



## Review Article

# A bibliometric analysis of homosexuality research in SAARC countries

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**Date of Submission :**

14 December 2021

**Date of Acceptance :**

31 Decemeber 2021

## Abstract

Homosexuality, which was considered to be deviant sexual behaviour, has been recognized as normal sexual behavior in recent years. Despite this change in scientific viewpoint, there are still many taboos centered around this entity. Even the research concerning homosexuality seemingly suffered discrimination. This research attempts to understand the trend of research in homosexuality in the SAARC countries todate. We did a literature search in the PubMed database since the time of inception till date (28th September 2021) by using the search terms: homosexuality [tiab] and (Bangladesh [tiab] OR India [tiab] or Maldives [tiab] OR Afghanistan [tiab] OR Pakistan [tiab] or Sri Lanka [tiab] OR Bhutan [tiab] or Nepal [tiab]). A total of 67 articles were found from the database. Most articles were published in the Journal of homosexuality (n=4). The articles were published between 1976 to 2020, with the highest number of publications (n=5) in 2009 and 2018. The average number of authors per article was 2.433, and the average number of citations per paper was 2.866. Though homosexuality is a highly sensitive issue, there is a paucity of research in this field in the SAARC countries.

## Keywords:

Female orgasm, Women, Indian, Sexuality

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**How to cite the article:** Devrani, A., Shankar, A., Singh, A., (2021). A bibliometric analysis of homosexuality research SAARC countries. Indian Journal of Health Sexuality and Culture 7 (2), 29-34.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6062668>

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## Introduction

An exclusive or virtually exclusive romantic desire for other persons of the same sex, often to achieve sexual gratification, is characteristic of homosexuality (Cohler and Hammack, 2004). Homosexuality encompasses homosexual desire; the affective experience of same-sex attraction, homosexual

behaviour; same-sex people engaging in sexual activity, homosexual identity; the acceptance of a self-label acknowledging the primacy of homosexual desire and behaviour in one's self-composition, as well as homosexual orientation (Kalra et al., 2010), reflects the affective experience of primarily same-sex erotic desire that is beyond conscious control and outside the purview of historical and social construction (Cohler and Hammack, 2004). Traditionally, homosexuality was proscribed in many cultures, with a lot of taboo associated with it. However, with globalization, it is increasingly considered normal sexual behaviour. In 1990, the World Health Organization (WHO), lending support to this understanding, made consonant changes in the tenth revision of their International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10) (Sadock et al., 2017). Still, in many geographies, homosexuality continues to suffer prejudice, which is also evident in relatively lesser research on this topic.

Alfred Kinsey et al. created a six-point scale to determine a person's position on the heterosexual-homosexual scale based on his or her sexual behaviour history (Dodge et al., 2008). In the Indian subcontinent, there is a lack of such behavioral survey data, making it challenging to categorize and identify the population on the spectrum. In India, people are commonly identified as homosexuals if they have experienced, as adults, any explicit sexual activity with any person of their sex (Maroky et al., 2015).

They have more mental health issues than their heterosexual counterparts, such as substance use disorders, affective disorders, and suicidal ideation (Dhikav, 2004). It has also been proposed that the higher prevalence of comorbidities is due to stigma, prejudice, and discrimination creating a stressful social environment that can lead to

mental health problems in members of a stigmatized minority group (Chandradasa, 2019). Thus, it is important to understand the research trends focussing on homosexuality and related issues.

## Methods

A literature search was done in the PubMed database to analyze published literature on homosexuality in member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The search was carried out from inception to 28th September 2021 using a combination of the following keywords: homosexuality [tiab] AND (Bangladesh [tiab] OR India [tiab] OR Maldives [tiab] OR Afghanistan [tiab] OR Pakistan [tiab] OR Sri Lanka [tiab] OR Bhutan [tiab] OR Nepal [tiab]) in order to get the number of globally published articles. It was refined further by evaluating document type, subject area in which it is the most studied, and year-wise distribution of articles. All the data was further refined based on top journals, disciplines, publications type, and the number of publications per year. All citations were counted from inception to search date. We extracted and analyzed data by Microsoft Excel version 2010 for Windows.

## Results

The PubMed search engine yielded 67 publications related to homosexuality in SAARC countries published from inception till September 2021.

### Publication types

Majority (n=56; 83.5%) of the publications were journal articles. While letters constitute 10.4% (n=7) of publications; only 4.4% were comparative studies (n=3). There were three reviews, while two articles each appeared as editorial, newspaper article, comment, and historical article (Table 1).

**Table 1: Top publication types**

Publication Type	Number of publications	Percentage of the total publications(%)	Earliest article year	Latest article year	Average number of times an article has been cited*
Journal Article	56	83.5	1976	2020	3.0
Letter	7	10.4	2004	2018	0.4
Comparative Study	3	4.4	1976	2014	2.6
Review	3	4.4	2013	2019	1.3
Editorial	2	2.9	2012	2018	4.5
Newspaper Article	2	2.9	2006	2006	3.5
Comment	2	2.9	2009	2009	1.5
Historical Article	2	2.9	2011	2019	0.0
English Abstract	1	1.4	2015	2015	2.0
Randomized Controlled Trial	1	1.4	2018	2018	0.0
Validation Study	1	1.4	2017	2017	0.0

\*not including self-citations

**Top Fields/Disciplines**

The subject-area-wise distribution was majorly medicine (n=11; 15.7%) followed by public health (n=7; 10.0%). Behavioural

Sciences was the subject area in 8.5% (n=6) of publications. Psychiatry, communicable diseases, ethics and social sciences comprised of 7.1% (n=5), 5.7% (n=4), 5.7% (n=3) and 4.2% (n=3) of the publications respectively (Table 2).

**Table 2:Top Fields/Disciplines**

Field	Number of publications	Percentage of the total publications (%)	Earliest article year	Latest article year	Average number of times an article is cited*
Medicine	11	15.7	1986	2020	2.0
Public Health	7	10.0	2001	2016	2.0
Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome	7	10.0	1994	2018	3.4
Behavioral Sciences	6	8.5	2009	2018	1.1
Psychiatry	5	7.1	2014	2018	0.6
Communicable Diseases	4	5.7	2008	2016	3.2
Ethics	3	5.7	2016	2019	0.0
Health Services	3	4.2	2001	2015	19.6
Social Sciences	3	4.2	2001	2019	18.3
Tropical Medicine	2	2.8	2001	2004	1.5

\*not including self-citations

## Time trends

On the assessment of the year-wise distribution of articles, it was found that maximum publications were in the year 2018 (n=6) followed by in the year 2009 (n=5). There were 4 publications each in 2016, 2015, 2006, and 1995. There were 4 (6.45%)

publications each in 1998 and 2007. The years of 2017, 2013, 1996 had 3 publications each. There were two publications each in the year of 2019, 2014, 2012, 2007, 2003, 2004, 2001, 1994, 1992 and 1991 one publication each in the year of 2011, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2005, 1999, and 1986 (Table 3).

**Table 3: Publications and Citations over years**

Publication year	Number of published articles	Number of times any article was cited	Cumulative number of times any article was cited
2021	0	8	192
2020	3	23	184
2019	2	14	162
2018	6	17	150
2017	3	8	133
2016	4	24	126
2015	4	20	104
2014	2	19	86
2013	3	20	68
2012	2	12	49
2011	1	13	39
2001-2010	20	26	27
1976-2000	17	1	1

## Publication type

The publications came in journals. Among the journals, Journal of Homosexuality had the highest number of publications on homosexuality. There were 4 publications with a total average citation of 1.750, comprising 5.970 % of the total publications.

Indian Journal of Psychiatry, Lancet Infectious Disease and Indian Journal of Medical Ethics had 3(4.478%) publications each. Anthropology medicine, Journal of Pakistan medical association, Southeast Asian Journal, Tropical Medicine, Public Health and Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Disease and AIDS had two publications each (Table 4).

**Table 4: Top journals**

Journal	Number of publications	Percentage of the total publications	Earliest article year	Latest article year	Average number of times an article has been cited
Journal of Homosexuality	4	5.9	2009	2018	1.7
Indian Journal of Psychiatry	3	4.4	2010	2015	4.3
Lancet Infectious Diseases	3	4.4	2008	2009	3.6
Indian Journal of Medical Ethics	3	4.4	2016	2019	0.0
HIV/AIDS Policy & Law Review	2	2.9	2006	2006	3.5
Anthropology & Medicine	2	2.9	2005	2020	3.5
Journal of Pakistan Medical Association	2	2.9	2006	2009	2.0
Southeast Asian Journal of Tropical Medicine and Public Health	2	2.9	2001	2004	1.5
Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS	2	2.9	2017	2020	1.0
AIDS	2	2.9	1994	2006	1.0

## Discussion

The present study reviewed 67 publications on homosexuality in SAARC countries available in the PubMed database from inception till September 2021. The maximum number of publications was found in 2011-2020 (n=30), followed by 2001-2010 (n=20), suggesting more incredible research focus on homosexuality during this period. The maximum number of papers were published in the Journal of Homosexuality (n=4), followed by the Indian Journal of Psychiatry, Lancet Infectious Diseases, and the Indian Journal

of Medical Ethics (n=3 each). Though these findings seem to suggest an increasing trend in research in homosexuality, there is a lack of diversity as most of the articles were published in journals associated with infectious diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, and AIDS. This further suggests that homosexuality is still stigmatized in all SAARC countries and not considered a normal phenomenon (Gupta, 2011). These cultures continue to stigmatize homosexuality, and people of same-sex inclination experience substantial maltreatment throughout their lives (Agoramoorthy and Minna, 2007). In comparison to heterosexuals, gay men and

lesbians in various Asian nations have been observed to have increased suicide inclinations (Agoramoorthy and Minna, 2007). This occurs in the context of alienation linked to a lack of tolerance for social diversity in these communities and a sense of difficulty associating with these minority groups' sexual identities (Lowe et al., 2021).

## Conclusion

Homosexuality is considered normal in the contemporary world. However, it remains a sensitive issue in specific geographies and cultures. The health needs of this population are diverse and should not get ignored. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of research in this field in the SAARC countries. Therefore, there is a need for focussed, extensive research to understand the issues of homosexual people, which will help in planning the remedial measures and policies. The important issue is that sexual diversity, gender plurality, sexual rights, and freedom must all be safeguarded and upheld in different ways in different societies.

## Acknowledgements : None

## Conflict of interest : None

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