



Reimagining Inclusion: Pre-service Teachers' Transformative Use of Dadaist Art for LGBT Awareness

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Abstract

Dadaism is an art form which was always used to challenge conventional norms of our society. It has the power of attempting transformation through the strokes of colors on canvases. The controversial messages were passed through the common people through the artwork by Dadaists. Even today there are controversial issues like LGBTQ+ acceptance which cannot be discussed openly in the heteronormative society in the Indian context. The Dadaist art form is a powerful tool in such a case where one can express their beliefs through the medium of art. Teachers can be catalysts in bringing change in society through this medium of art. They need to be trained in using Dadaist poetry form for breaking their own prejudices & for using it as a reflective tool. It aimed to bring LGBT awareness by expressing voices of the most marginalized community i.e. the LGBTQ+ community. The teacher education colleges need to take a lead to train the pre-service teachers to use Dadaist poetry for reflecting their own perspectives, their beliefs on the LGBTQ+ community. The present study employed a qualitative study using one shot case study where poetic inquiry helped to explore the beliefs and feelings of pre-service teachers towards the LGBT community. The findings of the study helped to identify the strength of Dadaist poetry in drawing out the ability of cognitive perspective taking as well as empathetic concern of a pre-service teacher towards the LGBTQ+ community. The study also helped to discover the potential of this art form in directing the pre-service teachers on the path of the social justice for the LGBT community.

Keywords: Dadaist poetry; Heteronormative society; Inclusivity; LGBT inclusion; Poetic inquiry.

1. Introduction

LGBT community is the most disadvantaged group in India. Transgender bill was passed in 2019 however the transgender face rights violation even today. Lack of medical facilities, lack of homes, lack of adoption rights are a few to name [1]. They also witness online bullying, brutal rape crimes, homophobia, transphobia & sexual abuse. This community often avoids registering a complaint. Due to gender dysphoria, intersex people undergo surgery which causes a lot of pain and even mental health issues. Similar issues are seen in classrooms where LGBT children are often bullied because of

effeminate expression. Arvay Malhotra, a school boy from Faridabad gave his life because of being abused for effeminate gender expression. We need sensitive & empathetic teachers who could be an ally for children who are gender and sexual minorities. We need to change the mind-sets of teachers towards the LGBT community. To work on developing attitudes of teachers we need to work at the teacher education level. Teachers are powerful catalysts who can bring transformation through their language. The present study is a part of the mission to work on preservice teacher's attitudes towards the LGBT community.



Dadaist Poetry could be an instrument which would permit the pre-service teachers to use it to reflect their own subjective feelings and thoughts towards the LGBT community [2].

1.1. Theoretical Underpinnings of the Study

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) which was later extended to theory of planned behaviour (TPB) forms the theoretical framework of this study. Ajzen (1991) claimed that behavioural intentions of a person depend on the attitude, social norms as well as the perceived control of the individual. In the present context we need to understand how the idea of behavioural intention could be understood in the context of heteronormative Indian society. Also we need to explore the relation of attitude of teachers towards LGBT community & the perceived control of pre-service teachers about creating an LGBT inclusive classroom [3]. Heteronormative society & gender binary system sets expectation for an individual to live in the boundaries of social norms. Within this boundary right from childhood an individual is trained to obey these norms that are set by each one's cultural background. Keeping this in mind each one behaves in a certain way to get approval of the behaviour by the others in the group. Children need to develop tolerance and respect for all people including people from different sexual orientation and genders or else they would be discriminated against once they enter the society. For making this happen, the teachers should be positive towards LGBT inclusion. We need to work quite early to form the right attitudes towards LGBT community and teacher education is responsible to achieve this goal. The pre-service teachers need to be the ones who can question the heteronormative society and fight for ending discrimination towards the LGBT community [4]. Using this framework, the researcher aimed to understand how the pre service teachers could use Dadaist poetry to project their understandings of their own perception of societal expectations about heteronormativity and binary system thereby leading to social justice for the LGBT community. The pre service teachers needed to reflect their own feelings, prejudices or preconceived notions if any

through the Dadaist poetry. It would help teachers to create a safe space starting within the classroom by training the students to understand the injustices faced by the LGBT community through the lens of Dadaist poetry [5].

1.2. Literature Review

To understand the factors affecting the attitudes of the pre-service teachers towards LGBT community. Newnham & Gillett (2022) conducted a study based on using poetry for data collection and deep reflection. It was suggested that the poetic inquiry as a tool of reflective practice presents a unique way of data collection which enables us to process emotions. It also enables one to shift perspective and move towards unexpected awareness [6]. The researchers also stressed the use of creative arts practice which can offer the practitioners to achieve a state of deeper understanding & self-awareness. Bernie et.al (2017) conducted a study to identify the potential benefits and pressures in implementing a poetic approach to spread the participants' experiences and perspectives. The concept of I-poetry was used in this study as a means of passing on the first person views of participants [7]. Here the researcher suggested that I-poetry could be used as a medium through which one can make subjective emotional connections. Aiyer (2020) claimed that poetry is treated as a third space for LGBTQ adolescents as it acted as a shelter, home or a safe space for them to both explore their own sexualities and accept their queerness. One of the responses of the participant was "*Poems were my home when my actual, tangible house felt unsafe and hostile to me.*" Another one who felt it like a sanctuary said "*It was where I went when I needed to get away from everyone in my real life discriminating against me. It was my one sanctuary, and everyone there was so accepting.*" Aiyer (2020) strongly recommends uncovering the potential of poetry from an early age which can offer children a platform to express and recognize their developing identities specifically if their identities feel a mismatch with societal expectations. This no doubt proves that poetry could be a vent for those who are not able to get acceptance in oppressive societies. It can be therapeutic for children who have not come out to anyone out of fear [8]. Jack & Illingworth (2023)



conducted a study to examine how an activity of reading, poetry or engaging in some kind of creative writing opportunities may help to develop empathy among students from social care & the health backgrounds [9]. Poetry can also help to offer a platform for cognitive perspective taking as the readers get an opportunity to project themselves through the scenarios, viewpoints, affective states of mind through an artificial simulation process (Henry & Thorsen, 2019). To add to it the researcher proposed the use of poetic metaphors for serving as an empathic bridges for making connections of observed realities & personal emotions but for discussing controversial topics in a non-literal terms (Fox, 1997 as cited by Jack & Illingworth, 2023). Importantly, here the present study connects as the intention of the researcher here is to develop a personal sense of connection with the LGBT community by living their experiences through a poetic journey. For this the participant teacher is expected to process the information that they have related to the LGBT experiences and take their perspective to voice out the feelings. It would also portray the affective state of mind of the participant teacher in this poetic journey. Thus here we could witness cognitive perspective taking along with empathetic concern in this study. Since such a kind of research was not done in Indian context, the present study is initiated by the researcher to know if the pre-service teachers are able to make use of Dadaist poetry to explore their beliefs towards LGBT community and make use of empathetic concern and cognitive perspective taking using an innovative Dadaist art work which puts controversial ideas in soft form.

1.3. Context of the Study

Dadaism, as an art movement, began in the early 20th century. It was initiated to spread the message of rejecting traditional norms. Dadaists accepted the idea that absurdity is beautiful because it helps to come out with a unique idea with a strong message. This revolution emerged from societal issues. Further it spread its wings in all fields – literature, Poetry, music etc. It aimed to question the existing norms and invite new ways of thinking. It was a branch that came out of the postmodernist

school of thought. We need to address the discrimination faced by the LGBT community. In light of the framework of postmodernism, where subjective ideas & irrationality are embraced, the present study encourages the pre-service teachers to make use of Dadaist poetry to develop as a reflective practitioner. The study aims to enable the pre-service teachers to make use of cut up technique of Dadaist poetry to deconstruct their own ingrained beliefs and attitudes towards questioning heteronormative society and fighting for LGBT acceptance.

2. Methodology

The present study used a qualitative methodology with a one shot case study design. A group of 8 teachers came ahead with their innovative work of Dadaist poetry with an aim of expressing their thoughts about the LGBT community. The study aimed to train pre-service teachers to make use of Dadaist poetry to explore the thoughts and feelings. Thus an in-depth study of their thoughts and feelings was possible through qualitative poetic inquiry. Poetic Inquiry in a qualitative study can help the researcher to gather subjective data which is complex, connected however at times it can be influenced by the social world (Cutts & Waters, 2019) In the present study the researcher used poetic inquiry as a tool to understand and explore sense making process of the lived experiences of LGBT community as perceived by the pre service teachers.

2.1. Instrument

As the study dealt with capturing of pre-service teachers reflective thoughts & feelings about the LGBT community. Poetry is used as a tool for data collection for critically analysing and interpreting the world with the lens of social justice. Dadaist poetry offered the pre-service teachers a medium to present their views on people from gender and sexual minority groups living in a heteronormative society. This medium was deliberately chosen so that it gives the teacher a platform to question the conventional norms of gender and sexuality in a heteronormative society like India. Here the teacher gets flexibility to pick disparate elements and get a new meaning to their own thoughts. Dadaist poetry proves to be a medium of experimentation for presenting the thoughts and beliefs towards the LGBT community.

2.2. Research Questions

The present study aims to answer the following research question. ***RQ How can pre-service teachers make use of Dadaist poetry to explore their own beliefs towards LGBT community?***

2.3. Participants

8 pre-service teachers pursuing B Ed program were the part of this study. They belonged to one particular college only. The pre-service teachers acted as the subjects who were given a task of making use of Dadaist poetry to explore their own thoughts & feelings towards the LGBT community. The artwork was in the form of a collage where text and images could be used using cut up technique.

2.4. Sampling Technique

It was based on a convenient and purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling was done for studying thoughts & reflections of pre-service teachers towards the LGBT community. The pre-service teachers were chosen as a sample because their attitudes towards the LGBT mattered more than the in-service teachers. The pre-service teachers would be role models to many of the students who needed to be accepting & respecting this vulnerable group. Moreover, whoever was willing to be a part of the study were chosen as a sample, hence convenient sampling was used. Here freedom was given to the pre-service teachers to opt out of this activity at any point of time.

2.5. Data Analysis

The researcher aims to answer the following research questions. ***RQ 1: How can pre-service teachers make use of Dadaist poetry to explore their own beliefs towards LGBT community?***

To answer this question, the researcher uses content analysis of the unique artwork in the form of Dadaist poetry made by the pre-service teachers. The common themes emerging from the poetic inquiry are presented for discussion.

2.5.1. Dadaist Poetry 1

The present Dadaist poetry in Figure 1 is a reflection by a pre-service teacher to make us aware of our discriminating behaviour towards the LGBT community based on gender and sexual orientation. The art work points towards lack of empathy towards LGBT community. It also stresses on

hatred towards LGBT members leading them to question their own existence. The pre-service teachers view themselves in place of the LGBT member and express the vulnerability in contemporary Indian society.



Figure 1 Dadaist Poetry by Pre Service Teacher 1

2.5.2. Empathetic Understanding of LGBT Community

The phrase '*Homosexuality within a boundary*' depicts the freedom to live, freedom to choose, freedom to express which the community looks out for. The use of this phrase itself shows that the pre service teacher is aware of the beliefs or perspectives of a homosexual person in a heteronormative society like India. One of the phrases like '*sexual killings*' helps us to understand the empathetic concern of the pre-service teacher towards brutal exploitations faced by the queer community. The word 'sexual' deliberately gives a misleading tone as it intends to suggest the purity of relation being corrupted by the gruesome and twisted narrative of dark human impulse. The art work by the pre-service teacher projects the voice of an LGBT member.

2.5.3. Compassionate Realism

The words '*only solution is to run away*' points towards the miserable situation in life of a LGBT member where survival is possible only when one gives up and runs away from the situation. Here the pre service teacher has understood the harsh realities

of the heteronormative society where LGBT acceptance is a distant dream. The phrase points towards the pre-service teachers feeling the pain of traumatic life experiences of an LGBT member in India. Also the pre service teacher's words in the phrase points towards the deep understanding of complex reasons of the pain that the participant has understood. The phrase *"no one is perfect"* focuses on the beliefs of the pre-service teachers projecting LGBT acceptance. It gives a message to the LGBT community to embrace their own authentic self with beautiful imperfection. It clearly points towards the empathy that the pre-service teacher has shown.

2.5.4. Advocate for Self-acceptance and Resilience

The phrase *"no one will understand your thoughts, your mind, only you will do Throw a fit when someone... Assume... judge... worst outcome ... Got to be okay with"* clearly shows that the participant aims to convey the LGBT community to be having a self-accepting & carefree attitude. The pre service teacher gives a message to the members of the community that experiences cannot be altered. Ignoring the bad experiences and developing resilience is an important mantra to live in a heteronormative society. The Dadaist poetry in this case is a medium of language for countless no of LGBT members who have faced struggles not in society but at family level in the form of *corrective rapes* and *suicides* especially by lesbians.

2.6. Dadaist Poetry 2



Figure 2 Dadaist Poetry by Pre Service Teacher 2

2.6.1. Emotional insight into lives of LGBT

In the Dadaist poetry 2, the pre-service teacher points to the loneliness felt by the members of the LGBT community when they face rejection from the family (Figure 2). *"2 am in the morning and I am lost on the road"*. In this line the pre-service teacher can sense the plight of such people who make the choice of coming out of the closet at family level. Here the pre-service teacher conveys the deep vulnerability felt by the LGBT people after finding rejection at home further having fear of navigating alone for acceptance in a heteronormative society with a gender binary system.

2.6.2. Appraisal of Self-Efficacy & Resilience

The line *"Everyone here are spectators. And I'm made a player in this life"* Here the word "spectators" used by the pre-service teachers helps us to sense that the society includes people who do not fully indulge in understanding the struggles faced by the LGBT, community. The society that mostly judges & acts passively even when they face discrimination or rights violation. It points to the people who act as standby in case they face violence. The word 'player' indicates that the LGBT member may feel proud of being resilient enough for trying to navigate successfully through the life challenges. The pre-service teacher can sense the feeling of believing in self amidst all struggles acting strong and taking charge of one's own self. The pre-service teachers point towards the internalized homophobia in this poetry. LGBT members are often judged by the members of heteronormative and gender binary society. This leads to internalizing the hatred which they see in others eyes.

2.6.3. Sensing Control by Societal Norms

"I am a puppet with strings" In this line the pre-service teacher points towards the feelings of being controlled by demands of others be it family or society. It stresses on the struggle of not having autonomy in one's own life with reference to choice of partner or of gender expression.

2.6.4. Recognizing Silent Struggle for Acceptance:

The line *"While I am said that I am worst, to be a lesbian is a mistake"* indicates that the pre-service teacher is pointing towards external judgement

followed by self-judgment. The participant teacher here points towards how an LGBT member's identity of oneself depends on others perception. "As the night covers the city" points towards feelings of being unseen in a heteronormative society. Moreover "My voice is lost", here the participant teacher focuses on unheard voices and demands of the LGBT member in gender binary system where being from a non-conforming gender or a homosexual could not allow one to fit in societal norms. The pre service teacher has a deep understanding of complex emotions felt by the LGBT community which includes being invisible, silenced and feeling completely lost.

2.7. Dadaist poetry 3

The present Dadaist poetry of the pre service teacher points towards the freedom which a Transgender member looks out for (Figure 3). The choice of the title itself points towards the fact that the pre service teacher is aware of the status of the transgenders in India.

2.7.1. Advocacy for Trans liberation

"Prisoner of Gender" points towards the thought that the Transgender people have no freedom to express their gender expression. In Indian context the cross dressing aspect is not accepted So even though a person might have been assigned a male at birth but identifies as a female or vice versa, it would still be very difficult for one to find acceptance with a gender expression that is against the expectations of gender binary system. The pre-service teacher voices out the demands of freedom of gender expression for the transgender community.

2.7.2. Fostering Gender Safety by Challenging Authorities

The participant teacher used the phrase "to ensure a safer world" Here the participant teacher pinpoints towards the need of right to safety. It uncovers the brutal murders, the rape crimes & lack of medical facilities that the LGBT community come across. The bold letters in the question "Where are these rules and to whom do they apply" shows that the participant teacher is questioning the society for the rights violation of same sex marriage. The larger font shows the need to

emphasize the significance of questioning the power structure of law. Larger font also means that the pre-service teacher's wants to draw attention to the strength of written words which pulls the attention of the reader towards a particular issue.

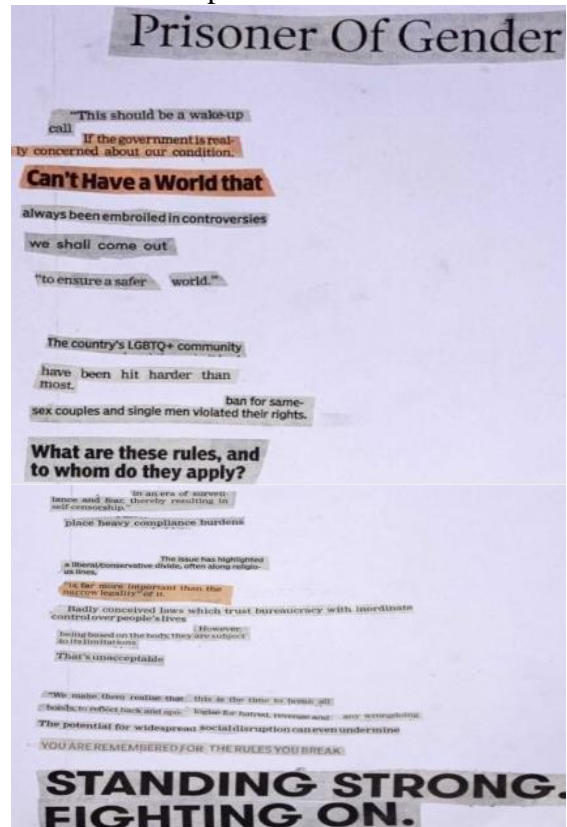


Figure 3 Dadaist Poetry by Pre Service Teacher 3

It can be sensed here that pre pre-service teacher has taken a stand for the LGBT community. It shows empathetic concern by this participant teacher.

2.7.3. Sensing need for Privacy & Freedom

The phrase "In the era of surveillance" points towards the deep understanding in the participant for the continuous stalking faced by the LGBT members be it in daily life spaces or in social media they are always being followed and bullied. The participant teacher uses the word "self-censorship" due to the awareness of conscious or unconscious restriction on expression or behaviour of the homosexual people who do so due to fear of societal disapproval, the homophobic comments Undoubtedly the teacher in this poetry is questioning as though it's the lived experience of the participant teacher.

2.7.4. Cultural Rift Beyond Legalities

The phrase “*issue has created conservative divide along the religious lines far more important than the narrow legality of it*” shows that the participant teachers have carefully analysed the experiences of a homosexual person and brought out the deeper cultural and social conflicts.

2.7.5. Reflection & Reconciliation for Building Compassionate Societies

Finally the phrase used is “*We make them realize that this is the time to break them all bonds to reflect back and apologize for hatred, revenge and any wrongdoing*” Here the participant teacher has portrayed as being a strong supporter for the LGBT members of the society and completely understanding their plight. This statement is an eye opener for all the people who have harassed, rejected or took revenge from the LGBT members and need to sincerely apologize.

2.8. Dadaist Poetry 4

The art work by the pre service teacher points towards the rejection of the LGBT member at family level. It projects the state of remaining in closet at family level even though the LGBT member may be open at pride parades. The poetry shows that the pre-service teacher is aware of the issue of gender based violence in spite of being educated (Figure 4). The poetry throws light on the feeling of uncertainty even after having the bill of decriminalisation of section 377 passed.

2.8.1. Highlighting Marginalization of Transgender

The phrase “*Acceptance of sexuality still remains a struggle*” implies that the pre-service teacher is aware of the need of getting acceptance at family level as due to its absence one can have profound psychological influence through alienation and loneliness. This clearly shows that the participants have analysed life experiences of a transgender person which needs careful investigation. “*And transmen in rural areas end up in the bottom*” enables the pre-service teacher to bring out the fact that being gender non-conforming the transgender person never gets an opportunity to come ahead in society with reference to financial status or position.

2.8.2. Giving Courage and Resilience

“*Decisions made still haven't every learntThey lead a road better than different*” This phrase first stresses on the legal decisions which may have been implemented but everyone has not been aware of it the pre service teacher here brings out a positive hope brought by law which may be challenging yet it gives a few provisions to make the journey of a transgender more easier.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The present study based on poetic inquiry helps to analyse the Dadaist poetry made by the pre-service teachers. Through the art work the pre-service teachers project a deep understanding of the life experiences of LGBT members and empathetic concern to bring justice to this community. Dadaist poetry enabled the pre-service teachers to make sense of these experiences from the perspective of an LGBT member. To sum up the study helped to know how the pre-service teachers demonstrated an acute awareness of societal rejection. They projected compassionate realism through the depiction of harsh realities and advocacy for supportive solutions for addressing the LGBT issues. They confirmed the need for privacy and freedom by highlighting the daily experiences of LGBT members being on surveillance and societal scrutiny. The poetic works also proposed the need for gender safety and challenging authorities by the ability of questioning the societal practices that violate rights of the LGBT



Figure 4 Dadaist Poetry by Pre Service Teacher 4



members. Also the art work pointed towards the advocacy for trans liberation as the pre-service teachers highlighted the need for equal rights for the transgender individuals. The pre-service teachers also reflected on the importance of reconciliation and building compassionate societies through the acceptance of people belonging to sexual and gender minority groups. Apart from this the teachers proposed the need for appraisal of self-efficacy & strength of the LGBT community in spite of the discrimination faced by them. Overall the poetic inquiry helped the researcher to bring out the pre-service teachers' commitment to spread awareness of the real life experiences of LGBT members with an aim to create a more inclusive and empathetic society.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this poetic inquiry focuses on the empathetic engagement & in depth understanding of pre-service teachers regarding the life experiences of the LGBT individuals through the use of Dadaist poetry. The pre-service teachers established an insightful empathetic understanding toward LGBT experiences. The findings recommend the use of reflective practices like poetry into the curriculum of teacher education can commendable nurture the pre service teacher's ability of empathy and perspective taking of the LGBT community. Poetry gives an immersive experience which promotes perspective-taking (Ludtke et al., 2017) & emotional exposure through reflective processing (Jack & Illingworth, 2017). The pre-service teacher's Dadaist poetry projected a critical stance on existing power dynamics. The findings of the study highlight the ability of pre-service teachers in becoming promoters of equity and social justice. Teacher education programs need to integrate components that help in developing critical thinking and social action projects or say encouraging pre service teachers to challenge unfair practices towards LGBT community. Poetry as a teaching strategy that foster cultural acceptance & inclusion at school. Several implications can be recommended for the teacher education level practices:

- Integrating reflective practices using Dadaist poetry can improve empathy and accepting nature among the pre-service teachers.
- Encouraging social action projects based on addressing LGBT discrimination can enable pre-service teachers to question the power of enforcing the discriminatory practices.
- Training pre-service teachers about discrimination and the psychological impacts of discrimination. Further they can develop the need for creating supportive inclusive environments.
- Most importantly developing a comprehensive resilience-building model in teacher education which can help every child in the life journey.

Conclusion

The poetic inquiry conducted on the Dadaist poetry offered a valuable insight into the preservice teacher's beliefs and feelings towards the LGBT community. It reveals the strength of arts-based approaches in order to nurture empathy, advocacy skills & perspective taking ability in the future educators. Teacher education needs to provide a platform for promoting social justice and inclusivity in the schools and beyond the schools.

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