



Department of Socialwork

Report Submission: 17/07/2026

Semester:	EVEN	Academic Year:	2025-26	Venue:	Main Auditorium, Acharya Institutes
Event Date:	23/06/2026 & 29/06/2026	Time:	10:30AM TO 04:30PM	Duration:	6 Hrs

TYPE OF EVENT: AWARENESS PROGRAM

EVENT NAME: Pride Week 2026 - Voices of Pride: Stories, Challenges and Triumphs" & Theatre Performance "Talki"

Target Audience:	Students of AIGS	Number of Participants:	60
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Objectives:

1. To create awareness about LGBTQIA+ inclusion, transgender rights, and human dignity.
2. To provide a platform for dialogue and interaction with community leaders, activists, and professionals.
3. To sensitize students towards the lived experiences, challenges, and achievements of LGBTQIA+ and intersex communities.
4. To promote diversity, equality, inclusion, and social justice through academic and cultural interventions.
5. To encourage critical reflection and empathy among future social work professionals.

Program Introduction:

As part of Pride Week 2026, the Department of Social Work, Acharya Institute of Graduate Studies (AIGS), organized two significant programmes aimed at promoting awareness, inclusion, and social justice. The first event was a Panel Discussion titled "Voices of Pride: Stories, Challenges and Triumphs" held on 23 June 2026, followed by a Theatre Performance titled "Talki" by Payana Theatre Artists on 29 June 2026.

The programmes were designed to provide students with opportunities to engage with lived experiences, understand issues related to gender diversity and inclusion, and develop greater sensitivity towards marginalized communities. Through dialogue, storytelling, documentary screening, and theatre, students were encouraged to critically reflect on issues of equality, dignity, and human rights.



Theme of the Event:

"Celebrating Diversity, Inclusion, Equality and Human Dignity"

The theme emphasized the importance of creating inclusive spaces where individuals are respected regardless of their gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. It reflected the values of social justice, human rights, and diversity that are central to social work education and practice.

Resource Person:

- Dr. Akkai Padmashali, Founder, Ondede, Bengaluru; Member Advisor to the Supreme Court of India for Drafting Equal Opportunity Policy for Transgender Persons in India.
- Ms. Rakshitha, Director, Ondede, Bengaluru.
- Ms. Abeda Begum, President, Karnataka Intersex Association, Raichur.
- Payana Theatre Artists, Bengaluru.

Detailed Report:

The Department of Social Work, Acharya Institute of Graduate Studies (AIGS), successfully organized Pride Week 2026 with the objective of promoting awareness, inclusion, equality, and respect for diversity through meaningful academic and cultural engagements. The week-long observance was conceptualized as an educational initiative to sensitize students towards issues related to gender identity, sexual orientation, human rights, and social inclusion. It aimed to create a safe space for dialogue, reflection, and learning while reinforcing the values of diversity, equity, and acceptance within the academic community.

The observance comprised two major events: a Panel Discussion titled "Voices of Pride: Stories, Challenges and Triumphs" on 23 June 2026 and a Theatre Performance titled "Talki" by Payana Theatre Artists on 29 June 2026. Both programmes were thoughtfully designed to provide students with experiential learning opportunities that aligned with the core values of the social work profession—social justice, human rights, dignity and worth of the individual, professional integrity, and respect for diversity. The programmes also reflected the institution's commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment where every individual is respected regardless of their identity or background.

The first programme commenced with an invocation rendered by the students, creating a respectful and positive atmosphere for the day's proceedings. This was followed by a warm welcome extended to the dignitaries, keynote speaker, panelists, faculty members, students, and invited guests. The programme was formally inaugurated with the traditional lighting of the lamp, symbolizing



enlightenment, equality, hope, and the collective commitment towards building an inclusive and compassionate society. The inaugural ceremony set the tone for a day dedicated to meaningful conversations on diversity and social justice.

The Keynote Address was delivered by Dr. Gurunath Rao Vaidya, Principal, Acharya Institute of Graduate Studies, who emphasized that institutions of higher education have a significant responsibility in nurturing socially conscious graduates capable of contributing to an equitable society. He highlighted that classrooms should serve not only as spaces for academic learning but also as environments where empathy, mutual respect, and inclusion are actively practiced. He encouraged students to challenge stereotypes, appreciate diversity in all its forms, and become responsible professionals committed to protecting human dignity and promoting social justice through their personal and professional actions.

The Chief Guest Address was delivered by Dr. Akkai Padmashali, Founder of Ondede, Bengaluru, and Member Advisor to the Supreme Court of India for drafting the Equal Opportunity Policy for Transgender Persons in India. Through her inspiring and deeply personal address, she shared her life journey, highlighting the struggles, discrimination, resilience, and achievements of the transgender community. She sensitized participants to the realities faced by transgender persons in accessing education, employment, healthcare, housing, and social acceptance. Drawing attention to constitutional values, legal protections, and the importance of equal opportunities, she urged students to become allies who advocate for inclusion, challenge discrimination, and uphold the values of humanity in both their professional and personal lives. Her interaction inspired students to reflect upon their own attitudes and responsibilities towards creating an equitable society.

Following the inaugural session, a documentary screening was conducted to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the lived realities experienced by LGBTQIA+ communities. The documentary served as a powerful educational resource, enabling students to appreciate the emotional, psychological, social, cultural, and structural challenges encountered by individuals because of prejudice, exclusion, stigma, and discrimination. It also highlighted inspiring stories of resilience, identity, hope, advocacy, and empowerment. The screening created an emotional connection with the audience and established an appropriate context for the panel discussion that followed, encouraging participants to critically examine societal attitudes and systemic inequalities.

The panel discussion, titled "Voices of Pride: Stories, Challenges and Triumphs," was moderated by Mr. Mohammed Swaroop, Faculty of Psychology, who effectively facilitated a thoughtful, respectful, and engaging dialogue among the speakers and participants. The discussion featured distinguished panelists including Dr. Akkai Padmashali, Ms. Rakshitha, Director of Ondede,



Bengaluru, and Ms. Abeda Begum, President of the Karnataka Intersex Association, Raichur. Each panelist shared valuable perspectives based on their lived experiences, community engagement, advocacy work, and professional expertise with LGBTQIA+ communities. The discussion covered a broad spectrum of issues including gender identity, sexual orientation, social exclusion, family acceptance, mental health, education, employment opportunities, legal rights, policy advocacy, healthcare accessibility, media representation, and the role of educational institutions in fostering inclusive environments. The panelists also emphasized the importance of affirmative practices, inclusive language, gender-sensitive policies, and community participation in reducing discrimination and promoting equal opportunities.

Students actively participated throughout the session by raising thoughtful and socially relevant questions, leading to meaningful discussions that challenged myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes while promoting empathy, critical thinking, and understanding. The interactive nature of the session encouraged participants to engage in reflective learning and strengthened their awareness of the ethical responsibilities associated with working with diverse populations as future social work professionals. The discussion also reinforced the significance of intersectionality in understanding the multiple dimensions of identity, discrimination, and social exclusion.

The programme concluded with a formal vote of thanks, expressing sincere gratitude to the Chief Guest, keynote speaker, panelists, moderator, institutional leadership, faculty members, student volunteers, organizing committee, and all participants for their valuable contributions. The panel discussion successfully created a safe and inclusive platform where meaningful dialogue replaced stereotypes, awareness replaced prejudice, and understanding replaced misconceptions. The event left a lasting impact on participants by encouraging openness, compassion, and respect for diversity.

The second programme of Pride Week was organized on 29 June 2026 in the form of a theatre performance titled "Talki" by the renowned Payana Theatre Artists. Theatre, as an effective medium of education, advocacy, and social transformation, has the unique ability to communicate complex social realities through emotion, creativity, symbolism, and storytelling. Recognizing the transformative potential of performing arts, the Department of Social Work intentionally included this cultural programme to complement the academic discussions initiated during the panel discussion and to provide participants with a different yet equally impactful learning experience.

The performance explored themes of identity, belonging, discrimination, acceptance, gender diversity, social exclusion, resilience, and human dignity through compelling narratives and expressive performances. The artists portrayed the emotional and social realities of marginalized communities with remarkable authenticity, enabling the audience to connect deeply with the characters



and their lived experiences. Through humour, emotion, symbolism, and powerful storytelling, the performance challenged deeply rooted stereotypes, questioned societal prejudices, and encouraged participants to critically reflect on prevailing attitudes towards diversity, inclusion, and equality. The artistic presentation effectively demonstrated how theatre can become a powerful catalyst for social awareness and behavioural change.

Students and faculty members remained actively engaged throughout the performance, responding positively to the messages conveyed through theatre. The audience appreciated the creative portrayal of sensitive social issues and acknowledged the role of performing arts in promoting empathy and social consciousness. The interactive session following the performance enabled participants to discuss their reflections, clarify their perspectives, and engage directly with the theatre artists regarding the themes presented. This interaction further reinforced the importance of empathy, acceptance, dialogue, and collective responsibility in building an inclusive society where diversity is celebrated rather than marginalized.

Both programmes witnessed enthusiastic participation from students and faculty members representing various departments of Acharya Institute of Graduate Studies. The multidisciplinary participation enriched the discussions by bringing together diverse perspectives and encouraging collaborative learning across disciplines. The combination of expert-led discussions, documentary screening, lived experiences, interactive dialogue, and theatre created a holistic learning environment that encouraged participants to critically examine issues related to gender diversity, equality, inclusion, human rights, and social justice from multiple perspectives.

The programmes significantly contributed to strengthening students' understanding of contemporary social issues while enhancing their sensitivity towards marginalized communities. They also reinforced essential professional competencies such as empathy, cultural competence, ethical decision-making, critical reflection, advocacy, effective communication, and respect for human rights; qualities that are fundamental to the practice of professional social work.

Overall, Pride Week 2026 successfully fulfilled its objective of creating awareness, fostering meaningful dialogue, and promoting a culture of inclusion within the institution. The programmes not only enriched students' academic understanding but also inspired them to become compassionate, ethical, socially responsible, and rights-based professionals who uphold the principles of equality, dignity, diversity, and justice in their future social work practice. The successful organization of Pride Week reaffirmed the Department of Social Work's continued commitment to creating educational spaces that celebrate diversity, encourage inclusive thinking, and prepare students to contribute positively towards building a just, equitable, and inclusive society.

PHOTOS



Inauguration of Pride Week 2026



Panel Discussion on “Voices of Pride: Stories, Challenges and Triumphs”



Dignitaries addressing the Participants



Participants at the Auditorium



ACHARYA INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(NAAC Re-accredited 'A+' and Affiliated to Dr. Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University)
Soladevanahalli, Bengaluru-560107



Q & A Session



Facilitating the Chief Guest



Group Photo with the Panelist and Chief guest



Theatre performance by Payana Theatre Artists



Theatre performance by Payana Theatre Artists



Group photo with the Payana Theatre Artists

Outcome:

- Students gained a deeper understanding of LGBTQIA+, transgender, and intersex issues.
- Participants developed greater sensitivity towards diversity, inclusion, and human rights.
- The panel discussion provided first-hand insights into the lived experiences and challenges faced by marginalized communities.
- The theatre performance encouraged critical reflection and empathy through creative expression.
- Students were motivated to challenge stereotypes and promote equality and social justice in their personal and professional lives.
- The programmes strengthened the values of respect, dignity, acceptance, and social responsibility among participants.

Conclusion:

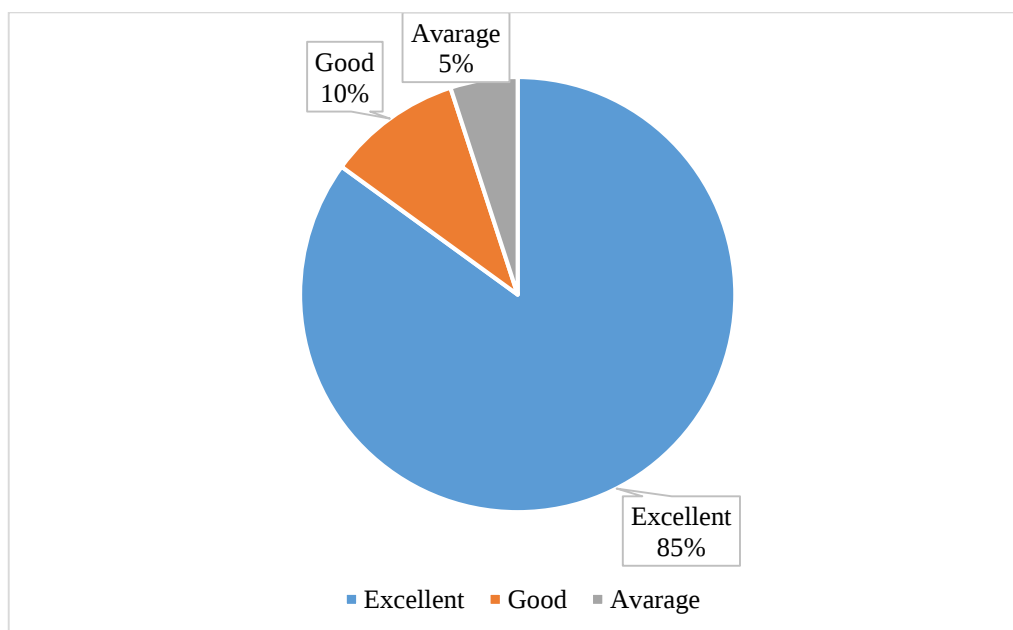
The Pride Week 2026 programmes successfully created a platform for awareness, dialogue, reflection, and learning. Through the panel discussion and theatre performance, students were exposed to diverse perspectives and real-life experiences that enhanced their understanding of inclusion and social justice.



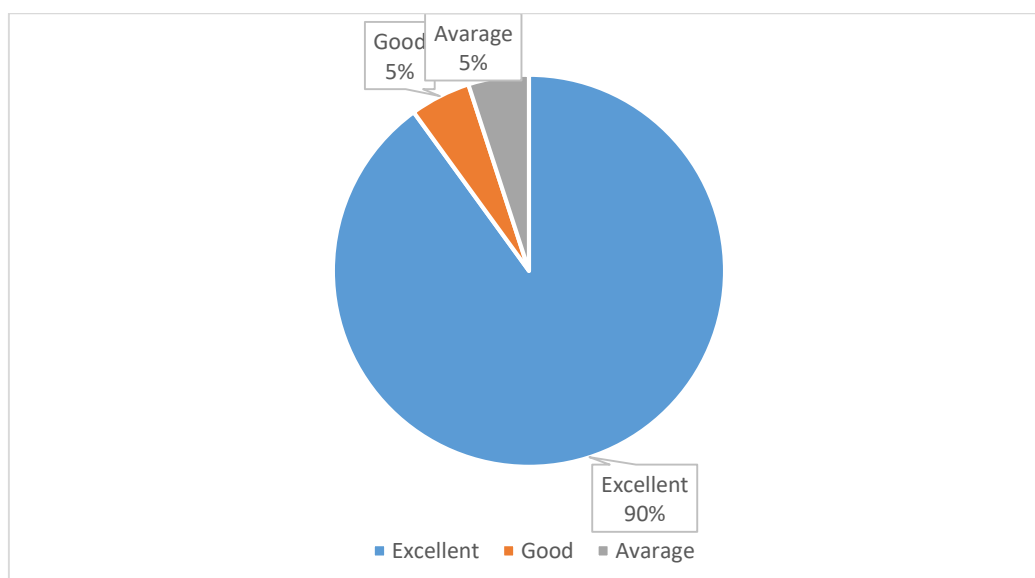
The events reinforced the commitment of the Department of Social Work towards promoting diversity, equality, and human dignity while preparing socially conscious and responsible professionals. Pride Week 2026 served as a meaningful initiative that encouraged students to become advocates for inclusive and equitable communities.

Student feedback summary

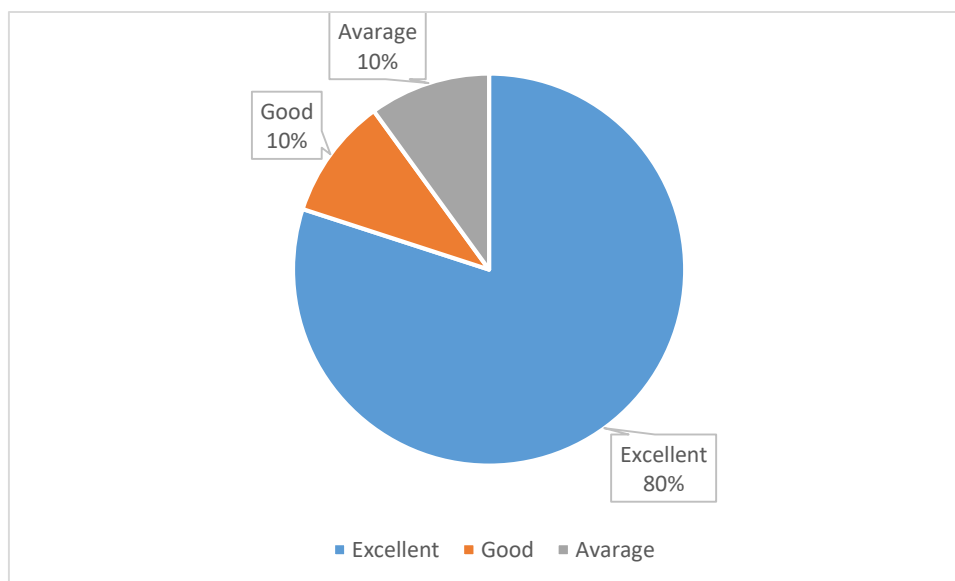
CONTENT AND RELEVANCE OF THE PROGRAM



PRACTICAL INSIGHTS AND APPLICATIONS



OVERALL EXPERIENCE



Feedback Analysis and Interpretation

The feedback analysis reflects a highly positive response from the participants regarding the programme. The overall responses indicate that the programme was well planned, relevant, and successful in meeting the learning expectations of the participants.

In terms of Content and Relevance of the Programme, 85% of the participants rated the programme as Excellent, 10% as Good, and 5% as Average. This indicates that the majority of the participants found the content to be informative, relevant, and aligned with the objectives of the programme, while a small proportion felt there was scope for further enhancement.

The Practical Insights and Applications component received an outstanding response, with 90% of the participants rating it as Excellent, 5% as Good, and 5% as Average. This demonstrates that the programme effectively translated theoretical concepts into practical knowledge, enabling participants to gain meaningful insights that can be applied in real-life and professional settings.

Regarding the Overall Experience, 80% of the participants rated the programme as Excellent, 10% as Good, and 10% as Average. These responses suggest that the participants were highly satisfied with the overall organization, delivery, and learning experience, although a small percentage indicated opportunities for further improvement.

Overall, the feedback findings clearly demonstrate that the programme was well received and successfully achieved its intended objectives. The high percentage of Excellent ratings across all parameters reflects the quality of the programme, the effectiveness of its delivery, and its positive impact on the participants. The constructive feedback from participants who rated the programme as Good or Average provides valuable insights for further strengthening future programmes.