Non-Existent “Bi”omes : Attitudes and Binegativity against Bisexual People in India

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Introduction

- “The term “bisexual” is used to describe a person who experiences emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to, or engages in romantic or sexual relationships with, more than one sex or gender” (APA, 2017).
- 3 years ago the same-sex law was decriminalized in India which has brought about an increase in the LGBT+ community’s visibility (Union of India, 2018).
- Today, around 9% of India’s population identifies as bisexual (Ipsos, 2021).
- Binegativity and discrimination against bisexuals are mainly known to rise from the stereotypes against bisexual people (Elia, 2010; Hartman, 2013).
- Cisgender and Heterosexual (cishet) individuals’ binegativity towards bisexuals has made it difficult for bisexual people to form long lasting friendships and romantic relationships, and has alienated them from the society (Li et al., 2013).
- Cishet individuals have reported to be significantly more biphobic and have negative bisexual attitudes than gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals (Mulick & Wright, 2002; Hertlein & Hartwell, 2016).
- There is a dearth of literature available on the various factors influencing the lives of bisexual population of India as compared to studies about the lesbian/gay and transgender population which makes it crucial to study and find solutions to eradicate the discrimination against the bi+ community (Gupta & Bhugra, 2010).

This study will have three overarching objectives:

- (1) To examine the attitudes of cishet students against bisexuality and bisexual individuals.
- (2) To analyze the binegativity or biphobia of cishet students against bisexual individuals.
- (3) To investigate any demographic differences with regard to attitudes and binegativity of the cishet students.

Myths and Stereotypes regarding Bisexuality

- Bisexuality is merely a phase, and bisexual people do not yet realize what they want (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013).
- Bisexuality, especially among men, is a disguise for homosexuality (Brewster & Moradi, 2010).
- Bisexuals are less trustworthy and are more probable to cheat on their romantic partners than heterosexuals (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013).
- Bisexual women are only experimenting and will eventually return to a man (Hartman, 2013).
- Bisexuals face less discrimination and have more heterosexual privileges than gay and lesbian people (Elia, 2010).
- Due to their assumed promiscuity, bisexual people (particularly men) are more susceptible to STDs and HIV (Elia, 2010).

Findings from Previous Researches

- **Heterosexual men have higher binegativity towards bisexual men.**^{1, 10, 18, 24}
- **Research in India on the topic of bisexuality has mainly focused on bisexual men as married MSM (men who have sex with men).**^{4, 6, 13, 20}
- **Heterosexual people have slightly favorable attitudes toward bisexual women.**^{17, 18, 24}
- **Heterosexual people reported to have higher biphobia than homosexual individuals.**^{8, 19}
- **Men are more likely to label bisexuals as "wrong and disgusting".**^{1, 18}
- **Bisexual people are subject to "double discrimination".**⁹

Method

Study Design

- This study will follow a cross-sectional exploratory design.
- Multiple stage cluster sampling method will be followed to collect data from cishet high school students from the four metropolitan cities of India: Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai.
- After the survey is administered and data collected, the students will be provided with the LGBT Youth Resources list provided by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020) with the aim to build allyship within the students and educate them about bisexuality and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Method (Continued)

Measures (Scan QR)

- **Informed Consent and Demographics:** An informed consent form and demographic questions including age, gender, religion, domicile, parents’ education and occupation, socioeconomic status etc.
- **Attitudes Regarding Bisexuality Scale (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999):** An 80 items instrument rated on a 5-point Likert scale measuring attitudes of individuals regarding bisexuality. The scale measured attitudes regarding bisexuality in three of the following domains: (a) tolerance of bisexuality, (b) legitimacy of bisexuality as a sexual orientation and (c) reliability of bisexual people as friends and monogamous romantic partners. The instrument has a high internal consistency ranging from .83 to .91 for the subscales.
- **Gender Specific Binegativity Scale (Mulick & Wright, 2002):** A 30 items instrument assessed on a 6-point Likert scale measuring gender specific binegativity of individuals against bisexual people. The scale has a high internal reliability coefficient, $\alpha = .94$ and high test-retest reliability of $r = .93$.
- **LGBTQ Youth Resource (CDC, 2020):** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has compiled a list of LGBTQIA+ resources on their website (<https://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm>) for people from the community and their family and friends. The resource list includes various reports and guidelines to support them and build allyship within heterosexual people.

Importance

- This research will contribute significantly to the research on the bisexual community in India.
- This study will shed more light on heterosexuals' opinions regarding bisexuals in India.
- This research work will help researchers determine how many heterosexual people are prejudiced against bisexuals.
- The research study will assist in determining the significant demographic disparities in views and binegativity toward bisexual people among cishet students.
- This study will also educate the students surveyed, about bisexuality and allyship to the LGBTQIA+ community.

SCAN FOR REFERENCES AND
SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL