

PERCEPTION AND PARTICIPATION OF HETEROSEXUAL CISGENDER PERSONS IN CHENNAI LGBTQ+ PRIDE

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *To understand the perception of heterosexual cisgender persons towards pride month and to study their participation in Chennai LGBTQ+ pride*

Method: *Quantitative research method* **Sample & Field:** *Fifty four UG and PG Students from 10 colleges located in Chennai*

Results: *The Study shows that 57% of the respondents have heard about LGBTQ+ pride out of which 12% of the participants attended pride in the past. 61% of the participants mentioned that they support queer inclusion and are vocal about it and 33% support queer inclusion but are not vocal about it. 30% of the participants mentioned that they faced harsh comments from their social circle for supporting queer inclusion. 52% of the participants mentioned that the message of LGBTQ+ inclusion is not effectively conveyed through the pride march.*

Conclusion: *It is important for any kind of demonstration to ensure and actively monitor that the idea that it tries to convey is reaching the majority and the current shows that though Chennai LGBTQ+ pride creates visibility amongst the general public about the queer community there is a gap in the message reaching the majority of the society which should be addressed by multiple stakeholders including queer communities, allies, educational institution, and government.*

Keywords: *LGBTQ, Queer, Chennai pride, Perception, Participation*

Background:

Gender Sex and Sexual orientation play an important role in a person's life and in many cases, these are the factors that decide a person's life instances. For example, important life incidents including marriage, parenting, and at times even choice of education and career also depend on a person's gender, sex, and sexual orientation.

The socially constructed qualities of men, women, girls, and boys are referred to as gender. This covers interpersonal connections as well as the standards, mannerisms, and roles that come with being a woman, man, girl, or boy. Gender is a social concept that differs from culture to culture and can evolve over time. Due to the hierarchy of gender, additional social and economic inequities are exhibited.

In both people and animals, the term "sex" refers to a set of biological characteristics. Physiological characteristics, such as chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and functions, and reproductive/sexual anatomy are primarily involved. Although sex is typically classified as either female or male, there are differences in the biological characteristics that make up sex and how those characteristics are exhibited. Sexual orientation refers to the physical, romantic, or emotional attraction that someone feels for another person.

Challenges faced by LGBTQ+ Community.

Discrimination: Negative gender and sexual stereotypes pose a considerable obstacle to young people's access to knowledge, mobility, and decision-making power.

Violence: In light of laws that discriminate against persons based on their sexual orientation and gender identity and/or expression, young people who identify as members of the LGBTQI or who are thought to identify as such have been the targets of violence, extortion, and blackmail from both state and non-state actors.

Young people: Their access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services is hampered by legal and health restrictions. School: There are still impediments that prevent girls, young women, and young people who identify as LGBTQI from receiving school.

Political engagement: These limitations on young people's freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly are an alarming development in and of themselves.

Queer movement around the world:

- **1924**-First recorded gay rights publication, "Friendship and freedom" newsletter in America.
- **1958**-The first homosexual magazine was published in the U.S.
- **1966**-"The mattachine society"entered a new york bar and ordered drinks while announcing they were gay.
- **1969**- "Stonewall riots"LGBTQ civil rightsmovement in the U.S.
- **1973**- The american psychiatry associationremoved homosexuality from mental illness.
- **1987**- "Barney frank" was the second gay member of congress
- **2000**- Vermont- The first state to give right to civil union for same-sex couples.
- **2009**- President Barack Obama signed the "Matthew Shepard and James Byrd hatecrimes prevention act" into law.
- **2011**- President Barack Obama revoked the "Don't Ask, Dont Tell" law.
- **2013**- "The Defense of Marriage Act" which said that same sex couples should not get federal benefits was madeunconstitutional.
- **2015**- President Barack Obama called for an end of conversion therapy after the suicide of transgender who ws subjected tochristian conversion therapy.
- **2015**- The supreme court made same sex marriage is a constitutional right.
- **2016**- President Barack Obama announcedto designate New York's sytonewall innmonument.

Queer movement in India:

In India, the LGBTQ movement first emerged in the late 20th century. The first "gaymagazine" in India, Bombay Dost, was started as a newsletter by Ashok Kavi Row in 1990. The first known LGBT demonstration took place outside police headquarters on August 11, 1992, in New Delhi's ITO neighbourhood. This was two years later. The subsequent turning point in the queer debate was Deepa Mehta's film "Fire." When the 1998 movie, Radha and Sita, was released, it followed their forbidding sexual impulses.Kolkata hosted the inaugural Indian pride parade on July 2, 1999. Even though it only had about 15 members, it was nonetheless an important accomplishment because it heralded the introduction of visible LGBT politics in the nation. Section 377 of the Indian Constitution, which relates to "unnatural offences," was found to be unconstitutional by the Delhi High Court in a 2009 decision. But in 2013, the Supreme Court overturned the high court's decision, criminalising

homosexual partnerships once more. The Supreme Court of India rendered a significant ruling in the matter of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) versus the Union of India in 2014. The court recognised transgender people as a third gender and upheld their constitutionally protected fundamental rights. Finally, Section 377 was declared invalid by the Supreme Court in 2018, decriminalising homosexuality in India.

The current study mainly focuses on the perception of non-queer community towards the queer and their participation in pride month.

METHODOLOGY:

The study employed a descriptive research design and quantitative method. A self-prepared interview schedule is used to collect data from the participants. The tool contains three sections and a total of 33 items, section one focuses on the demographic details of the participants, section two on the perception towards the LGBTQ community, and section three on the perception and participation in LGBTQ pride. All 54 participants and the colleges were randomly selected using a simple random technique. The collected data is analyzed using SPSS (Version 20).

Demography of the participants

- 64.8% of the participants are between the age of 21 and 23 years, 22.2% of the participants are between the age of 24 and 26 years. 9.3% of the participants are between the age of 18 and 20 and 3.7% of participants are aged above 27.
- 57% of the participants identify as heterosexual ciswomen and 43% of the participants identify themselves as heterosexual cismen.
- 91% of the participants are post-graduate students and 9% of the participants are undergraduate students.

Significant findings

- 44% of the participants mentioned that they heard the term „Queer“.
- 46% of the participants mentioned that they never heard the term „cisgender“.
- 30% of the participants mentioned that they have not heard the term “intersex”.

- 93% of the participants agreed with the statement that transgender identity is not a disorder.
- 63% of the participants believe that all transgender people undergo hormonal change naturally without any medical intervention.
- A majority of 94% of the participants mentioned that transgender and intersex persons are always not the same.
- A majority of 96% of the participants mentioned that any other sexuality other than heterosexuality is not a disorder.
- 80% of the participants mentioned that any other sexuality other than heterosexuality is unnatural.
- Only 33% of the participants think that any other sexualities other than heterosexuality are against our Indian culture.
- 29% of the participants are not at all aware of the concept of “preferred pronouns”, whereas only 13% of the respondents are extremely aware of the concept.
- 74% of the participants mentioned that they are ally of the LGBTQ+ community.
- A majority of 56% of the participants mentioned that they know at least one person who identifies as queer in their close circle.
- 40% of the participants mentioned that it is perfectly acceptable to be a queer person and 7% mentioned that it is totally unacceptable.
- 57% of the respondents have heard about LGBTQ+ pride out of which 12% of the participants attended pride in the past.
- 61% of the participants mentioned that they support queer inclusion and are vocal about it and 33% support queer inclusion but are not vocal about it.
- 30% of the participants mentioned that they faced harsh comments from their social circle for supporting queer inclusion.
- 18% of the participants mentioned that the pride march helps to create awareness about the LGBTQ+ community and 15% of the participants mentioned that pride shows the diversity in human sexuality and gender. 8% of the participants mentioned that it’s a demonstration of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. 6% of the participants mentioned that they see the pride march as a celebration and 2% mentioned that pride is a western concept.
- 52% of the participants mentioned that the message of LGBTQ+ inclusion is not effectively conveyed through the pride march.

Discussion

The study shows that 93% of the participants mentioned that being transgender is not a disorder which is a positive sign but 63% said that a transgender person undergoes hormonal change without any medical interventions shows a lack of awareness about gender identity and transgender persons. Also, 96% of the participants mentioned that any sexuality other than heterosexuality is not a disorder shows the awareness amongst the participants about sexual orientation. But 33% of the participants believe that any sexuality other than heterosexuality is against Indian culture shows that despite being aware that homosexuality or bisexuality is not a disorder, participants still think they are against Indian culture highlights the role of culture in understanding and accepting sexuality. 74% of the participants mentioned that they identify as an ally of the LGBTQ+ community which shows the scope of creating support systems for the LGBTQ+ community. Out of the 57% who mentioned that they heard about Chennai LGBTQ+ pride only 12% have attended the pride and those who are interested in pride but never attended one mentioned that it is primarily because of lack of company from peer groups to attend one. The perception of heterosexual cisgender participants towards pride is diverse. 18% mentioning the pride march helps to create awareness and 15% mentioned that the pride march shows human diversity and shows how different people perceive the pride march in different ways. Despite a diverse positive view on the pride march, more than half of the participants mentioned that pride marches are not very effective in conveying the message of LGBTQ+ inclusion to society and this is probably due to a lack of awareness about the pride month itself and its distinct nature of the presentation.

Suggestion:

LGBTQ+ Community and its ally should make attempts to understand the efficacy of pride marches to understand whether the message is spread to the study and how it can be improvised for a better outcome.

Education Institutions can form LGBTQ+ Ally Clubs to create better awareness among students and promote inclusion in the institution.

Limitation:

Since most of the participants are from Chennai city and the sample size is less and focuses primarily on Chennai LGBTQ pride, the results may not be generalized to a large population. A large study on the same theme can be conducted for a better understanding of the situation.

CONCLUSION

It is important for any kind of demonstration to ensure and actively monitor that the idea that it tries to convey is reaching the majority and the current shows that though Chennai LGBTQ+ pride creates visibility amongst the general public about the queer community there is a gap in the message reaching the majority of the society which should be addressed by multiple stakeholders including queer communities, allies, educational institution, and government.

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