



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



Religious values, attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, and gender role beliefs among young adults

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Abstract

The study aims to examine the relationship and impact of religious values, attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, and gender role beliefs among young adults. A quantitative approach was employed in this study, utilizing self-report inventories to gather data from 300 participants aged 18-25 years in Indian cities. The questionnaires used were the Duke University Religion Index (DUREL), the Attitude towards Lesbian and Gay Men Scale (ATLG), and the Gender Role Beliefs Scale (GRBS). The results indicated that there was a positive correlation between religious values and attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, a negative correlation between religious values and gender role beliefs, and between attitudes towards the lesbian and the gay men and the gender role beliefs. The study also found that there was a gender difference in the distribution of attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs between males and females but not towards religious values, and a difference in the distribution of attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs based on education levels but no distribution towards religious values. The findings provide clinicians and mental health professionals with vital information with regards to the influence of religion and gender role beliefs which are important factors to consider when formulating intervention programs for lesbian or gay men.

Keywords: Religious Values; Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men; Gender Role Beliefs; Gender; Education.

1. Introduction

The present study is of vital importance in present times as it tries to understand the extent of influence of religious values on people's perceptions towards lesbians and gay men and their gender role beliefs. Religious values are defined as the fundamental tenets, ethical norms, and beliefs of every religion that direct the conduct and moral perspective of its adherents. Lesbian women are those who are attracted to other women romantically, emotionally or physically, and men who are attracted to other men romantically, emotionally or physically are called gay men.

According to the Christian religion, a person engaging in a sexual act with another person from the same gender is considered as immoral or sinful, as it does not result in procreation of an offspring. There have been studies that show that people who adhere to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam develop more negative attitudes towards homosexuality [27]. Religious fundamentalism involves belief that a single, essential, set of religious truths which requires specific and unchangeable religious practices [1], [23], [25]. Previous researches have shown that religious fundamentalism is associated with negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. Misunderstandings and stereotypes about homosexuality, historical discrimination leaving a lasting impact, lack of protective measures by way of discriminatory laws and policies etc., which have since historical times led to a gradual increase in negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. A study found that heterosexual individuals with negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men are more likely to express traditional, restrictive attitudes about gender-roles and more likely to subscribe to a conservative religious ideology [10]. A study found that a higher level of negative attitudes exists when students are deeply religious, particularly with regards to gay males [2].

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Gender Role Beliefs is defined as a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences for the person or others. It occurs when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of others or oneself [6]. A study has shown that dislike of lesbians and gay men are particularly strong among people who hold traditional gender-role attitudes because homosexuality poses an especially strong threat to their system of gender beliefs [19]. Heterosexuality is on an equal plane ideologically with 'normal' masculinity and 'normal' femininity, while homosexuality is on an equal plane with violating the norms of gender" [14]. Exposure to violations of the male gender role may motivate perpetrators to attack gay men in an effort to enforce gender norms [11], [13]. Studies done by social scientists have found that the power disparity that arises between men and women are deeply rooted in modern social structures due to which traditional gender relations are being retained and generated [7], [29]. A study found that sexual prejudice is strongly associated with adherence to traditional gender roles [18], [25], [30], [33]. A study found that traditional gender roles strongly influence conservative attitudes towards liberal sexual relations and that religiosity and gender beliefs play significant roles in shaping negative attitudes towards homosexual people [17].

There is a gap in existing literature as there have been limited studies that have tried to study the relationship between all three variables, especially in India where limited attention is paid to lesbians and gay men, and how religious values and gender role beliefs affect them. The present study is a step in addressing these needs as it tries to fulfil the research gap by trying to find if there is a relationship between religious values and attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs and what level of impact do, they variables have on each other.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Statement of the problem

To explore if there is a relationship and impact between Religious Values, Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men and Gender Role Beliefs.

2.2 Research Design

The study follows a quantitative approach using a correlational research design. Preliminary correlational research studies can provide invaluable information about what future research may be required to investigate the variable shown to be correlated with the outcomes or attributes previously studied. Researchers can prepare essential actions or implications by using correlational research to determine which factors are most closely

2.3 Objective of the study

- Q1: To find out the relationship between Religious Values, Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men and Gender Role Beliefs.
- Q2: To find out if there is any impact of Religious Values on Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men.
- Q3: To find out if there is any impact of Religious Values on Gender Role Beliefs.
- Q4: To find out if there is any gender difference in Religious Values, Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men and Gender Role Beliefs.
- Q5: To find out if there is any difference in Religious Values, Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men and Gender Conflict Role Beliefs based on education.

2.4 Hypothesis

- H₀1: There is no relationship between Religious Values, Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men and Gender Role Beliefs.
- H₀2: There is no impact of Religious Values on Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men.
- H₀3: There is no impact of Religious Values on Gender Role Beliefs.
- H₀4: There is no gender difference in Religious Values, Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men and Gender Role Beliefs.
- H₀5: There is no difference in Religious Values, Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men and Gender Role Beliefs based on education.

2.5 Operational Definitions

2.5.1 Religious Values

The beliefs and norms which guide the moral and spiritual actions of human beings.

2.5.2 Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men

It is an individual's opinions and feelings regarding homosexuality, ranging from acceptance and support to prejudice and discrimination.

2.5.3 Gender Role Beliefs

It is a psychological state in which socialized gender roles have negative consequences on the person or others.

2.6 Sample and Techniques

The sample comprises 300 young adults which comprises 163 females and 137 males, aged between 18 to 25 who are currently residing in Bangalore and Mumbai. Basic education level average is UG or PG. 22. Convenient sampling is a type of nonprobability or non-random sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study [5]. The data collection method will involve self-report inventories, where participants will respond to structured questionnaires.

2.7 Tools for the study

2.7.1 Duke University Religion Index (DUREL)

The Duke University Religion Index (DUREL), developed by Koenig and Büsing in 2010, is a 5-item efficient measure of religious involvement. The scale has high retest reliability (intra-class correlation coefficient of 0.91) and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha between 0.78 and 0.91), convergent validity is established with other known measures of religiosity (r 's = 0.71-0.86).

2.7.2 Attitude toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG)

The ATLG scale, developed by Herek in 1984 is a brief, 20-item survey designed to gauge heterosexuals' sentiments toward homosexual men and lesbians. The ATLG subscales have strong internal consistency, as evidenced by alpha values greater than .85 for samples of college students and $>.80$ for samples of adult non-students. With other forms, test-retest dependability has been proven.

2.7.3 Gender Role Beliefs Scale (GRBS)

The GRBS scale, developed by Kerr and Holden in 1996 is a brief, psychometrically sound, 20-item self-report survey that gauges each person's perspective of gender roles. Cronbach's alpha for the scale is 0.88.

2.8 Inclusion Criteria

- Participants who are in the age group of 18-25 years.
- Participants residing in Bangalore and Mumbai cities.
- Participants not diagnosed with any psychological disorder or intellectual disability.
- Participants should be able to independently complete the self-report inventories, indicating their ability to understand and respond to the questionnaire items.
- Individuals not diagnosed with any psychological disorder or intellectual disability.

2.9 Ethical Considerations

Participants read and agreed to an informed consent form before answering the survey questions. They were assured of anonymity and confidentiality of the responses they provided. Participants also had the right to withdraw from the survey at any point. The data was handled only by the researchers solely for research purposes. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association.

2.10 Statistical Analysis

Data was analyzed using the IBM SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, such as mean, and standard deviation, were computed for preliminary data analysis. Pearson's product moment correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between religious values, attitude towards lesbian and gay men and gender role beliefs. Linear regression analysis was used to understand the impact of religious values on attitude towards lesbian and gay men and also on gender role beliefs. Independent sample t-test was used to test the difference in religious values, attitude towards lesbian and gay men and gender conflict beliefs based on gender and education levels.

3. Results

The final data was analyzed using statistical software SPSS 25. A normality test was used to determine whether the sample data has been drawn from a normally distributed population. Based on the normality test results, non-parametric statistics were used for the entire study.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the variables (Mean and Standard Deviation)

Variable	n	M	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Religious Values	300	17.003	5.623	5.00	27.00	-0.187	-0.748
Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men	--	77.063	17.006	40.00	133.00	0.866	0.723
Gender Role Beliefs	--	77.190	13.464	40.00	114.00	-0.234	-0.0171

Table 1, which shows the descriptive statistics for the study variables: Religious Values, Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men, and Gender Role Beliefs. The total sample size (N)= 300 young adults. For religious values, the mean is 17.00, and the standard deviation is 5.623 for attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, the mean is 61.13 and the standard deviation is 28.95, and for gender role beliefs the mean is 77.19 and the standard deviation is 13.46.

Table 2 **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3
Religious Values	300	17.003	13.464	--		
Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men	--	73.063	17.006	0.345**	--	
Gender Role Beliefs	--	77.190	5.623	-0.154**	-0.472**	--

Table 2, which denotes the correlation between Religious Values, Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men, and Gender Role Beliefs. The correlation was calculated and was significant at 0.01 level. The Spearman correlation results showed that there was a positive correlation between religious values and attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. ($r=0.345^{**}$, $p=0.001$). The results also showed a negative correlation between religious values and gender role beliefs ($r=-0.154^{**}$, $p=0.001$). The results also showed a negative correlation between attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs ($r=-0.472^{**}$, $p=0.001$). Therefore, these results partially reject hypothesis H_{01} as there is a positive relationship between religious values and attitudes toward lesbians and gay men and a negative relationship between religious values and gender role beliefs and a negative relationship between attitudes toward lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs.

Figure 3 Linear regressions analysis scores between Religious Values and Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Model Summary
	B	Std. Error	β (Beta)	
Religious Values	.806	0.169	0.267	F = 22.786 t = 4.773 Sig = 0.000 R = 0.267 R square = 0.071

Figure 3 shows the results of linear regression analysis and explains to what extent religious values impact attitudes towards lesbians and gay men as evidenced by the F statistic of 22.786 ($p = .000$). The unstandardized coefficient (B) for religious values was .806, suggesting that on average, a one-unit increase in religious values corresponds to a .806-unit increase in attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. The standardized coefficient β (Beta) of 0.267 implies a modest positive relationship between religious values and attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. The t-value associated with religious values is -2.690, indicating that it is statistically significant. The R value of .267 signifies a weak positive correlation, and the R square value of .071 indicates approximately 71% of the variability in attitudes towards lesbians and gay men can be explained by religious values. These results from regression analysis reject H_02 as there is an impact of religious values on attitudes towards lesbians and gay men.

Table 4 Linear regressions analysis scores between Religious Values and Gender Role Beliefs

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Model Summary
	B	Std. Error	β (Beta)	
Religious Values	-0.369	0.137	-0.154	F = 7.238 t = -2.690 Sig = 0.008 R = 0.154 R square = 0.024

Figure 4 shows the results of linear regression analysis and explains to what extent religious values impact gender role beliefs as evidenced by the F statistic of 7.238 ($p = .008$). The unstandardized coefficient (B) for religious values was -.369, suggesting that on average, a one-unit increase in religious values corresponds to a -.369 unit decrease in gender role beliefs. The standardized coefficient β (Beta) of .154 implies a modest negative relationship between religious values and gender role beliefs. The t-value which is associated with religious values is -2.690, indicating that it is statistically significant. The R value of .154 signifies a weak positive correlation, and the R square value of .024 indicates approximately 2.4% of the variability in gender role beliefs can be explained by religious values. These results from regression analysis reject H_03 as there is an impact of religious values on gender role beliefs.

Table 5 Results for Religious Values, Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men, and Gender Role Beliefs based on Gender using Mann-Whitney test

Variable	Male (Mean Rank)	Female (Mean Rank)	Mann-Whitney U	p
Religious Values	188.09	119.33	6040.000	0.498
Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men	116.34	178.83	6506.500	0.000
Gender Role Beliefs	146.78	153.59	10645.500	0.000

Table 5, shows results of Mann Whitney U test which was conducted to find out significant differences on religious values, attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, and gender role beliefs based on gender. The results are calculated at the significance level of 0.05 and the significance value for associated with religious values is 0.498 which suggests that there is no statistically significant gender difference in the distribution of religious values between males and females. The results are calculated at the significance level of 0.05 and the significance value associated with attitudes towards lesbians and gay men is 0.000 which suggests that statistically there is a significant gender difference in the distribution of attitudes towards lesbians and gay men between males and females. The results are calculated at the significance level of 0.05 and the significance value associated with gender role beliefs is 0.000 which suggests that statistically there is a significant gender difference in the distribution of gender role beliefs between males and females. The results from Mann Whitney U test partially accept H_04 as there is a gender difference in the distribution of attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, and gender role beliefs between males and females.

Table 6 Kruskal- Wallis test results for differences in Religious Values, Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men, and Gender Role Beliefs based on Educational Level

Variable	UG Mean Rank	PG Mean Rank	U	P
Religious Values	150.64	130.02	38.785	0.612
Attitudes towards Lesbians and Gay Men	168.47	107.62	29.473	0.119
Gender Role Beliefs	117.98	171.04	4.460	0.127

Table 6 shows results of Kruskal- Wallis test which was conducted to find out significant differences on religious values, attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, and gender role beliefs based on education level. The results are calculated at the significance level of 0.05 and the significance value associated is 0.095 which suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in the distribution of religious values between educational levels. The results are calculated at the significance level of 0.05 and the significance value associated is 0.000 which suggests that statistically there is a significant difference in the distribution of attitudes towards lesbians and gay men between educational levels. The results are calculated at the significance level of 0.05 and the significance value associated is 0.000 which suggests that statistically there is a significant difference in the distribution of gender role beliefs between educational levels. Therefore, the results from the Kruskal Wallis test are partially accepted as H_05 states that there is a significant difference in the distribution of attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs between education levels.

4. Discussion

The present study aims to explore the relationship and impact between Religious Values, Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gay Men and Gender Role Beliefs. The study found positive associations between religious values and attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. These findings are similar to that of previous research that suggests that when participants are deeply religious, there exists a higher level of negative attitudes particularly towards gay men [9], [12], [21], [32]. A study showed that religious practice contributes to negative attitudes towards LGBT rights and that boys show more hostility towards LGBT rights than girls [16].

The study found negative associations between religious values and gender role beliefs. Previous research has shown contradicting results as previous researches have found positive association between religious values and gender role beliefs. Reason for this studies result could be due to the person being raised in a family which holds fundamental religious values and traditional gender beliefs but due to meeting people who hold modern beliefs regarding gender and religion, they might have been influenced by their views. Another reason could be due to news programs, media campaigns or protests in recent years which have focused on equality of rights for men and women, which might influence their views. The influence of education where students are taught about equality between men and women and the ill effects of discrimination between men and women could also be another reason. The study also found negative association between attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs whereby previous researches have found contradicting results as previous researches have found positive association between attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs. The reason for these contradicting results could be due to recent media campaigns, news programs, protests, awareness programs etc. which show support to the LGBTQ community

due to which people could be holding neutral views regarding the LGBTQ community, by accepting that the community exists and that the community is facing these problems for which they are fighting to obtain their rights.

The results show that there is an impact of religious values on attitudes towards lesbians and gay men. Previous research has shown that prejudicial attitudes towards lesbians and gay men was moderately related with extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity [34]. A study suggests that through a social influence process, religious involvement may affect people's attitudes toward lesbians and gay men [12]. The results also show that there is an impact of religious values on gender role beliefs. Research studies conducted in the United States reported results that religious fundamentalism was associated with more traditional gender beliefs [22], [26]. Research has also shown that higher levels of religiosity which are measured in terms of attendance at religious services and importance of religion to one's life were associated with holding of more patriarchal attitudes [4], [30]. The results show which is consistent with previous researches which show that women and men who belong to conservative denominations and/or frequently participated in church attendance are shown to have fewer accepting attitudes toward homosexuals than their women and men who belong to liberal denominations [3].

The results also show that there is a gender difference on attitudes towards lesbians and gay men as previous research has shown that in general, women are more accepting of homosexual relations than men [3]. The results also show that there is a gender difference on gender role beliefs as previous research has shown that men and married individuals hold more patriarchal gender beliefs compared to women and non-married counterparts [8].

The results show that there is no educational difference on religious values which is not consistent with previous researches that has shown contradicting results. Reason could be that the educational institution that the person obtained their formal education from may be accommodating of various religious practices and beliefs and thus not challenging or forcing any person's religious values. In India, there is a strong influence of religion and culture on a person's life, upbringing and moral outlook due to which education does not have an influence on their religious values. The results show that there is no educational difference on attitudes towards lesbians and gay men as previous research has found that lower levels of education are associated with negative attitudes and beliefs regarding lesbians and gay men [15]. A research study has found that higher educational qualifications of students are associated with more positive attitudes towards lesbians and gay men [33]. The results show that there is no educational difference on gender role beliefs as previous research has found that an increase in educational and income level will open a new avenue for people with traditional gender beliefs to have a change in their beliefs system [8].

5. Conclusion

The research has revealed significant findings that emphasizes the pervasive influence of religious values and beliefs on perceptions towards lesbians and gay men and gender belief roles. The study found that religious values were positively correlated with attitudes towards lesbians and gay men which has been backed by previous research findings. It should be highlighted that the study has found that religious values are negatively correlated with gender belief's role, while attitudes towards lesbians and gay men is also negatively correlated with gender belief's roles which has not been found in previous research findings which gives a novel finding to the research results.

We have also found that there is an impact of religious values on attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and an impact of religious values on gender role beliefs which have been backed by previous researches. The study also found that that there is no gender difference on religious values, but a gender difference on attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs which are consistent with previous researches. The study also found that there is no educational difference on attitudes towards lesbians and gay men and gender role beliefs which are consistent with previous researches. However, the study has a new finding that there is no educational difference on religious values which is not consistent with previous researches.

The findings provide clinicians and mental health professionals with vital information with regards to the influence of religious values and gender role beliefs which are important factors to consider when treating lesbians and gay men, and they also have a responsibility to provide interventions, positivity training, spreading awareness and promoting their well-being so as to deal with their issues and also thus provide support to lesbians and gay people.

However, the limitations of the present study should be taken into consideration. The findings, although informative require further attention to address several limitations. Firstly, enhancing the generalizability of the findings would have been possible with a larger sample size and a sample population representing the majority of cities, towns and villages in India. Also, instead of using a scale which measures people's attitudes regarding traditional or modern gender

role beliefs, a scale which measures people's attitudes regarding conservative or liberal views would be a more accurate measure of people's attitudes towards gender role beliefs.

Future researches should also address factors such as if the effects of negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men result in alcohol and substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies of the individuals. Future research studies should also consider using a mixed method research of qualitative and quantitative methods. Future research studies should focus on conducting the research on a larger population, and also a bigger range of people in terms of age, and also conduct the research in different cities and towns in India, and also consider people who are currently working. Lastly, future research studies should also focus on effects of mediating and moderating role on these variables.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to report.

Statement of ethical approval

As this study was done for dissertation purpose, approval was taken from the college.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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