

Creation of Inclusive Spaces: Impact of Minority Stress and LGBTQ College Climate on Quality of Life of Queer Students

Tithi Roy¹, Dr. Anjali Sahai²

¹Student, M.A. Clinical Psychology, Amity Institute of Psychology And Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh

²Assistant Professor-II, Amity Institute of Psychology and Allied Sciences, Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh

ABSTRACT

In India, 17% of individuals identify as non-heterosexual according to the LGBT+ Pride Global Survey Report. Discrimination and stigma against the LGBTQ community remain pervasive even after Section 377 was decriminalised. Being a minority and dealing with heterosexism and other types of social and cultural oppression adds up as minority stress, making them more vulnerable to poor mental health outcomes and social marginalisation. Majority of young people's time is spent in academic settings. The college setting is critical to the mental health of LGBTQ students. During these pivotal developmental phases, inclusion can reduce minority stress and enhance wellbeing. Against this backdrop, the research sought to answer the pressing question: How can we create inclusive spaces for LGBTQ university students? The present research aims to explore the impact of minority stress and perception of campus climate on quality of life of Indian queer students. The methodology involved a cross sectional quantitative research. Questionnaires were filled by LGBTQ college students aged between 18-28 years. (N=200). For statistical analysis correlation and multiple linear regression was conducted. Findings revealed that minority stress and college climate were negatively associated with quality of life. Furthermore, minority stress and perception of LGBTQ campus climate significantly predicted quality of life. The research underscores the importance of diversity and inclusion to counter systemic oppression. The study's implication includes the requirement for queer inclusive interventions to be implemented in Indian educational institutions. It demands that other social institutions address the psychological stressors that members of sexual and gender minorities face

Keywords: *LGBTQ, Minority stress, College climate, Quality of life.*

INTRODUCTION

People who identify as queer or who are neither cisgender or heterosexual but have a variety of sexual orientations and gender identities are collectively referred to as queer. The way a person views himself about their emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction, desire, or affection for another person is known as their sexual orientation (Barbara, A. M., et al. 2007). The mental and psychological perception of

oneself as male, female, both, or neither is known as gender identity. (Veltman, A., & Chaimowitz, G. 2014). The term queer is often interchangeably used with LGBTQ+ i.e. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and where plus included all the other individuals with diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, or gender expression. (Intersex, genderqueer, non-binary, pansexual, Asexual, etc.) According to current literature, around 14% of people worldwide identify with the LGBTQ community. Queer people are one of the most excluded people in various social institutions. They experience individual and systemic oppression. (Veltman, A., & Chaimowitz, G. 2014). They are subject to forms of discrimination, stigma, and prejudice causing adverse mental and physical health outcomes. According to a population-based study, LGBT individuals experience more acute mental health problems and perform worse overall on general mental health indicators than heterosexual individuals (Bakker, F. C., et al. 2006). Another study found LGBTQ-related factors like being transgender or non-binary, coming out, acceptance, victimization, reaction of peers, etc are associated with mental health, self-harm, and suicide risk among LGBTQ students. (Gnan, G. H. et al 2019).

Concept of Minority stress

Experiencing discrimination, stigma, and prejudice based on one's sexual orientation and identity creates a hostile social environment affecting the mental health of minority individuals. Minority stress can be defined as the result of this conflict between the goals of the dominant and minority groups and the subsequent social environment that minority group members encounter. (Meyers, 1995, 2003). Meyers' minority stress theory/model describes various proximal and distal stressors that are common to all queer individual's life experiences such as internalized homophobia, identity concealment, expectation of rejection, and discrimination/violence. (Meyers. 2003). The core of the experience of minority stress is the incongruence between a person's culture, needs, experience, and societal structure. (Meyer, 1995). According to Waldo (1999), encounters with heterosexism in particular settings may result in unfavorable consequences or distress. This finding is in line with Meyer's (1995) minority stress theory, which emphasizes the connection between one's minority status and particular stressful events.

LGBT individual's experience of minority stress is rooted in the heterosexist actions leading to social and cultural oppression faced by the community. Other than blatant and overt heterosexist experiences, there are also subtle forms of heterosexism that LGBTQ people experience in their daily lives like microaggressions, Gender expression problems, vigilance, vicarious trauma, etc. which Meyer's theory does not entirely cover (Balsam, K. F. 2013).

Concept of LGBTQ College Climate

There is extensive literature that talks about the link between LGBTQ college students and adverse mental health outcomes. LGBTQ minority stressors hold great significance and relevance for queer college students as these are the pivotal developmental stages and formative periods for young adults. (Bissonette, D., & Szymanski, D. M. 2019). The university environment plays a major role in preventing mental health problems in LGBTQ students by incorporating supportive staff and speaking up about LGBTQ issues. (Gnan, G. H, 2019). After reviewing the literature, Rankin and Reason (2008) defined "campus climate" as the attitudes, behaviors, and standards that employees and students hold today about the availability, inclusion, and degree of respect for the needs, potential, and abilities of both individuals and groups (Blumenfeld, W. J., et al. 2016). Weber, Blumenfeld, and Frazer's investigations found that heterosexism in the form of disparaging statements was 17 times more common among

LGBQ college students than physical assault (2010). LGBTQ-inclusive campus climate should be promoted in colleges that will further aid in creating a positive experience for queer people (Waling, A., & Roffee, J. A. 2018). Classroom climate within the institution plays an important role in determining the perception of campus climate. (Garvey, J. C., et al, 2015). Prejudice and discrimination are one of the leading reasons why queer college students engage in destructive behaviors like alcohol use, self-harm, and suicidal ideation and experience depression. (Busby, D. R et al. 2020; Bissonette, D., & Szymanski, D. M. 2019). In many comparative studies, LGBT students perceive their college climate as negative as compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Rankin, S. R. 2006).

Concept of Quality of Life

According to the World Health Organization, a person's view of their place in life about their objectives, standards, expectations, and worries, as well as the culture and value systems in which they live, constitutes their quality of life. The experiences of prejudice, heterosexism, discrimination, and other forms of exclusion can negatively impact the quality of life for LGBTQ students. Historically, the LGBTQ+ community has continuously dealt with negative interactions with society leading to mental and physical health disparities. This further purport that there is a myriad of determinants that contribute to the quality of life of the queer community. Research suggests that legal (e.g. Laws policies etc), social (e.g. Relationships, school belongingness, etc), and individual factors (e.g. age, socioeconomic status, race, self-efficacy, etc.) can improve the quality of life of the LGBTQ community. (Munoz, R. S. 2020).

Indian LGBTQ+ Landscape

In India, 17% of individuals identify as non-heterosexual according to the LGBT+ Pride Global Survey Report. (Gaur, P. S., et al, 2023). There has not been much research done on the lives of LGBTQ+ college students in India, particularly when it comes to examining minority stress and LGBTQ+ campus culture. Most studies have been done on the American population (Rao, S., & Mason, C. D. 2018). There is, however, a paucity of research on the mental health of Indian LGBTQ students. The heteronormative standards prevail in the educational landscape of India. One of the first pan-India studies about the situation of the LGBTQ+ community in universities was conducted in March 2021. It was conducted by Boston Consulting Group, Institute of Management Ahmedabad, and Pride Circle Foundation. The report investigated the inclusivity problems in universities on Indian campuses. The survey was filled by 1700 students in colleges all over India. The report highlights the issues and challenges faced by LGBTQ+ students on campus and aims to improve the experience of these students by specific measures such as support groups. Among many key findings, one of them revealed that 64% of LGBTQ student who were 'out' about their identity experience discrimination. The non-community members were interviewed on awareness, perception, acceptance personal and social level, and active support. The report also revealed that most colleges did not have any kind of LGBTQ+ support systems like policies, programs, services, etc.

The already existing studies in India talk about various challenges that the college-going queer community. Multiple forms of microaggressions have been documented that are faced by Indian LGBTQ+ college students. (Maji, S., & Sarika, K. 2024). Biswas, D., et al. (2023) documented the journey of coming out by sexual/gendered minority individuals and the psychosocial consequences related to it. The findings revealed the consequence of culturally embedded discrimination in India towards the SGM population and, the difficulty experienced in coming out for individuals with non-

normative gender expression and highlighted the importance of family and social support. Even after the decriminalization of section 377, existing studies do show poor mental health and lifestyle of the queer community in India. Significant implications of Section 377 impacted the mental health of LGBTQ individuals such increase in stress related to concealment, a rise in depressive symptoms, and a decreased sense of belonging. (Rao, S., & Mason, C. D. 2018). The verdict on section 377 also included the need to focus on the mental health of the LGBTQIA+ population of India and more systemic data on these individuals (Wandrekar, J. R., & Nigudkar, A. S. 2020). Literature suggests that transgender community is more likely to experience gender discrimination. In a study, major primary stressors that were revealed were prejudice and discrimination experienced by trans people in India (Parikh Chopra, S. 2018)

A scarcity of literature remains when it comes to assessing LGBTQ inclusivity in the college climate of Indian campuses. Existing literature studies perceptions and attitudes of different stakeholders in colleges in India regarding LGBTQ inclusivity. A study in India revealed that teachers in educational institutions and parents of college students do not have significant knowledge about lives of the LGBTQ individuals (Yadav. S., & Bhattacharjee. J., 2023). Yadav. S., (2022) investigated the perception of students towards inclusion of transgender students. The key findings of the study revealed that 41% of students perceived higher education institutions as not inclusive spaces for trans students. It further raises concerns about the lack of infrastructure, empathy, inclusion policy, washrooms, etc in colleges. The National Education Policy 2020, introduced a Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) to promote gender inclusivity. However, it only included women/girls and transgender people, ignoring the LGBTQIA population. (T already included). (The Quint, 2020). A comparative study between New Zealand's curriculum and Indian educational structure revealed gender inclusion in NEP 2020 is vague and not helpful, it doesn't attend to gender studies or sex education, further, perpetuating stigma, gender stereotypes, and lack of LGBQ+ inclusivity. (Chouhan, N. & Gupta, A. 2021).

Empirical studies document the community's dismal mental health outcomes. Homosexuality is still discriminated against and viewed as socially undesirable in India. There is a lot of heteronormativity in Indian culture. The quality of life of LGBT individuals is usually higher in cultures that show acceptance towards homosexuality than in cultures that restrict it. (Traeen, B., et al. 2009). Research on 151 LGBT+ individuals highlights the inverse relationship between hostile societal attitudes and the mental health of the queer community with self-efficacy and social support as moderators. (Parwani, S. & Talukdar, A. K. 2023)

Purpose of the Current Study

The current research examines the impact of minority stress and the perception of the LGBTQ college climate on the quality of life of queer individuals. It was hypothesized that minority stress and LGBTQ college climate will have a negative association with the quality of life and psychological well-being of students. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that minority stress and LGBTQ college climate will predict the quality of life of students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The current study focused on collecting data based on the experiences of LGBTQ college students and

their respective experiences. The study consisted of 200 LGBTQ+ participants. All the participants were currently enrolled in an Indian university. Majority of the participants identified as Queer (44.5%). 9.5% Identified as lesbians. 6% of people identified as individuals with gay sexual orientation. 25.5% of participants opted the bisexual orientation and 14% of individuals were transgender. 62.5% of individuals were pursuing their bachelor's degree, 34.0% were enrolled in master's degree, 3.0% were pursuing a higher degree like MPhil/PhD from an educational setting and one individual was pursuing CA, CFA (0.6%). The states/cities of the colleges of the participants included Delhi, Gujrat, Karnataka, Bangalore, Tamil Nadu, Jodhpur, Uttar Pradesh, Sonipat, Haryana, Pune, Goa, Punjab, Maharashtra, Telangana, Ahmedabad, Rajasthan, Nagpur. The majority are from the state of Delhi. 96% of participants were from an urban sector of residence and 3% of individuals came from the rural area of residence. 2 individuals reported Army and town as areas of residence, respectively (1%). All participants ranged from the ages between 18 to 30 years, with a mean age of 21.10 years. ($SD=2.24$). The majority of participants were aged 21 years old.

Measures

LGBTQ Minority Stress: Assessment of LGBTQ minority stress was done using the shortened version of the 50-item LGBTQ minority scale developed by Pearl L. Outland (2016). The shortened version comprised of 25-items. The scale included 7 dimensions, Identity concealment, Everyday discrimination/ Microaggression, Rejection Anticipation, Discrimination Events, Victimization, Internalized Stigma, and community connectedness. For the current study, Internalized stigma and community connectedness dimensions were not taken. Thus, the total number of items was 19. Participants were asked to reflect on their life experiences within and outside campus that occurred in the past year and indicate the frequency of the given situations. A 5-point Likert scale was used, from 0 (*Never happens*) to 5 (*Happens all the time*). Mean scores were calculated for all dimensions with higher scores indicating greater LGBT minority stress. The first subscale inquired of situations wherein people avoid talking about the LGBTQ aspect of their life to make their queer identity apparent ($\alpha = .81$). The second subscale of everyday discrimination/microaggression measures the frequency of perceived prejudice and discriminatory hassles in daily life ($\alpha = .73$). The third subscale, rejection anticipation assessed the hypervigilance and continuous worry that they will be discriminated against ($\alpha = .84$). The fourth subscale of discrimination events asks about blatant forms of discrimination and unfair treatment in different settings like work, college, etc ($\alpha = .75$). The fifth subscale of victimization even referred to physical, sexual and emotional forms of abuse and discrimination because of the individual's LGBT identity ($\alpha = .82$). The overall scale has good internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$).

Furthermore, one extra subsection of the Daily Heterosexist Experience Questionnaire (DHEQ) developed by Balsam, K. F., Beadnell, B., & Molina, Y. (2013) was added. The gender expression subsection was included particularly for the transgender and genderqueer population (TGD) involved in the current study. The original scale includes 50 items to study minority stress. The scale has an overall alpha of 0.92. The reliability of each subscale was strong including Gender expression ($\alpha = .86$). Concurrent and construct validity was also supported.

LGBTQ college climate: Assessment of college climate was done with the help of Perception of the LGBTQ College Campus Climate Scale developed by Dawn M. Szymanski and Danielle Bissonette (2019). The scale comprised of 6 items. It was further divided into two subsections, college response to

LGBTQ students and LGBTQ stigma. A 7-point Likert Scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) was used for rating the items, Higher scores indicated more negative perceptions of the college climate. The scale was supported by Cronbach's alphas which were .82 or higher. The overall scale was internally consistent ($\alpha = 0.85$). Construct validity and incremental validity of the scale were supported.

Quality of life: Quality of life was assessed with the help of the Mental Health Quality of Life Questionnaire (MHQoL) developed by Van Krugten, et al. (2021). The MHQoL measures the seven most important dimensions of quality of life under the context of mental health. The scale consists of a 7-item descriptive system measuring the seven dimensions (MHQoL-7D), Self-Image, Independence, Mood, Relationship, Daily Activities, Physical Health, and Future. Each item has 4 options to choose from. For example, under self-image, the options are “I think very positively about myself,” “I think positively about myself,” “I think negatively about myself” and “I think very negatively about myself.” A three-point scoring system, with 3 representing the most favorable reaction and 0 representing the most unfavorable response, was included in the handbook. Additionally, it includes the MHQoL-VAS, a visual analog scale of psychological well-being that asks participants to select their degree of psychological well-being on a range of 1 (*Worst possible psychological well-being*) to 10 (*Best possible psychological well-being*). The scale (MHQoL- 7D) shows high internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.85$) and test-retest reliability as 0.85. The scale shows convergent and known-group validity.

Procedure

The participants were recruited using convenience or snowball sampling methods. All the measures were combined to make one questionnaire on Google Forms. The same questionnaire was further printed out as well. Research announcements are put up on social media platforms to contact LGBTQ+ people from various universities/colleges. Individuals were also approached in person to fill out the printed questionnaire. People were asked to forward the research announcement to students who meet the eligibility criteria of the current study. Informed consent was taken from the participants before they started answering the questions. The order of the measures arranged in the questionnaire was minority stress, college climate, and finally, quality of life.

RESULTS

The statistical analysis was conducted on 200 participants. Skewness and kurtosis analysis showed that variables were sufficiently normal. Cronbach alpha of all variables ranged from 0.75 to 0.89. Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics			
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
QoL	10.555	3.5652	200
MSS	2.60	.691	200
CC	26.915	8.0199	200

Note that MSS is Minority stress scale, QoL is Quality of Life and CC is LGBTQ College Climate

To analyze the derived hypotheses, Pearson’s bivariate correlation was employed at a 95% confidence level (see Table 2). It was hypothesized that minority stress and LGBTQ college climate will show a negative association with the quality of life and psychological well-being of students. The results revealed that minority stress showed a moderate negative correlation with quality of life ($r = -0.332, P < 0.01$) and psychological well-being ($r = -0.318, P < 0.01$). Gender expression showed a moderate negative correlation with psychological well-being ($r = -0.323, P < 0.01$). Furthermore, the perception of LGBTQ+ college climate showed a moderate negative correlation with quality of life ($r = -0.306, P < 0.01$). Additionally, correlation was employed in sub-sections of both the questionnaire (Minority stress and campus climate scale) and quality of life (MHQoL-7D). The results revealed that all the subsections were negatively correlated to quality of life. However, the values ranged from weak to moderate with Values ranging between 0.146 to 0.34

Table 2: Correlation

	<i>MSS</i>	<i>Gender Expression</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>QoL</i>	<i>Psychological Well-Being</i>
<i>MSS</i>	1				
<i>Gender Expression</i>	.575**	1			
<i>CC</i>	.435**	.344**	1		
<i>QoL</i>	-.332**	-.287**	-.306**	1	
<i>Psychological Well-being</i>	-.318**	-.323**	-.156*	.729**	1

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 -tailed)

Multiple linear regression was further employed at 95% confidence intervals with minority stress and perception of LGBTQ college climate as predictors and Quality of life as the dependent variable. Approximately 37.8% of the variance in quality of life is accounted for by the predictor variables (see Table 3). The model summary reveals a statistically significant model fit ($F = 16.39, P < 0.05$). Minority stress and perception of LGBTQ college climate are significant in predicting quality of life. Furthermore, the values of $F(2,197), p < 0.05, Adjusted R^2 = 0.134,$ and $R^2 \text{ change} = 0.143$ indicate that 14.3 % of the variability in quality of life is explained by predictors after adjustment. However, the model shows moderate fit, suggesting only a potential predictive relationship between the predictor and dependent variables and thus, emphasizes the need for further exploration of factors that might contribute to the quality of life of queer students.

Table 3: Model Summary

Table 3: Model Summary									
					<i>Change Statistics</i>				
<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>	<i>R Square Change</i>	<i>F Change</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>Sig. F Change</i>
1									

1	.378 _a	.143	.134	3.3178	.143	16.394	2	197	.000
a. Predictors: (Constant), CC, MSS									

Analysis of the coefficient table (Table 4) reveals that higher minority stress is negatively associated with decreased quality of life ($\beta = -0.246, t = -3.35, P < 0.01$). Perception of college climate also showed an inverse effect on quality of life ($\beta = -0.200, t = -2.724, P < 0.01$). Thus, the second and third hypotheses are also accepted. Multicollinearity analysis indicated no evidence for multicollinearity with a variance inflation factor of less than 3.

Table 4: Coefficients

Model 1		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	16.242	1.021		15.909	.000	14.229	18.256		
	MSS	-1.267	.378	-.246	-3.352	.001	-2.013	-.522	.811	1.233
	CC	-.089	.033	-.200	-2.724	.007	-.153	-.024	.811	1.233

DISCUSSION

The minority stress theory is the strong conceptual base to understand the lived experiences of LGBTQ college student and infer their quality of life. Perception of LGBTQ inclusive climate within the college further provides a framework for understanding how campus climate can affect the lives of LGBTQ students. The findings are consistent with the previous research and the minority stress theory. The results reveal that high levels of minority stress in life and negative perceptions of college climate are inversely linked to the quality of life and well-being of LGBTQ college students. This underscores the importance of inclusivity in the Indian institutions be it social or educational, for the LGBTQ youth. Below are some of the verbatim statements of the participants in the study:

"Experiencing a homophobic college climate and witnessing instances of unwanted politics of homosexual superiority within the queer community-based in the college that I read in has created a profound sense of alienation for a queer student like me who feels unbelonged to the college as well as the lgbtq collective. Instead of finding a supportive environment, I have felt excluded both from the broader college institution and within my community. This double-edged marginalization has had detrimental effects on my mental health."

"a lack of understanding or knowledge about the community and proper inclusive sex education. A lack of queer support groups and events that celebrate queerness."

"The "normal" people just have no awareness that queer people exist among them. In universities, the respective authorities do not want to acknowledge our existence as fellow students in their instructions. The social stigma around us (also their queerphobia) prevents them from taking steps to make our clog experience better as queer students."

The key findings highlight that gender expression, microaggression, and rejection anticipation as predictors of minority stress showed a higher negative correlation with quality of life than other predictors like victimization, discrimination, and identity concealment. The findings are consistent with the previous research on microaggression faced by Indian LGBTQ college students. (Sucharita Maji and Kumari Sarika, 2023). This further indicates that the Indian landscape purports more subtle forms of discrimination than blatant and overt discrimination.

Furthermore, results suggest a potential predictive relationship between minority stress and perception of college climate on quality-of-life queer college students. This indicates that higher minority stress will predict decreased quality of life and well-being and higher negative perception will also predict poor quality of life. These findings are consistent with Weber et al. (2010) and Rankin et al. (2006) who found instances of heterosexism and negative perception of the LGBTQ college climate affecting the lives of queer students. A lot of participants in the study were not out to family and social groups. The findings are consistent with previous research of Biswas, D., et al. (2023) which found that there is culturally embedded discrimination in India towards the SGM population which makes it difficult for them to 'come out' and seek social support. An open-ended question was added to the questionnaire which asked whether being a part of the LGBTQ community has affected the individual's relationship with the family. The majority of participants agreed about changes in family dynamics due to their queerness. While some participants disagreed, there were also the ones that either were not out of their family or predicted that if they came out it would change the relationship dynamic with their family. Furthermore, some participants only told a few members of the family or about a few aspects of their queerness, it being directly proportional to change in the relationship. Thus, the question helped understand the familial landscape of the lives of the LGBTQ students which was not covered in the rest of the questionnaire.

In the present research there a lot of educational concerns were stated by the participants. This highlights the role of educational factors to improve the well-being of lgbtq students. Factors such as perception of non-LGBTQ students' level of comfort, basic knowledge and awareness of students and staff about LGBTQ issues, open representation of LGBTQ administrators and staff, etc provided environmental factors that can contribute to outness of the LGBTQ students. (Dentato, M. P., et al. 2014)

The findings of the overall, regression analysis suggest that minority stress and LGBTQ college climate would predict the outcomes of quality of life with a negative association between the two. However, the weak to moderate correlation strengths suggest that other variables that are not explored in the study may influence the observed relationship. It is important to understand that correlation does not lead to causation. Henceforth, the interaction between all three variables necessitates a further large-scale exploration. Additionally, studies conducted outside of India on LGBTQ students cannot be taken as a reference point for research in India. Most of the studies on minority stress have been conducted on the

American population. Being queer in India and being queer outside of India is very different due to culturally embedded stereotypes and discrimination towards the community. Henceforth, it is important to further explore the variable and nuances of lived experiences of the queer population in the Indian context.

LIMITATIONS AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The present research included several limitations. The sample size collected in the study is small (N=200). Based on the type and the target population chosen for the study, the data should have been around 300+ individuals. The majority of individuals in the study belonged to the urban sector, LGBTQ students in the sub-urban and rural sectors are not included. The data is collected from diverse states of India and not just one state or city. Hence, the results of the study only provide preliminary evidence which cannot be generalizable to the larger population. Furthermore, the scales and measures used in the study are made from the lens of the western concept of queerness, hence some of the questions might not have been relatable to Indian LGBTQ students. The measures themselves have preliminary support for their reliability and validity. Additionally, the researcher's bias can also be considered a limitation due to the author's queer identity. Furthermore, quantitative analysis restricted the in-depth exploration lived experiences of queer students in India.

The finding of the current study suggests various strategies/interventions to be employed at social institutions like college, family, workplace, and fellow clinicians when engaging with LGBTQ college students. As stated by many students in the duration of the research the college environment is not inclusive to their needs. The teachers are unresponsive, the students are misgendered, the bathroom is not gender-neutral, and there is a lack of inclusive policies and sensitization programs for students and teachers. The curriculum of Indian education does not even include the minority stress theory or a separate unit on LGBTQ lives in the majority of disciplines.

Our findings suggest an increase in minority stress, which indicates that the stress that college-going queer students face within and outside the university setting can lead to poor quality of life and even academic outcomes as suggested by previous research. Every social institution in India must create a welcoming and inclusive space for the LGBTQ community. Additionally, when it comes to universities or educational institutions in India the findings suggest that the majority of queer students have negative perceptions. This underscores the need for future inclusive interventions to be conducted like sensitization programs for students and staff/faculty. It is time that universities act towards diversity, inclusivity, and equity and not just scholarly merit. Another scope for future research is the need to investigate high school students as well as this population is much more confused about identity and needs queer affirmative support. Finally, to study the lived experience of LGBTQ+ in India one needs to forget the ideologies of the Western concept of queerness and adapt a social-cultural lens to the concept of queerness within the context of India. Future researchers may approach the study on the same topic with a method research design.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of results and findings suggest that minority stress and negative perception of the LGBTQ college climate present risks to the quality of life and mental health of LGBTQ college students.

Additionally, the results identify the role of Microaggression, rejection anticipation, and gender expression as major predictors of quality of life in Indian LGBTQ college students. Furthermore, the response of college towards LGBTQ students and LGBTQ stigma in college play a role in predicting the quality of life of queer students and in creating an inclusive space for the queer community. Thus, the present research calls out to universities to check – in on their LGBTQ students and make the needed developments to improve their mental health and well-being.

References

1. Bakker, F. C., Sandfort, T. G. M., Vanwesenbeeck, I., van Lindert, H., & Westert, G. P. (2006). Do homosexual persons use health care services more frequently than heterosexual persons: Findings from a Dutch population survey. *Social Science & Medicine*, 63(8), 2022–2030. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2006.05.024>
2. Balsam, K. F., Beadnell, B., & Molina, Y. (2013). The Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 46(1), 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0748175612449743>
3. Barbara, A. M., Chaim, G., Health, C. for A. and M., & Doctor, F. (2007). *Asking the Right Questions, 2: Talking about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Mental Health, Counselling, and Addiction Settings*. Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
4. Bissonette, D., & Szymanski, D. M. (2019). Minority stress and LGBQ college students' depression: Roles of peer group and involvement. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 6(3), 308–317. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000332>
5. Blumenfeld, W. J., Weber, G. N., & Rankin, S. (2016). In Our Own Voice: Campus Climate as a Mediating Factor in the Persistence of LGBT People in Higher Education. *Queering Classrooms: Personal Narratives and Educational Practices to Support LGBTQ Youth in Schools*.
6. Busby, D. R., Horwitz, A. G., Zheng, K., Eisenberg, D., Harper, G. W., Albucher, R. C., Roberts, L. W., Coryell, W., Pistorello, J., & King, C. A. (2020). Suicide risk among gender and sexual minority college students: The roles of victimization, discrimination, connectedness, and identity affirmation. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 121, 182–188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2019.11.013>
7. Chouhan, N., & Gupta, A. (n.d.). *The Gender Inclusivity of Academic Curriculum and its Effects on Students*. 1(3).
8. Donato, M. P., Craig, S. L., Messinger, L., Lloyd, M., & McInroy, L. B. (2014). Outness among LGBTQ Social Work Students in North America: The Contribution of Environmental Supports and Perceptions of Comfort. *Social Work Education*, 33(4), 485–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2013.855193>
9. Garvey, J. C., Taylor, J. L., & Rankin, S. (2015). An examination of campus climate for LGBTQ community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 39(6), 527–541. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2013.861374>
10. Gnan, G. H., Rahman, Q., Ussher, G., Baker, D., West, E., & Rimes, K. A. (2019). General and LGBTQ-specific factors associated with mental health and suicide risk among LGBTQ students. (2019). *Journal of Youth Studies*, 22(10), 1393–1408. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2019.1581361>
11. *LGBT+ Pride 2021 Global Survey points to a generation gap around gender identity and sexual attraction* | Ipsos. (2021, June 9). <https://www.ipsos.com/en/lgbt-pride-2021-global-survey-points-generation-gap-around-gender-identity-and-sexual-attraction>
12. Maji, S., & Sarika, K. (2024). LGBTQ Microaggression on the Campus: A Systematic Review. *Journal of School Violence*, 23(1), 124–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2023.2289107>

13. Gaur, P. S., Saha, S., Goel, A., Ovseiko, P., Aggarwal, S., Agarwal, V., ... & Gupta, L. (2023). *Mental healthcare for young and adolescent LGBTQ+ individuals in the Indian subcontinent*. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1060543/full>
14. Meyer, I. H. (1995). Minority Stress and Mental Health in Gay Men. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 36(1), 38–56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2137286>
15. Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(5), 674–697. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.129.5.674>
16. Munoz, R. S. (n.d.). *Legal, Social and Individual Factors That Improve the Quality of Life of LGBT Individuals: A Systematic Review*. <https://www.proquest.com/openview/a029d4692c740bec44433c6250ebdb56/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
17. Parikh-Chopra, Seetal. *Transgender Minority Stress and Mental Health Outcomes Among Hijras in India*, Doctoral dissertation, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2109842594?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>
18. Parwani, S., & Talukdar, A. K. (2023). Mental health of Indian LGBT+ community: Role of coping self-efficacy and social inclusion. *Mental Health and Social Inclusion*. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/MHSI-01-2023-0003/full/html>
19. Rankin, S., & Reason, R. (2008). Transformational Tapestry Model: A comprehensive approach to transforming campus climate. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1(4), 262–274. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014018>
20. Rankin, S., Weber, G., Blumenfeld, W., and Frazer, M.S. (2010). *State of Higher Education for LGBT People*. <https://www.campuspride.org/wpcontent/uploads/campuspride2010lgbtreportsummary.pdf>
21. Rao, S., & Mason, C. D. (2018). Minority stress and well-being under anti-sodomy legislation in India. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 5(4), 432–444. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000291>
22. Træen, B., Martinussen, M., Vittersø, J., & Saini, S. (2009). Sexual Orientation and Quality of Life Among University Students from Cuba, Norway, India, and South Africa. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 56(5), 655–669. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918360903005311>
23. Veltman, A., & Chaimowitz, G. (2014). Mental Health Care for People Who Identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and (or) Queer. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry. Revue Canadienne de Psychiatrie*, 59(11), 1–7.
24. Waldo, C. R. (1999). Working in a majority context: A structural model of heterosexism as minority stress in the workplace. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 46, 218– 232. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.46.2.218>
25. Wandrekar, J., & Nigudkar, A. (2020). What Do We Know About LGBTQIA+ Mental Health in India? A Review of Research From 2009 to 2019. *Journal of Psychosexual Health*, 2, 26–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2631831820918129>
26. Yadav, S., & Bhattacharjee, J., (2023). Exclusion of LGBT From Higher Education: Perceptions of Different Stakeholders. N. Rajput., A.Katyal, & R. Katyal (Eds), *Global LGBTQ+ Concerns in a Contemporary World: Politics, Prejudice, and Community*, 2022, pp.58-78 <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-5568-5.ch003>