

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: UNESCO

Across India, students are bullied because of their **sexual orientation and gender identity** (SOGI), forcing many to drop out from schools.

• UNESCO's New Delhi office has teamed up with **Sahodaran**, a male sexual health initiative in Chennai, to conduct a community-based study on SOGI-based bullying in Tamilnadu.



- **60% and 50%** were found to be a victim of physical bullying when they were in middle/high school and higher secondary school respectively.
- 40% were sexually harassed when they were in primary school.
- 18% of participants reported incidents of SOGI-based bullying to school authorities.
- 53% of those who reported being bullied said that authorities took some action against the person who bullied them.

Consequences of SOGI based violence

- 73% had reduced social interactions with their peers.
- 70% suffered from anxiety and depression.
- 63% reported **lower academic performance**.
- 53% reported **skipped classes**.
- About a third (33.2%) said bullying played a key role in discontinuing school i.e increase in the school dropout rate.

Initiatives for reducing SOGI based violence:

- **UGC** (University Grant Commission) recognized gender identity and sexual orientation as **grounds for ragging** in 2016.
- Bilingual manual, 'A Teacher's Guide To Gender Non-conforming Students', (that gives some insight about what is sexual orientation, gender identity, why some children are different from others, how to identify a gender non conforming child) was distributed free of cost in Tamilnadu schools.
- **NGO SAATHII** has been studying violence against SOGI in partnership with **LGBT community** groups such as AMANA and ETA in Manipur, VIKALP in Gujarat, Queerala in Kerala and Nirangal in Tamilnadu.
- In <u>section 377 judgment</u>, the supreme court had made it clear that **Article 14** of the Constitution guarantees equality before the law and this applies to all classes of citizens thereby restoring 'inclusiveness' of **LGBTQ Community**.

