

## **LGBTQ Discrimination at Workplace : The homophobic attitude of organization towards the LGBTQ community.**

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### **Abstract**

This study is to discover more about the bigotry faced by LGBTQ individuals at workplace and the mental and/or social problems faced by them due to the biased behaviour from their colleagues. The aim is to stimulate a debate on equality, diversity and discrimination and to promote a shared understanding along with sensitising and empowering the youth to welcome and live diversity. Moreover, to expand the knowledge base for inclusive development at organizations as well. The main pointers of this research work are (i) Coming out (Self-acceptance and acceptance from society),(ii) Discrimination (Discrimination faced at workplace),(iii) Micro aggressions (Difficulties faced at workplace),(iv) Isolation (Lack of sense of belonging, the inability to engage and connect with others) . A total of around 100 individuals comprising of mostly students, completed a questionnaire. The responses also included employed individuals and homemaker. Primary data was collected in the time frame from Feb.2021 to April 2021. The results revealed that non-LGBTQ respondents have favourable attitudes towards LGBTQ people. However, a positive attitude towards the community is not seen in the real world, even in workplace is shrouded in taboo and stigma. Also, the society is aware about them and the problems faced by them on a daily basis but fails to make a change, as the notion of gender identity is clouded by societal norms and beliefs.

**Keywords** – LGBTQ discrimination, Mental health, Coming out, Equal protection, Gender identity, Civil Society.

### **Introduction**

Bhaskar Lama (2020)<sup>6</sup> , Jennifer Ung Loh (2018)<sup>30</sup> ,Deepa Srinivas (1950 )<sup>16</sup>, have studied the transgender issues in Indian perspective in different timelines and changes of the mainstream mindset.

In 2017 ,International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)<sup>29</sup> reported that homosexual behaviour is still unlawful in 71 countries and capital punishment in 13 countries globally.

LGBT issues have become a matter of worldwide attention for policy maker and social scientists (Adam et al., 1999<sup>1</sup>; Dioli, 2011<sup>17</sup>; European Commission, 2015<sup>19</sup>; Gamson and Moon, 2004<sup>22</sup>; Hildebrandt, 2012<sup>27</sup>; Paternotte, 2016<sup>48</sup>; Rankin et al., 2010<sup>51</sup>; United Nations, 2013<sup>67</sup>; Weber, 2015<sup>68</sup>). According to *Transgender Euro-Study* (2008)<sup>66</sup>, condition of transgender people is even more vivid as 79% of transgender people in Europe have suffered oral, voluptuous or physical aggravation in civic spaces.

Alfred Kinsey(1948 , 1953)<sup>35,36</sup> conducted unravelling studies on masculine and feminine sexuality triggered contentious deliberations when exposing that homosexual conduct was more generic than believed. These fallouts continued to be prominent for several years after, especially in debates on homosexuality by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1990.

Societal studies on the state of LGBT community and their issues have compounded exponentially in various social areas (Baiocco et al., 2018<sup>3</sup>; Caudwell, 2013<sup>12</sup>; Ginty, 2001<sup>23</sup>; Griffin, 1992<sup>25</sup>; Haritaworn, 2010<sup>26</sup>; Panfil and Peterson, 2014<sup>47</sup>; Rankin et al., 2010<sup>51</sup>; Tomsen, 2009<sup>64</sup>; Wells and Polders, 2006<sup>71</sup>).

Köllen (2016)<sup>37</sup> advocated that in the region of Southeast Asia and the Pacific region, the Indian continent and Eastern and Western Europe the encounters faced by LGBT workforces are more about existing the everyday life of industries, rather than just issues of inclusion in the formal workforce.

India has been unable to create a LGBTQ inclusive environment, being LGBTQ is not a series of actions or feelings but an identity. Homophobia has been disguised as religion. The faith and generally accepted rules or beliefs of a religion or practice is considered of holding an inevitable place in the Indian society<sup>45</sup>. Despite the efforts made by the activists, a majority of people are seen opposing the community. From a broader vantage point, the evangelical protestors and religious people have seemed to be the portion of population having a problem with accepting the queer community. Having faith in one's own philosophy and principle is important; however, it can't be used as an excuse to discriminate against a person's natural sexual identity. There have been quite positive steps taken when talking about supporting and accepting the LGBTQ community, how be it, not enough.

There are different forms in which the community faces discrimination for who they are, from being bullied and called names to being beaten up and sometimes even killed, there's an extensive and endless amount of trauma faced by them<sup>3,4,5,6</sup>. This doesn't only affect their social and personal life but their state of mind as well. There are instances where an individual is forced to divert their sexual identity. Dangerous practice of conversion therapy being practiced in India even after homosexuality has been decriminalized points out the existence of a mind-

set in the Indian society which ascribes homosexuality to be abnormal and hence, curable by medical means. This practice has been denounced by the medical community as unethical because it is done assuming homosexuality as a mental illness, even though there exists no scientific evidence.

These reactions against the LGBTQ community are not just psychological but are coupled up with cultural aspects, which include a combination of people's personal prejudice and the structure of the Indian society, thereby making homosexuality abnormal.

This leads to stigmatization, which remains a thought process of certain sections of Indian society resulting in considering homosexuality as a treatable mental disorder. Further, when this thought process is backed by doctors who are practising this therapy, it takes the form of a firm mind-set. This evidently defeats the acceptance of homosexuality<sup>10-13</sup>.

Instances also highlight the usage of electric shocks to treat homosexuality, which is not only violate of human rights but also the fundamental right to life protected under Article 21 of the India Constitution. Instances like these are continuing, highlighting that just the decriminalization of section 377 did not suffice, and criminalizing conversion therapy is required. However, aspects such as gender and sexuality-based education are also crucial.

Unlike the west (e.g., US, Europe), which has a Christian majority, India has a Hindu majority (79%). This religious difference will play a vital role, as in the west, Christian groups were largely against homosexuality. But, the holy scripts and ancient texts (e.g., Vedas, Kamasutra) in Hinduism indicate the acceptance of homosexuality. Hence, in India, the opposition to criminalising conversion therapy will never be on similar grounds as that of the west.<sup>15,17,20-22</sup>

The problem, however, is about social stigma which was imported from the British Empire after they criminalized homosexuality in the year 1860 based on Christian beliefs. Hence, the opposition from Hindus against the criminalization of conversion therapy can be based on stigmatized social and cultural grounds which include family honour, reputation, etc., often fed with notions of patriarchy.

On the other hand, the religious texts of other major religious groups in India, like Islam (14%) and Christianity (2%), consider homosexuality as a sin, and this gives a religious backing to the opposition from these communities. They might use freedom of religion as a gag to suppress the proponents of criminalizing conversion therapy. The same was seen in the state of Utah in the US, where Christian groups backed doctors practising conversion therapy in the name of religious freedom.<sup>23-27</sup>

**Workplace discrimination-**A considerable number of the LGBTQ individuals in the workplace are faced with tremendous psychological problems. LGBTQ persons experience

discrimination and human rights abuses at all stages of the employment process. This includes unequal access to educational opportunities, discrimination during the recruitment process, discriminatory and gendered working conditions, and a lack of job security.<sup>16</sup>

**Pre-Employment** – Due to serious nature of harassment, bullying and violence against LGBTQ persons debarred them from educational and training opportunities. School uniforms, dress codes, limitations on participation in sports, a lack of access to toilets, and even seating arrangements are often gendered in a male-female binary without appropriate accommodation for transgender persons. Difficulties in obtaining accurate gender identity documents, including school records, adversely affect employment prospects.<sup>30-31</sup>

**Recruitment** – Discriminatory eligibility requirements place gender restrictions on some jobs, which effectively exclude transgender and gender non-binary persons. Invasive medical tests are sometimes imposed during recruitment processes leading to further discrimination, including the “outing” of LGBTQ persons without their consent. This discrimination is further compounded by the difficulty of obtaining required identity documents that are consistent with and match their gender identity. Documents are often refused to LGBTQ individuals by State institutions such as universities. Due to the difficulties in accessing work in the formal sector, transgender and gender non-binary persons often take up work in precarious employment spaces in the informal sector, or work as sex workers and resort to begging thereby further exposing themselves to human rights abuses.<sup>36-37</sup>

**Conditions of work** – Public and private workspaces are often gendered within a binary of male-female with resulting discriminatory effects, including the imposition of restrictive and discriminatory dress codes and standards of appearance. Where LGBTQ persons’ identities are presumed or known in the workplace, they sometimes experience discrimination and harassment including bullying, sexual harassment, assault and mis-gendering. Those who undergo transitions or sex reassignment surgery sometimes have their pre-transition work records disregarded.<sup>40-43</sup>

**Job Security** – LGBTQ persons suffer impediments to job security as a result of workplace discrimination. This includes harassment, threats of harassment, and arbitrary or discriminatory dismissal from work. Some areas of livelihood engaged in by some transgender persons are subject to outright criminalization.<sup>47,49,51</sup>

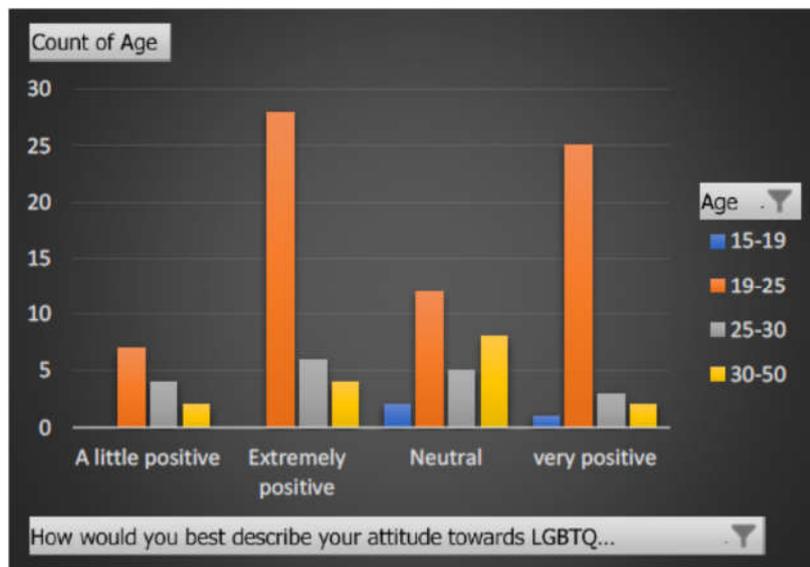
## Methodology

### Questions and Study Identification

The author(s) searched databases such as Google Scholar, PubMed, SagePub, Research Gate, and Academia, using key terms such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, LGBT, sexual orientation, sexual minorities, gender minorities ,homosexual, mental health, mental illness, psychology, psychiatry, or psychosocial and India as search terms. The author(s) also searched archives of prominent Indian journals on psychology, psychiatry ,public health and gender studies. Articles from blogs are also incorporated in this research work.

In keeping with the framework, author(s) were interested in the following key questions:

#### *How would you best describe your attitude towards LGBTQ individuals?*



Sexual opportunity in society and Discrimination based on sexual orientation. The notion of LGBTQ community is often seen as a stigma and is generally expressed as a stereotype or a false assumption.

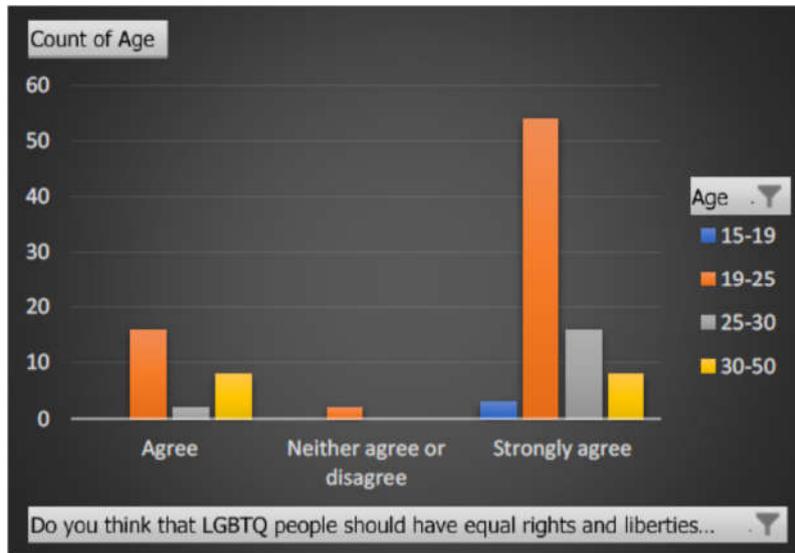
Studies have shown that LGBTQ people experience a type of stress and trauma that

is not experienced by heterosexual people referred to as 'minority stress'.

By withdrawing from potentially supportive relationships, and decreasing the intensity and diversity of their networks, the individual is denied the psychological and health benefits that come from honest, close relationships with others. Additionally, the LGBT person's ability to receive support and coping assistance is decreased.

***Do you think that LGBTQ people should have equal rights and liberties as other citizens?***

People around the world face violence and inequality sometimes torture, even execution. Sexual orientation and gender identity are integral aspects of ourselves and should never lead



to discrimination or abuse. Lesbians, gays and bisexuals do not claim any 'special' or 'additional rights' but the observance of the same rights as those of heterosexual persons.

A majority of people agree that LGBTQ community must get equal rights as other citizens. However, there is a

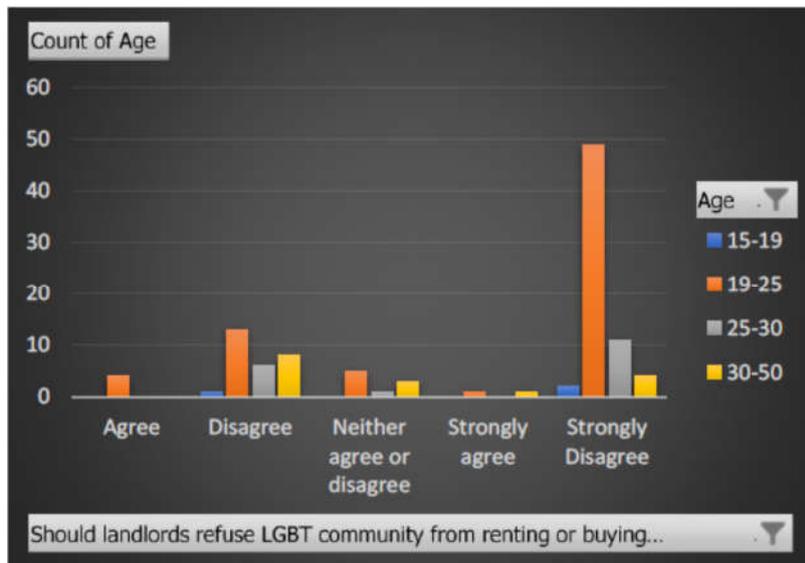
small portion of the population showing neutral behaviour which implies the dilemma they have. The number of people being neutral increases when a larger sector is studied. As we can see from the above graph that most of the respondents do agree that LGBTQ community should have equal rights and liabilities as any other citizen of the country. Many changes are being done, people are changing their ideology and their perspective towards LGBTQ community but they still have a long battle to fight head. In an opinion poll of 2019 nearly half of Indians objecting to same-sex relationship but there remains a significant amount of homophobia present among the Indian population.

***Should landlords refuse LGBTQ community from renting or buying property?***

Having equal rights as any other citizen of the country is what they demand. Them getting discriminated on the bases of whom they love and getting deprived of basic rights is something that is clearly happening wrong in the society.

Them even finding a place to live is difficult. Most of the respondents do agree that they should not be refused by the landlords from buying or renting property just because they belong to LGBTQ community; there are still a number of people who do believe that they should be refused.

Then think about how difficult it must be for transgender in a city where biases make life extremely difficult for people perceived as 'different.' Most of them say that landlords in the city treat them "like human beings from another planet."



Kiran, a transgender, social activist, nurse and counsellor at Naz Foundation, an NGO that provides support to the LGBT community, says that once a home owner let his eyes wander all over her body and then asked if she was a boy or a girl. “While we are now almost used to the stares we get when we

look for homes to rent, it becomes difficult to answer the totally unnecessary questions asked by people. The worst was when I was asked whether I had been castrated or not.<sup>52</sup>

What connection does it have with my wanting a house to rent?” asks Kiran.

While a few might agree that landlords as a rule have to be cautious while renting out their properties, transgenders are usually singled out for harassment.

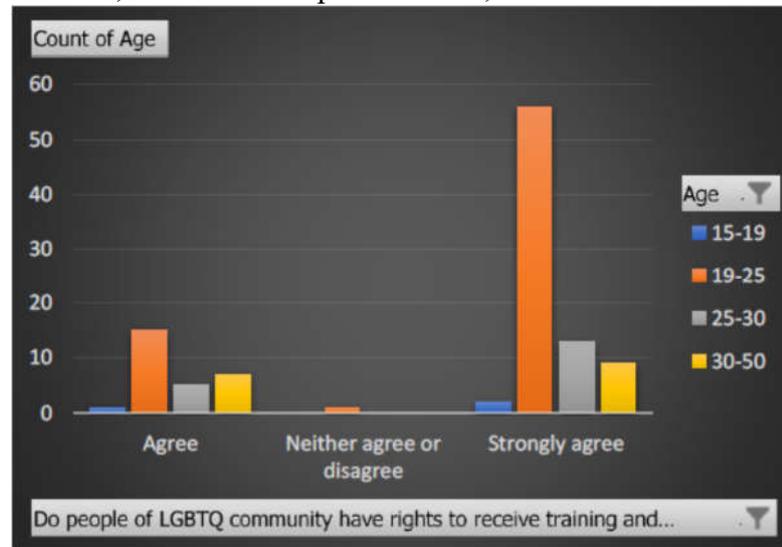
Their ordeal starts when they get in touch with property agents, who charge a higher commission amount by saying that there are very few options and that it is a task to get a house for them. Transgenders who do manage to pass the interview round with the landlords qualify for the second round of the battle – rent negotiation. Most landlords will charge them at least 50% more than the prevailing rates.

As of now though there is no specific enacted law providing for protection of property interests of the third gender or transgenders in India. In 2014, Supreme Court in its ruling in *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India* propounded that trans-genders have equal human and fundamental rights. The Hon’ble Supreme Court has held that “gender identification becomes a very essential component which is required for enjoying civil rights by this community. It is only with this recognition that many rights attached to the sexual recognition as ‘third gender’ would be available to this community more meaningfully viz. the right to vote, the right to own property, the right to join in matrimony, the right to claim a official individuality through a authorization and a ration identification card, a driver’s authorization, the right to education, occupation, wellbeing so on,” says Sunil Tyagi, senior partner, Zeus Law.

***Do people of LGBTQ community have rights to receive training and employment services?***

For the past two decades, the rights of LGBTQ+ people in India have been reaffirmed to be on par with the rights of cisgender, heterosexual people, as enshrined under the Indian constitution.

In 2014, the Indian Supreme Court, in *NALSA v. Union of India*, recognised transgender



people as “third gender” under the Indian Constitution. It acknowledged the unfair treatment faced by transgender people in various areas of life, including employment, and held that discrimination on the basis of gender identity is constitutionally prohibited.

Following this judgment, the

Indian parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 (Transgender Act). Section 3 of the Transgender Act prohibits the government as well as private persons from unfairly discriminating against transgender people in employment relationships, including by denying or terminating employment on the basis of gender identity. Section 9 of the Transgender Act specifically bestows protection against discrimination in employment.

In 2018, the country's highest court of law realistically bring to an end a colonial-era commandment that outlawed same-sex relations . Many Indian MNCs have become more open to LGBTQ, especially MNCs in India are encouraging the employing of LGBTQ members as they seek to create a more inclusive workplace. Since the change in law, "there are lots of enterprises that have gone on their inclusion journey," said Parmesh Shahani, author of “Queeristan: LGBTQ Inclusion at the Indian Workplace”.

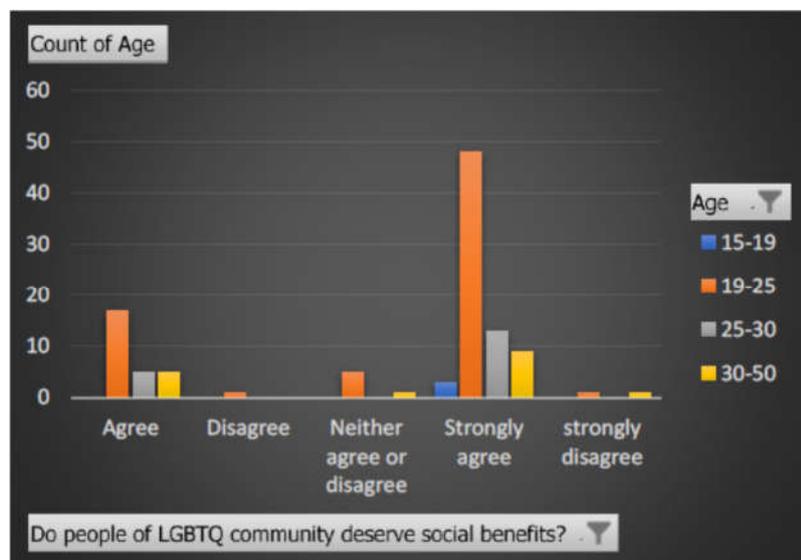
Professionals say that not only does multiplicity nurture revolution; it also helps bring together the best and brightest talent. In June 2020, Mahindra Logistics embark on its first policy for employing and holding lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning and/or queer (LGBTQ) people. The take-off was timed with Pride Month, which is commemorated worldwide to uphold self-respect and dignity among the LGBTQ community.

It is clear that changes are happening in the employment sector, companies especially multi-national companies have made many policies that are in favour of the community and not only them many Indian companies like Godrej and Mahindra are hiring people from the LGBTQ community and also changing their policies in favour of the LGBTQ community.

It can be seen from the graph that majority of the respondents do believe that people of LGBTQ community should deserve rights to training and other employment services.

### ***Do people of LGBTQ community deserve social benefits?***

Social benefits are right of any Indian citizen no matter whom you are. But belonging to LGBTQ community to receive basic right becomes difficult. By looking at the graph we can clearly see that most of the respondents from all the age group agree that people of LGBTQ community should receive social benefits, and changes are happening. There are many states in India who



do provide with social benefits to LGBTQ community.

In a unique initiative, the Noida Metro Rail Corporation (NMRC) decided last month to convert Aqua Line's Sector 50 Metro station into a 'She-Man' station<sup>62</sup> in order to promote transgender rights. It also

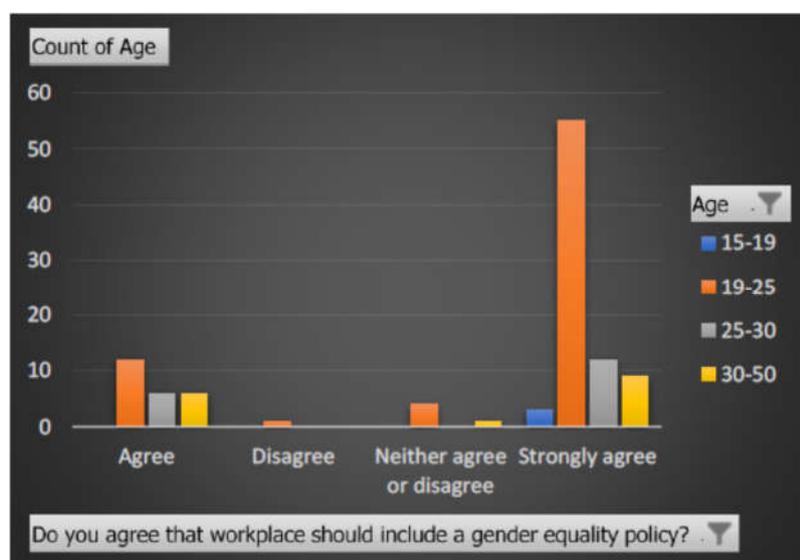
plans to include members of the transgender community at ticket counters and other areas of the station. Just a few days ago, Assam became the first state in the country to form a welfare board exclusively for transgenders.

Much earlier, in 2016, Odisha had become the first state in the country to give transgender people social welfare benefits such as a pension, housing and food grains — usually allocated for only the most impoverished and those living below the poverty line (BPL). This includes free housing, 100 days of paid work annually, pensions and loans to start their own businesses. They are also entitled to 5 kg of food grains every month under the National Food Security Act. Similarly, recently in another progressive gesture, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) roped in members from the transgender community to collect pending property taxes of around Rs 11 crore.

As per Census 2011, there are 4.9 lakh transgenders in India. On April 16, 2020, the Indian transgender community celebrated six years of the milestone ruling of the highest court of land in National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) vs. Union of India, wherein the apex court attach importance to the right of transgenders to self-determine their gender distinctiveness. Two days later, on April 18, 2020, the Government of India released the draft rules on transgender rights in the exercise of the powers conferred on it by sub-section (1) and (2) of Section 22 of the historic Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 (parent law) passed by the Indian Parliament in November 2019.

***Do you agree that workplace should include a gender equality policy?***

Gender equality policy is something that people of LGBTQ community require in order to be saved from discrimination, but this policy is yet to be recognized by organizations. But that



does not mean that positive steps are not being taken to stop the discrimination they face and provide them with a healthy work environment.

LGBT inclusion is a grey area in the context of Corporate India. Legally India has been making strides with respect to recognizing the rights of the LGBT community. The

century old law, Section 377, was recently repealed to decriminalize sexual orientation or relationship between two consenting adults of the same gender. The fundamental right to live and work with dignity was upheld. This landmark judgment is believed to have long-term impact, especially with companies which were worried about LGBT inclusion due to regulation issues. Equal opportunity and recognition of the fact that this preference is the right of the individual and within his or her personal space are the principles that the judgment was based on.

When we see the global context, more Fortune 500 companies offer benefits to their LGBT employees, according to Catalyst, a diversity consulting firm. Also, as of 2017, 91% of Fortune 500 companies have non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation.

These are positive indicators of the steps being taken for LGBT inclusion. Let us take a closer look at some companies in India and the types of practices they have instituted.<sup>54</sup>

1) **Godrej** - There were some significant policy changes that the company made. Employees are allowed to select gender when they join the company. Terminology such as 'spouse' has been changed to 'partner'. Also crucial to note is the fact that LGBTQ individuals are given a three-month paid break for primary care-giving if they choose to adopt. Health insurance coverage includes same sex partners. The company's leadership has been extremely vocal about their support for the community and their efforts towards creating a safe workplace for LGBT employees.

2) **RBS** - One of the most forward-thinking moves from the organization was to include the provision of extended hospitalization benefits to same-sex partners of its employees. The company has decided to bear the cost of this provision, as well as a surrogacy leave policy provided irrespective of the gender of the partner. This was done to encourage their employees to express themselves without the fear of being judged or humiliated.

3) **Infosys** - This Indian IT employer has been one of the first few companies to create an employee resource group called "Infosys Gays Lesbians and You" (IGLU) to bring together their LGBT employees. The focus of the ERG is to encourage open discussions on policy changes that are needed and the support that can help LGBT employees perform better in the workplace. Infosys also works actively in hosting workshops and sessions to raise awareness and foster a culture of respect.

4) **Intuit** - This Bangalore-based IT organization is seen as one of the frontrunners in providing inclusion for LGBT individuals. It was voted one of the best companies to work for in 2017. Due to its efforts, Intuit has achieved a 100% rating on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index for many years in a row.

5) **Barclays** - Barclays made its diversity strategy stronger by sponsoring India's first LGBT film festival. They encouraged free dialogue and internal discussions about the business impact of inclusion. One of their biggest strengths was to ensure that the senior leadership was engaged in the process from the beginning.

### **Policy Changes**

Medical insurance coverage, for instance, offered by companies like Godrej and Mahindra Logistics now cover same-sex associates as well as other family members of the employee, compassionate or bereavement leave for their same-sex partner, and lend a listening ear services provided by the companies.

Mahindra Logistics has expanded the scope of its current sexual-harassment-prevention policy to include any sexual harassment reported by an LGBTQ employee. In 2018, Godrej introduced a gender affirmation policy by which the company offers to cover the costs of hormone

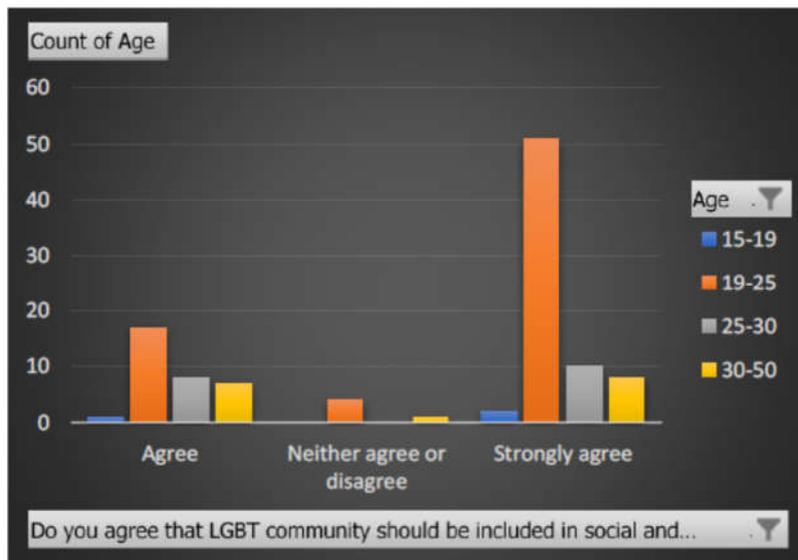
replacement therapy or surgery for transgender employees. Similarly, Publics Sapient, a digital transformation company, covers gender reaffirmation surgery under its medical insurance policy in India.

### Attitude Changes

At Essar Group, a conglomerate with interests in construction and energy, Kaustubh Sonalkar<sup>32</sup> has been preparing the organization for more than a year to hire its first transgender employees, whom he hopes to on board this year. Essar invited its staff to watch a performance by Dancing Queens, a transgender troupe who use dance to share their life stories and hardships. "When they performed, 60 percent to 70 percent of the people in the audience were crying," said Sonalkar. That went a long way in dismantling stereotypes, he said.

### *Do you agree that LGBTQ community should be included in social and health policy?*

LGBT topics in medicine are those that relate to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender access to health services. According to the US Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA),



besides HIV/AIDS, issues related to LGBT health include breast and cervical cancer, hepatitis, mental health, substance use disorders, tobacco use, depression, access to care for transgender persons, issues surrounding marriage and family recognition, conversion therapy, refusal

clause legislation, and laws that are intended to "immunize health care professionals from liability for discriminating against persons of whom they disapprove."

LGBT people may face barriers to accessing healthcare on the basis of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression. Many avoid or delay care or receive inappropriate or inferior care because of perceived or real homophobia or transphobia and discrimination by health care providers and institutions; in other words, negative personal experience, the assumption or expectation of negative experience based on knowing of history of such experience in other LGBT people, or both.<sup>59</sup>

Many business houses are providing favourable health insurance to their LGBTQAI+ staff and their partners as well widening their policies to single and live-in couples too. Here's the look at some of the companies:-

• **IBM**

IBM is one of the first companies to incorporate sexual acclimatization as part of its policy. In September 2015, it joined American Express, Google, and other worldwide companies to launch the first business-led confederation that supports LGBT inclusion across the world.

In 2016, IBM took its first move in support of the LGBT community by declaring benefits like health insurance for sex reassignment surgery and medical and leave-benefits for same-sex partners. They've also launched 'Our Role Models', a global policy that features LGBT employees as role models in growth countries, including Brazil, Greece, Israel, the Czech Republic, China, Japan, Mexico, and India.

Adding to the diversity and inclusivity section, IBM also launched #Equality Act in 2018 to ensure transgender employees receive fair and equal treatment, globally. Over the years, it has also introduced many LGBTQ-friendly policies to reform their workplace, for good. This includes sensitising all managers with cautious training about transgender team members who may wish to undergo sex-reassignment surgery; allowing staff members to choose their prefixes and pronouns; supporting LGBT employees to put video about their experiences.

• **GODREJ**

Godrej is another enterprise in India facilitating in making Indian working area more comprehensive. In 2011 it introduced Godrej India Culture Lab and vociferous about making their offices LGBTQ-friendly, "A graceful and elegant experimental space that cross-pollinates view point and individuals to discover what it means to be modern and Indian."

Soon the guidelines and programmes were fine-tuned to create an ambiance of recognition. These included allowing employees to select gender so they can use gender-appropriate washrooms at work; changing 'spouse' to 'partner' in policies extending benefits to next of kin; giving LGBTQ individuals a three-month paid vacation for primary care giving if they decide to adopt; allowing same-sex associates in dedicated and devoted relationships welfares like treatment at the group's hospital and even compensating health cover bought for a same-sex partner.

• **ACCENTURE**

The company embark on 'Pride at Accenture' in 2019, an project to talk about how equal opportunity is beneficial for corporate workplace and the importance of own up LGBTQ employees. Accenture in India introduced LGBTQ-friendly benefits including coverage for

hormone therapy, mental health counselling and transgender-specific surgeries, healthcare facilities for LGBTQ staff members and their partners.

LGBT employees at Accenture can reveal their journeys on a virtual platform, and even answer questions from non-LGBT people via a Global Ally program, which has 118,000 members.

#### • STAR INDIA

Star India is another big name to bookmark in the list of companies offering insurance benefits to LGBT partners. Effective July 1, 2019 (as it says on their website), Star India extended health insurance coverage to the partners of LGBT+ employees. This includes benefits around maternity and paternity, IVF, surrogacy, and adoption. Furthermore, they erased the word 'spouse' from insurance product and replaced it with 'partner'. It is a step taken to ensure a broader perspective of including live-ins, unmarried LGBTQ couples.

Star was also one of the first organisations to offer '6+6 months' maternity leave program, four weeks of paternity leave, and flexible leave policy, allowing its employees to take as many days of paid leave as they need.

#### • TATA

In a press release in December 2019, Tata Group boosted their focused attempts enabling equal rights to their LGBTQ+ employees.

According to an email received by the employees then, the new health policy redefines 'spouse' as a partner. The new insurance policy covers up to 50 per cent cost of sex or gender reassignment surgery. Tata Steel employees and their partners can now avail a host of benefits including health check-up, medical benefits, joint house points, adoption leave, new-born parent leave, child care leave, and inclusion in employee assistance programme (EAP). They also get financial assistance for gender reassignment surgery and 30 days of special leave for the same.

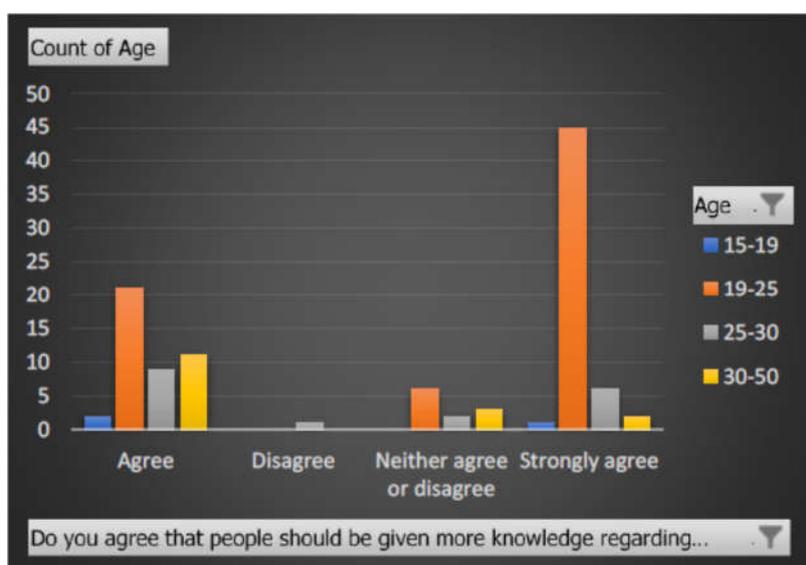
They are also eligible for Tata Executive Holiday Plan (TEHP), domestic travel coverage for new employees, temporary transfer policy, transfer and relocation, which that allows the partner to travel and familiarise themselves to a new place.

***Do you agree that people should be given more knowledge regarding LGBTQ community by holding seminars, or by giving them knowledge regarding diversity from school level?***

In a survey conducted by the United Nations cultural Agency on the 400 LGBT+ youth in India, it was revealed that over 60% of LGBT+ youth faced bullying in middle school / high school, 43% reported incidents of being sexually harassed in school, with 70% suffering from anxiety and depression and shockingly 33% of them even drop out because of bullying altogether.

In 2007, the central government in collaboration with NCERT, NACO and UN agencies tried to introduce the Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) in all secondary and higher secondary schools aiming to educate children it was immediately banned by thirteen states. They submitted that the explicit content designed to impart comprehensive sexuality education under the AEP went against Indian culture and morality.

The sole step that the schools have taken so far is restricted only up to holding discussions on good touch and bad touch to prevent child sexual abuse. Thus in the status quo, school continues to consider homosexuality a disease and sexual relationship as “immoral” reiterating those same old age notions of prejudices and ignorance.



Various Researches have shown that Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) that is scientifically correct, gender-sensitive and life skills-based, age and culture appropriate can provide young people with useful skills and knowledge about sexuality and lifestyle.

Therefore it becomes extremely important to design, formulate and implement a comprehensive sexual awareness programme which will not only educate the youth, about menstruation, sexual harassment and risk of STDs but will also be useful for addressing the concerns of same-sex relations and LGBTQIA+ community. This will make students better and responsible citizens by making them aware of the wide spectrum of gender-diverse identities around them.

Further efforts should be directed at updating the curriculum on health and gender to ensure that they must comply with the legal guidelines on transgender rights in NALSA vs. Union of India, and on rights of LGBT persons in Navtej Johar Vs Union of India.

However, what must be appreciated is that the University Grants Commission (UGC) has always been very prompt in taking actions against such complaints and has taken promising initiatives to stop homophobic and transphobic bullying. This is evident from the fact that UGC Anti-Ragging Regulations (2009) binds both public and private universities to take cognizance of complaints of homosexual assaults. Further, in 2016, UGC has also recognised gender identity and sexual orientation as the grounds for ragging and discrimination.

When students open up about such deeply personal issues then change is taking its root."

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