

# Needs of Sexual Minority Employees at Workplace

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**Abstract**—*Non-normative Sexual Identity has been a burning issue in our country. Citizens have witnessed events wherein there has been a wave of acceptance as well as negative criticism. Consecutive events starting from vandalizing theatres screening movies based on the community to religious prejudices leading to extreme hardship, the life of the people belonging to the sexual minorities have been churned in the wheels of judgement in our country. Through Preliminary survey of studies it has been found that there is enough scope and opportunity to understand the concept of acceptance of sexual minorities thoroughly and thereby evaluating the needs and issues of these employees at formal work settings. Hence the paper further aims to analyze all the aspects related to professional and personal adjustment of these employees. For the purpose of the study at hand the researcher has relied on both primary and secondary data sources. In-depth Interviews has been employed for the primary data purposes. It offers a group of total 10 respondents as sample for the study. With this background; the paper also underlines the implications for future research and practice.*

**Keywords:** *Sexual Minority, LGBT, gender, Needs, Issues, Formal Work settings.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The advancement of the globe has led to manifestation of a massive furtherance in the thinking and mindset of people. With the buildout of technology, Man has also developed so as to compete with the rest. Along with the progressive thoughts and attitude lies the perplexing reality with has failed to accept the people belonging to sexual minorities. The unabridged concept of having divergent sexual orientation other than binary sexes is a taboo in our country. The interdiction has led to labelling such sexual orientations as unconventional to Indian traditional beliefs thereby permitting jeered and hurled sexual epithets. Episodes of absolute aggravation and ignominy still continue to haunt people of the community. People belonging to the sexual minorities have been customarily bullied and have been facing obnoxious comments. Numerous studies conducted worldwide accentuates the unceasing events that have transpired making the lives of the people even more miserable which clearly implies that there wasn't any sort of effort made or may be efforts were scanty enough to understand their needs. This thereby restricts their competitiveness in order to transcend the rest of the world. When it comes to workplaces, the instances are even more dreadful. Moral policing and several other reactions is what they face when they make an attempt to open

up. The culture of the organization is one of the key factors in determining the same succouring the people belonging to the community that opening up will not subject them to any form of harassment. Organizations need to understand the difference that lies between the socially categorized genders and the LGBT employees as they might have completely different needs at workplace so as to be able to perform and prosper optimally. These needs can be catered either by artefacts, organizational norms and policies or even by certain espoused culture that may help them to freely open up and work efficiently for the entity. It is hence essential to cognize the needs of people belonging to sexual minorities working in formal work settings. The policies should adhere to their needs so that they do not feel that they are not subjected to an environment conducive to their issues as well as needs. Acting upon the same is also utterly necessary for organizations so that they can maintain an immaculate working environment

## 2. REVIEWING EXISTING LITERATURES AND THEORIES

The Vedic Age broaches the concept of "Tritiya Prakriti" which signifies that homosexuality as well as trans-sexuality existed and was adjudged as "the third nature"(Wilhelm, 2004). According to the Vedas, everything that exists has a purpose, role or reason to exist(Vasumathi & Geethanjali, 2018) but the enduring dissonance in this modern era changes the face and facts that are stated by such ancient literatures. The hardship of homosexual and trans-sexual people has transpired to make their lives quite troublesome. The constitution mandates non-discriminatory clause that is to be abided by all citizens. This prohibits discrimination of all citizens on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth(Article 15, Constitution of India, 1949). Here, the term "all" although encircles sexual minorities but they are nevertheless being ill-treated and in most of the cases on the basis of biases(Friedman, 2014). When it comes to workplaces, the instances are even more hideous. Survey conducted reveals the fact that the people belonging to sexual minorities still face harassment, obscene homophobic comments in their contemporary workplaces and prefer to hide their identity fearing exclusion and rejection(MINGLE, 2016). The ceaseless silence of people belonging to sexual minorities at workplace poises them to accept the unabating environment which may or may not suit their needs(Bell, Özbilgin,

Beauregard, & Sürgevil, 2011). This raises a pertinent concern whether the enactments claiming equality are actually applicable or are just conjectural. A workplace ensuring social equity and status will definitely excel in comparison to organizations which consider such issues as least important. Designing effective intervention for such emergent workplace issues as well as fostering egalitarianism will help in overcoming the impediment of creating an effective workforce (Davis, 2009). Enabling an inclusive environment ensures creativity, innovation as well as productivity.

The need of feeling included, respected and engaged in a workplace analogizes Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Jerome, 2013). Physiological needs are met when pay and growth in a particular role is significantly fair, Safety needs are met when anti-discrimination and comfort is ensured, Belongingness needs are met when there is an inclusive environment, Esteem needs are met when the work is valued and recognized and Self Actualization needs are met when the employee feels his talent and contribution is leading to personal growth and development. Failing to meet these needs, the employee might not execute the best to the organization that could otherwise be rendered. Hence, there is a high relevance of the theory in ensuring organizational as well as personal growth (Carter-Hicks, 2015). The feeling of inclusiveness cannot be attained by portraying the greatness of a particular organisation by boasting about its policies for sexual minorities every now and then. Queer Theory problematizes the same and states that embellishing the very fact of having "Gay-friendly" company policies adds to the stigmatization. Hence such reckoning practices of certain organizations should be highly forbidden (Rumens, 2016). The employees belonging to sexual minorities in any formal workplace should thus be treated equally just like the binaries thereby avoiding prejudices and bigotry based on sexual orientation. The issue of discrimination is no longer an individual issue when it comes to the homosexuals and trans-sexual employees. A structured disparate treatment theory shall enable organizations to have a conceptual and legal foundation in solving the plight (Green, 2010)

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to understand the needs and issues of sexual minorities at workplace. It conceptualizes 'Workplace' or 'Work settings' as an entity that engages business which includes IT Industries, Educational Institutions, Medical Entities, Public Sector Undertakings, Finance and Marketing Industry, NGOs and so on. It attempts to unravel the issues of employees belonging to sexual minority at workplaces and apprehend the effect of those issues in their lives. The term 'Sexual Minority' in this study refers to Lesbians, Gays and Transgenders who hold a difference from the gender binaries on the basis of sexual identity, orientation or practices. 'Gender Binaries' here stands for the typical classification of people used with reference to social norms. The further objective is to decipher the needs of the employees belonging

to sexual minority thereby analyzing the essential measures that these employees expect in their respective workplaces. Corresponding to the aims and objectives of the study, the universe of the study included people belonging to sexual minority working in IT Industries, Educational Institutions, Medical Entities, Public Sector Undertakings, Finance and Marketing Industry, NGOs, MNCs and so on. 10 samples for qualitative data were chosen purposively. An Informed Consent Form that included details of the researcher and the research, i.e., the rationale, aim and objectives of the study as well as the procedure to be carried out was sent through e-mail to prospective respondents. An information sheet was enclosed with the e-mail which consisted of the Interview Guide used for the interview and had been verified and validated by experts by then. The recipients willing to take part in the study were asked to revert back. Seventeen emails were sent. Thirteen emails with willingness to be a part of the study were received. Three of them were unsuitable for the study because the respondents were not within the inclusion criteria set by the researcher. Ten suitable respondents were chosen for the study and the other three respondents were thanked for their cooperation and were informed that their participation was no longer required in the study. Three months and fifteen days approximately were taken to collect the data. Direct observation and in-depth interview are used as methods of collecting primary data. An Interview Guide was used for conducting the interview consisting of stem questions corresponding to the research questions and were driven by the study aim. Secondary data was also considered for a better understanding of the problem thus enabling the researcher to understand the issue in depth thereby drawing conclusive remarks

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The intent of the research conducted was to explore the needs and issues of sexual minorities at workplace. The objectives and the research questions aim to investigate how employees belonging to sexual minorities can be succeeded. With this as the basis of the research, Qualitative Approach using an exploratory study design has been considered as socially contrived connotations and meanings are more important to fathom in such studies rather than general laws and numerical values. Multiple interpretations of experiences of the respondents enabled the researcher to comprehend, explore and gain insights assiduously as these are primarily used for understanding the phenomenon based on perspectives of those being studied.

Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) aims at investigating and conferring lived experiences of people rather than relying on theoretical preconceptions (Smith & Osborn, 2015). The researcher adopted IPA for the present study as the methodology of IPA is effective and useful in examining the complex variables that are difficult to be articulated. IPA aims to explore the processes by considering individual accounts and self-reflection of a particular situation. As the current

study aims at exploring the needs and issues of sexual minorities at workplaces by looking at the respondent's account of the processes they have been through, IPA was considered as a suitable analytical tool.

Suitable Super-ordinate as well as Sub-ordinate themes have been identified from the data after careful transcription. This was employed by the researcher as thematic analysis allows to identify a pattern of meaning across a dataset. A semantic way of thematic analysis was adopted in this study so as to focus on the explicit details of the data collected. Sequential phases in this process of analysis which includes familiarization with data, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally documenting the interpretation was highly necessary for the present study as the essentialities of the data could be analyzed adequately. The needs and issues of sexual minorities have been defined by each respondent on the basis of their own lived experiences. Usage of thematic analysis enabled the researcher to pinpoint each postulation which in turn helped in concocting patterns that suits best in explaining the phenomenon

## 5. DATA INTERPRETATIONS AND RESULTS

From the transcribed data of interviews conducted super-ordinate themes have been identified which is formulated in correspondence to a cluster of sub-ordinate themes. A Master Table consisting the issues and needs citing the super-ordinate themes and the sub-ordinate themes identified is thus prepared as below

**Table 1: Issues of Sexual Minorities at Workplaces**

Super-ordinate themes	Sub-ordinate themes
<b>a) Predicaments in workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indignation</li> <li>- Harassment</li> <li>- Discrimination</li> <li>- Denial</li> <li>- Unfair Dismissal</li> <li>- Victimization</li> <li>- Inability to express oneself</li> <li>- Shame and Disgust</li> <li>- Difficulty in hiding actual Identity</li> <li>- Attitude and Stereotyping</li> <li>- Assault</li> </ul>
<b>b) Short-comings in workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workplace Structures</li> <li>- Restricted Opportunities</li> <li>- Recruitment Policies</li> <li>- Welfare policies</li> </ul>
<b>c) Societal Fallibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Misconceptions about sexual minorities</li> <li>- Social Acceptance</li> <li>- Stigmatization</li> <li>- Vulnerability</li> </ul>
<b>d) Legal Constrains</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Theoretical Legal Protection</li> <li>- Scrapping Section 377 is Subjective</li> <li>- Property Inheritance</li> <li>- Legal Fallacies</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Needs of Sexual Minorities at Workplaces**

Super-ordinate themes	Sub-ordinate themes
<b>e) Improvising Company Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recruitment Policies</li> <li>- Welfare policies</li> <li>- Employee Conduct.</li> <li>- Employee Position Descriptions</li> <li>- Personnel Policies: Compensation and Benefits Policies.</li> <li>- Discrimination/Harassment Policy.</li> <li>- Disciplinary Action Policy</li> </ul>
<b>f) Devising Company Cultures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basic Underlying Assumption</li> <li>- Espoused Value</li> <li>- Artifacts</li> <li>- Intolerance towards harassment</li> <li>- No discrimination</li> <li>- Inclusive Environment</li> </ul>
<b>g) Revamping existing laws</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amendment of Existing Laws</li> <li>- Quick Responses</li> <li>- Equal Treatment</li> </ul>
<b>h) Need to ameliorate attitude of colleagues</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-Judgmental Attitude</li> <li>- Acceptance</li> <li>- Strict action against Homophobic Remarks, Insult</li> </ul>
<b>i) Sensitive and compassionate HR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding our needs</li> <li>- Understanding our expertise</li> <li>- Policies should be more employee friendly</li> <li>- Being recognized for talent</li> <li>- Leading Diversity awareness</li> <li>- Following up experiences</li> </ul>
<b>j) Refinement of existing societal ideologies towards sexual minorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive Documentation</li> <li>- Understanding Queer</li> <li>- Normalizing the Phenomenon</li> <li>- Equal Treatment</li> <li>- Ability to express</li> </ul>

Each super-ordinate as well as subordinate theme is then interpreted individually supporting each with relevant literature and quoting the individual experiences of each respondent who have added information regarding the particular theme. This has led to an establishment of a thematic pattern in order to understand the phenomenon.

### a) Predicaments in workplace.

Employees belonging to sexual minorities often face gargantuan complications in their workplaces. The parochialism of colleagues towards sexual minorities often cause instances such as harassment, discrimination and even victimisation. Quoting from an interview which states "People use offensive terms either to directly address us or just to mock... I am not 'Chakka'! I do have a name! Why is it so difficult to just call me by that?" depicts the attitude of people

towards sexual minorities which causes severe indignation. The quandary lies if people belonging to sexual minorities should express themselves freely as hiding their identity makes them feel trapped. This could be understood clearly from the interviews. Taking the example of one among several, it states, "I want to be me and not someone else every time" which implies how difficult it is for people belonging to sexual minorities to be themselves. The fear of judgements, denial and dismissal continue to haunt them adding up to the predicaments at workplace. In some cases, they are even subjected to assault of all nature which multiples their issues.

The plight is quite familiar as issues do hinder their overall functioning. Several cases of humiliation have even made people conceal their identity fearing verbal attacks and unfair treatment (Speelman, 2013). It is believed to have higher trends of suicide because of such homophobic remarks. People are affected and are often not able to gulp the insult which persuade them to commit suicide (Kalman, 2009). The idea is well supported by a very fresh event in India wherein a young salon working professional committed suicide for being ridiculed for being a homosexual (Aggarwal, 2019). This thereby pose a concern of how issues are still restricting the growth of LGBT employees

#### **b) Short-comings in workplace.**

The organization should ensure that working space supports all employees. It aggregates all support starting from the structure as well as the policies. Quoting from an interview conducted, "There is no separate washroom for us in my workplace. I am not comfortable in male washrooms and females do not entertain me into theirs. There are times wherein I have to hold for longer hours. It is quite difficult" drags our attention to the need of workplaces considering the idea of building separate washrooms for trans-sexual employees. This is a major concern cited as hardly organizations contemplate such minor details. The organization should also ensure that the recruitment policies should be fair and should not be a means to ask uncomfortable questions regarding the orientation. Same sex partners should be given equal benefits as the binaries and welfare policies should be equal for all irrespective of any difference in orientation.

Organizations which ensure a better working environment will always have a productive workforce. Hence dealing with the short-comings is utterly necessary.

#### **c) Societal Fallibility**

Vulnerability of employees belonging to sexual minorities continue to exist because of the recurring stigmatization and misconception that people have against the queer community. The interviews suggest the role of public domain to convey positive ideologies about sexual minorities rather than seeming them to be sexual predators. Social acceptance is also a major concern when it comes to societal issues.

It is essential for companies to deal with stigmatization as being a productive employee requires him or her to be an active team player. The constraints put forth because of the societal attitude might therefore effect in bringing absolute fecundity at work

#### **d) Legal Constrains**

When the entire nation celebrates the scrapping of Section 377 and do not shy out in using the hashtag #LoveWins in social media, the interviews highlight a completely different perspective. The respondents believe the legal measures are absolutely theoretical unless the related laws are also amended. Respondents are still subjected to uncomfortable set of circumstances with the apogee of their inability to register their marriage or even enjoy benefits being partners.

Human Rights prohibits discrimination of any form (Patel, 2019). Legal measures should therefore be amended accordingly supporting the queer community.

#### **e) Improvising Company Policies**

This is one of the major needs of employees belonging to sexual minorities. The interviews conducted outline the company policies as Recruitment, Welfare, Prompt Action against any unfair instance as well as Employee conduct. The quotes from the interviews conducted suggest the following needs under improvisation of company policies –

1. Recruitment should be fair and should be based only on talent and expertise. Sexual orientation has nothing to do with the work role and hence should not be used as a factor in recruiting talents. The process should be very professional ensuring that people belonging to sexual minorities are not asked any uncomfortable questions or even are moral policed.
2. All the welfare policies as well as benefit policies should be equal for all. The policies of all companies and organizations should be amended accordingly so that no biases exist.
3. Compensation and promotion in all organizations should be fair and should only be on the basis of expertise and performance.
4. There should be strict policies against discrimination and harassment enabling an environment which is inclusive
5. The entity should ensure that there are enough growth opportunities and the employees belonging to the queer community

#### **f) Devising Company Cultures**

Company culture enables to create an inclusive environment eliminating issues and thereby cultivating and polishing the existing norms thus creating a workplace's image. The needs of the employees that are cited in the interview with respect to company culture are as follows:

1. The entity should enable an inclusive environment and should support employees belonging to sexual minorities

thereby enabling them to grow and prosper in their respective fields.

2. No discrimination should be tolerated
3. Edgar Schein's Model of Organization culture co-relates with the responses received during the interview. The employees belonging to sexual minorities need an environment to work which has strong underlying values, artefacts supporting their differences and Espoused Values that would definitely enable them to prosper in their field.

#### g) Revamping existing laws

The respondents believe that few issues cannot be sorted by entities single-handedly. Therefore there is need of laws to revamp in accordance to the occurring needs and changes.

1. The laws that relate to workplace issues of LGBT needs to be amended according
2. There should be quick action and solution to every problem reported
3. The law should amend in a way so that equality on all basis are ensured

#### h) Need to ameliorate attitude of colleagues

The employees belonging the queer community need workplaces without judgements. The attitude of fellow colleagues affect them to work in teams. There has to be acceptance in the working environment enabling productivity and efficiency. The queer community believes, a workplace strict enough against lewd remarks and homophobic behaviour and enabling strict non-discriminatory actions will always excel in its business.

#### i) Sensitive and compassionate HR

The respondents believe that a sensitive HR management shall appreciably help in curbing issues of people belonging to sexual minorities at workplace. Certain needs have been put forth which as listed as below-

1. Understanding the needs of employees belonging to sexual minorities thereby enabling them to solve issues they face
2. Understanding the expertise and enabling recognition.
3. Policies should be for all thereby ensuring that all are benefitted equally
4. Leading Diversity awareness is one of the major needs cited by respondents which is believed to bring in diversity inclusion.
5. Following up experiences of the queer community employees shall help in reforming existing policies in accordance to emerging needs.

#### j) Refinement of existing societal ideologies towards sexual minorities

The respondents believe that it is essential to have an accessible medium so as to enable the community to express itself. Positive documentation about queer should enabling

understanding the phenomena according to them. The respondents believe that normalizing LGBT for the future generation can lead to equal treatment and shall enable people to express themselves without fear.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The major motive of conducting the study was to apprehend the needs of people belonging to sexual minorities. The major findings of the study implied the needs such as non-discrimination workplace protections, domestic partner benefits, inclusive health care benefits, competency programs, and public engagement with the LGBTQ community.

It is essential to understand how effective are the measures that are facilitated to people claiming inclusion and diversity management. It is essential to analyze the effectiveness as well the gaps so that the measures are facilitated adequately. It's important to take inventory of the risks involved with being out at work. Hence, the claim of ensuring a better workplace can only be fulfilled if the workplace ensure inclusiveness and growth.

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