

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF SEXUAL MINORITIES IN KARNATAKA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The term sexual minority refers to four major groups, namely, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender (LGBT), the most vulnerable and marginalized section in society until now. In order to prevent and control HIV/AIDS, the Indian Government in collaboration with international agencies initiated many programmes, which included the LGBT community. Gradually, exploitation and discrimination against this group was highlighted and the focus shifted towards human rights of sexual minors. Many government and non-government organizations started recognizing their issues.

The aim of this study is to understand Issues and Challenges of Sexual Minorities and examine three and half decades of work carried by the government and NGOs for the welfare of the LGBT community. The purpose of the study is to know the personal profile of the respondents, to understand the issues and challenges faced by the sexual minority groups, to examine their awareness about HIV/AIDS and discrimination patterns, and to explore health-seeking behaviour among the respondents. The study is explorative in nature. It was carried out in two districts of Karnataka state, namely, Vijayapur and Mysuru, which experience high rate of mobility of LGBT people. The population of the study is 2629, of whom 50 active members were selected using purposive sampling method. The primary data was collected from the selected district headquarters using a structured interview schedule. Sex work and begging was found as major occupations of the respondents. Their level of literacy was very low and higher rate of discrimination was noticed during the study. However, a significant number of respondents were aware about HIV/AIDS.

While exploring the discrimination faced by the LGBT people, the researcher also came to know about their painful experiences and the collective efforts made by them to fight for their rights. The study recommends carrying out capacity building programmes for sexual minors, and advocacy at macro and micro level regarding basic rights as well as HIV/AIDS awareness. It also suggests working with their family members and community to create a healthy and discrimination free environment from them. Social recognition and sustainable occupation to sustain life are essential to live a dignified life. Hence, further research can be carried out to explore the role of police in resolving conflict issues of LGBT people, to understand family acceptance, and to find sustainable employment opportunities.

Key Words: Issues and challenges, Discrimination, Awareness, Health, and HIV/AIDS

INTRODUCTION

The term sexual minority refers to four major groups, namely, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender (LGBT) people. However, in India, they are identified under different names at different places (PUCL-Karnataka, 2001). The group called "transgender" include mainly male-to-female conversion. There are around 4.9 lakh sexual minorities identified in the country, but transgender activists estimate the numbers to be six to seven times higher (The Times of India, May 30, 2014; Madar & Mohan, A. K., 2016). In India, the National
