



A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE REGARDING HOMOSEXUALITY AMONG NURSING STUDENTS STUDYING IN SELECTED COLLEGES OF AMRITSAR, PUNJAB

Ms.Khushwinder Kaur*

M.Sc Psychiatric (Mental Health) Nursing

ABSTRACT

Background: Human sexuality is a very complex behavior that is affected by many factors such as physiological, cognition and learning. The phenomenon of homosexuality is nothing new but homosexuals are still facing discrimination and stigma in our traditional taboos, they go through many problems like in getting jobs, getting and giving education, receiving health care services etc. Negative attitude regarding same sex attraction appears to be deeply ingrained in majority of the nurses' mind as a socialization process. Lower sex knowledge was related to negative attitude towards gay/lesbian/bisexual behavior, masturbation, premarital sex and contraception.

Objective: To assess the knowledge and attitude regarding homosexuality among nursing students.

Methodology: Sample consisted of 200 nursing students from selected colleges of, Amritsar, Punjab. Convenient sampling technique was followed to select the sample. Knowledge of nursing students was assessed by Homosexuality Questionnaire and attitude was measured by Homosexuality attitude scale. The study was conducted in the month of January, 2013.

Results: Study findings revealed that 86.5% of students had average knowledge, 10% had good knowledge and merely 3.5% students had poor knowledge regarding homosexuality but on the other hand majority of study subjects (65.5%) had negative attitude towards homosexuality while remaining 34.5% had positive attitude. Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation was applied to find the correlation between knowledge and attitude which depicted weak positive correlation between knowledge and attitude ($r=+0.204$). ANOVA and 'Z' test were applied to assess the relationship of knowledge and attitude regarding homosexuality among nursing with socio demographic variables such as age, gender, religion, marital status, place of residence, current living area and source of information. While source of information showed significant relationship with both knowledge and attitude regarding homosexuality.

Key words: Knowledge, Attitude, Homosexuality, Nursing Students

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of sexuality is a deep, pervasive aspect of the total human experience and contributes to life in positive and healthy ways. The American Psychology Association (1999)¹ stated that "Sexual orientation is an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or

affectionate attraction toward others”. Sexual orientation can be distinguished from other aspects of sexuality including biological sex, gender identity and the social gender role. There are three broad categories within the spectrum of sexual orientations\ namely heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality. Heterosexual persons are emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex. Bisexual persons can experience sexual, emotional and affection attraction to both their own sex and the opposite sex and Homosexual persons are attracted towards people of same sex.

Many people considered homosexuality as a mental disorder but in 1973, the American Psychiatric Association’s Board of Trustees removed homosexuality from its official diagnostic manual (DSM II). The world health organization's ICD-9 (1977) listed homosexuality as a mental illness but it was removed from the ICD-10 in World Health Assembly on May 17, 1999. In 2001, Netherland was the first country to legalize same sex marriage.

Leonard (2002)² stated homophobia as ‘fear and hatred of gay and lesbian people and of their sexual desires and practices’ and Douglas Scott et al (2004)³ defined homophobia ‘as an irrational fear and dislike of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people which may lead to hatred and result in physical or verbal abuse’.

Daily News and Analysis (2012)⁴ stated that India has an estimated 25 lack gay population. In India under Section 377 of Indian penal code criminalized private consensual sex between adults of same sex but it was struck down in 2009 and India legalized same sex sexual activities. Although number of laws have come into existence but these minority groups are still facing discrimination and prejudice against them.

Better Health Fact Sheet on gay and lesbian Issues (2012)⁵ stated that gay and lesbians had higher rates of mental health disorders than the rest of the population. They also have higher rates of obesity, smoking and unsafe alcohol and drug use and more likely to self harm. The majority of gay and lesbians have had experience of homophobic health professionals which may make them less inclined to seek medical help or they may wait longer before they seek help. Health professionals particularly in rural areas may be inadequately informed about gay and lesbian health issues and during consultation they were receiving less favorable care.

Sachdev P (1998)⁶ studied 887 students in social work, nursing, and humanities from two major universities in Delhi and compared them regarding their knowledge about AIDS/HIV and attitudes toward person with AIDS and homosexuals. The results showed lack of information related to homosexuality and AIDS and they also possess negative attitude towards homosexuality.

Bowers et al (2006)⁷ reported the negative impact of nursing and medical staff making derogatory comments about lesbian and gay patients. In addition, this research reported instances of same sex partners of patients or clients being ignored by staff, not being kept informed of their partner’s condition and progress, and excluding them for planning care for their partner.

Nursing students could be viewed as person equipped with adequate knowledge and skills in all areas in the hospital or community setting. In every setting, nurse should also focus on one key area that is sexuality. Healthcare professionals those lacks the knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity toward homosexual people can negatively impact how they provides care and that ultimately contributing to minority stress. They also exhibit poor attitudes, poor behavior and ignorance, along with their religious beliefs that also negatively affect the treatment of these individuals related to the stigma associated with being homosexual.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

A Descriptive Study to assess the knowledge and attitude regarding Homosexuality among Nursing Students studying in selected Colleges of Amritsar, Punjab.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the knowledge regarding homosexuality among nursing students.
2. To assess the attitude regarding homosexuality among nursing students.
3. To determine the relationship between knowledge and attitude regarding homosexuality among nursing students.
4. To determine the relationship of knowledge regarding homosexuality among nursing students with selected sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, religion, marital status, type of family, place of residence, current living area and source of information.
5. To determine the relationship of attitude regarding homosexuality among nursing students with selected sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, religion, marital status, type of family, place of residence, current living area and source of information.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection procedure was conducted from January 3rd to 31st, 2013. The sample consisted of 200 subjects. Convenient sampling was used to select sample from the population. Prior to the data collection procedure formal permission was obtained from the six nursing colleges of Amritsar named as Anand college of nursing, Jethumal; Nam Rattrra International college of nursing, Lahorke; Shri Guru Ram Das college of nursing, Valla; Shri Guru Ram Das college of nursing, Pandher; SV Memorial college of nursing, Mudhal and Government Nursing College, Amritsar. Structured questionnaire was prepared to assess knowledge regarding homosexuality among nursing students. It consisted of total 30 multiple choice questions having four options.

Each correct answer carries one mark and wrong answer carry zero mark. For attitude towards homosexuality assessment, likert scale was used, There were total 22 items and each item has 5 options i.e. strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), strongly disagree (1). Analysis was done by using descriptive and inferential statistics such as mean, percentage, standard deviation, correlation coefficient and ANOVA test and Z test. Pie charts and bar diagrams were used to depict the findings of the study.

RESULTS

Table no. 1 frequency and percentage distribution of sample characteristics

S.No.	Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age (in years)		
	20-22	179	89.5
	23-25	21	10.5
	Above 25	-	-
2	Gender		
	Male	03	1.5
	Female	197	98.5
3	Religion		
	Hinduism	27	13.5
	Sikhism	159	79.5
	Islam	12	06
	Christianity	02	01
4	Marital status		
	Married	03	1.5
	Unmarried	197	98.5
	Widow/widower	-	-
	Divorced /separated	-	-
5	Types of family		
	Nuclear	151	75.5
	Joint	49	24.5
	Extended	-	-
6	Residence		
	Urban	98	49
	Rural	102	51
7	Current living area		
	Hostel	126	64.5
	Home	62	31
	Paying guest	05	2.5
	Staying with relatives	04	02
8	Source of information		
	Friends	40	20
	Family	06	03
	Techers	30	15
	Media /T.V/Radio	80	40
	Books /journals/magazines	31	15.5
	Internet	13	6.5

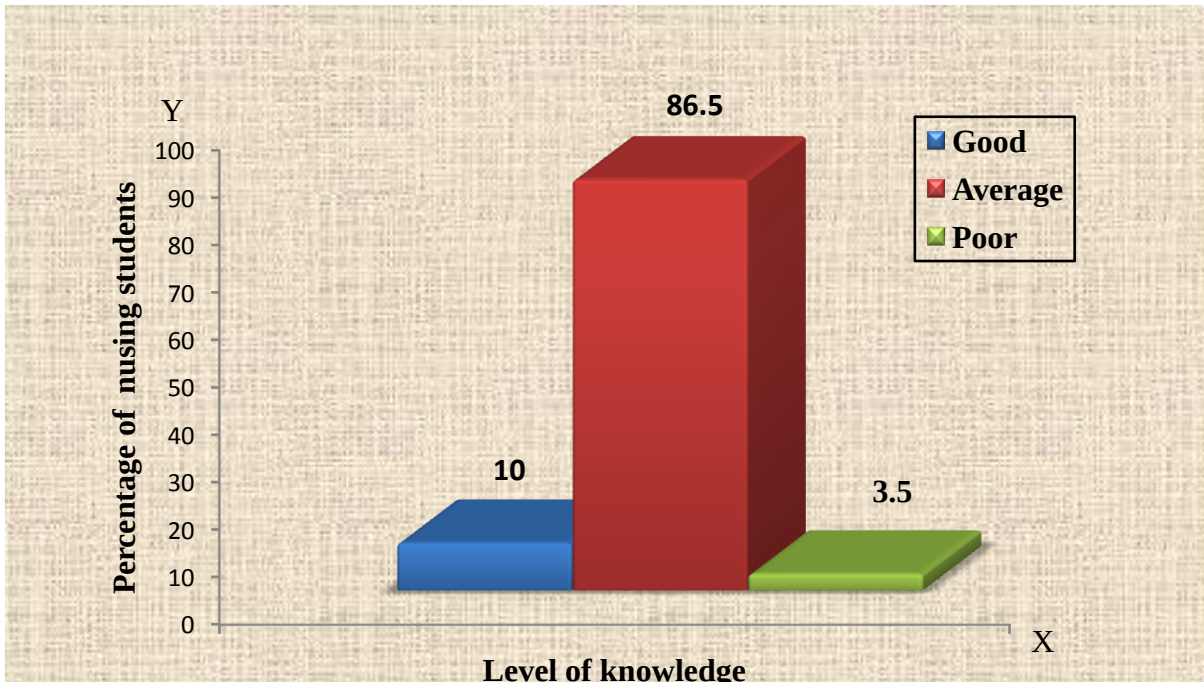


Figure 4: Percentage distribution of nursing students regarding homosexuality according to Level of knowledge

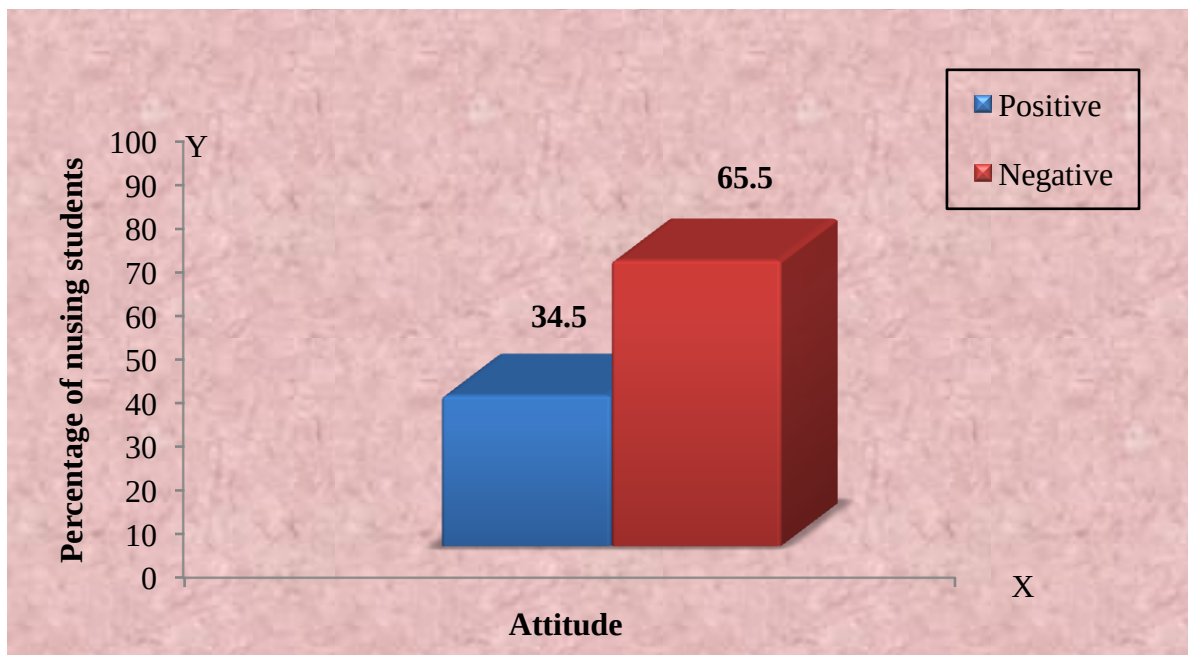


Figure 12: Percentage distribution of nursing students regarding homosexuality according to Attitude

Table no. 2: Correlation between knowledge and Attitude regarding homosexuality among nursing students

N=200			
Variable	Mean	SD	Coefficient of Correlation (r)
Knowledge	15.69	3.25	+ 0.204***
Attitude	63.49	10.16	
Maximum attitude score= 110		*** Significant at p<0.001	
Minimum attitude score= 22			
Maximum knowledge score=30			
Minimum knowledge score= 00			

Table 2 represents the correlation between knowledge and attitude regarding homosexuality among nursing students. The coefficient of correlation was calculated and found to be weak positive i.e. $r = + 0.204$ which was statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of data related to knowledge regarding homosexuality among nursing students revealed that out of 200 nursing students majority (86.5%) of them had average knowledge, 10% had good knowledge and merely 3.5% students had poor knowledge regarding homosexuality. This finding is inconsistent with the results of Rondahl Gerd (2009)⁸ who conduct a study on students inadequate knowledge about lesbian , gay , bisexual and transgender person's on 6th semester of nursing students in Sweden revealed that out of 71 participants 66% students have inadequate knowledge related to homosexuality.

The analysis related to attitude towards homosexuality among nursing students revealed that out of 200 nursing students majority of them (65.5%) had negative attitude and while remaining (34.5%) had positive attitude regarding homosexuality. This finding is consistent with results of Yen CF et al (2007)⁹ on attitudes of nurses toward gay and lesbians in Southern Taiwan. Results revealed that out of 1824 nurses majority of (58%) of participants had the most negative attitude towards homosexuality.

The analysis of data regarding the relationship between knowledge and attitude regarding homosexuality revealed that coefficient of correlation was found to be weak positive i.e. $r = + 0.204$ and it was statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ level. This finding is inconsistent with the study conducted by Bojana et al (2009)¹⁰ the impact of knowledge on shaping medical professionals' attitudes towards homosexuality in Serbia and results revealed that there was a strong, statistically significant, inverse correlation between the knowledge of homosexuality and attitudes towards the homosexuals ($r = -0.56$, $p < 0.001$).

CONCLUSION

There are many contrasting opinions on the sensitive topic of homosexuality. Sometimes health care providers are not known to health care needs of homosexual patients. Health care workers identify homosexual as like heterosexual and if they discover them then homosexual feels discriminated. In the present study it is concluded that there is a need to improve the attitude and knowledge regarding homosexuality among nursing students. Study findings revealed that majority of students had average knowledge (86.5%) and negative attitude (65.5%) towards homosexuality. Knowledge and attitude had weak positive correlation. Knowledge and attitude regarding homosexuality has statistically non significant relationship with age, gender, religion, marital status, type of family, place of residence and current living whereas the relationship was found to be statistically significant with source of information regarding homosexuality.

REFERENCES

1. American Psychological Association (1999). Answers to Your Questions about Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality: Definition of sexual orientation. available at <http://people.ucalgary.ca/~ptrembla/homosexuality-suicide/construction/a1-sexual-orientation-binary.htm>
2. Leonard W. What's the difference? Health issues of major concern to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI). Australian journal of advanced nursing 2002; 25(1):71. available at <http://www.ajan.com.au/Vol25/Vol25.1-10.pdf>
3. Douglas Scott S., Pringle A. and Lumsdaine C. Social exclusion- homophobia and health inequalities: a review. UK Gay Men's Health Network. Available from: http://www.gaymenshealthnetwork.org.uk/gmhn_report.pdf
4. Daily news and analysis, http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report_gay-population-is-25-lakh-7pct-hiv-infected-govt-to-sc_1662028
5. Better health fact sheet on gay and lesbian issues, http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Gay_and_lesbian_issues_discrimination
6. Sachdev P. Knowledge regarding AIDS/HIV and attitude towards person with AIDS and homosexuals. Social Work in Health Care (SOC WORK HEALTH CARE), 1998; 26 (4): 37-57. Available at <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?sid=bd9abbf9-3b66-4e98-bc5c1e25b0584802%40sessionmgr198&vid=1&hid=121&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=rzh&AN=2002050095>
7. Bowers R, Plummer D, McCann P, Mc Conaghy C and Irwin L. How we manage sexual and gender diversity in the public health system 2000;2(4):45-47
8. Rondahl Gerd. Students inadequate knowledge about Lesbian, Gya, Bisexual and Transgender Persons. international journal of Nursing Education Scholarship 2009;6(1):1-12
9. .Yen CF, Pan SM, Hou SY, Liu HC, Wu SJ, Yang WC . Attitude toward gay men and lesbians and related factors among nurses in Southern Taiwan. Public Health; 2007;21(1):73-79. Available at <http://www.traveldoctoronline.net/attitudes-toward-gay-men-and-lesbians-and-related-factors-among-nurses-in-southern-taiwan-MTcxNjY1MzQ=.htm>
10. Bojana Dunjic-Kostic, Maja Pantovic, Vuk Vukovic, Dunja Randjelović, Sanja Totic-Poznanovic, Aleksandar Damjanovic, Miroslava Jašović-Gasic & Maja Ivkovic. Journal of psychiatry danubina 2012;24(2):143-151