

Disciplinary Differences In LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Awareness Among Kerala Graduate Students: A Mixed-Methods CAB Framework Study

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Abstract

This mixed-methods research examines awareness of the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons among graduate-level students in Kerala. Here, the researcher used a Likert scale for measuring the awareness of graduate-level students on cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of awareness. Data were collected from 150 students (78 Arts, 72 Science) from different colleges in Kerala, and the quantitative data analysis showed that Arts students ($M = 92.1$, $SD = 8.03$) have significantly higher overall awareness than Science students ($M = 76.0$, $SD = 7.41$), $t(148) = 12.7$, $p < .001$ and also showed that among all domains, affective awareness ranked highest, followed by cognitive, with behavioural being the lowest. Qualitative analysis of students' responses revealed the basic myth and misconceptions existing around the sexual orientation, gender identity concepts and LGBTIQ+ Individuals suggest low-to-moderate awareness among graduate-level students across all three domains, and highlight the need for SOGIESC inclusion in education to foster behavioural acceptance, cognitive understanding, and affective compassion.

Key Words: Disciplinary Differences, LGBTIQ+, Inclusion Awareness, graduate students, Mixed-Method, CAB Framework

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I. Introduction

The concept of inclusion for LGBTIQ+ persons has emerged as a major focus around the world with the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion of them have gained increased attention within academic discourse. Awareness of diversity not only supports human rights but also fosters the physical, emotional and social well-being of LGBTIQ+ individuals. Despite legal progress and constitutional safeguards, social acceptance of sexual and gender diversity remains a problem among Indian youth.

Conceptual Framework of Awareness: Awareness is a multidimensional construct encompassing knowledge, emotions, and actions. It reflects the levels to which individuals understand, value, and respond to the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons. In the present study, awareness is conceptualized through the Cognitive–Affective–Behavioural (CAB) framework, which integrates psychological and educational theories of attitude and social learning.

Cognitive Component - Awareness as Understanding and Knowledge: The cognitive dimension represents the knowledge and comprehension a person possesses about LGBTIQ+ persons on inclusion: education, employment and social sectors.

Affective Component - Awareness as Empathy and Acceptance: The affective dimension reflects emotional connection, empathy and attitude toward LGBTIQ+ persons on inclusion: education, employment and social sectors. It involves internalized feelings of acceptance, sensitivity and moral responsibility toward inclusion.

The behavioural dimension signifies observable readiness to act in support of inclusion: education, employment, and social sectors. It represents the translation of knowledge and attitude into conduct—speaking up against discrimination, supporting peers, or engaging in awareness-raising activities.

Kerala has made notable progress in advancing the rights of gender and sexual minorities through pioneering policies such as the 2015 Transgender Policy, the Karuthal emergency support scheme, the Queer-Friendly Hospital Initiative and various welfare and talent-development programmes. These initiatives reflect the state's commitment to legal and structural inclusion. Despite these advancements, social acceptance and awareness regarding Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC)

remain limited. Persistent stigma, discrimination and lack of representation continue to affect the dignity, mental health and overall well-being of LGBTIQ+ persons.

Various research conducted across Kerala consistently reveals gaps in awareness and inclusivity within education, healthcare and social systems. Studies have highlighted issues such as low visibility in educational institutions, high levels of depression, anxiety, SOCE-related distress and inadequate social integration of gender and sexual minorities. Although SCERT and the Higher Education Department have begun incorporating SOGIESC topics into curricula, structured educational interventions for higher-education students are still insufficient.

Given that graduate-level students represent the future workforce, policymakers, educators, and service providers, their awareness and attitudes play a crucial role in shaping an inclusive society. There is therefore an urgent need for a validated, research-based educational module that enhances cognitive, affective and behavioural understanding of inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons.

II. Objectives Of The Study:

1. To compare total awareness of the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons between Arts and Science graduate students in Kerala.
2. To examine relative strengths across cognitive, affective and behavioural awareness domains for inclusion of LGBTIQ+ persons within each student stream.
3. To identify misconceptions, myths and need areas existing around the sexual orientation, gender identity concepts and LGBTIQ+ individuals across cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions.

Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in total awareness between Arts and Science students.

There is no significant difference among cognitive, affective and behavioural awareness about LGBTIQ+ persons among arts students.

There is no significant difference among cognitive, affective and behavioural awareness about LGBTIQ+ persons among science students.

III. Methodology

Research Design: A mixed-methods design was adopted, combining quantitative survey data and a qualitative questionnaire to achieve comprehensive insight.

Sample: The study included 150 graduate-level students (78 Arts, 72 Science) from 3 colleges. The sample was drawn using stratified random sampling, ensuring representation from both academic streams.

Tool: An Awareness Scale on Inclusion, Dignity and Well-Being of LGBTIQ+ Persons was used. The scale consisted of 36 items-12 each for cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions-rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The tool demonstrated good internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$).

Data Collection Procedure: Data were collected in classroom settings after informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Qualitative comments were gathered from 50 students through yes or no questions and short open-ended questions.

Statistical Techniques

Descriptive statistics (mean, SD) and *t*-tests were computed using Jamovi to examine differences by stream. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically following Braun & Clarke (2006).

IV. Analysis And Interpretation

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and *t*-test for Total Awareness

Stream	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Arts	78	92.1	8.03	12.7	< .001
Science	72	76.0	7.41		

Arts students demonstrated significantly higher total awareness than Science students, $t(148) = 12.7, p < .001$.

Figure 1. Mean Awareness by Stream

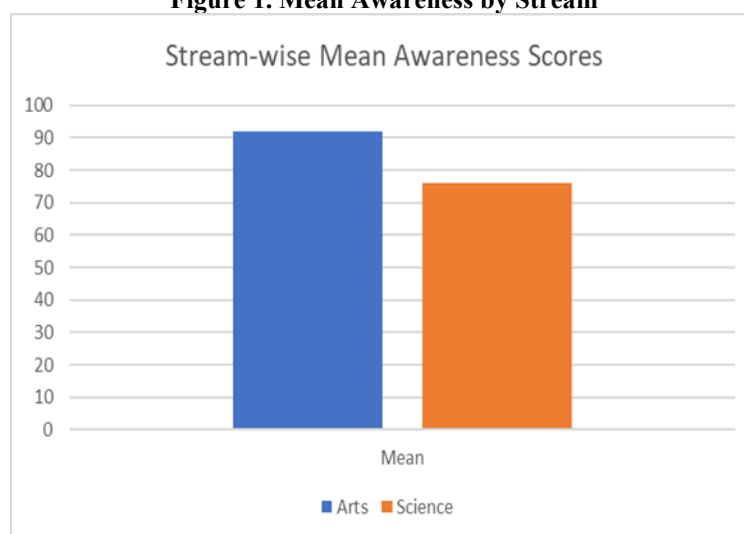
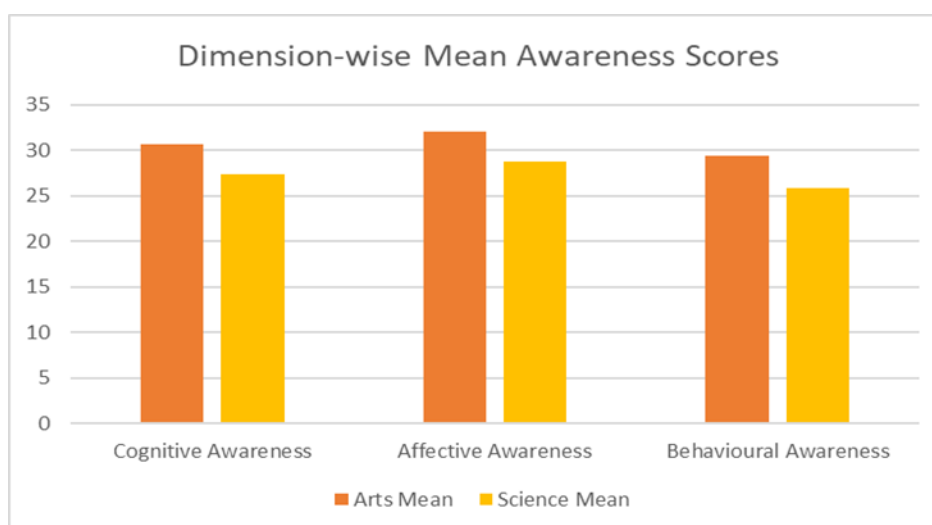


Table 2. Dimension-wise Mean Awareness Scores

Dimension	Arts Mean	Science Mean	Overall SD
Cognitive	30.6	27.4	7.5
Affective	32.1	28.8	7.9
Behavioural	29.4	25.8	8.1



Affective awareness scored highest across both groups, while behavioural awareness was lowest.

V. Qualitative Findings

Table 3. Theme wise Analysis

Theme	Subtheme	Description	Illustrative Participant Quote
Misinterpretation of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity	Confusion between sexual orientation and gender identity	Participants used terms interchangeably, indicating conceptual misunderstanding.	“Transgenders are homosexuals and attracted to the same sex, like lesbian and gay”
	Belief that orientation is a choice like gender expression	Sexual orientation is viewed as voluntarily adoptable or influenced by peers/media or trans people	“People become gay because of influences. Now it become more visible because it now become a trend”

2. Myths and Stereotypes Fueling Social Prejudice	People can change their orientation through therapy	LGBTQ identities are viewed as abnormal or against tradition and religion. And it is easily changeable with therapy	"It is not natural to be transgender or gay. It can be changed by counseling"
		Discomfort and avoidance behaviours are influenced by stigma.	"I don't feel comfortable interacting with a man behaving like a woman and it makes me nervous."
3. Limited Exposure and Educational Gaps	Lack of formal knowledge and credible sources	Students highlighted minimal exposure to academic or scientific information.	"We never learned about these topics in school or college. Mostly, we hear about them from social media."
	Need for awareness programs and curriculum inclusion	Demand for structured modules to improve understanding, acceptance and respect.	"Education about these identities should be included in our syllabus so people stop judging and start understanding."

Cognitive Dimension Analysis

Misconceptions Identified: Fundamental confusions persist, such as equating transgender identity with homosexuality ("Transgenders are homosexuals") and viewing sexual orientation as a peer/media-driven choice ("People become gay because of influences... now become a trend"). These reflect partial conceptual understanding, likely from informal sources.

Myths Prevalent: Beliefs in changeable via therapy ("It can be changed by counselling") and inherent abnormality ("not natural") dominate, rooted in cultural and religious beliefs rather than evidence.

Need Areas: Urgent curriculum gaps ("We never learned... only from social media") demand structured, scientific content to replace myths-aligning with ADDIE's cognitive units on definitions and myth-busting.

Affective Dimension Analysis

Strengths Amid Myths: Empathy shines through ("Everyone deserves dignity... comfortable talking about inclusion"), indicating baseline goodwill and higher affective readiness compared to other domains.

Myths Fueling Prejudice: Stereotypes frame LGBTQ+ identities as "against tradition", fostering discomfort despite empathy, creating an attitude-behaviour gap.

Need Areas: Reinforcement via awareness programs to deepen acceptance, countering stigma without alienating cultural values-evident in calls for syllabus inclusion.

Behavioural Dimension Analysis

Hesitation Patterns: Support exists, but action lags ("I support inclusion but... hesitate to speak up"; "uncomfortable interacting"), driven by stigma-induced nervousness.

Myths' Impact: Therapy/change myths indirectly promote avoidance, as "abnormal" views normalize exclusion.

Need Areas: Skill-building for confident interventions (e.g., countering comments), progressing from affective comfort to observable inclusivity.

From the quantitative and qualitative analysis, the researcher found that Affective concern is greater than cognitive knowledge or behavioral readiness.

VI. Discussion

The significant difference in awareness of the inclusion of LGBTIQA+ persons between Arts and Science students suggests that disciplinary exposure influences social understanding. Arts curricula often include sociology, psychology and gender studies, fostering empathetic dialogue. Science curricula, by contrast, prioritize technical learning with limited discussion of human diversity.

Behavioral awareness remained the weakest domain across both groups, which highlights the gap between knowing and doing. Integrating inclusive practice training, role-plays and experiential workshops could enhance behavioral engagement.

VII. Conclusion

This study concludes that overall awareness of inclusion of LGBTIQA+ persons among graduate students is **low to moderate**, with **Arts students** exhibiting slightly greater awareness than **Science students**. Among all domains, **affective awareness** ranked highest, followed by **cognitive**, with **behavioural** being the lowest.

Educational stakeholders should integrate inclusion and diversity content within all disciplines and encourage dialogue-based pedagogy to nurture empathy and respect.

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