

The Challenges Due to Social Exclusion of Homosexual Men in Kerala

Aneesh M. S.¹, Dr. Jilly John²

¹Research Scholar, Dept. of Social Work, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod (Kerela) India.

²Asst. Prof., Dept. of Social Work, Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod (Kerela) India.

ABSTRACT

Heterosexuality is the socially approved and preferred mode of sexual orientation in India and the homosexual people had discriminated based on their Sexual Orientation. Homosexual people are facing so many problems from society due to sexual orientation and the people are targeted for verbal and physical violence and discrimination. The present study focused on the challenges due to social exclusion experienced by homosexual men in Kerala. The study has done in the selected districts of Kerala and descriptive research design and snowball sampling method were used to identify the respondents in the selected district. The result proved that homosexual men had experienced exclusion and violence from all areas of life. The exclusion can negatively influence their physical and mental health.

Keywords: Homosexual men, Social Exclusion, family, educational institutions, workspace, violence, Kerala.

I INTRODUCTION

The LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) is an umbrella term and commonly used all over the world. The single definition of sexual minorities is a same-sex lover, which means their primary romantic and sexual attraction towards their own sex, but the bisexual people are quite different from others they have attraction to both same-sex and opposite sex. The society mainly considered that LGBT community members are transgender and they have feminine attires to do the sexual relation with all same-sex people. The situation is also not different in Kerala; the homosexual people have been avoided and discriminated from the mainstream society related to the negative perception about homosexuality and homosexual men. Homosexual men face so many issues from the family and society based on gender identity that has negatively influenced their daily activities. In Kerala very limited information is available about homosexual men because the people are not ready to disclose the homosexual orientation publically and they are living in a hidden world or closeted. A study proved that family is one of the most discriminating institutions of homosexual men in India (sherry,2005). Our constitution provides an equal right for every citizen to live in the society without any discrimination based on the caste, gender and economic position. But the homosexual people have frequently experienced discrimination and violence from the mainstream society due to their sexual orientation. Despite a recent judicial ruling in Delhi state, consensual same-sex sexual behavior remains culturally forbidden in most parts of the country (Skanland, 2009), which necessitates many MSM to remain hidden and consequently difficult to reach by HIV prevention and other services given by government (Safren et al., 2006). The prejudices are also linked with homosexual men, the hetero-normative society all over India believe that homosexuals are sex workers and they have feminine attires or act like a female for attracting male partners for sexual contact (supriya,2013).

LGBT community is invisible among the huge population of 1.2 billion in Kerala. There are no situations to estimate their population yet and hence, there is no official estimate of the total population of LGBT community in India. In a country like India, which confirms the gender binary roles of a male or a female, the existence and survival of a third gender is going through tough times and extremely rough paths. The Honorable Supreme Court, vide Judgment dated 15th April 2014, has recognized transgender as the third gender for the purpose of safeguarding their rights. The judgment has also directed the Centre and State Governments to grant legal recognition of their gender identity, to treat them as socially and educationally backward classes and to extend all kinds of reservation in cases of admission in educational institutions and for public appointments. September 2018 is a noticeable year because the Honorable Supreme Court of India decriminalized section 377. Consensual adult gay sex is not a crime anymore and the homosexual orientation is a natural thing and people have no limitation or control to select their partners. Center and State Governments have also been directed to operate separate Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) surveillance Centers, since transgender face several sexual health issues. The Govt. of Kerala introduced a policy for transgender with the help of Sangama on 2014. Kerala is the first state that introduced a policy for transgender in India. The government and other supporting groups in Kerala provide more support for transgender community but the other sexual minorities are closeted and addressing different issues connected with their sexual orientation.

II REVIEWS BASED ON LITERATURE

The research study is about the barriers, exclusion and current status of LGBT people in Kerala. For the part of this study, the researcher reviewed the literature about exclusion, mental health problems, and related topics. The review of the literature has helped the researcher to get knowledge about the

issues of people. The homosexual youth experienced challenges especially those who come out without family or societal support.

A study done by Deuba (2012) found that 21% of homosexual men had experienced verbal abuse, 10% had experienced physical and sexual abuse, and 32% experienced all of three forms of abuse from the mainstream society. The study furthermore expressed that 38% of the respondents are facing physical abuse from spouse or partner/relative and 41% of them are sexual abused by spouse/sexual partner/relative. 61% of the homosexuals reported high rate of depression, 47% reported of having suicidal thoughts/tendencies in the last year and 40% have suicidal plan.

Ryan et al. (1998), studies have proved that almost one-half of the homosexual men and one-fifth of the homosexual women were verbally or physically assaulted/ harassed in high school and they were two to four times more likely to be threatened with weapons at school. Moreover, homosexual men had experienced threatening by family members, peer group, partners, spouse, and relatives because of their sexual orientation. The negative responses leads to different psychological problems such as depression, stress, tension, etc.

Augelli (2002) study described that homosexual and bisexual men are facing violence and rejection from the family and society. The result also found that the homosexual men face more psychological issues and suicidal tendencies related to the negative response from parents, rejection, victimization and hostile environment. The study also reported that more than three-quarters of the respondent had been verbally abused, 15 % of the homosexual respondents are facing physical violence, and more than one-third reported of losing friends because of their sexual orientation/ gender identity.

III AREAS OF DISCRIMINATION

The researcher identifies the major areas of exclusion experienced by homosexual men in India based on the previous studies and the interaction with community members. GBT people are most vulnerable, discriminated, isolated and minority group in the society. According to Indian culture, place in heaven depends on the birth of son and because of that the Indian society is very much concerned about the gender as well as Indian people strongly believed on the Manusmriti (A constitution of Hindu religion). According to Manusmriti, occupation of people, the role of gender is fixed by God; it should be followed by people. In Kerala context most of the sexual minorities face discrimination from every area depending on their sexual orientation. Main areas are family, educational institution and health care.

IV FAMILY

The family is the primary group and the character formation will happen from the family. Based on the previous studies homosexual people are facing discrimination or exclusion from their family because of their sexual identity. Most Indian families are trying to educate their children living with heterosexual orientations and the family shown the model of heterosexual marriage and the relationship. The men and women has experienced the pressure from the family to marry a partner from the opposite sex and the women have experienced more pressure from the family to choose a partner because the women has less freedom in the Indian context. But the situation is slowly changing and women are fighting for equal position with men. There is no space within the family to express their same sex behavior and some of them have married an opposite partner with pressure of family. In this conservative context, some sexual minorities have chosen to disclose to their families as having an alternative sexual orientation. The disclosure leads to different form of rejection and attack from the family. Most of the time they are thrown out of the family. The family may completely disown their son or daughter and the parents are not ready to accept that he or she is homosexual or marry a same sex partner and the family also force them to undergo psychiatric treatment in a vain attempt to convert their sexual orientation from homosexual to heterosexual or they push them to select a partner from opposite sex and they lead an unhappy marriedlife. The homosexual partners act as heterosexual partner in front of the spouse and practicing the homosexual activities. The female partner suffers different issues like her sexual freedom being denied and not getting any physical care from partner etc., (Human Rights Violations against Sexual Minorities in India-2001).

V EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The educational institution takes an important role of an individual life but on the other side, homosexual men have experienced more discrimination/harassment and stressful time from educational institutions. Schools are difficult places for homosexual students as they regularly face discrimination, bullying, and harassment in elementary, secondary, and higher secondary institutions. The issues mostly start at the high school level because the friends notice their behavior and some of them have feminine attires. School is a place where an individual develop socialization and learn social norms, knowledge, skills and culture. In one survey

(www.endtransdiscrimination.org/report.html), 40% of gender non-conforming youth reported being frequently harassed by others and 37% of the homosexual men have experienced verbal harassment and name calling from peers. In another survey reported that, 33% of the homosexual students reported frequently experienced homophobic comments from others. The study also reported that the victimized homosexual students have high rate of psychological issues and the sexuality related harassment are very high compared to the other population. This harassment, bullying, and discrimination have a negative influence on their education and the future life of homosexual people. The victimized students are regularly absent in school and their GPA score is very low. These are the main reasons to discontinue their higher education. On their psychological side homosexual men have experienced high rate of depression and low self-esteem. The transgender policy has identified some of the major reason for discontinue the education of LGBT people in Kerala. The reason is

- (a) Severe harassment makes studies impossible.
- (b) Gender-related negative experiences at school.
- (c) Lack of special educational quota or reservation.
- (d) For those who had to leave school due to harassment, nearly half reported having experienced a negative home environment.

(Transgender policy draft- 2014)

VI WORKPLACE

LGBT people have victimized the widespread of discrimination at work place. Studies proved that gay and bisexual people have experienced some forms of discrimination and violence, mistreatment at work place. These negative attitudes in work place made homosexual people insecure or victimized. The employers have judged based on their sexual orientation and gender identity not their job related performance. The judgment may affect their promotions and may lead to experienced exclusion in the workplace. A survey by Williams on Sexual Orientation Law and public Policy found that 8% to 17% of gay and transgender workers reported of being passed over for a job or fired because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. 10% to 28% received negative evaluation on their performances or were passed over for a promotion because they were gay or transgender.

VII RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is focused on the social exclusion and victimization of homosexual men in Kerala. The data has been collected from Ernakulam district the central region of Kerala. The data has been collected with the support of Santhwanam Suraksha project. The study excluded the transgender and bisexual people in the selected district.

- (a) **Research Design-** A descriptive research design is used because the researcher is trying to describe the challenges of exclusion among homosexual men in Kerala. Study wants to portray the characteristics of a group. As the descriptive research design describes the different factors in their life and forms of exclusion they experienced from the society.
- (b) **Sampling-**Non-Probability sampling is used in the present study. In this snowball sampling technique is more suitable to identify the respondents. The respondents are selected from Ernakulam district because of the visibility of sexual minorities. The sampling size is 100 and the age category is 18-40 years.
- (c) **Method and Tools of Data Collection-**The data collection is based on the primary method and secondary method. In primary method, data is collected through interview schedule prepared by the researcher and in secondary method data is collected through books, journals, articles, newspaper, and internet.

VIII RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study tries to focus on the challenges due to social exclusion and current status of homosexual men in Kerala state. In Kerala homosexual men are less visible because of the fear of rejection from mainstream society. The data has been collected through questionnaire in the area of Ernakulam district with the help of supporting groups in Ernakulam. Ernakulam is a metro city and LGBT people are more visible especially the transgender community and they are ready to disclose their identity in front of society. But the homosexual people are closeted and majority of the people are coming to the cruising spot for searching suitable partners for sex and other relationship. For the purpose of the present study the researcher visited their cruising spot in the early night time and discussed with them about their experience from the society. The researcher met more than 200 homosexuals in the district of Ernakulam and selected 100 homosexuals based the inclusion exclusion criteria.

(a) **Socio Demographic Profile of Homosexual Men in Kerala**-Socio demographic profile is an

important factor of a social work research. It helps the researcher to identify the basic details and current situation of the homosexual respondents in Kerala.

Table 1
Socio Demographic Details of the Respondents

Characteristic		Frequency (N100)	Percent
Locality	Urban	64	64%
	Rural	36	36%
Age wise classification	18-25	11	11%
	26-30	11	11%
	31-35	41	41%
	36-40	37	37%
Education wise classification	Primary	14	14%
	High school	42	42%
	Higher secondary	18	18%
	Degree and above	26	26%
Religion wise classification	Hindu	48	48%
	Christian	39	39%
	Muslim	12	12%
	Others	1	1%
Marital status	Married	11	11%
	Unmarried	82	82%
	Separated	7	7%
Occupation	Government employee	7	7%
	Private sector	32	32%
	Business	12	12%
	Daily wages	45	45%
	Unemployed	4	4%
Monthly income	Below 10000	10	10%
	10000-15000	33	33%
	15000-20000	42	42%
	Above 20000	15	15%
Living arrangements	Friends	44	44%
	Family	48	48%
	Alone	1	1%
	Same sex partner	7	7%

The above table 1 presents the socio demographic details of the homosexual men in Kerala. The Age wise classification of the homosexual men in Kerala indicates that majority (41%) of the respondents is within the age category of 31-35 years and 37% of the respondents are in the category of 36- 40 years. The remaining 11% respondents are belongs to the age category of 18-25 and 26-30. Age is an important variable of the present study because the sexual experience may start from child hood.

Educational qualification is very low compare to the normal population , 14% of respondents have only primary level education (1-7),42% of respondents have up to high school level education and 18% of the respondents have higher secondary level of education and the rest of 26% of the homosexual men have completed degree and above level of education . Based on the religious back ground of the

respondents is proved that majority of them are belongs to the Hindu religion (48%), 39% of the respondents are from the Christian religion and 12% of the homosexual men are from the Muslim background. The 2011 census reported that 54.73% of the Kerala population is belongs to the Hindu religion.

Homosexual people are not ready to marry an opposite sex member because their primary sexual and romantic attraction is towards only the same sex members. The family is not ready to accept their same sex relationship and they have to force them to marry an opposite sex partner. Marital status of the homosexual men in Kerala is clearly indicating that 82% of the homosexual men are unmarried and very less number of homosexual 11% is legally married because of the fear of rejection from the society and the societal norms has supported only the

heterosexual relationship. The remaining 7% of the respondents are legally separated from the partner. Occupation is another important variable and it gives an idea about their economic status of the respondents. The data shows that the occupational status of homosexual men in Kerala, majority of the respondents 45% are daily wages like coolie and construction works, 32% of the respondents are working in private sectors, 12% are business and 7 % of them are government employee. Majority of the respondents have 15000 -20000 range of monthly income, 33% have 10000- 15000, 15% have above 20000 and 10% of the respondents have only the monthly income is below 10000. A current living condition has helps to know the present condition of homosexual men in Kerala. 48% of the respondents are living with family, 44% are living with friends and 7% have living with partners.

(b) Family Response of Homosexual Men-The family is the primary institution that provides the support and help to an individual; but most of the

homosexual are experiencing discrimination or avoidance from the family. The avoidance leads to different type problems and it has negatively influenced their mental health. The result indicates that majority of the homosexual men (57%) has not disclosed their sexual identity in front of the family. Homosexual people are victimized to physical, verbal and sexual abuse from family. The verbal abuse is mainly in the form of using abusive words and other way. 43% of the respondents have 'come out' in family and majority of them have experienced physical attack from parents and siblings. Father and siblings are the main discriminator of homosexual men in Kerala. 62% of the parents are not ready to accept the sexual orientation of their son and they think that homosexuality is a psychological issue and they suggest a mental health professional for reducing the homosexual tendencies

Table 2
The Response of Family Exclusion and Support

Response	Exclusion from family		Support from family	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	44	44%	23	23%
Agree	30	30%	13	13%
Strongly disagree	19	19%	48	48%
Disagree	6	6%	16	16%

Table 2 presents the response of family exclusion and support experienced by homosexual men in Kerala. It indicates that 44% of the homosexual men strongly agree that most of the time they experienced discrimination from family related to their sexual orientation and 30% also experienced moderate level of exclusion from family and 19% of them have never faced any type of exclusion from the family.

The familial support helps an individual to overcome all their issues and based on the study 48% of the respondents had never get any form of support from the family after disclosing their sexual orientation, 16% moderately disagree that, 23% of the homosexual men has getting support from family and 13% have moderately get support.

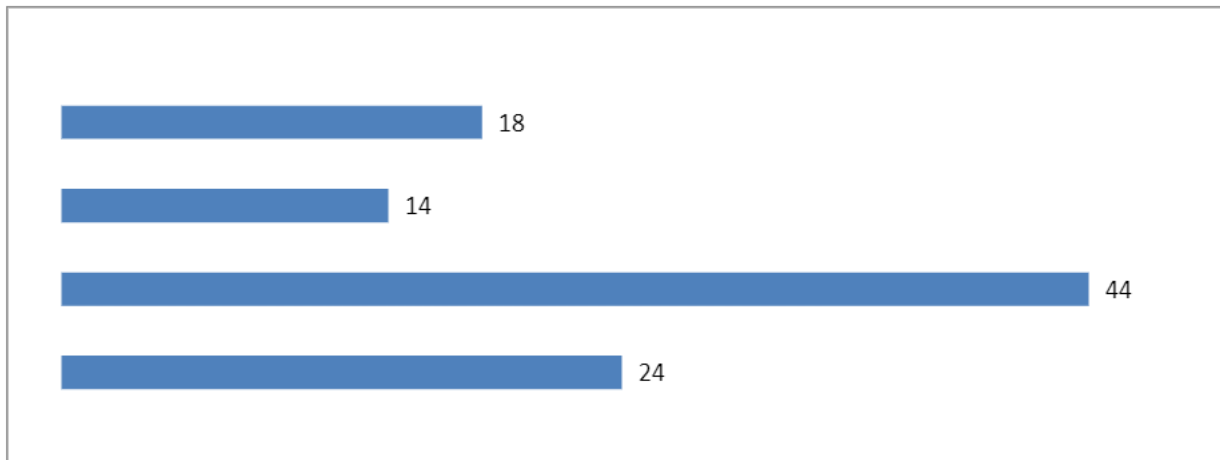


Fig. 1: Family Response

The family response is very important for the life of LGBT people. The figure 1 shows that majority (44%) of the respondent's families have negative response related to homosexuality and homosexual men and they become angry in the presence of homosexuals and 18% of the respondent's families are not interested to talk about the homosexuality . Very less number of families (24%) is accepting the change especially their sexual orientation. The response of the family members has totally different and they facing problems from family members, 50% of the respondents are facing negative response from their brothers and also experienced the physical attack from their side. 17% of the siblings are accepting the change and 12% of siblings are completely discriminated. The neighbors are one of the other discriminators. The result proved that 32% of the respondent's neighbors are accepting the change, they support them to overcome the issues faced by the society, and 30% of the neighbors are fully discriminating the homosexual men and they are not ready to talk about homosexuality. Winter (2006) study found that 62.9% of mothers and 40.6% of fathers accepted or encouraged their child as a homosexual from its first expression.

(c) Exclusion from Educational Institutions- Educational institution is one of the most discriminating areas of homosexual men in Kerala. The homosexual people are facing different issues in school time and that can be negatively influence their mental health and identity confirmation. Educational institution has to be free from violence, fear and discrimination so that an individual can develop in a healthy environment. Bullying and stigma makes schools and other educational institution unsafe for homosexual people. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) expressed that bullying poses a significant threat to the universal Right to education. 41% of the GBT people has strongly agreed that they faced discrimination/exclusion from their friends at the time of schooling, 35% have moderately agreed that they have victimized the exclusion and 13% are moderately disagreed that and they get support from their friends. The present study majority of the respondents are not disclosing their sexual orientation in school and their behavior and body language has been leads different issues in school.

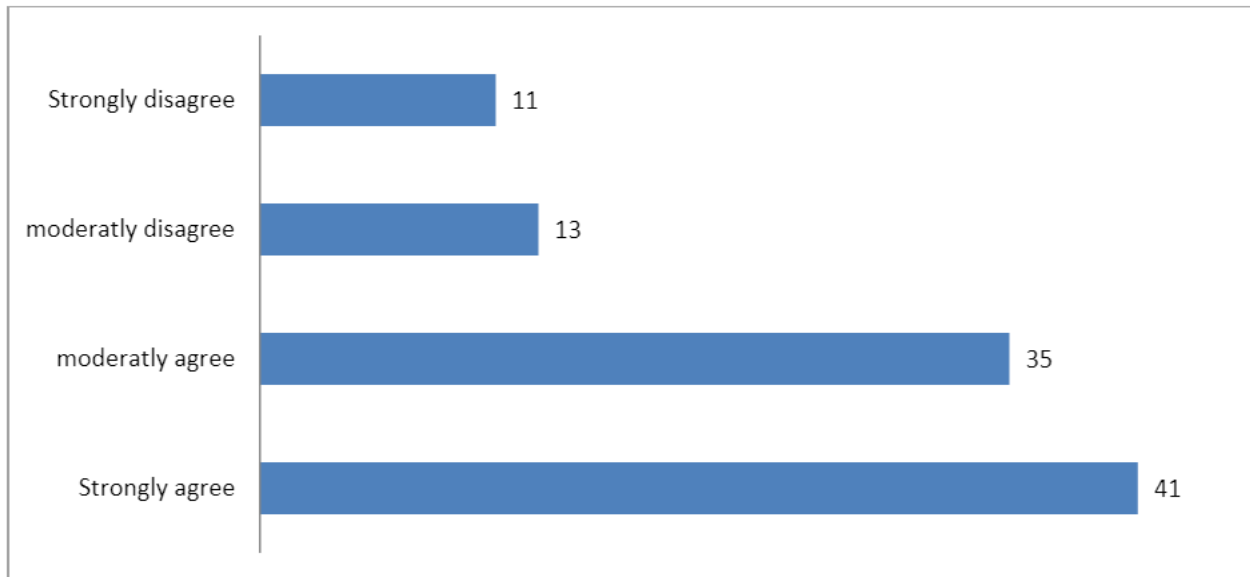


Fig. 2: Response related to the discrimination from teachers

The above figure 2 explains the response of homosexual men regarding the discrimination from teachers based on their sexual orientation at the time of schooling. Based on the result 41% of the respondents strongly agreed that they had face discrimination from teachers at the time of schooling and 35% of them had moderately experienced the discrimination from teachers and 11% of them strongly disagree that they never face any type of discrimination from teacher in school time and 13% of them moderately disagree the comment. The unawareness about homosexuality is one of the main reason for the discrimination and the homosexual people has to victimize verbal and physical harassment from teachers, students and other staffs in school. 85% of the respondents have experienced verbal harassment from classmate and they have to

use the local words or abusive words to representing the homosexuals. Name calling is the main form of verbal abuse.

A study was done by Greytal et al, (2009) to assess the different forms of violence experienced by homosexual students and he interviewed more than 7,000 middle and high school homosexual students within the age category of 13–21 years. It was found that over 85% of the homosexual students have experienced verbal harassment in school based on their sexual orientation. Nearly half (49.5%) reported that they victimized the physical harassment from friends and others in school based on the homosexual orientation, and a one third (34.1%) reported being physically assaulted.

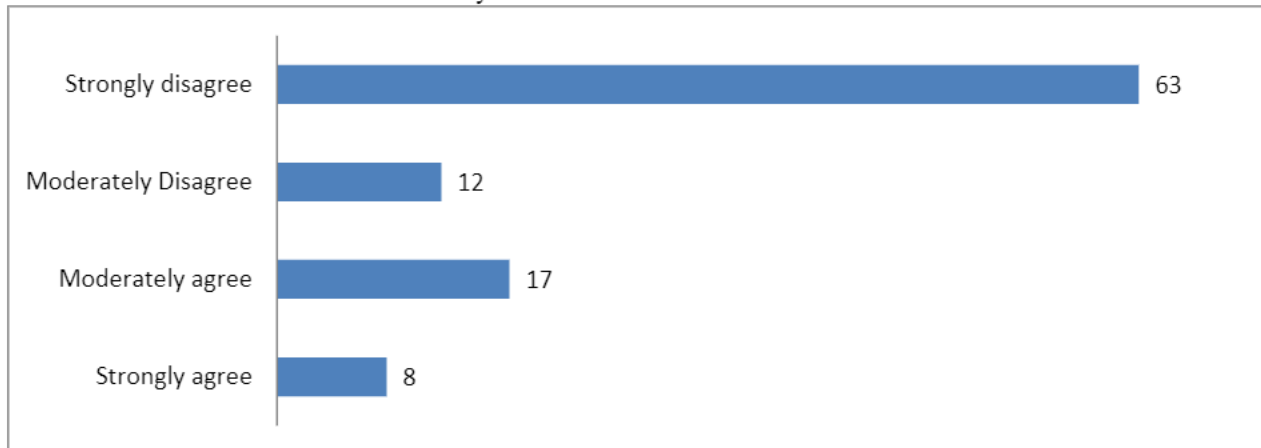


Fig. 3: Support from Teachers

The figure 3 represents the support from teachers at the time of schooling. 8% of respondents have strongly agreed that their teachers are very supportive in schools and 17% moderately agreed that they had not much support from teachers. 12% moderately disagreed and remaining 63% strongly disagreed that

they never received any support from teachers. It clearly proved that the teacher have homophobic behavior about the homosexual students. Harris (2005) found that homosexual students were over four times more likely to be verbally harassed because of their gender expression.

(d) **Workplace**-Work place is the second home of an individual and the people has to spend the most of the time in their work place. Work place is one of the major exclusion areas of homosexual people especially homosexual men and transgender. Multinational companies have inclusion policies for LGBT people for providing equal position and support for them. Some of the homosexual people are feminine attire and sometimes they are cross dressers and based on that they have to experience so many issues in

workspace. Pramodini (2014) study result found that, 75.3% of the LGBT people experienced the negative response from work place whereas 24.7% of them did not face any negative experiences in workplace. The present study tries to focus on the exclusion experienced by homosexual men in workplace. Based on the result, majority of them have not disclosed their sexual orientation in front of the colleagues and 59% of them hide their orientation because of the negative response from the colleague.

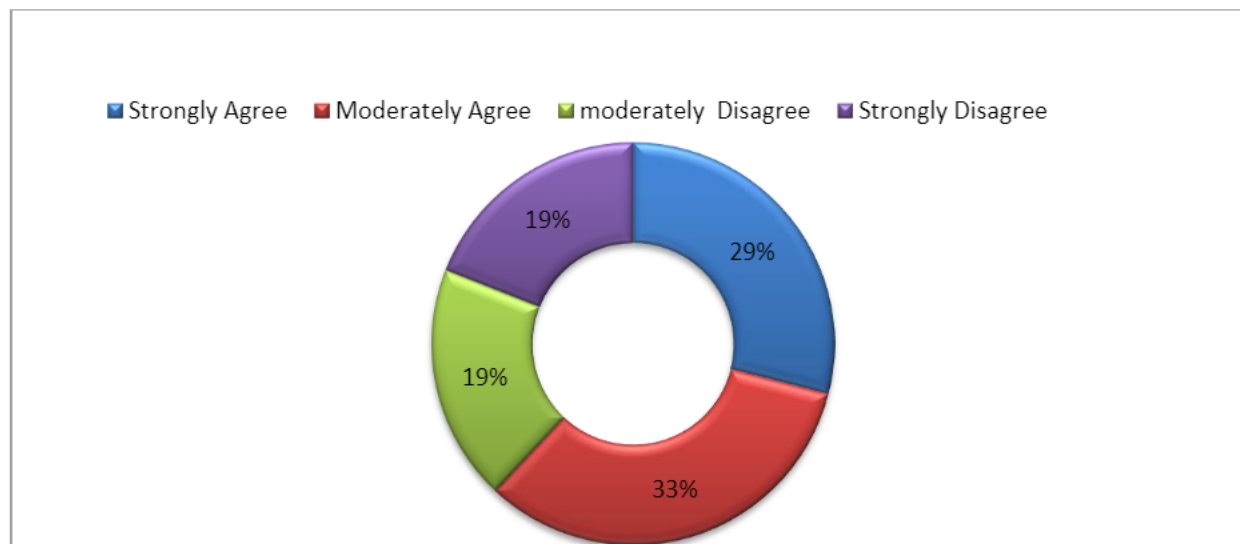


Fig. 4: Work Place Discrimination

The figure 4 represents the discrimination experienced by homosexual men in work place and it shows that 19% of the homosexual men moderately disagree and strongly disagree that they never face any type of discrimination at workplaces. On the other side 29% of the respondents strongly agree that they are facing discrimination in workplace and 33% are moderately agreed the arguments. It clearly proved that homosexual men in Kerala experience high rate of discrimination in work place related to their sexual orientation. Homosexual men experience physical, sexual and verbal harassment in workplace. Based on the result 50% of them strongly agreed that they faced verbal and sexual abuses at workplace. The verbal abuse like name calling, using abusive words etc. 20% moderately agreed, and among the remaining 15% of the respondents strongly and moderately disagrees with the sexual and/or verbal abuses at workplace. The result clearly proved that the homosexual people are not safe in any area, especially at workplaces. Majority of them face sexual and verbal abuses from colleagues and others. Badgett et al., (2007) discussing about the workplace situations of homosexuals and the result of 15% to 43% of homosexual workers have experienced some form of discrimination in the workplace like salary discrimination, discrimination at the time of promotion etc. and 8% to 17 % of homosexual workers report that they are being terminated from

the job because of their sexual orientation. 10% to 28 % of people were rejected or denied their promotion because they belonged to the LGBT community. 7% to 41% of workers was verbally or physically abused at their workplace. (Bryant and Schilt (2008) study proved that 99% of the homosexual people are facing discrimination/ verbal harassment from workplace.

(e) **Experience in the Society**-Homosexual people experience the issues from the mainstream society because the society is more heterosexual oriented and the norms are accepting only the heterosexual relationship. Cloud (1997) states that homophobia is the one of the main reason of people victimized in the violence and discrimination from the society. The society is not ready to accept the same sex behavior and most of the time they are discriminated from the mainstream society. Based on their sexual orientation homosexual people has experienced the personal rejection, hostility, harassment, homicide, verbal, sexual and physical violence etc. the study result indicates that , 74% of the homosexual respondents face the verbal harassment from general public and 26% of the respondents never faced any harassment from

public. 45% of the homosexual men experienced negative comments and physical attack from police and 18% of them got help from police and 23% of the respondents experienced both help and harassment from police. The police officials

considered that the homosexuals are sex workers. The social justice department and other supporting group have organized few programs for creating awareness in police and other staffs of other department.

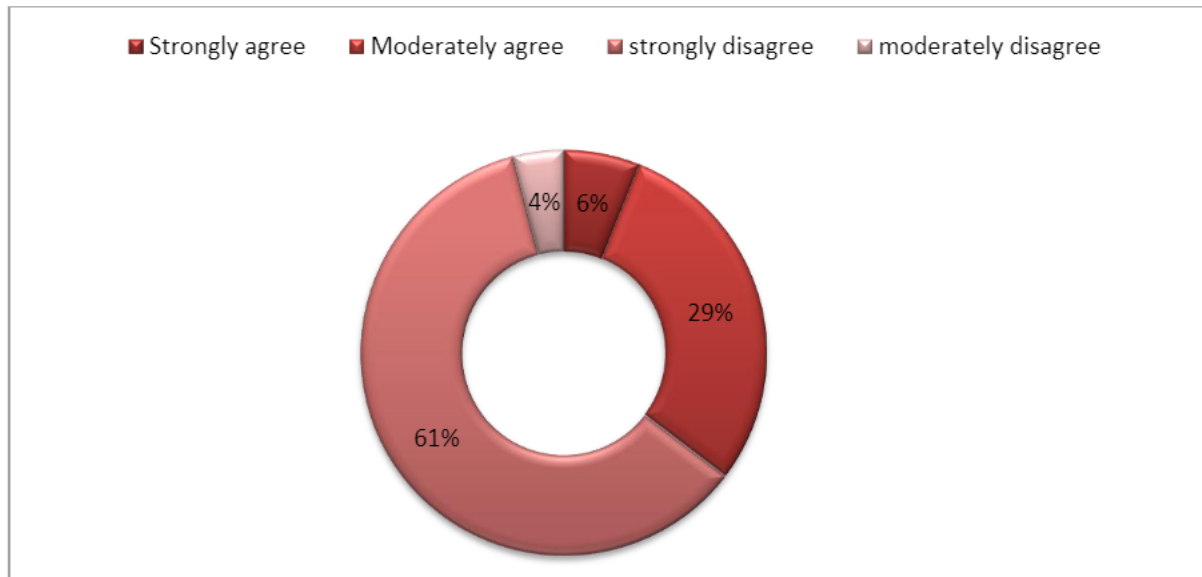


Fig. 5: Response of Homosexual Men Regarding the Social Acceptance.

The above figure 5 illustrates the response of people regarding to the social acceptance of the mainstream, majority of the homosexual men (61%) relied that they strongly disagree that the society never accept their sexual orientation and most of the time they experienced rejection and avoidance from the hetero-normative society. 29% of the respondents moderately agree that they received rejection and acceptance from the society. 6% of the respondents strongly agreed that the society is never discriminated and they received support from the society and 4% moderately disagree the comment. The LGBT people experienced the physical and sexual attack from police and local criminals. Police periodically patrolled the cruising area and chased them away. They even revealed that they were harassed and forced to have sex with them by the police and local people (Pramodini 2014).

IX CONCLUSION

Homosexual men are not free from problems and most of the time they have to experience different form of issues from family and mainstream society. The problems are mainly rooted from their homosexual orientation and gender identity. The present study tries to focus on the challenges due to social exclusion in Kerala and the study proved that homosexual people are facing so many problems in family, workplace, educational institution, and

society. The societal exclusion may affect their physical and mental health. Homosexual men have experienced more issues from the family and educational institutions. In the family they are victimized and suffer different form of violence and harassment related to their sexual orientations. The violence leads to different type of problems and that has been negatively influenced their physical and psychological health. Invisibility of homosexual men is one of the main reasons to increase the issueshighly.

X SUGGESTIONS

- (a) The government and other supporting group have to take more initiatives in creating awareness about the gender and sexuality. It may help to reduce the violence and exclusion experienced by homosexuals in Kerala.
- (b) The government has to implement new policies and programmes for LGBT community especially the workplace inclusion
- (c) Create more awareness in school level and include the sexual education in school curriculum

XI LIMITATION

The study is not free from limitations; the main limitation of the study is the selection of sample and universe. The study included only the people from Ernakulam district and reduced the sample size of 100.

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