

# Effectiveness of Awareness Programs Creating a Shift in Attitude towards Transgender

Dr. B. Golden Kisha

Ph.D Scholar

**Abstract**— This article comparatively examines the relationship between Attitude of youths before and after conducting an awareness program on transgender to identify the significant difference in the research variables. For this purpose 100 girls studying BEd from a College of Education which is located in between Chennai and Thiruvallur. Single group experimental method is adopted by Pre Test-Program-Post Test. The study focused on the data collected and measured the Attitude of youths towards transgender. The data collected from the scores of Pre Test and Post Test were subjected to statistical analyses. The results of the analysis were presented in the form of tables and charts also interpreted appropriately to arrive at logical Findings and Conclusions. It may be concluded that on the basis of findings, the students have had better awareness and Attitude towards transgender after attending programs given by transgender. A control group included in the experimental study would have made the design stronger. More awareness programmes can be conducted in schools and colleges so that young people will be able to understand and accept the transgender instead of avoiding them due to their fears and unexamined beliefs. The study also shows how awareness programmes can make a shift in Attitudes towards transgender. More programmes must be planned especially for the students since it will sensitize them to the problems of marginalized groups like transgender either M2F or F2M.

**Key words:** Attitude, Awareness Programme, M2f-F2mtransgender

## I. INTRODUCTION

Persons have been documented in many cultures and societies from antiquity until the present day. However, the meaning of gender variance may vary from culture to culture. Every society contains individuals who do not fit into the culture's dominant sex/gender categories - persons born intersexed (hermaphrodites), those who exhibit behavior or desires deemed appropriate for the "opposite" sex/gender, or those who, while conforming outwardly to culturally normative gender roles, experience themselves in conflict with these roles in some fundamental ways. Historically, communities have attempted to appropriate (with varying degrees of success) rituals, folklore and legends in order to obtain a sense of self-validation and carve out a niche for themselves in the traditional social structures. In various cultures, transgender were seen as having special powers due to their assumed 'third sex' dimension, and were allowed to take part in semi-religious ceremonies. Often they were tolerated and allowed to live in the role of the other sex, to pursue their occupations (including that of sex work), cross-dress, and display other forms of behaviour. Nevertheless they were often segregated and excluded from many occupations and community practices, and even traded as slaves. The *hijra*, an alternative gender role in India, is culturally conceptualized as neither

man nor woman. Hijras are viewed with ambivalence in Indian society and are treated with a combination of mockery, fear, and respect. Although hijras have an auspicious presence, they also have an inauspicious potential. (Nanda, 2002) Their traditional occupation is to collect payment for their performances at weddings and the birth of a male child; today they also perform for the birth of girl children, collect alms from shopkeepers, act as tax collectors, and even run for political office. They also are widely known as prostitutes, both in the past and present. In terms of their gender identity and role, *kothis* like hijras are persons who identify themselves with the feminine gender. However, whereas hijras often settle into a fixed gender role after castration, *kothis* display a dual gender identity alternating between the masculine role of the husband demanded in the marriage relationship and the feminine role in the same-sex relationship outside. There are roughly one million Hijras in India, representing approximately one in every 400 post pubertal persons born male. This very large prevalence (1:400) of the Hijra in India, most of whom have undergone 'nirvan' (a sex change by ancient surgical means), is strong evidence that the intense condition is far more prevalent than traditional western psychiatrists and psychologists have ever been willing to admit. Community members generally live in groups of five to ten people who function as a family. The community is organized around the 'guru-chela' (teacher-student or leader-follower) relationship, one based on hierarchy and power. (Pisal & Bandewar, 2005). In Thailand *kathoeys*, defined as a third sex, a variant of male or female, having characteristics of both, live and work openly both in rural and urban areas. Like the *waria* in Indonesia and the *bakla* in the Philippines, *kathoeys* are particularly associated with feminine beauty and glamour and widely admired for their feminine grace and elegance. In Malaysia, the local term for male transsexuals is *mak nyah*, and *pak nyah* for females. According to Teh (2001) they are labelled as sexual deviants and are generally shunned by society. Muslim transsexuals in Malaysia, who form the majority in the transsexual community, share similar characteristics to transsexuals in other parts of the world. However, due to their religious beliefs many of them have accepted the fact that they are not allowed to have the sex change operation. Among the native tribes in North America, transgender had the choice to cross dress and live as women. In Mexico, Central America and South America males who are feminine are subjected to extremely intense ridicule and stigmatization. As a result, many of them in Latin America remain in a state of fear and repression, are terrified about showing their gender feelings, and mostly never attempt to resolve their gender conditions. In 1972, Sweden was the first country to pass special legislation regulating surgical and legal measures required for sex reassignment, thereby granting the sex-reassigned person the rights and obligations of the new sex (Wälinder & Thuwe, 1976). Japanese have a positive *Attitude* towards

transgender. They have made significant social and legal gains in spite of the fact that they continue to face discrimination. There have been many positive developments in Tamil Nadu in the last five years and the community of s has won major battles for inclusion, notable among which is a special 'third gender' category for transgender on ration cards, voter's slip (identity documents) even a separate Apex Board for members, also to be addressed as Thiru Nangai (M2F). Tamil Nadu has also taken affirmative action to achieve equality by reserving seats for third-gender students in government-owned arts and science to third-gender people with the appropriate gender category. The state government also gives subsidy to all those transgender who wish to undergo surgical treatment for change of sex. The study empirically examines the possibility of making a shift in the *Attitude* by dealing with some of the unexpressed fears towards this gender variant group. Discrimination is the anti-thesis of equality, and it is the duty of all right minded citizens to drive away discriminatory practices from all walks of life (Shukla, 2011).

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

What is the *Attitude* of students and adults towards transgender? Is a shift in the *Attitude* towards transgender possible through a planned intervention programme?

## III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine whether awareness programme can create a shift in *Attitude* towards transgender among students.

## IV. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Down the ages, our society has condemned and alienated people who do not conform to its norms. persons are one such group of people who have been marginalized in many societies. Leading a life as a is far from easy because such people can be neither categorized as male nor as female and this deviation is "unacceptable" to society's vast majority. The study will examine the possibility of making a shift in the *Attitude* by dealing with some of the unexpressed fears towards this gender variant group. Discrimination is the anti-thesis of equality, and it is the duty of all right minded citizens to drive away discriminatory practices from all walks of life (Shukla, 2011).

## V. HYPOTHESIS

There will be significant difference in the *Attitude* towards s in students after attending an awareness programme.

## VI. RESEARCH DESIGN

It was an experimental study. The design used was the one group pretest-post test. An awareness programme on transgender was introduced and its effect on the *Attitude* towards transgender was observed. To substantiate research it was also decided to incorporate an analysis of some of the newspaper reports on s for a period of four years from 2007 to 2011 to see how much of attention s have received in the print media.

## VII. RESEARCH METHOD

Single group experimental research method was adopted.  
Pre Test – *Awareness Programs* – Post Test

## VIII. SAMPLE

100 female graduates in the age range from 25 to 35 years studying in a Teacher's Training college formed the sample for the experimental study.

## IX. DATA COLLECTION

Examining the effect of awareness programme on transgender among college students, a pre test was conducted for the students to test their *Attitude* towards transgender. The students responded to the questionnaire in their classroom environment. An awareness programme on transgender was planned as part of their Citizenship Training Camp. This was held a month after the pretesting. The main objective of the programme was to provide "real life" exposure. The programme was aimed at providing experiences that facilitate effective and intellectual learning. Interacting with a would enable participants to examine their values and stereotypes and lead to a greater acceptance of s in particular and diversity in general. The programme which was held for two hours addressed issues like the myths which surround s and understanding the problems they face in their day to day life, besides covering aspects of development scientifically the sharing of personal experiences of the struggle and determination to be accepted in the society as well as other issues would facilitate effective learning. The Question and Answer sessions helped the students clarify doubts and misconceptions. Some of the questions posed by the students were as follows:

"Why do the transgender indulge in begging and sex work?"

"In trains generally we find that they threaten and get money from us.

Why do they behave like this?"

"Is sex reassignment surgery really necessary?"

After two weeks post testing was done. The students were once again tested in their classroom. This was done just before the end of their course. Some of the students (N=10) who returned to the college were contacted after two months and asked to express their views about the programme and how it had influenced them in writing.

A. *Content analysis of a sample of 23 news report reveals the following facts:*

- There has been a change in the Attitude of policy makers and various welfare measures have been introduced the government for the s. Introducing an "others" category in the recent census, allowing them to opt for adoption, giving them access to higher education and creating welfare boards as well as receiving support from the judiciary are some of the positive trends that were seen in the last four years.
- It is not easy for many s to live a life of dignity as the community has its internal problems. The older s encourage the exploitative jamaat system to live off the earnings of the younger s.

- There have been concerted efforts to make the s more employable by starting special training programmes and encouraging them to start self employment schemes.
- They have received more favorable media exposures from late 2007.
- However there have been reports of police harassments, discrimination and suicides even in 2010. This is aptly described by one of the headlines, "They changed, society didn't"
- Social stigma attached to s is very much present in spite of all the governmental and non governmental endeavors which can be described by quoting one of the reports, "There is still very little awareness about s in mainstream society. Much work needs to be done,"

#### B. Feedback from the students after two months

An analysis of the feedback reports clearly shows that the awareness programme had made them more sympathetic and caring for this marginalised group. Students were deeply affected by the awareness programme as can be seen by the reports given by a sample of ten students two months of the programme. The feedback reports clearly showed that the awareness programme had made an impact in changing their not so favourable *Attitude* to positive and caring ones. All of them were happy to have attended the awareness programme since it gave them a new understanding about transgender. One of them said, "As a future teacher I will also sensitize my students so that social acceptance will be there at least in the coming days". Another student said "awareness programme is a must for each and every person in the society." It is interesting to note that one of them said that she was curious to know about transgender but "nobody gave me a positive information about them and then I started hating them" Another student also mentioned about her lack of understanding about transgender before the awareness programme thus, "Before the awareness programme I had no idea or knowledge about them. I was confused with their physical appearance and their behavior. I could not accept them, and could not clarify my doubts in these aspects."

Most of them mentioned that they are able to accept s and that their *Attitude* has changed thanks to the programme.

- Before meeting Ms.Jeeva, a transgender I really had a very bad opinion on them. Their rude appearance will make me feel very scared and whenever I come across them somewhere in the streets or in shops, I will allow them to pass by and then I will go or sometimes I even leave the shop without buying anything when they come in. I in fact used to make fun of the way they walk and the way they dress.
- I believed transgender are a curse to the society and because of them our society is getting spoiled this was my opinion about the s. But after attending the awareness programme my opinion towards them changed totally. I started thinking in a different way, they too have a heart and mind like us they too wanted to live a peaceful and dignified life."
- "Nowadays my approach to these people have changed. I try to have a conversation with them and that makes them happy"
- "We should also not make fun of them because I heard from Ms.Jeeva that they find it humiliating. So we

should treat them as human beings and do the needful to them."

- "I used to ask myself God why you have created these people but after attending the awareness programme, I came to know God has a purpose to create them. Now I have changed my mind they are also human beings and they also have likes and dislikes they too want to live in the society with dignity. Now I have accepted them as one among us."
- "From that day, when I met Ms.Jeeva, I only pity them and I think if there is any opportunity for us to help them, we should definitely do so in all the possible ways we can"
- " We could understand that if given an opportunity, they can also excel in education and at work. We further came to know through this program that transgender must be accepted without prejudice, and be provided with equal rights, opportunities and benefits in Society".

#### X. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Geographically, sample area selected was middle place of Chennai and Thiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu.

#### XI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- 1) There is a significant difference in the *Attitude* towards transgender among students after attending an awareness programme.

#### XII. CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that on the basis of findings, the students have had better awareness and *Attitude* towards transgender after attending programs given by transgender. A control group included in the experimental study would have made the design stronger. More awareness programmes can be conducted in schools and colleges so that young people will be able to understand and accept the transgender instead of avoiding them due to their fears and unexamined beliefs. The study also shows how awareness programmes can make a shift in *Attitudes* towards transgender. More programmes must be planned especially for the students since it will sensitize them to the problems of marginalized groups like transgender either M2F or F2M.