CHAPTER 6
A SHAME CULTURE LIKE KERALA WILL BE INTOLERANT TOWARDS
MSM SEX BEHAVIOUR

6.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter II we have seen that Kerala’s Geography, habitat, history and socio-cultural as well as politico-religious settings are conducive for generating a shame culture which feeds on the middle class value system. Kerala shared a promiscuous sex morals with the neighbouring States, became very rigid in the last one or two centuries to be the most puritanical in its sex morals as we have seen in Chapter IV. The present socio-cultural scenario in Kerala being such our assumption were: (i) the public may not be aware of the MSM sex behaviour (ii) those who know from experience or hear say will not share the information out of shame (iii) those who acknowledge will show high degree of stigma against the MSMs (iv) among the patriarchal religions Christianity will be more discriminating as there is an organized campaign against same sex behaviour by the religious authorities.

Testing of the Hypothesis

The hypothesis are tested with an interview schedule of sixty questions in five parts. The first section consisted of eight questions to collect the personal information; the second section with ten questions collected information for testing tolerance towards MSMs; the third section with thirteen questions assessed the moral judgment; the fourth section with sixteen questions measured the willingness of the people to relate to the MSMs; and the fifth section with thirteen questions gauged the stereo type understanding of the MSMs. Our assumption was that a high degree of strong agreement in the last four sections would indicate density of stigma towards MSMs.
We had put a four scale responses: (i) agree (ii) no opinion (iii) disagree and (iv) don’t know. The “don’t know” response was purposely included to measure public’s knowledge of the MSM reality.

The quantitative enquiry to measure the density of MSM stigma was done on an all Kerala level. We have divided Kerala into four zones: (i) Trivandrum (ii) Ernakulam (iii) Kozhikode and (iv) Kannur. Thousand interview schedules, 250 each in every zone, were distributed at random ensuring religion and job as two major criteria for sampling. The interviewers were able to collect information from 867. One of the major limitations of the sampling was that we could not cover Kottayam, Idukki, and Pathanamthitta Districts where the Christian population is more. We were also not able to keep the sampling from major religions equal, mainly due to the non-cooperation from the Christians and the Muslims. These two religious categories were reluctant to cooperate with the study accusing the study means for promotion of sexual deviations.

6.2. Basic Variables

6.2.1. Age

Out of the 867 samples, 88.6% belongs to the age group 20-49, only 2.2% below 20 years of age. 9.2% of the respondents are above 50 years of which only 1.6% is above sixty years of age. See the bar diagram below:
6.2.2. Religion

Of the total respondents, Hindus are 67.5%, Muslims – 17% and Christians - 15.5%. Even though, the investigators took extra interest in getting more Muslims and Christians as respondents, the outcome was discouraging. See the Pie Diagram.
6.2.3. Education

There is a good representation of the respondents based on their educational qualifications. 56.6% is graduates & post-graduates, 20.2% is professionals, 16.8% below SSLC and others 5.4%. See the bar diagram below:

![Bar Diagram of Education](image)

6.2.4. Same-sex Experience

Out of the 867 respondents, 27.1% has reported to have same-sex experience. From the informal interviews, the investigator knows that many more persons have same sex experience. When it comes to recording, the Keralites are generally cautious.

6.2.5. Knowledge of Same-Sex Persons

Interestingly, in spite of the extreme invisibility of the MSM phenomenon, 66.8% of the respondents know persons who indulge in same sex. Our surmise is that roughly, this many persons have same-sex experience one time or other in their life. Mostly the way to know the MSMs is through experience as they are too invisible to know by just observation.
6.3. Factor wise Analysis

To measure the intensity of stigma we have chosen the factors: The Tolerance towards MSMs (ii) MSM Morality (iii) MSM Contact (iv) The MSM Stereo Types. The question was on a four-point scale: (i) Agree (ii) No Opinion (iii) Don’t Agree (iv) Don’t know.

(i) Tolerance Towards MSM

11.6% of the respondents agreed, 31.5% disagreed, 40.8% “no opinion” and 16.1% “don’t know”. Fifty seven percent of the respondents belongs to the category of either “no opinion” or “do not know”.

As against the expectation, comparatively low percent of respondents are intolerant towards MSMs. Two times more respondents disagreed to be intolerant towards them. More than half of the respondents are either neutral or are disinterested or do not know the MSM phenomenon enough to take a stand.
(ii) MSM Morality

22.5% of the respondents agreed that the MSMs are a danger to the moral life of the society, 30.6% have no opinion, 38.1% disagreed that they are a moral threat to the Kerala Society. 8.8% said they do not know. About 40% of the respondents is either disagreed or did not know whether they are a threat to the morality.

Compared to the intolerance aspect there are more respondents who feel that the MSMs are a threat to the moral life of the society. About 40% of people in Kerala has either no opinion or do not know whether the MSMs are a threat to the moral life of the Kerala Society.

(iii) MSM Contact

20.5% of respondents are opposed to have contact with MSMs. 39.5% have no difficulty in having contact with them. 31.2% has no opinion and 8.8% “don’t know”. About 40% of Keralites has either no opinion or “don’t know” regarding their contact with MSMs.
The scorings are almost identical for MSM Morality and MSM Contact. 40% of the people do not know MSMs they have heard of them.

(iv) MSM Stereo Types

17.2% of the respondents agree with the stereo types. 33.8% disagree and 35.5% has no opinion and 13.5% do not know. 47.3% has either no opinion or do not know the MSM stereo types.
Respondents in general are not aware of the presence of MSMs and are not able to describe them by their stereo types. However, 27.1% of the respondents have same sex experience that need not be out of same sex orientation.

6.4. Comparative analysis of the four Components

Only 11.6% of the respondents agreed with showing intolerance towards the MSMs. 22.5% agrees that MSMs will be a threat to the morality of the society. 20.5% do not like to have contact with the MSMs and 17.2% only agrees with the stereo type proposed in the questionnaire.

31.5% disagrees with the idea of showing intolerance to the MSMs while 38.1% does not consider MSMs are a threat to the Morality of the Society. 39.5% has no difficulty in cherishing a contact with the MSMs and 35.5% disagree with the stereo types proposed in the questionnaire.

40.8% has no opinion about intolerance towards MSMs, 30.6% considers MSMs are no threat to the morality of the Society, 31.2% has no opinion regarding establishing contact with the MSMs and 33.8% has no opinion regarding the stereo types of MSMs.

16.1% do not know whether intolerance should be shown towards MSMs. 8.8% do not know whether MSMs affect the morality of the Society and the same percent do not know whether they have difficulty in contacting the MSMs. 13.5% do not know the stereo type of MSMs.

The assumption was that many more people would be negatively prejudiced towards the MSMs. This may be because an average 40% are not concerned with MSM phenomenon as they are not affected by it. In all the categories, except the one on
intolerance, an average of 40% is either does not know or are neutral to the MSM phenomenon. In the factor of tolerance towards MSMs 56.9% is either does not know or neutral.

6.5. Cross Tabulation

(i) The Correlation percentage between MSM Morality and Contact.

There is a high correlation in percentage between the attitude towards MSM morality and contact with MSMs. 73.7% shows agreement in morality 78.4% shows agreement in contact. 59.6% has no opinion on morality and 58.5% has no opinion regarding contact. 70.4% disagree with morality, 68.1% disagree with contact. Equal percentage i.e. 19.2% does not know whether MSMs are a threat to the morality of the society or contact with them should be avoided.

(ii) The Correlation percentage between MSM Stereo type and Contact

The agreement stereo type is 15.8% and contact is 13.4%. 31.9% in Stereo type and 34% in contact have no opinion. 62.4% and 55.2% in contact and stereo type respectively disagree. 16.5% does not know the stereo types and 25.7% responded saying that they do not know whether contact with MSM should be avoided.

(iii) The Correlation percentage between MSM Intolerance and Contact

25.5% agreed with MSM intolerance and 14% agreed not to have contact with MSMs. 38.8% has no opinion on intolerance towards MSMs and 50.8% has no opinion on contact with MSMs. 75.7% disagree with showing intolerance towards MSMs and 60.5% disagree with not contacting them. 20% don’t know whether intolerance should be shown to MSMs, while 37% don’t know regarding contact with MSMs.
6.6. Religion wise Analysis of the Prejudice towards MSMs

(i) MSM Tolerance

11.1% Hindus, 10.6% Muslims and 14.9% Christians agree with showing intolerance towards MSMs. 43% Hindus, 38% Muslims 34.4% Christian has no opinion as the MSMs should be tolerated or not. 33% Hindus, 28.9% Muslims and 27.6% Christians disagree with showing intolerance to MSMs. 12.9% Hindus 22.5% Muslims and 23.1% Christians don’t know whether the society should be intolerant towards MSMs.

![Religion wise MSM tolerance](image)

**Interpretation**

The responses show that Christians comparatively agree that MSMs are a moral danger to the society. Out of the three religions, Muslims are less intolerant towards MSMs. The Muslims are very strict in their theoretical religion in condemning homosexuality, however, in the lived religion they are very tolerant, so much so MSM activity is said to be the orientation of the Muslims and the MSM activity is named as
“Quilandy pani”footnote. The official religion of Hinduism is, perhaps, the most tolerant towards homosexuality by recognizing Hijaras and Thirunangaiar as special people who are endowed with divine power to bless as well as to curse the devotees. However, in the peoples’ lived religion of Hinduism in Kerala due to the English education and the reform movements the sexual activities of all nature including homosexuality are often frowned at.

The Hindus register maximum “no opinion” responses and the Christians Minimum, indicating thereby that the Christians show the tendency towards certainty in showing intolerance towards MSMs.

Maximum Hindus and minimum Christians disagreed with showing intolerance towards MSMs. This is consistent with Hindu ethos. Hindus are largely most tolerant people of any ideologies whether religious or otherwise. When it came to the response of “do not know” the Christians registered maximum and Hindus, minimum. This also is in keeping with the religious approach of the two religions. The Christians are rather clear about their teachings and the position they should take, whereas the Hindu religion can accommodate even unclear of religious tenets.

In all the four category of responses, the overall conclusions are that the Christians consistently showed the most negative responses while the Hindus expressed comparatively intolerant attitude towards MSMs. The Muslims are the most tolerant towards MSMs, falling in the middle of ascending and descending order of responses.

55.9% Hindus, 50.5% of Muslims and 57.4% Christians do not either know or have no response. This show the Muslims are more aware of the MSM phenomenon. Looking at from the official teachings and practice of Hindu religion elsewhere in the country, Hindus in Kerala should have known and should have been more tolerant
towards MSM phenomenon. This proves the research hypothesis that the extraneous influences of English education, the accompanying morality, and the reforms movements based on it have made the Hindus in Kerala differences towards sex and sexual orientations.

(ii) MSM Morality

24.4% Hindus, 16.9% Muslims and 20.9% Christians agree that MSMs are danger to the moral life of the Society. 30.3% Hindus, 29.6% Muslims and 32.8% Christians have no opinion as they are a threat to the moral life of the society. 37.5% Hindus, 42.3% Muslims and 36.6% Christians disagree with that they are a moral danger to the society. 7.9% Hindus, 11.3% Muslims and 9.7% Christians don’t know whether they are a danger to the moral life of the society.
Interpretation

Comparatively both Hindus and Christians agree that MSMs are a threat to the moral life of the Society. Muslims stands out in this regard that the MSMs are not a moral danger to the society.

Comparatively more Christians 32.8% responded saying that they have no opinion. Muslims registered lowest, 29.6%. The Muslims registered highest disagreement, 42.3%, that MSMs are a danger to the moral life of the Society. Muslims also register highest in the “Don’t know” response. The responses of Muslim community are in tune with the Islamic thinking and practice of sex and sexuality.

The “no opinion” and “don’t know” responses too Christians register highest, 42.5%. The others being 38.2% Hindus, 40.9% Muslims. This is in line with our assumption that the Christians tend to be more ignorant about the MSM phenomenon.

(iii) Contact with MSMs

22.8% Hindus, 17% Muslims and 14.9% Christians agree that they would avoid contact with MSMs. 30.5% Hindus, 32.6% Muslims and 32.8% Christians have no opinion. 39.4% Hindus, 40.4% Muslims and 38.8% Christians disagree. 7.3% Hindus, 9.9% Muslims and 13.5% Christians do not know whether they like to have contact with MSMs.

The combined scores of “no opinion” and “don’t know” responses, 37.8% Hindus, 42.5% Muslims and 46.2% are Christians.
Interpretation

When it comes to avoiding contact with MSMs the Christians score the least and Hindus highest. Given the intolerant attitude of the Christians towards MSMs this is an anomaly. We don’t know whether the practice of untouchability has influenced the response. Muslims come, as in other cases, in the middle.

Muslims register maximum disagreement in avoiding contact with MSMs while the Christians register lowest disagreement. The Christians, generally show ignorance or disinterestedness in the MSM phenomena.

(iv) MSM Stereo Type

15.3% Hindus, 10.4% Muslims and 32.3% Christians agree with the MSM Stereo types. 34.8% Hindus, 30.4% Muslims and 33.1% Christians have no opinion
about the stereo types. 39.4% Hindus, 32.6% Muslims and 22.3% Christians disagree with the stereo types. 10.5% Hindus, 26.7% Muslims and 12.3% Christians do not know the MSM stereo types.

45.3% Hindus, 57.1% Muslims and 45.4% Christians register combined responses to “no opinion” and “no response”.

**Interpretation**

The Muslims show the least agreement as well as highest disagreement with the stereo types. This is an indication that they are positive towards MSM stereo types. The Christians show maximum agreement toward the stereo types. Christians show two times more agreement compared to the Muslims. When it comes to disagreement, the Muslims score highest. This again indicates that the Muslims do not agree with the negative stereo types given in the questionnaire. It can also be interpreted that the
MSMs are a part of the Muslim community that their stereo types blur due to the familiarity.

Muslims express opinion that is more definite about the stereo types compared to the Hindus and Christians. The Christians register lowest disagreement with stereo types which is consistent with their highest score of agreement. Christians largely agree with the negative stereo types as against the Muslims. Hindus too are positive towards the MSMs.

Maximum Muslim respondents register more than double “don’t know” responses. Hindus are the lowest in “don’t know” responses regarding the stereo types.

From the general trend of responses, the Muslims response to “no opinion” and “don’t know” is highest. This again affirms that the Muslims in general are positive towards MSMs.

The Christians, Muslims and Hindu express negative attitude in all the three factors in the descending order. That is, the Christians show more stigmata towards MSM compared to Muslims and Hindus. However, in the fourth element of stereotyping, the Muslims score highest, 1.60 and the Christians the lowest mean difference 1.33, while the Hindus register 1.48 mean differences. The knowledge of MSM stereotypes is comparative higher in the Muslims communities and lowest in the Christians communities. Though the Christians are stigmatizing towards MSMs, their knowledge of the MSMs is comparatively poor.

6.7. Question wise Analysis

The questions assented by fifty percent or more respondents are analyzed here.
First factor Tolerance: In the first factor of Tolerance, to the question (no.12): “MSMs should not be discriminated against in work,” 50.2% responded positively. To question (no.15): “Finding out an artist was a MSM would have no effect on my appreciation of his work,” 57.1% responded positively. Question No.17: “MSMs should not be discriminated against because of their sexual preference”, 51% agreed.

Second factor of Morality, to the question (no.19): “The increasing acceptance of MSM in our society is aiding in the deterioration of morals”, 54.1% disagreed. To the question No.21: “Many MSMs are very moral and ethical people”, 56.5% agreed. To the question No.22: “MSM couples should be able to adopt children the same as heterosexual couples,” 54% disagreed. Question No. 26: “MSM do need psychological treatment,” 57.8% agreed. Interestingly, only 42% of the respondents disagreed with the question: “Homosexuality, as far as I am concerned, is not sinful.”

Third factor of Contact, to the question (no.37): “I would enjoy attending social functions at which MSMs were present,” 52.6% agreed. To the question (no.39): “If a gay man approached me in a public rest place, I would be disgusted,” 56.1% agreed. To the two identical questions put positively and negatively the responses confirmed the attitude that sexual advancement by an MSM would make 53.1% Keralites angry and 53.6% of Keralite would feel uncomfortable knowing that he was attractive to MSMs.

Fourth factor of Stereotypes: Regarding the Stereotypes 19.13% respondent said that they do not know. The two questions out of 13, which score more than 50%, are: “Most MSMs have a life of one night stands,” (52.1%) and “MSMs are highly emotional persons” (53.7%). People in Kerala do not know MSM/Gay as they are an invisible group. They are, therefore, not able to respond to the stereotypes described in the questionnaire.
6.8. Conclusion

More than half of the respondents are either neutral or are disinterested or do not know the MSM phenomenon enough to respond. Comparatively low percent of respondents are intolerant towards MSMs. Compared to the intolerance factor there are more respondents who feel that the MSMs are a threat to the moral life of the society. About 40% of respondents has either no opinion or do not know whether the MSMs are a threat to the moral life of the Kerala Society. The scorings are almost identical for MSM Morality and MSM Contact. 40% of the people do not know MSMs they have heard of them. Respondents in general are not aware of the presence of MSMs and are not able to describe them by their stereo types. However, 27.1% of the respondents have same sex experience that need not be out of same sex orientation. An average of 20% people who share the anxiety that MSM phenomenon is abnormal and needs caution. In all the four category of responses, the overall conclusions are that the Christians consistently showed the most negative responses while the Hindus expressed comparatively intolerant attitude towards MSMs. The Muslims are the most tolerant towards MSMs, falling in the middle of ascending and descending order of responses.

Looking at from the official teachings and practice of Hindu religion elsewhere in the country, Hindus in Kerala should have known and should have been more tolerant towards MSM phenomenon. This proves the research hypothesis that the extraneous influences of English education, the accompanying morality, and the reforms movements based on it have made the Hindus in Kerala negatively oriented towards sex and sexual orientations.

Comparatively both Hindus and Christians agree that MSMs are a threat to the moral life of the Society. Muslims stand out in this regard. They don’t believe that the
MSMs are a moral danger to the society. Muslims register maximum disagreement in avoiding contact with MSMs while the Christians register lowest disagreement. The knowledge of MSM stereotypes is comparative higher in the Muslims communities and lowest in the Christians communities. Though the Christians are stigmatizing towards MSMs, their knowledge of the MSMs is comparatively poor.

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