

# Cyberbullying in the LGBTQ and Delineating Indian Government's Role for LGBTQ in Cyberspace

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**Abstract:** *Cyberbullying is one of the major concerns in LGBTQ community. The present research demonstrates the adverse effect of cyberbullying in mental, physical, and emotional health of LGBTQ community. The objective of the research is to measure the effects of Cyberbullying and delineating the government's role for LGBTQ in cyberspace. The qualitative study was carried out on a sample of 10 participants who are either bisexual, gay or transgender. Interviews were done in a telephonic manner and participants were asked a set of validated questions regarding cyberbullying and the Indian government's safeguards and measures for the LGBTQ in the online space. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the data and themes were analysed separately for bisexuals, gays and transgenders for understanding any similarities and differences between them. The finding depicts the negative effects of cyberbullying which includes suicidal ideation and lower self - esteem, constant threats and abuses, mistreatment by the authorities, homophobia and bigotry. Recommendation and interventions were discussed with the participants. This paper contributes further on a rather scarce topic of LGBTQ and cyberbullying in India and attempts to bring a new understanding of LGBTQ in India.*

**Keywords:** LGBTQ, Cyberbullying, Indian government, Authorities, Bullying

## 1. Introduction

Since the inception of the internet, Cyber - bullying has been the inevitable outcome that has plagued everyone regardless of gender or sexuality. Although bullying has been among us for decades, the issue of cyberbullying in LGBTQ is still new to educators and researchers. As a result, there is little to none cyberbullying research studies available on this topic. Unfortunately, most studies focused on heterosexual and cisgender individuals. The scant available research on sexual minority and gender expansive youth shows that this group is at higher risk for cyberbullying when compared to heterosexuals.

Patchin and Hinduja (2006) defined cyberbullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices." Suicidal ideation and low self - esteem are among the key effects of cyberbullying. Youth who experienced cyberbullying, as either an offender or a victim, had more suicidal thoughts and were more likely to attempt suicide than those who had not experienced such forms of peer aggression. Students who experienced cyberbullying, both as a victim and an offender, had significantly lower self - esteem than those who had little or no experience with cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010b).

Due to increased popularity of social network sites and applications, the issue of cyberbullying has shot to the forefront of society. Even though a dramatic spike in cyberbullying awareness has been conducted, yet to determine the most appropriate means to resolve this phenomenon. It is clear that cyberbullying negatively affects the emotional and physical wellbeing of individuals, particularly in LGBTQ community, since gender identity has been analyzed as the indicator in individuals' psychosocial adjustment and wellbeing in the peer groups. In fact, it could be argued that the effects of cyberbullying are even more

damaging to sexual minority groups, thus prolonged cyberbullying leading to depression, suicidal tendencies, substance abuse, sleep disorder and other types of mental disorders. According to Patchin and Hinduja (2006), cyberbullying has been linked to multiple maladaptive emotional, psychological and behavioral outcomes.

The section of the society which has been forsaken, in terms of cyberbullying, is the LGBTQ community. Let alone cyberbullying, nearly 70% of the face - to - face bullying done on LGBTQ students in India face anxiety and depression and suffer loss in studies, 43% of the LGBTQ students surveyed - between the ages of 18 - 20 - faced sexual harassment in primary schools (UNESCO, 2018).

The privilege of anonymity on social media can be a boon and a bane. While it helps people to masquerade as whoever they want on the internet, which they can't in real life, it also allows them to say and write to their wishes without any severe consequences. The LGBTQ share remarkably similar experiences related to stigma, discrimination, rejection and violence across cultures and locals. In this exciting time, we witness progress towards gender equality for sexual and gender minorities. But the changes we witnessed are too limited and recent to determine their impact on health and wellbeing to this community. Public health research needs to assess the change in attitude and prejudice towards sexual and gender minorities. A study by Garaigordobil & Larrain (2020) showcased cyber victims of each sexual orientation are higher in non - heterosexuals (13.7%) compared to heterosexuals (6.7%). In India, there is no specific law which addresses cyberbullying.

Compared to murder and organized crime, cyberbullying seems like a milder offence, which is why not a lot of thought goes into it when one reports about cyberbullying and many of the victims and their families wish to stay silent about it. Although the Internet makes life easier and plays a

significant role in everyday activities, it is unfortunate that they have been poisoned and used to abuse others. Kevin Brennan (2007) stated "cyberbullying is an unacceptable face of new technology and we need concerted action across society to address it. Schools must play a key role and guidance will help them to identify and tackle instances of cyberbullying more effectively as well as providing practical advice and information on how to prevent it." This study is significant because it aims to provide a healthy environment to LGBTQ community in social media, as well as, protect them from all social norms and decrease the negative effects of cyberbullying.

## 2. Literature Review

In the Indian context, cyberbullying and the LGBTQ is where not much thought goes into. Due to its dynamic nature, cyberbullying is a difficult subject to approach. One person's pleasure can be misery to another. Cyberbullying is subjective, so an offensive comment on an individual could be a joke for another. And provided that the digital space is a pool of opinions and ideas, cyberbullying is generally done in many forms or expressions. Therefore, to quantify whether someone can be considered to be cyberbullied is a difficult task. Furthermore, the term "bullying" does not even exist in all languages (Strohmeier & Toda, 2008).

Internet usage in India has exceeded half a billion people for the first time, at 566 million, driven by rural internet growth and usage (PTI, 2019). Two in three internet users in India are between 12 and 29 years of age (IAMAI, 2019). The lack of awareness and normalization of cyberbullying has made it strenuous for the victims to spot the harassment or bullying that they're facing in normal or not.

The second largest state by population, Maharashtra, had the highest number of cyberstalking and bullying incidents against women and children compared to the rest of the country, with nearly 400 cases registered with the authorities. Andhra Pradesh followed with almost 90 cases. Overall, the country recorded approximately 740 cases of such offences that same year (NCRB, 2018). These numbers might seem small in comparison to the vast population of 1.2 billion people in India, the reason being that many offences are not reported to the police and thus they cannot find their way into official crime statistics. Criminologists use the term 'dark figure of crime' to refer to these unreported and undetected offences (Durrant, 2014, pp.4). As there is little to no awareness in India about cybercrime or proper channels to report these crimes in certain regions as well as stigmatization, a substantial amount of unreported cybercrime might be overlooked.

A clear case of gender bias is shown as well in cyberbullying. A study by Jackson and Cassidy (2014) presented that female students are more likely than males to experience cyberbullying over social networks and text messaging, suggesting a relationship between the victim and the person cyberbullying them. The study also suggested that if cyberbullying was intended to cause friendship troubles, exclusion, or harm to reputation, it's been rather effective in reaching those goals.

Another point of issue that India has created for itself, is the social norms for the LGBTQ community. The legal framework of India works against the people of LGBTQ community. After the first Transgender Protection Bill in the year 2016 and the case of Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India that India recognized the existence of the LGBTQ community and was concerned about their safeguards. While there are laws and regulations enforced in India, like Article 14, Article 15, Article 19 (1) (a) etcetera for employment of the LGBTQ community, the truth is that these rights can only be enforced against the state, its instrumentalities, and only against those private entities which are performing state actions and in the era of privatization where most of the employment within the country is provided by the private sector, the country doesn't have any regulation to guard the LGBTQ community in these entities. Therefore many transgender go into involuntary prostitution and working in brothels due to financial pressure. While cyberbullying may be hard to identify and LGBTQ remains a taboo, it doesn't mean the correlation between the two is non-existent.

A study by Escobar - Viera et al. (2018), conducted a systematic review of the evidence on Social Media use and Depression Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Minorities. After title and abstract screening, the researchers were able to identify 11 articles in the review, out of which - 9 studies were quantitative and cross-sectional and 2 were qualitative. The study came to the conclusion that there is a lack of study done on this topic and future research would benefit from more consistent definitions of both social media use and study populations.

This research focuses on the Indian aspect of cyberbullying among LGBTQ on social media, where almost little to no research is done on it. While also trying to shed new light on the lack of support by India on the LGBTQ community.

## 3. Methodology

**Statement of the problem:** To study cyberbullying in the LGBTQ and outlining government role in safeguarding the LGBTQ in the online space.

### Research questions:

- Can you tell about the importance of cybersecurity to the LGBTQ community?
- Can you tell me about your decision to open up about your sexuality online?
- Have you been informed about your cyberattack to the concerned authorities? What problems do people face while informing about such attacks in India?
- What role do you see the Government of India playing for the rights of the LGBTQ?
- How has being bullied online, because of your sexual orientation, affected you?
- Can you elaborate on any experience you may have had after being bullied online?

### Research Objectives

- To examine the after effects of cyberbullying in LGBTQ community.

- To identify the role played by the government of India for the rights of LGBTQ community.

**Research Design:** Qualitative approach

**Operational definition of the key concepts:**

- Cyberbullying involves sending or posting harmful or cruel text or image using the Internet or other digital communication devices. It involves stalking, threats, harassment, impersonation, humiliation, trickery and exclusion (Feinberg, T., & Robey, N.2009).
- LGBTQ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning. These terms are used to describe a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Variables**

Independent variable: Cyberbullying, LGBTQ

Dependent variable: Cyberattack

**Inclusion Criteria**

- The participant must belong to LGBTQ community.
- The participant must disclose their sexual orientation in online platform
- The participant must have faced cyberattacks due to their sexuality or gender

**Exclusion Criteria**

- The participant who does not belong to LGBTQ community.
- The participant who does not disclose their sexual orientation on an online platform.

**Sampling Procedure**

Sample size: 10.

Age range: between 18 and 60.

Sampling procedure: Purposive Sampling

Place: South India and Central India

**Procedure of the study:** The study collected data through in - depth interviews with over 10 participants who belong to LGBTQ community, specifically bisexuals, gays and transgenders. The participants were recruited using google forms and social media platforms. The data collection procedure started in January 2021 to August 2021. Among the collected data, 6 participants are gay, 2 participant are bisexual and 2 participant are transgender. The proposed interview questions were validated by three experts and it contains six questions. The data was collected through telephonic interview and with the consent of the participant, the session was recorded. The questions solicited participant’s views pertaining to knowledge about cyberbullying, self - disclosure and effects of bullying. Each interview session lasts from 10 mins to 20 mins.

**Ethical Consideration**

- Before recording the session, consent was taken from each participant.
- Participant’s personal information is maintained confidential.
- Participants's age, sexuality and gender were asked during the interview.
- Rapport building was done with each participant before the interview.

**Thematic Analysis**

**Bisexual Thematic Analysis**

Themes	Sub - themes	Examples
Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prejudice</li> <li>Choice</li> <li>Criticism</li> <li>Bigotry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the basic prejudices that I face is over - sexualization of things. Like people just assume that we are up for threesome just cause we are attracted to both sexes.</li> <li>There are a lot of people online just saying that this whole sexuality thing doesn’t even exist, like - “Oh yeah you are bisexual? That must be like a choice”. It's not a choice</li> <li>I had to face these criticisms and felt like I was obliged to certain things (pause), I wasn’t free enough to express myself and initially I snuck up in my shell and I didn’t want (pause), but it actually made me bolder and made me realize - no matter who you are, you are going to face some type of problem or some type of criticism irrespective of who you are</li> </ul>
Rights of LGBTQ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equality</li> <li>Doubt in government role</li> <li>Ineffective laws and regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think it's really important for someone to feel equal as a human being and for someone to feel loved no matter who they are and to post freely without being obstructive or barricaded just because of their preference in a particular gender</li> <li>I don’t expect much from the government either because it just happened two years ago which isn’t that progressive. So, it might take a few more years for gay marriage to legalize. And it would be better if they had more safety rights for us especially</li> <li>As far as the government point is concerned I am not really sure what the government is doing about it.</li> <li>its bad enough straight couples can’t hold hands or kiss in public, Imagine homosexual couples. . . we will be murdered</li> </ul>
Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anger and frustration</li> <li>Struggle with self image</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any personal comment is made or any such things affect me and who I am as a person obviously. It hit me really bad, and I got really angry, and I think I retorted in a in a very (hasty) manner</li> <li>I didn’t want to open up for a very long time, admittedly. But then I realized, if people don’t really know the real me then I am just putting a fake image and that’s not going to help me in the future</li> <li>I wasn’t free enough to express myself</li> </ul>
Coping with cyberbullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frustration</li> <li>Sad</li> <li>Emotional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I got really angry, and I think I retorted in a very (hasteful) manner.</li> <li>I should have been a little more patient and a little more polite in the way I reacted to it, but I think I allowed my anger to get in the way I reacted.</li> <li>Yeah, I couldn’t do that. It's not like a stranger did it to me, it was a friend of mine. And it's not like I didn’t wanted to complain to the authorities. Even if you wanted to complain, you would have to first come out.</li> </ul>

**Transgender Thematic Analysis**

Themes	Sub - themes	Examples
Hazardous online conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Death &amp; Rape threats</li> <li>• Abusive language</li> <li>• Targeted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking about issues online has become a huge problem. Anything you do, you are (<i>incoherent</i>) or you get death threats or rape threats and everything. For example, if I am posting anything against one political party, I feel like this is a secular country and it's an open country and a free country, so we should be able to express our opinions. But that doesn't happen that way</li> <li>• I prefer a personal initiative, you know, to inform people about myself but I don't surround myself with people who aren't like - minded like me... There is a lot of abusive language that is used, defamatory language that is used.</li> <li>• I just feel that we are targeted a lot more just because we are different.</li> </ul>
LGBTQ rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Accessibility</li> <li>• Lack of government action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going to the authorities is not a very accessible option for the members of the LGBTQ community, because the authorities of this government or authorities around us are not enough, you know... are not totally sensitized about the community and the members of the community and their problems. So they might fail to understand, right? And they might fail to acknowledge my problems and you know start victim - blaming me</li> <li>• As far as the government, I don't think they have done much about the... other than overruling Section 377.</li> </ul>
Coping with cyberbullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger</li> <li>• Anxious and Depressed</li> <li>• Doubting self - identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There have been instances when suddenly someone is (<i>stuttering</i>) video calling me and telling me that "Hey want to call?" and they are in a shower. Things like these happen out of nowhere. Like I haven't talked to the guy for (<i>stuttering</i>). . . like we haven't talked at all and he does these things. The person suddenly, you know... uses very very abusive languages. So it made me feel angry.</li> <li>• There are a lot of hate comments and that leads to maybe depression and I have also had few friends who have also, you know, attempted suicide because of this.</li> <li>• For the longest time I have had questions about myself and I thought maybe there is something wrong with me. . .</li> </ul>
Practicality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire for change</li> <li>• Realities of social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would say social media influencers, maybe like they have all heard about (<i>incoherent</i>) and one more activist Laxmi Narayan Tripathi who is fighting for her rights. So I think they can make the change</li> <li>• I just feel that whatever people see on the internet isn't what it is. Many things are just a setup. Many things are just framed. Many things are just put up there, just for show and I just feel that, you know, people should have their own opinion. The internet is not always true and people should have their own resources to find out what exactly happened or whatever being the issue.</li> </ul>

**Gay Thematic Analysis**

Themes	Sub - themes	Examples
Cybersecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe cyberspace for everyone</li> <li>• Priority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel like cybersecurity for the LGBT community in India is necessary. As being a victim myself of cyberbullying.</li> <li>• In general, cybersecurity is important for everyone. Irrespective of gender, race, caste or creed. Because this is a disease. You know, this is a system of oppression.</li> <li>• I feel on a general note, cybersecurity is an important thing, be a part of the community or not, it affects the mental health of anyone. So yeah, I feel it's quite important for everyone, not just only the community.</li> <li>• A lot of people who live on a general basis are also attacked for, you know, expressing their masculinity or femininity. So you know, it's really a basic thing and not catering to one's sexuality or gender or a community. Cybersecurity is for everyone.</li> </ul>
LGBTQ rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varied opinion of the government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think the Indian government has done a fabulous job where you have the option of the third gender. Where you can specify whatever your gender preference is. So, which many countries till date have not done that.</li> <li>• Actually the authorities were supposed to help us and support us. They are mostly homophobic, so I just feel like it's very hard to open up publicly and so, that's it.</li> </ul>
Humiliating and demeaning behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats</li> <li>• Abusive comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My bullying has been more physical confrontation and verbal than online.</li> <li>• I was also vulnerable to physical and verbal attacks in public. So this is something we accepted. We knew it would come. I knew it would come.</li> <li>• I remember a lot of people like you know, it was a public account and a lot of people you know got to make opinions on it. I remember people, you know, really commenting on things like hijra or chakka. You know what that really means?</li> </ul>
Effects of cyberbullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional and mental toll</li> <li>• Self harming tendency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not going to lie but I actually have had many thoughts of even ending my life because of all this cyberbullying and often it has led me to depression.</li> <li>• We are specifically looking at the sexual health of community members. And when you talk about sexual health, you talk about not just physical but also mental and emotional health and well - being of the individual.</li> <li>• Imagine someone out there, if you know, reminding you of an insecurity you hide for your whole damn life and you know it just really mentally affects you, at least on me and I can say that for quite a few people it mentally affects you.</li> </ul>

#### 4. Discussion

Thematic analysis was utilised to conduct the analysis. Themes and categories were gathered, and they were then used to conduct continuous analysis across interviews.

Interviews were done in a telephonic manner, and audio files from the interviewees were transcribed manually for accuracy. All participants identified themselves from the LGBTQ community and the sample mainly consists of bisexuals, gays and transgenders. All participants were open about their sexuality and gender online, and a careful inspection of their social media was done for verification. Themes were analyzed separately on the basis of sexuality and gender, to see if there is any difference and similarities of viewpoint among bisexuals, gays and transgenders.

The thematic analysis is divided into the following sections and sub - sections:

- 1) Bisexual thematic analysis
  - a) Discrimination
    - Prejudice
    - Choice
    - Criticism
    - Bigotry
  - b) Rights of LGBTQ
    - Equality
    - Doubt in government role
    - Ineffective laws and regulation
  - c) Emotions
    - Anger and frustration
    - Struggle with self - image
  - d) Coping with cyberbullying
    - Frustration
    - Sad
    - Emotional
- 2) Transgender thematic analysis
  - a) Hazardous online conditions
    - Death and rape threats
    - Defamatory language
    - Targeted
  - b) Rights of LGBTQ
    - Lack of accessibility
    - Lack of government action
  - c) Coping with cyberbullying
    - Anger
    - Anxious and Depressed
    - Doubting self - identity
  - d) Practicality
    - Desire for change
    - Realities of social media
- 3) Gay thematic analysis
  - a) Cybersecurity
    - Safe cyberspace for everyone
    - Priority
  - b) LGBTQ rights
    - Varied opinions of the government
  - c) Humiliating and demeaning behaviour online

- Threats
- Abusive comments
- d) Coping with cyberbullying
  - Emotional and mental toll
  - Self - harming tendency

##### 4.1 Bisexual thematic analysis

###### a) Discrimination

**Prejudice:** - Interviewees admitted to facing prejudice online in the form of “over - sexualisation” because of their bisexuality. Both interviewees are female and the prejudice might stem from their sexuality as well as their gender.

**Choice:** - Interviewees claimed that they received comments online saying that their sexuality is a choice and are doing it out of attention. They have also stated that such comments don't bother them anymore and have learned to ignore them.

**Criticism:** A lot of criticism was met online due to interviewee's sexuality and they weren't able to express freely and openly without being criticised. They felt dejected and interviewees have gotten used to facing such criticism. One of the interviewees claimed that facing such criticism on a daily basis has changed her and she has learned how to better ignore these negative comments.

**Bigotry:** Bigotry, due to their sexuality, was a contributing factor to both interviewee's cyberbullying. One of the interviewees confessed that they had to delete some of the posts online, related to her sexuality, due to bigotted comments.

###### b) Rights of LGBTQ

**Equality:** - Interviewees concurred that equality should be maintained in the online space, regardless of sexuality and gender. One should be able to post anything online to the individual's desire, without the threat of cyberbullying.

**Doubt in government role:** - Interviewees have acknowledged that the government has taken steps for the betterment of the LGBTQ community with a heavy implication on the abolishment of section 377. But presently, interviewees have felt a lackluster role by the government for the LGBTQ community.

**Ineffective laws and regulation:** - Interviewees stated that fitting laws and regulation are not in place for LGBTQ members, be it in the online space and in real life.

###### c) Emotions

**Anger and frustration:** - Interviewees responded to their cyberbullying, which includes mean comments, trolling and direct messaging, through anger and frustration and it has affected their mental health. Interviewees regretted how they initially handled their cyberbullying.

**Struggle with self - image:** - Interviewees stated that initially they went through a struggle with self - image and found it hard to come out with their bisexuality. Eventually,

with the help of friends and family, interviewees found it easier to be open about their bisexuality in online space and real life.

#### d) Coping with cyberbullying

**Frustration:** - Interviewees were frustrated when trying to cope with cyberbullying. They resorted by blocking, reporting, or ignoring cyberbullies. And eventually, interviewees have gotten used to facing criticism, regarding their sexuality, online.

**Sad:** - Interviewees felt that they were visibly more sad due to criticism and comments on their sexuality.

**Emotional:** - After a thorough analysis of the interviewees' statement, it can be interpreted that interviewees were emotionally affected by cyberbullying and had a hard time to cope with it. Soon, cyberbullying and constant criticism became a norm and now interviewees are able to better handle the online trolling and bullying with effective responses and managing emotional health.

#### e) Transgender thematic analysis

##### Hazardous online conditions

**Death and rape threats:** - Interviewees revealed that they occasionally received death and rape threats online through commentators or direct messages. They responded back by blocking and reporting or ignoring such trolls. But interviewees confessed that it has taken a mental toll on their health and have felt helpless in these situations.

**Abusive language:** - Both interviewees shared that they are frequently addressed with defamatory language online such as - body - shaming, attacks on their sexuality and gender, and abuses either through public comments or direct messages.

**Targeted:** - Interviewees feel that individuals who identify themselves from the LGBTQ community are targeted more online, especially transgender. They feel that they are more vulnerable to threats online and are not able to express themselves more freely.

#### f) LGBTQ rights

**Lack of accessibility:** - Interviewees stated that they find it hard to report to the authorities, concerning cyberbullying. Interviewees shared that they have approached the police and social media authorities, but either they have been ignored or have received no response. Both interviewees suggested having accessibility options for LGBTQ online, so cybercrimes can be reported more swiftly.

**Lack of government action:** - An overall negative opinion was given by transgender interviewees of the Indian government. Insufficient laws and regulation and slow progress of the government for the betterment of LGBTQ are contributing factors. It can be inferred that the lack of action taken by the authorities can be the cause of the negative viewpoint of the government.

#### g) Coping with cyberbullying

**Anger:** - While facing online trolls and cyberbullying, interviewees claim that they feel angry. Mainly due to the fact that they feel helpless in these situations and a lack of acceptance of their gender and sexuality online.

**Anxious and depressed:** - Frequently facing hate comments online, interviewees state that they are visibly more anxious and depressed. It can be inferred that being depressed and anxious can be a commonality among those who are frequently cyberbullied.

**Doubting self - identity:** - A common characteristic of "doubting self - identity" is present in both the interviewees. Interviewees have trouble finding their own true identity online and in the real world, due to cyberbullying.

#### h) Practicality

**Desire for change:** - Interviewees have expressed a change is necessary for LGBTQ in India. By analysing interviewees' statements it can be interpreted that they want awareness and an understanding of LGBTQ among people in India.

**Realities of social media:** - Interviewees feel that people online are too quick to judge and immediately jump to conclusions. After analysis, it can be interpreted that interviewees are suggesting that people should think before commenting online about anyone and a prior fact - checking should be done on the individual before jumping into conclusions.

#### i) Gay thematic analysis

##### Cybersecurity

**Safe cyberspace for everyone:** - Most of the Interviewees have similar opinions that a secure online space should be available for everyone, and not just for LGBTQ. Interviewees wished for an online space where they can freely express themselves and not be constantly criticized for their sexuality and gender.

**Priority:** After analysing Interviewees' comments on cybersecurity, it can be interpreted that a secure cyberspace should be a priority. LGBTQ can express themselves more freely online rather than in the real world. Therefore, having safe online forums for discussing and showcasing their sexuality and gender should be a priority.

#### j) LGBTQ rights

**Varied opinion of the government:** - It was observed that a mixed opinion about the Indian government for the role of LGBTQ was shared between Interviewees. While some acknowledge and appreciate that the government has taken steps in the right direction for the inclusion of different genders in various educational institutions and job sectors as well as the abolishment of section 377, others express that the government and the authorities are unhelpful for the LGBTQ in online or in real life. A shared consensus was observed in all the gay Interviewees that the Indian

government still has a long way to go for the betterment of LGBTQ community.

#### k) Humiliating and demeaning behaviour

- **Threats:** - Majority of the Interviewees confessed to facing threats online through trolls and direct messages. But participants find online bullying easier to handle than face - to - face bullying. As a matter of fact, gay participants face more face - to - face bullying than online bullying.
- **Abusive comments:** - Interviewees also said that they have faced abusive comments on their posts in social media. These abusive comments consist of name - calling or using vulgar words, mostly attacking their sexuality and gender.

#### l) Effects of cyberbullying

- **Emotional and mental toll:** - Interviewees have felt a constant emotional and mental toll taken by the online bullying. While it is easier to ignore tolls online, it can also leave the individual mentally disturbed and emotionally troubled. Gay interviewees have also said that they are getting used to online bullying and are learning to not be bothered by it.
- **Self - harming tendency:** - A few interviewees confessed to having suicidal tendencies and also thinking about harming themselves due to online bullying. After analysing the comments, it can be interpreted that interviewees' insecurities and self - doubting is being exploited by online trolls, which is leaving the interviewees in a vulnerable spot.

### 5. Conclusion

Cyberbullying is a frequent occurrence among the LGBTQ. The study has found that all participants have faced discrimination, based on their sexuality and gender, on various social medias. It was found out that transgenders had a much harsher experience with cyberbullying compared to gays and bisexuals, as they have faced rape and death threats and constant abusive and vulgarity online. Gay participants were comparatively more optimistic about the government's role for the LGBTQ rights compared to bisexual and transgender participants but all participants had a shared opinion that the Indian government still has a long way to go for the betterment of the LGBTQ. Surprisingly, none of the participants mentioned that the reason for their cyberbullying is due to certain religious beliefs. Gay and transgender participants felt that the face - to - face bullying is more dangerous than cyberbullying. And finally, all participants were mentally and emotionally traumatized by the cyberattacks but eventually they learned how to cope with it and have gotten used to it.

### 6. Limitations

Few limitations were noticed for this study. The sample consists only bisexuals, gays and transgender. All participants are from either Central India or South India. More research should be done on this topic and a lack of statistical data regarding Indian LGBTQ.

### 7. Suggestions

Broader sample space, which contains more genders and sexualities should be considered for future studies. Studies should be done individually for each category of LGBTQ for a better understanding. For studies in India, data should be collected from each state to analyze regional differences in experience.

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#### Appendix

- Can you tell about the importance of cybersecurity to the LGBTQ community?
- Can you tell me about your decision to open up about your sexuality online?
- Have you been informed about your cyberattack to the concerned authorities? What problems do people face while informing about such attacks in India?
- What role do you see the Government of India playing for the rights of the LGBT?
- How has being bullied online, because of your sexual orientation, affected you?
- Can you elaborate on any experience you may have had after being bullied online?