

## Impact of Identity Acceptance on Psychological Well-Being among LGBT community

Pragna Desai\* and Pankaj Suvera\*\*

### Abstract

Sex and sexuality are two different terms; Sex is referred to biologically assigned role whereas sexuality is individual's emotional and sexual expression towards oneself and romantic relations, which can be divided into heterosexual, homosexual, asexual, etc. Due to poor social acceptance and taboo towards homosexual orientation leads to identity crisis, which makes an individual emotionally vulnerable. Objective: The purpose of this research was to see the impact of identity acceptance on psychological well-being among LGBT community. A sample of 240 people from LGBT community were taken by using purposive sampling method. Psychological well-being Scale developed by Bhogale and Prakash (1995) was used as tool in this research for the data collection and 4\*2 ANOVA was applied for statistical analysis. Results revealed that, there is significant difference in psychological well-being within LGBT community based on the reference to their level of identity acceptance.

**Key Words:** Psychological Well-being, Sexual Orientation, Identity Acceptance, Homosexual, Bisexual, Transgender, Psychological Health, Gay, Lesbian

What is normal?' has always been a matter of discussion among scholars, as there is always someone who doesn't fit in with the pattern which society has drawn. It doesn't mean that they don't want to follow social norms or trying to rebel. Some people are born to be different; someone out of the box who doesn't fit into boundaries of social norms and that is not by choice. Such inherent characteristics are common in each area, including sexual expression to intellectual quotient.

SEXUALITY is the most fascinating topic among human being since prehistoric times, artistic representation of human sexuality and sexual behavior is found in all cultures through historical evidence. According to American Psychological Association's guideline, "Sex refers to biological and physiological characteristics which is assigned by birth, where as gender implies the psychological, behavioral, social and cultural aspect with the assigned role of being masculine or feminine. And sexual orientation is individual's enduring sexual attraction to partner which can be heterosexual" (APA, 2015).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION consists of three components: desire, behavior and identity. Sexual orientation is distinct concept from the components of sex and gender, it includes biological sex assigned by birth, with anatomical, physiological, and genetic characteristic associated being male or female at the time of birth, gender identity is a psychological sense of being male or female and cultural gender role is the role defined by norms of society that define feminine or masculine behavior. Sexual orientation is individual's enduring sexual attraction to partner (APA, 2015), which could be attraction towards the same sex, opposite sex, to both sex, nobody. Among all heterosexuality has been perceived as normal and socially accepted concept from the ages, where as other

sexual preference has remained a controversial topic that can be divided into following categories;

HOMOSEXUAL is considered to be that group who gets attracted towards same sex and not having desire to change their biological characteristic as well as happy with their body. Male attracted to male is identified as GAY whereas female attracted to female is identified as LESBIAN.

BISEXUAL refers to have sexual attraction or romantic relation with both, Male and female; and has same level of satisfaction.

TRANSGENDER are those whose gender identity, gender expression and emotions are incongruent with the assigned sex by birth, and who have undergone or will undergo in future for medical procedures including gender reassignment surgery, hormone therapy to bring harmony between gender identity and biological sex. Transgender men is one who was women by sex assigned at birth, having incongruence gender identity; Transgender women is one who is men by birth and wish to be female by psychological and emotional identity. Individuals having different sexual orientation has been surrounded by heterosexuals, they have been raised and nurtured, even the one who gave birth to the one who trained for life problem, all are heterosexual. So from sexual perspective individual sees oneself as heterosexual. And as per heterosexual society, the existence of gay, bisexual or transsexual doesn't exist. Society considers homosexual feeling as a part of growing phase and it fade away very soon, but this is not the fact. As one reaches to puberty starts exploring one's sexual orientation is different from peers and that creates feeling of being different or not fitting into the social structure soon leads to fear of being abandoned due to social stigma. According to Goffman (1963), stigmatized individuals use different strategies to manage and hide their stigma from the wider society; gradually develops Identity confusion (CASS, 1984)

\*Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidhyanagar, Gujrat, Email: pragnadesai91@gmail.com

\*\*Professor, Department of Psychology, Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidhyanagar, Gujrat, Email: pankajsuvera@spuvvn.edu

that affects their emotional well being. According to CASS's Model of Homosexual identity development, homosexual identity develops in linear progression from stage 1 to 6, Identity confusion → Identity Comparison → Identity Tolerance → Identity Acceptance → Identity Pride → Identity Synthesis. The concept of Well being encompasses comprehensive and well balanced experience of life. It includes health in social, physical, mental, emotional, career and spiritual domains. Well being a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well. Healthy living conditions are primary need for well being.

**Psychological well being** is a state of mind desirable for one and all, optimism, understanding, positive attitude toward work and effective crisis management, maintaining good health, reaching out and healthy socialization, ability to sustain relationships, and understanding are some of the characteristics associated with psychological well being. Psychological well being is just not an absence of a mental disorder but also emotional state of feeling good and functioning effectively. The concept of feeling good is not limited to positive emotions or happiness but also confidence, affection and sense of self worth. Effectiveness of functioning involves development of individual's potential, good control over life situations and building positive relationships. Psychological well-being has great impact on individual's self-esteem and self-image, which brings sense of worth. Edwards, (2005) stated that psychological well-being refers multidimensional concept (Ryff, 1989) that develops in combination of identity emotional regulation, personality traits, and life experiences (Helson & Srivastava, 2001). Studies have given evidence of social support and acceptance in increasing well-being.

**Aim:** To study the impact of identity acceptance on psychological well-being among LGBT community.

#### **Objective**

1. To study and compare psychological well-being among LGBT community.
2. To study and compare psychological well-being among LGBT community with reference to their level of identity acceptance
3. To study the interaction effect between psychological well-being and level of identity acceptance among LGBT community

#### **Hypotheses**

Ho: There will be no significant difference between psychological well-being among LGBT community.

Ho: There will be no significant difference between psychological well-being and level of identity acceptance among LGBT community

Ho: There will be no significant interaction effect between psychological well-being and level of identity acceptance among LGBT community

#### **Method**

##### **Sample**

For data collection purposive sampling technique was used by approaching to various organizations of Vadodara and Ahmedabad districts working for LGBT community. In present study to obtain the sample official permission was taken from the authority of these organizations and consent was taken from each participant in prior. For this study 1000+ active members from the organization were approached out of that 240 were selected. These samples were equally divided among gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual.

##### **Tools**

In this current study, to measure psychological well-being "Psychological Well-being Questionnaire" developed by Bhogle and Prakash (1995) in Gujarati version was used. The questionnaire contains 26 items with true and false response alternative. It covers 12 dimensions of psychological well-being. Higher the score higher the psychological well-being. The test-retest reliability coefficient is 0.72 and internal coefficient is 0.84. The validity of questionnaire has been reported up to satisfactory level by the author.

##### **Procedure**

To obtain the sample group, official permission was taken from the authorized person of organizations and taken informed consent of each participant promising confidentiality and anonymity, after well established rapport. The Psychological well-being scale was administered on each participant individually during that time privacy and comfortable environment was ensured. After completion of data from each participant, responses were analyzed by using scoring key. To identify the mean difference and interaction effect of sexual orientation and level of identity acceptance on Psychological well-being 4 X 2 ANOVA F-test was used.

##### **Results and Discussion**

The table shows result of ANOVA for psychological well-being among LGBT community that is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender is 4.708 that is significant at 0.05, which means there is significant difference in the psychological well-being among the group of different sexual orientation. Hence the hypothesis has been rejected.

The graph shows that among LGBT community, mean value of psychological well-being scale in Bisexuals is 2.681, which is higher as compare to others. In contrast to that Transgender community shows 1.724, which is minimum among all on mean value of psychological well-being. The reason, bisexual is considers to be invisible part in the society, Individual with bisexual orientation can lead their life without getting into any

controversies and will be able to enjoy family life, whereas transgender are facing conflicts within their

the group varies into building healthy psychological well-being of individual from each group.

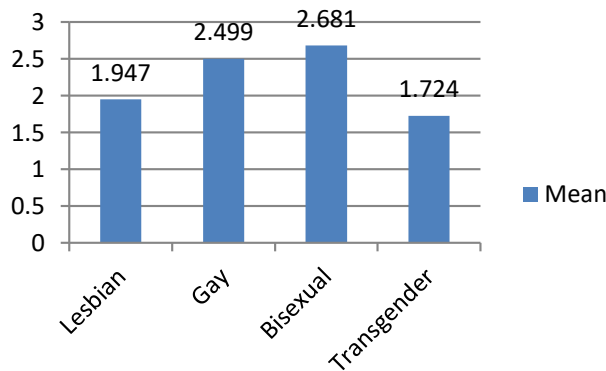
**Table 1 Result of ANOVA for Psychological well-being among LGBT community**

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Level of Significance
Sexuality	66.000	3	22.000	4.708	.003
Level of Acceptance	70.417	1	70.417	15.070	.000
Sexuality * Level of Acceptance	37.117	3	12.372	2.648	.050
Error	1084.067	232	4.673		
Total	55980.000	240			
Corrected Total	1257.600	239			

\*N/S (Non-significant) S(Significant)

actual self and desired self and faces maximum discrimination in society.

The above graph shows interaction between sexuality and identity acceptance on psychological well-being



**Figure 1. Mean Difference of PWB Among LGBT Community**

F ratio of Identity Acceptance and psychological well-being is 15.070, significant at 0.01 levels, indicates the impact of acceptance is important aspect for psychological well-being. This result gives an insight about the importance of having community support for positive psychological well-being.

This graph indicates impact of being in community in the sense of psychological well-being, those who are attached with community for more than 5 years has mean value of psychological well-being that is 2.479, is better than those who have spend less time with group, which is 1.957. Social support from community helps to achieve sense of worth in an individual.

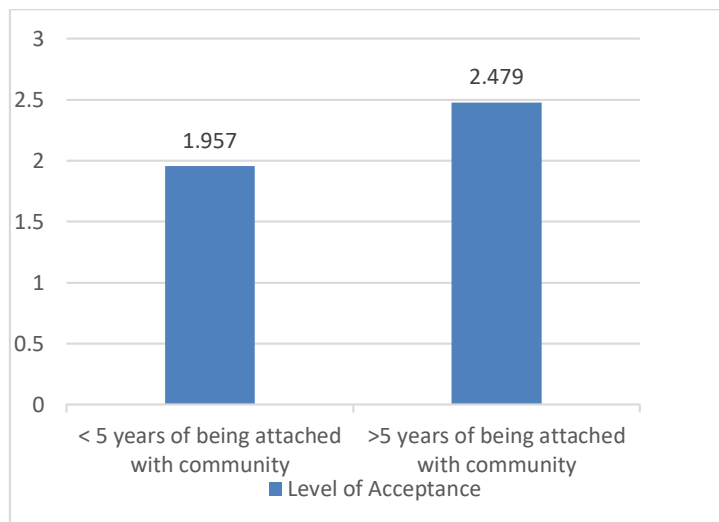
F ratio of interaction effect between Psychological well-being and level of identity acceptance among LGBT is 2.648, which is also significant at 0.05 level. Hence it can be stated that community support among

among the LGBT groups on individually, which suggests that psychological well-being improves with identity acceptance at its best in Bisexual followed by transgender and lesbian. But the result alters in gay men as with increasing communal support the mean of psychological well-being decreases.

People are generally viewed as heterosexual (Lasser and Tharinger, 2000). Everything that is seen heterosexist behavior and heard heterosexist comment, everything is assumed from the heterosexual perspective. In such scenario, other than heterosexual groups were assumed to face same sort of challenges but it's not fact. However the result shows some different scenario, the data analysis of this study indicates that psychological well being of Bisexual group is sound in compare to Transgender group. Though LGBT is considered to be a single community, Transgender people faces more challenges in their way

to derive Identity pride and acceptance in compare to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual group. Stigma affects their life adversely (Lasser & Tharinger, 2000) and leads to

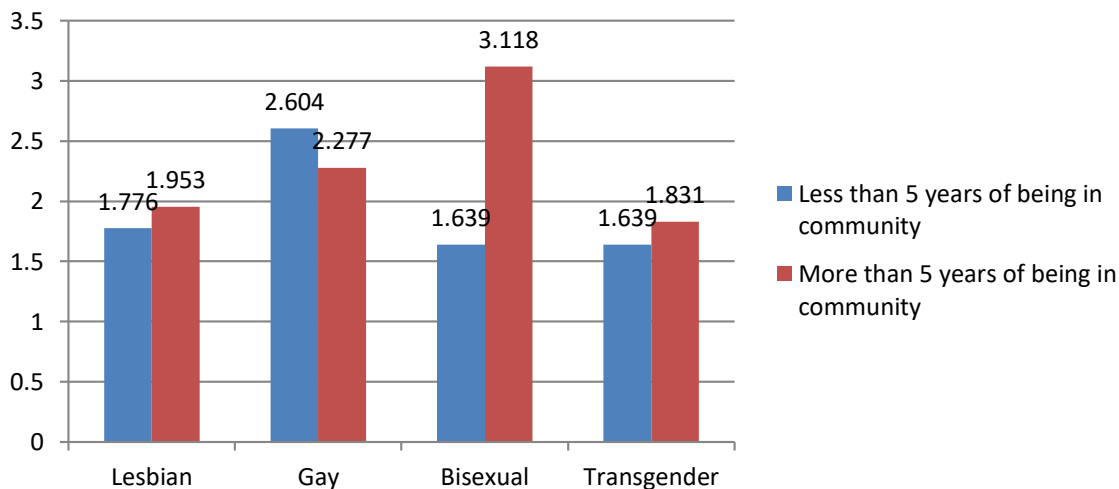
creates identity assumption. Here it is significant improvement has been observed psychological well-being of minority group who spend more than 5 years



**Figure 2. Mean Difference of PWB at different level of acceptance**

various mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and distress(Meyer, 1995) Especially Transgender community faces this intrapersonal and

or more with community. Community support gives a sense of security and belongingness which is core of emotional wellness, but this varies among the



**Figure 3. Mean difference of PWB among LGBT at different level acceptance**

interpersonal conflict due gender identity and sex assignment at birth, also behavior and presentation transcend culturally defined parameters of gender are not congruent (Institute of Medicine, 2011). But Bisexuals are one who is more of hidden and fit among heterosexual group without reviling their identity. Having someone who is like-minded reduces burden of being different. The data of this study supports Trioden’s (1989) stage of identity assumption, Association with homosexual community and exploration life and culture of sexual minority group

community. More than five years duration of community support in Bisexual data shows notable improvement in psychological well-being, followed by transgender and lesbian, whereas Gay tends to have negative impact. Relationship insecurity and sexual harassment could be the leading factor for this negative impact due to various factors such as poor support from children and other family members when they gets older (Beeler, Rawls, Herdt, & Cohler, 1999; Dorfman et al., 1995) leading feeling of loneliness among gay

men with ageing (Grossman, D'Augelli, & O'Connell, 2001; Kuyper & Fokkema, 2010)

### **Conclusion**

The finding suggests, though sexual minority group has some unique challenges (Ryan & Futterman, 1997), Transgender community is having poor psychological well-being in compare to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual. Also long term communal support and being a part of group improves their Psychological status, than being alone and short term communal support. There is significant improvement in psychological well-being of those who were associated with community for more than five years than those who had just joined or have spend less than five year with community. Results have indicated significantly change in the scores of psychological well-being with respect to the years of connecting with community groups except Gay.

### **Limitations**

The present study was carried out on a small group; hence the result cannot be generalized on entire community. The sample of research was taken from Vadodara and Ahmedabad District and city only. Also the demographic details like age, education level, socioeconomic status, source of income, marital status, and family type were not considered for this study could also have possible impact on result.

This research was only focusing on overall psychological well-being, whereas factors of psychological well-being can also carried out to explore the result into depth.

### **Implications**

Since the legal bodies have also accepted the homosexual relation and validated sex change surgery, the society needs to be sensitized. Awareness program and homosexual friendly approach should be taken from the baseline to remove homophobia. School should give equal privilege to teachers from sexual minority so that the society can overcome with the taboo of sexual minorities.

Sexual minority group has equal right to live their life. Parents, Educators, Health workers, Social worker, law and administrators should encourage to have homo-friendly environment, which can create healthy environment in future for all sexual minority group.

This study can be useful for further researched in the same field and encourage more and more mental health professionals to develop therapy which can make the identity exploration procedure easier.

This study can also become helpful for policy maker to see the invisible side of the society and take some action for the betterment of this youth.

This study could help education and health ministry in introducing sexuality along with sex education in high school children to create homo-friendly environment.

### **References**

- Appleby, G. A. (2001). Ethnographic study of gay and bisexual working-class men in the United States. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 12(3-4), 51-62.
- Beeler, J. A., Rawls, T. W., Herdt, G., & Cohler, B. J. (1999). The needs of older lesbians and gay men in Chicago. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 9(1), 31-49.
- Bhogle and Prakash (1995). The manual of development of psychological well being scale.
- Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 4(3), 219-235.
- Cass, V. C. (1984). Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *Journal of sex research*, 20(2), 143-167.
- Cass, V. C. (1990). The implications of homosexual identity formation for the Kinsey model and scale of sexual preference.
- D'Augelli, A. R., Grossman, A. H., Hershberger, S. L., & O'Connell, T. S. (2001). Aspects of mental health among older lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults. *Aging & mental health*, 5(2), 149-158.
- Dorfman, R. A., Walters, K. L., Burke, P., Hardin, L., Karanik, T., Raphael, J., & Silverstein, E. (1995). Old, sad and alone: The myth of the aging homosexual. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 24(1-2), 29-44.
- Edwards, S. D., Ngcobo, H. S., Edwards, D. J., & Palavar, K. (2005). Exploring the relationship between physical activity, psychological well-being and physical self-perception in different exercise groups. *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation*, 27(1), 59-74.
- Frost, D. M., & Meyer, I. H. (2009). Internalized homophobia and relationship quality among lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 56(1), 97.
- Helson, R., & Srivastava, S. (2001). Three paths of adult development: conservers, seekers, and achievers. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, 80(6), 995.
- Kuyper, L., & Fokkema, T. (2010). Loneliness among older lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults: The role of minority stress. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39, 1171-1180
- Lasser, J. & Tharinger, D. (2000). Sexual minority youth. In children's needs: Development, problems and alternatives, Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- McWhirter, D. P., Sanders, S. A. E., & Reinisch, J. M. E. (1990). Homosexuality/heterosexuality: Concepts of sexual orientation. Oxford University Press. 239-266.

Ryan, C., & Futterman, D. (1997). Lesbian and gay youth: care and counseling. *Adolescent medicine (Philadelphia, Pa.)*, 8(2), 207-374.

Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 57(6), 1069.

Troiden, R. R. (1988). *Gay and lesbian identity: A sociological analysis*. Rowman & Littlefield.