

Relational Dynamics of MSM Population

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ABSTRACT

The aim of present study was to cast a glance on the dynamics of interpersonal relationships of Men who have sex with Men (MSM). Sample of 50 MSM were selected through purposive sampling technique age ranged from 16 to 40 years from Bharosa (Trust on MSM). Thematic Apperception Test (Indian adaption by Dr. Uma Roy Chowdhary) was administered on the participants. Result revealed that conflicting interpersonal relationships of MSM with their significant others specially father.

Keywords: *Dynamics, MSM Population*

There are lots of men who are practicing same sex activities due to various reasons like their orientation or just for pleasure and any other reason. While there is die hard rules and laws which construe same sex activities as a criminalizing and punishable act in all over the world and in India too. Same sex behavior is not a socially accepted norm in India. It's a taboo identity and behavior both at global level. But male to male sexual behavior is major concern because it has been denied in most of the part of the world including India, and that is the major reason that MSM population is invisible and hard to trace while according to WHO SEARO, 2010 estimated population of MSM in India is 23, 52, 133 and it is growing day by day. Talking and any kind of discussion about any kind of sexual behavior are prohibited in public domain by Indian civil society and the government, and same sex behavior has been declared criminalize by section 377, Indian penal code, 1860.

In spite of having sexual identities MSM share behavior identity. The term “Men who have Sex with Men” (MSM) addresses to those who engage in sexual relationships exclusively with other men (homosexuality) or who engage in sex relations with either men or women (bisexuality). *Men who have sex with men* have been used in HIV literature since at least 1990 by epidemiologists when many new HIV infections were identified among those who were behaviorally homosexual in Western & Asian countries (Young and Meyer, 2005).

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The acronym *MSM* had been in use in public health discussions the coining of the initialize by Glick *et al.* in 1994 "signaled the crystallization" of a new concept. MSM is not a behavior which is developed by any mental disorder nor is it any mental or physical depravity. MSM is a choice of sexual behavior it's not all about sexual orientation. But some researchers found relational worldview aspect behind MSM behavior. As this miniscule population is considered as deviant population, people living drifted away from social norms. Crucial issues of their life which they witness are their interpersonal relationship. Hence for them relationship is a highly sensitive issue.

Interpersonal relationships have been identified as more important than anything else in making our lives meaningful (Adler, Rosenfeld, & Proctor, 2001). Humans are born to relate with one very significant person from their primary caregiver to their partners and their grand children respectively at different stage of life. Interpersonal relationships are dynamic system that changes during continuously during their existence. Each and every relationship has a beginning, a lifespan and an end. From beginning to the end relationship grow improve as people know each other and become closer emotionally or it deteriorates as people set aside, not able to manage interpersonal conflicts and frictions, hence interpersonal relationships are a dynamic system and it can be called relational dynamics. Relational dynamics does not refer only to by birth relationships like father, mother, siblings, spouse, and maternal or paternal relatives but it also emerges friends, helpers, colleagues, and other whom one's consider a significant in his circle of life.

There is paucity of research concerning the interpersonal relationship of the MSM. Further the prevalence of the MSM and their increasing member day by day. As being stigmatized, sexually minor and hidden population they were studied just for stipulated issues like HIV/AIDS and STI. Facing the different kind of social, personal and interpersonal issues in their day to day life, here an effort was done to explore the dynamics of their interpersonal relationship in their relational world.

The present study focuses on to explore the dynamics of interpersonal relationship of MSM population. An attempt was made to understand the relational world of MSM population.

METHOD

Participants

The participants of present study compromised of MSM from Lucknow. Method of sample selection was based on purposive sampling technique age ranged from 16 to 40 years.

Instrument

The Indian adaptation of the TAT by Dr. Uma Roy Chowdhary was used. Only 5 cards were administered which were two neutral cards- Card no. T(2) and T(6), two cards depicting interpersonal conflicts Card no T (3MB) and T(4MB) and lastly a blank card.

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Procedure

The researchers initially approached to Bharosa Trust in Lucknow for facilitating the study. Bharosa is basically involved in providing social and medical support to the MSM community. Bharosa assisted in establishing appropriate rapport with the participants, after that participants were introduced with the TAT with the instructions “I am going to show you some pictures, one at a time, and your task will be to make up a story for each card. In your story, be sure to tell what has led up to the event shown in the picture, describe what is happening at the moment, what the characters are feeling and thinking, and then give the outcome. Tell a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end. Do you understand? I will write your stories verbatim as you tell them. Here’s the first card.”

Research Design

The present study was an ex post facto research with an exploratory orientation.

Data Analysis

After administered TAT, analyses of the stories were done with the help of Bellak TAT Blank and Analysis Sheet.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The perception of these participants on administered TAT cards was sought in terms of interpersonal conflicts as well as their relational dynamics. TAT responses were analyzed on some basic points as manifest contents and latent contents. Manifest content has descriptive features where latent content consists of interpretative value. One main thing to consider in the interpretation of the TAT is that the pictures are best seen psychologically as a series of social situations and interpersonal relations. Another way to consider them is that all characters in the stories are projected aspects of the self, keeping in mind that they may represent the ideal self, the real self, the feared self, etc. Bellak (1947) says "A repetitive pattern is the best assurance that one does not deal with an artifact".

The data obtained was exhaustive and qualitative in nature. Keeping this in mind, data were analyzed on the major point Hero, Need, Press, Thema and Figures and objects Introduced/omitted according to Bellak TAT Blank and Analysis Sheet.

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Table 1.1: TAT analysis table in terms of Hero, Need, Press, Thema and figure introduce/omitted

| Card no. | Hero | Need | Press | Theme | Figure Introduced | Figure omitted |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| T2 | Male | Achievement Affiliation | Lack of harmonious interpersonal relationship, Lack of education and money | Down trodden family , poverty, educational & economical deprivation and interpersonal relationship conflict (with father), helplessness | School, House, village | Man, girl, old lady , small child |
| T6 | Male | Achievement Affiliation | Contamination, educational deprivation, interpersonal relationship conflicts. | Down trodden family poverty, educational & economical deprivation and interpersonal relationship conflict (with father), helplessness | Fisherman, people, villagers, town, pollution in the river, | Boat, |
| T(3)MB | female | Achievement Affiliation | Lack of harmonious interpersonal relationship, capricious discipline | Down trodden family, poverty, deprivation and interpersonal-relationship conflicts (father), helplessness | Father, Friends, alcohol | Boy |
| T(4)MB | Male | Affiliation | Lack of harmonious interpersonal relationship, | Down trodden family Poverty, deprivation and interpersonal-relationship conflicts, helplessness | Mother | – |

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| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|------|----------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Blank Card | Male | Achievement Affiliation | Lack of harmonious interpersonal relationship, education and money | Down trodden family, Poverty and deprivation of education. | Family and its member, education, friends, chronic illness (cancer), doctor | – |
|-------------------|------|----------------------------|--|--|---|---|

Hero

As in the interpretation of TAT; Bellak considered that hero is the figure with whom the subject identified with himself. As shown in table 1.1, it was found that participants identified themselves with same sex as hero except in the card T(4)MB. In the response story of T(4)MB participant did not identified themselves with same sex clearly. To the extent this showed that participants had little conflict with their self. Manifested content of the stories showed the demographic picture of the present MSM sample according to which it can be easily said that MSM population belong to low socio-economic status with little or no educational background. It showed that participants demographically projected themselves in their stories. In some cases heroes had maladapted behavior by getting in wrong company from their younger age or school days.

Need

Murray (1938) described needs as a, "*potentiality or readiness to respond in a certain way under certain given circumstances*". Focusing on table 1.1; in present study it was found that participants were projected two major need and that are need of achievement and need of affiliation and they also projected achievement motivation which was depicted in stories as they quoted, "*Mehnat se padhai ki aur ...naukari mil gayi* (study hard and got a job), "*Apna sara dhyaan padhai likhai pe lagaya ... zile ke collector ka pad hasil kia.*"(Put focus on education and became the district collector). Participants projected hero in highly need of affiliation, which was manifested in their stories as hero's need to relate with others and it can be interpreted that this need emerged from the conflicting relationship and deprivation of love and affection from their significant others like parents.

Press

Press is effective and significant determinants one's behavior in the environment. "*The press of an object is what it can do to the subject for the subject- the power that it has to affect the well being of the subject in one way or another.*", Murray(1938). In simple words press can be any environmental attribute which facilitates the efforts of individual to drive towards need satisfaction. On analyzing manifested and latent both content of the stories presses were hero's

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conflicts to the extent on both interpersonal and intrapersonal level. As they manifested in their stories that hero doesn't have cordial and harmonious relation with his significant others most importantly with his father. Other presses are poverty, and lack of affiliation and capricious discipline as mentioned in table 1.1.

Thema

Thema includes the instigating situation (press) and the need that is operating. Thema is a dynamical structure of need and press interaction (Murray, 1938). Table 1.1 summarizes all the themes which emerges from the plot of the stories is broadly a down trodden family which have economic deprived and conflicting interpersonal relationships between hero and his parent (Father). And another theme on the basis of latent affect in the plot is helplessness which depicted in each and every story.

Figures and objects Introduced/omitted

As analyzing the story it was found that participants introduced/omitted characters and objects in their stories e.g.: father (dead), boat man, old man, doctor, fishes, children, school, village, harvest etc (table 1.1). And in TAT figures or objects were not only considered as figures but they have their own meaning as significant relations or person of life and inclusion/exclusion of figures and objects both shows dynamics of interpersonal relationship as well as high need for aggression, nurturance and money and denial, repression or anxiety respectively (Groth-Marnat, 2003) of the subject which he projected in the story through the hero. On the basis of the manifest content of the stories and introduction and omission of the figures it can be fairly said that subjects have conflicts regarding close and significant relationship like parent-child relation and subject has need for aggression, nurturance, and money for example many of the subjects quoted, "*wo pita se apni baatein nahi kah pata tha...*" (He did not say things to his father). This line reflected the need for nurturance and affiliation.

An overview of overall analysis and interpretation we found that MSM population have friction in their family and they have entangled relational dynamics with full of conflicts in their close and significant relationship like parent-child and friendship.

CONCLUSION

Findings emerged from the present study: MSM population has little conflict with their physical self which was depicted on analyzing the stories in terms of Hero. MSM population has high need of affiliation and need of achievement. Deprivation in terms of nurturance, belongingness, harmonious relation with father, education and money are the major presses or environmental forces in the life of MSM population.

Overall present study was an effort to explore the dynamics of interpersonal relationship among MSM population. The study of the MSM sample highlighted the fact that the relationship

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of MSM population with their parents has been conflicting, moreover it can be said that father-son relationship was more conflicting and full of frictions.

IMPLICATION

After analyzing the present study brought to the fore the fact that interpersonal relationship one can understand MSM population better and further intervention can be planned which would facilitate them towards acceptance, adequate social support, healthy optimism, life satisfaction, in other words enriched quality of life.

This would not only make their life more meaningful by including them in main stream, it will also send a message to our policy makers, activists and social reformers to visualize effective plans for such sample.

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