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Study on quality of healthcare services available to the LGBTQ+ population in Kenya, Nepal, Palestine, Bangladesh and India

A multi-country qualitative study

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Aim: To conduct a multi-country situational assessment of quality of healthcare services available to the LGBTQ+ community

Background: The human rights framework identifies that everyone has the right to life. In this context, it is important to uphold a social setting wherein no one is deprived of life with dignity, right to health and other facilities and freedom of expression, especially in terms of their sexual orientation or gender identity. These demands lie in tandem with the aim of the sustainable development goals to leave no one behind.

The researchers recognize that it is in only 2 of the participating countries (Nepal and India) that these identities are now acknowledged legally. In countries where negative legal status continues to prevail, it is important to raise our voice and push the government to grant its citizens the rights they deserve. In such settings, it is important to outrightly advocate *“repealing the criminal and other legal provisions that prohibit or are, in effect, employed to prohibit consensual sexual activity among people of the same sex who are over the age of consent, and ensure that an equal age of consent applies to both same-sex and different- sex sexual activity.”*¹ In all countries, regardless of its legal status, it is imperative for any campaigns to push the government to adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to prohibit and eliminate discrimination in the public and private spheres on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Objectives:

1. To conduct a situational assessment in the five participating country, in term of health status
2. To identify the difficulties associated with LGBT in accessing and utilizing of health services.
3. To utilize the findings of the study to develop a PHM campaign

¹ Supreme Court of India, NALSA Judgement

Research Questions

1. What is the health status of the LGBTQ+ population in the countries (including communicable and non-communicable diseases)?
2. What are the difficulties which the LGBT population face while accessing and utilizing health services?
3. How do we use the findings of the study in developing a PHM campaign?

Methodology:

Study type: Qualitative

Sampling Unit: Nepal, India, Kenya, Palestine and Bangladesh

Sampling technique: Snowball sampling technique will be used to identify participants. Collaborations will be formed with community based organizations and the sample design will be discussed with personnel of the organization to ensure proper representation.

Data collection tool: A semi structured questionnaire will be used by the researcher for conducting the interviews. The questionnaire will be used as a guide to steer the conversation while also allowing space to explore any other issue that may arise while talking.

Data collection method: In depth interviews will be conducted to allow a better understanding of issues the participants may raise during the conversation.

Sample size: The sample size will be 50 (10 from each country). The sample will be intersectional in nature, based on gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, race or any other forms of identity that may exist in an individual country setting. This sample will be representative to draw a general conclusion from.

Situational Analysis:

Palestine: Lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender rights in the state of Palestine remains one of the highly tabooed human right issues in the regions. Even though it is not illegal, it is socially not acknowledged and their rights are not protected in either. In the early 2000s, two groups were established to provide support to LGBT community, but they still continue to work in way that is hidden from the larger society.

Bangladesh: Bangladesh does not recognize sexual orientation or gender identity which are not heteronormative and criminalizes it. The social recognition is also extremely negative in nature. However, it is important to acknowledge that organizations here continue to work with the community and provide an environment which is safe for all to access.

Kenya: In Kenya, same sex activities are criminalized by the penal code and there is widespread stigma and discrimination against the LGBTQ+ population. The population in Kenya face many barriers related to their health issues. This increases their vulnerability to negative health outcomes.

Nepal: Nepal is the first country to include 3rd gender in its federal status. The constitution also protects the population. However, they continue to face social harassment in social settings and social acceptance still has a long way to.

India: India has just witnessed the landmark 377 judgement, where the Supreme Court read down the section which criminalized other sexual orientation and gender identities. This judgement was highly anticipated in the country and was greeted with a lot of celebration. The struggle now lies in implementing and accepting the changes at a social level.

Ethical measures:

1. All members of the research team will be members of the community from where people will be interviewed. This is to ensure comfort for the participants when it comes to disclosing their identity.
2. Informed consent will be taken from all participants, wherein they will be explained about the study, their participation in the study and that they can retract their consent at point of time during the entire research process.
3. Names of all participants will be changed to maintain confidentiality.
4. Interviews will be conducted at local setting to ensure a safe space.
5. If the participants want to stop the interview at any point, the researcher will comply with their wishes.

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

Name:

Age:

Place of living:

Type of Housing:

Occupation:

Source of Income:

Family Size:

Number of Siblings:

Educational Background:

1. Family and other relationships

- Who do you live with?
- How would you describe your relations with your family member?
- How would you describe your relations with your friends/family/whoever you live with? (whatever applicable)
- Do you receive financial, emotional, etc. support from the people you live with?
- Do you face any problem in your surrounding due to your sexual orientation/gender identity?
- Where do you mostly go to socialize and meet people?

2. Healthcare

What are the kinds of health issues do you have? (communicable and non communicable)

2a. Type of healthcare used:

- When you need a doctor for your self, where do you go?
- Do you go to see the doctor only in case of an emergency or do you also go for some regular checks?
- How do doctors and other hospital staff behave with you?

- Have you ever faced problems accessing health services because of your gender identity/sexual orientation?
- Are there any clinics which are made to solely provide services to the LGBTQ+ population in your region?
- Are you comfortable disclosing your sexual orientation/gender identity when accessing health services?

2b. Health workers:

- Do you know if there are community workers in your neighbourhood?
- Do you go to see them? Or have they come to see you?