

# Postgraduate Student's Attitudes toward the Lesbian and Gay Community in The Western Province, Sri Lanka

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## 1. Introduction

This study explores the attitudes of postgraduate students in Sri Lanka's Western Province toward the lesbian and gay community, focusing on how these views are shaped within a context where traditional values meet increasing calls for inclusivity and equality (WFD, 2021). Using frameworks like queer theory and intersectionality, the research aims to provide insights into the specific cultural and educational influences that affect perceptions of sexual orientation in Sri Lanka. By examining postgraduate students' attitudes, this study contributes to the growing understanding of sexual orientation issues in the country. The objectives are to identify overall attitudes among postgraduate students toward the lesbian and gay community and to assess whether gender differences exist in these attitudes.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Materials

Two questionnaires were used in this study. The first collected demographic data (age, gender, province of the university, and educational level). The second used the Homosexual Attitude Scale (HAS) to measure participants' attitudes toward homosexuality. The HAS is in a Likert scale format. Developed by Kite and Deaux in 1986, the HAS comprises 21 questions with five response options: "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree."

### 2.2 Methods

#### 2.2.1 Participants

A sample of 100 was selected: 50 males and 50 females. Participation criteria stated the selection of participants based on age, with a minimum of 24 years of age, and currently following a postgraduate program at government or private universities in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.

#### 2.2.2 Design

This research used a quantitative research method with a cross-sectional design. Quantitative research enables the measurement of variables such as behaviors, opinions, attitudes, and other factors in a quantifiable manner, facilitating the generalizability of data to a broader population. In this study, the independent variable was education level, and the dependent variable was attitudes.

#### 2.2.3 Procedure

Data was collected using a random sampling technique. The questionnaire was distributed using WhatsApp. Each respondent individually participated in this research by clicking on an online questionnaire survey. Participation was voluntary, and consent was provided electronically through the online survey before answering the questions. There was an option to discontinue at any point if they felt uncomfortable. Data analysis was done for 100 samples after collecting the data. Results obtained after analyzed data.

### 2.2.4 Method of Analysis

The raw data was analyzed by scoring the responses to the HAS questionnaires according to the author. Data analysis was done using SPSS. A t-test was conducted to determine whether gender differences exist regarding postgraduate attitudes toward the homosexual community.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Results

#### 3.1.1 Postgraduate Student's Attitudes toward the Homosexuality

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		75.4900
Median		77.0000
Mode		78.00 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation		11.79582
Variance		139.141
Range		72.00
Minimum		29.00
Maximum		101.00

According to Table 1, the questionnaire yields scores ranging from a minimum of 29 to a maximum of 101, with an average score of 75.49. The mode, indicating the most frequently occurring score, is 78. The mean score is calculated at 75.49, indicating a relatively high overall score. This suggests that postgraduate students have more favorable attitudes toward the lesbian and gay community.

#### 3.1.2 Gender Difference between Postgraduate Male and Female

Table 2. Independent Sample T-Test

		Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Total	Equal variances assumed	3.301	.072	-.076	98	.470	.940	-.18000	2.37110	-4.88537	4.52537
	Equal variances not assumed			-.076	96.896	.470	.940	-.18000	2.37110	-4.88604	4.52604

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare postgraduate student's attitudes toward the homosexual community and gender differences. There was no significant difference in the scores for males (M= 75.40, SD=11.20496) and females (M=75.58, SD=12.47216), conditions;  $t(98) = -0.076, p=0.940$ . Therefore, there is no gender difference between postgraduate male and female student's attitudes toward the lesbian and gay community.

### 3.2 Discussion

A positive attitude towards homosexuality among postgraduate students has been identified within this research. It has been further supported by the findings of Passani and Debicki's 2016 research who found that the majority of their respondents among the students showed positive attitudes toward homosexuality (Passani & Debicki, 2016). However, such findings are not unanimous as seen by the research conducted by Swank and Raiz in 2010. They found that university social work students, in particular those oriented toward religious social work, held a hostile attitude toward homosexuality and homosexual people (Swank & Raiz, 2010). The present study also found no significant gender difference in postgraduate student's attitudes toward the homosexual community. Research conducted in 2016 by Chi and Hawk among

2644 Chinese university students revealed that women had more positive attitudes towards homosexuality than men (Chi & Hawk, 2016). The final recommendations include expanding this research to demonstrate how attitudes toward homosexuality differ for various demographic factors: cultural background, religion, level of education, age, ethnicity, and others. By analyzing all of these variables at an even greater depth, the research can provide deeper and more precise insights into what shapes attitudes toward the lesbian and gay community.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study explores the postgraduate students' attitudes towards the lesbian and gay community in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Previous studies have revealed that although the majority of Sri Lankans are not opposed to the community, discrimination and inequality still occur. The study explored the attitudes of postgraduate students, who are representative of a knowledgeable and influential category within the population, to take into account their attitudes on this issue. Indeed, the current sample of 100 participants established that students generally had positive attitudes toward the lesbian and gay community, with no significant differences between male and female students. This suggests that higher education may encourage more accepting attitudes in this homosexual community.

#### 5. Acknowledgment

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#### 6. Keywords

Attitudes, Homosexuality, Postgraduate, Sri Lanka

#### 7. References

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