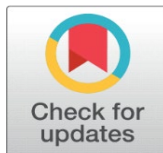


ASSESSING THE NEED FOR A MODULE ON GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS FOR PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS THROUGH CURRICULUM ANALYSIS

Shruti Shriram Deshmukh ¹✉, Dr. Aruna Maheshwari ²✉

¹Research Scholar, G D Goenka University, Gurugram, Haryana, India

²Assistant Professor, G D Goenka University, Gurugram, Haryana, India



Corresponding Author

Shruti Shriram Deshmukh,
shrutidesh29@gmail.com

DOI

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to thoroughly assess the need to create a module on gender identity and sexual orientations for psychology students in India. With increasing societal awareness and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities worldwide, academic institutions need to incorporate these into their curriculum. There is a scarcity of research examining the degree to which psychology programs in Indian universities incorporate gender and sexual identity related content in the curriculum. Considering this, curricula from 30 higher education institutions offering postgraduate psychology programs are selected. Data analysis is done by descriptive statistics. The objectives and course outcomes undergo curriculum analysis to identify gaps in the integration of gender and sexual identity content, and the findings are graphically depicted. The findings of this research will inform educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers about the necessity for targeted interventions to address these gaps. By developing a more inclusive and informed educational environment, this research aims to better prepare future psychologists to meet the needs of diverse clients and promote LGBTQ+ mental health as well as well-being in India.

Keywords: Psychology Curriculum, Gender Studies, Sexual Orientation, LGBTQ+, Curriculum Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychology is the study of the mind and behaviour of an individual or group. Psychologists study and analyze thinking processes and behavioural patterns. The behaviour of individuals or groups ought to be diverse as well as changing from time to time. As such, while studying, Psychology aspirants are expected to have non-judgmental and non-discriminative behaviour while dealing with an individual or group. The Psychology aspirants are also expected to have no prejudice towards the distinct characteristics of an individual or group such as nationality, religion, race, caste, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Over the period of time, society has revolutionized in diminishing the differentiation on the ethnic characteristics of people, but the radicalization of non-discrimination over the characteristics of gender identity and sexual orientation is still believed to be underdeveloped. The scholar through this paper delves into the important issue of the basic human characteristics of Gender identity and sexual orientation.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different terms related to the sense of a person about oneself. Usually, people mix these terms with each other without knowing their actual meaning. There are a few terminologies that people need to understand before getting to know about these terms. The terms are Sex, Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation.

- **Sex:**

Sex is a biological term that refers to differences between male, female, and intersex individuals. It is based on the physiology, anatomy, hormones, and genetics of a person. Sex is decided after birth by looking at your physiological characteristics specifically your genitals. (Sex & Gender, n.d.)

- **Gender:**

Gender is more related to roles and norms, relations, and powers. Gender is a social and cultural aspect of a person's behaviour, and characteristics in accordance with his or her sex assigned at the time of birth. Society has some expectations and perceptions about gender roles, and how a person of a particular gender should act, express, or behave. Society even has a fixed pattern of work according to the sex assigned at the time of birth. Cooking food, doing household chores, and taking care of babies are typically known as "women's work" while going out for work, and earning money are typically "men's jobs". Gender is a lot more social than personal. (What Is Gender? What Is Sex? - CIHR, n.d.)

- **Gender Identity:**

Gender identity is a sense of oneself being a man, a woman, and a blend of both or neither. The gender identity of a person can be the same or different from their sex, assigned at birth. Gender Identity is how a person perceives and calls themselves. Apart from gender, gender identity is more personal. It is how a person is feeling internally, and how one describes oneself. ((1) (PDF) Gender Identity, n.d.)

- **Sexual Orientation:**

Sexual orientation is an emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to others without considering a gender assigned at the time of birth. Heterosexual and homosexual are two types of sexual orientations.

Heterosexuals are people who are sexually, physically, and romantically attracted to opposite-gender people. Females attracted towards males and males attracted towards females are typically known as heterosexuals. Heteronormative, straight, and heteroromantic are the words used for heterosexual persons. (What Is Heterosexuality?, n.d.)

Homosexuals are people who are sexually, physically, and romantically attracted to same gender people. Homosexuals also call themselves lesbian, gay, or queer. They consider themselves from the LGBTQ+ community. (What Does Homosexuality Mean?, n.d.)

People with different sexual orientations are considered as a part of the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ is a short form to denote other various sexual orientations made with the initials of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queers and many more. Lesbians (L) are females attracted to a female, whereas Gay (G) are males attracted towards males. Bisexuals (B) are attracted to both genders. Transgender (T) are people whose gender does not match with sex assigned at the time of birth. Queer (Q) is an umbrella term for all gender-fluid people. + is for all other gender fluidities. (Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity, n.d.)

Generally, the common man is not aware of these basic terminologies and always misinterprets and misuses them in daily conversations. For a psychology student, it is very necessary to understand these concepts and to understand the ethics while studying an individual or group in these references. There is a scarcity of psychological literature about gender identity and sexual orientation which in turn has also been reflected in the Psychology curriculum. While taking higher education people are preparing themselves for becoming a professional or a skilled person. And so Psychology curriculum plays a pivotal role in providing knowledge and skills to be a better psychologist.

Due to the social discrimination towards the LGBTQ+ community, the people of this community are the most vulnerable to being left out. Thus, it is believed essential that a Psychologist is required to be aware of this community, during higher education itself, which shall diminish the discrimination over the sexual orientations in future studies and practice. This implies the need to review and include LGBTQ+ related content in the Psychology curriculum for a basic understanding of Psychology aspirants.

Curriculum:

According to Hilda Taba "Curriculum is a plan for teaching" (Hilda Taba Model of Curriculum Development - Students Mirror, n.d.). The curriculum has learning objectives, outcomes, skills, etc. that a student requires to become a successful professional. The curriculum of higher educational institutions requires an individual to think outside the box rather than just following a prescribed module as in case of schools. This thought process in the institutes of higher education incites the future career aspects of an individual as well as inculcates ethical moral values.

Curriculum Analysis:

Curriculum analysis is the evaluation of a curriculum to check its effectiveness in accordance with learning objectives and outcomes. It helps educators to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum in relevance and alignment concerning educational standards and goals. (Critical Analysis of Curriculum - Prep With Harshita, n.d.) Curriculum analysis helps in enhancing the quality of a curriculum, implementing changes to improve students' learning, inclusion of new emerging topic in the curriculum and it also gives an opportunity to teachers for development.

Review of syllabi, analysis of content, and assessing gaps between course objectives and outcomes are some methods that can be used for curriculum analysis. This analysis can be done through document review, surveys and interviews, classroom observations, and feedback analysis. (Tools and Techniques Used for Curriculum Assessment - Prep With Harshita, n.d.)

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research was done by Isabella McMurray, Pat Roberts, Ian Robertson, and Kevin Teoh in UK, titled "An action research project exploring the psychology curriculum and transitions to employment". Cycle 1 of research concluded that skills like communication, information technology, and working with others need to be improved. Application of this skill for career development was a difficult part for students. Cycle 2 included implanting skills in the psychology curriculum that will incorporate employability among psychology aspirants, and it was found that implementation is a tough and very challenging part. (What Is Employability, and Why Is It Important?, n.d.)

Another research by Nitesh Chouhan and Ananya Gupta in 2021 titled "The gender inclusivity of academic curriculum and its effects on students". A comparative analysis of New Zealand and Indian educational structures was done. The research was focused on the gaps in our educational system to attain sustainable developmental goals 4 and 5 as well as the importance of gender inclusivity in the educational field and its effects on students' mental and overall health. (Chouhan & Gupta, n.d.)

Matthew S Minturn, Erica I. Martinez, Thien Le, Natalie Nokoff, Louis Fitch, Carley E. Little, and Rita S. Lee developed a 10-hour curriculum on LGBTQ health as an intervention of this research. The title of the research was, "Early Intervention for LGBTQ Health: A 10-Hour Curriculum for Preclinical Health Professions Students". Everyone from the research team is a Doctor and they developed this curriculum for preclinical medical and physician assistant students. Researchers found out that LGBTQ patients have said that they go through barriers in providing care. 40 medical 1st and 2nd-year students had completed this 10-hour session and had given valid responses in pre and post-surveys and all felt significant improvement in their knowledge of LGBTQ-related concepts but the session was not efficient in providing them knowledge related to LGBTQ medical care. (Minturn et al., 2021)

A book chapter under the title, "Integrating Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer issues in the psychology curriculum" written by Weinstock J S, in the year 2019. Including LGBTQ issues in the curriculum was the main focus of the chapter. According to the researcher, the course should be conducted in two parts. First for creating a comprehensible and responsible learning community. Age and physical development play an important role in understanding of children, about physical sex categories and gender identities. (Weinstock, 2019)

"Gender and Sexual Diversity in Asian Universities" is a research done by Khoo Hoon Eng and Daryl W. J. Yang in 2020. In this research, the main focus is on investigating the negative and potentially unreceptive attitudes towards LGBTQ identities and expressions in Asian universities caused by cultural and historical factors. Here researcher developed a framework and divided the Asian universities into 3 types The Affirming University, The Ambivalent University, and The Hostile University based on the approach of their institutions toward LGBTQ inclusion. According to the researcher an affirming socio-legal landscape, the globalization of higher education, and student activism are the main three factors to adopt a more supportive attitude towards LGBTQ inclusion. (Eng & Yang, 2020)

2.1. RATIONALE

People with various sexual identities i.e. LGBTQ+ face emotional and mental health concerns like depression, anxiety, lack of acceptance from family & society, fear of gender expression, and so on. (Fatima & Research Scholar, 2022). The LGBTQ+ community is experiencing extreme prejudice, discrimination, and violation due to their sexual orientation. This harms their mental health, especially after revealing their sexual orientation which is the most essential psychological stage for LGBTQ+ people. LGBTQ+ community has major mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance addiction and abuse, and, worst of all, suicidal thoughts and attempts.

Five newspapers from the year 2011 to 2021 were analyzed. A total of 135 suicide reports were mentioned which contributes to 54.5% of the suicides as a result of multiple psychosocial stressors. The most common factor associated with LGBTQ+ suicide is social stigma. As compared to local language news articles, English news reports displayed more frequent and serious violations. (Kar et al., 2023).

Seeking help and care for a psychological or mental health issue is still considered as a taboo in India, in this case, the situation of the LGBTQ+ community is even worse. In addition, there is a dearth of LGBTQ+ psychiatric literature in India (Mental Health Issues LGBTQ Community Members Face in Society - The Economic Times, n.d.).

The preceding arguments demonstrate that mental health and addressing mental health concerns are critical for the LGBTQ+ population. When it comes to mental health, a psychologist or a counselor is the person who can deal with the concerns. All mental health concerns require acceptance and support, followed by appropriate counseling and direction.

The above reviewed literature highlights the importance of understanding gender identity and sexual orientation among students. As such, this research focuses on the need for the development of a module, for the aspirants of Psychology, based on gender identity and sexual orientation. Developing a module on this topic would provide a valuable and credible resource for psychology students, enhancing their knowledge and enabling them to apply these skills in their future practice and personal lives. In this research, the researcher aims to identify the necessity of such a module by analyzing the curricula of various private and public universities in India.

Researcher purposefully selected curricula of NAAC B++ to A++ accredited universities because these universities are considered to be the finest universities. NAAC has a set of standards, which evaluates and helps universities to stay focused on improving the quality parameter of education. Less number of curricula containing gender identity and sexual orientation education content highlights a major gap. The researcher intends to find this gap and denote a need for the development of a module containing the same.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To find the gaps in inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation education content in psychology curriculum of NAAC accredited universities.
- 2) To identify the course objectives and course outcomes reflecting gender.
- 3) To understand the need of a module on gender identity and sexual orientation for psychology students.

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

The descriptive Method approach is used in this research. It focuses on summarizing data and representing data graphically. The researcher used a pie chart to represent the findings of the research.

Sample Size:

- 15 Public NAAC accredited universities curriculum from all over India.
- 15 Private NAAC accredited universities curriculum from all over India.

Sampling:

The purposive sampling method was used to collect data. It is a non-probability sampling technique. In this research selection of 30 curricula was done for the purpose of curriculum analysis. All the universities are NAAC B++ to A++ accredited universities providing Master's degree in Psychology.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The curricula of all the 30 universities were analyzed by the researcher on the basis of a few questions. The study was divided into two parts based on the objectives of the study. Part one is based on how many universities have any coursework or unit or topic related to gender, sexuality, or LGBTQ+ content. The information is presented in a graphical format which is most easiest way to get along with the results. In part two, an analysis of the gap between course objectives and course outcomes is done.

Part 1:

Question 1: How many universities have coursework/papers on gender education or sexual orientation education?

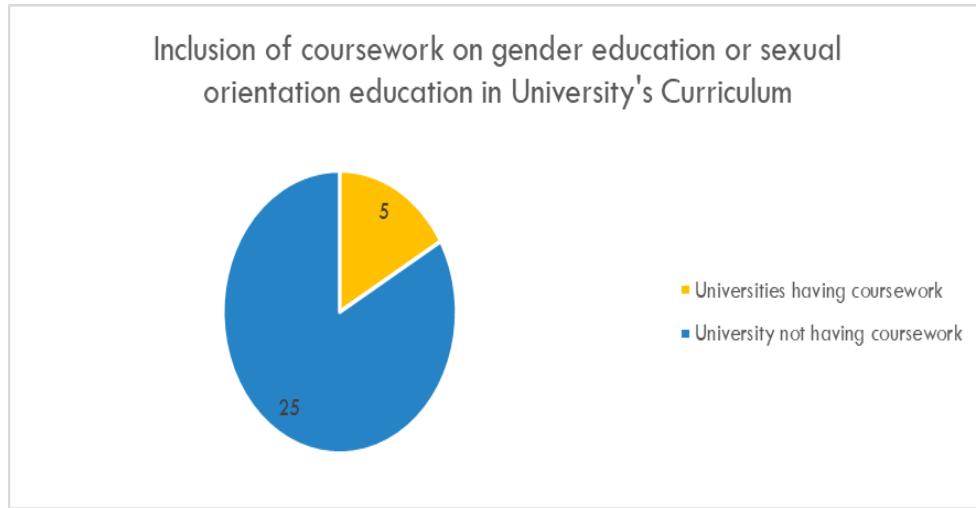


Figure 1

The above graph shows that five universities have full coursework or papers based on gender education or sexual orientation education.

Question 2: How many universities have a unit or section on gender education or LGBTQ+?

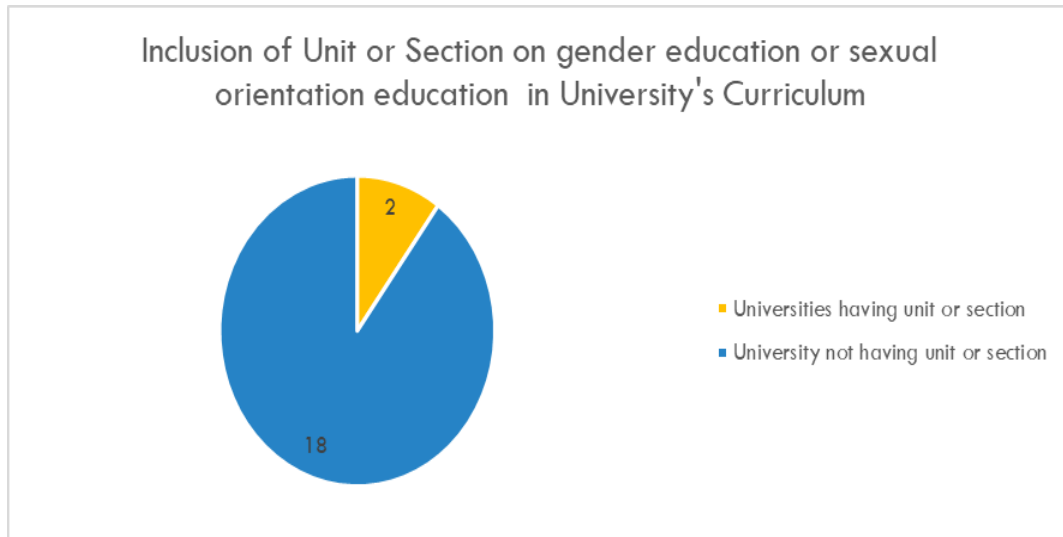


Figure 2

The above graph shows that two universities have a unit or section based on gender education or sexual orientation education.

Question 3: How many universities have topic on gender education or sexual orientation education?

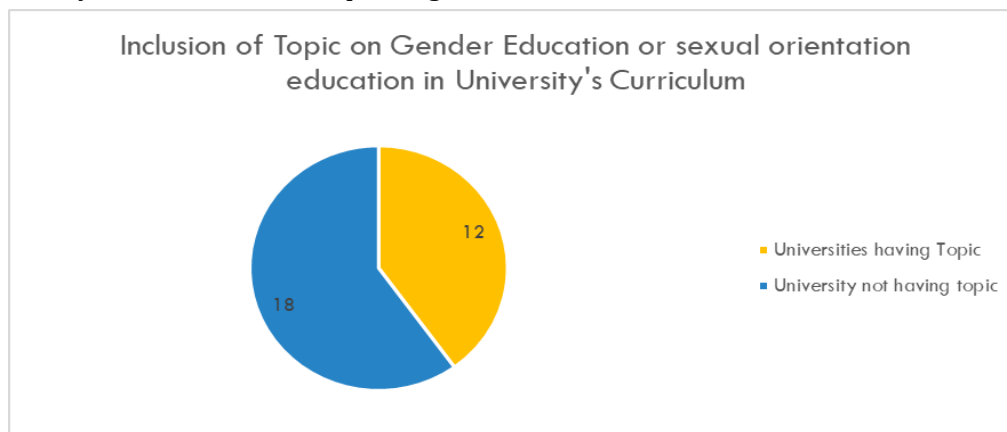


Figure 3

The above graph shows that twelve universities have a unit or section based on gender education or sexual orientation education.

Question 4: How many universities have used words related to "Gender identity" or "sexual orientation" in their curricula?

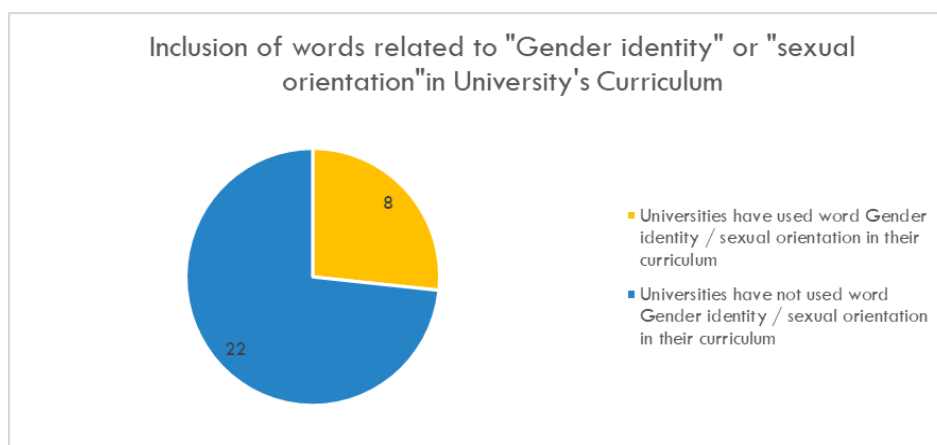


Figure 4

The above graph shows that eight universities has a unit or section based on gender education or sexual orientation education.

Part 2:

Question 1: How Many Universities have course objectives on gender education or sexual orientation education?

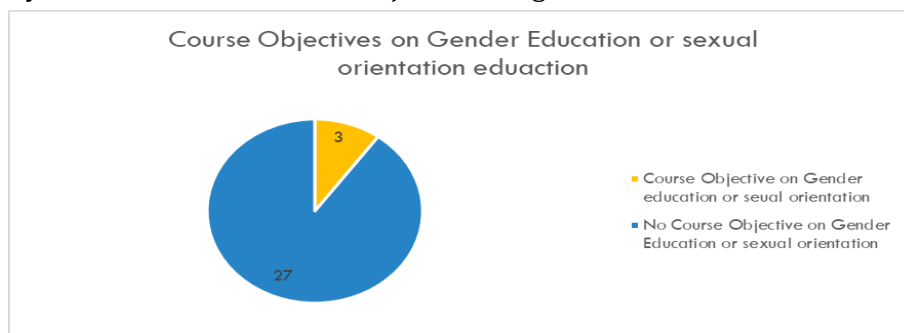


Figure 5

The above graph shows that only three universities have a course objective on Gender education or sexual orientation education in their curricula.

Question 2: How Many Universities have course outcomes on gender education or sexual orientation education?

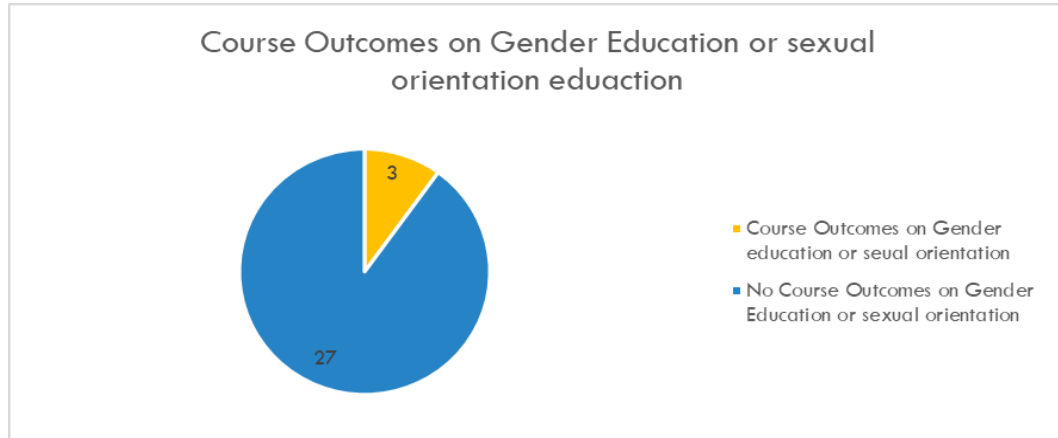


Figure 6

The above graph shows that only three universities have a course outcome on Gender education or sexual orientation education in their curricula.

5. DISCUSSION

The graphical representation given above shows an analysis done by the researcher to find out the need to create a module for psychology students on gender identity and sexual orientation.

Only five university's curricula have a coursework or paper on gender education. Among these five coursework, two coursework are given as an elective paper in the curricula. The other three curricula cater to gender education mainly focused on males and females, not on other sexual orientations. Only one curriculum from these three curricula contains a topic on trans-genders.

Two university's curricula from a total of thirty contain a unit on gender identity. These two universities' curricula are apart from above five curricula mentioned above. Among these two universities' curricula, one university curriculum has nothing mentioned about sexual orientation or LGBTQ while the other universities' curriculum contains a unit on gender identity and sexual orientation.

A total of twelve universities' curricula have a topic on gender education. This topic is about gender roles and gender identities which are related to the male and female binary. Not a single topic among these twelve curricula caters to sexual orientations or LGBTQ+ studies. These twelve curricula do not count above mentioned seven curricula.

Of all thirty curricula, five university curricula contain coursework, two university curricula contain a unit, and twelve university curricula contain a topic on gender and so all these nineteen university curricula contain words related to gender identity and sexual orientation. Other than these nineteen curricula, a total of eight curricula contain the word gender. This word is not related to gender identity or sexual orientation. This word is related to disorders.

Three university's curricula from thirty had written objectives related to gender education and sexual identity. Two of them did not mention the outcomes. Three university's curricula had written outcomes related to gender education and sexual identity. Two of them did not mention objectives. One curriculum among these had objectives and outcomes both mentioning gender identity and sexual orientation. Few university's curricula have not mentioned course objectives and course outcomes.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the Above research, the researcher concluded that none of the universities has compulsory coursework on gender identity and sexual orientation education. There are discrepancies in course objectives and course outcomes of the curriculum. The curricula containing course objectives don't have course outcomes and vice versa. Few curricula even have mentioned any course objectives or course outcomes, which is the most important gap in the curriculum.

Universities containing gender education coursework or sexual orientation education coursework have very less credits. Course objectives, course outcomes, and course credits are not in accordance with each other.

Inclusive education is a need of time. As such, it is very necessary that a curriculum should be all-inclusive, focusing on all relevant aspects required for a student to develop a proactive prospect and a strong base for his future endeavors. In today's tech-savvy world, it is the duty of educational institutions to provide correct and scientific information to students especially the psychologists who ought to deal with such important but underestimated aspects of mental health, person to person.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Less number of curricula collected by the researcher was the major limitation of this study. Implementation of curricula according to NEP 2020 is not yet done in a few universities was another limitation for the researcher. This is a recommendation for further research. Further curriculum analysis can be done on a maximum number of universities with and without NAAC accreditation. Curriculum or module development inclusive of gender identity and sexual orientation content is a major highlighted scope for further research.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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