

Family Dynamics, Mental Health, and Pathways to Inclusive & Sustainable Entrepreneurship among LGBTQ+ Youth in India

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Abstract:

Purpose: to investigate how LGBTQ+ youngsters' involvement in inclusive and sustainable business in India is influenced by family dynamics and psychological health. The study highlights implications for social innovation, policy, and governance by establishing a connection between home surroundings and entrepreneurial intention/behavior, access to entrepreneurial ecosystems, and usage of digital platforms for revenue generation.

Methodology: Five comprehensive case studies of LGBTQ+ youth were used in this qualitative multiple-case approach. A codebook that recorded (i) family acceptance/rejection and coping, (ii) resilience and mental health, (iii) entrepreneurial intention and self-efficacy, (iv) digital transformation in livelihood strategies (e.g., content creation, freelancing), and (v) ecosystem touchpoints (NGOs, incubators, finance, workplace policies) was used to thematically analyze the interviews.

Findings: Long-term participation in micro- and digital entrepreneurship, improved mental health, and increased entrepreneurial confidence are all linked to supportive families, sometimes known as "chosen families." Higher levels of anxiety and disengagement from opportunity pipelines are associated with conservative or forceful family relations. Greater visibility and NGO/intermediary assistance are provided by urban ecosystems; yet, there are still enduring shortages in supplier access, inclusive funding, and mental health services within incubators and workplaces. When there are resources available, young people use their abilities to launch social-innovation projects and demonstrate early stages of sustainable or circular endeavors (e.g., repair, resale, eco-focused services).

Practical implications: Ecosystem players could increase supplier diversity and inclusive procurement, implement impact-oriented microfinance and investment aimed at LGBTQ+-led businesses, and integrate anti-discrimination and mental health services into incubators. Local ecosystems can be strengthened by policymakers through inclusive credit structures, targeted grants, and legal safeguards. To increase market access, corporations should connect ethics and governance with DEI principles. Universities and non-governmental organizations can offer training in digital skills and entrepreneurship related to climate and cyclical opportunity areas.

Originality/Value: The study combines research on families and mental health with inclusive/sustainable entrepreneurship. It provides a case-based model that shows how family acceptance leads to psychological well-being, which in turn leads to entrepreneurial self-efficacy and participation, with ecosystem supports and digital affordances acting as moderators. In an Indian setting, it offers practical levers for practice and policy.

Keywords: Inclusive entrepreneurship; LGBTQ+ youth; Family dynamics; Mental health; Entrepreneurial ecosystem; Digital transformation.

Paper type: Case study.

Introduction

Homosexuality refers to the aspect or nature of humans in which the same genders feel attracted towards each other in both physical and mental ways. This particular trait of humans is seen as very common for ages, however, in recent years, such groups of people have been facing much humiliation and disrespect from the existing society (Lin *et al.*, 2021). Specifying Indian history there lies a number of evidences in the form of portraits and paintings that showcase and prove the existence of this type of individual in the past time. Discrimination against the system of homosexuality was mainly imported

from the Western culture through Islam and Christian-derived morality during European colonialism (Zaharin *et al.*, 2022). It primarily started in the second millennium and culminated in the 17th-century Fatawa-e-Alamgiri of the Mughal Empire and the 17th-century Indian Penal Code of the British Empire.

At a recent point in time, a new term was identified by the Indian government (**LGBTQ+**) which stands for the acronym for **Lebian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and others**.



Figure 1: LGBTQ+ Symbolism- Using Rainbow Flag

Source: [ndtv.com](https://www.ndtv.com), (2018)

After a long struggle in the form of movements, rallies and demonstrations the said community successfully received their legal rights in year 2018 through the Constitution of India. **Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code** was acknowledged by the Indian government guaranteeing social, economic, and political justice thereby accepting their claim of “We the people of India” (timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 2022).

The individual belonging to the community of LGBTQ is presently seen to get involved in a number

of professional and occupational activities in various profound business organisations. Such involvement of them is not only resulting in the Indian GDP growth but also portrayed the open and wide mindset of the people residing within the economic sector of India. It is further reflecting the idea of equality and respect for all genders in the international scenario. Even in comparison to countries like Japan, Malaysia and Russia, the government of India is supporting the societal marriage of same-sex people.

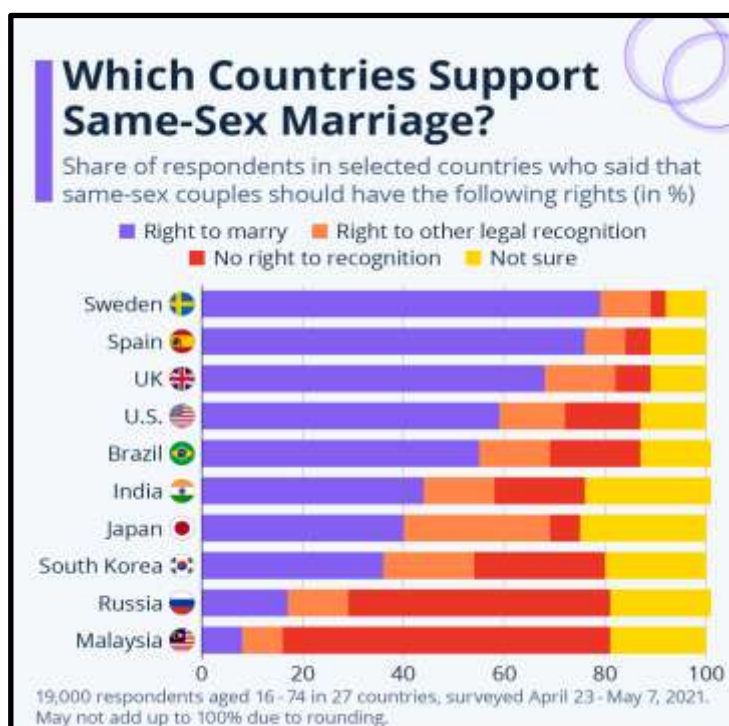


Figure 2: Indian Government Supporting same-sex marriage

(Source: [Statista.com](https://www.statista.com), 2024)

The aforementioned graphical presentation provides clear evidence of the practice of the Indian constitution towards supporting the concept of same-sex marriage thereby showing huge respect to

the LGBTQ community. More than 40% of the individuals residing in the economy support these couples thereby helping them to lead a happy life ahead. From the said graph another section of people

has been **shown in red** according to whom they have to no right to marry the same gender and get recognized in the society [*Referred to Figure 2*]. In this context, one of the pivotal factors lies in the family dynamics and the way of living and mindset of the Indian people.

Such a group of people do not want to accept that humans of the same gender and sex may attract towards each other and this is something very natural and not a medical issue. The science and logic behind the hormonal imbalance during the time of birth creating such feelings and sexuality of the individuals are seen to remain unrevealed to such people (Tokatli *et al.*, 2022).

The said family dynamics of the Indian residents are lastly creating a negative impact on the mental health and well-being of the LGBTQ people (especially the youths). Almost **135 reports of suicides have been reported** within India for the basic reason of families not accepting same-sex relationships. Almost **54.5% of the individuals who committed suicide were associated with huge mental stress due to the humiliation, disrespect and embarrassment** they faced from their close ones and society (Kar *et al.*, 2023). Besides these many youths of India seem to undergo physical violence and torture by their elders and family members for revealing their sexuality and mental intentions and attractions.

Overall, the main essence of the research lies and revolves around the impact of family dynamics on the mental health and well-being of the Indian youths belonging to the LGBTQ community. The below-mentioned sections will provide the objectives of the paper that will be the key component for reviewing the existing and past literature pertaining to the current topic. Apart from this research will also include sections related to methodology showcasing the methodological tools and procedures used by the respective researcher to provide justified comments and information in relation to the study domain. Moreover, the findings area of the paper will be analysing the founded results of case studies through proper asset and vindication. Lastly, the research will end with proper concluding comments which will be carried forward with implications of the information portrayed in the real world and scope of the same in the future. This study extends the conversation on LGBTQ+ mental health by exploring how supportive or hostile family dynamics affect entrepreneurial self-efficacy and participation. In doing so, it links personal well-being to inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship, digital livelihoods, and broader entrepreneurial ecosystems. By analysing these intersections, the paper identifies actionable levers for social innovation, policy reform, and ethical governance that can enhance equitable participation in India's evolving enterprise landscape.

Objectives of this study

The objectives of the research paper are as follows:

- To identify the family dynamics of the Indian towards the LGBTQ+ individuals
- To showcase the impact of family dynamics on the mental health and well-being of the LGBTQ+ youths in India
- To assess the atrocities and challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ youths in India for the humiliation and distress both mentally and physically
- To reveal the strategies that need to be implemented by the Indian government, LGBTQ+ youths and the residents in adopting and accepting the change in a fruitful manner

Literature review:

Family dynamics of the Indian towards the LGBTQ community

India, a country with numerous diverse customs and many cultures, can be stimulating for the LGBTQ+ people to mainly live in. This context also discovers the multifaceted associations found in several Indian homes and how generally they affect the LGBTQ+ youth's mental health and happiness. Alanko and Lund (2020), mainly state that **family Honour and Reputation** regarding the LGBTQ+ people majorly face serious consequences from the durable importance positioned on the family honour, as well as abuse, elimination, and even intimidation of their lives. LGBTQ+ youth face important stress due to the intensely rooted preparation of **decided weddings and the social expectancy of reproducing**, which regularly causes them to hide their individualities or arrive into the heterosexual relationships. Some Indian interreligious and several cultural traditions have outdated commencements of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, Rathus and Watson, (2021) also states that it is suitably marginalising LGBTQ+ personalities and generating an unreceptive environment within the families. LGBTQ+ youth in India often experience psychological stress, social exclusion, and stigma within their families, which can severely affect their emotional and mental well-being. Traditional family structures, deeply embedded in patriarchal and heteronormative norms, often fail to provide acceptance, support, or even safety for non-conforming individuals. Studies show that rejection by family members is linked to elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation among LGBTQ+ individuals. Conversely, affirming families serve as a crucial protective factor, helping to reduce mental distress and promote a sense of self-worth and belonging. However, there is limited research exploring how family-related psychological outcomes influence economic participation, including entrepreneurship. Most work focuses on health or social integration, overlooking how mental well-being affects entrepreneurial self-efficacy or access to income-generating pathways.

Inclusive and Sustainable Entrepreneurship

Inclusive entrepreneurship refers to efforts that aim to provide access to business opportunities for individuals or groups traditionally underrepresented in entrepreneurial ecosystems, including women, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and other marginalized communities. When linked to sustainability, it emphasizes ventures that not only promote economic participation but also contribute to positive social or environmental impact. In the Indian context, inclusive entrepreneurship is increasingly recognised as a tool to reduce inequality and stimulate innovation. It is closely aligned with global priorities such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). Inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship enables marginalized individuals to contribute their knowledge, creativity, and resilience toward building a more just, equitable, and environmentally responsive economy.

Digital Transformation and Livelihoods

Digital platforms have emerged as vital tools for self-employment, particularly for communities excluded from traditional job markets. For LGBTQ+ youth, digital transformation enables low-barrier participation in content creation, digital marketing, online retail, and freelance services through platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Fiverr, and Upwork. These platforms offer both economic opportunity and social visibility, allowing individuals to monetize skills and passions without facing the stigma of in-person discrimination. However, digital spaces also expose LGBTQ+ individuals to unique risks—including harassment, account takedowns, and content censorship. While digital tools expand opportunity, they also introduce vulnerabilities, particularly in the absence of strong content moderation standards, anti-abuse mechanisms, or platform support for LGBTQ+ creators. The success of digital livelihoods, therefore, depends on the presence of inclusive digital ecosystems and skill-building support.

Corporate Governance, Ethics, and Impact Investment

Corporate governance and ethical business practices are increasingly expected to include diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in both employment and supply chains. When companies implement inclusive procurement policies, LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs may access new markets and client bases that were previously out of reach. Ethical governance models

also set expectations for safe, inclusive work environments that respect gender diversity.

Impact investment—capital deployed with the intent to generate social or environmental impact alongside financial returns—is another growing lever to support inclusive entrepreneurship. However, most LGBTQ+-focused ventures remain underfunded due to bias or lack of visibility in investment circles. Building pipelines for LGBTQ+-led enterprises, and including identity-based metrics in impact assessments, are essential to unlocking their full contribution to the sustainable development agenda.

The Acceptance Spectrum

Although it also might be problematic, a growing quantity of numerous Indian families particularly those in many cities are implementing their LGBTQ+ issue. These relations suggest vital sustenance systems that encourage flexibility and several types of favourable consequences for mental health. [Parwani and Talukdar, \(2023\)](#) states that many families also fight with inconsistent feelings, separated between their love for mainly their child and the prospects of this society. LGBTQ+ youth may be involved in emotional disturbance and a government of uncertainty as a significant result of this uncertainty. Unfortunately, some families mainly reject their LGBTQ+ children completely, which has thoughtful consequences including rootlessness, drug misappropriation, and an advanced hazard of suicide.

Internalised homophobia, which is characterised by little self-esteem and self-hatred, can result from increasing up in a judgmental or refusing this environment ([Brown et al., 2020](#)). LGBTQ+ youth who are mainly afraid of being excluded are regularly left out of dynamic support schemes and wholesome influences due to this social isolation. Research has recurrently established that the LGBTQ+ children and youths from these dysfunctional homes are more probable to knowledge constituent misuse, sadness, anxiety, and suicide opinions ([Gaur et al., 2023](#)).

Impact of Family Dynamics on Mental health and Well-being of LGBTQ+ Youths in India

LGBTQ+ youth may internalise the social humiliation as a potential result of continuous compression to suit themselves, which can be significant in low self-assurance and self-hatred. There is a portion of disgrace against the LGBTQ+ youth in India, and this humiliation is connected to suicide opinions, desolation, and anxiety ([Gaur et al., 2023](#)).



Figure 3: Effects of Family Dynamics on LGBTQ+ Youths' Mental Health

Source: (Brown *et al.*, 2020)

According to Drabble and Eliason, (2021) an environment of confidentiality and privacy can result from the anxiety of being disallowed or avoided by several family members affecting the mental health meaningfully. This is also originating that LGBTQ+ youth in India who are mainly fearful of refusal from their relations are more probable to involve mental health difficulties. In many exciting cases, families might opt for involuntary marriages to 'correct' the apparent unconventionality from several societal norms, causing enormous psychological shock by Brown *et al.*, (2020) [Referred to figure 3]. Compulsory marriage is a serious problem in India, and the LGBTQ+ people are predominantly helpless.

A growing number of families, particularly in cities, are approaching relations with the detail that their LGBTQ+ children happen. These young common mental health issues are contingent on this provision. According to Alanko and Lund, (2020), LGBTQ+ children and youths who have helpful families are less likely to fight with mental health problems. A portion of families contract with a complex relationship of feelings, such as love, hesitation, and annoyance. This uncertainty may lead to emotional disturbance and a disorder of indecision. Families of the LGBTQ+ youth are usually in the center between being totally compliant and totally declining. Commerce with this uncertainty can be somewhat stimulating because it can make the LGBTQ+ youth feel disordered and unsupported.

Consequences for Mental Health

Increased Risk of Mental Health Disorders: Research uninterruptedly validates that the LGBTQ+

youth who face refusal or nonexistence of provision from their families have better rates of anxiety, dejection, and suicide opinions (Gaur *et al.*, 2023). As was beforehand established, the LGBTQ+ youth who are involved in rejection from their relations are more probable to involvement sadness, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts. Similarly, Alanko and Lund, (2020) some young people use constituent misappropriation as a coping approach to numb their emotional anguish. A predominant coping approach used by the LGBTQ+ children undergoing mental health problems is material misuse. Associated with their heterosexual peers, LGBTQ+ youth in the outer context were more likely to report material misuse.

Challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youths in India

According to Drabble and Eliason (2021), **Family Rejection** is one of the primary issues faced by LGBTQ+ people. Several LGBTQ+ youth in India experience disapproval from their families and close people because of deeply ingrained traditional beliefs. Such rejection can cause deep emotional suffering, loneliness, and an absence of care. The fear of being rejected or disconnected from their close people forces many people to hide their true feelings, causing a significant amount of emotional stress. Similarly, Ream and Peters (2021), have suggested that **Social Stigma and Discrimination** in Indian society against LGBTQ+ people cause multiple events of harassment. They faced mockery, assault, and rejection, in educational institutions and communities. Such continuous depressive treatment can lead to unworthy feelings and depression that will harm their psychological condition.

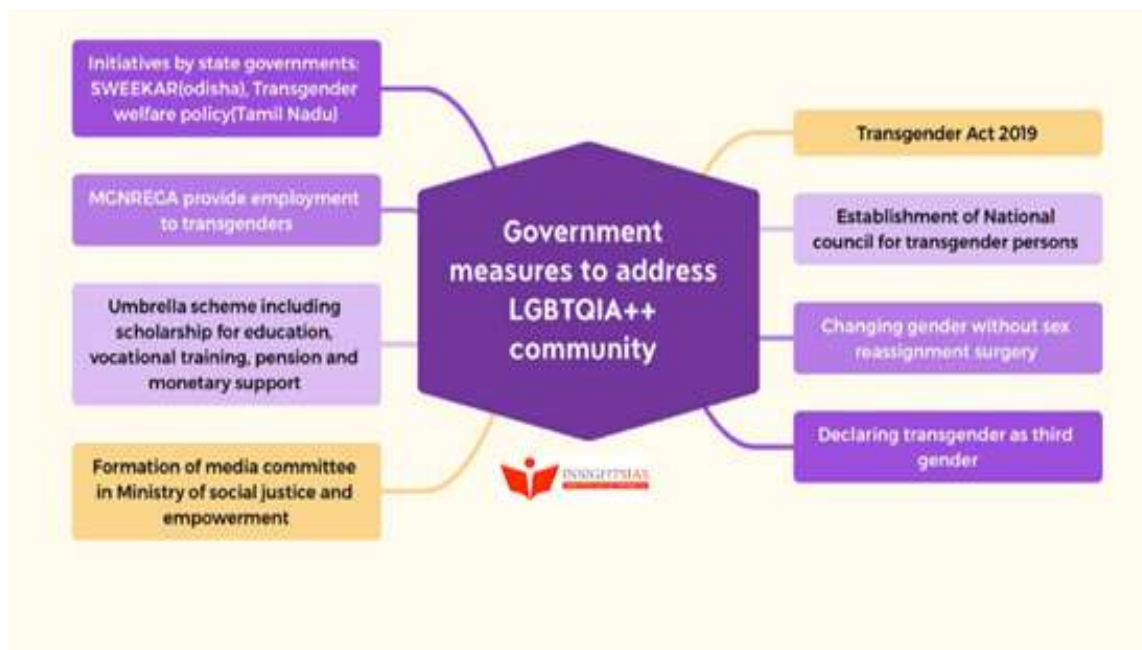


Figure 4: EDITORIAL ANALYSIS: A community and a health issue of concern

Source: (Wandrekar and Nigudkar, 2020)

Other than that, there is enormous stress on LGBTQ+ youth to **fit in with norms of the society**, which include marriage with heterosexual people. This pressure forces many people to conceal their true nature or commit to relationships that do not authentically reflect who they are, leading to personal disputes and psychological issues. On the perspective of Wandrekar and Nigudkar, (2020), **The legal protection** for Equal, gay, bisexual, Transsexual, Queer, plus (LGBTQ+) persons in India is very minimal. Homosexuality was decriminalized in India in 2018, but people continue to face legal issues provoked by their orientation, primarily regarding marriage and adoption. This lack of legal protection means the youths in this community remain open to being abused and discriminated against [Referred to Figure 4].

Craig *et al.*, (2021) also state the high rate of rejection by families, social isolation, and societal pressure could push the youths to develop **severe mental health issues**. It was found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are twice as likely to experience anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. These problems are compounded by a relative scarcity of affordable mental health care thus they struggle to get the assistance they require. As much as other youths, members of the LGBTQ community experience **Substance Abuse** like severe stress and emotional suffering, and to manage it, some of them may engage in dreadful habits (Drabble and Eliason, 2021). This negative coping style makes them develop a dependence and exacerbates their mental and physical health. They fail to seek help due to the cultural bias in the society that frowns at gay and lesbian individuals and substance use.

Strategies to mitigate the challenges

Similarly, Craig *et al.*, (2021) suggested that action is needed in educating **families regarding issues** to do with the LGBTQ+ population. Sometimes families learn that sexual orientation and gender identity are innate and diverse and may change their attitudes. Families with learning difficulties can be taken through workshops, counselling, and other material that makes them accept their young ones' sexuality hence not rejecting them. **Promoting awareness of Mental illnesses** in society reduces prejudice and Discrimination. People can become aware of the existence of LGBTQ+ through public awareness, discussions, and even school programs to make sure that everyone accepts these people (Wandrekar and Nigudkar, 2020). Society should encourage equal representation through diverse media to prevent LGBTQ+ youths from feeling isolated from society. As per Datar (2023), more recognition and legal safeguards for gay people are required. Promoting equal rights legislations, anti-discrimination legislation, and being an advocate for equal rights for health care and especially mental health services is imperative. Legal support can make the LGBTQ+ youth stand and fight for their rights to freely be themselves. Stigma-free **mental health service** providers are important. People of the queer community have to seek comfort to speak openly about the difficulties they face (Ream and Peters, 2021). LGBTQ+-friendly therapists who can comprehend their needs and problems will be able to assist them in dealing with stress, anxiety, and depression.

According to, Drabble and Eliason (2021), it is therefore important that **support networks** should be put in place for the youths who belong to this

category. Finding friends and acquaintances who accept and share the same attitude towards equal rights can shelter and support a person. These networks might help youth offer 'emotional support' which includes, 'advice', and a 'safe haven' to voice out their concerns without prejudice. Of particular relevance, information about **appropriate and constructive methods** of dealing with stress should be given to the participants (Craig *et al.*, 2021). Specific counselling and rehabilitation for youth with an orientation to the LGBTQ+ community can help them solve the problem of drug abuse. Promising care conditions that target recovery and overall mental well-being can result in favourable end products. **Instructing children** on the reality of LGBTQ+ can also be equally helpful in encouraging the students to accept the community right from their childhood. So, feeding into this mythology of integration is the belief that by making diversity the norm there shall be no discrimination, and hence, bullying (Ream and Peters, 2021). It also informs all students in the area and creates empathy so that LGBT students can be supported in school and by society.

Research Methodology:

This research concentrates standardized techniques to gather data on LGBTQ youths' mental health. The LGB (Lesbian, gay, and bisexual) guidelines published by the American Psychological Association (APA) serve as an illustration of evidence-based recommendations for the treatment of psychological problems and the factors that influence them for LGB people Gaur *et al.*, (2023). Researchers may analyze samples and comprehend specific difficulties by using qualitative research methods. Because it is reliant on information gathered from firsthand observations, interviews, and historical research, this type of study is also known as action research Pérez Granados *et al.*, (2022). These techniques can be applied to field research to comprehend the research topic. The **case study method** has been chosen as an appropriate approach due to the goal of the study and the nature of the research question. It examines actual conditions and gives first-hand knowledge about the subject or respondents, which is helpful in evaluating both their past and present life experiences. An in-depth description of the topic under investigation is obtained through a rigorous investigation procedure.

Data collection:

Data collection was collected via an online campaign in India; after that few participants were selected for an online in-depth interview from different cities in India. Data was collected in two phases from December 2023 to June 2024. Initially, the first phase of data collection was done via social media through a digital campaign by inviting the audience

for their voluntary participation for research purposes. After they were informed about the research topic and purpose of research, all the respondents spontaneously participated and agreed to sign up for an online interview. The respondents were asked to speak in whatever language they were comfortable with discussing their family dynamics. With their permission, the whole interview session was recorded. The interview session was 0.5 hour to 1 hour. To understand the family dynamic and its effect on the mental well-being of LGBTQ+ youth several questions were asked.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted using a structured codebook that included the following analytical dimensions:

(i) Family dynamics: acceptance, rejection, negotiation, or coercion in relation to gender/sexual identity.

(ii) Mental health and resilience: experiences of distress, coping mechanisms, therapy or counselling, emotional self-regulation.

(iii) Entrepreneurial intention and behaviour: motivation to pursue self-employment or enterprise, actions taken, perceived barriers.

(iv) Digital transformation in livelihoods: use of online platforms for income generation (e.g., content creation, digital marketing, freelance work).

(v) Ecosystem touchpoints: exposure to NGOs, incubators, accelerators, financial institutions, corporate hiring or supplier programs.

(vi) Sustainability and circularity: orientation toward eco-friendly or socially innovative business models (e.g., repair, resale, awareness campaigns).

(vii) Governance and safeguarding: experiences with discrimination, workplace policies, platform moderation, and legal support.

All interviews were coded using NVivo software. Within-case summaries were developed first, followed by a cross-case comparison matrix to identify patterns and divergences across participants.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the researchers' host institution. Participants provided informed consent after being briefed on the study's purpose, their rights to withdraw, and data confidentiality. All names used in the paper are pseudonyms. Sensitive questions related to identity or trauma were asked with care, and referrals to LGBTQ+-friendly mental health resources were offered where needed. The researchers practiced reflexivity by acknowledging their own positions, privileges, and potential biases. Interview guides were piloted and revised based on community feedback to ensure sensitivity and inclusiveness.

Trustworthiness and Rigour

To ensure credibility, participants were invited to review their case summaries and clarify or correct any misrepresentations (member checking). A detailed audit trail was maintained to support dependability and confirmability. Triangulation was applied using multiple data sources (interviews, social media, NGO inputs) to enhance the robustness of the analysis.

Research questions

Q1. How does the response of a family make any impact on the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth?

Q2. What challenges can be faced by LGBTQ+ youth due to negative family dynamics?

Q3. What coping mechanisms do LGBTQ+ youth take to deal with stress and discrimination?

Q4. What are the differences between supportive and non-supportive family of LGBTQ+ youth and how does that impact their resilience and well-being?

Q5. What type of humiliation and distress do the LGBTQ+ youth go through in India, due to family dynamics?

Q6. How do family dynamics influence LGBTQ+ youths' mental health and, in turn, their entrepreneurial self-efficacy and participation?

Q7. What ecosystem and policies support or constrain LGBTQ+ youth from pursuing inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship in the Indian context?

The questionnaire was prepared based on the relevant literature review on this and expert judgment. The reliability and validity of these questions have been thoroughly verified. All those participants who signed up for the online campaign, among them the LGBTQ+ youth have been invited via email for online interviews. In the research findings, the cases were thoroughly analysed through identification of similarities and differences among them. Five profiles among all the respondents are given below:

Sl.No.	Name	Sexual Identity	Age	Education	Place	Medical History	Profession	Ever seek therapy
1	Suresh Kumar	Bisexual	31	Masters in Biology	Gurgaon	Asthma	Biologist	No
2	Priya Sharma	Lesbian	28	Bachelors in Science	Noida	Depression, Anxiety.	Digital Marketing	Yes
3	Harman	Non-binary	22	Bachelors in Arts	Mohali	Allergies	Graphic Designer	Yes
4	Maria Gonzalez	Transgender	25	MBA	Chennai	Hypertension	Marketing Manager	Yes
5	Sudip Maji	Gay	23	Bachelors in Arts	Jamshedpur	None	Youtuber	No

Table 1: Respondent Profile

(Note: Psuedonames have been used instead of participants' actual name to protect their identity)

Case Study 1: Suresh Kumar (Sexual identification: Bisexual)

Suresh Kumar, a single man (31 years old) is working as a biologist in Gurgaon. At the age of 17-18, he found himself to be attracted to both men and women and then only he realized he was bisexual. However, this unique sexual identity has led him to many problems regarding finding a suitable partner for life, social acceptance and support from the family. Although he has never attended any therapy for that, however, the inactivation of the Indian Act Section 377, has helped him to live independently with his own gender identity. His responses to the interview questions were crucial for the research study, which were:

"In my late teen days, I was really confused about the gender I was supposed to be attracted to. Most of my friends were attracted to their opposite genders,

which I was not able to cope with, which really confused me. I belong to a traditional conservative family. As a consequence, it was hard for me to tell about these feelings to my parents, neither they are able to understand them properly. As both men and women attract me, I never had any kind of issue finding a partner, however, my bisexuality has never allowed me to keep my relationships for longer periods. I also had no support from my family. There were a couple of occasions when I was asked for marriage, however, after I had revealed my gender identity to them, none of them were worked out. I was in a depression for a certain period; hence, I joined an LGBTQ+ group in Gurgaon through Facebook. Now I am certainly a confident member of bisexual representatives in Gurgaon. Although my family does not live with me, I am quite happy now and eager for further experiences. Thanks to the Indian government

due to the inactivation of the 377 Act that allows gender independence under human rights."

Case Study 2: Priya Sharma (Sexual identification: Lesbian)

Priya Sharma is currently dating her girlfriend Sudeshna Tiwary and considers herself a proud member of the LGBTQ+ family. She is currently living in Noida and has been involved in significant campaigns for promoting gender equality as well as for normalizing the social acceptance of lesbian people. She had to go through a lot of traumas in early childhood as well as in her late teens. Her responses to the interview questions are the following-

"I was born in a typical conservative Gujarati Family, with all of the members are not only religious but also maintain certain social and cultural status. I had found myself to be attracted by women in my early 20s. Although I had a boyfriend during my graduation period, however, that relationship did not last very long. Even though the boy was good for me, however, I was never able to find the perfect sort of connection, which lead to our breakup. Then after, I am able to know that, I find women to be attracted more than men. When I unmasked my sexual identity to my family, they did not support me. Even after my graduation, my parents did not let me study further and kept me at home for 3.5 years. I was depressed, and I had a feeling like living in a cage in my home. Even after the inactivation of Article 377 act, in 2018, my family not only ignored my feelings but also tried to humiliate me by arranging a traditional marriage with a man in 2021. For me, the most disturbing fact is that I had to fight with my parents and left home that same year, as I walked out of the marriage. After these events, I had to come to Noida and join a digital marketing company. After coming to Noida, I am still attending 'Insight Counseling services' every month to overcome the mental trauma that I had received in the past few years. That is the reason, I have also joined a group of LGBTQ+ people in Noida to fight and promote our social acceptance. I believe family dynamics is very important for any person to be really happy in their lives. Hence, I fight for others so that others do not have to go through like me."

Case Study 3: Harman (Sexual identification: Non-binary)

Harman (22 years old) grew up in Mohali, India, in a traditional family. As a non-binary individual, Harman always felt like they didn't fit into the expectations of their family and society from a young age. Harman struggled with their identity feeling like they were living in a world that didn't understand them. Entering their teenage years, they began to express themselves more authentically but this led to friction with their family Harman's parents though well-intentioned struggled to accept their child's identity leading to feelings of isolation and

rejection. To silence Harman found solace in art and design which became a vital outlet for self-expression and distress relief; they pursued a degree in graphic design which helped them develop a sense of purpose and identity. Their response to the interview questions goes below-

"I remember feeling like I was living in a constant state of anxiety never knowing when my family's disapproval would trigger another depressive episode but as I found my tribe within the LGBTQ+ community. I slowly began to heal and develop resilience it's incredible how much of a difference it makes to have people who understand and accept you for who you are. I struggled with feelings of shame and self-doubt constantly wondering if I was worthy of love and acceptance the emotional distress was overwhelming at times leaving me feeling trapped and uncertain about my place in the world. For me, creative expression has begun a lifesaver through art and design. I have found a healthy outlet for my emotions and a way to express myself authentically self-care and supportive networks have also been crucial in coping with stress and discrimination. I have experienced firsthand the difference between supportive and non-supportive families. I hope that by sharing my story I can help create a more supportive environment for others like me. Unfortunately, I have faced my share of humiliation distress and even violence due to family dynamics verbal abuse emotional blackmail and pressure to conform to societal norms have been incredibly challenging but I'm determined to use my experience to raise awareness and advocate for greater acceptance education and support systems for LGBTQ+ youth in India. We deserve to live without fear of persecution and with the freedom to be our authentic selves."

Case Study 4: Maria Gonzalez (Sexual identification: Trans-gender)

Maria Gonzalez (25 years old) grew up in Chennai India, in a traditional Catholic family. As a transgender individual, Maria faced immense challenges from a young age. At 10, Maria was scolded by their parents for playing with dolls and told to, "act like a boy". This incident sparked a journey of self-discovery and struggle. At 16, Maria's parents forced them to undergo "conversion therapy", a traumatic experience that left Maria feeling shattered and alone. Despite these challenges, Maria found solace in education and career. They pursued an MBA and became a successful marketing manager. Maria battled hypertension, a constant reminder of stress and anxiety. Now this was their responses to the interview questions:

"I still remember the pain of being rejected by my family at 18, my parents disowned me leaving me feeling lost and alone. But as I found support in friends and the LGBTQ+ committee I began to heal. I faced numerous challenges due to negative family dynamics."

At 12, I was forced to attend therapy sessions to "correct" my gender identity. The emotional distress was overwhelming leading to anxiety and depression. It's essential to recognise the harm caused by such actions. Actually, I have experienced both supportive and non-supportive family dynamics. My parent's rejection was devastating but my chosen family's acceptance has been life-changing. Supportive families foster resilience and well-being while non-supportive ones lead to internalized shame and blame. In India, LGBTQ+ Youth face immense humiliation and distress due to family dynamics. I recall being forced to wear masculine clothes, hiding my true self. The verbal abuse, emotional blackmail and pressure to conform to our traumas that stay with us. We need greater acceptance and support systems to combat these issues."

Case Study 5: Sudip Maji (Sexual identification: Gay)

Sudip Majhi (23 years of age) is a rising YouTuber from Jamshedpur. He has identified himself as Gay. Sudip in his social media platforms not only promotes the importance of gender identity but also provides solutions against the issues faced by LGBTQ+ people in their social and professional lives, which involve, discrimination, social acceptance, public as well as peer criticism and many others. Sudip has also worked with 2 NGOs in Jamshedpur who are working for the LGBTQ+ community and their rights. Sudip's responses to the interview questions provide valuable perspectives which follows-

"I found myself liking men in my late teens. In my school, men liking men is not a common thing for society. As a consequence, I was a victim of bullying as well as social assault. Initially, I hesitated to speak about it to my parents. However, I am very grateful to my parents as they hear it out and provide me with constant support. Unlike many others, I did not have to deal with any kind of issues. My parents have empowered me to be okay and completely normal in

liking or being attracted to men. Now, I am 23 and just graduated with a BA degree. My parents have also supported me in pursuing my career as a YouTuber. As a consequence, I have started my YouTube channel in early 2023. YouTube has provided me ample scope to develop a social connection between people just like me. I found later what kind of challenges people have to face for being Gay. Eventually, most of them are suffering from either any kind of mental illness or trauma-related issues. Some of the people are involved with suicidal thoughts. These events have led me to continue my journey as a YouTuber as an utmost necessity. I have also engaged with NGOs like 'The Humsafar Trust' and 'Nazariya' for their cooperation in providing help to the people of the LGBTQ+ community."

Findings and analysis of case studies

Family dynamics play a crucial role in impacting the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ youth and its interplay between cultural norms, societal expectations and family correlations that significantly influence the lives of young individuals. In this regard, [Wise et al., \(2016\)](#), reported that "The Institute of Medicine" found out that LGBT youth have been diagnosed with poor mental health structure compared to heterosexual and cisgender humans. Although it has also been reported that the LGBTQ+ community of youth also faced sexual orientation disparities, stresses related to stigmatization of homosexuality within society and minority stress ([Wise et al., 2016](#)). The report published by [Statista \(2016\)](#), suggested that it is found that around 29% claimed that they know some individuals within the LGBT community and around 39% did not know anyone in the LGBT community in India [[Referred to Figure 5](#)]. Additionally, [Goenka \(2023\)](#), reported that in India, around 10% of India's population which refers to the approximately 135 million population belong to the LGBTQ+ Community.

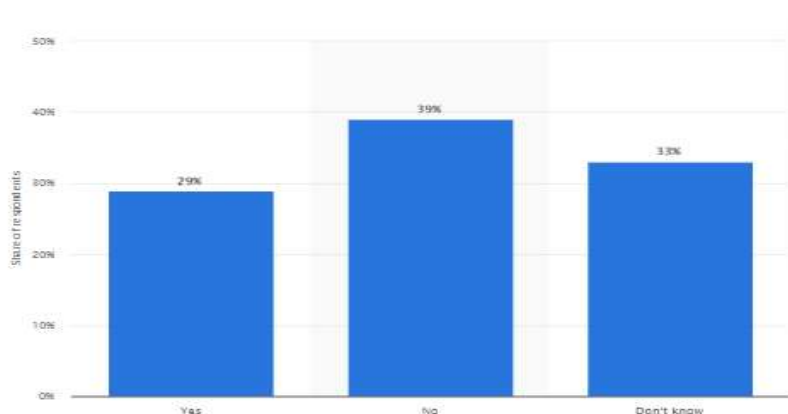


Figure 5: Familiarity with the LGBT community in India
(Source: [Statista, 2016](#))

However, Indian society is deeply intertwined in its traditional values which hold the hetero-native relationships and strong traditional gender roles. Where LGBTQ + identities are viewed as a departure from these social norms leading to family dynamic rejections and correcting their behaviour through conversation therapy or forced heterosexual marriages (Beagan *et al.* 2022). In this regard, based on the above-mentioned case study, it can be found in the journey of Suresh Kumar, a bisexual man in India who lived in Gurgaon, India's one of major cities; also faced multi-factor challenges in terms of LGBTQ + individuals in the conservative societies of India. It is asserted that Suresh Kumar faced identity confusion and societal expectations challenges during his late teenage years as well as a lack of family support as he came from a traditional conservative Indian background which led to challenges to any social expectations and personal identity. Moreover, the societal pressure and the absence of family support and relationship struggles Suresh faced mental health challenges as he was diagnosed with a period of depression and asthma. It signifies the impact of community support and legal reforms in empowering individuals to live authentically and confidently beyond their sexual identification.

According to McDermott *et al.* (2021), the acceptance of LGBTQ+ children can significantly elevate mental health outcomes and creating a supportive environment enhances the self-esteem and resilience of the individuals. On the other hand, Newcomb *et al.* (2019), the rejection of family has led to negative consequences as many LGBTQ+ youth face homelessness, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and even suicidal thoughts as a result of being rejected by their families. Based on the above-mentioned case studies it can be found that Priya Sharma a profound member of the LGBTQ+ community, found her sexual identification as a lesbian in early her 20s and was rejected by family support, she remained at home for around 3.5 years and diagnosed with depression and humiliated by arranging a traditional heterosexual marriage in 2021. Consequently, Priya fled from her house and had to come to Noida where she joined a digital marketing organization, attended counselling services for overcoming mental disturbance and joined a group of the LGBTQ+ community which promotes social acceptance of this community.

Moreover, Brandt *et al.* (2022), reported that the continuous trace of hiding one's identity, fears of rejection, experiencing continuous discrimination of general rules leads to significant psychological distress that can cause mental distress including anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. In this context, the case study of Harman non-binary individuals from Mohali experienced isolation, shame and depression due to family rejection to accept his identity which led to feelings of self-doubt, emotional distress and uncertainty. Furthermore, based on the above-mentioned case study of Maria Gonzalez, a transgender who faced significant challenges from her young age at the age of 10 in terms of the journey of discovery and self-identification struggle, her parents are forced to undergo conversational therapy which led to a traumatic experience for Maria. Although Maria has experienced supportive family dynamics, he is the chosen family that promoted his internal strength and became a successful marketing manager.

In this context, Vaughan *et al.* (2024), state that many LGBTQ+ youth find comfort in peer groups and LGBTQ+ communities which provide them with self-esteem to express themselves without fear of judgment or social acceptance. In this regard, the supporting community provides essential emotional support and information regarding mental health resources and enhances the mental health of individuals. Based on this context, the case study of Sudip Majhi a YouTuber from Jamshedpur stated that he identified himself as gay and for that reason, he uses the social media platform to promote the role of gender identity and provide a solution for the LGBTQ+ community. However, to promote the significance of gender identity and eliminate the issues of LGBT you individuals he works for recognised NGOs in Jamshedpur, named 'The Humsafar Trust' and 'Nazariya'. As per the report of Rathore (2023), in India around 15 registered major NGOs were found that are working for the LGBTQ+ community members.

Naz Foundation (India) Trust in India played a significant role in the fight against 377 and centered on LGBTQ+ rights, HIV/AIDS awareness and sexual health (Ayshwarya, 2023). Additionally, many other NGOs including Sangama in Bangalore, Orinam in Chennai, Queerala in Kerala have played a significant role in advocating LGBTQ+ rights in India and promoting equality and social acceptance.

No.	Theme	Achievement in case
1	Family dynamics	The respondents explained that they faced challenges in non-supportive family dynamics including being confined at home for years and forced into heterosexual traditional marriage after revealing their identity towards the patterns. This led to stress, anxiety, self-doubt, low self-esteem, depression and many other mental distress.
2	The Acceptance Spectrum	The interviewees said that they found out their self-identity in their teenage years and few claims in between the early 20s while revealing their identity occurred family rejection, lack of social acceptance, peer and family criticism, mental trauma and home fled.
3	Impact of mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+	These respondents come from various regional and social backgrounds yet major metropolitan cities in India, although they face social stigma, family rejection, forced conversion therapy, lack of support and criticism. However, some found support from the chosen family and the right support by the community.
4	Challenges faced by LGBTQ+	All the respondents faced challenges in being their self-identity as LGBTQ+ community which caused social discrimination, cultural and religious pressure, family rejection, harassment and lack of mental health well-being. These disparities are largely caused due to living in a conservative and traditional society like India where LGBTQ+ individuals are often marginalize and discriminated against.
5	Strategies to mitigate the challenges	To cope with these challenges, these identified respondents fled to another city and involved in the LGBTQ+ community, being fostered in another family, pursuing their educational background, engaging in art and design, working in NGOs and being active on social media platforms to find LGBTQ+ peers.

Table 2: Themes of importance of Family dynamics in the mental health and well-being of the LGBTQ+ youths in India.

Discussion

The research conducted by [Rao and Mason \(2018\)](#) aimed to evaluate minority stress and psychological well-being of the youth under the anti-sodomy legislation in India by taking 277 participants suggests that gender discrimination and lack of social acceptance can be considered as the epitomical factor that leads to mental disturbance and issues for the most of the people of LGBTQ+ community. According to the authors, before 2018, i.e., while Section 377 was activated in India, same-sex intimation was considered a penalised act, which has caused an adverse impact on the mental health of sexual minorities. These statements have been supported by [Sahoo et al., \(2023\)](#), through their findings, which suggest that, even after the inactivation of Section 377 law, major issues for LGBTQ+ people were to be accepted socially and independently. India being a conservative country has most of its people religious and guided by cultural rules and norms. Hence, lack of social acceptance and gender discrimination is still present nowadays while same-sex marriage and independence on gender identity were legalised nearly half a decade ago. Similarly, the report published by [World Value survey \(2024\)](#) suggests that more than 62% of Indian families do not like to have a homosexual or a person from the LGBTQ+ community as their neighbours. On the other hand, the research conducted by [LGBT+ Pride Global Survey \(2021\)](#) suggested that only 37% of the individuals from the LGBTQ+ community are getting recognition in the corporate sectors in India, while

others are becoming victims of gender discrimination, professional harassment and most importantly public abuse only due to their unique sexual orientation. Indian family dynamics also played a crucial role in terms of supporting their youths with unique gender identities. From the case studies also, it is evident that people like Priya Sharma and Harman have to face a lot of traumas in their earlier days from their families. They were dominated by a conservative patriarchal mindset guided by social norms. For these events, they have to take therapies and counselling to get over their past traumas. On the other hand, there are people like Sudip Majhi, whose family supported him being Gay. The difference can be observed through their past experiences as well progress in lives. The former members were controlled by societal norms while restricting their individual growths whereas the latter one is having a prospering growth at the age of 23. Most importantly, a change of mindset in the youth not only helps himself but also provides solutions for others who are going through the pains of gender discrimination.

However, in recent years, India has shown significant progress in accepting unique gender identities. The report published by Equaldex in 2023 suggests that more than 53% of Indians are accepting as well as supporting same-sex intimacy and marriage. In addition, there are multiple NGOs like Humsafar Trust, Nazariya, Sappho for equality and others working especially for the LGBTQ+ community people who were victims of mental illness or disorders including depression and

anxiety. Other than that, the metropolitan cities in India also play a very crucial role in promoting the importance of Gender Identity and its impact on the mental well-being of any individual. There are multiple LGBTQ+ communities and pride marches are orchestrated by the youths in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Noida, and other major cities in India, which promote the normalisation of the different perspectives and freedom of basic human rights, especially for the LGBTQ+ community members (Krishnan *et al.*, 2024).

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant impact of family dynamics on the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth in India. The findings suggest that negative family responses, such as rejection and discrimination can lead to increased stress anxiety and depression among LGBTQ+ youth. In contrast, supportive family environments can foster resilience and promote overall well-being. The research reveals that LGBTQ+ youth in India face numerous challenges including humiliation, discrimination, distress, and even physical violence due to negative family dynamics. To address these issues, it is essential to implement strategies that promote acceptance and inclusivity. The Indian government, LGBTQ+ youth, and residents must work together to create a supportive environment that allows LGBTQ+ individuals to thrive. The study's findings suggest that supporting families can play a crucial role in promoting the resilience and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth. Therefore, it is essential to develop and implement family-based intervention that promotes acceptance, understanding and support. Additionally, LGBTQ+ youth must have access to resources and support services that can help them cope with stress and discrimination. Ultimately, this research emphasizes the need for a multidimensional approach to address the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth in India. By working together, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment that allows LGBTQ+ individuals to live authentically and thrive.

Implications:

This study's findings have significant implications for understanding the crucial role family dynamics play in shaping the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth in India. The results suggest that: Family acceptance and support are associated with promoting resilience and mitigating the risk of mental health problems among LGBTQ+ youth. Negative family dynamics can have severe consequences, including increased stress, anxiety, replacement, and suicidal ideation highlighting the need for targeted intervention. Coping mechanisms such as self-care, social support, and creative expression can help LGBTQ+ youth deal with stress and discrimination but may not be sufficient to

counteract the effects of negative family dynamics. Supportive family environments can foster a sense of belonging, self-worth and identity affirmation, while non-supportive families can perpetuate internalized shame, self-harm, and decrease well-being. The atrocities and challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth in India including humiliation, distress, and violence, necessitate urgent attention from policymakers, mental health professionals, and community leaders.

This research underscores the need for - Family-based interventions promoting acceptance and support, mental health services tailored to LGBTQ+ youth, community-based initiatives for studying inclusive environments, and policy reforms protecting LGBTQ+ rights and addressing discrimination.

Limitations and future scope:

Limitation:

The study's sample size and geographic scope may limit the generalizability of findings to all LGBTQ+ youth in India. Self-reported data may be subject to biases and social desirability effects. The study's focus on family dynamics may overlook other influential factors, such as social and cultural contexts. The research relies on cross-sectional data, making it difficult to establish causality.

Future scope:

Longitudinal studies can explore the temporal relationships between family dynamics and mental health outcomes. Investigating the impact of supportive family interventions on LGBTQ+ youth's well-being. Examining the intersections of family dynamics with other social determinants, such as education and employment. Developing and evaluating culturally tailored support programs for LGBTQ+ youth in India. Exploring the experience of LGBTQ+ youth from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and regions.

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