms, 1978; Weis & Dain, 1979). Researchers point to a number of factors that may explain why women have more positive attitudes toward homosexuality than do men. Although this sex difference in attitudes has been observed often in the Western setting, few attempts have been made to explain the difference across the dimensions of attitudes towards homosexuality.

Problem and Hypotheses

Research Problem

1. Does gender influence the attitudes towards homosexuality?

Objectives

1. To study the measures of attitudes towards homosexuality.
2. To study the influence of gender on the attitudes towards homosexuality.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant gender difference in their tolerance of homosexuals.
2. There is no significant gender difference in their contact with homosexuals.

3. There is no significant gender difference in their moral judgement of homosexuals.
4. There is no significant gender difference in their stereotypes about homosexuals.

Method of Investigation

Research Design

Ex post facto research design

Variables

The independent variable is

- Gender

The dependent variables are

Attitude towards homosexuality

- Tolerance
- Contact
- Morality
- Stereotypes

Sample

The sample size is 60. Data is to be collected through Google forms using snow ball technique. Sample data is to be randomly selected from the data collected.

Inclusion criteria

Heterosexual students in Chennai aged between 21 to 24 years.

Tool used

S. No.	Name of the questionnaire	Author and year	Variable measured
1.	Component Measure of Attitudes Toward Homosexuality	Kite, E. (1998)	Attitudes regarding tolerance, contact, morality and stereotypes.

Description of the tool

1) Component Measure of Attitudes Toward Homosexuality (Kite, E., 1998)

Research has demonstrated that attitudes toward gay men and lesbians are multidimensional and that to fully understand prejudice, these different aspects of people's attitudes and perceptions should be considered hence this scale consists of 92 items assessing established measures of attitudes toward homosexuality – Tolerance, Contact, Morality, and Stereotypes.

Reliability

For the purpose of the current study, the researcher established internal consistency in the Indian population. Cronbach's alpha was established for n = 60 college students between ages 20 to 25 (30 males and 30 females) for the four components – tolerance, contact, morality and stereotypes. Coefficients were found to be 0.82 for tolerance, 0.91 for contact, 0.92 for morality and 0.62 for stereotypes.

Validity

For cultural relevance and suitability (reading and comprehension)

levels of the sample group) the researcher established content validity for the scale. All the items of the scale were found to have .60 concurrence except three items for which changes were indicated by the field experts.

Scoring

Participants evaluate these items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 strongly agree to 5 strongly disagree. Scores are computed for each component separately. The score range for tolerance is 11 – 55, contact is 18 – 90, morality is 13 – 65 and stereotypes is 7 – 35. The higher the score on tolerance the more tolerant the respondent is of homosexuals, the higher the score on contact, the more comfortable is the respondent with homosexuals, the higher the score on morality, the more the respondent thinks homosexuals have high morals, the lesser the score on stereotypes, the more mistaken beliefs the respondent has about homosexuals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1

t-test for gender difference in attitude towards homosexuality.

	Gender						t
	Males			Females			
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	
Tolerance	41.6	7.91	30	40.1	7.47	30	0.771NS
Contact	54.3	10.35	30	52.6	13.44	30	0.656NS
Morality	42.6	10.81	30	45.2	10.55	30	0.954NS
Stereotype	21.1	3.26	30	21.5	3.05	30	0.531NS

NS – Not significant

The independent sample *t*-test indicates that 30 boys and 30 girls who were compared for the attitude measures towards homosexuality did not differ significantly. Therefore, **null hypothesis, which states that there will be no gender difference in attitude measures towards homosexuality is failed to be rejected.**

This results indicate that gender doesn't influence the attitude towards homosexuals. This finding differs from the other studies from the Western context. It might be because of the cultural difference, the legalisation of homosexuality in India or the small sample taken for study.

Implications

The empirical research shows that although gays and lesbians have received some rights and have won in various areas to end discrimination, their struggle for full equality has been far from accomplished. In addition, for whatever reason(s), in the vast majority of the research that has been reviewed, it has been revealed that men experience having problems with gay and lesbian individuals far more than women, although in this study there was no significant difference among the two groups. In choosing one's own lifestyle, all are encouraged to develop their individual potential to the fullest extent as possible as long as they do not impinge upon the rights of others. Therefore, personal homophobia can result in adequate, improper, and harmful reactions to gay and lesbians.

Further research may involve a broadening of the sample group and studying the associated factors with the attitudes towards homosexuality.

REFERENCES

1. Beere, C. A. (1990). Gender roles: A handbook of tests and measures. Greenwood Publishing Group.
2. Bernard E. Whitley Jr. (2009) Religiosity and Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men: A Meta-Analysis, *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 19:1, 21-38.
3. Clarke, V., Ellis, S. J., Peel, E., & Riggs, D. W. (2010). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer psychology: An introduction. Cambridge University Press.
4. Gregory M. Herek & Eric K. Glunt (1993) Interpersonal contact and heterosexuals' attitudes toward gay men: Results from a national survey, *The Journal of Sex Research*, 30:3, 239-244.
5. Gregory M. Herek (1990) Heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: Correlates and gender differences, *The Journal of Sex Research*, 25:4, 451-477
6. Hoeksema, S. N., & Fredrickson, J. B. L., Loftus G., Wagenaar, WA (2012). Introdução à Psicologia: Atkinson & Hilgard.
7. Johnson, P. (2012). Adoption, Homosexuality and the European Convention on Human Rights: Gas and Dubois v France. *The Modern Law Review*, 75(6), 1136-1149.
8. Kite, M. E. (1984). Sex differences in attitudes toward homosexuals: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of homosexuality*, 10(1-2), 69-81.
9. LaMar, L., & Kite, M. (1998). Sex differences in attitudes toward gay men and lesbians: A multidimensional perspective. *Journal of Sex Research*, 35(2), 189-196.
10. Lindsey, E. W. (2015). Attitudes toward homosexuality among young adults: Connections to gender role identity, gender-typed activities, and religiosity. *Journal of homosexuality*, 62(8), 1098-1125.
11. Myers, D. G., & Smith, S. M. (2012). Exploring social psychology. New York: McGraw-Hill.

12. Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C., Austin, W. G., & Worchel, S. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *Organizational identity: A reader*, 56-65.
13. Whitley Jr, B. E. (1990). The relationship of heterosexuals' attributions for the causes of homosexuality to attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 16(2), 369-377.