Abstract

This study was designed to identify the perception towards social minorities and the variables which influence such perception for 230 preliminary police trainees of the Central Police Academy. The data were collected through the survey questionnaires and a multiple regression analysis was performed to conduct frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, and learn about the sense of social distance. The analytical results are as follows.

The average value of the sense of social distance towards sexual minorities perceived by the police trainees was 3.65 or higher, whose average difference was not clear, yet the average value (3.07) was lower than the other questions for the questions on whether they are acceptable as members of the family.

Examining the results of the final regression analysis performed, it was shown that social minorities related training experience, stereotypes about sexual minorities, and negative emotions about sexual minorities had a significant influence on the police trainees' sense of social distance towards sexual minorities. This indicated that those with the training experience related to social minorities had a less sense of distance, and that the more and higher the stereotypes and negative emotions towards sexual minorities, the larger the sense of social distance. This study is meaningful in that it presented the relationship between the sense of social distance and the factors of influence about the sexual minorities for the police trainees who will become the preliminary police officers.

[Keywords] Sexual Minorities, Preliminary Police Officers, Sense of Social Distance, Negative Emotions, Negative Stereotypes

1. Introduction

Article 11 Paragraph(1) of the Constitution provides that "All people are equal before the law. No one shall be discriminated against in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural life for gender, religion or social status." However, our society has to date seen an abundance of key words generated such as discrimination, hatred and conflict. In particular, discussions of diversity are taking place actively and discussions of sexual minorities are also actively being conducted.

In Seoul, the 19th Queer Culture Festival was held on July 14, 2018, and the queer culture festival for sexual minorities was held under different names in various cities throughout 2018. The city of Gwangju also hosted its first Queer Cultural Festival this year, but the police was dispatched and clashed with members of the assembly.

While the queer culture festivals for improving the rights of sexual minorities have been supported by the many, but they are also providing another cause of conflict in our society for their opponents including religious people. Despite such conflicts and differences in opinion, movements to recognize the rights and differences of sexual minorities are a trend not only in Korea but also across the entire globe. On June 26, 2015, the
United States Supreme Court ruled, in accordance with Article 14 of the amendment of the US constitution, that all states of the United States should recognize same sex marriage and that the same sex marriage permitted by another state must also be recognized. As a result, the United States became a complete state allowing same sex marriage. In Europe, Article 21 of the European Union’s Charter of Fundamental Rights promulgated on December 7, 2000 provides that discrimination for or by any reason, including sexual orientation, shall be prohibited. Thereafter, many countries have legitimized same sex marriage, and many countries such as France, Britain, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden are in favor of the same sex marriage. Among the Asian countries, Taiwan became the first Asian country to legitimize same sex marriage. It began as the supreme court justices interpreted on May 24, 2017, that, under No. 748, that prohibition was in violation of Article 22 of the constitution and Article 7 of the constitution which guarantee rights of equality and freedom of marriage in accordance with the current civil law in the same sex marriage freedom plan. The Canadian prime minister participated the homosexual festivals in person and announced that the government is reviewing the introduction of gender neutral identification cards in 2016.

As such, the opinions of for and against same sex marriage are only the beginning of the changes associated with sexual minorities, and there will likely be more changes in gender identity and orientation. Furthermore, there will be many changes such as rights for sexual minorities and various systems and legal amendments to guarantee human rights. Accordingly, the studies of gender identity and sexual orientation are a very crucial research topic, and many discussions will be needed especially in pertinence to law enforcement and police activities. In particular, there are such a variety of studies conducted on teachers if the previous studies related to sexual minorities are examined. The reason is that sexual minorities are the members of our society, and people need to change their perception through education from their childhood for building a harmonious and healthy society.

Likewise, how the police recognizes sexual minorities in applying the same laws and norms to all members of society and providing services and security services is an extremely crucial issue. While the multi-cultural society has become more apparent, various studies are being conducted by the police on the subject of social minorities, yet studies on sexual minorities are very limited. Furthermore, sexual minorities are almost not covered in education and training programs and academic subjects for the preliminary police trainees who will become police officers in the future.

As mentioned earlier, conflicts caused by sexual minorities will become more frequent, and the role of the police to protect and mediate them will increasingly become critical. The perception and prejudice of each individual police officer will naturally be transmitted to the citizens through words, conducts, and attitudes, which will affect the evaluation of the police and level of satisfaction.

Accordingly, the level of the police officers’ perception of a specific group and what education and training should be provided for them are determined to be the most urgent issues facing the police education and training. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to investigate the factors influencing the preliminary police officers’ perception towards sexual minorities and their sense of social distance to sexual minorities.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Sexual minorities

2.1.1. Concept of sexual minorities

Minorities mean those who are discriminated against in the society because of their differences in values and standards from the groups forming the mainstream in various aspects including sex, race, ideology, economic power, and sexual orientation. Sexual minorities refer to those whose sexual identity and orientation are different from the majority of ordinary people and other sexual minorities. Sexual orientation and gender identity are the concepts introduced to define sexual minorities[1][2].
Sexual orientation is a concept which refers to whether a gender is intriguing or attractive, either sexually or emotionally. The sexual orientation based identity categories can be classified into homosexuals (gays and lesbians), heterosexuals attracted to the other gender, and bisexuals attracted to both men and women.

Gender identity refers to the individual’s own gender identified by him or herself. Gender identity is mostly consistent with biological gender, but sometimes it is not, which is also referred to as transgender.

That is, sexual minorities include people with sexual minorities other than heterosexuals, which is the majority of the society, and who are generally referred to as LGBT (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders). Recently, the range has also expanded to include those referred to as “Questioners,” who are not certain about their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Another concept is Gender Expression, which refers to the appearances or behaviors that are considered masculine or feminine in a particular culture, such as dress, hairstyle, voice, or speech. Individuals’ gender expressions may or may not match the socially defined gender roles or their own gender identity.

Recently, homosexuals have formalized themselves as queers, which meant "weird and odd" putting down homosexuals. However, it was used as a means of redefining their existence, and they turned to represent their identity for all sexual minorities and used it as a word of community for pride, acceptance, and collective[3].

2.1.2. Status and perception of sexual minorities in Korea

There are no accurate statistics and data on the studies of sexual minorities in Korea, so it is difficult to identify their status and current situation. Furthermore, they were the latest subject of attention among the socially weak and minorities, and the research data are insufficient relative to the disabled, foreign workers, married immigrant women, and Chinese of Korean descent.

While some studies carried out surveys on awareness, attitude and behaviors towards sexuality through the voluntary participations of sexual minorities, they were limited to some age groups and minorities, so it is quite difficult to accurately define their current status and situation.

In most domestic studies conducted, the studies on the perception towards sexual minorities based on the victimization and experiences of discrimination, or based on various classes and occupation groups such as youth, college students or ordinary citizens.

The studies of perception towards sexual minorities and questionnaire surveys show different results depending on age, religion and generation.

From May 30, 2017 until June 1, 2017, Gallup Korea conducted a questionnaire survey of 1,004 male and female adults of age 19 or over. While age 19 to 29 showed 66% of them favoring the legitimatization of same sex marriage, those in their 30s showed 41% those in their 40s 34%, and those in their 60s or older showed only 16%, respectively.

The Asan Institute for Policy Studies’ survey also showed that the rate of approval for same sex marriage for those in their 20s increased rapidly from 30.5% in 2010 to 60.2% in 2014, however, those in their 60s or older increased from 6.5% to 8.3% during the same period, reaching 1.8% only.

As such, the individuals’ perception towards sexual minorities can be seen through the opinions for and against same sex marriage most representatively, but it was found that it varied mainly depending on age, religion and extent of interest.

2.2. Concept of the sense of social distance and previous studies

2.2.1. Concept of the sense of social distance

The sense of social distance is a socio-psychological concept through which people refer to the extent of prejudice or subjective emotions for groups of various subjects[4]. According to Park’s(1924) study, the sense of social distance was defined as the distance
measured by human emotions rather than the distance of spatial concept.

Bogadus was the first person who attempted to apply this concept of the sense of social distance. According to Bogadus (1925), the sense of social distance was defined as the difference of empathic understanding which exists among individuals, and he claimed it to be a concept based on the premise that it is measurable. In addition, according to Kadushin (1962), the concept of the sense of social distance can be used as a more accurate and objective tool if it is identified as a specified indicator rather than an individual’s subjective emotions or evaluation[5][6].

As such, the scale of the sense of social distance has been verified across various fields of social science through many previous studies. Most typically, this scale was often used to measure the extent of racial discrimination and prejudice affected emotions in the United States. In Korea, it has also played a role as a tool for identifying and learning the prejudice against the socially weak and minority groups including the physically and mentally challenged.

2.2. Factors influencing the sense of social distance and previous studies

The sense of social distance varies according to demographic characteristics, and education and human rights movements are mainly known to reduce the sense of social distance[7].

According to Jung Jin-Hwan’s (2011) study, self-esteem, value orientation, and cultural diversity are influenced by variables related to the sense of social distance. As for self-esteem, Coopersmith (1967) argued that it is an individual’s self-evaluation and signifies the extent to which one’s abilities are believed, meaningful, successful, and valued[8].

Value Priorities are said to be a very important factor in understanding an individual’s behavior as it is a part of the psychological characteristics and determines values and behavioral preferences under specific situations according to the value theory. In addition, value is used as an important indicator of personal tendency and influences the sense of social distance which is measured based on subjective judgments[9]. Cultural diversity recognizes that mankind living contemporaneously are faced with diverse cultures and environments, and it must be recognized that such a culture can be a creative source for the development of mankind. And only when there is an effort to understand the culture, can one discover and recognize the value of the culture itself without looking at it from its own perspective[9]. Previous studies on the sense of social distance were conducted around the disabled in the beginning, but thereafter have expanded to include North Korean refugees, foreign workers, married immigrant women, and homosexuals, among others. In addition, the sense of social distance was measured for various professionals such as youth, college and university students, nurses, teachers, as well as the citizens’ perception of the socially weak and minorities.

Triandis’ (1960) study was conducted on the sense of the college and university students’ sense of social distance in the United States[10].

Through this study, racial and social groups were found to be more influential on the sense of social distance towards specific groups than religion or nationality. Hagendoorn’s (1989) study was conducted on the sense of social distance for various minority groups of middle school and college and university students in the Netherlands. The results indicated that the group with the largest sense of social distance turned out to be the Muslim group, and the group with the most receptive attitude turned out to be the European race[11].

3. Research Method

3.1. Investigative method

A total of 300 police trainees were surveyed from October 29, 2018 until November 2, 2018. The survey method was self entry and the questionnaires with the large missing
values were excluded from the coding process, and 228 people were finally selected as the subject of the study.

3.2. Variables and measurement tools

3.2.1. Control variables

As demographic variables, gender, age, educational history, and religion (Christianity) were entered as control variables. As for gender, dummy variable of male = 1 and female = 0 were entered, and as for age, dummy variables of 1 for those in the 20s and 0 for those in the 30s were manipulated for the continuous variable measured as they are. As for educational history, it was manipulated such as 1 was entered for 4 year college or university or higher and 0 for community college or college or university drop out. As for religion, it was manipulated with 1 for Christianity and Catholicism and 0 for no religion and other religions.

3.2.2. Key variables

3.2.2.1. Sense of social distance

Bogardus, Westie, and others’ scale to measure the sense of social distance was utilized, while the criterion of “degree of acceptance of social system” was applied for reformation. In this study, the level of acceptance for 8 items such as ‘I just know them’, ‘Joining a club’, ‘Participating in a club’, ‘Neighbors’, ‘Colleagues’, ‘Friends’, ‘Spouse of a family,’ and ‘Family’ were measured with 1 point for ‘I do not agree at all’ for being very low for each level of agreement and 2 points for ‘I do not agree’, whereas neutral points of view were measured at 3 and 4 points, respectively. Five points were manipulated for ‘Agree’ and 6 points for ‘Agree to a large extent’ with the values measured from 1 point to 6 points were adjusted to 3 points including neutral points, after which 4 points were given to ‘Agree’ and 5 points to ‘Agree to a large extent.’ It may be interpreted that the higher the total score, the lower the sense of social distance of the police trainees towards the sexual minorities, and the lower the score, the higher the sense of social distance towards the sexual minorities[12]. In this study, the reliability of the sense of social distance scale, the value of Cronbach’s, turned out to be .958.

3.2.2.2. Presence or absence of training experience related to social minorities and presence or absence of friends / acquaintances who are sexual minorities

‘Presence or absence of training experience related to social minorities’ can have a positive impact on the perception towards sexual minorities. Accordingly, the presence or absence of related training experience was manipulated to be 0 for ‘No’ and 1 for ‘Yes’ to the presence of such experience.

In addition, since there may be a difference in the recognition of sexual minorities according to the ‘presence or absence of sexual minorities among the acquaintances(family, relatives, friends, or colleagues) with whom relationship is maintained on a regular basis’, the presence or absence of the acquaintances who are sexual minorities was manipulated to be 0 for ‘No’ and 1 for ‘Yes’ to the presence of such acquaintances.

3.2.2.3. Negative stereotypes

Negative stereotypes represent a belief about the subjects of the sexual minorities. This is characterized by the cognitive complexity of the subject of the attitude. In this study, the negative stereotypes for the sexual minorities were measured. The extent of agreement was measured with 1 point of ‘I agree’ to 7 points of ‘I do not agree’ for each of the items of ‘They hurt others’, ‘They expect excessive reward’, and ‘They are not reliable.’ After the measurements, they were reverse coded and the total of each variable was turned into parameters and used for analysis, so that the higher the score, the more among the negative stereotypes were manipulated. In this study, the reliability of negative stereotypes turned out to be .933 for Cronbach’s.

3.2.2.4. Negative emotions

Negative emotions take on a relatively simple characteristic for the emotional aspect. The items that express negative emotions were measured as ‘I want to avoid’, ‘I do not feel good towards them’, and ‘It would be
awkward to be with them'. They were asked to respond on the degree of sympathy for 1 point for 'I sympathize' to 7 points for 'I do not sympathize'. Likewise, they were reverse coded and the total of each variable was turned into parameters and used for analysis, so that the higher the score, the more among the negative emotions were manipulated. In this study, the reliability of negative stereotypes turned out to be .955 for Cronbach's.

3.3. Analytical method

Frequency analysis and descriptive statistical analysis were conducted to review and examine the demographic characteristics of the police trainees and the extent of their perception towards sexual minorities. In addition, a multiple regression analysis was performed to analyze the effects, which are the final model of this study on the police's sense of social distance towards the sexual minorities. SPSS 21.0 was used for the tool for the entire statistical analysis.

4. Research Results

4.1. Demographic characteristics of investigation subjects

Examining the demographic characteristics of a total of 228 police trainees who are the investigation subjects, 86.4%(197 people) were males and 13.6%(31 people) were females. Those from age 21 to 30 participated, and the average age of the respondents was 27.34. Of them, 76.3%(174 people) were in their 20s and 23.7%(54 people) were in their 30s or older. As for their level of education, 54.4%(124 people) graduated from college or university and acquired master's degree in graduate school(4 years) and 45.6%(104 people) dropped out of college or university(4 years) including those who graduated or dropped out from community college and graduated from high school. As for religion, those having religion were found to be 34.2%(78 people) and 65.8%(150 people) did not have religion.

4.2. Police trainees' perception towards sexual minorities

In order to learn about the perception of police trainees towards sexual minorities, simple questions were asked about gender, term, culture, and definition. In regards to sexual minorities' terms, such as "Do you know what LGBT stands for?", 76.3%(174 people) answered 'I do not know(hearing for the first time)', while 17.1%(39 people) responded with 'I know', 'I have heard of it' and 6.6%(15 people) responded with 'I have heard of it, but forgot it.' said "I forgot". Next, in response to the question of "Do you know about the queer festivals?" asking about typical details of the sexual minorities' culture, 74.1%(169 people) said "I know" and 18.0%(14 people) said "No, I do not" (hearing for the first time), while 7.9%(18 people) said "I have heard of it, but forgot it." In relation to the definition of sexual minorities, the questions of "Do you know the definition of sexual minorities?", 82.9%(189 people) answered "I know", while 12.7%(29 people) said "I have heard of it, but forgot it.", while 4.4%(10 people) said "No, I do not know"(hearing for the first time). In addition, 12.7%(29 people) of respondents answered "Yes" to the question of "Do you have a sexual minority among your acquaintances(family, relatives, friends, or colleagues)?" while those with training on the social minorities were 63.2%(144 people), indicating that more than half of them had experience in the social minorities related education. Overall, they had a rough understanding of the definition and culture of sexual minorities, but the conceptual understanding of terms such as LGBT may be seen to be low.

4.3. Police trainees' sense of sense of social distance towards sexual minorities

In order to examine the status of the sense of social distance, and examining the average value for each question by assigning 5 points on a 7 point scale, 'I will not hesitate to be an acquaintance with the sexual minorities' turned out to be 3.68, followed by 'I will not be reluctant to the sexual minorities joining the club to which I belong' for 3.63, 'I will not be reluctant to participating in the same club with the sexual minorities' for 3.64, 'I will not be reluctant to be a neighbor to the sexual minorities' for 3.62, 'I will not be reluctant to
be a personal friend to the sexual minorities’ for 3.63, ‘I will not be reluctant to the sexual minorities being a spouse to my family’ for 3.07, and ‘I will not be reluctant to the sexual minorities being a member of my family’ for 3.07, respectively. While the hierarchical priority of the social distance scale was not clear, the extent of accepting them to be the members of their family showed a lower average value than the other items, thereby demonstrating a relatively lower acceptance level. In addition, the average of the total 8 questions on the sense of social distance towards the sexual minorities turned out to be 3.47.

4.4. Analysis of factors influencing the police trainees’ sense of sense of social distance towards sexual minorities

A multiple regression analysis was performed to analyze the factors influencing the sense of social distance of police trainees towards the sexual minorities, whose results can be verified in Table 1. First, in Model 1, demographic variables such as gender, age, educational level, and religion were entered. In this study, the dependent variable of the sense of social distance is the total of the scores measured by 8 questions, and so the higher the score, the closer the sense of social distance, that is, the acceptance of the sexual minorities can be interpreted to be high.

In Model 1, the gender turned out to be β=-0.971, which was statistically significant at the significance level of p<.05. This means that in the case of men, the acceptance of sexual minorities is lower, that is, the sense of social distance is far. In addition, the explanatory power of the model with only demographic variables entered was low as it turned out to be 8.2%(Adjusted R^2 = .049), which was not significant at the significance level.

As for Model 2, which is a Full Model, demographic variables from Model 1 were entered as control variables, and whether training was conducted on social minorities, presence or absence of friends who are sexual minorities, negative stereotypes and negative emotions were entered. Examining the results of Model 2, it was shown that the social minorities related training experience(β=0.290 p<.1), negative stereotypes (β=0.046 p<.1) and negative emotions(β=0.173 p<.001) had a significant influence on the sense of social distance towards the sexual minority. That is, the more those who have been trained on social minorities, the less the sense of social distance towards the sexual minorities. In addition, the higher negative stereotypes and negative emotions towards the sexual minorities, the more difficult it is for the police trainees to accept the sexual minorities. The explanatory power of Full Model was very high as it turned out to be 71.3%(Adjusted R^2 = .690), which was statistically significant at the significance level of p<.001.

Table 1. Correlates of social distance towards the LGBT among South Korean newly recruited policemen(n=228).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.971</td>
<td>2.363*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.598</td>
<td>-1.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>1.045</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
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<td>-0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence or absence of training experience.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence or absence of friends who are sexual minorities</td>
<td>-0.131</td>
<td>-0.539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant value</td>
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<td>6.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R^2</td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td>0.713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adg R^2</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F(sig)</td>
<td>2.427</td>
<td>32.221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.1, *p<.05, **p<.005, ***p<.001
5. Conclusion and Implication

The sense of social distance did not manifest a clear hierarchical priority, but the average value of the questions about acceptability as a family member turned out to be relatively low. It may be burdensome for a sexual minority to become family, but it can be seen that there is no significant influence if that event has no direct relation to him or herself. Since most respondents are in their 20s and 30s, it can be seen that the acceptance turned out to be high. However, the respondents will be appointed officially upon the completion of the training period, will become police officers and face sexual minorities in the line of their duty. Accordingly, it is necessary to train them on how to care for them and run programs to train them on how to deliver the necessary knowledge.

As a result of the study, it was discovered that there is a difference in the sense of social distance towards sexual minorities according to gender. For the males, the distance turned out to be greater, and the sense of social distance varied according to religion. In addition, it turned out to be the higher the negative stereotypes, and the higher the negative emotions, the larger the sense of social distance towards the sexual minorities.

What is noticeable is that, approximately 76% of the respondents said that they did not know what LGBT stands for among the perceptions of the police trainees towards the sexual minorities. On the other hand, 74% and 82% of them answered that they were aware of the questions related to queer festivals or the definition of sexual minorities, demonstrating high percentages. Such conflicting results may attribute to the familiarization with the words of 'queer festival' presented in the media recently and 'sexual minorities' being a social issue. However, the training programs provided to the trainees cover very little on the human rights related matters, and there is even a greater lack of the education for the socially weak including the sexual minorities.

Accordingly, it is very likely that stereotypes and negative perceptions towards minorities will likely solidify as an unilateral image drawn from personal experiences, contacts, or colleagues when they enter the line of their duty without undergoing such training at the stage of police trainee. This may also likely lead to prejudices or distorted ideas about sexual minorities depending on the individual's learning method. In severe cases, we could deny the possibility of judging sexual minorities as inferior beings or learning them as abnormal beings.

The significance of training and education is as important as the future of a nation. As such, the preliminary police officers should not only concentrate on traditional education such as prevention of corruption and ethics education but also various types of conflicts facing our society and what will be required for service by the citizens. While there are many qualities of police officers required by the citizens today, it must be overlooked that they also require the abilities to recognize and care for the minorities.

6. References

6.1. Journal articles


6.2. Thesis degree


6.3. Books


6.4. Additional references


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