

Factors Associated With Indian Youth's Attitudes Towards Sexuality

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ABSTRACT

Prejudice is both common and often extreme in India, especially regarding sexuality, which remains a deeply taboo subject. This taboo may contribute to discrimination and alienation of LGBTQIA+ individuals. By studying the factors associated with beliefs in younger generations (ages 12-25), we can add to our understanding of how these prejudices form and how to most effectively change them. The paper uses a literature review to synthesize and draw inference from available data on the subject. Two databases, Google Scholar and The International Journal of Indian Psychology in July and August 2024 were used. This review included thirteen studies based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria and identified ten key factors. Among these factors, two had consistent data behind them (contact and knowledge of sexuality); three had inconsistent results (gender, religion and area of living) and five were only researched in one study (emotional intelligence, friends' acceptance of homosexuality, mother's education level, just world belief, right-wing authoritarianism). There is limited empirical research conducted on this topic and, due to methodological restrictions, no causal relationships could be established. Regardless, correlations with attitude were found for a number of different factors. Future research should consider exploring larger, more diverse samples and investigating additional factors to deepen our understanding of this topic.

Keywords Belief, Attitude, Prejudice, Sexuality, Indian, Youth

INTRODUCTION

A belief is defined as either acceptance of the truth, reality, or validity of something, particularly in the absence of substantiation or an association of some characteristic or attribute, usually evaluative in nature, with an attitude object (American Psychological Association, n.d. "Belief"). An attitude is defined as an enduring judgement of objects, people, or concepts that generally originates from pre-existing beliefs (American Psychological Association, n.d. "Attitude").

The study of the factors associated with beliefs is essential to understand how people construct beliefs, how to prevent the formation of dangerous or prejudiced beliefs and how to change pre-existing beliefs. This is particularly important when we consider prejudice. A number of studies discuss the relationship

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between belief and prejudice and the theory that certain beliefs can lead people to ostracize others for their differences (Suhay et al., 2017; Taylor & Guimond, 1978). Therefore, knowledge about beliefs can be used to reduce prejudice and improve conditions for marginalized groups. Additionally, this can help us understand where and how prejudice develops, which would allow us to prevent it from forming in the future. While prejudice and the beliefs that cause it have been studied extensively, they are complicated topics that need to be researched further to be better understood.

India has a majorly conservative society that is deeply corroded by prejudice (Thorat et al., 2020; Vijayan, 2018). In particular, sexuality remains an extremely taboo topic (Hunt, 2011), which results in there being little research on it in India as well. This means that there is a lack of understanding surrounding the causes of prejudice against homosexuality in India. Due to the vast cultural and social differences between different countries, investigating the attitudes of different countries can provide significant insight into the belief systems and causes of prejudice in specific countries. Furthermore, more research in this field may enable us to make comparisons between countries, allowing us to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence prejudice and attitudes.

The beliefs of the adolescents and young adults in a country reflect the direction of the country's future progress. Therefore, it is important to learn about the factors that influence their belief systems to reduce the amount of prejudice that is passed down from generation to generation (Brown, 2021). Additionally, numerous studies have shown that younger people tend to have more positive attitudes towards homosexuality (Anand, 2016; Horn, 2006), which indicates that there is a potential for new insights into belief formation in studying the youth of a population.

There is a considerable amount of research on factors associated with beliefs towards sexuality in Indian youth. For example, research has found that empathy and commitment were shown to be significantly correlated with attitudes towards homosexuality and that those with greater degrees of empathy and commitment are more likely to have favourable views about homosexuality (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2023).

Similarly, Maji et al. (2023) investigated the factors that correlate acceptance of homosexuality amongst Indian engineering students. It identifies a number of factors that correlated with positive views on homosexuality. For example, female students were found to have a significantly higher positive attitude towards homosexuality than male heterosexual students. Other factors in the study that predicted positive beliefs about homosexuality were friends' acceptability of homosexuality, just-world belief, mother's education level, and having a fandom to LGBTQIA+ celebrities. Additionally, the study found that religiosity is not a predictor of attitudes towards homosexuality.

However, a majority of the available papers discuss this in one of two ways: either only considering a few factors, such as prejudice amongst peers and emotions, and how they affect beliefs in general (Hjerm et al., 2018; Frijda et al., 2000; Bettinghaus & Basehea, 1969), or focusing on only a few factors in a specific area that affect a specific belief (e.g., Joshi, 2010; Bandyopadhyay et al., 2023; Kawatra, 2021). Hence, it is important to acknowledge that different types of beliefs may be influenced by different

factors, making it important to separately evaluate different types of beliefs and the wide range of factors that affect them. Thus, the current review aims to consolidate and synthesize the information from the existing research papers to create a work that offers insight into the broad range of factors associated with beliefs on homosexuality in Indian youth. Additionally, this study highlights the importance of further research into the factors that affect the formation and change of beliefs, and by extension, open-mindedness.

The present literature review will utilize a narrative method to identify, critically appraise, and synthesize existing empirical evidence relevant to investigate the research question “What factors are associated with Indian youth’s attitudes towards sexuality?” Instead of using a systematic review, focusing on a relatively narrow topic, and adhering to an extensive and exhaustive screening process, the study will provide in-depth, critical, and reflective appraisals of the literature.

METHODS

To identify studies published in English in peer-reviewed journals from 2000 onwards containing empirical evidence relevant to the research question, a literature search with the keywords “(india) AND (adolescent OR youth) AND (belief OR attitude OR acceptance OR prejudice) AND (sexuality OR homosexual)” was conducted from July to August 2024 on Google Scholar and The International Journal of Indian Psychology, which allowed for a focus of Indian research published in regional journals. Additionally, an examination of reference lists in the selected papers was conducted to ensure a well-rounded pool of papers, reducing any bias that may have been caused by the selection of the search terms. Initially, 63 papers were identified through the search process. The first round of screening eliminated papers that discussed only views on heterosexual sexuality (e.g. sexual health and premarital sex), and studies including the terms “belief” and “factors” that discussed the effect of beliefs on behaviour and other factors such as societal norms rather than factors associated with the beliefs themselves. This eliminated 39 papers, narrowing the pool to 24. The second round of screening eliminated studies with samples that included Non-Resident Indians, or a mean age greater than 25. This eliminated 11 studies, leaving a final pool of 13 papers. Relevant information from the selected studies was retrieved and categorized according to the factors that were identified across papers.

RESULTS

A number of factors associated with attitudes toward sexuality were identified through a literature review of the sample of papers gathered, such as: gender (Mishra & Gupta, 2018; Maji et al., 2023; Kala et al., 2018), religion (Maji et al., 2024; Sulthana et al., 2021; Banwari et al. 2015), and knowledge of sexuality (Kawatra, 2021; Banwari et al., 2015; Mishra & Gupta, 2018). From the pool of thirteen papers, ten factors were identified: gender, religion, area of living, knowledge of homosexuality, contact with LGBTQIA+ individuals, emotional intelligence, friends’ acceptance of homosexuality, mother’s education, just world belief, and right-wing authoritarianism. Information pertaining to the demographics

and designs of each study in addition to the relevant content in each study are summarized in Table 1 in the Appendix.

Gender

Of the thirteen studies, ten examined the correlation between gender and attitude towards homosexuality, of which nine used a cross-sectional approach, and one experimental. Six studies found no significant difference in gender for beliefs on homosexuality (Mishra & Gupta, 2018; Sulthana et al., 2021; Kawatra, 2021; Bhaskar et al., 2012; Anand, 2016; Pal & Sinha, 2016). However, three studies found that the female gender demographic has a more positive attitude towards homosexuality, measured by positive statements such as “Homosexuality is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned,” in comparison to negative ones such as “If gay men want to be treated like everyone else, then they need to stop making such a fuss about their sexuality/culture” (Joshi, 2010; Maji et al., 2023; Banwari et al., 2015). Regardless, a study using an experimental approach to investigate the effect of an intervention on changing attitudes towards homosexuality only found statistically significant changes in attitudes in males and the whole sample, whereas females’ attitudes did not significantly change (Kala et al., 2018).

Religion

Religion was considered as a factor influencing beliefs about homosexuality in four of the studies, all of which used a cross-sectional approach. One study (Maji et al., 2023) found that religiosity (the practice of a religion) was not a significant predictor of students’ beliefs on homosexuality. However, Sulthana et al. (2021) reported that atheists and non-religious individuals were most accepting of homosexuality while Christians and Muslims were least accepting. Furthermore, Banwari et al. (2015) found that religion was a significant predictor of knowledge, with non-Hindus having greater knowledge about homosexuality than Hindus, though knowledge was not significantly correlated with attitude towards homosexuality. Nevertheless, this difference may have been caused by external factors such as the wide gap between the number of Hindu and non-Hindu individuals in the sample. Finally, Pal & Sinha (2016) found that religious fundamentalism is a significant predictor of homophobia. The study defines religious fundamentalism as “The extent to which an individual follows the beliefs and values of his/her religion, considers it the most supreme, protects these beliefs and opposing those who don't follow the same”. Therefore, it identified high religiosity to be a predictor of prejudice against sexuality.

Area of living (Urban, Rural, Slums)

Two studies, both of which used a cross-sectional design, investigated the impact of the level of development in a youth’s place of residence on their attitude toward homosexuality. Bhaskar et al. (2012) explored the difference between beliefs on homosexuality and lesbianism in youth from urban, rural, and slum areas. The study found that slum youths held more positive attitudes towards sexuality than their urban and rural counterparts did. They also found that males in urban areas held significantly more negative attitudes towards homosexuality and lesbianism as compared to their counterparts from rural and slum areas as well as that females from slum areas held significantly more favourable attitudes towards

homosexuality and lesbianism. Contradicting Bhaskar et al. (2012), Sulthana et al. (2021) concluded that a higher degree of urbanization indicated a higher level of acceptance towards homosexuality.

Knowledge of Sexuality

Previous knowledge of sexuality. A total of four studies examined the effect of knowledge on beliefs on sexuality. All four papers used a cross-sectional method and found that knowledge about homosexuality decreased prejudice towards it. Kawatra (2021) found that there is a positive correlation between knowledge of and positive attitude towards homosexuality. Banwari et al. (2015) did not find a correlation between the two within sub demographics such as gender and year of study (i.e., Interns and third-year medical students were found to be more knowledgeable on homosexuality than first and second-year students, but there was no significant difference in their attitudes toward homosexuals). However, when considering the entire sample it was found that those with higher knowledge had more favourable attitudes. According to Mishra and Gupta (2018), college students had average scores on a questionnaire testing knowledge on homosexuality, and a majority of them had favourable attitudes towards homosexuality. They found that knowledge and attitude were both significantly correlated with the same two factors (age and year of study) out of several factors tested for correlation. Joshi (2010) also indicated that a lack of knowledge about homosexuality contributes to the negative beliefs that surround it.

Education on sexuality. Two studies, both using an experimental approach, examined the effect of education on changing attitudes towards sexuality. Kala et al. (2018) showed their participants two videos, the second of which presented the names of various famous LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual) people and then the viewpoints and experiences of multiple LGB individuals. It found that the intervention with these videos was successful in significantly improving the perception of homosexuality in its participants. One of the interventions created in Ahuja et al. (2018) used a presentation to educate their participants on homosexuality and found that education on homosexuality helped dispel myths, reduce heteronormative assumptions and significantly improved attitudes towards homosexuality. However, their control group's attitude also significantly improved, and the difference between the two groups was not significant. The study speculated that it was likely that the reason for this was that the control group participants deciphered the study's purpose, leading to bias.

Contact

Four studies discussed the effect of contact with the LGBTQIA+ community on beliefs held by the youth regarding sexuality, all of which referenced the contact hypothesis by Allport (1954) and concluded that increased contact led to more positive attitudes. Two of the studies used a cross-sectional approach. First, Sahni et al. (2016) was the only one to study the contact hypothesis exclusively, and concluded those in the 'contact group' (people in contact with people from the LGBTQIA+ community) held significantly more positive attitudes towards homosexuality than those in the 'non-contact group'. Maji et al. (2023) explored both physical and parasocial contact using the parameters 'have friends in the LGBTQIA+ community' and 'having a fandom to a celebrity from the LGBTQIA+ community' respectively. It found

that both forms of contact correlate with a higher level of positive attitude towards homosexuality. Similarly, Kala et al. (2018), using an experimental approach, found that contact through recorded videos also caused a positive shift in attitude towards homosexuality. Finally, Ahuja et al. (2018) also used an experimental approach that involved contact in the form of participants listening to a panel comprised of people of a different sexuality. As mentioned previously, while the experimental group's attitudes significantly improved, their results did not significantly differ from the control group.

Emotional Intelligence

Only one paper (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2023) studied the correlation between emotional intelligence and attitudes towards homosexuality, using a cross-sectional approach. They found that out of 8 major predictors of emotional intelligence (e.g. self-awareness, empathy, emotional stability), empathy and commitment were found to significantly predict acceptance of and positive attitudes towards homosexuality.

Friends' acceptance of homosexuality, Mother's Education, 'Just World Belief', and 'Right-Wing Authoritarianism'

Maji et al. (2023) studies a number of factors and their correlation with beliefs on homosexuality, three of which were not discussed in any other paper. The paper found statistically significant differences in attitude towards homosexuality based on mother's education. It was theorized that those with higher education are more likely to be accepting of homosexuality and pass on those values to their children. In a similar vein, the paper found that positive attitude towards homosexuality significantly correlates with the frequency of LGBTQIA+ discussions in a family. The study also found that having a friend who was accepting of homosexuality was a significant predictor of positive attitude towards the same. The final factor identified by this study was found to be positively correlated with a prejudice against homosexuality; just world belief. Just world belief is the idea that the world is a fair and orderly place where what happens to people generally is what they deserve and that bad things happen to bad people while good things happen to good people (APA, n.d., "Just World Hypothesis"). Finally, (Pal & Sinha, 2016) investigated a unique factor as well; Right-Wing Authoritarianism, "the extent to which an individual adheres to and follows authority figures, their norms and how submissive they are to the said authority figure and is hostile towards groups that don't follow these norms", as defined by the paper. Similarly to just world belief, it found that this factor predicts prejudice against homosexuality.

DISCUSSION

The current review aims to understand and synthesize the available data on the factors associated with beliefs in Indian youth on sexuality with thirteen studies included. The review found that there are several factors that influence attitudes towards homosexuality. However, due to the complex nature and lack of research surrounding this topic, only a few factors had cohesive research behind them, while the results for the others were inconclusive. The results for knowledge of sexuality and contact were consistent

across studies; gender, religion, and area of living had inconsistencies and the rest were only investigated in one study. Importantly, a causal relationship was not found, which means that the review can only draw conclusions about the correlations between the factors and beliefs.

The review found evidence stating that females often have more positive attitudes towards homosexuality. However, a considerable amount of evidence was also found stating that the gender of a person does not have any significant correlation with their attitude towards sexuality. This conflicting evidence was likely caused by the small sample sizes of the studies and the small number of studies available. Some of the studies that found no significant correlation between gender and attitude did find an insignificant difference wherein females had more positive attitudes (Mishra & Gupta, 2018; Sulthana et al., 2021; Pal & Sinha, 2016) and so it is plausible that the studies would have found significant results with a larger sample size. This is further supported by the fact that previous research (Whitley, 2001; Herek, 1988; Wills 1999; Komlenović et al., 2014) has also found that females are generally more accepting of homosexuality than males. It has been suggested that this may be due to the fact that men are placed under more scrutiny to conform to traditional gender norms, which leads to the internalization of these norms and in turn, the increased homophobia expressed by men (Kite & Whitley, 1996). Therefore, it is probable that men's heightened dislike for homosexuality is caused by the rigid societal norms and gender roles enforced by the patriarchy.

All four studies that investigated the role of religion in attitudes toward homosexuality in Indian youth found slightly different results, so no conclusions could be drawn about specific religions. However, the three studies that found a significant correlation between religiosity and attitude seemed to agree that lower levels of religiosity positively correlate with more positive attitudes towards homosexuality. This inference can be drawn as, while Banwari et al. (2015) found no direct significant correlation between religiosity and belief, it found that non-Hindus had more knowledge about homosexuality, and it also found that knowledge on the same was directly correlated with positive attitudes towards homosexuality. This means that it is highly likely that the result was due to sampling bias caused by the disproportionate numbers of Hindus and non-Hindus. This is in line with previous research, as while there is some research that found no correlation between religion and beliefs on homosexuality (Xie & Peng, 2017), a majority of available research found a positive correlation between religiosity and prejudice against homosexuality (Rowatt et al., 2006; Pal & Sinha, 2016; Griffiths et al., 2011; Lopez et al., 2016). It is possible that highly religious people tend to be against homosexuality because they believe that it is a sin that goes against whichever god(s) they follow. Additionally, another possible explanation could be that religiosity predicts a preference for tradition and conformity, and thus a lack of openness to different ideas and perspectives (Saroglou et al. 2004).

Of the two reviews that discussed the impact of the level of development in the area a person lived in, one was centered around only this topic (Bhaskar et al., 2012), while the other investigated a number of factors and only briefly brought up urbanization in its discussion section (Sulthana et al., 2021). The two studies came to opposing conclusions, as Bhaskar et al. (2012) found that youth from slum areas had more positive attitudes towards sexuality, while Sulthana et al. (2021) stated that a higher level of urbanization indicated a higher acceptance of homosexuality. This disparity is likely caused by the small sample sizes,

differences in region and differences in the focus area of the two studies. Moreover, there is a distinct lack of research in this area globally as well, and results from other studies are equally disparate. For example, Eliason & Hughes (2004) found no difference in beliefs in counsellors from urban and rural areas, while Casazza et al. (2015) found differences in attitudes towards bisexuals between regions, with the most negative attitudes coming from rural areas and most positive from suburban areas. Therefore, it is impossible to draw any conclusions and it is clear that further research with a greater scope is needed in this area.

Studies on the effect of knowledge on beliefs on homosexuality all found that knowledge was significantly correlated with positive attitudes towards sexuality. In a similar vein, both studies that examined education as a factor found that it positively influenced attitudes towards homosexuality. This suggests that awareness about homosexuality may be an important factor involved in attitudes towards it and that education is an effective tool to change beliefs on homosexuality. Previous research (Lopez et al., 2016; Harris et al., 1995; Komlenović et al., 2014; Hou et al., 2006) supports this conclusion, having found that higher knowledge about homosexuality correlates with less prejudice towards it. Knowledge about a subject dispels preconceived notions, corrects misinformation and decreases uncertainty and fear surrounding the subject. This may be an explanation as to why knowledge on homosexuality is correlated with acceptance of it.

The review found that all the studies that examined the effect of contact on prejudice against homosexuality concluded that contact with LGBTQIA+ individuals increased positive attitudes toward homosexuality. Collectively, the studies found that all forms of contact including friends from the LGBTQIA+ community, watching videos from or about LGBTQIA+ people, and being fans of LGBTQIA+ celebrities predicted more positive attitudes towards sexuality. This is also consistent with previous research on contact with LGBTQIA+ individuals (Lehman & Thornwall, 2010; Herek & Capitanio, 1996; Heinze & Horn, 2009; Hou et al., 2006). A possible explanation may be that intergroup contact reduces ignorance and negative perceptions, in line with the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954)

As only one study from the pool investigated emotional intelligence as a factor, it is difficult to draw definite conclusions. However, Bandyopadhyay et al. (2023) is a well constructed study that used multiple regression analysis to analyze the collected data and accounted for the eight dimensions of emotional intelligence in its investigation. While there is a distinct lack of research surrounding the effect of emotional intelligence on attitudes toward homosexuality, it was found that the findings of the study were in line with relevant findings about emotional intelligence and racial prejudice (Makwana et al., 2021; Dierckx et al., 2021) and about empathy and its correlation with prejudice reduction (Vescio et al., 2003; Batson & Ahmad, 2009). Therefore, Bandyopadhyay et al. (2023) may serve as a basis for future studies that investigate this topic.

The next three factors were also only investigated in a single paper: friends' acceptance of homosexuality, mother's level of education, and just world belief (Maji et al., 2023). Thus, it is difficult to draw strong conclusions here as well. Furthermore, the dearth of research on these factors and their relationship with beliefs on homosexuality and prejudice in general means that there is very little information to draw

inference from. Hence, more research is required before any definitive statements can be made. However, the current review speculates that there are a few suppositions we can make regarding these factors and their relationship with beliefs on homosexuality. For instance, people tend to adjust their own attitudes according to their friends (la Roi et al., 2020), which may explain the correlation between peers' acceptance of homosexuality and the participants' positive attitude towards the same. According to Maji et al. (2023), it is possible that a mother's education impacts a child's attitude towards sexuality as traditionally, fathers are less involved in child rearing (Deosthale & Hennon, 2008) and that an educated mother may be more open-minded and teach her children to be open-minded as well. Finally, individuals with just world belief tend to display higher social dominance orientation, a personality trait indicating a preference for hierarchies, which may predispose prejudice (Bizer & Jekogian, 2012). Similarly, the final identified factor, right-wing authoritarianism, was also only studied in one paper (Pal & Sinha, 2016). However, unlike the previous factors, there is a considerable amount of research supporting the study's conclusion both in regards to homophobia specifically (Çetiner & Van, 2021; Whitley, 1999) and other forms of prejudice (Wylie & Forest, 1992). One possible explanation is that authoritarians have more rigid ways of thinking, thus they tend to be more narrow minded and less willing to accommodate new concepts. While the present review cannot draw any conclusions currently as only one eligible study was found, Pal & Sinha (2016) may act as a foundation for future studies on the factor.

The present review identified a multitude of factors that are associated with beliefs on sexuality in Indian youth. However, there is a significant lack of research in this area, as a number of studies present conflicting information and multiple factors do not have sufficient research surrounding them to draw conclusions. The current review has identified a few directions for future research. Studies should investigate more factors and their influence on attitudes towards homosexuality as it is a complex, multi-faceted subject. This will allow us to gain a more comprehensive understanding on the formation of beliefs on homosexuality in Indian youth. Furthermore, studies should investigate the reasons certain factors are correlated with beliefs on sexuality. For example, studies may examine the reasons for men having more negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Doing so would allow for a deeper understanding of the topic. In particular, it is important to carry out more experiments on this topic so that a causal relationship between the factors and the beliefs may be confirmed. It is also important for future research to employ longitudinal studies, none of the studies in the present review did so, in order to better investigate the formation and revision of beliefs on sexuality over time (Ekstam, 2022). The papers reviewed in this paper all took samples from limited geographical areas, so it is essential that future studies take samples across wider regions to account for regional differences. It would also be beneficial for papers to compare the factors between different age groups to understand how different factors affect the beliefs held by different age groups. Finally, future studies should compare beliefs on homosexuality and the factors that are correlated with them across countries to account for cultural context. This can help us better understand how culture affects these beliefs.

LIMITATIONS

The present review used a very small number of papers, which reduced its ability to draw definitive conclusions and limited its scope. The current review is a literature review rather than a systematic review, which means that some papers relevant to the subject may have been accidentally omitted. Furthermore, the paper lacked a quality appraisal, which meant that low quality papers may have been used. Finally, the paper lacked a second reviewer, which made it vulnerable to bias from the main reviewer.

Moreover, as Table 1 shows, the included studies all used small sample sizes that were not representative of Indian youth, making it difficult to apply the findings to a larger population. The results of the studies may have been biased as the samples were taken from only one place. None of the studies were longitudinal, so they did not take into account how beliefs and the factors that influence them may change over time. Furthermore, only two of the studies were experimental, one of which did not have a control group (Kala et al., 2018), while the other's experimental and control group did not differ significantly in results, likely due to participant bias (Ahuja et al., 2018). Therefore, no true causal relationship could be drawn, only correlational. Additionally, none of the studies were qualitative, which meant that the studies lacked in nuance and depth. Finally, a number of studies were not high in quality and occasionally omitted data in their papers (e.g. a majority of papers did not list the mean and standard deviation of their participants' age), which may have caused errors and bias in results.

CONCLUSION

The present review identified a total of ten factors that were correlated with beliefs on sexuality: gender, religion, area of living, knowledge of homosexuality, emotional intelligence, contact with LGBTQIA+ individuals, friends' acceptance of homosexuality, mother's education level, just world belief, and right-wing authoritarianism. Emotional intelligence was only investigated in a single study, similarly to friends' acceptance of homosexuality, mother's education level and just world belief, and right-wing authoritarianism. No firm conclusions can be drawn about these factors, as more research is required to do so. Additionally, more research is also required for the factors gender, religion, and area of living, as the studies that investigated them presented conflicting results. In particular, more experiments should be conducted to allow us to draw a causal relationship between factors and their beliefs. The limited data available on this subject suggest several directions for future research. Understanding the factors associated with beliefs on homosexuality will allow us to reduce prejudice against it. Furthermore, detailed examinations of these factors in different countries and age groups will allow us to make comparisons and draw more inferences.

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APPENDIX

Table 1

Summary of Demographics, Study Design, and Relevant Findings in the Eligible Studies

Authors	Sample	Study design	Measures	Analytic Method	Main relevant findings
Joshi (2010)	182 adolescents aged 17-21 years (93 males,	Cross sectional Quantitative	Knowledge about sexuality Attitudes toward sexuality Sexual behavior	Frequency analysis	Men had significantly more conservative attitudes towards homosexuality than women.
Maji et al. (2023)	252 under and postgraduate university students (140 men, 107 women, 5 non binary, mean age = 20.03 years, SD = 1.979)	Cross sectional Quantitative	Parents, friends, and celebrity-related questions Attitudes Towards Homosexuality Scale for Indians (AHSI) developed by Ahuja (2017) Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS)-5 Global Belief in a Just World Scale (GBJWS) developed by Lipkus (1991)	Data Analysis ANOVA	Female heterosexuals had a significantly higher positive attitude male heterosexual students. Moreover, friends' acceptability of homosexuality, just-world belief, mother's education level, and having a fandom to LGBTQ celebrities significantly predict positive attitude towards homosexuality among the participants Religiosity was not a significant predictor of students' attitudes towards homosexuality.
Bhaskar et al. (2012)	300 youths aged 18-22 years (150	Cross sectional Quantitative	Sexual Attitude Scale (SAS) developed by Amit Abraham (1997)	Data Analysis ANOVA 'Z' test 'F' test	The females of all groups; urban, rural and slum areas showed a highly significant difference in their attitude

	men, 150 women)				towards polygamy, lesbianism and homosexuality. Males also showed a highly significant difference in their attitude towards lesbianism and homosexuality. Slum females showed a high attitude score compared to urban and rural females in all the five factors of sexuality.
Ahuja et al. (2018)	115 college students aged 18-21 years (59 males, 56 females)	Experiment Quantitative	Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale Attitudes Towards Homosexuality Scale for Indians (AHSI) developed by Ahuja (2017) Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) developed by Spreng et al. Social Desirability Scale-17 (SDS-17) designed by Stober (1999,2001)	Data analysis SPSS version 16.0	The research demonstrates how a one-time session can effectively reduce prejudice. Statistical analysis of the control group's data showed significant increase in positive attitude, indicating influence of a third factor.
Mishra & Gupta (2018)	100 college students aged 17-25 years (69 males, 31 females)	Cross sectional Quantitative	Sociodemographic Data Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire (KHQ) developed by Harris et al. Homosexuality Attitude Scale (HAS) created by Kite & Deaux (1986)	Frequency Analysis	The students had average knowledge and a majority had favourable attitude towards homosexuality. Both knowledge and attitude were positively correlated with age and year of study, and no other demographic factors.
Sulthana S H et al. (2021)	83 Indians aged 18-38 years (17	Cross Sectional Quantitative	Gender Age Religion	Frequency Analysis	A majority of responses indicated mostly favourable opinions towards homosexuality. A higher degree

	males, 66 females)		Opinions on homosexuality		of urbanisation indicated greatest acceptance of homosexuality. Atheists were most accepting while Muslims and Christians were the least.
Kala et al. (2018)	108 undergraduates from Delhi aged 18-21 years (54 males, 54 females)	Experiment Quantitative Single group pre-test, post-test design	Homosexuality Attitude Scale (HAS), developed by Kite & Deaux (1986)	Data Analysis t-test	An immediate positive attitude change among the participants when shown audio-video clips about homosexuality was found. While the results for females were not statistically significant, the results for males and the whole sample were statistically significant.
Sahni et al. (2016)	100 undergraduate and graduate students of Delhi and NCR aged 18-25 (50 males, 50 females)	Cross sectional Quantitative	The Implicit Association Test	Comparative Analysis	The findings suggest that people tend to have a negative implicit attitude towards homosexuals. Students that were in contact with homosexuals generally had more positive views of them. In the non-contact group, males showed a more negative implicit attitude towards homosexuals than females
Bandyopadhyay et al. (2023)	122 university students aged 17-26 years	Cross sectional Quantitative	Homosexuality Attitude Scale (HAS) developed by Kite & Deaux, (1986) The Emotional Intelligence Scale English version developed by Hyde et al. (2011)	Correlational & Regression Analysis – Pearson product moment and Multiple regression	There are several components of EI and not all of them are responsible for shaping attitude towards homosexuality. The results of regression analysis showed that among the eight dimensions, empathy and commitment were the most significant predictors of positive attitude towards homosexuality.
Kawatra (2021)	67 adolescents aged 12-18 years (32	Cross sectional Quantitative	The Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG)	SPSS-20 IBM Mean Independent T test	The study observed a positive attitude but a low-level of knowledge towards homosexuality among adolescents in the sample. No

	male, 35 female)		The sex education and knowledge about homosexuality questionnaire (SEKQH)	Pearson correlation	significant difference between males and females in terms of both knowledge and attitude toward homosexuality was found. The results of the study showed a positive correlation between attitude, and knowledge towards homosexuality.
Banwari et al. (2015)	244 filled questionnaires from medical students and interns aged 17-25 years (137 males, 107 females, mean age =20.04, SD = 1.62)	Cross Sectional Quantitative	Baseline demographics The sex education and knowledge about homosexuality questionnaire (SEKQH) Attitudes towards Homosexuals Questionnaire (AHQ)	Descriptive Statistics Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test t test one way ANOVA Pearson's correlation Multiple linear regression	Females were found to have a more positive attitude towards homosexuals than males, though their knowledge about homosexuality did not differ significantly. Interns and third year students scored better than first and second years on knowledge but they had similar attitudes. Considering the entire sample, higher knowledge predicted more favourable attitudes. Religion was found to be a significant predictor of knowledge about homosexuality
Anand (2016)	336 participants living in Delhi-NCR, (168 males, 168 females)	Cross sectional Mixed methods	Homosexuality Attitude Scale (HAS) developed by Kite & Deaux, (1986) Attitudes towards homosexuality	Data Analysis t-test	Significant gender differences were not found though women showed a slightly more positive attitude towards homosexuality.
Pal & Sinha (2016)	89 participants from Delhi and Mumbai aged 18-30 years, (57 males, 32 females,	Cross sectional Quantitative	Religious fundamentalism Scale developed by Altemeyer & Hunsberger (1992) Right Wing Authoritarianism Scale created by	SPSS ver. 21 Carl Pearson correlation coefficient method Linear regression analysis t-test	Religious fundamentalism, Right wing authoritarianism and Homophobia were found to be positively and significantly correlated to each other.

	mean age=22.4)		Altemeyer & Hunsberger (1992) The homophobia Scale designed by Wright et al. (1999)		
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