

Understanding the Intersectional Challenges of LGBTQ Community in the Indian Society: A Systematic Review Paper

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Abstract

This study examines the intersectional issues that the LGBTQ population faces in Indian society, examining how their lived experiences are shaped by caste, class, religion, and regional differences. The purpose of this study is to investigate how the experiences of LGBTQ people in India are impacted by several axes of identification, including caste-based discrimination, economic position, geographical inequities, and religious biases. 43 research papers have been reviewed from which 30 papers have been included and 13 have been excluded. Research papers from following databases are reviewed - Pub med, Springer, research gate, science direct, Wiley online library, sage pub, academia etc. Systematic review of 30 research papers has been done in the article. This review examines the particular difficulties LGBTQ+ people from various socioeconomic and geographic origins encounter, emphasizing problems including lack of legal recognition of same-sex weddings, family rejection, job discrimination, and healthcare access. It also looks at how the media, policy changes, and grassroots movements shape narratives and promote social change. In order to guarantee equality and dignity for every member of the LGBTQ+ population in India, the report emphasizes the necessity of inclusive policies and social acceptance. The study also emphasizes how education and awareness campaigns can help address mental health issues, foster inclusivity, and lessen stigma. The research emphasizes the critical need for inclusive policies, community participation, and structural reforms that eliminate systemic discrimination in order to ensure equality, social justice, and dignity for all LGBTQ+ individuals in India.

Keywords: LGBTQ, Intersectional challenges, community, Indian society, Social Inclusion

INTRODUCTION

The LGBTQ+ community's lived experiences in India, a multicultural nation where tradition and modernity frequently clash, represent a complicated tapestry of acceptance, stigma, and resiliency.

Numerous LGBTQ+ people still confront complex issues influenced by their gender, sexual orientation, caste, religion, and socioeconomic background, even in the face of recent legal advancements like the legalization of Section 377 in 2018 and continuing debates around marriage equality. This study delves into these intersectional realities, aiming to uncover how factors like caste-based discrimination, economic inequality, regional disparities, and religious prejudices shape the lived experiences of India's LGBTQ+ community. By exploring these interconnected axes of identity, the research seeks to illuminate the complexities that define the everyday struggles and resilience of LGBTQ+ individuals in Indian society.

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The LGBTQ community in India is made up of individuals from a wide range of socioeconomic, religious, and cultural origins that all face different challenges because of their intersecting identities. Intersectionality examines how caste, class, gender, religion, disability, and geography exacerbate oppression and prejudice among the LGBTQ population in India. For instance, a qualitative study examining the lived experiences of LGBTQ people in urban India was carried out. Their study sheds insight on how cultural norms, societal attitudes, and organizational policies affect LGBTQIA+ workers' identities, familial relationships, and work situations. The study highlights these groups' marginalization and difficulties, such as social exclusion and healthcare inequalities. Research also suggests that there is an impact of intersectionality on health inequalities of transgender individuals in India [1].

Furthermore, the researchers focused on how gender, race and socioeconomic class affect the discrimination experienced by transgender people. A study on intersectional discrimination in South India examined the ways in which caste interacts with sex, gender identity, and handicap [2]. According to the study, those who live near these intersections experience more severe forms of discrimination in a variety of contexts, such as workplaces and educational institutions. In order to address these exacerbated issues, the research highlights the necessity of legislative recognition and protection against intersectional discrimination. The study explores how neoliberalism and social norms have created queer subjectivities in India and how they are entwined with caste and class politics [3].

This review paper seeks to critically analyze the existing literature which largely focuses on legal frameworks and societal attitudes. By synthesizing findings from various studies, this study aims to determine an interdisciplinary approach to close this gap and promote a more representative and inclusive conversation about LGBTQ rights and general well-being in India. This study addresses gaps by exploring the socio-legal, economic, and psychological challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals in India, fostering a more inclusive discourse on their rights and well-being.

Paradigm

Intersectionality

The term "intersectionality," which was first used by Kimberlé Crenshaw, highlights the ways in which many social identities—such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation—intersect to produce distinct experiences of advantage and discrimination. In India, caste, religion, and socioeconomic class are some of the other elements that determine the identities of LGBTQ people, which can further marginalize them [4].

Heteronormativity

Non heterosexual orientations are marginalized as a result of society's perception that heterosexuality is the default or "normal" sexual orientation. Heteronormativity frequently infuses Indian laws, cultural customs, and social conventions, putting LGBTQ people at odds with conventional expectations.

Medical Care and Mental Health

LGBTQ people have particular healthcare concerns, such as limited access to gender-affirming treatments, prejudice from medical professionals, and mental health problems brought on by social rejection. Gender-based violence, economic instability, and social isolation all contribute to inequities in mental health.

Principles

Representation and inclusion

To ensure that the voices of underrepresented subgroups within the LGBTQ community (such as Dalit, Muslim, or rural LGBTQ individuals) are heard and understood, research on LGBTQ problems in India should place a high priority on inclusivity.

The Rights-Based Method

Human rights concepts must serve as the foundation for any advocacy for LGBTQ rights, including social fairness, healthcare access, and legal recognition. Promoting equality, dignity, and nondiscrimination entails making certain that everyone is treated with respect, irrespective of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

THEORIES

1. *Queer theory*: opposes the strict binary conception of gender and sexuality as well as heteronormativity. Aids in the analysis of how Indian societal norms restrict LGBTQ people by influencing institutional structures, laws, and social attitudes. For instance, non-binary and transgender individuals in India are excluded from customary family structures and inheritance rights.
2. *Intersectionality*: This theory describes how several social identities—including sexual orientation, gender, caste, class, and religion—intersect to produce distinct discriminatory experiences. LGBTQ people in India may experience discrimination not only because of their gender identity or sexual orientation but also because of their socioeconomic background, caste, and religion. For instance, a Dalit transgender woman may face both transphobia and caste-based prejudice, which would further marginalize her.
3. *Structural violence theory*: Explains the suffering that systemic injustices and institutional systems cause to underprivileged groups. LGBTQ people in India frequently experience indirect violence due to laws, discrimination in healthcare, and the denial of social security benefits.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

To examine intersectional challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community in Indian society and analyze legal and policy frameworks.

Research question: Exploring the intersectional challenges faced by LGBTQ community and analysis of legal frameworks?

PRISMA FLOW DIAGRAM

Figure 1 shows the study collected records from a range of academic databases and sources such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, and other psychology-focused platforms. Before the screening stage, duplicate entries and non-eligible records were eliminated to maintain accuracy and relevance. The remaining records were carefully screened to evaluate their appropriateness for inclusion. Following the application of eligibility criteria, the studies that satisfied the requirements were incorporated into the final review.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In India, the intersections of gender, sexuality, caste, class, religion, and regional differences create a complex array of obstacles for the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) population. Notwithstanding legislative developments, such as the legalization of homosexuality under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in 2018, there is still little social acceptance of homosexuality, and many people face prejudice in a variety of contexts.

Legal Advancement versus Social Acceptance

The Supreme Court's decision to decriminalize homosexuality marked a significant legal turning point [5]. However, acceptance in Indian society has not kept pace with legislative advancements. Ignorance, religious beliefs, and cultural conservatism continue to be the main drivers of homophobia and transphobia [6]. LGBTQ people sometimes face rejection from family and society, which can lead to socioeconomic marginalization and mental health issues [7]. An in-depth analysis of LGBTQ+

equality in India from an anthropological and legal standpoint. Researchers look at how LGBTQ rights have evolved historically and currently in India, paying special focus to significant court rulings, legislative successes, and social norms. It emphasizes how crucial it is to prioritize human rights over deeply rooted social norms, particularly when it comes to recognizing transgender people as equal and significant members of society. This study intends to investigate the complex development of LGBTQ rights over time, as well as the practical accessibility of these rights as protected by constitutional law, case law, and other relevant laws [8].

Intersectionality: Gender, Caste, and Class

According to Crenshaw, intersectionality emphasizes how overlapping identities impact oppressive situations [4]. Caste and class have a big impact on LGBTQ experiences in India. For example, caste-based and gender identity-based discrimination are exacerbated for transgender Dalit people. Vulnerabilities are made worse by economic position since LGBTQ individuals from lower-income families encounter obstacles to education and work, which restricts their prospects for upward mobility [9]. The results of the present study support the hypothesis that examines the intersectionality of LGBTQ rights in India. The Important findings show that structural injustices, familial rejection, and social stigma sustain transgender people's marginalization and violate their constitutional rights under Articles 14, 15, and 21. The report also looks at court rulings that have pushed LGBTQ+ rights but fall short of guaranteeing complete equality and social inclusion, such as *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* and *NALSA v. Union of India*.

Healthcare Disparities

India's healthcare services frequently lack the necessary resources to meet the unique needs of LGBTQ people. While mental health facilities usually lack LGBTQ-inclusive frameworks, transgender people experience stigma while seeking medical care [10]. Many people still experience prejudice in healthcare settings despite government initiatives such as the transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 and inconsistent implementation. Researches also focused on the psychophysical effects of sexual violence on LGBTQ + Community Internalized stigma surrounding the individuals' sexual orientation and gender identity made these effects worse. Persistent pain and sexual dysfunction were common physical symptoms. The findings encourage structural policy changes and LGBTQIA+ competent, trauma-informed care to better support this population. For LGBTQIA+ survivors of sexual assault, this study emphasizes the necessity of a comprehensive, culturally sensitive approach to healthcare that addresses holistic health results by lowering care-related obstacles [11]. One research examined the effects of children intersectional sociodemographic traits on risk factors for health problems. Findings indicated that children of sexual minorities, including White and ethnic/racial minorities, were more likely to experience suicide thoughts, self-harming behaviors, and low moods than White heterosexual boys. While heterosexual ethnically/racially minority's children, including boys and girls, were less likely to drink alcohol, white SM children, including both boys and girls, were also more likely to do so [12]. The goal of the current study was to investigate how intersectionality contributes to the health inequalities that Indian transgender people experience. The results of this research provide supporting evidence that the physical, mental and sexual health are significantly impacted by lack of awareness and sensitivity about this community as well as rejection from peers, lovers and family.

Educational and Employment Challenges

In India, LGBTQ people experience prejudice at employment and in educational institutions. LGBTQ youth dropout rates are higher as a result of bullying and exclusion in schools [13]. Biases in hiring, harassment, and restricted possibilities for advancement are examples of workplace discrimination [14]. Inclusion is hampered by the absence of legal protection against discrimination in the private sector on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. Furthermore, the research also focused on the intersectionality of gender wage gap among healthcare professionals. Four nations' worth of data was

included in the studies: Brazil, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The most frequently studied professions in the synthesized papers were doctors (43%), followed by nurses (38%). A study found that sexual orientation contributed to salary differences, but the results were paired with other personal traits [15]. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of different social and professional challenges that the LGBT population faces in Indian mainstream society and in organizations. The findings suggest that the LGBTQ population must deal with discrimination on nearly every level of their existence and that nearly everyone they encounter will either physically or verbally assault or harass them. They are disproportionately the victims of hate crimes worldwide, not just in India which demonstrates how many people are conceited and hateful to LGBTQ minorities. They frequently endure beatings, are coerced into prostitution, or are compelled by their families to enter into unhappy marriages. They frequently experience mental stress as a result of the pressure from society to hide their sexual orientation [16].

Media Representation and Public Perception

The way the general public views the LGBTQ community is greatly influenced by the media. Although positive representation has gradually increased, sensationalism and stereotypes still exist [17]. Although LGBTQ activists and independent filmmakers have worked to provide more complex representations, the variety of the community is sometimes overlooked by mainstream media. Research suggests that by investigating how queer-identifying people in Mumbai have negotiated the relationship between queerness and social media disclosures about mental health, this study aims to comprehend disclosure among people with overlapping stigmas. The three key findings of the present research First, people may be especially reluctant to disclose at all, and particularly on social media, due to the perceived danger of disclosure being increased by intersecting sources of stigma. Second, the value of resources and community support for people with intersecting stigmas can help them focus more on the advantages of disclosure for the whole community. Third, the perceived safety of disclosing on specific social media platforms and the tactics employed can be influenced by past experiences with doing so.

Family and Social Isolation

Individual well-being depends on social and familial acceptance, although many LGBTQ people in India experience exclusion and rejection from these core social groups. When people come out, traditional Indian family systems frequently place a higher priority on heteronormative expectations, which can result in emotional abuse, forced marriages, or disownment. LGBTQ people frequently hide their identities out of fear of the shame and stigma attached to non-conforming gender identities or sexual orientations, which can have a very negative impact on their mental health [18]. Social isolation goes beyond the family because LGBTQ people are frequently excluded from community settings, which further marginalizes them and restricts their access to networks of support. The results of the present study support the hypothesis that examines the psychological health of LGBTQ teenagers, bullying and prejudice are associated with high rates of anxiety, sadness, and suicide thoughts. According to the study, 78% of transgender and non-binary teenagers experience discrimination, which has a major negative impact on their mental health. The results highlight how inclusive learning environments are necessary to lessen these problems.

Marginalization of the Economy

One major obstacle facing the LGBTQ population in India is economic isolation. Common problems include limited job growth prospects, harassment at work, and discrimination in employment (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Due to their systematic exclusion from established job markets, transgender people in particular experience extreme employment discrimination and are frequently forced into unofficial industries like begging or sex work (Humsafar Trust, 2018). Widespread societal biases prevent full economic involvement, even in private businesses with progressive policies, which exacerbates poverty and economic dependency among LGBTQ people. Research suggests that this study looks at how risk communication affected LGBTQ+ populations in South Korea during the

COVID-19 outbreak. The study examines (1) the intersectional and multi-layered stigma and discrimination LGBTQ+ people experienced; (2) factors that exacerbated stigmatization, damaged trust, and deterred public health engagement, like COVID-19 testing; and (3) strategies that decreased stigma, promoted inclusivity, and promoted protective health behaviors through in-depth interviews. Results show that, especially in culturally homogeneous and structurally inequitable contexts, stigma and public health barriers were made worse by the insensitivity of health authorities, the release of identifiable contact tracing data, and the derogatory depictions of LGBTQ+ community spaces. This study looks at how intersecting marginalized identities might be able to predict when preadolescent youth would start acting suicidal. Youth from minoritized racial/ethnic origins who identify as sexual and gender minorities, for example, are more likely to have both suicide attempts due to an interaction effect. Preliminary suicidal behaviors and earlier beginning of suicide attempts were linked to intersectional marginalized identities. The results indicate that in order to lower the sharply rising suicide incidence among preadolescent youth, early interventions for marginalized youth may be crucial [19].

Intersections of Religion and Caste

Both within and outside of society, discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals from lower castes is made worse. Religious extremism, which often depicts LGBTQ+ identities as "Western" or "against tradition," increases their vulnerability. The results of this research provide supporting evidence that examines the complex relationships between the caste system and different socioeconomic classes, as well as the numerous difficulties encountered by those with non-normative gender and sexual identities in North India. People from marginalized communities who have non-normative gender and sexual identities face widespread social stigma and prejudice. Increased degrees of discrimination and exclusion result from the fusion of caste, religion, and LGBTQ+ identities, both within their own both within communities and throughout society [20].

Our findings highlight that an understanding of intersectionality is necessary to fully understand the LGBTQ+ experience in India. Though social and cultural acceptability is still lacking, legal changes have begun. Caste, class, and religion all have an impact on the persecution of marginalized LGBTQ+ people, which gives their battles a unique and nuanced character. To create a more inclusive society, policy improvements must be accompanied by social reforms, awareness campaigns, and community support systems. Promoting business diversity, educational reforms, and awareness-raising campaigns in the legal and medical sectors can all help to overcome these systemic inequities.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research should explore how caste, class, religion, and disability intersect with LGBTQ identities to deepen understanding of varied lived experiences. There is a need for studies focusing on rural areas and small towns to contrast with urban LGBTQ experiences. Future studies should assess how recent legal changes (e.g., decriminalization of Section 377) have tangibly affected the community's socio-economic conditions. Research tracking individuals over time can reveal evolving challenges and coping strategies across different life stages. More research should examine mental health disparities and barriers to healthcare access, especially for transgender and non-binary individuals. Future studies can explore how media portrayal and educational curricula shape societal attitudes towards LGBTQ communities. Special attention should be given to marginalized subgroups within the LGBTQ community, such as Dalit queer individuals, elderly LGBTQ people, and LGBTQ persons with disabilities.

LIMITATIONS

There are at least three potential limitations concerning the results of this study. A first limitation concerns existing literature focused on global perspectives, with limited India-specific research. This restricts comprehensive understanding of local cultural, legal, and societal nuances. A second potential limitation is that within the LGBTQ community, identities such as asexual, intersex, and non-binary individuals are less represented in research. The third limitation is that this Urban-centric research often overlooks the experiences of LGBTQ individuals in rural or economically marginalized areas.

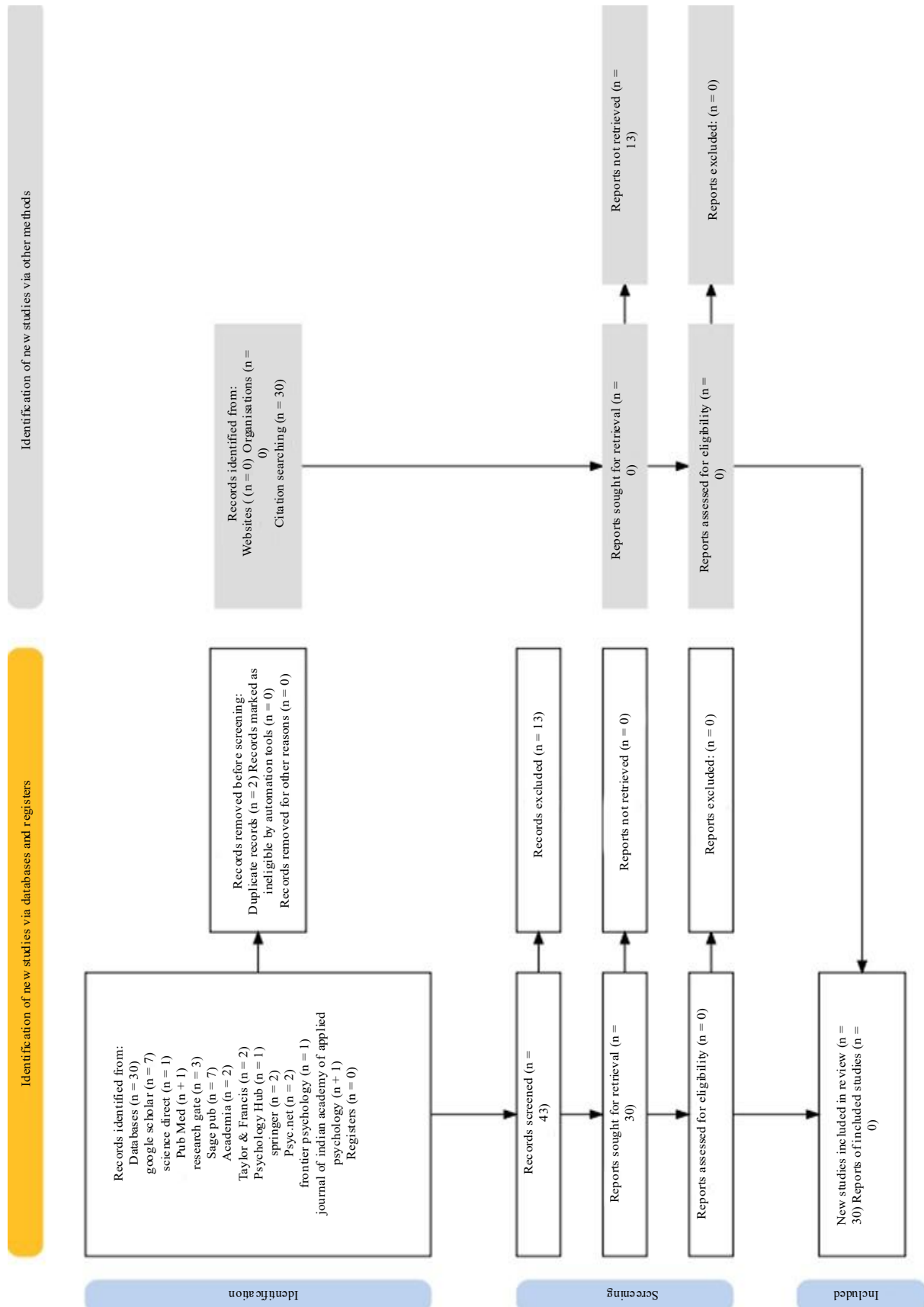


Figure 1. Prisma flow diagram.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, our findings point to a number of theoretical and applied consequences. The results can help legislators create regulations that address the intertwined problems of caste, class, religion, and geography in addition to sexuality and gender. Bolstering legal structures to stop discrimination in public areas, workplaces, and educational institutions. Creating LGBTQ-inclusive healthcare regulations that cover sexual health, mental health, and general healthcare access. Integrating LGBTQ topics into university and school curricula in order to foster acceptance and understanding at a young age. Creating sensitivity training for police enforcement, medical personnel, and educators. Utilizing the media to dispel myths and advance accurate portrayals of LGBTQ people.

CONCLUSION

The intersectional challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ population in India are a sobering reminder of the structural inequalities that go beyond sexual orientation and gender identity. Although there has been progress in legal advancements, like the decriminalization of Section 377, social acceptance is still slow. Living an inclusive and respectable life is fraught with challenges for LGBTQ+ individuals, including as caste-based oppression, religious intolerance, and rejection from family, discrimination at employment, and restricted access to healthcare. Addressing these concerns requires a multipronged approach that includes policy measures, societal awareness, legal reforms, and grassroots activism. Media outlets, businesses, healthcare systems, and educational institutions must work together to eradicate prejudices and promote diversity. Indian society can only get toward complete equality for the LGBTQ+ community by acknowledging and addressing the Media outlets, businesses, healthcare systems, and educational institutions that must work together to eradicate prejudices and promote diversity. Recognizing and addressing the complex experiences of oppression is the only way Indian society can move closer to complete equality for the LGBTQ+ community.

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