Analyzing Media's Real -World Impact On Societal Attitudes Towards The LGBTQ+ Community In India

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Abstract

Media plays a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes, influencing perceptions, and fostering awareness about marginalized communities. In India the representation of the LGBTQ+ community in mainstream and digital media has undergone significant shifts, yet its real world impact on public perception remains a topic of debate. This research aims to analyze how media influences societal attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community by examining media consumption patterns, representations, and their perceived effects, this study seeks to understand whether media acts as a catalyst for acceptance or reinforces stereotypes. A survey will be conducted between different age group peoples to assess their views on LGBTQ+ representation in Indian media, including social media, news, films, and television. This study will provide insights into how media exposure and generational differences shape attitudes towards LGBTQ+ rights. The findings will contribute to discussions on the need for responsible media representation and legal frameworks that promote inclusivity and equality.

Keywords Media, LGBTQ+ community, societal attitude, Social acceptance, Media influence

Introduction

The LGBTQ+ community, which includes lesbian, gay, bisexuals, transgender and queer individuals has faced discrimination, social stigma and legal challenges in India. The pursuit of equal rights and gender equality for LGBTQ+ individuals is deeply intertwined with the nation's historical, cultural and legal framework. Beyond legal recognition, LGBTQ+ individuals continue to face issues such as workplace discrimination, lack of healthcare access, and exclusion from social institutions like marriage and family inheritance rights. Mental health challenges, arising from societal rejection and lack of acceptance, further highlight the urgent need for inclusive policies. Media representation and public discourse have playing a crucial role in reshaping perceptions but deep rooted biases persist.

The discussion on the LGBTQ+ individuals and their societal acceptance has gained huge momentum in the past few years. The media serves as a powerful tool in shaping societal attitudes, influencing public discourse, and constructing narratives around marginalized communities. The LGBTQ+ community in India has historically faced discrimination, legal challenges and social exclusion, largely influenced by cultural norms and religious beliefs. Over the years, Indian media has played a dual role- both perpetuating stereotypes and acting as a platform for advocacy and representation. With increasing LGBTQ+ visibility in films, television, online platforms and news media, it is essential to analyze how this evolving portrayal affects social attitude.

In the context of LGBTQ+ community in India, media representation has evolved from invisibility and negative stereotyping to increasing visibility and negative stereotyping to increasing visibility and advocacy. However, despite this progress, societal acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals remains a challenge, influenced by culture, religious and legal factors.

Bollywood, web series, and television serials have played a significant role in shaping societal perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community in India, with portrayals ranging from stereotypical misrepresentations to progressive narratives. Traditionally, Bollywood depicted LGBTQ+ characters in a negative or comedic light, reinforcing harmful stereotypes. Films like Dostana (2008) and Kal Ho Naa Ho (2003) used queer characters for comic relief rather than meaningful representation.

However, in recent years, there has been a shift toward more nuanced and empathetic storytelling. Movies like Aligarh (2016), based on the real-life struggles of a gay professor, and Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan (2020), a mainstream romantic comedy centered on a same-sex relationship, have contributed to breaking taboos. Web series such as Made in Heaven (2019) and Four More Shots Please! (2019) have further normalized LGBTQ+ narratives by showcasing authentic queer experiences and struggles. Despite these advancements, many mainstream productions still hesitate to explore LGBTQ+ themes deeply, and television serials often reinforce traditional gender norms, limiting positive representation. While Bollywood and digital content have started embracing inclusivity, the industry still has a long way to go in ensuring fair and respectful portrayals of the LGBTQ+ community. The portrayal of LGBTQ+ individuals in films, television, news and social media plays a pivotal role in either fostering acceptance or reinforcing prejudices. Positive representation can contribute to awareness and normalization, while biased or stereotypical portrayals may perpetuate discrimination.

Literature Review
Title LGBTQ+ IN INDIA: AN EVALUATION OF THEIR SOCIO-LEGAL ACCEPTANCE

References Goyal, s. j. (n.d.). LGBTQ+ IN INDIA: AN EVALUATION of their socio legal acceptance. *Supremo Amicus*

Review In this research paper the authors trace the evolution of LGBTQ+ rights in India, highlighting significant legal milestone such as the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018. The paper discusses the societal stigma and descrimination that persist despite legal advancements, emphasizing the need for broder social reforms. The authors proposes to enhance both legal protections and societal acceptancefor the LGBTQ+ community in India. Overall the paper offers valuable insights into the ongoing struggles and necessary steps towards achieving comprehensive socio-legal acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals in India.

Title Role of Media intervention in changing attitude towards transgenders

Reference Sharma, G. T. (2023). Role of Media Intervention in changing attitudes towards transgenders. *Indian journal of positive psychology* .

Review This study examines how media exposures can influence young adults' perceptions of transgender individuals in the New Delhi, NCR region. Utilizing a mixed method approach, the researchers combined quantitative assessments with the attitudes towards Transgender scale and qualitative insights from semi structured interviews. The sample consisted of 30 individuals aged 18 to 25. Findings indicate that media interventions positively shifted participants' attitudes towards transgender people, with no significant gender differences observed. Themes such as enhanced understanding, increased social acceptance and destigamatization emerged from the qualitative data. The study underscores the media's pivotal role in fostering positive societal attitude toward the transgender community.

Title The Influence of Media Role Models on Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual identity

Reference Giuliano, S. C. (2011). The Influence of Media Role Models on Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual identity. *Journal of Homosexuality* .

Review This study explores how media representation affects the identity development of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. Utilising both surveys and in depth interviews, the researchers

found that the media role models significantly influence self realization, the coming out process, and the current identities of GLB individuals by providing sources of pride, inspiration, and comfort. The study suggests that increasing the availability of GLB role models in the media may positively influence GLB identity.

Research Objective

1. To analyze the impact of media on societal attitude toward the LGBTQ+ community in India.
2. To examine the role of different media platforms in shaping perceptions of LGBTQ+ individuals.
3. To assess whether media representation fosters inclusivity or reinforces stereotypes about the LGBTQ+ community.
4. To study the perception of different age group peoples regarding LGBTQ+ issues and how their media exposure influences their views.
5. To explore the need for legal and policy interventions to promote accurate and responsible media representation of LGBTQ+ individuals.

Research Methodology

This study follows a mixed research design to analyze the real world impact of media on societal attitudes toward the LGBTQ+ community in India. A survey based approach is used to gather empirical data from individuals belonging to different age groups and educational backgrounds. The study focuses on understanding how media representation of the LGBTQ+ community influences public perception, awareness and acceptance. Secondary data is collected from various online journals, articles etc.

A convenience sampling method is employed to collect the data from diverse age groups and educational levels. A minimum of 60 respondents will be surveyed to ensure sufficient data for meaningful analysis.

A structured survey questionnaire is used to collect data on media consumption habits, perception of LGBTQ+ representation in Indian media, impact of media exposure on societal attitude towards LGBTQ+ individuals.

The questionnaire is distributed online via Google Forms and shared through professional networks and educational groups. Respondents are assured of voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality.

Survey based research enables the collection of data from a diverse population. This sampling ensures fair representation across age groups and educational levels. Quantitative analysis helps identify patterns and relationships in media influence on societal attitudes.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

In the present study data has been collected from total 60 respondents.
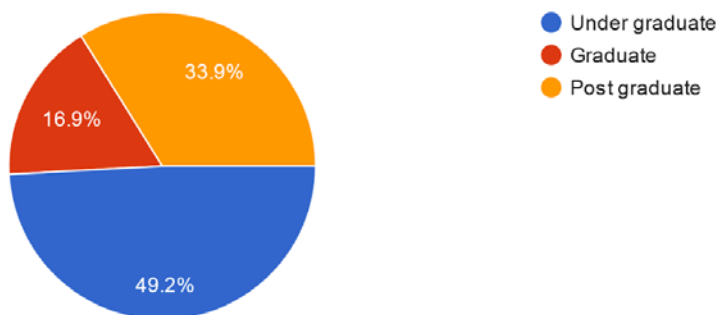

Age Group
60 responses

- 18- 20
- 21 - 23
- 24 - 26
- 27- 29
- 30 and above

40%
33.3%
11.7%
10%
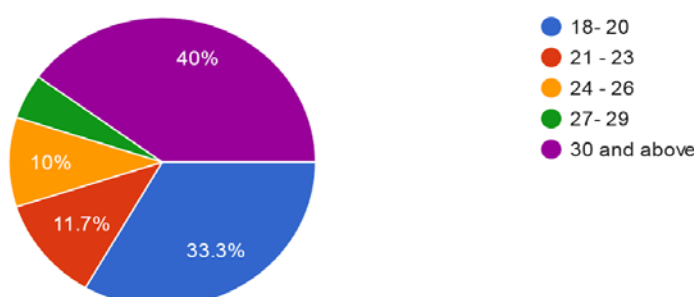
This pie chart represents an analysis of the age distribution of 60 respondents.

After analysis it has been observed that there is a strong representation of older individuals (30 and above), making up 40% of the respondents. Young adults (18-20) also form a significant chunk (33.3%), indicating a dual concentration of responses in younger and older age brackets. The middle age groups (21-29) have relatively lower participation, with 21-23 (11.7%), 24-26 (10%), and 27-29 (least percentage) being much smaller.

Education

59 responses

This pie chart shows the Education levels of respondents. The largest group consists of undergraduates (49.2%), indicating that most respondents are still in their initial higher education phase. The postgraduate group (33.9%) is significant, suggesting a high proportion of respondents have pursued advanced studies. The graduate category (16.9%) is the smallest, which could imply that many individuals either continue into postgraduate studies or stop at an undergraduate degree.

Marital Status

60 responses
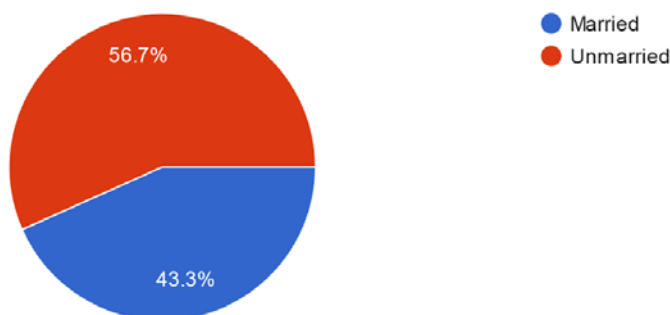
This pie chart analyzes the marital status of the respondents. The unmarried group (56.7%) is larger than the married group (43.3%), indicating that most respondents are single. The percentage difference is not very large, suggesting a relatively balanced distribution between married and unmarried individuals.

Which type of media do you consume the most?
60 responses
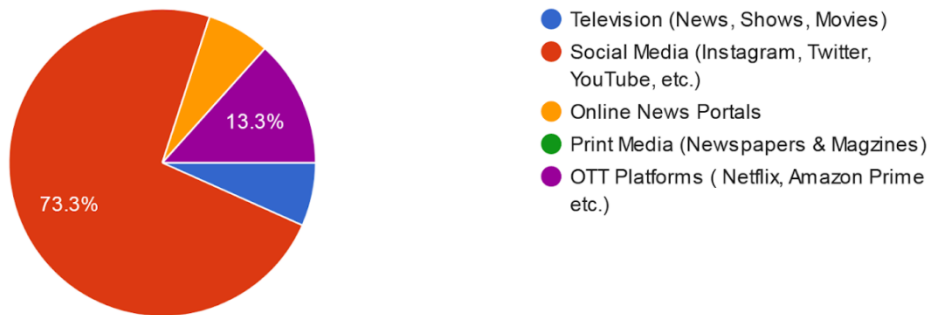
From the image, the pie chart presents data on media consumption preferences among 60 respondents.

Observations:

Social Media Dominates: The red segment, representing social media consumption, is the largest, accounting for 73.3% of responses. This indicates a strong preference for social media as the primary source of information and entertainment.

Television & OTT Platforms are Less Preferred: The next significant portion, 13.3%, is in purple, representing OTT platforms. This suggests that while streaming services are popular, they do not match social media in terms of daily consumption.

Minimal Preference for Other Media: The blue, orange, and yellow sections representing television, online news portals, and print media, respectively, appear to be much smaller, indicating lower consumption rates.

Analysis:

The dominance of social media suggests that information, entertainment, and news are primarily consumed through platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. Traditional media like television and print are losing their grip as primary sources of information. OTT platforms are growing but remain secondary to social media.

How frequently do you come across LGBTQ+ related content in media?
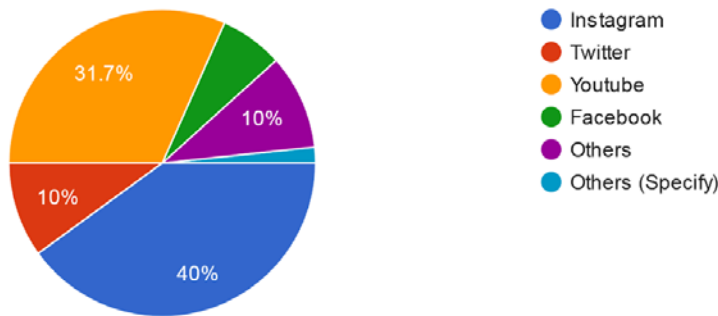60 responses
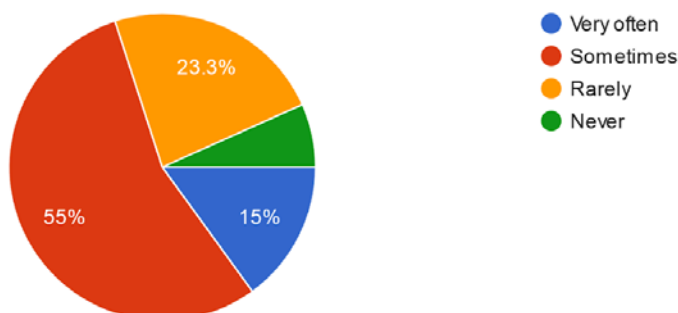
Analysis:
1. Majority Exposure (70%)

55% of respondents encounter LGBTQ+ content sometimes, and 15% very often. This suggests that LGBTQ+ representation in media is relatively common but not dominant.

2. Limited Exposure (Approx. 30%)

23.3% rarely see such content, and a small percentage never does. This indicates that a segment of the audience still has minimal or no exposure to LGBTQ+ narratives.

Which social media platforms influence your opinions the most?
60 responses

The image shows a pie chart summarizing the responses of 60 participants to the question: "Which social media platforms influence your opinions the most?"

Observations:

1. Instagram (Blue) - 40%

The largest portion of respondents (40%) believe that Instagram has the most influence on their opinions. This suggests Instagram's strong impact, likely due to its visual content, influencers, and engagement-driven algorithms.

2. Twitter (Red) - 10%

Only 10% of respondents consider Twitter as the most influential platform. This indicates that, while Twitter is a powerful tool for news and debates, it may not have as broad an influence as Instagram.

3. YouTube (Orange) - 31.7%

The second-most influential platform, with 31.7% of the votes. This highlights YouTube's role in shaping opinions through long-form content, educational videos, and commentary.

4. Facebook (Green) - Smallest Share

Facebook has the smallest percentage, suggesting that its influence on shaping opinions has declined, especially among younger demographics.

5. Others (Purple) - 10%

This indicates that some respondents rely on other platforms or alternative sources for opinion formation.

6. Others (Specify) - Very Small Share

A negligible number of respondents mentioned platforms outside the main social media apps.

Analysis:

Instagram and YouTube dominate in influencing opinions, likely due to their visual appeal, influencers, and algorithm-driven content. Twitter has a niche audience, possibly influencing political and intellectual discussions but not as much as Instagram and YouTube. Facebook's declining influence suggests it may be losing relevance for younger generations in shaping opinions. The presence of 'Others' (10%) indicates that people are also influenced by other media like Reddit, Telegram, or LinkedIn.

Do you believe media plays a role in shaping societal attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community?
60 responses
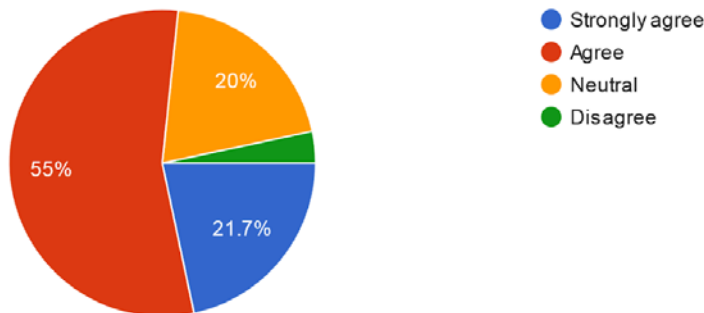
Analysis
1. Majority Opinion (Strong Influence of Media)
76.7% (21.7% + 55%) of respondents either strongly agree or agree that media plays a role in shaping societal attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. This indicates a general consensus that media has a significant impact on public perception, likely through representation, narratives, and portrayal of LGBTQ+ issues.
2. Neutral Stance (20%)
A notable portion of respondents remains neutral, possibly indicating uncertainty about the degree of media influence or suggesting that other societal factors also play a role.
3. Minimal Disagreement
A small percentage (green segment) disagrees, meaning very few believe media does not influence attitudes towards LGBTQ+ issues.

What type of LGBTQ+ representation have you seen the most in media?
60 responses
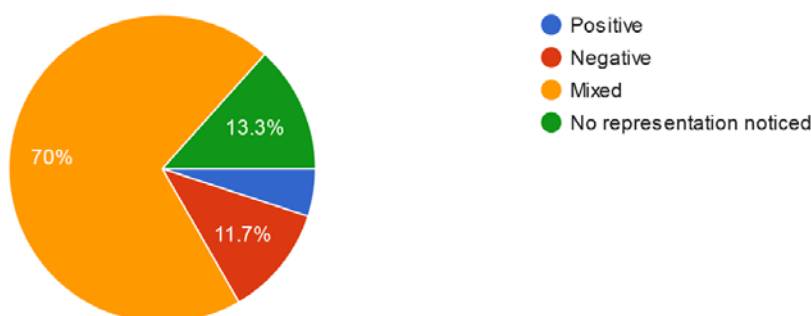
Observations:
1. Mixed representation (orange) dominates with 70% of responses, indicating that most respondents have seen both positive and negative portrayals of LGBTQ+ individuals in media.
2. No representation noticed (green) accounts for 13.3%, suggesting that some respondents feel LGBTQ+ representation is either absent or not noticeable.
3. Negative representation (red) makes up 11.7%, implying that a portion of respondents has primarily encountered unfavourable portrayals.
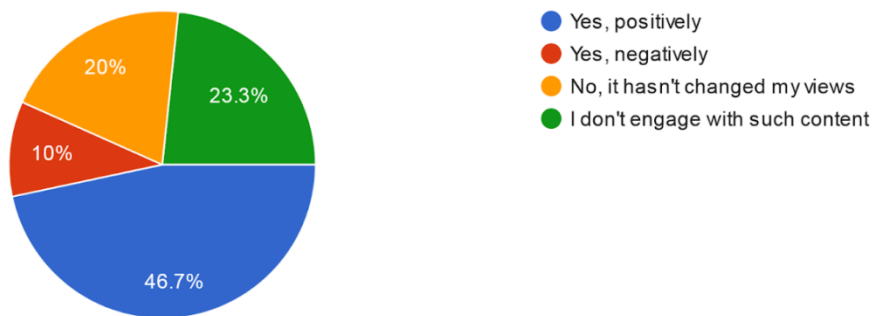4. Positive representation (blue) is the least common, highlighting a potential gap in affirmative and empowering portrayals of LGBTQ+ individuals.
Analysis:

The dominance of "mixed" representation suggests that media portrayal is inconsistent—sometimes progressive and inclusive, but also reinforcing stereotypes or biases. The relatively high percentage of people who haven't noticed LGBTQ+ representation (13.3%) indicates that representation might still be lacking or not prominent enough in mainstream media. The low positive representation suggests a need for more affirmative and empowering narratives for LGBTQ+ individuals in media.

Has media influenced your perception of the LGBTQ+ community?
60 responses

- Yes, positively — 46.7%
- Yes, negatively — 10%
- No, it hasn't changed my views — 20%
- I don't engage with such content — 23.3%
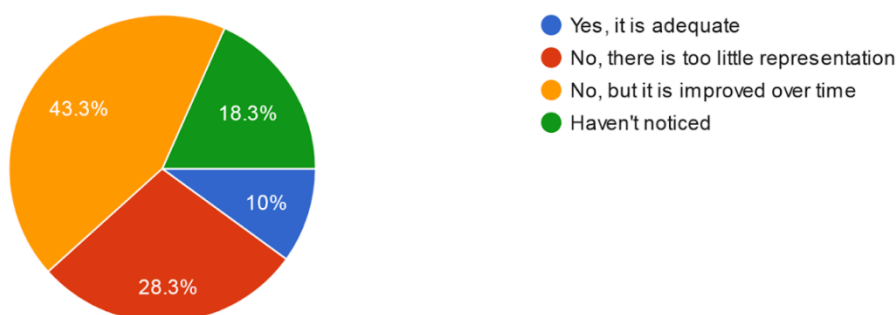
Observations:

1. Almost half (46.7%) of respondents say media has positively influenced their perception of the LGBTQ+ community, suggesting that representation—whether through films, TV, or social media—has played a role in fostering acceptance and awareness.

2. A small percentage (10%) report a negative influence, indicating that certain portrayals in media might reinforce stereotypes or biases.

3. 20% say media has not changed their views, implying that prior beliefs or experiences shape their perspectives more than media exposure.

4. 23.3% do not engage with LGBTQ+ content, which could reflect disinterest, lack of exposure, or cultural/social reasons affecting engagement.

Interpretation:

The high percentage of positive influence supports the argument that media can be a powerful tool in shaping societal attitudes toward the LGBTQ+ community. The negative impact on some respondents highlights the need for more responsible and accurate representation to counter misinformation or biased portrayals. The group that hasn't changed their views or doesn't engage with such content (43.3%) suggests that media influence has limitations, particularly if audiences are not actively engaging with LGBTQ+ narratives.

Do you think LGBTQ+ representation in Indian media is sufficient?
60 responses

- Yes, it is adequate — 10%
- No, there is too little representation — 28.3%
- No, but it is improved over time — 43.3%
- Haven't noticed — 18.3%

Majority View: 43.3% of respondents believe LGBTQ+ representation is insufficient but improving, indicating that while progress is being made, there is still a long way to go.
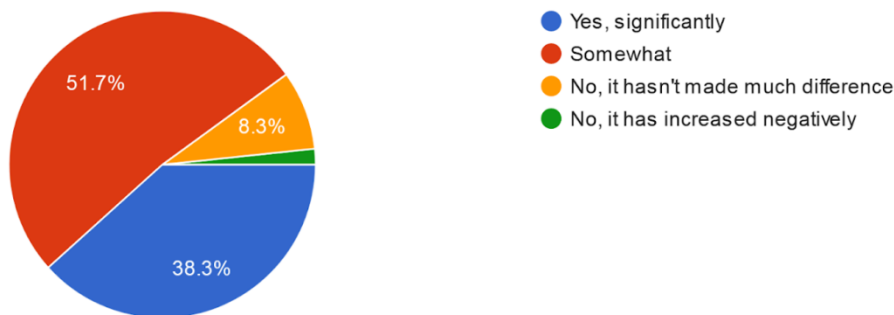
Lack of Representation: 28.3% explicitly state there is too little representation, reinforcing the need for better inclusivity.

Indifference or Unawareness: 18.3% haven't noticed, which could suggest either a lack of awareness or that representation is not prominent enough to be noticeable.

Positive Perception: Only 10% believe the representation is already adequate, showing that most people see room for improvement.

Do you think social media has helped in increasing acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals?

60 responses

- Yes, significantly — 38.3%
- Somewhat — 51.7%
- No, it hasn't made much difference — 8.3%
- No, it has increased negatively

Analysis:

The results suggest that social media plays a role in LGBTQ+ acceptance, with 90% of respondents indicating at least some level of positive impact (either "Yes, significantly" or "Somewhat").
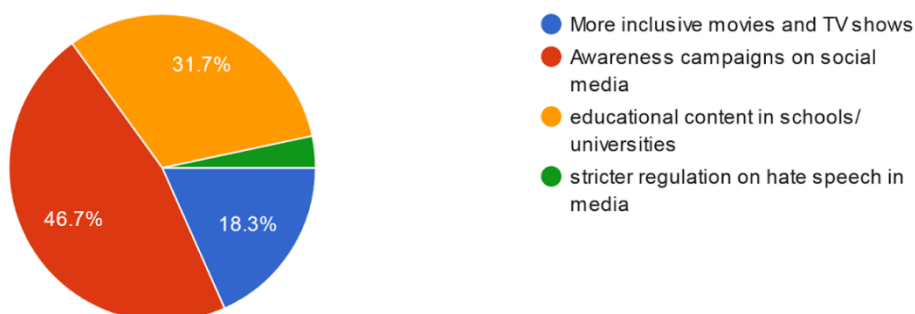
However, more than half (51.7%) think the impact is only partial, which could indicate the persistence of societal barriers or online hate speech.

The small percentage (8.3%) believing there is no effect suggests that social media alone may not be enough to change deep-rooted social attitudes.

The negligible percentage of negative impact perceptions suggests that while online spaces can be hostile, they have largely contributed to progress rather than regression.

What kind of media content do you think would help in improving societal acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community?

60 responses

- More inclusive movies and TV shows — 18.3%
- Awareness campaigns on social media — 46.7%
- educational content in schools/ universities — 31.7%
- stricter regulation on hate speech in media

Analysis:

1. Social media awareness campaigns (46.7%) received the highest preference, indicating that respondents believe digital platforms play a key role in shaping societal attitudes and increasing LGBTQ+ acceptance.

2. Educational content in schools/universities (31.7%) ranks second, suggesting a strong belief that formal education can influence long-term societal change.

3. More inclusive movies and TV shows (18.3%) came third, showing that while representation in entertainment is important, respondents see direct awareness efforts as more impactful.

4. Stricter regulation on hate speech in media received the least support, implying that proactive awareness and education are viewed as more effective than legal restrictions alone.

What do you think is the biggest barrier to LGBTQ+ acceptance in India?
60 responses
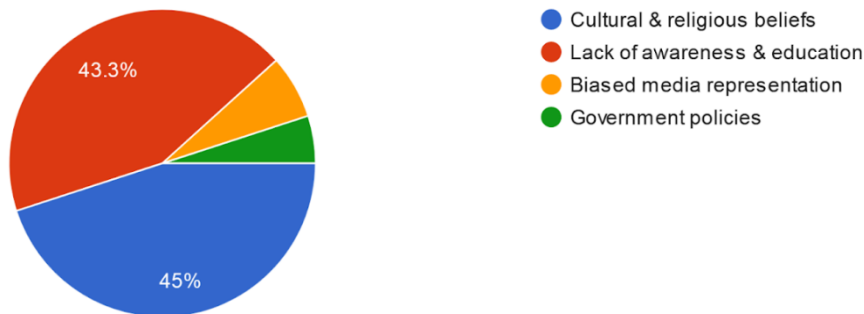
Analysis:

The data suggests that deep-rooted cultural and religious beliefs (45%), along with a lack of awareness and education (43.3%), are the primary reasons for limited LGBTQ+ acceptance. The relatively lower impact of government policies and media bias implies that societal attitudes, rather than legal constraints, are the dominant challenge. This aligns with broader sociological research, which indicates that legal changes alone do not guarantee societal acceptance without shifts in education and cultural perspectives.

Would you support legal measures to ensure better LGBTQ+ representation in media?
60 responses
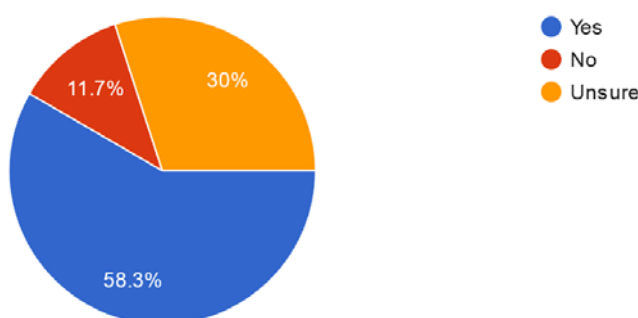
Analysis:

1. Majority Support Legal Measures:

A significant 58.3% of respondents support legal intervention to improve LGBTQ+ representation in media. This indicates that most participants recognize the importance of policy-driven inclusion.

2. Uncertainty is Relatively High (30%):

Nearly one-third of respondents are unsure, which suggests that many people may need more awareness or clarity on how legal measures would work in this context. Possible reasons for this could include lack of knowledge on existing policies, concerns about freedom of expression, or doubts about the effectiveness of legal enforcement.

3. Minority Opposition (11.7%):

A small percentage opposes legal measures, possibly due to beliefs in market-driven media representation or concerns about government overreach in creative industries.

Additional Comments & Suggestions
Analysis:
 Only 20 respondents have given their suggestions and comments.
Some respondents believe LGBTQ+ acceptance should be normalized through education and legal protections, including better representation in media. Several responses emphasize that LGBTQ+ individuals deserve dignity, freedom, and fair treatment, even if one does not actively support them. Some responses suggest debating LGBTQ+ rights, with a few stating that societal attitudes need to change for justice to be achieved. A few respondents express opposition, particularly against non-transgender LGBTQ+ identities, citing personal and religious beliefs. While courts have recognized LGBTQ+ rights, social and religious beliefs still hinder widespread acceptance.

Conclusion

The survey results indicate that a majority of the respondents consume social media like Instagram, Twitter and you tube. Almost 50% of respondents say media has positively influenced their perception of the LGBTQ+ community, signifying that representation—whether through films, TV, or social media—has played a role in fostering acceptance and awareness. Most of the respondents say that there is no significant influence of media in LGBTQ+ acceptance but it has increased over the period of time.

Majority (58.3%) of respondents support legal measures to enhance LGBTQ+ representation in media, highlighting a strong inclination towards policy-driven inclusivity. However, a notable proportion (30%) remains unsure, suggesting a gap in awareness or understanding of the impact of such legal measures. A small minority (11.7%) opposes legal intervention, likely due to concerns about creative freedom or skepticism regarding government regulation in media. These findings reflect the evolving societal perspective on LGBTQ+ representation and underscore the need for both policy action and public discourse to ensure fair and authentic media portrayal.

Suggestions

1. Awareness and Sensitization Campaigns
Conduct educational programs and workshops to inform the public, media professionals, and policymakers about the importance of LGBTQ+ representation. Promote discussions on how legal measures can coexist with creative freedom in media.
2. Legislative Framework for Inclusive Media Policies
Introduce guidelines or incentives for media houses to ensure diverse and authentic LGBTQ+ representation without mandating restrictive quotas. Encourage self-regulation within the media industry to promote fair and unbiased storytelling.
3. Collaboration between Government, Media, and Advocacy Groups
Engage media stakeholders, LGBTQ+ activists, and policymakers in dialogue to develop balanced approaches that promote inclusivity while respecting artistic freedom. Establish independent bodies or committees to monitor LGBTQ+ representation and address concerns of misrepresentation or stereotyping.
4. Research and Data Collection
Conduct further studies on the impact of LGBTQ+ media representation on societal attitudes to build stronger arguments for policy recommendations. Assess international best practices and adapt them to the Indian socio-cultural context.
5. Encouraging LGBTQ+ Voices in Media
Support LGBTQ+ content creators, filmmakers, and journalists through funding and mentorship programs. Provide platforms for authentic storytelling from within the community to reduce misrepresentation.

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