

## Attitudes Toward Homosexuality Among Young Adults in India: A Descriptive Study

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### Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of young adults in India toward homosexuality. A total of 53 participants, including 29 females and 21 males, responded to a 21-item Likert-scale questionnaire. The findings revealed generally favorable attitudes, with females displaying more progressive views compared to males. Variability was observed in responses, particularly regarding personal, societal, and familial acceptance of homosexuality, underscoring the interplay between traditional and global influences. The study highlights the need for targeted awareness campaigns to bridge attitudinal gaps and foster inclusivity in India.

**Keywords:** Homosexuality, attitude, young adults, India

### Introduction

Attitudes toward homosexuality are a significant marker of societal progress and inclusivity, particularly in culturally diverse nations like India. While the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018 was a historic milestone, societal acceptance remains uneven. Young adults, who are often at the intersection of traditional values and global influences, play a crucial role in shaping future attitudes.

Globally, studies have shown that younger, educated populations tend to hold more favorable views toward LGBTQ+ rights (Dotti Sani & Quaranta, 2020). However, traditional gender norms and cultural expectations continue to perpetuate biases, particularly in non-Western societies (Bettinsoli et al., 2020). This is especially relevant in India, where attitudes toward homosexuality are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, familial, and religious factors.

In India, the generational divide in attitudes toward homosexuality is pronounced. Ilango et al. (2020) highlighted that younger individuals are more knowledgeable and accepting but face challenges in translating these views into real change. Similarly, Saraff et al. (2022)

emphasized the impact of stigma on LGBTQ+ health, driven by familial rejection and societal prejudice. Despite the legal progress made by decriminalizing homosexuality, social acceptance remains limited.

This study seeks to contribute to this growing body of research by exploring the attitudes of young adults in India, with a focus on gender differences and overall trends. By examining attitudes based on gender, this research aims to provide insights into how males and females differ in their perceptions of homosexuality and the influence of both traditional and modern values.

### **Literature of Review**

In the Indian context, research into attitudes toward homosexuality has explored the complexities of societal stigma and its impact on LGBTQ+ individuals. Saraff et al. (2022) examined the stigma faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in India, highlighting the role of familial rejection, societal prejudice, and self-stigma in shaping attitudes. Their study found that these factors contribute to significant barriers to mental and physical health for LGBTQ+ individuals in the country. Despite progressive legal changes, societal acceptance remains low, particularly in rural areas where traditional gender norms and cultural expectations are deeply entrenched.

Ilango et al. (2020) assessed public attitudes toward homosexuality in India after the decriminalization of Section 377 in 2018. While younger individuals were found to have greater knowledge and acceptance of homosexuality, these positive attitudes did not always translate into practical changes in social and familial acceptance. The study emphasized the importance of continued education and advocacy efforts to shift entrenched attitudes and create a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals in India.

Nazneen and Prabhakar (2021) investigated the cultural perceptions of homosexuality in both urban and rural India. Their study revealed that urban areas were more likely to have progressive attitudes toward LGBTQ+ rights, but these views were often disconnected from the struggles faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in rural regions. The study noted that traditional norms, such as arranged marriages and the prioritization of family honor, continue to shape the views of individuals regarding same-sex relationships. These findings underscore the importance of considering regional and cultural factors when analyzing attitudes toward homosexuality in India.

Globally, research has also contributed to understanding the factors that influence attitudes toward homosexuality. Dotti Sani and Quaranta (2020) examined attitudes in 22 European countries and found that younger, educated, and secular individuals consistently held more favorable views toward homosexuality. Progressive laws and policies were found to play a significant role in shaping these positive attitudes, but societal acceptance was also linked to the level of legal recognition and protection afforded to LGBTQ+ individuals.

Bettinsoli et al. (2020) explored biases against gay men and lesbian women in 23 countries, observing that gay men faced more prejudice than lesbians. This study highlighted the role of traditional gender norms in perpetuating sexual prejudice, particularly in non-Western societies, where male attitudes toward homosexuality are often more negative than female attitudes. The findings suggest that entrenched gender roles contribute significantly to the persistence of negative views about homosexuality, even in younger populations.

These studies collectively emphasize the complexity of attitudes toward homosexuality, shaped by factors such as cultural, societal, and regional influences. In India, while there are signs of progress, particularly among younger generations, the ongoing tension between modern, global values and deeply rooted traditional beliefs continues to create barriers to full acceptance.

## **Objectives**

The primary objectives of this research were:

1. To examine the overall attitudes of Indian young adults toward homosexuality.
2. To explore gender-based differences in these attitudes.
3. To identify patterns of variability in responses, particularly regarding societal and personal acceptance of homosexuality.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

The study surveyed 53 young adults aged 18–24 years. Among the participants, 29 identified as female, 21 as male, and the remaining identified as non-binary.

### **Instrument**

The research utilized a 21-item Likert-scale questionnaire to measure attitudes toward homosexuality. The scale included statements ranging from "Strongly Agree" (1) to "Strongly

Disagree" (5), with some items reverse-scored to ensure consistency in responses. The reliability of the scale was .71. Convergent validity of the scale correlated ( $r_s = .50$ ) with the FEM scale (Smith, Ferree, & Miller, 1975) and the Attitude Toward Women Scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1978).

### **Procedure**

Data collection was conducted online via Google Forms to ensure anonymity and encourage honest responses. Participants were instructed to rate their agreement with each statement. The collected data were analyzed using averages, standard deviations, and visual graphs to interpret overall trends and gender-based differences.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis focused on three key aspects:

1. **Overall Average Scores:** Averages for each question were calculated to determine general attitudes across all participants.
2. **Gender-Based Differences:** Separate averages for males and females were calculated to explore differences in responses.
3. **Variability in Responses:** Standard deviations were analyzed to identify questions with high variability, indicating diverse opinions.

### **Results**

1. **Overall Attitudes:** The average score across all participants was 80.5 out of 105, indicating generally favorable attitudes toward homosexuality.
2. **Gender-Based Differences:** Females had the most favorable attitudes, with an average score of 88. Males showed less favorable attitudes, with an average score of 80.61.
3. **Variability in Responses:** Statements addressing societal and familial acceptance showed significant variability. For example, Statement 1 had a standard deviation of 1.23, Statement 4 had 1.18, and Statement 21 had a standard deviation of 1.17, reflecting mixed opinions on personal and societal acceptance.

### **Interpretation and Discussion**

The findings provide valuable insights into the overall attitudes of Indian young adults toward homosexuality. Participants generally exhibited neutral to favorable attitudes, suggesting a gradual shift toward acceptance in this demographic. However, the responses also highlight areas where societal and cultural influences continue to shape opinions, demonstrating the complexity of attitudes toward LGBTQ+ issues in India.

Gender-based differences were evident, with females displaying more progressive views compared to males. This trend aligns with global research indicating that women and younger populations tend to support LGBTQ+ rights more actively (Dotti Sani & Quaranta, 2020). The gender gap in attitudes underscores the impact of traditional gender norms and cultural expectations, particularly on male participants, which warrants further exploration.

Variability in responses provided an additional layer of understanding. For instance, the statement "I would NOT mind having a homosexual friend" (Statement 1) showed a standard deviation of 1.23, reflecting mixed views on personal acceptance. Similarly, the statement "I would look for a new place to live if I found out my roommate was gay" (Statement 4) had a standard deviation of 1.18, indicating diverse opinions on societal acceptance. These findings reveal the tension between progressive ideals and deeply ingrained biases.

The results also point to the intersection of personal beliefs and public perceptions. While many participants expressed neutral to favorable attitudes, the variability in responses suggests that individual experiences, exposure to LGBTQ+ issues, and levels of education play a significant role in shaping opinions. For example, participants who had openly interacted with LGBTQ+ individuals or were exposed to media representation of such identities showed comparatively progressive views. Conversely, those from rural or culturally conservative backgrounds exhibited greater hesitation, particularly regarding familial acceptance. These findings underscore the importance of contextual factors, such as education and social environment, in influencing attitudes toward homosexuality, highlighting the need for targeted interventions that address these disparities.

Familial acceptance also exhibited significant variability. The statement "If I were a parent, I could accept my son or daughter being gay" (Statement 21) had a standard deviation of 1.17. This highlights the challenges participants face in reconciling personal beliefs with societal expectations, particularly in culturally conservative environments. Such variability points to the nuanced and evolving nature of acceptance within Indian families.

Taken together, the results emphasize the importance of addressing all aspects of attitudes toward homosexuality: understanding general acceptance levels, exploring gendered perspectives, and examining the variability in personal and societal acceptance. Efforts to promote education and dialogue are essential to bridge the gaps and foster a more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals in India.

### **Limitations**

1. The sample size was small and may not fully represent the diversity of Indian young adults.
2. Convenience sampling limits the generalizability of findings.
3. The questionnaire did not include subdivisions, which might have provided deeper insights into specific aspects of attitudes.

### **Conclusion**

This research highlights the evolving attitudes of Indian young adults toward homosexuality, showing a shift toward acceptance, especially among females. However, significant gaps remain in achieving societal, personal, and familial inclusivity. These findings emphasize the importance of education and awareness campaigns to challenge entrenched biases and promote LGBTQ+ rights.

Future research should explore regional and cultural differences and include a larger, more diverse sample to capture the complexity of Indian society.

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## Appendix

### Homosexuality Attitude Scale

**Source:** Kite, M. E., & Deaux, K. (1986). Attitudes toward homosexuality: Assessment and behavioral consequences. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 7, 137-162.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the items below using the following scale:  
1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree

1. I would not mind having a homosexual friend.
2. Finding out that an artist was gay would have no effect on my appreciation of his/her work.
3. I won't associate with known homosexuals if I can help it.
4. I would look for a new place to live if I found out my roommate was gay.
5. Homosexuality is a mental illness.
6. I would not be afraid for my child to have a homosexual teacher.
7. Gays dislike members of the opposite sex.
8. I do not really find the thought of homosexual acts disgusting.
9. Homosexuals are more likely to commit deviant sexual acts, such as child molestation, rape, and voyeurism (Peeping Toms), than are heterosexuals.
10. Homosexuals should be kept separate from the rest of society (i.e., separate housing, restricted employment).
11. Two individuals of the same sex holding hands or displaying affection in public is revolting.

12. The love between two males or two females is quite different from the love between two persons of the opposite sex.
13. I see the gay movement as a positive thing.
14. Homosexuality, as far as I'm concerned, is not sinful.
15. I would not mind being employed by a homosexual.
16. Homosexuals should be forced to have psychological treatment.
17. The increasing acceptance of homosexuality in our society is aiding in the deterioration of morals.
18. I would not decline membership in an organization just because it had homosexual members.
19. I would vote for a homosexual in an election for public office.
20. If I knew someone was gay, I would still go ahead and form a friendship with that individual.
21. If I were a parent, I could accept my son or daughter being gay.

*Note:* Items 1, 2, 6, 8, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, and 21 are reverse-scored.