



The Attitudes of Prospective Teachers towards Homosexuality: A Case Study in Konya

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ABSTRACT

Sexuality has played a natural and significant role in human life throughout history and the interpretations of the values related with sexuality have varied in time and place (Pinar, Pinar, Doğan, Karahan, Algier, at all, 2009). Homosexuality is also interpreted in various ways. In modern Turkey, homosexuals are among the discriminated and marginalised groups (Gelbal, & Duyan, 2006; Oksal, 2008). This study tried to determine the attitudes of prospective teachers towards homosexuality. The aim of the study is to investigate whether the attitudes of the participants vary according to gender, age and domains. The study group consists of 488 students who were studying at Ahmet Kelesoglu Education Faculty, Necmettin Erbakan University, in Konya, Turkey in the academic year 2011-2012. The number of female participants was 319 and the number of males was 169. The age of participants ranged from 19 to 22. The Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG) and Personal Information Form were used as data gathering instruments. As regards the studies into gender variable, the males have been found to have more negative attitudes than females. As for the findings related to the age variable, the 21-22 year old participants were found to have more positive attitude towards homosexuals than other age groups. The findings about the domain of the participants showed that the students with equal-weighted had more positive results towards homosexuality.

Keywords:

Teacher candidates, homosexuality, attitude.

1. Introduction

Homosexuality is romantic or sexual attraction and/or sexual behaviour between the people of the same sex. Also, it refers to the sense of identity deriving from those attractions and behaviours. Homosexuality dates back to a long time ago and various controversial methods were used to treat it for some time in the past. Today, it is not considered as an illness by scientists. Firstly, in 1973, the American Psychiatry Association, and then the World Health Organization, in 1990, decided to exclude homosexuality from the list of illnesses. In 1992, this decision was registered officially in the list of ICD-10 and from 1994 onwards all the member countries of WHO began to use the new classification (Çabuk, 2010). It was ascertained by medical science that homosexuality, which may be innate or may develop by 3 or 4 years old, is not a disorder but an involuntary tendency out of three sexual types. This conclusion has been accepted widely and homosexuals have achieved many rights equal with heterosexuals in developed countries, including official marriage (Çabuk, 2010). The number of studies on homosexuality has also increased in time.

On the other hand, negative attitudes towards homosexuals still prevail. The origin of the negative attitude is that people see the sexual choices except for heterosexuality "abnormal" or "diverted" due to the social

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beliefs, rules and norms, which cause some feelings about homosexuals such as fears, anxiety, concerns, and intolerance (Göregenli, 2004; Saraç, 2008).

In literature, the terms like homophobia, sexual prejudice and gender discrimination have been used to state the negative attitudes towards homosexuals (Göregenli, 2004; Saraç, 2008).

In Turkey, homosexuality began to be discussed and drew attention in the mid 1980s (Çabuk, 2010). Although homosexuality and homosexual affairs are known to date back to old times in Turkey, homophobia is still very common among Turkish people and negative attitude has usually been exhibited against homosexuals in society (Gelbal, & Duyan, 2006; Mitrani 2008). As for the Western societies, the attitude of public towards sexuality is said to approve and support homosexuality (Özeruz, 1999).

In the literature review, a number of studies on homosexuality have been found. The findings of the studies have revealed some significant points. In terms of age variable, it was found that negative attitude increases as the age advances (Ekşi, 1990; Herek, 2002; Özeruz, 1999). Another finding is that females display more positive attitude than males (Aosved and Long, 2006; Davies, 2004; Gormley and Lopez, 2010; Heath, & Goggin, 2009; Herek, 1988; Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006; Herek and Glunt, 1993; Jenkins, Lambert and Baker, 2009; Kite, 1984; Kite and Deaux, 1986; La Mar and Kite, 1998; Nagoshi, Adams, Terrell, Hill, Brzuzy, & Nagoshi, 2008; Nelson and Krieger, 1997; Nierman, Thompson, Bryan and Mahaffey, 2007; Schellenberg, Hirt and Sears, 1999; Simoni and Walters, 2001; Steffens and Wagner, 2004; Swank and Raiz, 2010). It was also found that positive attitude increases in parallel with the rise of education level (Jenkins, Lambert and Baker, 2009; Lewis and Taylor, 2001; Shackelford and Besser, 2007). As for religious beliefs, negative attitude was found to increase as the religious beliefs get stronger (Gelbal and Duyan 2006). Another finding is related to the relationship between financial status and attitude towards homosexuality, which revealed that negative attitude increases as the financial status gets worse (Okutan, 2010). As for occupational group variable, it was found that the most negative attitude was exhibited by police officers, doctors and teachers (Akdas-Mitrani, 2008). Findings related with homosexual friends have shown that positive attitude increases if a friend is homosexual (Sakalli, 2002a ; (Ballard, & Morris 1998). Some other studies have revealed that conservative attitudes contribute to negative attitude towards homosexuals (Ekşi, 1990; Özeruz, 1999). The other two variables that contribute to negative attitude towards homosexuals were family expectancy and media (Gelgeç and Öktem, 2008).

Furthermore, family values, cultural factors and biological structure play role in sexual identification, sexual orientation and sexual behaviours as well as the set up of masculinity and femininity (Kaplan and Sadock, 2004).

This study tried to determine the attitudes of prospective teachers towards homosexuality. The aim of the study is to investigate whether the attitudes of the participants vary according to gender, age and domains. Regarding this aim, the following research questions were put forward:

1. Do the attitudes of the participants vary according to gender?
2. Do the attitudes of the participants vary according to age?
3. Do the attitudes of the participants vary according to domains?

2. Method:

This study employed a quantitative methodology. Survey method was used in this study. Survey is a method of sociological investigation that uses question based or statistical surveys to collect information about how people think and act. Simple random sampling was used in selecting university students that will participate in the study. Students completed the data-collecting tools anonymously and voluntarily.

2.1. Participants:

The study group comprised of 488 students who were studying at Ahmet Kelesoglu Education Faculty, Necmettin Erbakan University, in Konya, Turkey in the academic year 2012-2013. The number of female participants was 319 and the number of males was 169. The age of participants was between 19 and 22. In

Turkey, education faculties place students in various departments according to four different intelligence groups: verbal, computational, equally weighted and artistic. The randomly chosen participants from these groups took part in the study voluntarily.

2.2. Instruments

The Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG-R) and Personal Information Form (gender, age, domain) were used as data gathering instruments

2.2.1. The Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG-R)

The scale was developed by Herek (1998) and translated into Turkish with validity and reliability tests by Duyan and Gelbal (2006). This scale includes ten statements. Statements such as are rated on a 5-point scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Positively worded items are reverse coded, such that higher scale scores indicate more negative attitudes. The ATLG-R subscales have high levels of internal consistency. $\alpha > .80$ for 5-item versions and $\alpha > .70$ for 3-item versions. Test-retest reliability ($r_s > .80$) has been demonstrated with alternate forms.

2.3. Statistical analysis

In the study, Variance analysis and t test were used as statistical method. SPSS 17 program was used in analysing the datas.

3. Results

The results of the study are presented in the following part. The t-test results related with the participants' attitudes towards homosexuality according to their gender are in the table below.

Table 1. The results of t test regarding the attitudes of participants towards homosexuality according to gender variable

Attitude	Group	N	X	Ss	t	p
ATLG	Female	219	25.01	10.08	3.61	.00
	Male	169	21.32	11.89		

$p < .05$

The findings revealed that the female participants had more positive attitudes than the males towards homosexuals, which means that females approve homosexuality much more than males and do not reveal discriminative attitude towards it.

Table 2. The results of Anova test regarding the attitudes of participants according to their age.

Attitude	Age	N	X	Ss	F	P	DBF
ATLG	19	96	23.21	7.96	5.24	.00	21- 22 age and 20 age
	20	73	19.45	8.17			
	21	118	25.38	11.01			
	22	199	24.58	12.50			

p<.05

The results of one way ANOVA test showed that there was a significant difference in the participants' attitudes towards homosexuality according to age variable (p<.05). The Scheffe test was done to determine the reason for this difference and it was found that the attitudes of the participants between 21 and 22 years old were significantly higher than the 20 year-old participants

Table 3. The results of Anova test regarding the attitudes of participants according to their domains.

Attitude	Domains	N	X	Ss	F	P	DBG
ATLG	1.Computational	90	19.97	7.60	22.72	.00	3 and 1-2 and 4
	2.Verbal	98	20.36	8.31			
	3.Equal weighted	156	29.09	13.60			
	4.Artistic	139	22.46	8.22			

p<.05

According to the results of one way ANOVA test, there was a significant difference in the participants' attitudes towards homosexuality according to domain variable (p<.05). The Scheffe test that was done to determine the reason for this difference showed that the participants in equal weighted domain revealed significantly higher attitudes than the others in computational, artistic and verbal domains.

4.Discussion

The results of the study revealed that the female participants had more positive attitude towards homosexuals than the males. It was also found that 21 – 22 year olds were more positive towards than the other age groups and the ones whose domain was equal weighted revealed more positive attitudes than those in the other domains.

As regards the findings on gender variable, the males have been found to have more negative attitudes than the females. The results of this study regarding the gender is supported by the similar studies. Dominant male roles in our country, the identification of masculinity with individuality, social pressure, the effect of peers and media, religious and social factors might have played role in this result. Boratav (2006) states that the gender roles children acquire through family, peer groups, media and school contribute to developing homophobia, and that homosexuality is considered as disgusting and abnormal state. It is also a fact that due

to the socio-cultural structure of Turkish society and some value judgements regarding sexuality, there are differences between males and females in their attitudes towards sexuality (Pinar et al., 2009).

As for the findings related with age variable, the 21-22 year old participants were found to have more positive attitude towards homosexuals than other age groups. The studies on the age variable shows that as the age advances, the negative attitude towards homosexuality increases (Adamczyk and Pitt, 2009; Heath and Goggin, 2009; Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006). The fact that the age intervals in this study were very close to each other might have played role in this finding.

The findings about the domain of the participants showed that the students with equal-weighted had more positive results towards homosexuality. The fact that the students at the Departments of Elementary School Teaching and Psychological Counselling and Guidance come from equal-weighted domain may have been significant in this result due to the curriculum implemented in these departments.

Prospective teachers are in the period of youth. In this period, health habits and sexual behaviours are formed and individuals pass from childhood to adulthood.

The education given to the young on sexual health will help them participate in sensible and responsible activities and make the best choices, which will preserve and improve sexual health in society (Pinar et al., 2009). Roche (1998) claims the lack of knowledge, skills, values and positive attitudes about sexuality may cause dire effects on individuals. A study into the occupation groups found that the most negative attitude towards homosexuality was exhibited by policemen, doctors and teachers (Akdaş and Mitrani, 2008). This finding supports the conclusion reached in the study.

5. Conclusion And Recommendations

The aim of the study was to investigate the attitudes of the prospective teachers towards homosexuality in terms of gender, age and discipline variables. It was also found that the 21 – 22 year olds were more positive towards homosexuality than the other age groups and the ones whose domain was equal weighted revealed more positive attitudes than those in the other domains. If the prospective teachers have positive attitudes towards homosexuality, it might be considered that in future, they can guide their students in an appropriate way and recognize individual differences, which is very important to integrate them with society.

In view of the findings, the following recommendaitons are made:

Prospective teachers should be provided training on sexuality and homosexuality. The content of ongoing training, if any, should be revised. Research should be held to determine the reasons for the negative attitude towards homosexuality among prospective teachers.

Negative attitudes towards hoomosexuality among men should be reduced through training on homosexuality.

Students with computational, verbal and artistic skill should also be informed about homosexuality to foster positive attitude towards it. As a result, it is recommended that prospective teachers should be given supportive education so that they can develop positive attitude towards homosexuality.

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