

# A study on Perception and Prevalence of Domestic violence among LGBT in India

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## Abstract

Domestic violence in LGBT relationships largely remains in “stealth mode.” The situation of Indian LGBTQIA people is deplorable; even after the Section 377 period, domestic abuse cases in the form of gang rape and physical harassment persist. These evidences, however in no way represent the grim truth. To the best of our knowledge, this will be India's first study analyzing the perceptions and prevalence of domestic violence in the LGBTQIA population. Our research seeks to study LGBTQIA people's perceptions about different aspects of domestic violence, as well as the prevalence of domestic violence in the LGBTQIA community.

### **Methodology: -**

An online cross-sectional observational study was undertaken in India consisting of two phases (phase 1- Quantitative, phase 2- Qualitative). LGBT participants were included in this study and were recruited using snowball sampling method. 440 participants were recruited from different states to participate in the quantitative survey and 11 participants were recruited for in-depth interview for qualitative survey. The data collection began on June 20, 2020, till July 10, 2020. Data were analyzed statistically by simple proportions and tests of significance (Chi-square test)

### **Result: -**

Out of 440 respondents, 272 (61.8 %) participants were exposed to domestic violence. Prevalence of domestic violence in Gay, Transgenders, Bisexuals, Lesbians and Questioning were 31.4%, 25.2%, 3.9%, 0.7% and 0.7% respectively. Majority of the participants are male (74.3%) and belongs to age groups of 24 -39 years (52.9%) and 18-24 years (47%). Socio-demographic factors like Gender, level of education, area where they reside, their occupation and their mode of living were significantly associated with the experience of undergoing domestic violence ( $p < 0.001$ ). Also, the nature of relationships that participants had with their partners, as well as their knowledge of Domestic Violence, were strongly statistically significant factors in terms of experiencing Domestic Violence ( $p < 0.001$ ). In this study, semi-structured interviews elicited more detailed accounts of the victims' encounters. More than half of the participants ( $n=9$ ) and all the participants ( $n=11$ ) reported psychological and emotional victimization, with cheating and verbal abuse being the most frequent forms. Some of the participants mentioned acts of physical violence such as attempted murder, punching, and punching as their part of experiencing domestic violence.

### **Conclusion: -**

This research also shows that, considering the prevalence of violence in this culture, abuse experiences are not uniform, and are affected by variables such as gender, educational level, occupation, and so on. We must constantly shift the conversation of sexual violence to include LGBTQIA survivors, which means bringing in motion initiatives such as workforce training, LGBTQIA committees, and campaigns.

## **Introduction: -**

Domestic violence among LGBTQIA relationships largely exists in “stealth mode” for national governments, international organizations, and domestic violence agencies. (1) Due to lack of attention and awareness, LGBTQIA domestic violence victims suffer all around the world. In fact, the prevalence of domestic violence in LGBTQIA relationships was reported as equal as their heterosexual counterparts, taking place in approximately 25 to 33 % of relationships. (2) Just like the heterosexual relationships, LGBTQIA relationships experience physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, and financial violence. (3) According to National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), 43.8% of lesbian women, 61.1% of bisexual women, 26% of gay men and 37.3% of bisexual men have been through rape, physical violence, and stalking by their partner, as compared to 35% of heterosexual women and 29% of heterosexual men.(4) In addition, both LGBTQIA and heterosexual domestic violence, often follows a repeated pattern or cycle in which one partner gains or maintain power and controls over another intimate partner. (5) (6) Unlike the opposite-sex domestic violence, LGBTQIA domestic violence also arise from a distinct form of abuse derived from homophobia from their own societies. (7) This highlights the issue of “double closet” effect, in which they not only face homophobia from the society, but also from within the LGBTQIA community. (8) Negative attitudes veiled by society towards homosexuality, combined with the social legitimization of violence within intimate relationships, lead to violent behaviour within homosexual relationships being a socially invisible phenomenon. Also, the lack of attention within the LGBTQIA communities is somewhere results of intentional reluctance to conserve the impact of their struggle for equal rights. (9) (10) The scenario of Indian LGBTQIA too is in a lamentable state as well, but it’s been “under the radar” situation since long time back. Before the era of decriminalization of section 377, various tools were reported to be used by the perpetrators for domestic violence for e.g., criminal threats, gay dating apps, threats of exposure and even the IPC section 377 itself. (11) (12) Even after the era of section 377 where LGBTQIA community were finally given freedom, domestic violence cases are still in the picture in the form of gang rape and physical assault. (13) (14) However, these evidences do not represent the bleak reality in any way. Still many narratives are never heard as they belong to those who haven’t come out to their family, and do not seek help from queer-centric NGOs and/or the police. (14) Despite of India’s progress towards acceptance of LGBTQIA community in the society, domestic violence seems to be profoundly prominent yet camouflaged as it is not widely discussed in spite of being legally recognized. This makes it tough for the victims to talk about their experiences and to seek help. Hence studies regarding this situation are required to give society the clear picture and create awareness within as well as outside the LGBTQIA society. In our knowledge, this will be the first study in India to analyze the perceptions and prevalence of domestic violence in LGBTQIA population. Our research aims to study the perceptions towards the various forms of domestic violence among LGBTQIA population and to analyze the prevalence of domestic violence clustered in LGBTQIA community.

## **Methodology: -**

A Cross-sectional online survey was carried out in India. The study includes LGBTQIA community participants. The sample collection was done through snowball sampling. All other heterosexual

community was excluded from the study. The data collection was initiated on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2020 till 10 July; 2020. The questionnaire covered the information related to patient's socio-demographic profile, perception regarding domestic violence, their forms, and experiences regarding that. Perception regarding domestic violence was studied based on their response to a set of questions for four main form of domestic violence (physical, emotional, sexual, and emotional). The methodology of study was further divided into two phases i.e., Phase1 and Phase 2

### **Phase 1 (Quantitative):**

Participants (n=440) were recruited from different states to participate in the quantitative survey. A self-designed online questionnaire was developed with an informed consent attached to it. This questionnaire was administered by online survey through google doc. The link of the questionnaire was sent through WhatsApp and other social media for the collection of the data. In the sample majority of the participants were men (74.3%). The participants in the qualitative study did not participate in the quantitative survey. Data was entered into MS-excel sheet and were analyzed with SPSS V20.0 Software.

### **Phase 2 (Qualitative):**

The Qualitative method of data collection was carried out using an in-depth interview. Eleven participants completed the in-depth telephonic interview. The participants volunteered for participation in both forms of study. Participants answered questions about their experiences towards violence, behaviors of perpetrators, and their feelings as a victim. Interview was in detailed manner and allowed the participants to freely discuss their perceptions and their experiences. Due to the COVID-19 situation, telephonic in-depth interview was taken and was recorded. Duration of telephonic interview varies from 45 minutes to one hour 30 minutes.

## **Result**

A Descriptive Statistics was undertaken to examine the perception and prevalence of domestic violence among LGBTQIA population. 440 participants participated for the quantitative study and 11 participants voluntarily participated in qualitative study. In our study, prevalence of domestic violence was found to be 61.8%. Prevalence of domestic violence in Gay individuals was 31.4% and in Transgenders, Bisexuals, Lesbians and Questioning were 25.2%, 3.9%, 0.7% and 0.7% respectively. As shown in (Table 01), Majority of the participants are male (74.3%) and belongs to age groups of 24 -39 years (52.9%) and 18-24 years (47%). Most of the participants completed the graduation level of education by far (41.4%) and were students by profession (48.2%). Majority of the participants were residing with their parents (58.4%).

**Table-01 Distribution of participants according to the socio-demographic variables**

	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequencies (n = 440)</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
1.	<b>Age</b>		
	18-24 years	207	47.0
	24 and above	233	52.9
2.	<b>Gender</b>		
	Male	327	74.3
	Female	36	8.2

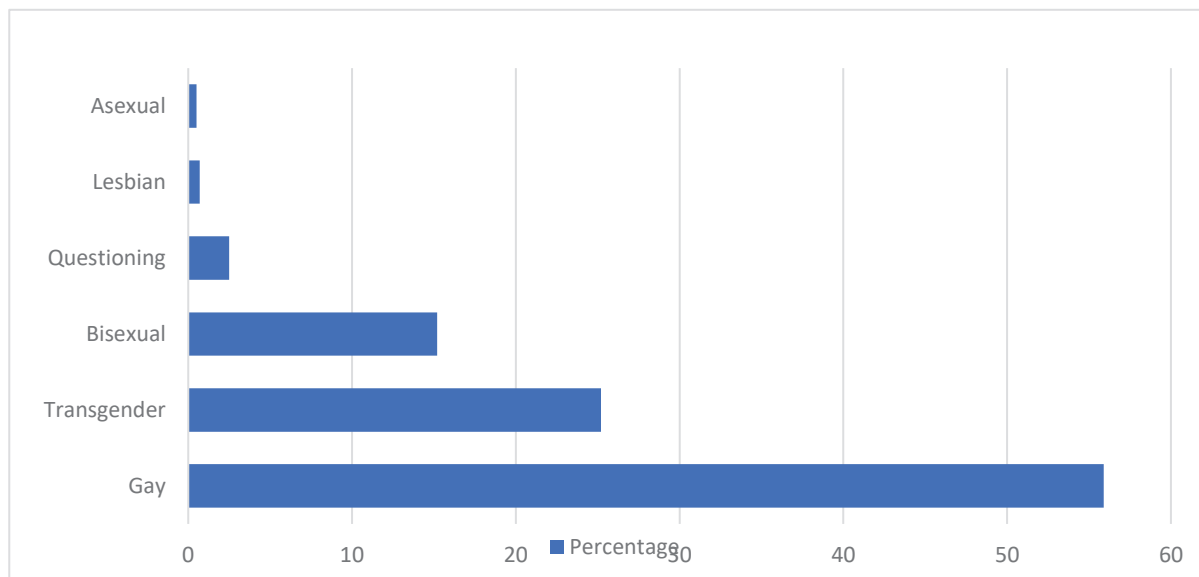
	Others	77	17.5
3.	<b>Education</b>		
	Graduate	182	41.4
	Higher-Secondary	171	38.9
	Post-graduate/PHD	87	19.8
4.	<b>Location</b>		
	North-Central zone	92	21.0
	South-West zone	97	22.1
	East zone	251	57.1
5.	<b>Occupation</b>		
	Student	212	48.2
	Working (Government / Private)	104	23.7
	self employed	124	28.2
6.	<b>Mode of living</b>		
	Living with parents	257	58.4
	Living alone	158	35.9
	Living with partner	25	5.7

**Table-02 Distribution of participants based on their sexual orientation and related variables**

S.no.	Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
1.	<b>What do you identify yourself as?</b>	<b>(n = 440)</b>	
	Gay	246	55.9
	Transgender	111	25.2
	Bisexual	67	15.2
	Questioning	11	2.5
	Lesbian	3	0.7
	Asexual	2	0.5
2.	<b>When did you discover your sexual orientation?</b>		
	Below 15 years of age	227	51.6
	Between 15-25 years of age	189	43.0
	After 25 years of age	12	2.7
	Still confused	12	2.7
3.	<b>Are you open about your sexual identity</b>		
	very open	137	31.1
	Fairly open	106	24.1
	Fairly closeted	97	22.0
	Very closeted	100	22.7
4.	<b>Did you talk about your sexual orientation to your family members yet?</b>		
	No	244	55.5
	Yes	196	44.5

5.	<b>If yes, what was your family's reaction on discovering your sexuality? (n= 196)</b>		
	Accepted whole-heartedly	64	14.5
	Broke off contacts	46	10.5
	Hyper	50	11.4
	Neutral	36	8.2
6.	<b>Did you talk about your sexual orientation to your friends yet?</b>		
	No	92	20.9
	Yes	348	79.1
7.	<b>If yes, what was your friend's reaction on discovering your sexuality? (n= 348)</b>		
	Accepted whole-heartedly	217	49.3
	Angry/Shocked	27	6.1
	Broke off contacts	8	1.8
	Neutral	96	21.8
8.	<b>Do you face any problems in interacting with your family members because of your sexual orientation?</b>		
	No	231	52.5
	Yes	149	33.9
	Rarely	60	13.6
9.	<b>Do you feel isolated/ disconnected from your family just because of your sexuality?</b>		
	No	252	57.3
	Yes	142	32.3
	Rarely	46	10.5
10.	<b>Do you feel isolated/ disconnected from your friends just because of your sexuality?</b>		
	No	288	65.5
	Yes	85	19.3
	Rarely	67	15.2
11.	<b>Are you in a relationship presently?</b>		
	No	299	68.0
	Yes	141	32.0
12.	<b>If yes, does your partnered relationship include? (n= 141)</b>		
	Causal relationship/hook-up	59	13.4
	Marriage/ Steady or serious relationship	82	18.6

The identity of being “gay” was reported by majority of the participants (71.8%) with being “asexual” the least (28.2%), as shown in table 2 and figure 1. 51.6% of the participants discovered their sexual orientation below 15 years of age with 31.1% considered themselves very open about their sexual identity. Majority of the participants were partnered, most of them called their relationship as serious and steady (18.6%).



**Figure 1. Sexual orientation of the participants**

**Table-03 Distribution of participants according to the variables related to perceptions regarding Domestic Violence**

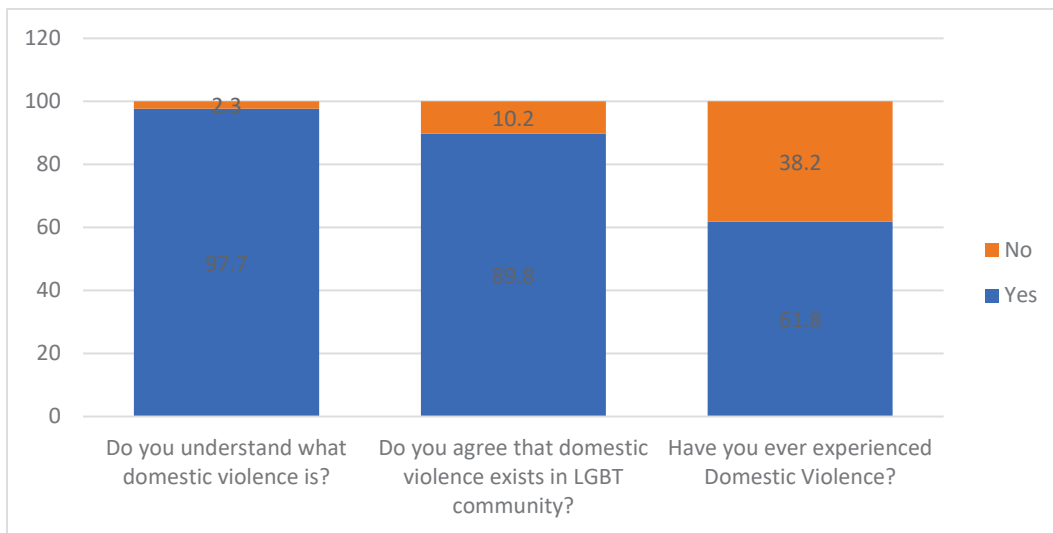
S.no.	Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
<b>1.</b>	<b>Do you understand what domestic violence is?</b>	<b>(n=440)</b>	
	Yes	430	97.7
	No	10	2.3
<b>2.</b>	<b>Do you agree that domestic violence exists in LGBTQIA community?</b>		
	Yes	395	89.8
	No	45	10.2
<b>3.</b>	<b>According to you, which of the following is a form of physical domestic violence?</b>		
	<b>1. Pushing, hitting, punching, choking, biting, throwing things, assault with a weapon</b>		
	Yes	428	97.3
	No	12	2.7
	<b>2. Harming partner after use of drugs or alcohol</b>		
	Yes	402	91.4
	No	38	8.6
	<b>3. Attempt to kill e.g., choking, strangling, burning</b>		
	Yes	419	95.2
	No	21	4.8
<b>4.</b>	<b>According to you, which of the following is a form of emotional violence / Psychological domestic violence?</b>		
	<b>1. Taunting</b>		
	Yes	389	88.4

	No	51	11.6
	<b>2. Insulting gender identity or sexuality</b>		
	Yes	422	95.9
	No	18	4.1
	<b>3. Threatening to end relationship</b>		
	Yes	405	92.0
	No	35	8.0
	<b>4. Threatening to throw out of the house</b>		
	Yes	409	93.0
	No	31	7.0
	<b>5. Threatening to kill</b>		
	Yes	398	90.5
	No	42	9.5
	<b>6. Threatening to beat up</b>		
	Yes	393	89.3
	No	47	10.7
	<b>7. Constant humiliation in front of friends and family</b>		
	Yes	412	93.6
	No	28	6.4
	<b>8. Restricting freedom of choice (Education, Career, Friends, Marriage)</b>		
	Yes	388	88.2
	No	52	11.8
	<b>9. Not giving equal opportunities</b>		
	Yes	392	89.1
	No	48	10.9
	<b>10. Indifferent/no communication</b>		
	Yes	361	82.0
	No	79	18.0
	<b>11. Deprivation of sexual relations</b>		
	Yes	375	85.2
	No	65	14.8
	<b>12. Threats of disclosing sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV status, or any</b>		
	Yes	405	92.0
	No	35	8.0
	<b>13. Threats of disclosing other personal information to family, employers or friends</b>		
	Yes	387	88.0
	No	53	12.0
	<b>14. Using personal characteristics or circumstances, such as individual's race, age, religion, physical ability and/or ethnicity, against them</b>		
	Yes	399	90.7
	No	41	9.3

	<b>15. Stalking</b>		
	Yes	349	79.3
	No	91	20.7
<b>5.</b>	<b>According to you, which of the following defines sexual domestic violence?</b>		
	<b>1. Forced sex by partners</b>		
	Yes	415	92.7
	No	32	7.3
	<b>2. Forced sexual relations with other family members</b>		
	Yes	408	92.7
	No	32	7.3
	<b>3. Intentional exposure to HIV or sexually transmitted infections</b>		
	Yes	409	93.0
	No	31	7.0
	<b>4. Filming sexual activities and threatening to send the footage to family and friends</b>		
	Yes	413	93.9
	No	27	6.1
<b>6.</b>	<b>According to you, which of the following is a form of economic violence?</b>		
	<b>1. Controlling money and resources of the partners</b>		
	Yes	380	86.4
	No	60	13.6
	<b>2. Forcing partner to pay for most things</b>		
	Yes	392	89.1
	No	48	10.9
	<b>3. Forcing partner to live beyond their means</b>		
	Yes	398	90.5
	No	42	9.5
	<b>4. Not allowing partner to go to work</b>		
	Yes	389	88.4
	No	51	11.6
	<b>5. Forcing partner to earn money</b>		
	Yes	375	85.2
	No	65	14.8
	<b>6. Taking away belongings</b>		
	Yes	376	85.5
	No	64	14.5
	<b>7. Not allowing to have control over one's income</b>		
	Yes	366	83.2
	No	74	16.8
	<b>8. Not providing sufficient financial resources</b>		

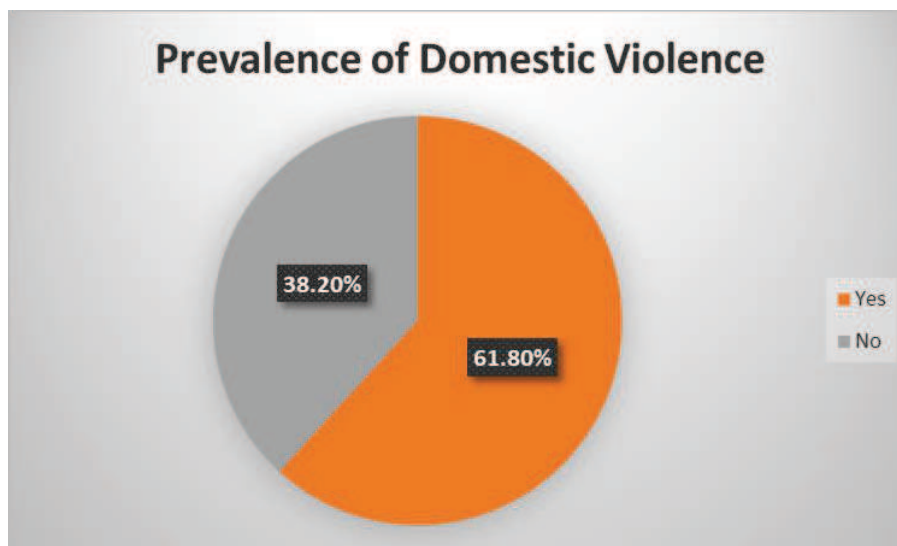


	Yes	361	82.0
	No	79	18.0
	<b>9. Not involving in financial decisions</b>		
	Yes	388	88.2
	No	52	11.8
<b>7.</b>	<b>Have you ever experienced Domestic Violence?</b>		
	Yes	272	61.8
	No	168	38.2
<b>8.</b>	<b>If yes, duration of experiencing domestic violence? (n= 272)</b>		
	< 3 months	20	4.5
	3-6 months	52	11.8
	>6 months	200	45.5
<b>9.</b>	<b>If yes, have you approached to anyone regarding that? (n= 272)</b>		
	Yes	228	51.8
	No	44	10.0
<b>10.</b>	<b>If yes, to whom? (n= 230)</b>		
	Friends	213	48.4
	Family members	17	3.9
	Non-Profitable Organizations (NGOs)	7	1.6
<b>11.</b>	<b>Domestic violence experienced within the LGBTQIA community</b>		
	Gay	138	31.4%
	Transgender	111	25.2%
	Bisexual	17	3.9%
	Lesbian	3	0.7%
	Questioning	3	0.7%
<b>12.</b>	<b>According to you, what could be the most probable reason for the under-reporting of domestic violence cases related to the LGBTQIA community in India?</b>		
	The risk of coming out to the society	192	43.6
	The belief that their experience will not be taken seriously by police	128	29.1
	The belief that they will be discriminated against by police	67	15.2
	The desire not to draw negative attention to LGBT communities	31	7.0
	It does not happen in India that much	22	5.0



**Figure 2. Perception and experience of participants regarding domestic violence**

As shown in table 3 and figure 2, the term domestic violence was understood by maximum proportion of participants (97.7%) and 89.8% believed that it exists within LGBTQIA community. On analysis of participant's perception towards forms of domestic violence, it was concluded that for maximum of the participants physical assault (pushing, hitting, punching etc.), harming partners physically after intake of alcohols/drugs and attempt to kill comes under physical domestic violence (97.3%), (91.4%) and (95.2%). Taunting (88.4%), insulting (95.9%), constant humiliation (93.7%) etc. should be considered as emotional violence and forced sex by partners (92.7%) and by other family members (92.7%), filming sexual activities (93.9%) constitute sexual domestic violence. In addition, the behaviour of controlling money and resources of the partner (86.4%), restricting partner to go out for work (88.4%) and taking their belongings (85.5%) constitute economic form of domestic violence. 61.8% participants experienced domestic violence in some point of their lives with a maximum duration of more than 6 months. (Figure 3) Upon asking the most probable reason for the under reporting of domestic violence cases related to LGBTQIA community in India, most of the participants (43.6%) believed that it's the fear and risk of coming out of the society which holds them back and secondly, it's the belief of being unheard and pushed aside by the police (29.1%).



**Figure 3. Prevalence of Domestic Violence in LGBTQIA community in India**

**Table-04 Association of Domestic Violence with socio-demographic and other related variables**

S.No.	Variables	Total N (%) (n= 440)	Domestic Violence		p- value
			Yes	No	
			N (%)	N (%)	
<b>1</b>	<b>Age</b>				0.171
	18-24 years	207 (47.0)	121(58.5)	86 (41.5)	
	24 years and above	233 (53.0)	151(64.8)	82(35.2)	
<b>2</b>	<b>Gender</b>				<0.001*
	Male	327 (74.3)	166 (50.8)	161(49.2)	
	Female	36 (8.2)	33 (91.7)	3 (8.3)	
	Others <sup>#</sup>	77 (17.5)	73 (94.8)	4 (5.2)	
<b>3</b>	<b>Education</b>				<0.001*
	Higher-Secondary	171 (38.9)	140 (81.9)	31(18.1)	
	Graduate	182 (41.4)	102 (56.0)	80 (44.0)	
	Post-graduate/PHD	87 (19.8)	30 (34.5)	57(65.5)	
<b>4</b>	<b>Location</b>				<0.001*
	North-Central zone	92 (20.9)	49 (53.3)	43 (46.7)	
	East zone	251 (57.0)	190 (75.7)	61 (24.3)	
	South-West zone	97 (22.0)	33 (34.0)	64 (66.0)	
<b>5</b>	<b>Occupation</b>				<0.001*
	Student	212 (48.2)	129 (60.8)	83 (39.2)	
	Working (Government / Private)	104 (23.6)	33 (31.7)	71 (68.3)	
	self employed	124 (28.2)	110 (88.7)	14(11.3)	
<b>6</b>	<b>Mode of living</b>				<0.001*
	Living with parents	257 (58.4)	145 (56.4)	112 (43.6)	
	Living alone	158 (35.9)	119 (75.3)	39 (24.7)	
	Living with partner	25 (5.7)	8 (32.0)	17 (68.0)	
<b>7</b>	<b>Are you open about your sexual identity</b>				<0.001*

	Very open	137 (31.1)	128 (93.4)	9 (6.6)	
	Fairly open	106 (24.1)	62 (58.5)	44 (41.5)	
	Fairly closeted	97 (22.0)	47 (48.5)	50 (51.5)	
	Very closeted	100 (22.7)	35 (35.0)	65 (65.0)	
<b>8</b>	<b>Did you talk about your sexual orientation to your family members yet?</b>				<b>&lt;0.001*</b>
	Yes	196 (44.5)	167 (85.2)	29 (14.8)	
	No	224 (55.5)	105 (43.0)	139 (57.0)	
<b>9</b>	<b>Did you talk about your sexual orientation to your friends yet?</b>				<b>&lt;0.001*</b>
	Yes	348 (79.1)	248 (71.3)	100 (28.7)	
	No	92 (20.9)	24 (26.1)	68 (73.9)	
<b>10</b>	<b>Are you in a relationship presently?</b>				0.151
	Yes	141 (32.0)	94 (66.7)	47 (33.3)	
	No	299 (68.0)	178 (59.5)	121 (40.5)	
<b>11</b>	<b>Your partnered relationship include</b>				<b>&lt;0.001*</b>
	Causal relationship/hook-up	59 (41.8)	50 (84.7)	9 (15.3)	
	Marriage/ Steady or serious relationship	82 (58.2)	44 (53.7)	38 (46.3)	
<b>12</b>	<b>Do you understand what domestic violence is?</b>				<b>0.036*</b>
	Yes	430 (97.7)	269 (62.6)	161 (37.4)	
	No	10 (2.3)	3 (30.0)	7 (70.0)	
<b>13</b>	<b>Do you agree that domestic violence exists in LGBTQIA community?</b>				0.093
	Yes	395 (89.8)	239 (60.5)	156 (39.5)	
	No	45 (10.2)	33 (73.3)	12 (26.7)	
*significant factor # Transgender, Non-binary, Questioning					

Bivariate analysis was applied to find the association of Domestic Violence with socio-demographic, sexual orientation, and perceptions regarding Domestic violence related variables. Table 4 depicts that the gender of the participants, their level of education, area where they reside, their occupation and their

mode of living were significantly associated with the experience of undergoing domestic violence ( $p < 0.001$ ). Domestic Violence and the sexual orientation of the participants along with the factor of being open about it to the society was highly statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Talking about their sexual orientation to the families and friends was significant regarding undergoing Domestic Violence ( $p < 0.001$ ). Also, the type of relationships which participants maintain with their partners along with the knowledge regarding Domestic Violence were highly statistically significant towards experiencing Domestic Violence ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Table 5 is a joint display of the interview reports of the participants in terms of abusive behaviors faced from parents, friends, and partner. The table also displayed the participants perceptions on the severity of domestic violence in LGBTQIA in India and reasons for their under reporting. Out of 11 volunteered participants 3 were bisexuals and 8 were gays. The display revealed various kinds of domestic violence faced by the participants either from family, friends, or partners. In the interview, 3 men reported physical abuse on them by their partners. Participant in case C reported to get slapped by his ex-partner multiple times because of small disputes. Case E participant stated himself as the survivor from a toxic relationship where his ex-partner tried to murder him in a fear of being exposed about his brutal behavior.

*“I think he was mentally not stable. He physically abused me many times and when I told him that I will complain this to his parents; he even managed to push me off from a building which I somehow escaped” (Case E)*

Also, three participants reported sexual domestic violence cases where the perpetrators were their partners. However, two participants reported of experiencing sexual domestic violence during childhood times too.

*“When I was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I was sexually abused by the head captain of my class in the boy’s washroom. Also, during my 1<sup>st</sup> semester in college my partner sexually abused me in the summer camp and the very next day he broke up with me and got into relationship with a girl. These incidents disturbed my mental state” (Case B)*

*“At the age of 11 years, my kaku (father’s brother) sexually molested me many times and I couldn’t told this to anyone as I was not even sure what was going on until few years later and even when I realized I still couldn’t told that to anyone of my family member as I was frightened that how would they react” (Case E)*

**Table 4- Interview reports and perceptions of the participants towards domestic violence**

S.No.	Cases	Identity & age (in complete years) described by participants in terms of LGBTQIA	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from family/friends	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from partners	Interview reports of domestic violence				Severity of Domestic violence in LGBTQIA community according to participants in India	Reasons for less reporting of LGBTQIA domestic violence cases in India	
					Physical	Sexual	Emotional	Psychological			Economic
1	A	Bisexual (31)	Participant's parents were unsupportive regarding his sexual identity and tried to convert him by means of superstitious methods which led him to attempt suicide and left his house for 8 days	No abusive behaviors reported	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Very severe	Fear of exposing their sexual identities to the society
2	B	Gay (20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's parents were not supportive about his sexual identity</li> <li>His friends verbally abused him by the words like "chakka" "meetha" "slut" and also he was sexually abused by one of his classmate in the school</li> </ul>	Participant's ex-partner during his 1 <sup>st</sup> semester of college sexually abused him and broke the relationship	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Very severe	Lack of support from the society when it comes to LGBTQIA community

S.No.	Cases	Identity & age (in complete years) described by participants in terms of LGBTQIA	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from family/friends	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from partners	Interview reports of domestic violence				Severity of Domestic violence in LGBTQIA community according to participants in India	Reasons for less reporting of LGBTQIA domestic violence cases in India
					Physical	Sexual	Emotional	Psychological		
3	C	Gay (21)	No abusive behaviors reported (Participant didn't tell about his sexual identity to his family)	Participant's ex-partner tried to control him, also he physically (slapped) and verbally abused him many times because of small disputes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Very severe	Fear of exposing their sexual identities to the society
4	D	Gay (21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's father was not supportive of his sexual identity.</li> <li>He was verbally abused by his family members, college mates which led him under depression for three years, attempt suicide and been admitted to mental ward for 3 months</li> </ul>	Participant had many hook-ups with men where he told his partners to physically, sexually and verbally abuse him to make himself insensitive to the situations he had been through	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Very severe	Fearful of the society reactions as they might hurt the victims

S.No.	Cases	Identity & age (in complete years) described by participants in terms of LGBTQIA	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from family/friends	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from partners	Interview reports of domestic violence				Severity of Domestic violence in LGBTQIA community according to participants in India	Reasons for less reporting of LGBTQIA domestic violence cases in India
					Physical	Sexual	Emotional	Psychological		
5	E	Gay (27)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At the age of 11, one of his family member sexually harassed him</li> <li>No abusive behaviors reported from his parents (Participant didn't tell about his sexual identity to his family)</li> </ul>	Participant's ex-partner physically and sexually abused him many times and also attempted to kill him when he tried to tell about his abusive behavior to his family	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Very severe	Fear of exposing their sexual identities to the society
6	F	Bisexual (26)	No abusive behaviors reported (Participant didn't tell about his sexual identity to his family)	Participant's ex-partner tried to control him emotionally and economically. He also cheated him many times which put him into stress and depression	No	No	Yes	Yes	Severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of exposing their sexual identities to the society</li> <li>Lack of support from the society for LGBTQIA community</li> </ul>



S.No.	Cases	Identity & age (in complete years) described by participants in terms of LGBTQIA	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from family/friends	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from partners	Interview reports of domestic violence				Severity of Domestic violence in LGBTQIA community according to participants in India	Reasons for less reporting of LGBTQIA domestic violence cases in India
					Physical	Sexual	Emotional	Psychological		
7	G	Gay (27)	No abusive behaviors reported (Participant told about his sexual identity to his family and they were supportive about it)	Participant's ex-partner controlled him emotionally and cheated with him by having affairs with girls	No	No	Yes	No	Moderately severe	Fear of exposing their sexual identities to the society
8	H	Gay (29)	No abusive behaviors reported (Participant didn't tell about his sexual identity to his family)	Participant's ex-partner verbally abused him with the 'prostitute' word, emotionally threatened him, cheated with him and also had unprotected sexual intercourse with him due to which he got sexually transmitted infection	No	No	Yes	No	Very severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of exposing their sexual identities to the society</li> <li>• Lack of support from the society when it comes to LGBTQIA community</li> </ul>

S.No.	Cases	Identity & age (in complete years) described by participants in terms of LGBTQIA	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from family/friends	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from partners	Interview reports of domestic violence				Severity of Domestic violence in LGBTQIA community according to participants in India	Reasons for less reporting of LGBTQIA domestic violence cases in India
					Physical	Sexual	Emotional	Psychological		
9	I	Bisexual (24)	No abusive behaviors reported (Participant didn't tell about his sexual identity to his family)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's ex-partner tried to control him emotionally, financially</li> <li>He also cheated on him by having sexual relationships with other men</li> </ul>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Very severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of exposing their sexual identities to the society</li> <li>They are used to such domains of violence, happening since a long time</li> </ul>
10	J	Gay (24)	No abusive behaviors reported (Participant told about his sexual identity to his family and they were supportive about it)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's ex-partner emotionally blackmailed him</li> <li>Participant's ex-partner also verbally abused him during the span of relationship</li> </ul>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Very severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of exposing their sexual identities to the society</li> <li>Lack of support and understanding from the society when it comes to LGBTQIA community</li> </ul>

S.No.	Cases	Identity & age (in complete years) described by participants in terms of LGBTQIA	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from family/friends	Interview reports of abusive behaviors experienced from partners	Interview reports of domestic violence				Severity of Domestic violence in LGBTQIA community according to participants in India	Reasons for less reporting of LGBTQIA domestic violence cases in India
					Physical	Sexual	Emotional	Psychological		
11	K	Gay (34)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's father was not supportive of his sexual identity and told him to get treated. Even he verbally abused him for being little femmine</li> <li>Participant's friends since his childhood bullied and abused him with many words like "randawa" "baila purush" which mentally affected him very much</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant's ex-partners cheated on him sexually and emotionally.</li> <li>One of his ex-partner rejected him because of physical needs after a long span of relationship which affected him mentally and he started building inferiority complex and thought of attempting suicide.</li> </ul>	No	No	Yes	No	Very severe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fear of exposing their sexual identities to the society</li> <li>Lack of support and understanding from the society when it comes to LGBTQIA community</li> <li>Lack of support to such issues from the LGBTQIA community itself</li> </ul>

Psychological and emotional domestic violence was reported by most of the participants interviewed. Majority of the participants mentioned the cases of non-acceptance and verbal abuse by their parents, family members and friends. Also, most of them reported cases like constant cheating, stalking, verbal abuse, and emotional blackmail by their partners. Depression and stress were mentioned by most of the participants as the consequences of such events in their life. However, some cases were so severe that participants even attempted suicide.

*“I saw something in red cloth tied beneath my bed and when I asked my mother about it, she said that my father did some black magic on me as an attempt to turn me as a straight person. This incident was frightening and depressing that on that very day I tried to kill myself” (Case A)*

*“Since very childhood I was bullied and verbally abused by my friends and even from my family members. The happenings of verbal abuse were even there during my college days. So, I started to meet with guys through online dating apps and had brutal sex with them. I told them to abuse me physically and sexually to be insensitive of the verbal abuses happening around me. However, this led me into depression for 3 years and a suicide attempt. I was admitted in the mental ward for 3 months” (Case D)*

One participant even reported the case of economic domestic violence where he had to bear all the expenses in the relationship which made him feel very uncomfortable and sense of being controlled by his partner.

*“I don't even remember an incident where he had paid anything. It was like I was forced to pay in every situation just because I am his boyfriend. I did not notice that initially but later it started bugging me. I know he had money, but he never spent a penny on me. It was very hurtful when I got to know that even the candles, he brought for me on my birthday was a gift from somebody to him which he used on me” (Case F)*

Almost all the 11 participants pointed out the scenario of domestic violence in LGBTQIA community as an alarming situation. They reported it to be very severe and common in the society, but people tend to neglect it or get used to it. Majority of the participants gave the reason of fear of exposing ones sexual identity for under-reporting of domestic violence cases in LGBTQIA. Along with that, reasons like lack of support and understanding from the family and from within the LGBTQIA community itself was pointed by some of the participants as a reason for less reporting of such cases.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this study is to assess the prevalence and perception of domestic violence in Indian LGBTQIA community and to explore its association with the participants' sociodemographic features. The results support the findings of many studies on the topic, showing that abusive behaviours can be seen in the Indian LGBTQIA community as well. (15,16) Regarding the overall prevalence of domestic violence, it was found to be 61.8% in terms of victimization which was quite higher than two studies conducted in 2014 and 2003 in United Kingdom having 40% and 38.4% respectively. (17, 18) However, in contrast to that two studies conducted in the year 2017 and 2005 showed 91.7% and 89% prevalence which was much higher than the present study. (19, 20) Majority of the victims experiencing domestic violence in this study were gay (31.4%) which supports the finding of some studies where gay people turns out to be the victims of domestic violence in maximum. (18, 21) In contrast, some studies stated that gay men are less likely to report or recognize domestic violence. (17, 22) Majority of the respondents

in this study characterized domestic violence under emotional, physical and/ or sexually violence by giving their perceptions under the options given in the questionnaire which describes coercive control by one partner against the other which support the findings done by one study in 1986. (23) Socio-demographic variables like educational level and occupation of the respondents were found to be significantly associated with domestic violence. This might be because the level of understanding regarding domestic violence and economic stability determines the intensity of domestic violence within the LGBTQIA community. Also, nature of partnered relationship within LGBTQIA population was a significant factor determining the prevalence of domestic violence which corroborates other research across several disciplines showing happenings of domestic violence within LGBTQIA partnered relationships. (24, 25, 26, 27) Of those individuals who reported that they had experienced domestic violence, more than half contacted friends for help which was similarly reported in one study done in 2006. (22) Domestic violence among homosexuals, bisexuals, homosexuals, and transgender people is without a doubt a major concern. Despite the high prevalence, it remains severely underreported, and LGBT survivors are overwhelmingly underrepresented, as the majority of respondents in this study indicated that the most possible cause for under-reporting was the fear of being revealed to society. This may be attributed to the intention of the LGBTQIA community to protect themselves from more stigma against the prevailing heterosexual society. Negative connotations regarding the LGBTQIA population may be compounded by accepting domestic abuse within its own community (Balsam, 2001; Browning, 1995), potentially leading to heightened homonegativity, as explained in other studies. (28) and (29) Furthermore, a significant percentage of respondents claimed that the victims never reported the events to the authorities because they were afraid of the police not taking their cases seriously, as seen in two studies. (30, 31) The semi - structured interviews elicited more comprehensive descriptions of the victims' experiences in this study. Nearly all the participants reported psychological (n=9) and emotional (n=11) victimization, with cheating and verbal violence being the most common types. Physical violence was also documented by some of the participants, including attempted murder, slapping, and pushing. The results of this research on psychological, emotional, and physical victimization are similar to those of other studies on LGBTQIA domestic abuse. (32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37).

In our study, it was seen that 22.25% of transgender participants within LGBTQIA community understand the meaning of domestic violence and 5% of transgender believes that domestic violence doesn't exist in their community. However, most of transgender consider taunting, insulting and constant humiliation in front of friends and family as the serious perception of domestic violence Whereas, in heterosexual relationship, a study done in 2002 discovered that the participants considered the abuse more serious and were more likely to recommend that the victim press charges in heterosexual domestic violence as compare to LGBTQIA community. (38)

Future researchers should consider using a qualitative approach to explore how different variables found in quantitative analyses of domestic violence among LGBTQIA, such as drug usage, mental health issues, shame, and childhood trauma, contribute to domestic violence experiences in this community, as this allows more in-depth analysis of these potentially complicated and diverse relationships. Furthermore, considering the small yet increasing domestic violence literature, prospective researchers can continue to use robust quantitative and/or mixed approaches to investigate the violence within LGBTQIA relationships.

### **Strengths and limitations**

The present study has several notable strengths. To begin with, this is the first mixed method analysis of domestic violence among India's LGBTQIA community. Second, it brings rich, qualitative

evidence to a literature that is mostly quantitative. Third, although most studies of domestic violence by LGBTQIA people concentrate exclusively on physical victimization, this research looked at LGBTQIA people's experiences in numerous aspects such as physical, psychological, sexual, and financial domestic violence, showing a much more complicated and dynamic pattern of behaviours than previously identified. Fourth, while other studies have used older, predominantly gay and bisexual men as samples, this research has bolstered by a younger, more demographically diverse LGBT community. This analysis also showed a variety of shortcomings. First, social desirability stigma and/or legal considerations may have hindered our ability to gather data on forms of domestic violence, specifically sexual domestic violence. Second, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in India, this study was conducted during a lockdown era, which restricted the scope of data collection for both quantitative and qualitative research. Third, the results of this research do not apply to LGBTQIA people of other ages, and the sample size is not indicative of India's vast LGBTQIA community. Considering the large LGBTQIA community in India, more comprehensive and in-depth research is needed.

### **Conclusion**

Domestic violence is more common in the LGBTQIA culture than in the heterosexual community. The lack of exposure is most likely attributable to underreporting rather than a lack of violence. Underreporting rates indicate that many LGBTQIA survivors do not feel comfortable or able to recognize their experiences as abusive because of 'heterosexual hegemony.' As a result, we must constantly shift the conversation of sexual violence to include LGBTQIA survivors, which means bringing in motion initiatives such as workforce training, LGBTQIA committees, and campaigns. This study also suggests that despite the prevalence of abuse within this community, the experiences of abuse are not homogenous, and these are compounded by factors such as gender, educational level, occupation etc. Within the LGBTQIA community, gay and transgender individuals continue to experience abuse disproportionately and face the most barriers to getting help compared to others within the community. This research also shows that, considering the prevalence of violence in this culture, abuse experiences are not uniform, and are affected by variables such as gender, educational level, occupation, and so on. Compared to other members of the LGBTQIA community, gay and transgender people appear to be disproportionately abused and face utmost barriers regarding accessing care.

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