

# **Impact Analysis of a School-based LGBTQIA+**

## **Gender Sensitization Program in India**

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## **Abstract**

In India, the LGBTQIA+ community has predominantly been opposed by society and overlooked by the government when it comes to laws and regulations. This deliberate societal neglect and absence have led to increased cases of abuse and harassment, physical, psychological, and mental, concerning sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), which is increasingly being witnessed in children in schools. Children's minds can be molded at this tender age, and thus there is a need for gender sensitization/awareness programs (GSP) and additions to the school curriculum. Teacher training programs, courses on B.Ed. etc., that speak about gender sensitization, also fail to include the LGBTQIA+ component.

To support the hypothesis of GSPs being an effective tool to mold views and attitudes, this study aims to conduct an impact analysis on an ongoing LGBTQIA+ gender sensitization program, the "Breaking Barriers Campaign" of the Tagore International School (TIS), Vasant Vihar, Delhi. The paper demonstrates a comparative analysis using questionnaires between TIS students and students not exposed to such content in schools (control group). Results show that TIS students are more aware and educated about the community when compared to the control group. No significant difference could be witnessed in their acceptance and attitudes; however, TIS students have more decisive responses to questions ('strongly agree/disagree'). Interviews with parents, teachers, LGBTQIA+ activists, and ex-students give insights into the various reasons for the absence of such information in the curricula or programs of schools, especially when LGBTQIA+ community issues are gaining attention in the mainstream media. According to the self-reported responses, TIS students' families are more aware of LGBTQIA+ persons, and more TIS students have had such conversations with them. Still, the same cannot be said certainly about their thoughts or attitudes. GSPs can empower students with information, which makes them knowledgeable and eliminates misconceptions. It has also been shown to have positive spillover effects on the family's awareness and education.

## **Self-Declaration**

This is to certify that the project submitted by me titled “**Impact Analysis of a School-based LGBTQIA+ Gender Sensitization Program in India**” is my original work and has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, or Fellowship to this or any other University.

- Anjali Sreeram

## **Certificate Of The Supervisor**

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Impact Analysis of a School-based LGBTQIA+ Gender Sensitization Program in India**” is original work undertaken by **Anjali Sreeram** under my supervision and guidance as part of his/her Master degree in this Institute. The thesis may be sent for evaluation.

Supervisor's Signature

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## I. Introduction

The LGBTQIA+ community<sup>1</sup> in India (which includes the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, etc.) has largely been shunned by society. The State has ignored it in its policies and legislation. There is a deep historical reason behind this, starting with the British imposition of Section 377 in the Indian Penal Code (derived from their 1533 Buggery Act), which criminalized homosexuality and termed it ‘unnatural’; this persisted even post-Independence. The community strove hard throughout the post-Independence period, with the movement gaining momentum in the late 1990s. In 2018, this unconstitutional law was eliminated, and homosexuality was decriminalized. However, the atrocities continued, and most overlooked its impact on school children.

According to the statistics submitted by the Government of India to the Supreme Court (SC) in 2012, there are 2.5 million gays in the country, of whom an average of 7% are seen to be HIV-positive. The SC ordered these numbers from the government as homework in the court order of challenge to the 2009<sup>2</sup> ruling of the Delhi High Court of decriminalizing same-sex relationships. The 2013<sup>3</sup> verdict reversed the 2009 HC judgment, and same-sex relationships became forbidden and criminalized by law again. However, post that ‘homework,’ the government has not officially recorded the number of LGBTQIA+ individuals (BBC, 2012). Post Section 377 being decriminalized by the SC order in 2018, many people came out of the closet as one huge societal and legal barrier was removed. However, these numbers are not documented. The 2011 Census counted 4.88 lakh transgender people in India (GOI, 2011); however, these numbers would have varied post the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill of 2019. Although the bill does not do justice to the NALSA<sup>4</sup> ruling of the Transgender person’s right to decide their gender and be recognized by law as per their self-declared gender, the bill seeks to enlist the actual number of the transgender population in the country (Knight, 2020). Thus, the 2011 figures are a gross underestimate of the actual number of the combined LGBTQIA+

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<sup>1</sup> The LGBTQIA+ community is an umbrella term used lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and plus persons. Although it is referred to as a ‘community,’ the individuals have different issues, interests, views, and opinions.

<sup>2</sup> Naz Foundation vs. Government Of Nct Of Delhi 2009

<sup>3</sup> SC ruling in Suresh Kumar Koushal & Anr. v. NAZ Foundation 2013

<sup>4</sup> National Legal Services Authority vs Union of India (2014) - The Court held that transgenders fall within the purview of the Indian Constitution and thus are fully entitled to the rights guaranteed therein.

population. Ipsos, a French company, is the third largest Insights and Analytics Company of its kind and has estimated that 3% of the total population in India identifies as homosexual, 9% as bisexual<sup>5</sup>, 1% as pansexual<sup>6</sup>, and 2% as asexual<sup>7</sup>, a total of 17% is not strictly heterosexual. 2% identified as Transgender", "non-binary<sup>8</sup>/non-conforming/gender-fluid<sup>9</sup>," or "in another way." This is the closest statistic to any data on this community, resulting from a market survey conducted by the company on its global advisor platform. The report also mentions that only 55% of the Indian population is strictly attracted only to the opposite sex (Ipsos, 2021). These are still extrapolated estimations achieved out of 500 sample respondents. Lack of awareness about the community, societal heteronormative beliefs, and lack of governmental will to spread awareness and make adequate policies are also cited by LGBT+ activists for this underreporting.

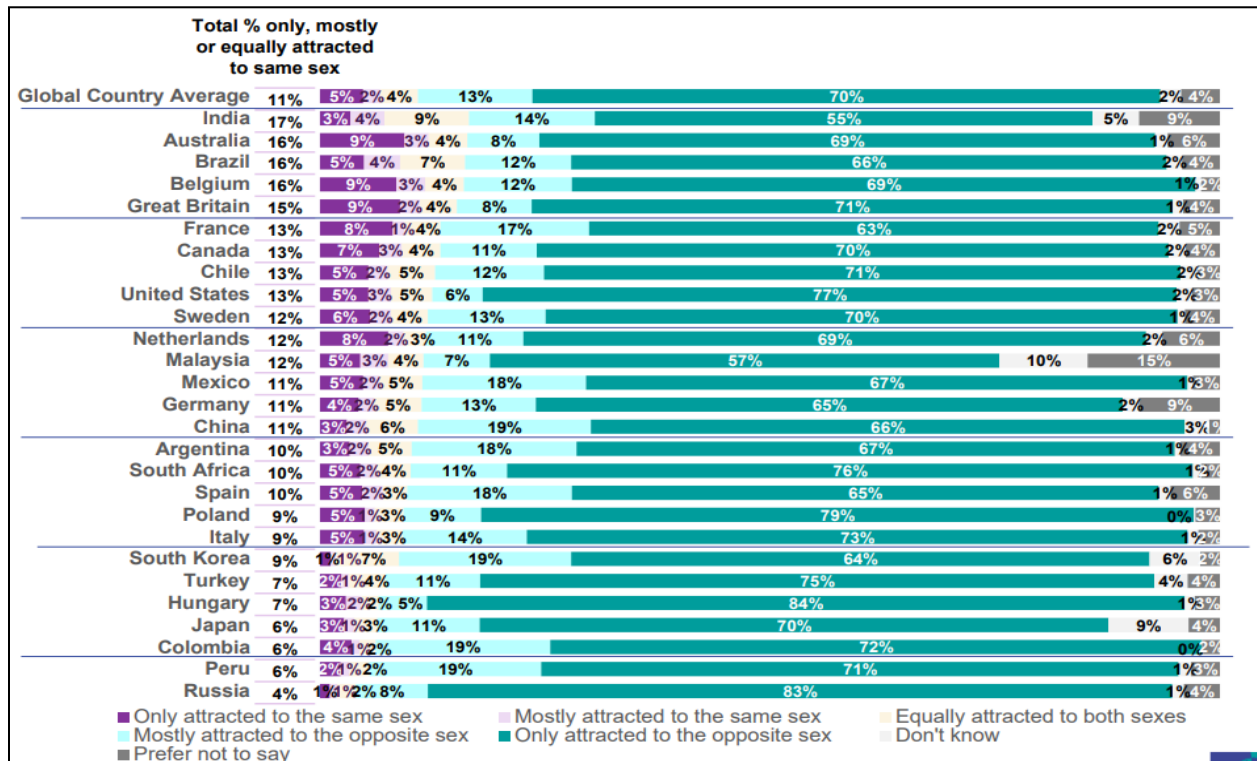


Figure 1 - GENDER IDENTITY BY COUNTRY

<sup>5</sup> Bisexual refers to having a sexual/romantic attraction to both sexes

<sup>6</sup> Pansexuality is the romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to people regardless of their gender

<sup>7</sup> Asexuals are individuals who lack the feeling of sexual attraction to other sexes

<sup>8</sup> Non binary or queer refer to gender identities that are not binned into male/female

<sup>9</sup> Gender fluidity refers to change over time in a person's gender expression or gender identity, or both (Harvard University).

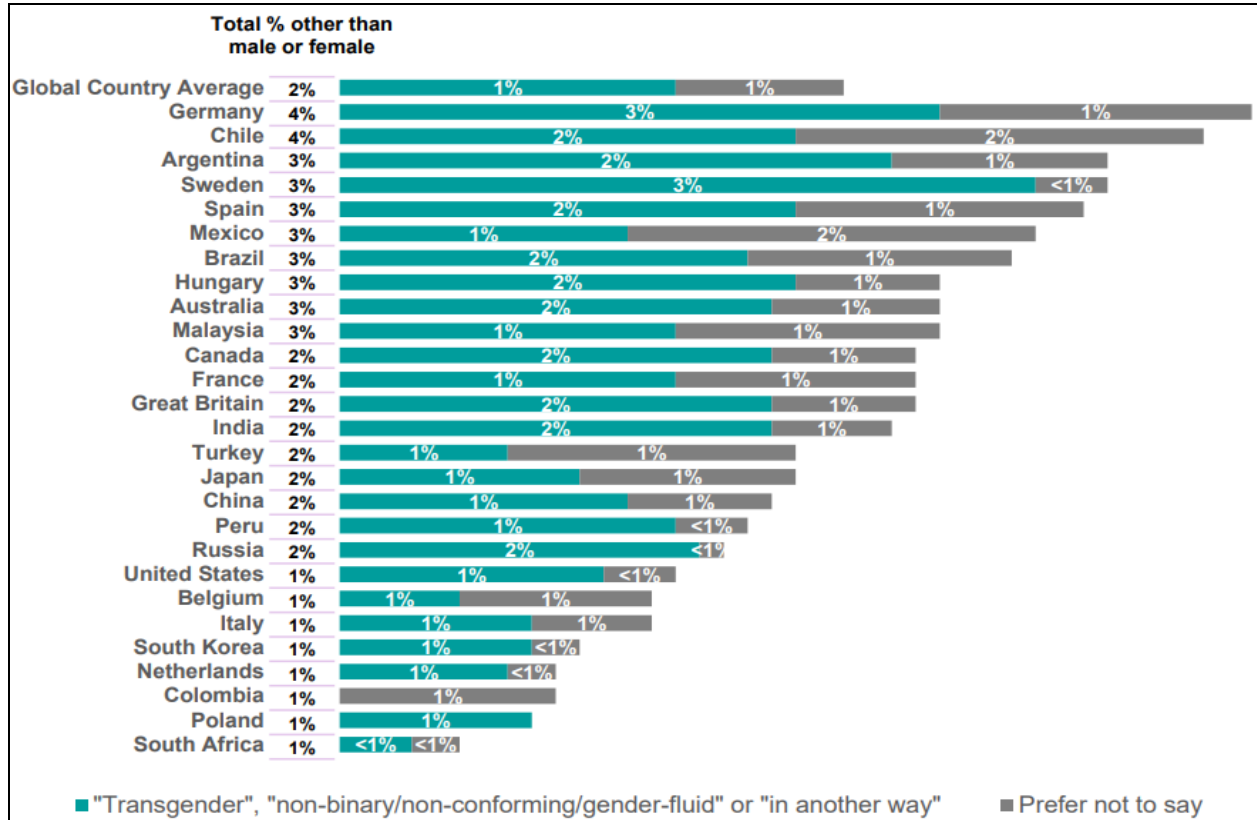


Figure 2 - SEXUAL ATTRACTION BY COUNTRY

Source for Figures 1,2 - Ipsos LGBT+ PRIDE 2021 GLOBAL SURVEY

### 01. Historical Review of LGBT+ Individuals

The preference or acceptance towards the community is sparse as they are perceived as different or going against the rules of the creator of the universe. Still, five years after the decriminalization of Section 377, society is largely heterosexual, and the male and female binary remains central to broader gender norms. The community and its relationships are seen as a source of sexual pleasure and, thus, an instrument of enjoyment. The Centre's stance on the ongoing same-sex marriage hearing in the Supreme Court is a testament to this. However, Indian mythology and Hindu scriptures have different stories to tell about LGBTQIA+ persons.

Hindu sacred texts and scriptures are neutral, i.e., they do not differentiate between homosexuality and heterosexuality. The differences are between procreative sexual acts, like those within marriage, and non-procreative sexual acts, mainly for pleasure. Due to the lack of a Hindu authority, the beliefs and preferences towards LGBT+ individuals differ at various temples and ashrams. The Hindu American Front says that the Hindu culture never saw homosexuality as a crime; "... Hindus should accept them as fellow sojourners on the path to moksha" (HAF, 2022). The 'third sex' is referred to in the Vedas as individuals who do not have procreative sex but are not ostracized. They are recognized for having some divine/special powers. The Kama Sutra<sup>10</sup>, too, has mentioned taking pleasure in homosexuality/same-sex experiences (HRC, 2020).

Devdutt Pattanaik, the famous Indian mythologist, author, illustrator, and speaker, has written on the Queer themes in the Mahabharata<sup>11</sup>. He explains how we, as a society, have bowed down to Victorian morality and forgotten how to respect and accommodate third-gender and queer sexualities. Same-sex love (romance) has to be segregated from same-sex attraction (sexual), and the former has been an important and relevant theme throughout India's 4000 years of rich culture. Hinduism does not base itself on exclusion. It is based on karma; if one is supposed to be a particular identity, one will be one. The question would be whether this would be supported by society. One can either hate or love it, and this is a choice. The queer community in mythology is embodied by Shikhandi, which represents gays, lesbians, transgender people, bisexuals, etc. Our Hindu temples, sculptures, and cave paintings depict erotic portrayals of same-sex relationships. In the Puranas<sup>12</sup>, too, the Divine is considered gender fluid<sup>13</sup>. Lord Shiva transforms into an Ardhanarishwara (half-woman) to please the Goddess (Pattanaik, 2019). Therefore, the Indian society, which according to the 2011 Census, is 80% Hindu, valued and respected the LGBT+ community and worshipped them. The community members, especially gays and transgender people, held a unique and respectable position in the king's palaces.

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<sup>10</sup> Kama sutra or the 'Principles of Love', an ancient Indian text in Sanskrit that speaks on sexuality, eroticism and emotional fulfillment in life.

<sup>11</sup> Mahabharata is an ancient sanskrit Hindu epic, the other major epic on Hinduism is Ramayana.

<sup>12</sup> any of a class of Sanskrit sacred writings on Hindu mythology and folklore of varying date and origin, the most ancient of which dates from the 4th century AD (Oxford).

<sup>13</sup> Gender fluidity, as defined by the Harvard University, refers to the change witnessed in a person's gender identity/gender orientation over time.

Section 377 that criminalized homosexuality, stated, “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with [imprisonment for life], or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine.” It was brought into the Indian Penal Code in 1863 post-Britain's colonization of Indian states. It was adopted from their 1533 Buggery Act. This was a British imposition and an attempt to set standards for how a society should function and behave. There are more than 80 countries in the world which, to date, have stringent laws against homosexuality, and more than half of these countries were previously British colonies. The British felt there were no active laws against homosexuality, and the pre-existing laws did not punish such unnatural sex enough. They felt the need to re-educate these masses about the true ‘white’ virtues, which were the ideal values of the elite, and thus added these reforms.

Although Britain decriminalized homosexuality and did away with its law in 1975, homosexuals in colonized nations like India, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Singapore, Botswana, Kenya, Malaysia, Uganda, and many more, although independent, had to struggle for years to free themselves from this deeply criminal and crude law (HRW, 2008). Therefore, history suggests that heterosexuality was a ‘Western’ concept and an imposition, not homosexuality. India’s LGBT+ population’s post-Independence struggle by organizations like Aids Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (AIDS Anti-Discrimination Movement, ABVA), Naz Foundation, etc., led to the decriminalization of same-sex relationships in September 2018, with the SC striking down Section 377 from the IPC. Homosexuality was declassified as a mental illness by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973. It was removed entirely from the International Classification of Diseases and the World Health Organization as recently as 1992. Homosexuals were also targeted by the then-medical fraternity, including the WHO, for spreading HIV, along with sex workers, professional blood donors, and drug users (Aggarwal, 2018).

## **02. Significance of the Issue**

Due to the historical injustices, the imposition of a criminal penalty on these individuals, the rigid gender binary thinking, and the obsession to categorize a person into either of the two

genders assigned at birth, people identifying themselves with this community are largely ostracized by the larger society. Such exclusion results in cases of bullying, harassment, and abuse, both physically and mentally. As children model their family and society, children belonging to the LGBT+ community are in grave danger in schools. A 2019 UNESCO<sup>14</sup> and Sahodaran (a male sexual health project) research study focused on the bullying faced by students based on their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) showed that 60% faced physical harassment in middle and high schools, whereas 43% faced sexual harassment in primary schools. This negatively affected the mental and physical well-being of the students; 73% reduced social activities, 63% witnessed poor academic performance, and one-third indicated that this caused them to drop out (UNESCO, 2019). There is a dearth of Indian literature on the consequences on the mental, physical, and psychological health of LGBTQIA+ students. However, limited studies have pointed toward increased depression, dropouts, ostracization, and low confidence (UNESCO, 2019). Students lack the infrastructure and other redressal mechanisms to seek support. Over the years, many queer rights organizations have emerged, but these are not accessible to children as they are minors where the parents are the decision-makers. Schools also do not have proper counselors or programs to help the students navigate their sexuality, and the World Health Organization has identified LGBTQIA+ students as vulnerable groups prone to suicide (Mantri, 2021).

To mitigate the above concerns and ensure that LGBTQIA+ students are protected, have proper institutional support, and can complete their education, there is a requirement for sensitization programs and curriculum interventions which sensitize, educate, and inform students and school authorities. Over the years and post the striking down of 377 and the various Public Interest Litigations (PILs) filed in the courts by ABVA and Naz Foundation, studies have shown that the attitudes and preferences towards the LGBT+ population in India are improving. The 2014 World Values Survey data shows how India's acceptance of homosexuality has ranged from 0 to 30% from 1990 to 2014. A 2016 study by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) found that by the data collected from 19 states, 24% of young people approved of same-sex relationships, and almost six in ten youth still perceive homosexuality as wrong

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<sup>14</sup> The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, a specialized body of the UN, headquartered at Paris, uses education, science, culture, communication and information to foster mutual understanding and respect for our planet.

(Rukmini, 2018). Thus, there is still a long way to make this socially acceptable and protect LGBTQIA+ children from being ostracized and bullied.

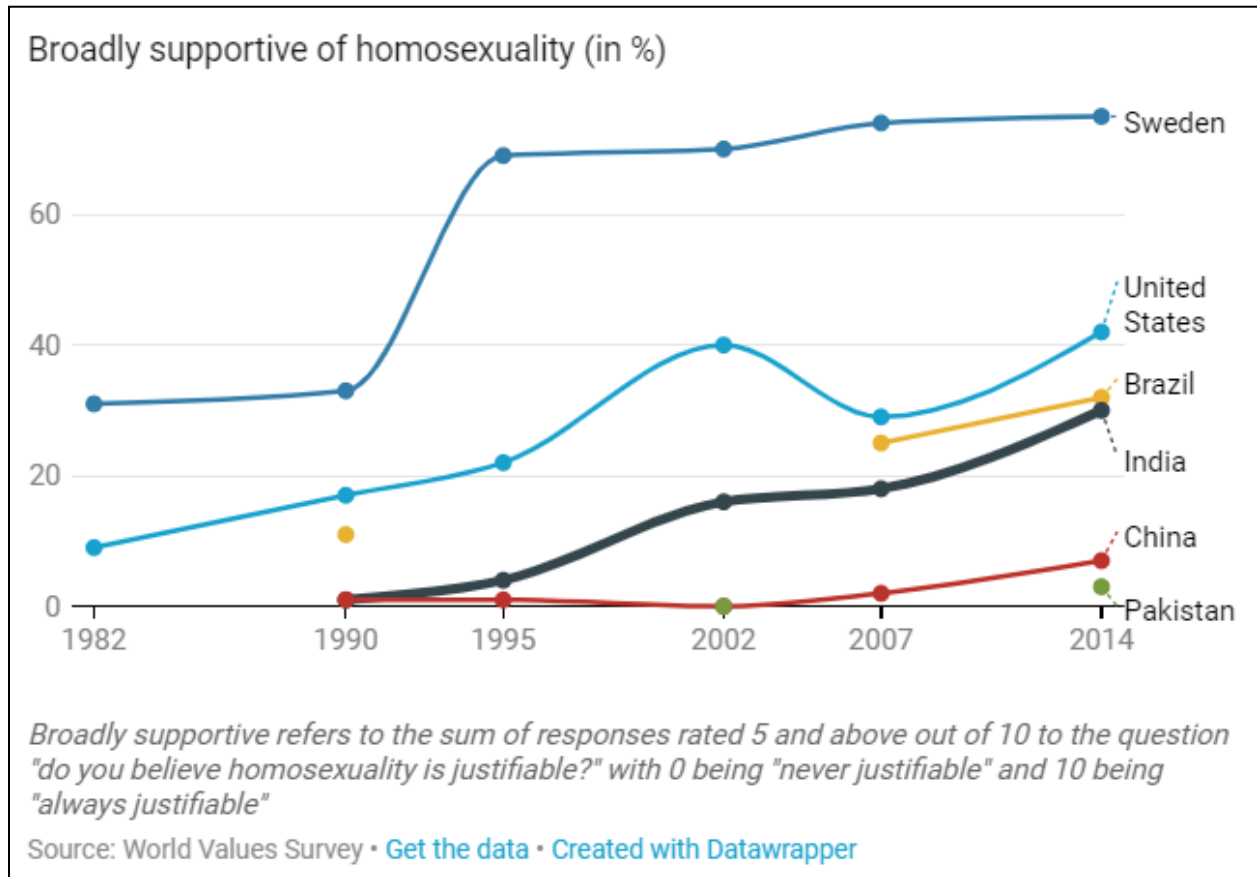


Figure 3 - Country-wise Support of Homosexuality (in %)

### 03. Views Against LGBTQIA+ Information Inclusion in Schools

Most society is against including information about LGBTQIA+ persons in schools and exposing their children to such sensitive information at a young age. Interviews with various stakeholders, like parents, teachers, etc., have highlighted that these are perceived as Western concepts, and the information is seen to have serious adverse effects on children's mindsets. The argument is that such exposure should be after the child has matured, and schools should not engage in such sexual/gender identity politics at such a tender age. It is argued that children, after



such education, necessarily start believing they also suffer from gender dysphoria<sup>15</sup>. Bullying and teasing are common on school premises. However, exposure to such Westernized concepts is imposing them on children and forcing them to belong/adhere to the community's rules, which goes against the child's rights. Allegations of homophobic and transphobic statements in schools are false. The portrayal of homosexual relationships in movies, photographs of a transman breastfeeding shown at sensitization programs at Tagore International School, and drag shows are all seen as LGBT propaganda by LGBT+ activists. Russia and its President Vladimir Putin are seen to be at the forefront of such opposing views and see gender identity politics as a 'borderline crime against humanity' (Bhattacharjee, 2021). Although there is no scientific basis or reasoning behind these arguments, this is, unfortunately, the more prominent societal belief.

#### **04. Overview of the Project**

Despite the opposing views on this topic, enough scientific evidence points toward the harmful impact of SOGI-related abuse and bullying on LGBT+ students in schools. The UNESCO study highlighted the bullying and harassment that occurs behind closed doors, the perpetrators of which are primarily peers (84% co-students and 58% seniors) and teachers (19% male teachers and 7% female teachers). School curricula and teacher training programs fail to educate and sensitize the stakeholders and indirectly encourage such behavior. Thus, this project aims to make a strong case for gender sensitization programs in schools. It examines the reasons behind this silence/ignorance about the larger LGBTQIA+ community in schools when content is readily available in the media and easily accessible and how this silence continues to persist even when the negative impacts on LGBTQIA+ children are broadly well-known and identified by authorities. The project would then explore if conducting gender sensitization programs in schools for students, teachers, and other staff members can be thought-provoking, informative, and behavior-altering and provide a powerful solution to mitigate the repercussions of SOGI-related abuse and violence on children.

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<sup>15</sup> a sense of unease that a person may have because of a mismatch between their biological sex and their gender identity (NHS UK)

## II. Literature Review

The literature on this topic is sparse in India because the LGBT+ community is taboo. As a result, this subject is not prioritized in schools or other educational institutions. Even sexual harassment or other institutional policies still speak in the gender binary. Recently, as the transgender community has become more visible because of their social media approach, we have government manuals, documents, policies, etc., mentioning third gender/transgender, or have initiated/encouraged using gender-neutral language. Nevertheless, these are overlooked or ignored in schools. This literature review will focus on four broad themes.

Literature Review Themes			
01	02	03	04
SOGI violence/abuse/harassment in schools	Impact on LGBTQIA+ students	Mechanisms to mitigate SOGI-related abuse	Lack of effective and adequate policies

### 01. SOGI violence/abuse/harassment in schools

LGBT+ children face bullying or abuse based on their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) everywhere in the world as the members are seen to vary from the set societal norms or standards. This disturbs the safety and security of the students and violates the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and children's right to education. LGBT persons in developing and developed nations face significantly higher levels of bullying and violence which have major psychological, academic, and social consequences.

UNESCO conducted a study in 2018 to understand the bullying, harassment, stigma, and discrimination based on students' SOGI in Tamil Nadu along with a Chennai-based community male sexual health organization, Sahodaran. This was the first proper study highlighting the nature and impact of the bullying inflicted upon LGBT+ students in India. This multi-site mixed methods study focused on 371 sexual/gender minority participants with an average age of 20-22 and documented the SOGI-related bullying in recent years. There were also focus group

discussions and interviews with students to understand the nature of bullying and a few key informant interviews. The results show that LGBT+ students face physical harassment highest in middle school (60%), followed by high school (50%) and primary school (27%). 43% suffered from sexual harassment in primary schools compared to 24% in high school and 14% in middle school. 31% faced verbal harassment in primary school, followed by 26% experiencing it in both middle and high schools. Physical harassment comprised students stealing their belongings, removing their clothes, kicking them, and locking them in rooms (presented in the order of highest frequency to low frequency). Sexual harassment included inappropriate touch, unwanted talks/comments about sex, threats to have sex, and sending porn images/clips. Reports of cybersocial harassment were less but were still prevalent. Co-students (84%) were the foremost perpetrators of bullying identified in the study, followed by seniors (58%) and male teachers (19%). 4% reported female teachers being the perpetrators. Bullying and violence were mostly practiced in classrooms, followed by school toilets and terraces. Only in 53% of the cases was action taken against bullying by the school authorities (UNESCO, 2018).

UNESCO research in other countries has shown the prevalence and scale of bullying and abuse on LGBT+ students. A 2021 policy paper titled “Don’t look away: No place for exclusion of LGBTI students” points to data from Europe which shows that 54% of the LGBT+ youth surveyed reported facing some form of bullying in school, whereas 83% were subjected to some negative remarks about their SOGI, gender expression or other sex characteristics. Data from China adds to this as 41% were subjected to negative comments, 35% faced verbal abuse, 22% faced social ostracism, and 6% were threatened physically. The figures are more significant in Japan, as 68% faced violence on school premises. 67% of LGBT+ youth faced discrimination in schools in Turkey. A 2017 study from New Zealand says that LGBT+ students were thrice more likely to get bullied than their non-LGBT+ peers. Almost half of the LGBT+ students in the United Kingdom (UK) faced bullying in secondary school. In a 2016 study in the United States of America (USA), 12.5% of LGBT youth reported feeling unsafe in school and thus not going to school, compared with 4.6% of heterosexual students. The European Union (EU) still witnesses significantly high levels of discrimination and harassment; a 2019 study points out that only 8% of the students are open about their SOGI, and 43% shared that they were teased,

insulted, threatened, and bullied because they belonged to the community. Most felt they were never supported in schools, and their cases were not addressed (UNESCO, 2021).

In Great Britain, 45% of LGBTI students and 64% of transgender students witnessed bullying because of their SOGI, according to a 2017 research from the University of Cambridge. Students who are questioning/unsure of their identity are equally at risk. The forms of bullying were mostly verbal (42%), followed by ostracism (24%) and intimidation (23%). Boys identifying with the LGBT community are more likely to be bullied than girls, and LGBT+ students with an additional disability are more likely to face violence/abuse. Schools are not welcoming of their identities as 33% reported that they were not allowed to use their preferred names, 58% reported not being able to use washrooms according to their preference, 67% could not use the changing room according to their preference and 20% could not use their preferred uniforms. Similar results were found in Canada in 2015, where more than 50% of students reported being bullied at least once, and 13% reported continuous bullying. One-third of the participants were physically threatened/injured, and more than 50% recalled being verbally abused. Cyberbullying is much more prevalent in LGBTI students, who are more likely to be injured or threatened by a weapon. School corridors, toilets, empty classrooms, dormitories, and grounds were the hotspots for school-related gender-based violence (UNESCO, 2020).

## **02. Impact on LGBT+ Students**

The more considerable impact of SOGI-related abuse and violence creates major barriers in the learning trajectory of the students. It hampers the child's right to a safe and secure school environment. Research has shown that such harassment seriously negatively affects students' psychological, physical, and mental health. It also hampers their academic performance and social behavior. UNESCO's 2018 Tamil Nadu study reported that when the students reported the incidents to the school authorities, 69% saw the authorities acting on their complaints. However, in 29% of the cases, the students were asked to change their mannerisms to avoid such acts of abuse, and 49% asked them to ignore the incident. Due to such a lackadaisical approach, only half the students reported resisting perpetrators' actions, 67% cried, and over one-fourth skipped classes to avoid the bullies. 60% reported suffering silently due to fear of ostracism. On the

academic front, 46% suffered from low academic performance, 70% faced a lack of concentration in studies, and 36% suffered from guilt and shame and avoided attending school. On the social side, 49% reported being ostracized, 53% reported being absent in classes as a coping mechanism, and 73% reported having fewer interactions with co-students. 63% reported physical injuries, and 70% reported anxiety and depression. Many participants revealed that negative school experiences were one of the main reasons for them to discontinue schooling. The absence of information about the community led to a lack of awareness of sexuality or gender issues among the school authorities. It hindered the institution's ability to address SOGI-related bullying. The focus group interviews also revealed that the school authorities did not perceive these students as victims and were more abusive towards them (UNESCO, 2018).

In the UK, 45% of LGBT+ students reported not informing anyone about the incident. One-third of the LGBT students in Thailand reported consulting their friends and fighting with their bullies. Most students prefer not speaking or taking action about it, and 22.8% said that they are sure that reporting would not help overcome bullies. These acts are generally normalized as no action is taken against them. Lack of trust and confidence in the authorities and the fear of victim blaming is the main reason for not addressing the issue. Data from the OECD<sup>16</sup> countries highlight that victims of bullying score 21 points lesser on reading performance in comparison to their non-bullied counterparts.

Furthermore, students who have been physically violated/abused score even lower. 19% of LGBT students in Great Britain feel unsafe on school premises, and 43% feel they cannot express themselves due to gender identity. They feel that they are not part of the school community. PISA results have also highlighted that students who are bullied and harassed frequently are more likely to feel sad and depressed and be less satisfied with themselves. 75% of the trans students in Britain reported inflicting self-harm, and 37% attempted suicide. A direct relationship was proved between bullying and absenteeism; 70% of the LGBT+ sample reported skipping school. Similar results were found in the USA. Most LGBT+ students in Thailand get used to such forms of bullying; some accept this as a form of a game between friends, while others get embarrassed, angry, disappointed, or vengeful. The student's mental health is always

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<sup>16</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

compromised with high levels of depression and anxiety, school absenteeism, extended reclusive behavior, and in some extreme cases, suicidal instincts (UNESCO, 2020).

### **03. Mechanisms to Mitigate SOGI-related Abuse**

In order to mitigate the harmful effects of SOGI-related violence on LGBT+ students in schools, it is imperative to focus on the various mediums through which such information can be administered formally by educational institutions. When the respondents were asked to give suggestions to address bullying in schools, 83% supported awareness and capacity-building workshops that focused on gender and sexuality in the 2018 Tamil Nadu study; 90% recommended that this be administered to the school authorities, 89% felt that students should also undergo such sensitization program and 88% suggested providing such support to parents as well. Almost four-fifths recommended having punitive measures against the bullies, and 86% emphasized the importance of providing appropriate sex education in schools. The respondents and key informant interviews also stressed including information on gender and sexual diversity in teacher training programs and workshops to understand the community better and demystify myths (UNESCO, 2018). A 2023 report titled “*Apnon ka bohot lagta hai* (Our own hurt the most)” highlighted the experiences of familial violence (including cases of violence and abuse in educational institutions) faced by queer and trans persons.; the closed-door public hearing for the report was organized by People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and the National Network of LBI Women and Trans Persons. The report recommended changes in laws and policies to provide emotional, social, and physical support along with mass sensitization of stakeholders like mental and physical health stakeholders, children welfare committees, parents, teachers, etc. (PUCL, 2023).

Gender sensitization programs for school staff, students, and administration, curricular interventions, policy or legislative changes, and sensitization through cultural programs or organizing talks/activities are some of the mechanisms by which institutions can be LGBT+ inclusive. Anti-bullying laws also have a significant positive effect in reducing victimization, mental health issues like depression and anxiety, and suicidal tendencies. Research from the USA reflects that students exposed to LGBT+ inclusive curriculum are less likely to feel unsafe

in schools because of their SOGI and are less likely to hear hostile or abusive language. Such mechanisms have proven to improve the acceptance of homosexuality and community members (UNESCO, 2021). Student-led clubs like gay-straight alliances, also known as gender sexuality alliances (GSAs), aim to create a safe and secure school environment for sexually and gender diverse students (SGD) or LGBT+ students. GSAs have grown over the years in schools in the USA. Their presence has been reported to have better health, a safe climate, and better health behaviors for LGBT students. Research has also supported that schools with GSAs witness lesser incidences of bullying of LGBT students and less homophobic, transphobic, and queerphobic environments (NCBI, 2018). The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention prescribes affirmative LGBTQ+ sexual health education to improve mental health and eliminate the stigma and likelihood of victimization. California students who formally imparted this information in schools reported fewer incidents of teasing and bullying (Bittker, 2022).

Gender sensitization programs through fruitful and interactive classroom discussions/interventions are more common in India. Gender Equity Movement in Schools (GEMS) was initiated in India in 2008 by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) to engage and communicate with adolescents about gender norms and gender-based violence. The program used a gender transformative approach and institutional settings to bring about a normative change. Evidence from Jharkhand showed that, in 2016, the program showed a significant positive shift in attitudes and thoughts towards gender-based violence in the intervention schools. There was also a decline in peer-based and corporal violence acceptance and improved relations between teachers and students. More cases were reported, and the officials and students had a stronger conviction to intervene (UNESCO, 2020). The Girl Rising 'Gender sensitization program' was conducted in the states of Punjab and Rajasthan. The quasi-experimental study reported that sensitization increased gender equality scores by 0.66 points which were significant at the 1% level. The program concluded that such gender sensitization programs could influence and mold their short and long-term beliefs and can help form gender attitudes during adolescence (Vyas et al., 2020). Another Indian study in Haryana attempted to reshape gender attitudes in adolescents through classroom-based interventions. These interventions were classroom discussions about various gender norms and gender equality, which went on for two years. The paper aimed to change the students' attitudes toward women's

and girls' future opportunities. The intervention changed the attitudes into gender equality-supporting attitudes by 0.18 standard deviations and decreased the regressive attitudes. The effects of the interventions persisted even two years after the program had ended, leading to an increase in gender equality self-reported behavior (Dhar et al., 2022). Thus, studies in India that have focused on altering adolescents' attitudes toward gender norms, gender equality, and gender-based violence (talking in the gender binary) highlight the significant and positive impacts of gender sensitization programs and classroom interventions/discussions. There is no literature on LGBT+ sensitization programs in schools/educational institutions and their impact on students in India, and the project also tries to bridge this gap.

#### **04. Lack of Effective and Adequate Policies**

This last theme focuses on the lack of suitable language in institutional policies seeking to mitigate this gender divide in schools and how teacher training manuals lack adequate information or impact for creating awareness and a safe environment.

Gender studies have been termed 'a critical marker of social transformation' by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). They are considered a critical organizing principle of school curriculums. NCERT's Department of Gender Studies (DGS) aims to work under the broad ambit of the NCERT and address the diversities of society. It focuses on a solid commitment to a gender-inclusive society and strives to eliminate gender biases. DGS was earlier named Department of Women's Studies but was changed post the 2014 Supreme Court Judgment of NALSA vs. Union of India, which identified transgender as the third gender. DGS's various functions include conducting sensitization programs for key educational stakeholders, including teachers, planners, administrators, etc., redesigning curriculum and educational programs to mitigate gender biases, the orientation of curriculum makers to the newly identified and defined gender values, inculcation of self-esteem and confidence in students irrespective of their gender, community mobilization, teacher training, and inputs and intervention strategies, networking and media communications, etc. (NCERT, 2023). However, DGS and NCERT fail to incorporate this notion of gender inclusivity and a broader definition of gender in teacher training manuals, curricula, various papers, etc. Words like 'transgender' or



'intersex' are used as tokenism in the initial sections of the various materials, and the rest speak in the gender binary, i.e., male and female or boys and girls. The manuals or various gender sensitization materials address women empowerment issues and stereotypes about roles/jobs of a specific gender very well and reiterate these with thought-provoking discussions and activities for children and educators. Another recent Gender Sensitization Booklet released by the National Commission for Women in 2020 mentions transgender and intersex persons only while discussing the definitions of sex and gender. The booklet then continues to talk about the social construction of gender, masculinity, gender stereotypes, etc., without mentioning the I and T of the community (NCW, 2020).

NCERT came out with its (draft) second teacher training manual for supporting transgender students in 2023 after the first manual, 'Inclusion of Transgender Children in School Education: Concerns and Roadmap' released in 2021, was forcefully withdrawn due to the complaints raised by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) about anomalies present in the manual. The draft titled 'Integrating Transgender Concerns in Schooling Processes' addresses some of the issues of bullying and the impact of transphobic and homophobic behavior on physical, mental, and psychological health while emphasizing the need for a transgender-inclusive environment at school (NCERT, 2023). Although this draft only focuses on transgender students, it is a step in the right direction in the academic space.

After reviewing the literature on this topic and understanding where our institutional frameworks lag in understanding the issues faced by LGBT+ students, the project aims to conduct an impact analysis of an LGBT+ school-based sensitization program through a comparative study. As echoed in the literature above, gender sensitization programs aimed at girl child and women empowerment are an impactful tool to mold the attitudes and thoughts of children. The project also tries to understand the reasons for the ignorance by various stakeholders in schools on LGBTQIA+ concepts through interviews. The following section mentions the methodology used in this project capstone.

### III. Methodology

This project follows a mixed methods approach, i.e., qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative component is captured by stakeholder interviews of teachers, parents, government bodies entrusted with child welfare, protection, and education, LGBTQIA+ activists, LGBTQ+ persons, etc., to understand their views and reasoning for the absence of content from the formal education space. These interviews are conducted either over the telephone or in person, and the project also draws on pre-existing interviews and comments on the topic available from secondary data sources.

After understanding the stakeholders' differing perspectives on the absence, the project aims to conduct a comparative study to check for the significance of school sensitization programs. This captures the quantitative component of the paper. Gender sensitization programs, here, are defined as programs that provide information to the students in school about gender, sex, and related concepts (inclusive of LGBTQIA+ individuals) in an attempt to correct misconceptions and alter stereotypical mindsets<sup>17</sup>. For this comparative analysis, the researcher has selected one school with a strong sensitization program for its students and poses specific questions to understand the depth and breadth of the student's knowledge of the LGBT+ community. The school selected is Tagore International School, Vasant Vihar, Delhi (TIS), which has had its student-led gender sensitization campaign called Breaking Barriers since 2013 (treatment group). These students' responses would be compared to students of similar schools, i.e., with similar demographic profiles, board, background, etc., but which do not have such sensitization campaigns as a part of the formal schooling processes (control group). This study took place through a questionnaire to capture students' awareness, acceptance, and attitudes toward the community and the family's awareness and acceptance. The project hypothesizes that students of schools that provide sensitization programs are more aware and sensitized in terms of their attitudes and acceptance of such individuals. They also have positive spillover effects on knowledge transfer on their family's attitudes and thoughts.

#### 01. About Tagore International School

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<sup>17</sup> Concepts covered in the Breaking Barriers Campaign are mentioned in the next sub-section.

Tagore International School is a private CBSE school based in Vasant Vihar, New Delhi, India, with classes for students from nursery to standard 12th. Its gender sensitization campaign, “Breaking Barriers,” was initiated in 2013 as a Human Rights Campaign. This program aims to sensitize students, faculty, and institutions about the LGBT+ population by *‘highlighting and addressing the prejudice against the members of this community through years of stereotyping and social conditioning by society’* (TIS, 2023). It aims to create a safe and secure environment for all students by encouraging students to accept and respect diversity and prevent bullying on the school premises. It is the pioneer school in organizing and conducting such a campaign at a time when speaking about the community is seen as taboo. These sensitization programs are regularly conducted and are compulsory for grades 9-12 and all the faculty and administrative staff in the school. The staff is advised and trained to use gender-neutral language in classrooms to foster an open and safe environment for all identities.

TIS identifies and trains volunteer students from grades 9th to 12th who are highly passionate and eager to learn and spread awareness about the LGBT+ community in educational and other institutions across the city. The team, led by (former head) Mrs. Vedica Saxena, later partnered with CREA and Naz Foundations for rigorous training sessions for peer educators. The campaign claims to have sensitized 3500 students across 30 different schools in Delhi and has been the only school to actively participate in the city’s Pride Parades<sup>18</sup> from 2013 onwards. Various organizations have invited the school to conduct its sensitization campaign. The topics covered in this gender sensitization campaign are as follows -

1. Basic definitions, such as - bisexual, gay, lesbian, and sexual orientation
2. Difference between sexual orientation and gender identity
3. Difference between sex and gender
4. The ‘genderbread’ person covers the various gender and sexual identities

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<sup>18</sup> These are outdoor events conducted to celebrate LGBTQIA + individuals, their rights and social acceptance for the community.

5. Difference between transgender and intersex
6. History of the LGBT+ Community, Section 377, NALSA judgment
7. Good and bad LGBT+ representation in movies
8. Inclusion activities that can be held in institutions

The questionnaire is designed keeping in mind the topics covered in the campaign.

## **02. Comparative Analysis through Questionnaire**

The questionnaire method tries to understand the impact of the gender sensitization program ‘Breaking Barriers’ on the students of TIS who have been exposed to a gender sensitization program along with a gender-inclusive environment compared to students who have not received such information through formal schooling. The students for this comparison have been selected from the 9th and 10th grades of private CBSE schools across metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Patna, etc., to keep the comparison accurate and assess the differences in the understanding of this marginalized population. The paper relies on snowball sampling to get responses for the control group.

Basic information like their gender, name of the school, presence of a gender sensitization program, attendance in the said program, and presence of a counselor in school is collected from the respondents, thus, making the questionnaire anonymous. The questionnaire covers four broad themes based on the concepts covered in the gender sensitization program at TIS.

- 1) Awareness
  - a) Definitions of LGBT+

- b) Usage and significance of pronouns
  - c) Understanding of heterosexuality and the gender binary
  - d) Understanding of gender identities and sexual orientation
  - e) Difference between sex and gender
- 2) Acceptance
- a) How accepting is the student toward an LGBT+ family member or acquaintance
  - b) How comfortable is the student around LGBT+ members
  - c) Student's opinions on transgenders and intersex persons having their own washrooms or seeing them in leadership positions
- 3) Attitudes
- a) How a student treats LGBT+ persons
  - b) Has the student engaged in bullying or name-calling
  - c) To what extent is the student aware of the person's pronouns
  - d) How accepting is the student of homophobic/transphobic behavior
- 4) Family's Awareness, Acceptance, and Attitudes
- a) To assess the spillover effects of the material passed on to the student in the gender sensitization program.

Details of the questions in each theme can be found in Annexure 2. All four themes rely on the students' self-reported behavior and information. The Likert scale is used in some questions in the sections. The hypothesis is that the students of TIS would be more aware and sensitive toward the community; they would be more accepting and understanding in both thoughts and actions, display correct answers, and such programs have positive spillover effects on their surroundings positively.

### **03. Stakeholder Interviews**

The stakeholder interviews form the project's qualitative component, complementing the questionnaire results by asking specific questions to stakeholders such as parents, teachers, LGBTQIA+ members, LGBT+ activists, government officials, etc. The questions posed to the various stakeholders are similar, but the stakeholders' positions and stances vary. These interviews aim to understand the different perspectives on the absence of this material and whether the stakeholders want such information to be a part of the formal schooling environment. The questions posed to different stakeholders can be found in Annexure 1.

The project covers interviews with two parents, two teachers, and two activists belonging to the community. Thus, the activists also provide the LGBT+ members' perspective. The project also takes views from two LGBT+ ex-students. Government officials were non-responsive and thus unavailable for the interview. The project, thus, relies on secondary data sources to highlight testimonials and media reports of different stakeholders (who were not available or responsive) on this topic. The vice president of the Breaking Barriers program, Jiya Chawla (class 11th), and the former head, Vedica Saxena, were also interviewed for this project to understand the school's vision. Most interview participants permitted to use their names, except for the ex-students and one parent, who would, thus, be anonymized. Other stakeholders in this environment influencing the decision are siblings, relatives, grandparents, school principals, religious leaders, political affiliations, etc. Nevertheless, for this project's scope, the emphasis is only on the immediate stakeholders like parents, teachers, activists, and LGBT+ persons.

## IV. Analysis and Discussions

This section focuses on the quantitative and qualitative components of the paper to check for the impact of the gender sensitization program ‘Breaking Barriers’ at TIS and also understand the stakeholders’ perspectives on the inclusion/exclusion of information about the LGBT+ community in schools. The impact analysis is done by conducting a comparative study between TIS students exposed to such sensitization and students from other schools with zero school exposure<sup>19</sup>.

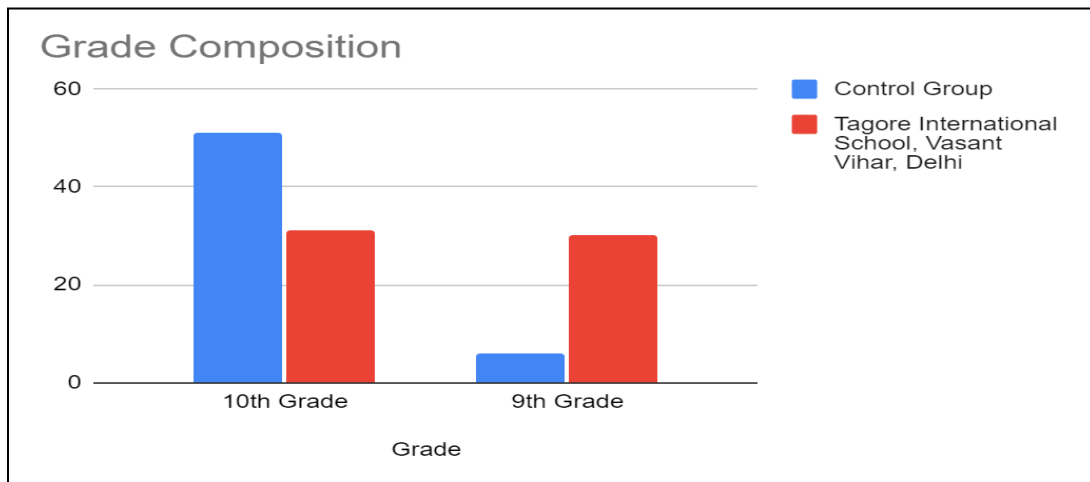
123 responses were collected through the questionnaire administered to students, of which 5 did not give consent for the questionnaire; thus, a total of 118 students consented from both groups, 61 from TIS, and 57 from other schools. The term ‘Other’ in the series reads as the students from schools other than TIS where students do not get exposure to gender sensitization programs (GSP), i.e., the control group. From the TIS group, 30 9th-grade and 31 10th-grade students responded, whereas the composition for the control group was not so even, with 6 students from grade 9th and 51 students from grade 10th due to snowball sampling. The gender composition of the sample can be seen in Graph 2. We have a few students from the control group identifying as transgender, other, or gender non-conforming, apart from the male and female options. This shows that diverse gender identities also exist in control schools, and students identify as non-binary or gender non-conforming.

91.8% of the TIS students report having GSP, whereas 36.8% of the students from the control group also report having such programs. This is despite students being selected explicitly from schools that fulfill the criteria of no GSPs. Although the question defines GSPs as a “*program that contains information about gender orientation and sexual identity, use of pronouns, vulnerable genders, LGBT+ population, abuse and harassment against them, safe spaces,*” students could have misunderstood what exactly comes under a GSP and responded ‘yes’ as they may have had some session close to this topic, like sex education. 75.4% of TIS students reported attending GSPs, and 18% said they have not attended, even though Breaking

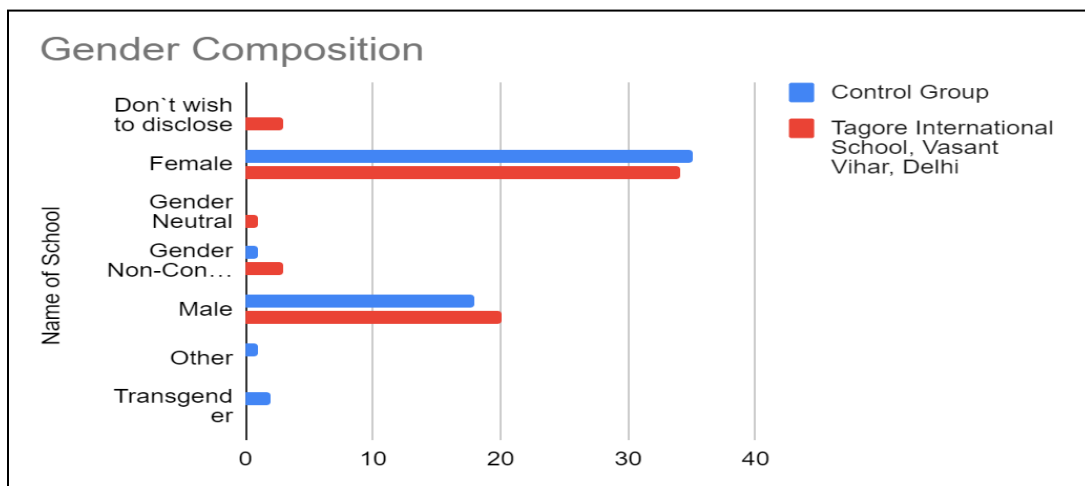
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<sup>19</sup> Exposure through other means like internet, news, social media, etc cannot be controlled for. The comparison was strictly based on school exposure.

Barriers is compulsory for grades 9th to 12th and happens throughout the year. 28% of the control group also reported attendance for GSPs. Due to the lack of any follow-up mechanism in questionnaires, clarity or interpretation of a plausibly incorrect response is not possible. 91.8% of TIS students said they have a student/mental health counselor, compared to 71.9% of students in the control group. The presence and awareness of a counselor are of utmost importance, not only for LGBT+ students but for all students.

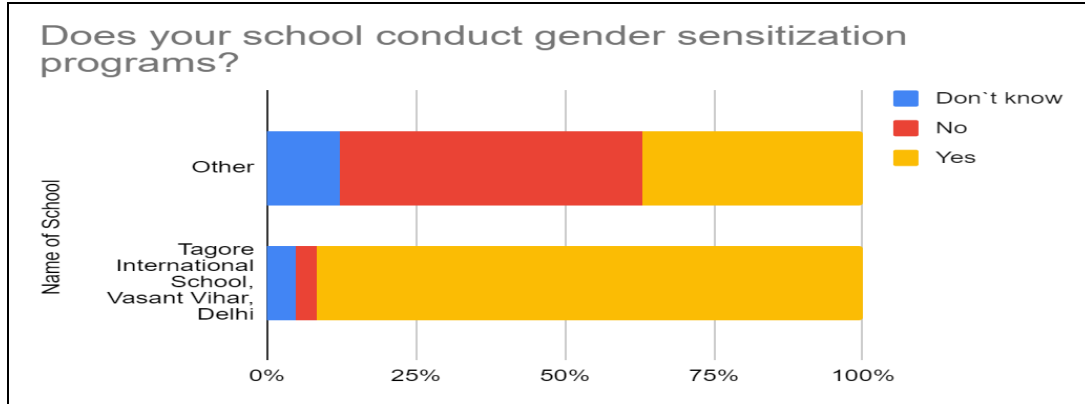


Graph 1

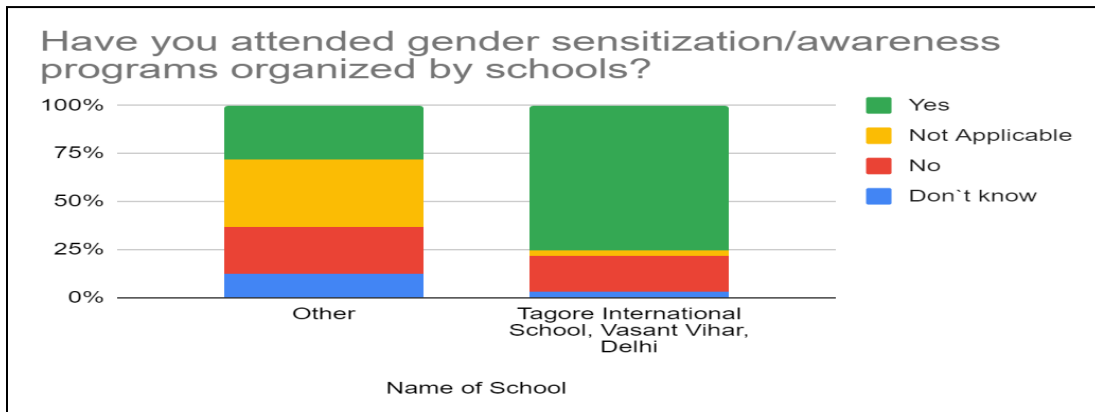


Graph 2

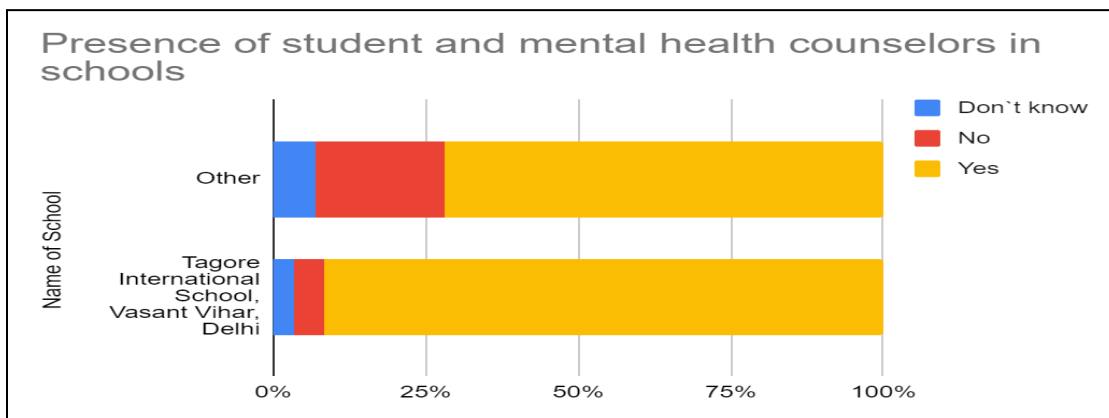




Graph 3



Graph 4



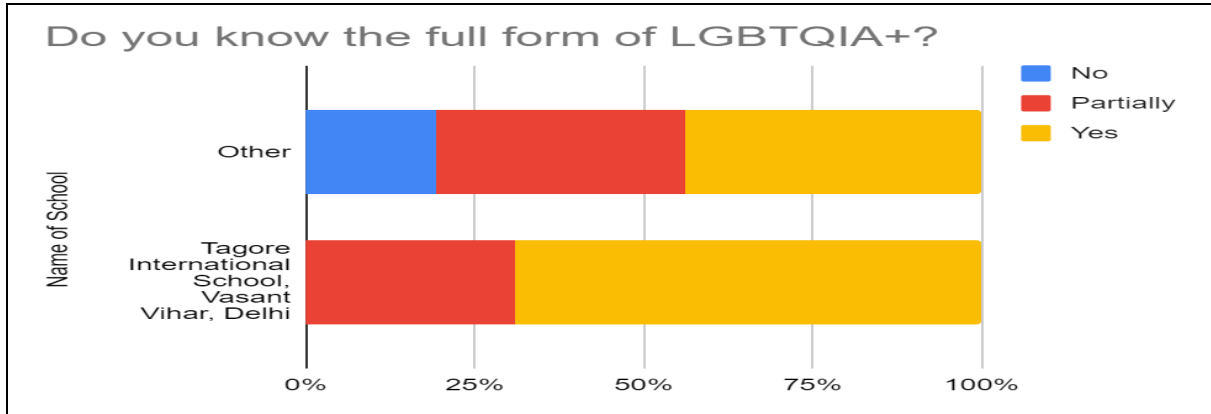
Graph 5

The study is divided into four major categories: Awareness, Acceptance, Attitudes, and Effect on Parents. All four sections rely on the student's self-reported responses, and as the questionnaire links were sent to the students, there was no scope for follow-ups. Thus, the responses can be subject to multiple interpretations. All four sections are supplemented by stakeholder interviews based on the themes, and the fifth section focuses strictly on stakeholder views through the interviews conducted and secondary sources.

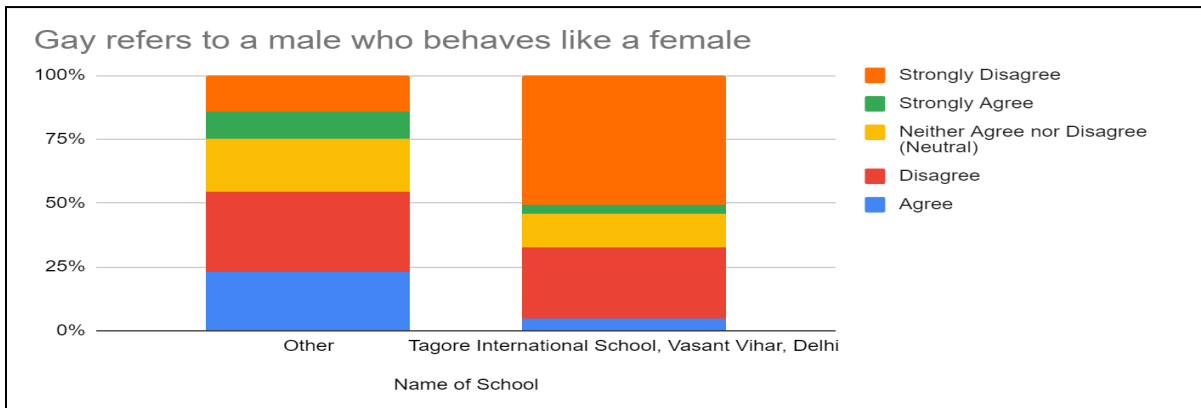
## **01. Awareness**

The Oxford Dictionary defines awareness as *'knowing that something exists and is important.'* Questions in this category aim to understand how much students know about LGBTQIA+ persons. Spreading awareness and educating the youth about the community is one of the aims of GSPs. The section contains questions that are more or less facts about the community and thus aims to measure students' knowledge or how much the student perceives he/she/they know.

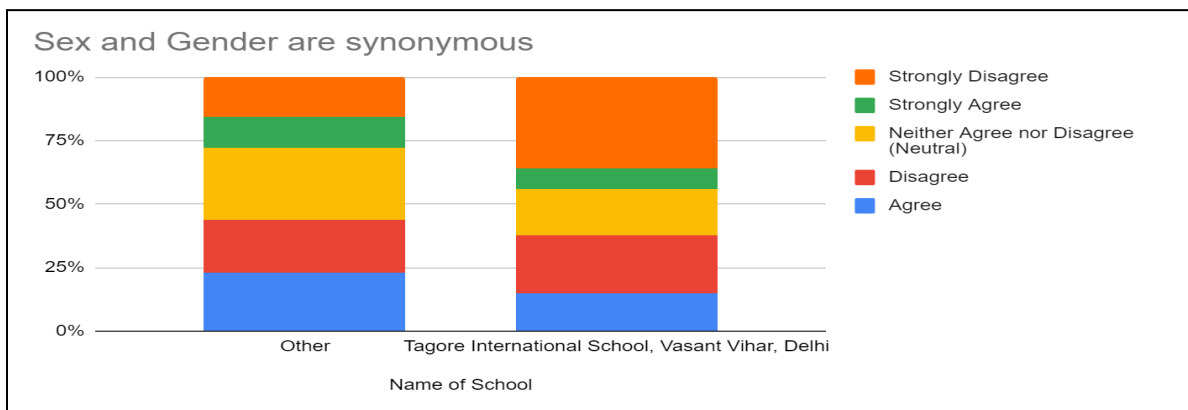
68.9% of TIS students reported that they completely know the full form of LGBTQIA+, compared to 43.9% of control school students. One-fifth of the control group did not know the full form. When asked if a gay person is a male who behaves like a female with respect to dressing sense, mannerisms, likes, dislikes, etc., three-fourths of the TIS students disagreed with the statement compared to less than half of the control group. Close to 30% of the students in the control group agreed with this statement. More than half of the treatment group agreed that sex and gender are not synonymous, compared to 36% of the control group. Both groups disagreed with the statement that there are only 2 genders; however, the treatment group had more 'strongly disagree' responses, 56% of TIS compared to 40% of the control group. More than 80% of TIS students disagreed that there could only be heterosexual romantic relationships, compared with 60% of the control group, with 20% agreeing. Around 23% of the control group agreed that homosexual relationships are unnatural, with 26.3% giving neutral answers. More than 75% of TIS students acknowledged that they/them is a pronoun compared to 43% of control group students.



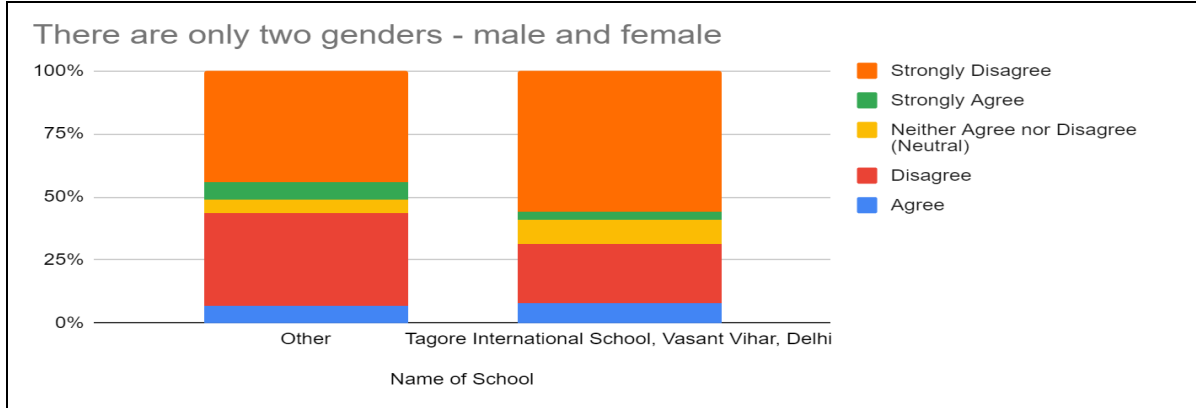
Graph 6



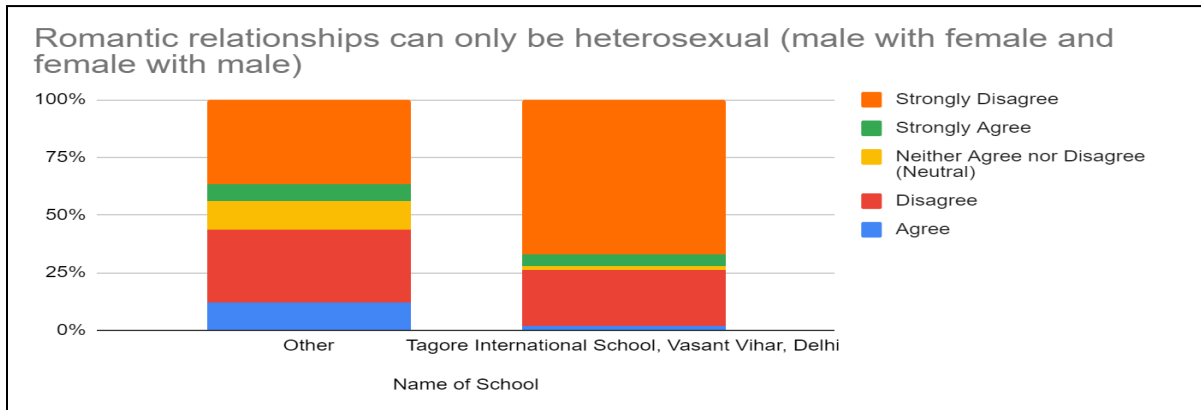
Graph 7



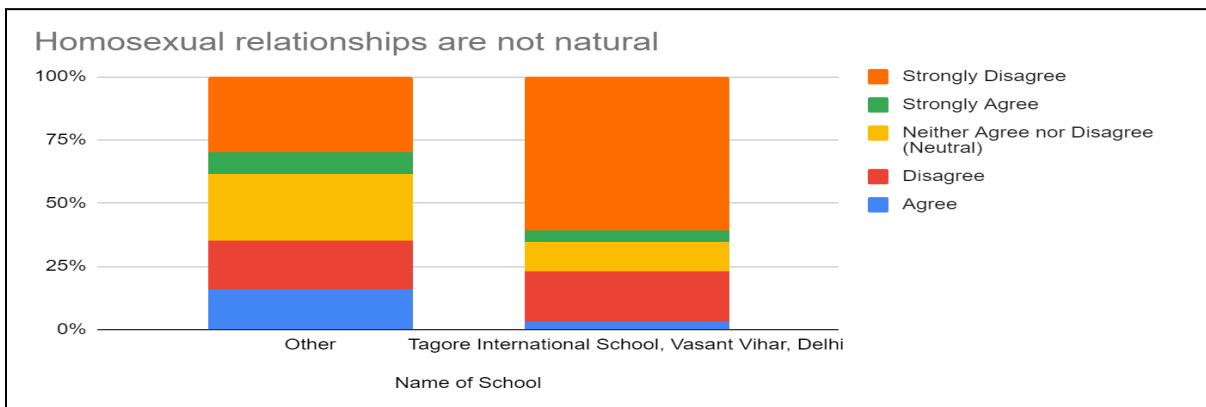
Graph 8



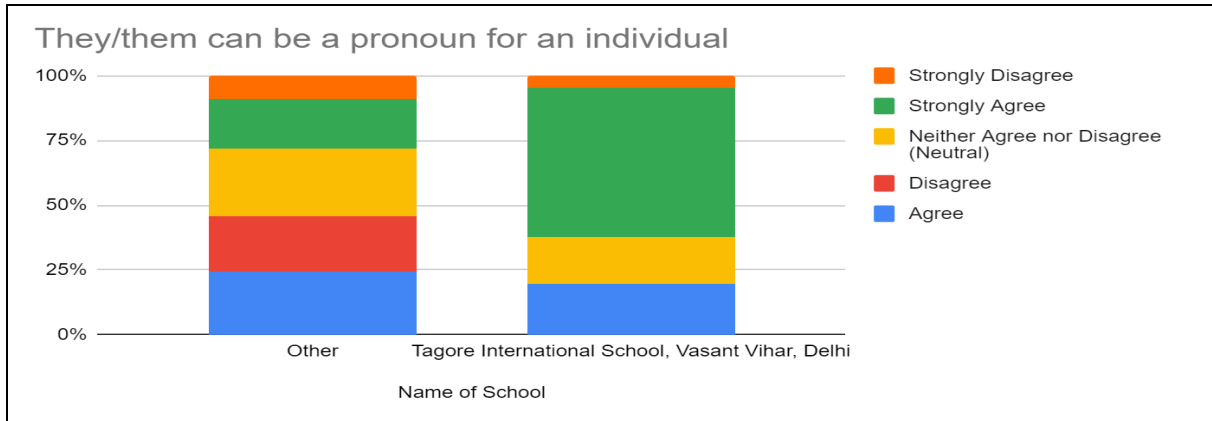
Graph 9



Graph 10



Graph 11



Graph 12

From the results, one can conclude that according to the students' self-reported information on the topic, the students from TIS are more aware and knowledgeable about the community. Close to 70% use and understand the significance of pronouns, compared to about 52% of the control group students. 69% of TIS students know Section 377 of the IPC and understand its implications on the community members compared to 33% of the control students. They also report watching movies and TV shows portraying LGBT+ people and same-sex relationships (88% versus 60% of the control group). Graphs of other questions can be found in Annexure 3.

A possible explanation for the differences in the responses can be the language used in the questionnaire. LGBTQIA+, homosexuality, pronouns, sexual identity, gender orientation, etc., are common parlance for people who are used to talking/listening/working on the topic. Such an issue might arise in schools where students have no exposure to such concepts. Another possibility is that students have different terms for the topics, which brings linguistic and cultural diversity into the picture. Due to a lack of follow-ups and help from authorities during the process, the students would not have support to understand the questions properly.

However, even without such instructions, students from other schools have performed at par with TIS students in some questions; an explanation for this could be that students can access external sources like social media and the internet through their mobile phones, laptops, etc., to

get information. If, presumably, students have such exposure to the community through their own devices, why is it not included in schools? Interviews with teachers belonging to schools that do not have information about the community gave some interesting insights into this question.

“All the stakeholders in the education system know that children have access to information, and if children have access to such discreet information, it is not necessarily the right information. However, they are limited by their administrative constraints. The schools that have included them in the curriculum (TIS) are probably not orthodox or traditional in their approach. These are schools that are themselves brave in their perspective and outlook. These are not the kind of schools depending on any kind of parental help or support, and TIS has a clientele that is in itself very modern and up-to-date with what is happening in society. Whereas in most schools, the clientele is not such. Some parents would be okay with this instruction, but many families could/would oppose it. So the schools have to ultimately towards the end cater to the clientele, and many schools, i.e., the management, do not believe in going against what the clientele wants because that would mean ruffling things the wrong way. To settle then would require not only funds but also a lot of time and attention. So that could be one reason why it is not done in an open way in schools even though students have information.”

- Akshika Vyas (English Teacher - Ramjas International School, Delhi)

“Because of the vast exposure of social media, everybody has seen everything. The younger people have also seen everything they are not supposed to be watching because practically the gadgets have gone into their hands. Parents also know that their students have access to all kinds of things which they won't approve of. There are good movies too available on this. So the children get aware. Thus, education for the same should be introduced in schools; there is no harm. Until and unless it is brought into the curriculum in schools, it will not go to every home also. As of now, I would definitely face challenges if I think of including such content in the teaching structure. I am a part of the missionary school. I have never really spoken about this to them, so I do not know how they would react. Nevertheless, right now, in the kind of society we are in, I think I would face many challenges and problems from all sides.”

- Rachana Ayarekar (Social Studies Teacher - Kilbil St. Joseph`s High School, Nashik)

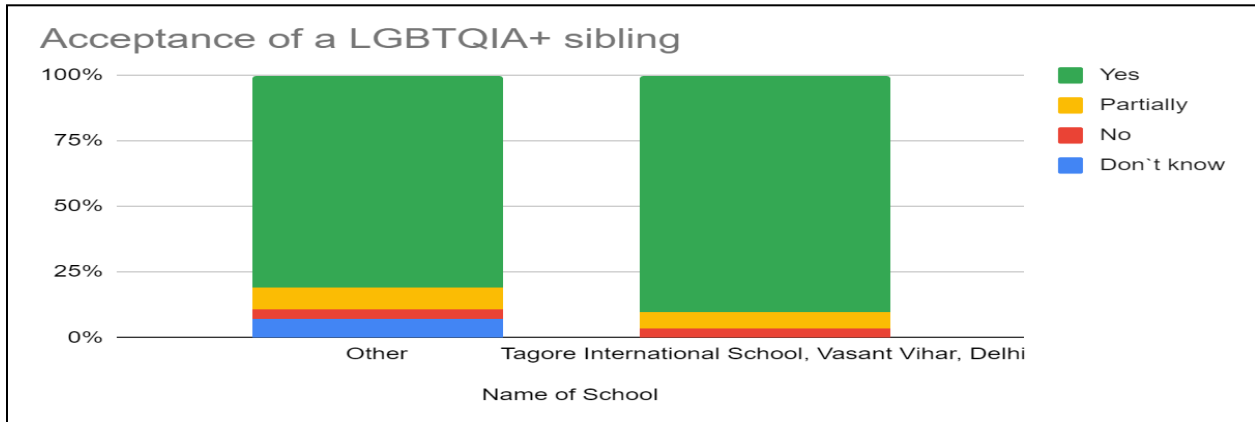
Thus, the clientele and society's perspectives are essential for including such information. School authorities and teachers acknowledge that students are curious, and these inquisitive minds try to get information from internet sources due to access to personal devices. Nevertheless, the school administration tries and controls the school instructions so that they can assure and comply with the parents` and other stakeholders` wishes.

## 02. Acceptance

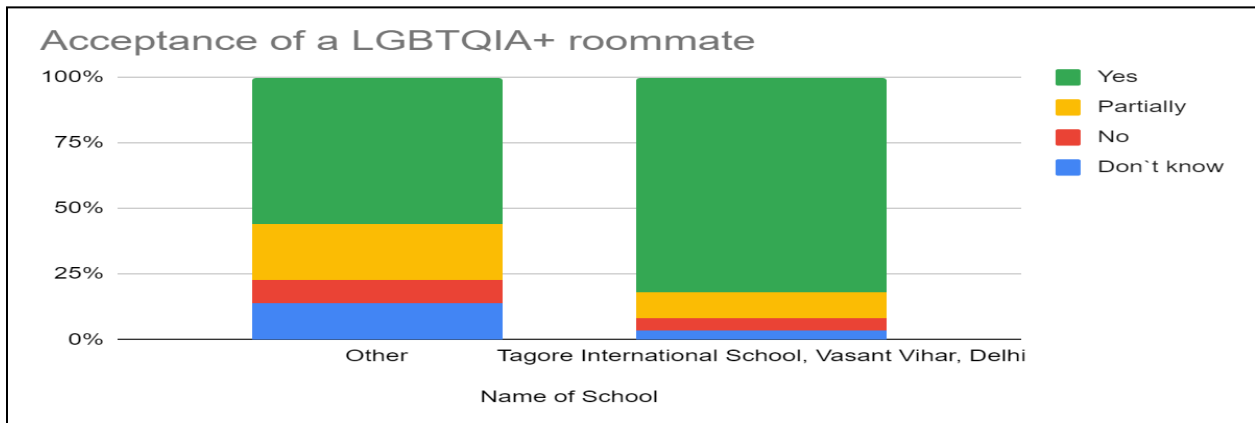
Acceptance is defined as “*the act of accepting a gift, an invitation, an offer*”; however, in this study, acceptance refers to **social acceptance**, which means that ‘*people are willing to include and accept the community in their informal groups and relationships*’ (DeWall et al., 2011). Questions in this section aim to check how the GSPs help students be more accepting of members of the LGBTQIA+ population and concepts like asexuality. Schools can build inclusive environments only when students accept the existence of LGBTQIA+ members and can, thus, help prevent bullying and harassment on the grounds of SOGI.

90% of TIS students report they would be supportive of their sibling coming out as gay/lesbian/bisexual/trans, compared to 80% of control group students. When asked about accepting an LGBTQIA+ roommate, 82% of TIS and 56% of control students said they would completely accept their roommate, followed by 21% of control group students saying they would just partially accept. 79% of TIS students said they would be okay having an LGBTQIA+ parent compared to 48% of the control group. 18% of the students in the control group and 9% of TIS reported they would not be okay with the parent. When asked if they would accept their child identifying as LGBTQIA+, 75% of TIS and 61% of control group students responded ‘yes,’ but many students responded ‘Don` t know.’ A possible interpretation can be that they do not want to think about such a situation or are unsure of their future responses. 74% of TIS students said they would be okay around a male who uses make-up and wears dresses, compared to 61% of the Other group. 90% of TIS students said they would be okay around a female who openly expresses her attraction towards other girls, versus 58% of the control group. This brings us to

the point that awareness of gay men is greater, compared to lesbian/gay women. In Bollywood portrayals as well, even in stereotypical portrayals, gay men are more visible in the mainstream. Research shows that boys who are feminine in their behavior or likes and dislikes are more likely to be teased or ridiculed (UNESCO, 2020). More than 50% of TIS students agreed that a person could be asexual compared to less than one-fourth of the control group.

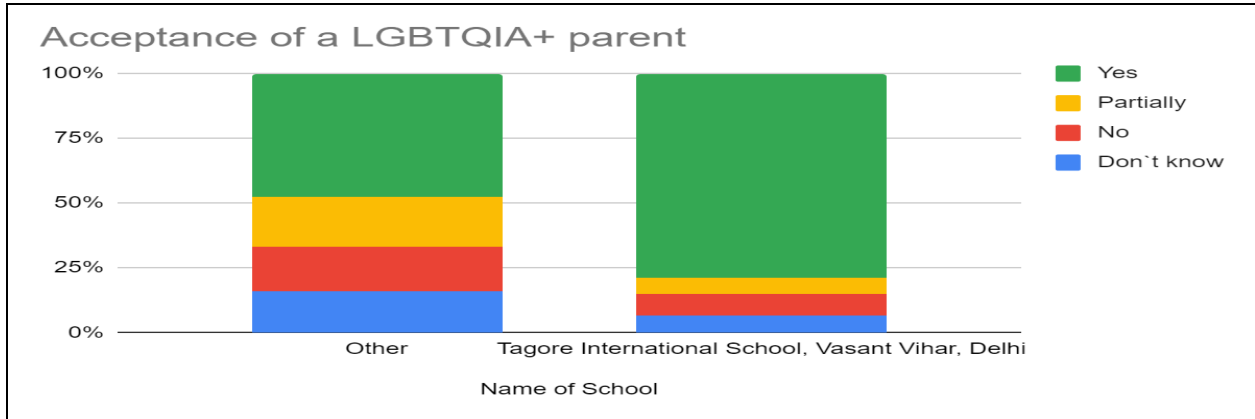


Graph 13

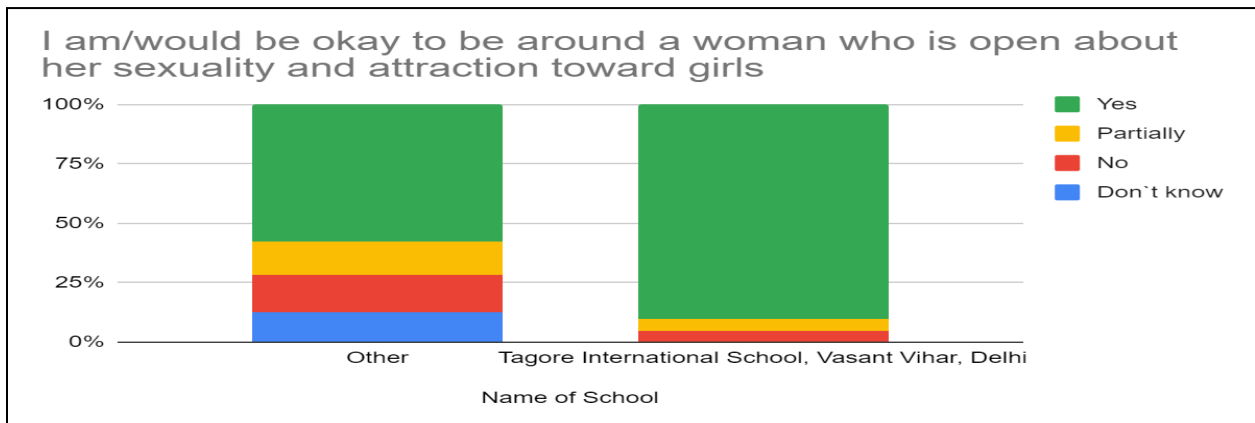


Graph 14

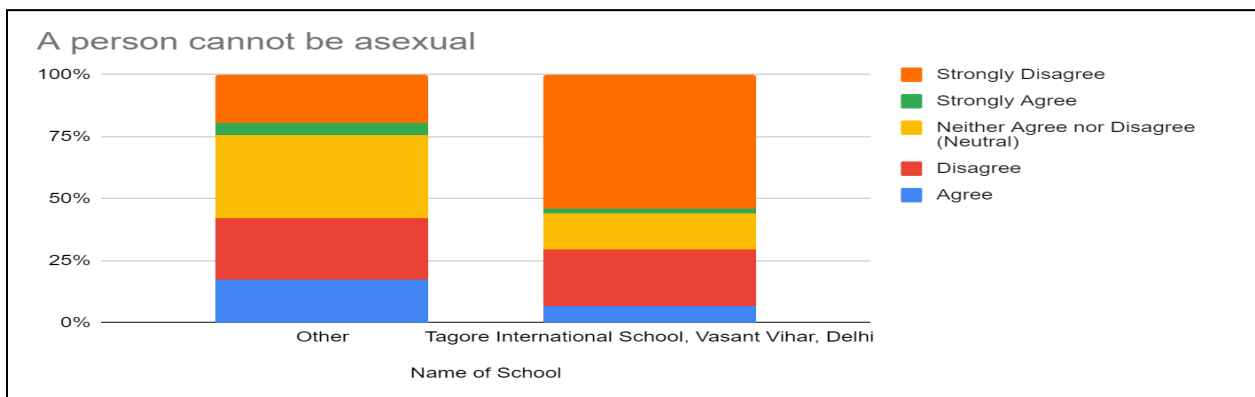




Graph 15

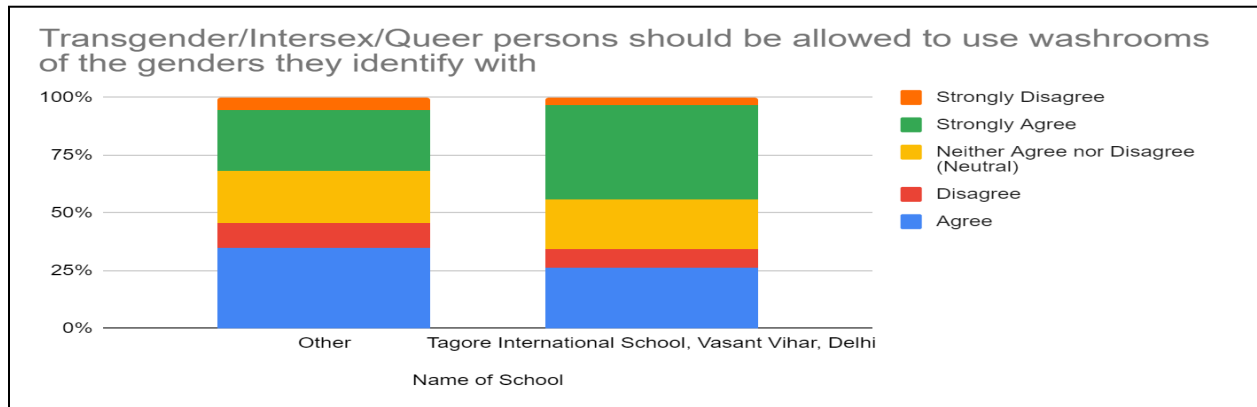


Graph 16

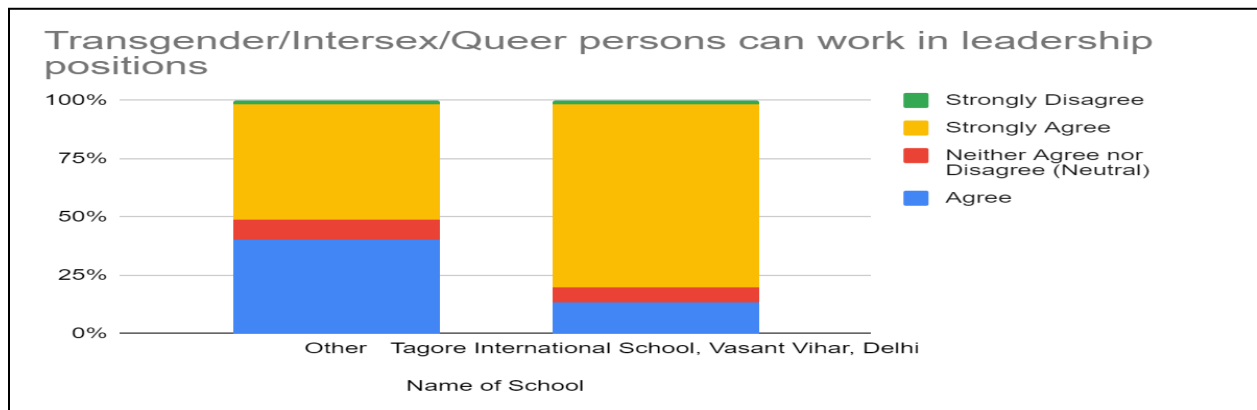


Graph 17

There were multiple questions on accepting transgender/intersex/queer persons. 35% of control group students said they feel somewhat uncomfortable around this population, compared to 25% of TIS students. 45% of TIS and 30% of control group students feel that transgenders/intersex/queer persons should be allowed to use washrooms of the genders they identify with, whereas 29% of TIS and 31% of Control students feel they should be provided with their separate washroom facilities. 92% of TIS and 89% of control students agree that transgenders/intersex/queer persons can work in leadership roles.



Graph 18



Graph 19

The responses gathered show no significant difference in the acceptance performance between the two groups. In some questions where again information is required, e.g., if a person

can be asexual, TIS students are more accepting and understanding. In the transgenders/intersex/queer questions, both groups perform equally well. This can be attributed to the increased visibility of the transgender population on social media, in movies, at traffic signals, in politics, in religious affiliations, etc. (Sarkar, 2022) (UNAIDS, 2023). Transgender popularity also increased with Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi becoming the Mahamandaleshwar, increasing the government's response to and support for the TG community. This also brings the political will into question for changing the schooling system as education comes in the Concurrent List, i.e., under the control of both the State and Central governments.

Political will can be defined as *“When a political actor is willing to commit precious time, energy, funds, and political capital to achieve change”* (UK Government, 2023). This becomes critical while talking about a highly tabooed and socially ostracized community. As explained by one of the parents interviewed (Mother and a DEI professional), “Something else that plays a key role in these issues [gender identity, sexual orientation, LGBTQIA+ community] getting prioritized is the political will and the politics behind this issue. When have we seen our political parties prioritizing or working for a community that has highly marginalized? Thus, for the absence to be mitigated, a strong political will is required, and I don't see this issue getting that any sooner.” With the increased visibility and popularity of the TG community, the government has also reciprocated with the introduction of policies/schemes like the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill and Garima Greh (Shelter Homes for Transgender Persons). A strong political will can translate to the introduction of policies for the marginalized population, which opens up a door for discussion. LGBTQIA+ activist, Sonal Giani elaborates on this plausible path.

“[...] the topic [LGBTQIA+] is largely anyways socially tabooed in India, and foremost thing is fear that there would be a backlash from not just families but also religious groups around the [educational] institution. That would bring us back to not really having any kind of legal protection, which leads to not holding any kind of sensitization programs. Right now, there is no political will; thus, the scope for including LGBTQIA+ content will be lesser. Nevertheless, this kind of government is very supportive of trans people, so that can be used as an entry point to continue the conversations. Somebody like Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi becoming the

Mahamandaleshwar, i.e., that kind of religious inroad changes many of the dynamics. It is a lot about optics as well. I think overall, the best strategy to push for something like this is having accountability mechanisms and using these manuals [TG NCERT manual] for students to push it into educational systems now because nobody, nor our institutions nor our govt, is holding them accountable. There are recommendations from the SC when 377 was read down, and some of the recommendations clearly state that there should be sensitization conducted through the central and state government, and the media needs to be reporting on this. So it is important that we focus on implementing such a recommendation, like what happened after that? I think many times we are not holding our own governments accountable.”

- Sonal Giani (Public Speaker, Independent Filmmaker, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Consultant at IPPF, Bisexual, LGBTQIA+ Activist)

“LGBTQI+ topics would take time, and the struggle should empower the community to work and stand up for themselves after centuries of struggle. The more the queer community comes out and claims its space and has a certain economic freedom, the more attention it will get, and the more the society will be forced to acknowledge the community members. Because now, even with women, there are reforms and policies for them because they are economically more independent with respect to their spending power, financial power, etc. Unfortunately, we are a society driven not by human rights but by economics. The heteronormative society has this sense of entitlement, what are the permissible limits to express queerness are decided by a heteronormative, mostly patriarchal society, and thus the community has to come to the forefront, be more visible, come together against the atrocities to get noticed, acknowledged and respected.”

- Onir (Indian director, editor, screenwriter, producer, Gay, LGBTQIA+ Activist)

The above snippets reflect upon the political will in question about the LGBTQIA+ community. Although the T of the community is more visible, that does not necessarily translate into affirmative policies for the entire group. Onir mentions that the community members will have to prove their financial and economic value to the government to be seen as a credible and

viable population to invest in terms of policies. Sonal Giani says that the popularity of the trans community can be used as a suitable entry point for sensitizing and educating the entire population.

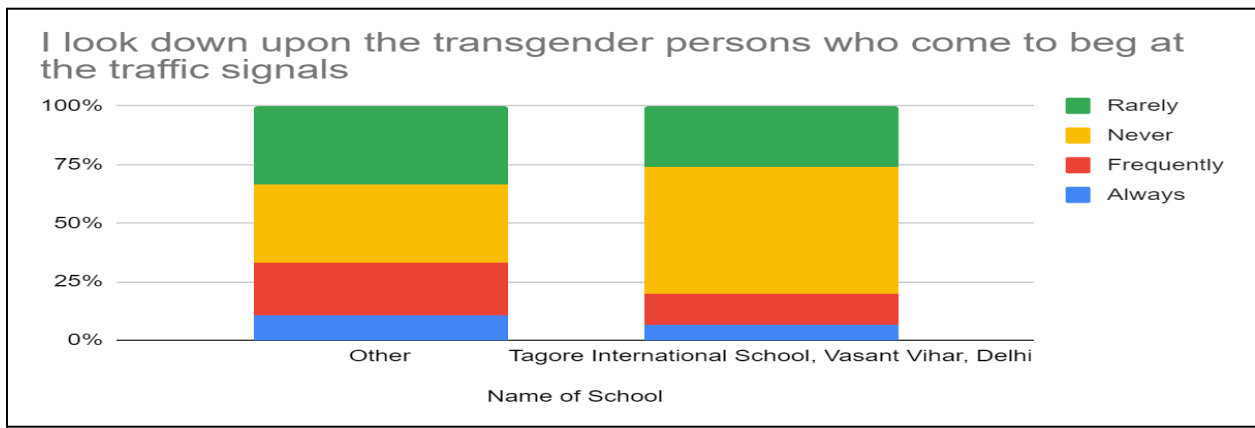
Coming back to the questionnaire, the TIS students also displayed non-accepting responses in some questions; e.g., one-fourth of the sample said that a person could not be asexual, 9% said they would not be okay with an LGBTQIA+ parent, or 5% said they would not be okay with an LGBTQIA+ roommate. These can have multiple plausible interpretations. One can be that the students have made an informed decision after getting the required knowledge from the GSP. Another explanation that can be derived is that giving information does not necessarily translate into positive attitudes, and other interventions are required to generate such responses. Alternatively, a third explanation could be that students simply picked an option without understanding the question, which is possible because of the nature and length of the questionnaire. These explanations do not have to be mutually exclusive. The lesser differences in the two groups' answers can also be attributed to social desirability bias while answering questions of this nature from both sides, making the responses highly unreliable. However, the scope of the questionnaire and the responses in this project is limited to self-reported answers.

### **03. Attitude**

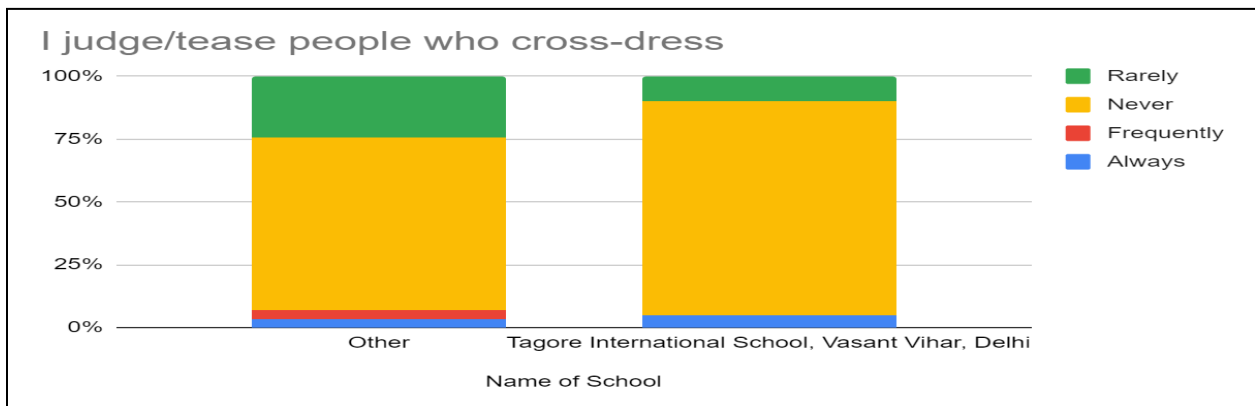
The Oxford Dictionary defines attitude as *'the way that you think and feel about someone or something.'* Attitudes translate into behavior, and molding one's attitudes after crossing a certain age group is difficult. Young minds can be molded as they are still learning and adapting to their surroundings. Thus GSPs have a critical role to play in their social and mental development on these concepts. This section will thus note the self-reported attitudinal questions of the respondents.

More than half of the TIS respondents say they have never looked down upon transgender persons who come to beg at the traffic signals compared to 33% of control group students; 23% of the control group report frequently doing this, and 11% of control group they always look down upon them. One-fourth of the control group respondents reported that they

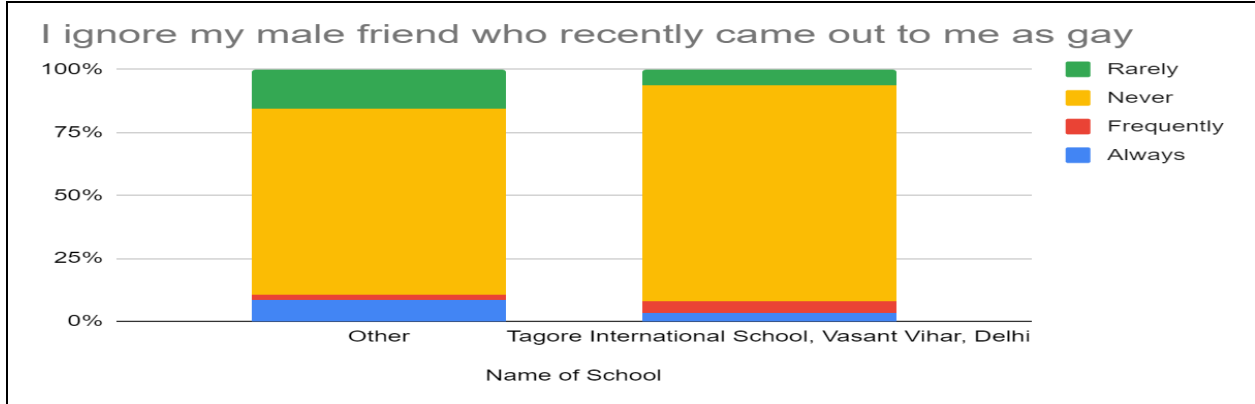
rarely judged people who cross-dress, compared to 10% of TIS. 9% of control group respondents report always ignoring their male friend who came out. 92% of TIS and 83% of the control respondents reported never bullying their classmates based on their SOGI. Almost 65% of the TIS students said they never assume anyone's pronouns compared to 28% of control group respondents, with 40% reporting that they assume pronouns. More than 60% of TIS respondents report calling out sexist/homophobic/transphobic behavior compared to 20% of control group students; more than 50% of the control group reported never calling out such behavior.



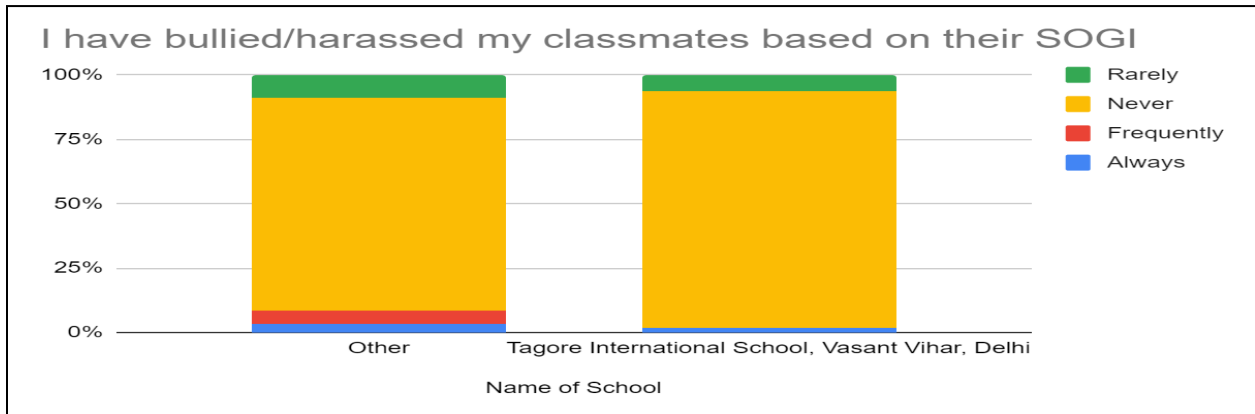
Graph 20



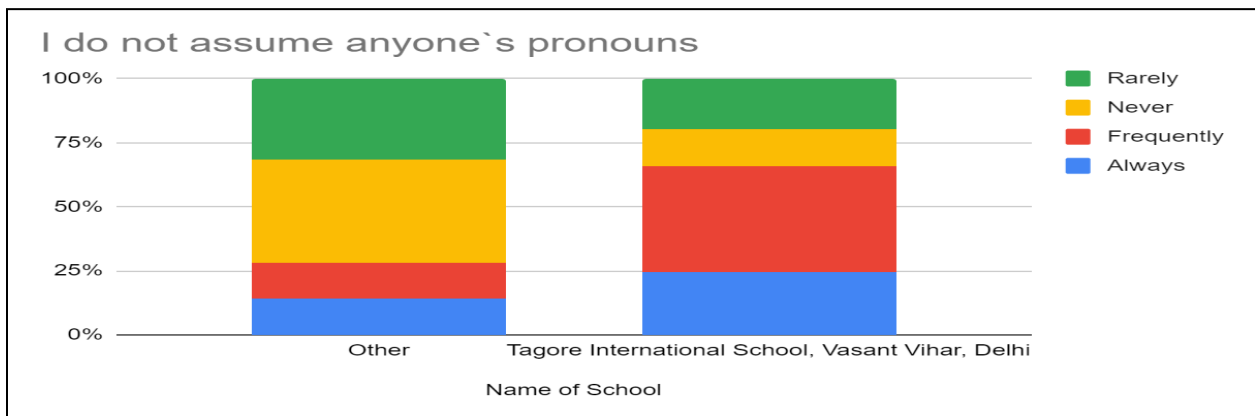
Graph 21



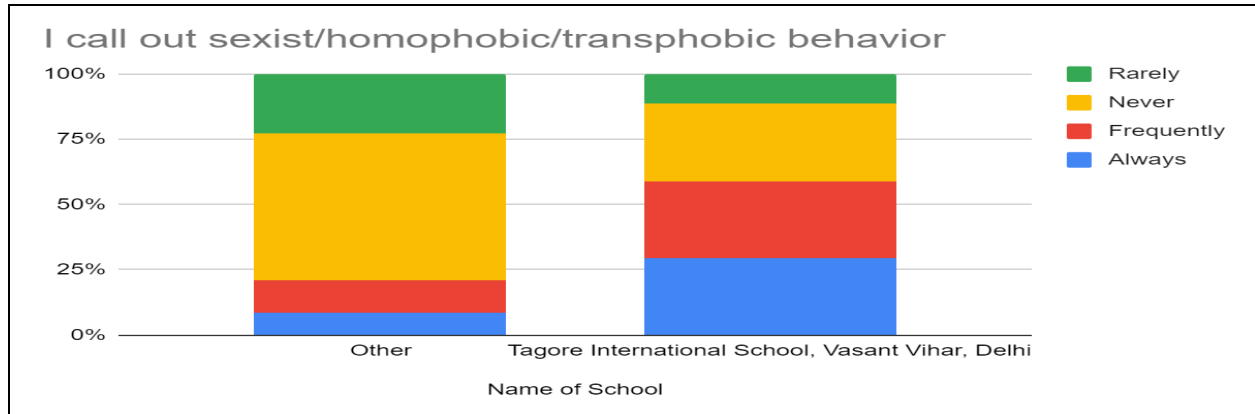
Graph 22



Graph 23



Graph 24



Graph 25

As with the Acceptance section, Attitude questions also report lesser differences between the two groups. Possible inferences can be that the control group respondents have a positive attitude as reported or are exhibiting socially desirable behavior in the answers. Another explanation is demand characteristic bias which means that the respondent, i.e., the student responds in a way they feel an ideal research participant would respond, i.e., respond to please/satisfy the researcher's demands. A third explanation can be that students in both groups selected a particular answer without reading the question. As the first couple of statements were affirmative/positive in nature, the responses were similar. However, the moment the nature of the statement becomes negative, e.g, 'I do not assume anyone's pronouns'/'I do not judge anyone based on their sexual orientation/gender identity', the differences in responses can be noted. TIS students report not assuming people's pronouns more than the control group students. More than 50% of TIS students also report not judging people based on their SOGI, compared to 35% of control students. Thus, one plausible inference can be that some students randomly selected responses and practiced speed runs while others diligently read and responded. In designing the questions for this section, the scale for responses was constant with no 'Don't know' option. This monotony in choice also could have influenced the responses received.

Jiya Chawla is the Vice President of the Breaking Barriers Campaign and gives some interesting insights into the kind of changes that she witnessed in her peers and faculty post the sensitization programs.



“Over the years, we have made sure that no teacher in our school uses any gender-biased language, and we sensitize teachers to always use gender-neutral language and gender-neutral books, and we have seen progress not only in teachers but also in students. We also have sensitization sessions with them and address all kinds of questions about this community that they had in the beginning, even the insensitive ones like - Are they only doing this because they are weird? Or the term queer was not a respectable term back then. So questions like if they are calling themselves queer, then they are disrespecting themselves, so why should we respect them? So there were many queries in the beginning, but now that we held many sensitization sessions and delved deep into every aspect of the community, we can see the doubts slowly fading away and people becoming more sensitive and knowledgeable about the issue. I have seen more of my own grade using gender-neutral language, respecting others` gender identity, and not assuming one`s gender.”

Vedica Saxena, the former head of this program at TIS, also echoed the same sentiments. She spoke about how their school faced smear campaigns in the initial years as TIS was going against society's values, and media reports blamed the school for brainwashing young minds. “But because of the support of the parents and the administration, and most importantly, it was the students who came up with the idea for this campaign, we were able to continue and maintain this legacy for so many years. We have seen our students develop a sensitive and non-discriminatory attitude, and we haven`t witnessed any bullying or harassment based on SOGI all these years. TIS also had a campaign called ‘Kick Start Equality,’ which focused on using gender-neutral textbooks, toys, and games for smaller kids to develop such a mindset right from childhood. This campaign was later subsumed under the Breaking Barriers campaign. As we are the pioneer school in running such a gender sensitization program, we have been called by various organizations, even corporate offices like Amazon, to sensitize the employees and develop an inclusive environment which has become of significant importance nowadays because of audits and ESG<sup>20</sup> reporting. I am happy to be an integral part of this transformed atmosphere.”

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<sup>20</sup> Environment, Social and Governance, a framework that helps stakeholders understand and monitor their company`s/organization`s activities, by observing how the organization is managing risks and opportunities pertaining to the ESG factors.

The interview snippets are strong evidence that the student's attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ persons are influenced by these positive reinforcements at schools like TIS.

#### **04. Effect on Parents**

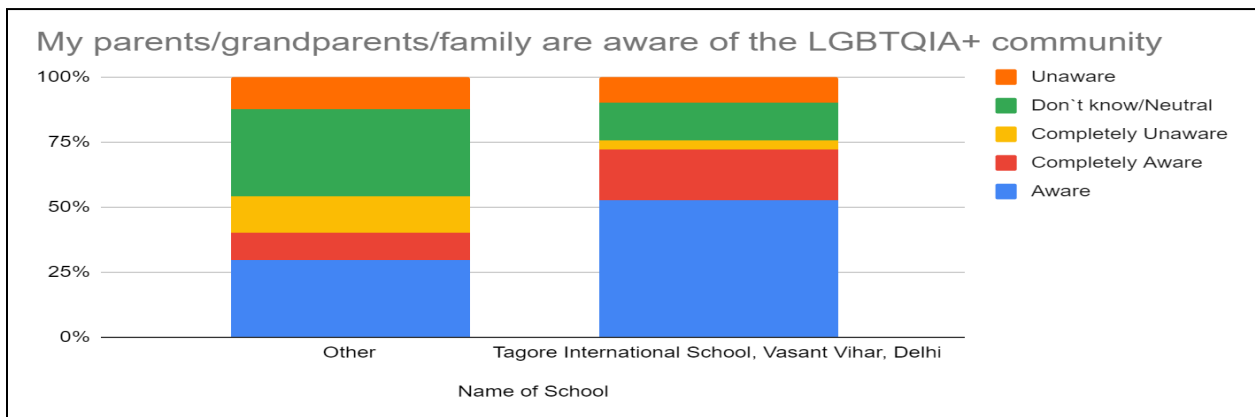
This section aimed to check for the spillover effects of the GSP on the student's family. Research from the University of Tokyo found that energy environmental education programs in elementary and junior high schools positively increased the awareness of not only students but also the behavior of parents. The study reported that students' behavior and awareness significantly impacted and influenced the parents (Hiramatsu et al., 2014). TIS also helps and encourages their senior grade students to talk with their families to dispel myths and misconceptions about the LGBTQIA+ community and bring about awareness.

“[...]yes there were parents that were skeptical about their child learning about this community and maybe they thought that this was contagious at first, that if they learn about and spend time with these kinds of people, they are going to become a part of the community itself. So for that reason, we encouraged each student to watch movies (links were sent of select movies) and educational videos with their families to make sure that not only this generation but all other generations and equal and accepting. There was a movie recommended by the High Commission of Canada, ‘Sticks and Stones,’ which we all campaigners watched with our families or relations that were older than them and unaccepting. We had a tremendous response, and parents definitely improved their behavior and acceptance of the discrimination aspect of it. These kinds of short movies and sensitization sessions have ensured that there is no bullying on any student and equal opportunities are given at every turn.”

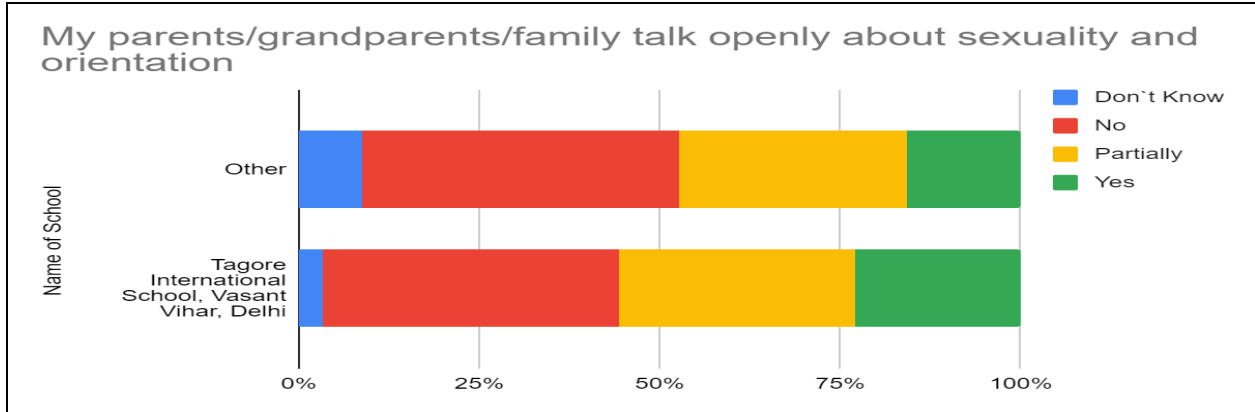
- Jiya Chawla (Vice President ‘Breaking Barriers Campaign,’ 11th grade)

The questionnaire enquired about the parents/grandparents/family's awareness of, support for, attitudes toward, and opinions of the members. More than 70% of the TIS students reported that their families were aware of the LGBTQIA+ community compared to 30% of the control group respondents. 23% of TIS and 16% of the control students reported that their families talk

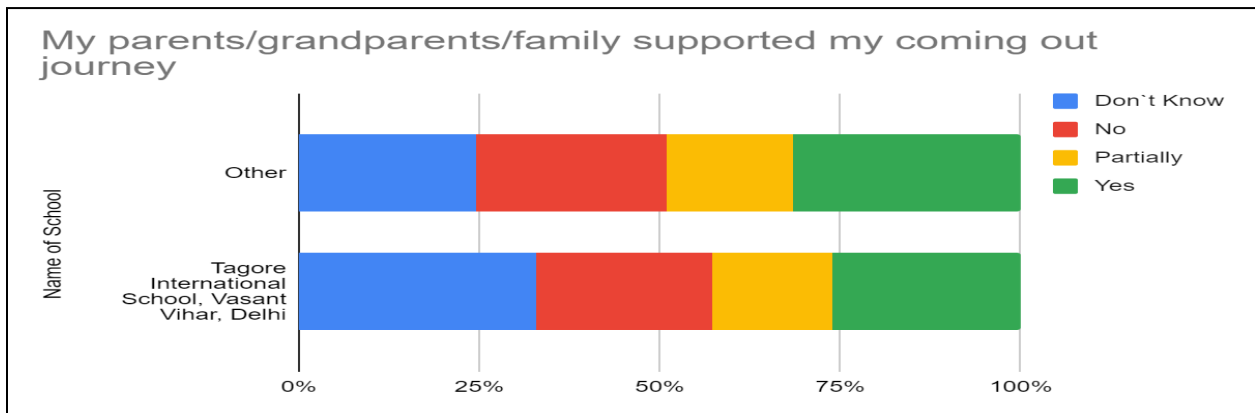
openly about sexuality and orientation, but the talks' direction (positive/negative) is unclear; 40% of both samples responded 'no' on the question of having open talks on sexuality and orientation. 26% and 32% of TIS and control group students, respectively, reported that their families supported their coming out journeys; close to one-fourths of both samples had negative responses. Close to half of TIS and 43% of control group students said their families were willing to learn about the community, fully or partially. 10 students from TIS said their families had teased people from the community, and 11 said they have engaged in teasing sometimes; this compared to 17 from the control group. 28% and 31% of TIS students have reported that their parents are completely and partially against same-sex marriages, respectively, compared to 40% and 14% from the control group. 24% and 14% of TIS and control group participants report hiding their true selves (sexuality/gender) in front of their families due to fear of abandonment. 46% of TIS families are aware of pride parades compared to 21% of control group students' families. As indicated by the Vice President, TIS students have also helped their families get aware of the community.



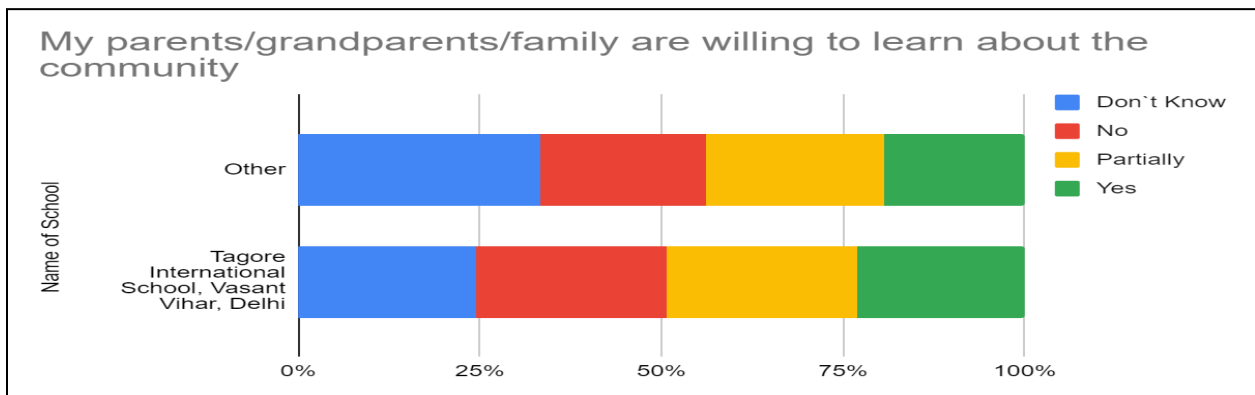
Graph 26



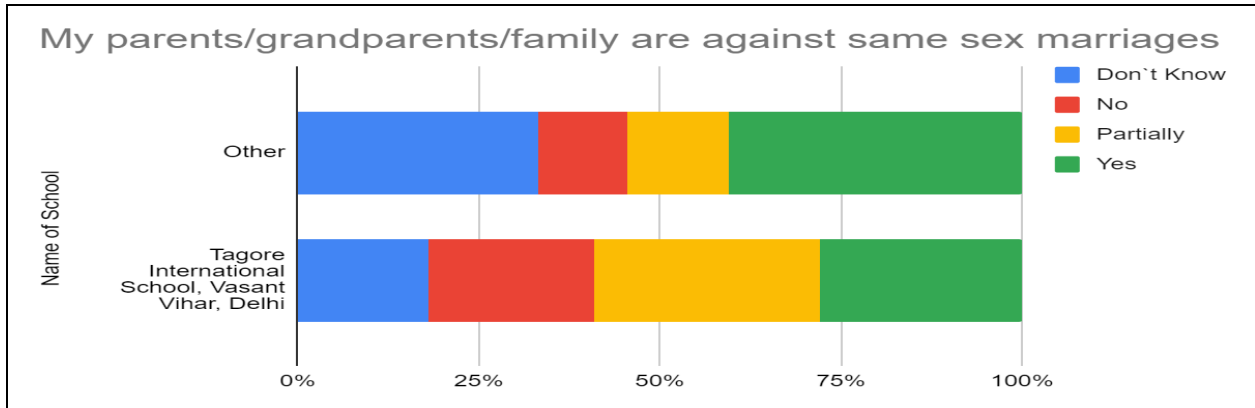
Graph 27



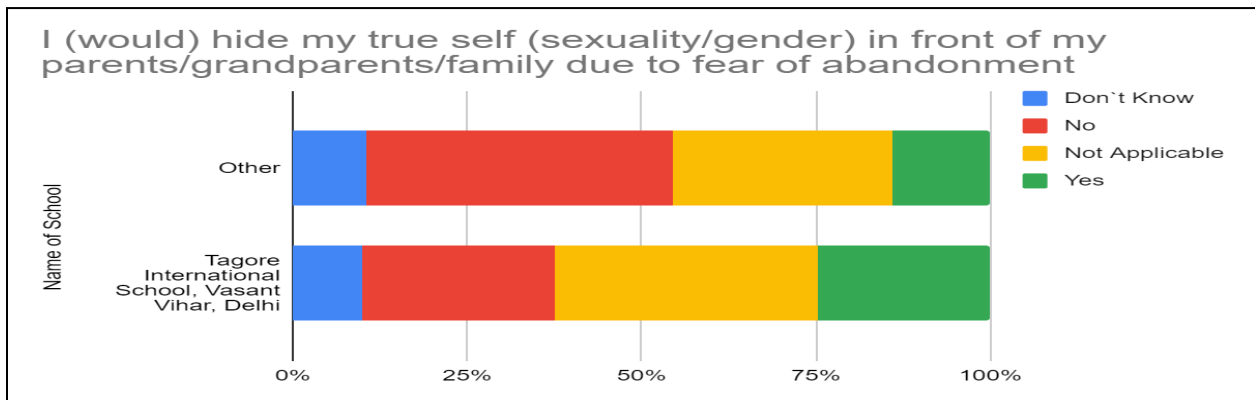
Graph 28



Graph 29



Graph 30



Graph 31

From the responses collected, the TIS students' families seem to be more knowledgeable about the community with respect to being aware of the community, knowing about pride parades, talking about sexuality and gender, etc. However, this has not influenced their attitudes (as the students report that some families are against same-sex marriages, tease people from the community, and some students hide their true selves in front of them due to fear of ostracism). The percentage of 'Don't know' responses skyrocketed in this section for both groups, possibly indicating that most students have not engaged in such talks with their families, do not want to engage, or simply do not know their responses. Thus, one can conclude that family awareness has increased due to the Breaking Barriers Campaign for some students. However, more research is required to test for acceptance, support, and attitude spillover effects. One can say that the

program is ineffective in this regard, but more research and in-depth study is required to point to that conclusion.

Srinivas Yanamandra, a compliance professional, regulatory researcher, fintech philosopher, and father of 2 daughters, spoke about how he got educated about the community. “My kids have got high school education abroad in China, and that was an American school, and there they are overexposed to this entire thing. This was the culture in schools abroad, but yes, in India, there is silence, but I don't think that there is radio silence. Now my kids are in an international school, and the culture has been the same there. There is no restriction on the information part, though it is not as openly spoken about as abroad. I learned about personal pronouns much more than the LGBTQIA+ community because of an incident at my children's school abroad. A student was sent a notice as they did not respect the personal pronouns of a fellow classmate who had asked to refer to them by a different pronoun. It was a blown-up issue as the parents of the student were agitated as they felt a young child could not understand these intricacies. But the school said that according to the policy, personal pronouns are to be respected. [...] As a parent, our duty is to talk to our kids and make them understand. At that time, I did a project with my daughter on - Is Gender a Biological phenomenon or a Psychological phenomenon. I also understood that it is not a binary thing. Understanding this was very complex, and I started reading more on this.”

Spillover effects on families and related communities is important as they have not been exposed to such concepts and perceive them as ‘foreign’. As a result, the lack of information and sensitization is reflected at a larger scale. Activist and Filmmaker, Onir believed that gender sensitization programs should be targeted at parent communities along with children. “I think more than actually teaching children, the first step is educating the parents. They are people who have grown up without any information or proper education about gender and sexuality because of the inherent homophobia in society, and it is not just homophobia; there is a huge reluctance in discussing anything to do with sex. [...] Giving information to parents is equally important as giving information to children, as we won't be able to reach the children till we have access and have convinced the parents. Unfortunately, our education system is such that without the parent's consent, the school cannot carry out certain activities. There have been several instances where

the parent communities forced the school to stop the events because that was not what they (parents) wanted. Thus due to these complexities, there needs to be a parallel effort for a dialogue with the students, but counseling the parents is also equally important. Although the child is empowered in schools, they need to be accepted in their families, in their societies as well, and that is where they thrive.” Thus, school sensitization programs should be aimed at transforming the ideas and thoughts of the surrounding communities as well.

### **05. Stakeholder Opinions on Inclusion of LGBTQIA+ Information in Schools**

This section highlights the important elements of the interviews with various stakeholders and understands their opinions on the inclusion of information about LGBTQIA+ persons in schools.

#### **a. Why is there ignorance of issues about the LGBTQIA+ community in schools?**

Both parents interviewed shared similar thoughts and concerns about including content in school through curriculum interventions or other classroom activities. The main concern for parents is that students should not necessarily start identifying with the community because they are being sensitized about them, which is a common misconception about such programs. This puts great emphasis on Onir’s opinion that the parents, who are the key decision-makers and models, must be educated and sensitized simultaneously.

The mother, a DEI professional, pointed out why this information was absent in schools. “So the concept of the LGBTQIA+ community itself in India is perceived as a fad, i.e., a Western concept that has recently been talked about a lot. As a result, parents and schools in general look at it as a foreign concept. There is a feeling that these ideas influence the child through such programs; they don’t want their child to get exposed to such things, which are considered as ‘adult content’ in schools, a place that parents trust. I personally don’t mind such information being provided in schools, but my concern is the way it is administered. Do we have trained people to do it?”

Srinivas Yanamandra, a fintech professional and father, echoes similar sentiments. He

mentions that such new information can be introduced only in 2 ways, through the refinement of the ecosystem or a complete overhaul of the system, which would shock it. “Norms in the society and systems that the society follows and that have been going on for ages, and as a result, some communities have been marginalized. The question is how and when we think of shaking it up. But before shaking up things, we need to see the ramifications/consequences, and by this shaking up, are you certain that you can avoid this issue of marginalisation? Real education is that why such a concept has come about in the first place, understanding the history behind it. Information should be given but not just one side of it. I always encourage pluralistic information. Gap is there because people love to be guided rather than think on their own. People have created norms, and most don't like touting with these pre-existing norms. However, my only worry is that the open culture should not impose these things on students. Students should not feel that because they are being bombarded with such information, both outside and in schools, they necessarily should belong to the community. Normal students should not start feeling sad that they do not have what they should have to associate with the community. Thus, one should revise and rethink the way such information is provided.”

As mentioned in the sections above, lack of political will towards this marginalized population, misconceptions about such instructions, and rigid thought processes are some of the reasons for the absence of such content and reluctance to inclusion in schools.

b. Is there a need for LGBTQIA+ gender sensitization programs?

Both activists agreed that LGBTQIA+ students are at a major disadvantage in schools; thus, GSP is paramount. Sonal Giani mentioned the possible concerns of having uniform GSPs in all regions; the population and culture of different areas are crucial, and the nature of GSPs can vary depending on the clientele. The need for support systems along with a suitable GSP is of utmost importance.

“Sensitization is definitely very important because if you currently look at the statistics of discrimination, a huge majority of LGBTQ people who are interviewed for this kind of research in India are reporting that they are experiencing discrimination, violence, and sexual harm. So



obviously, it is the need of the hour to work on sensitizing students. But I worry when the onus of this change is completely put on students or an institute. It is a larger social shift that our government needs to bring. There are different ways of sensitizing, and it need not be a direct sensitization of students. Indirect sensitization/support is possible, for e.g., allowing for an LGBT support network group to operate in an institute and allowing them to function or opening your cultural wing and encouraging them to do programs on DEI. Other thing is also to take support from parents groups. In India, there is a parents' support group called Sweekar, it is the parents of LGBTQ people who have been doing sensitization themselves. If nothing else, the institute should at least have a policy in place that prohibits any kind of discrimination on the basis of gender or sexual identity. That is the bare minimum through which you can start conversations which is totally acceptable. And this would be different in different places. For e.g., if I do a college sensitization say in a small town. After getting all this support through such sensitization, I come out as a transperson, and I start feeling differently. But then I go back home, where there is barely any support system. Thus you need to keep the population in mind as well, and the onus should not fall on just an individual. It should fall on society and has to be an institutional change, and it can't really happen until the law changes.”

- Sonal Giani (Public Speaker, Independent Filmmaker, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Consultant at IPPF, Bisexual, LGBTQIA+ Activist)

Onir also echoed similar sentiments, but he repeatedly stressed on parents' sensitization. “A lot of schools have parallelly started educating parents where the LGBT+ community members go to school and have discussions with their parents. Parents of the community members also can help educate other parents about the community. It is very important to have this dialogue with students and parents and make them interact with the community members to demystify this.”

Both teachers interviewed approved of such gender sensitization programs. Rachana Ayarekar once had an encounter with a female student who said she had feelings for another senior female student. She did not know how to respond and was shocked. She also admitted that she was unaware of the LGBTQIA+ community and had only heard of transgender and

homosexual people through the news. Thus, she was in support of GSP. Akshika Vyas does not see any issues with including such content in lectures or activities in schools. It is imperative to give accurate information to students at this age. Both teachers also agreed that primary students are too young and immature to understand these concepts, and thus the appropriate age for GSPs would be grade 6 and onwards.

“I think sensitization is required, and it is the need of the hour. Sensitization at the school level through maybe regular workshops, calling an expert or counselors to address the children, or maybe even if we could have it as a part of the 0-period activity or the class teacher's period where the teacher could talk to children about so many other issues also. We talk to them about discipline, substance abuse, bullying, etc., so why not this? Why keep it in the closet and make it something that children want to gather info about by the wrong means. I think if we bring it out of the closet and talk to children the way we talk about other things, it would probably give rise to a healthier environment and make society a better place for these people who belong to this community. They would not have to face racist or prejudiced attitudes if we were to talk about it and enlighten the children. If we were to talk about these things with the primary children, it would have the same consequences that we have when we are not sensitizing the children at all. They do not have the mindset or the outlook to understand something of this magnitude. It is a big thing for them. So if such sensitization were to happen, I think the best age group to subscribe would be maybe class 6th onwards.”

- Akshika Vyas (English Teacher - Ramjas International School, Delhi)

Akshika Vyas also mentioned that they have full freedom to innovate and design their classroom and subject activities. “The only thing is that we have to take prior approval. But it all depends on how intelligently or systematically the activity has been planned. It should not be something that is too rash, and it should not be a shocker for them. Last year, my class 12th made a lovely presentation on this topic. So if you approach it at the right level with the right age group and give them the right briefing, children are quite sensitive enough to handle. These presentations were done with the help of their parents, as this was during the lockdown working in online mode. Parents were aware, and it was not kept a secret from the parents. Thus, there has been no pushback. Thus it depends on the mindset of the parents. These are students whose parents give them the freedom to explore whichever topic they want. But I have other students whose parents would probably not approve of such projects from schools and refuse it to make it a part of their academics.”

Rachana Ayarekar also had similar opinions on the question. “This is a very sensitive issue as these people are not accepted into our society very easily. A program based on psychology, based on their behavioral patterns, and emotional and physical needs, is required and then, keeping all this in mind, a curriculum has to be designed. If we need experts to get involved in it, people need to get trained in it, and this should not be forced. Primary standard students would not understand and they lack the maturity. Maybe the 6th/7th standard up would be the appropriate category to get the sensitization. We can include basic things in the 6th grade and begin to prepare them mentally and then from 7th std we can start telling things gradually. 9th and 10th can have some substantial teaching, but I agree that such programs should be in place in schools.”

- c. Are you aware about the teacher training transgender manual and other gender equality modules issued by the NCERT?

When asked whether they had any information about the transgender or gender equality manuals by the NCERT, both responded that they were unaware.

“No I am not aware of these manuals. I am coming to know this from you for the very first time. We have not been trained or spoken about these things ever. I have been in the teaching profession for the last 20 years.”

- Rachana Ayarekar (Social Studies Teacher - Kilbil St. Joseph`s High School, Nashik)

“No we have not been given any training. I think the modules are present, but there hasn't been any formal training for the teachers, students, or any staff members. I guess that is primarily because the management in various schools believes they would deal with it whenever it comes up. I also feel that if sensitization has to be done, it should not be a rule or an imposition. It should be done in an involuntary way like in the normal flow of conversation. As 45 students react differently to a chapter in English, similarly, these students would react differently to this information that is given to them. So when we are in the classroom, we modulate ourselves because we have all kinds of children. For this, we need to train out teachers first. Teachers, if they are trained, can do much more than what the parents can do at home. Because as parents, we are not trained and we have a different attitude towards our child. As a mother, my attitude towards my boy is very different to what I am at school. Children will also react differently because they feel that if it comes from the teacher, it is a right thing.”

- Akshika Vyas (English Teacher - Ramjas International School, Delhi)

Even with manuals being made by the NCERT after consultations with experts and professionals, the teachers are not being trained, and the LGBTQIA+ students are again at a disadvantage. The teachers have limited knowledge of these concepts as they have not been exposed (or experienced) to this information. Thus, GSPs become critical.

#### d. Experiences of ex-LGBTQIA+ students

Ex-students belonging to the community strongly believed that there is a need for such sensitization programs because of the insensitivity of the administration and authorities, which gets passed on to the students.

“People are not comfortable talking about the LGBTQIA community because they feel that their children would become the same. Being a lesbian, I can very well understand what the parents feel about the community. I faced bullying when I was in school. I was made fun of for many reasons, like having short hair and being a lesbian. I was very timid, I didn’t dare to tell anyone about the bullying. So I suffered in silence. We had a session on sex education, but unfortunately, even the speakers didn’t speak about the community. They just spoke about the sexual and hormonal changes in the body. Schools help children grow, and they make them ready to face the world. The world consists of all types of people, so children who just left school should understand how to treat them. Yes, parents are concerned about providing exposure about the community. Sensitization programs would be a great idea to start with. But it depends on the parents too, like they should also go for such programs with an open mind.”

- Ex-Student, 23, She/Her, Lesbian, Nashik, Maharashtra (Requested to stay anonymous)

Another ex-student, a lesbian, has the same views. She also recalls being called names in school because she was not interested in boys, while her peers had crushes on her classmates. She is a closeted lesbian who fears confronting her parents, as her family is highly orthodox. Her elder sister once read her personal messages and asked her to stop behaving this way. She lacked the social, mental, and family support to come out and embrace herself, and she feels a GSP will be able to help students from the community. She requested to stay anonymous and only agreed to have an informal conversation on this topic.

On the issue of having trained counselors in schools, a qualitative study highlighted the ignorance of many counselors in the LGBTQIA+ community. A gay student narrates his ordeal, “My counselor asked me to forget about my queer identity as it was ‘just a phase.’ They just told me to ‘focus on my studies and build a career for now.’” Few counselors did not know the full form of LGBTQIA+ and did not know about the decriminalization of same-sex relationships (Srivastava & Dudeja, 2020).

Sukhnidh Kaur, an independent researcher from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, was working on a survey collecting experiences of LGBTQIA+ students from across the country, Chennai, Lucknow, Kolkata, Kharagpur, Jaipur, etc. Her research highlights the plight faced by LGBTQIA+ students nationwide, all of which follow a similar trend of bullying, harassment by peers and teachers, and overlooked complaints. She also stresses on education in schools, "We need to educate people. Educate the youth, educate authorities, educate whoever we can reach out to, because homophobia is often a product of ignorance. We also need to create formalized support and resource groups for LGBTQ+ Indians. We need sex education, social awareness workshops, redefined curricula. We need healthy media representation. We need to make sure that this generation and the next understand queerness, and how normal it is" (Bhattacharya, 2018).

Sonal Giani had similar views on the kind of sex education provided in schools. Schools lack trained sex educators to speak on these topics. "While there are sex educators, there are very few who would know in depth about such minority communities. Sex educators will currently talk about your body in a very heterosexual or binary way. You must also consider that if you do get a sex educator in and someone does come out in a session like this, how do you offer safety? Like if a transperson, and without really thinking about it, comes out, are there policies or guidelines in the space to help them? What is the kind of support system available to me at the time? Those are really the questions that you need to consider to understand the position of different educational institutes. Even in classroom sessions on say your body, or biology classes on the reproductive system, professors aren't comfortable to have these sessions with students. The ecology of schools is not currently in support such programs."

Thus, from the above interviews, it can be concluded that the immediate stakeholders, i.e., parents, teachers, activists, and students, understand the importance of such inclusion. Teachers are concerned about the students but are restricted because of the clientele and administration. Parents are concerned about how such information would be administered to students and the impacts, negative or positive on their children. Activists voice similar concerns and emphasize the need for such GSPs for children, parents, and families. As Sonal Giani mentioned, sex education can be a good entry point, but sex educators should be trained about

the community and other intricacies. She also is optimistic about the NCERT manuals. “The fact is that when they have such a manual in place in the places where a school is willing to do such kind of programs, it is largely a good thing that if you have a student body, they at least have a document to push for in comparison to having nothing earlier.”

Jiya Chawla, the Vice President of the campaign, stresses the importance of GSPs for the overall development of youth and how TIS prioritized this movement. “I believe firstly we understood the importance of spreading awareness because of the discrimination that the community faces. It is not just an adult problem, it starts in middle school and high school when you start noticing changes, you start discovering your identity and start questioning yourself and your surroundings and, in that phase, if you and the people around you are not educated, then it is a very harmful environment to live in. At this age, youth need to realise who they are and what they like and helping them do that should be an institution’s job because they are the one building the youth’s personality and their minds. It is their job to ensure that they come out to be respectable human being who does not discriminate on the basis of anything.”

Due to the paucity of time and the nonresponsiveness of government officials, the project could not include their opinions on this critical issue. However, the government set-up only has a handful of LGBTQIA+ allies. When NCERT published its first-ever transgender teacher training manual in 2021, NCPCR asked the government body to take down the 'anti-national manual,' which aimed to integrate gender non-conforming and transgender students into schools. This action was taken post a complaint filed by an organization called Legal Rights Observer, which said in its complaint, “[manual was] drafted by intellectually bankrupt leftist elements capable of traumatizing students.” The NCPCR echoed these sentiments. The manual merely recommended gender-neutral washrooms and uniforms for such students and asked teachers to talk about puberty blockers<sup>21</sup> (Barman, 2021). The NCERT realized the value of the inclusion of such information and, thus, sensitizing the stakeholders about the harassment and violence faced by transgender and gender non-conforming students. “Sensitization and education of Indian teachers and teacher educators about transgender concerns in an academic setting through this material

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<sup>21</sup> Medicines that can be used to delay puberty spurts in children; they are also called hormone blockers. It is prescribed for children who are experiencing transition and do not want to identify with the gender they are born with.

will enable fostering of gender-inclusive school system and take us closer to similar gender-sensitive models of education of Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand at the global level. This eventually will reduce mental health issues (depression, anxiety, disorder, and suicidal ideations) and dropping out of schooling for transgender, gender-nonconforming, gender dysphoric and questioning learners" (Datta, 2021).

The interview snippets, the data collected, and secondary sources point to the gross ignorance of LGBTQIA+ students. The need for sensitization programs is even more as queer help organizations are not accessible to those below 18. The co-founder of Queer Chennai Chronicles, Moulee, points to the caveat, "I have no answers for them if they are below 18, because the child is still under the care of parents' or families' who may not be supportive. And since Indian law does not recognise the consent of a person below 18 years, those who want to help tend to be wary. However, if they reach out to the organization, we direct them to NGOs, counselors, and other resources" (Mantri, 2021). There are diverging views persisting in society that might prevent such programs from taking place. However, this study's empirical studies and evidence point to better awareness and attitudes in places with GSPs, making a strong case for inclusion.



## V. Policy Recommendations

After analyzing the findings from the questionnaire and understanding the various stakeholders' points of view, some inferences can be drawn. The TIS students (exposed to the GSPs) are more aware and knowledgeable about the community. The control group students also possess information but are lagging. The students belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community are at a significant disadvantage to their cisgender and heterosexual peers, as highlighted in the literature review. GSPs have effectively changed gender attitudes, behavior, mindsets, etc., and helped create an inclusive environment. Thus, the project recommendations would be focused on incorporating such gender sensitization programs, direct or indirect, into the school ecosystem.

01. Gender sensitization programs are a requirement in educational institutions, focusing here on schools, as LGBTQIA+ students are also an integral part of the institution. As mentioned earlier by Sonal Giani, sensitization can be of various types, and the environment and pulse of the crowd need to be checked before implementing any program.

### a. Direct Sensitization

Like Breaking Barriers at TIS, programs can be conducted where there are mandatory sessions about gender identity, sexual orientation, history of the population and the diversity within, and the importance of pronouns, etc., for students, teachers, non-teaching staff, etc. The school can conduct these by recruiting trained sex educators, psychologists, and other professionals or by calling a third party, like TIS or NGOs, to take such sessions. Including the LGBTQIA+ community in sex education sessions can also be seen as a direct form of sensitization.

### b. Indirect Sensitization<sup>22</sup>

This can be done by calling various individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community for cultural fests or giving school guest speeches. NGOs working for the community, Diversity, Equity, and

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<sup>22</sup> Term used by LGBTQIA+ activist Sonal Giani to refer to other forms of sensitization/exposure other than campaigns or programs like 'Breaking Barriers'.

Inclusion (DEI) professionals, independent researchers working on such topics, etc., can also be called to give the ally's point of view. Drama, skits, or plays (nukkad natakas) can be other acquiescent ways of educating the youth and the surroundings about the community.

c. Changes in Policy

If none of the above types of sensitization is possible by the institution, a gender-neutral anti-bullying/anti-harassment policy can be formulated by the institution, which penalizes acts of abuse, bullying, ragging, harassment, or any other forms of violence. This is the bare minimum any institution can do. GSPs can further enforce such a policy on the ground and in the larger society.

These different forms of sensitization can be used depending on the institution's population, religious affiliation, and socioeconomic environment. School authorities, administration, and staff would have to be brought on the same page for direct sensitization, and the parents and other family members would have to be informed. The consent of different authorities is important to avoid future interruptions. Direct sensitization would have a stronger impact on the students in terms of information dissemination and awareness, as witnessed here in this study and the examined literature. Other forms of sensitization (indirect) would be able to give limited exposure to students; however, the school authorities would have little control over how the children perceive or absorb the information. These would not require the consent of parents or families as these would be one-off events. However, they would have to be informed. Minimal policy changes, although a positive step and a strong support system, do not ensure education and awareness of students. Nevertheless, in institutions with a rigid mindset and no scope for immediate action, such policy tweaks can be seen as silver linings.

02. The schools need trained in-house counselors who are accessible and can be trusted by the students. Along with the methods mentioned above, the institution should ensure the safety of any individual who comes out during or after such programs. Teachers and other staff who interact with students should be well-educated and trained about how to react when students disclose such sensitive information and to whom they should be directed.

The counselors, teachers, or staff should be sensitized about not outing the students to their parents/families if such a case arises.

03. For the concerns mentioned in point 2, the schools can tie up with NGOs working for the LGBTQIA+ community. Through this, the students can get the required counseling through a trusted institution. The student would have role models of their identity to look up to, and they will not feel alone in their journey of self-discovery and self-realization.
04. The GSPs should not be a one-off affair. There needs to be continuous sensitization of all the members through movies, plays, classroom activities, or lectures. Schools actively conducting GSPs should also check for their program's impact on the students and staff through surveys. This would help schools upgrade their instructions.
05. As stressed repeatedly by Onir, the institutions that can achieve student sensitization should also try to reach out to the families and conduct GSPs for those who have not been exposed to such content. This could again be done by the school, a third party, or LGBTQIA+ parent support groups. Implementing such a sensitization could be tricky as families might have differing views on such talks.
06. The paper compares the GSPs of TIS, a socio-economically well-off school, with potentially other lesser well-off schools. As mentioned by Akshika Vyas, TIS has a clientele that is very open in its outlook, and thus, the school faced little backlash from the parent communities. Unfortunately, this would not be the case with most schools in India. However, Vedica Saxena, former head of Breaking Barriers, recalls being called by various government schools in Delhi to administer the sensitization programs. Thus, if not a direct one, schools can engage in such talks indirectly so that children have basic exposure to such content.

## **VI. Limitations and Future Scope**

Due to the paucity of time, the study was restricted to an online questionnaire that was administered to students. The researcher relied on snowball sampling to collect responses for the control group. There was no possibility of following up with students on specific questions, and students could not ask clarifying questions. As February through March was also the CBSE exam season, many teachers and students refused to participate because of time and priority constraints. Interactions with TIS and other students also remained limited because of the reasons as mentioned earlier. These reasons also resulted in fewer stakeholder interviews being conducted.

Future research could employ in-depth interviews or focus group sessions to understand both groups' views on the questions posed in the attitude or family views sections. Breaking Barriers was launched in 2013 and thus has sensitized plenty of TIS students. The students who have passed out from TIS but have been exposed to the GSP can also be studied to understand the persistence of this kind of sensitization process. They can be studied to see whether this has translated into long-term effects on students' behavior and attitudes, contributing to an inclusive society. The interviews can be taken with other indirect but influencing stakeholders like siblings, grandparents (other dominant family members), religious organizations, political party members, government department officials, NCERT's Department of Gender Studies' officials and professors, etc. This can help present a comprehensive picture to understand ignorance. More interviews with parents and teachers also need to be conducted to collect a representative sample. Lastly, a regression can be run if a larger sample is collected for the questionnaire to check for the statistical significance of these sensitization programs, which could help make a stronger case for LGBTQIA+ sensitization and information inclusion in school curricula.

## VII. Conclusion

Schools actively and passively force children to adhere to the set societal gender norms and characteristics, and this rigidity specifically harms transgender and gender non-conforming students. Thus, these binary environments must be targeted to create safe spaces (Sheikh et al., 2021). The ostracization of the LGBTQIA+ population by society has caused severe harm to the students belonging to the community or questioning their identities. As highlighted in the literature review, these students suffer from mental health issues, poor academic and social performance, and are prone to self-abuse/self-violence.

Gender sensitization programs have been an important tool used by researchers in India and other countries to mold students' thoughts and attitudes and aim at changing their behavior. GSPs focusing on girl child and women empowerment in India through classroom interventions and activities have shown significant results. Thus, this is a suitable medium to achieve an inclusive and safe school environment for LGBTQIA+ students.

Tagore International School's 'Breaking Barriers' initiative has been a pioneer in conducting LGBTQIA+ GSPs in India. The results from its impact analysis show that the TIS students perform significantly better in the awareness section than the control group, highlighting that the program can educate and inform students about the community. Due to the smaller sample size, regression results were not significant, which forms a part of the future scope of the paper. TIS and control students perform almost similarly in the Acceptance and Attitude sections, the TIS students being slightly better (i.e. higher number of 'strongly agree'/'strongly disagree' responses). A plausible reason for the results could be social desirability bias creeping into the self-reported responses. This could also be due to a lack of interactions with the students and no follow-ups possible to explain questions better and extract accurate answers. In the last section of family awareness, attitudes, and acceptance, TIS families are more aware than the control students' families. However, the trend is not clear/certain for the other questions. Thus, it can be concluded that Breaking Barriers (and thus, GSPs) successfully educate students and increase awareness. This awareness has positive spillover effects on families. However, the other sections cannot arrive at the same conclusion due to the limited data collected.

One possible explanation for similar results from the control group students could be the increased awareness due to information overload through devices. Parents and teachers agree that keeping students away from their devices is hard, and their curious minds are aware of plenty of things. But teachers and activists are worried about exposure to wrong information or misinformation. LGBTQIA+ activists stress on GSPs for students and parents, direct or indirect, in educational institutions to build an inclusive environment. Sex educators must be trained and educated about LGBTQIA+ issues and sensitized. Counselors, aware of the community and their issues, must be present in schools. Parents do not want such information to be imposed on their children and worry about them suddenly associating themselves with the community. Here is where parent sensitization becomes vital. Teachers agree with the information about the community being included in schools but want autonomy in transmitting such materials as teachers have a grip on the classroom and know the students well. Information given in schools is perceived as the correct information, and thus students take it seriously; thus, including information about LGBTQIA+ individuals in the formal schooling process would have positive impact. But the medium of instruction, accurate design and delivery, and the training of teachers and administration will be crucial.

Due to time constraints, there were multiple limitations to the project. However, GSPs for the LGBTQIA+ community have made TIS students more aware, sensitive, and understanding of their thoughts and positively impacted their surroundings. LGBTQIA+ students need institutional support, as much as any other cisgender, heterosexual student, and the mindset of government departments, employees, institutional administrators, religious organizations, and most importantly, families, need to be revamped to provide equity of rights to such individuals. Such an impact analysis would provide a future roadmap for educational institutions to put an end to SOGI-based harassment and abuse, support LGBTQIA+ students, and initiate dialogues on such issues. The 2018 Tamil Nadu study conducted by UNESCO, has been one of its kind in India, and the results were able to ruffle a few feathers. There is a requirement for large-scale studies of this nature in India to understand the magnitude of issues faced by students based on their SOGI to highlight that this is not just experienced by a handful of children. With the help of such data, GSPs focusing on LGBTQIA+ persons, can be pushed for in multiple institutions.

Their impact could be further analyzed to design and curate a more gender-inclusive school curriculum and environment.

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## **IX. Annexures**

### **01. Annexure 1 - Interview Questions**

#### **Parents**

1. Why is there an absence of any content on the LGBTQIA+ community in the educational curriculum or schools? Why do you think the state and society are so hesitant, even in this day and age when people are so much more aware due to the spread of social media and readily available information?
2. Should schools include information about sex, gender, identity, and the larger LGBTQIA+ community in their teaching and activities? If yes, how does this impact students, teachers, and society? If not, why do you think this is a bad idea?
3. Did your daughters' exposure in school help you get aware/better understanding of the community? (Posed to Srinivas Yanamandra)

#### **Teachers**

1. Why is there an absence of any content on the LGBTQIA+ community in the educational curriculum or schools? Why do you think the state and society are so hesitant, even in this day and age when people, especially students, are so much more aware due to the spread of social media and readily available information?
2. Should schools prioritize and include information about sex, gender, identity, and the larger LGBTQIA+ community in their teaching and activities? If yes, how does this impact students, teachers, and society?

3. What kind of challenges will you as a teacher face while including topics like this in your classroom activities? Do you get the freedom to do this? Have you faced any such issues with parents or other family members?
4. Topics like sex education or menstruation are still considered taboo in some schools. Usually, boys are asked to leave the rooms while these lectures are only given to girls. When topics like these are only not spoken about openly in classrooms, where does the scope of LGBTQIA+ information lie then?
5. Have you seen cases of bullying or harassment of students in school on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity?
6. To what extent do government documents like the NCERT Transgender Manual help to converse about these topics? Are these even remotely followed?
7. Lastly, who do you think is more accountable or responsible for these changes - the government, the educational institution or the students themselves?

### **Activists**

1. Why is there an absence of any content on the LGBTQIA+ community in the educational curriculum or schools? Why do you think the state and society are so hesitant, even in this day and age when people are so much more aware due to the spread of social media and readily available information?
2. Should schools include information about sex, gender, identity, and the larger LGBTQIA+ community in their teaching and activities? If yes, how does this impact students, teachers, and society?
3. In my interviews with a few parents, they said that such information shouldn't become an imposition on the students and they shouldn't be bombarded with such material. They

feel that there is an age post which such sensitization programs should be conducted when the kids are more mature. What are your views on this?

4. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) introduced a transgender teacher training module which the National Commission took down for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR). What do you think about this?
5. How optimistic are you about this inclusion in the near future? Tamil Nadu recently announced that the new school curriculum would be more inclusive and will include LGBTQIA+ issues in the school curriculum and also provide training to teachers.

### **Ex-Students LGBTQIA+**

1. Why do you think there is an absence of material/ information about the LGBTQIA community in schools, especially in this day and age when material is readily available on the net and children have so much of exposure?
2. Do you think such information through gender sensitisation programs should be provided in schools? If yes, why? If no, why?
3. Did you have any such institutional support when you were in school? Do you feel things would've been different if you had a supportive environment in school?
4. Did you/anyone from your class face bullying or harassment because of their sexual orientation or gender identity? How did the teachers or principal or other authorities deal with it?
5. Parents or families get concerned about providing such exposure to their children as they feel that the community is contagious and interaction/exposure would be bad. Your views on this. Do you think such sensitization programs can be helpful for parents/family members as well?

**Tagore International School - Jiya Chawla (Vice President) and Vedica Saxena (Former Head)**

1. Why do you think gender sensitization programs, like Breaking Barriers, are important?
2. Why do you think such gender sensitization programs are still not prevalent across schools and are not a part of the formal schooling process, especially when so much information is readily available on the internet?
3. What kind of changes have you seen in yourself, your peers, and the school environment post joining this campaign and being an active member? (question posed to Jiya)
4. Were you able to see any differences in the way your parents/family thought about the community? Were you able to educate them about LGBT+ persons? (question posed to Jiya)
5. Did the campaign/school/administration face any backlash? (question posed to Vedica Saxena)
6. How did the school manage to prioritize the issue of safety and security to LGBTQIA+ students?
7. Have you seen any instances of bullying or harassment on the school grounds?



## 02. Annexure 2 - Questionnaire

### Information given about the project

Hey all!

I am Anjali Sreeram, a 23-year-old Master's in Public Policy student from Kautilya School of Public Policy, Hyderabad. This questionnaire is part of my capstone project, similar to a research project, which is a must for my degree program.

My project focuses on the LGBTQIA+ community, which includes gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, queer, and intersex people. This questionnaire would broadly like to understand young students' views on the community and their thought processes and attitudes towards them.

This questionnaire would tackle five aspects -

1. Basic information about the student
2. Awareness
3. Acceptance
4. Attitudes
5. Family's attitudes and acceptance

This questionnaire will be completely anonymous and only take your school's name and gender data. No other information will be asked. Due to the anonymous nature of the data collection, you can fill it with utmost honesty to ensure unbiased results. The questionnaire will commence only after taking your consent.

It is a lengthy questionnaire and requires 20-25 minutes of your time. Therefore, take your time and please fill this out without any distractions. Please do not discuss the answers with friends or family to ensure genuine results.

I highly value your input. Thank you so much for taking the time and helping me with the project!

### Consent

I give my consent for the questionnaire.

(This is an anonymous questionnaire and does not take your name, address or any other personal information. It only asks for your school and gender. In case of any query/complaint, you can reach out to me - Anjali Sreeram (+91 7769818890/anjalisreeram0309@gmail.com)

1. Yes (Skip to the next section)
2. No (End questionnaire)

Email IDs were not recorded.

<b>Information</b> Contains questions on school name, gender, counselors present, etc.		
1	Grade	1. 9th 2. 10th
2	School	1. Tagore International School 2. Other
3	Gender	1. Female 2. Male 3. Transgender 4. Gender Neutral 5. Gender

		<p style="text-align: center;">Non-Conforming</p> <p>6. Don't wish to disclose</p> <p>7. Other</p>
4	Does your school conduct gender sensitization/awareness programs/campaigns (contains information about gender orientation and sexual identity, use of pronouns, vulnerable genders, LGBT+ community, abuse and harassment against them, safe spaces)	<p>1. Yes</p> <p>2. No</p> <p>3. Don't know</p>
5	Have you attended gender sensitization/awareness programs organized by your school? (Select 'Not Applicable' if you selected 'No' for the question above)	<p>1. Yes</p> <p>2. No</p> <p>3. Don't know</p> <p>4. Not Applicable</p>
6	Does your school have student counselors for mental health concerns or other complaints?	<p>1. Yes</p> <p>2. No</p> <p>3. Don't know</p>
<p><b>Awareness</b></p> <p>This section will try to understand how much the student knows about the LGBTQIA+ community. Students will have to respond using the scale given in the answers. Some questions/statements are asked in the first person, e.g., I know about the community. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer as honestly as possible.</p>		
7	I know the full form of LGBTQIA+	<p>1. Yes</p> <p>2. Partially</p> <p>3. No</p>
8	I understand the significance of pronouns	<p>1. Yes, I understand the significance and use pronouns</p> <p>2. Yes, I understand the significance but don't use pronouns</p> <p>3. Yes, I use pronouns but don't understand its significance</p> <p>4. No, I don't understand the significance and do not use pronouns</p>
9	They/them can be a pronoun for an individual	<p>1. Strongly Agree</p> <p>2. Agree</p> <p>3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral)</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Disagree</li> <li>5. Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>
10	There are only 2 genders - male and female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Agree</li> <li>2. Agree</li> <li>3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral)</li> <li>4. Disagree</li> <li>5. Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>
11	Romantic relationships can only be heterosexual (male with female and female with male)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Agree</li> <li>2. Agree</li> <li>3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral)</li> <li>4. Disagree</li> <li>5. Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>
12	Gay refers to a male who behaves like a female (wrt behavior, dressing style, speech, mannerisms, likes, dislikes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Agree</li> <li>2. Agree</li> <li>3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral)</li> <li>4. Disagree</li> <li>5. Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>
13	Homosexual relationships (male with male and female with female) are not natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Agree</li> <li>2. Agree</li> <li>3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral)</li> <li>4. Disagree</li> <li>5. Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>
14	Sex and Gender are synonymous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Agree</li> <li>2. Agree</li> <li>3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral)</li> <li>4. Disagree</li> <li>5. Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>
15	Sexual orientation/gender identity is a voluntary choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strongly Agree</li> <li>2. Agree</li> <li>3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral)</li> <li>4. Disagree</li> <li>5. Strongly Disagree</li> </ul>
16	I'm aware of Section 377 and understand its implications for the LGBT+ community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ul>

	(Section 377 criminalized same-sex relationships)	3. Maybe
17	I have watched movies or TV shows that portray homosexual couples or LGBTQIA+ people	1. Yes 2. No 3. Maybe
18	I am in favor of gender sensitization programs?	1. Yes 2. No 3. Partially 4. Don't Know
19	I have attended Pride Parades	1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know
20	I know whom to approach if I have to report homophobic/transphobic/LGBTQIA+phobic behavior or acts	1. Yes 2. No 3. Don't know
<p><b>Acceptance</b> This section will have statements to which the student has to respond using the scale given in the answers. The questions/statements are asked in the first person, e.g. I know about the community. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer as honestly as possible.</p>		
21	I am/would be supportive of my sibling(s) if they came out to me as gay/lesbian/transgender/bisexual/queer etc.	1. Yes 2. No 3. Partially 4. Don't Know
22	I am/would be okay having a gay/lesbian/transgender/bisexual/queer roommate	1. Yes 2. No 3. Partially 4. Don't Know
23	I am/would be okay having a gay/lesbian/transgender/bisexual/queer friend	1. Yes 2. No 3. Partially 4. Don't Know
24	I am/would be okay having a gay/lesbian/transgender/bisexual/queer parent	1. Yes 2. No 3. Partially 4. Don't Know
25	As a parent, I would be okay to have a child who belongs to the LGBTQIA+ community	1. Yes 2. No 3. Partially

		4. Don't Know
26	I am/would be okay to be around a man who wears a skirt/saree or uses make-up	1. Yes 2. No 3. Partially 4. Don't Know
27	I am/would be okay to be around a woman who is open about her sexuality and attraction towards girls	1. Yes 2. No 3. Partially 4. Don't Know
28	I get/would get uncomfortable around a transgender/queer/intersex person	1. Yes 2. No 3. Partially 4. Don't Know
29	A person cannot be asexual (not having sexual attraction to any gender)	1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral) 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
30	Transgenders/intersex/queer should be allowed to use washrooms of genders they identify with	1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral) 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
31	Transgenders/intersex/queer should be provided with their own washroom facilities	1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral) 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
32	Transgenders/intersex/queer can work in leadership positions in big organizations	1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree (Neutral) 4. Disagree 5. Strongly Disagree
33	I have a friend/parent/sibling/acquaintance from the LGBTQIA+ community	1. Yes 2. No

		3. Don't know
<p><b>Attitudes</b> This section will contain statements that measure how the student thinks, feels, or behaves toward the community. The questions/statements are asked in the first person, e.g., I know about the community. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer as honestly as possible.</p>		
34	I (would) look down upon the transgenders who come to beg at the traffic signals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>
35	I (would) abuse/report the transgenders who approach at traffic signals, railway stations, etc	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>
36	I (would) judge/tease people who cross-dress (e.g. males wearing skirts/sarees)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>
37	I (would) ignore my male friend who recently came out to me as gay	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>
38	I have bullied/harassed my classmates based on their personality, gender identity or sexual orientation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>
39	I (would) tease my female friend who has feelings for another girl	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>
40	I (would) pass sexual remarks/jokes on someone who identifies to a gender that doesn't align to their sex defined at birth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>
41	I do not/would not assume anyone's pronouns and always ask beforehand	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>

42	I do not/would not judge someone based on their gender identity or sexual orientation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>
43	I (would) call out sexist or homophobic behaviour	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Always</li> <li>2. Frequently</li> <li>3. Rarely</li> <li>4. Never</li> </ol>
<p><b>Family`s Awareness, Acceptance, and Attitudes</b>  This section will contain questions on how/what the student's family thinks, feels, and knows about the community to gauge spillover understanding.  The questions/statements are asked in the first person, e.g., My parents know about the community.</p>		
44	My parents/grandparents/family are aware of the LGBTQIA+ community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completely Aware</li> <li>2. Aware</li> <li>3. Don`t know/Neutral</li> <li>4. Unaware</li> <li>5. Completely Unaware</li> </ol>
45	My parents/grandparents/family are/would be okay with me coming out as gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender/queer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Partially</li> <li>4. Don`t know</li> </ol>
46	My parents/grandparents/family talk openly about sexuality and orientation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Partially</li> <li>4. Don`t know</li> </ol>
47	My parents/grandparents/family have/would have supported my coming out journey	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Partially</li> <li>4. Don`t know</li> </ol>
48	My parents/grandparents/family are/would be willing to learn about the community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Partially</li> <li>4. Don`t know</li> </ol>
49	My parents/grandparents/family have teased people belonging to the community For eg. They have laughed at how gays/transgenders have been portrayed in mainstream media	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. Sometimes</li> <li>3. No</li> <li>4. Don`t know</li> </ol>

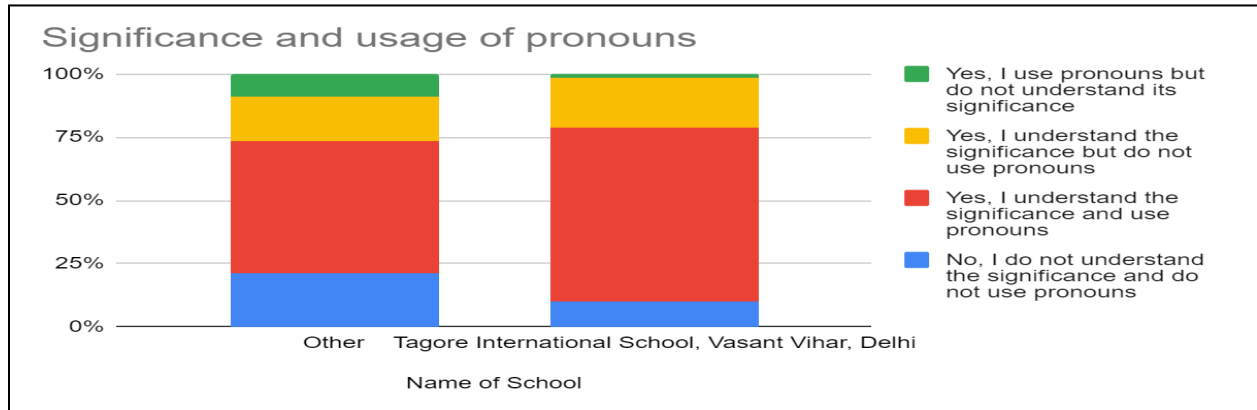


50	My parents/grandparents/family are/would be against same-sex marriages	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Partially</li> <li>4. Don't know</li> </ol>
51	My parents/grandparents/family have engaged in spiritual/religious/other occult practices to get rid of belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Don't know</li> </ol>
52	When I/my sibling/family member came out, and my parents/grandparents/family termed it as 'just a phase'	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Don't know</li> <li>4. Not Applicable</li> </ol>
53	I (would) hide my true self (sexuality/gender) in front of my parents/grandparents/family due to fear of abandonment (or other reasons)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Don't know</li> <li>4. Not Applicable</li> </ol>
54	My parents/grandparents/family know about the Pride Parade	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Don't know</li> </ol>
55	My parents/grandparents/family are aware of the sensitization programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Completely Aware</li> <li>2. Aware</li> <li>3. Not Applicable/Neutral</li> <li>4. Unaware</li> <li>5. Completely Unaware</li> </ol>
56	My parents/grandparents/family (would) support the sensitization programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Maybe</li> <li>4. Don't know</li> </ol>
57	I have helped my parents/grandparents/family get aware of the community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> <li>3. Partially</li> </ol>

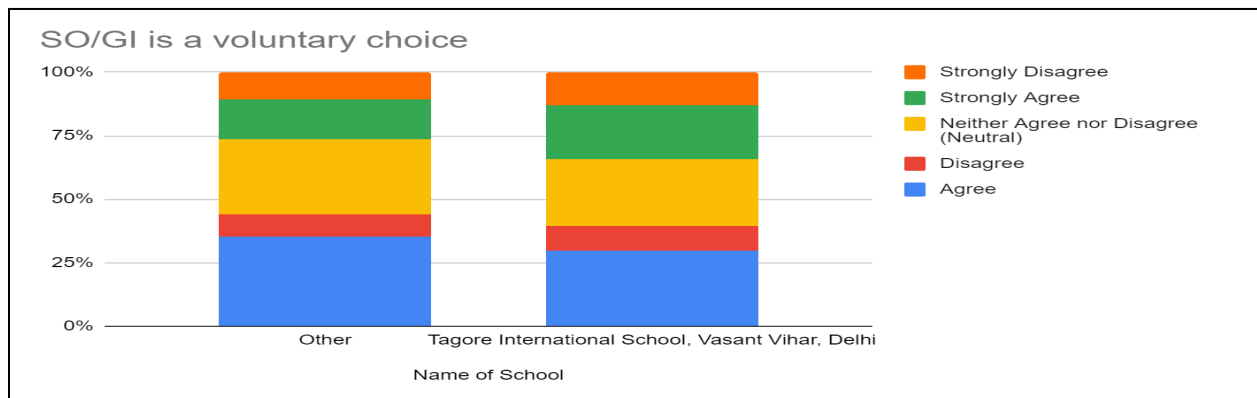
### 03. Annexure 3 - Graphs from the data collected

This section contains graphs of some responses from the questionnaire which were not used in the ‘Analysis and Discussion’ section, but were important for deriving conclusions.

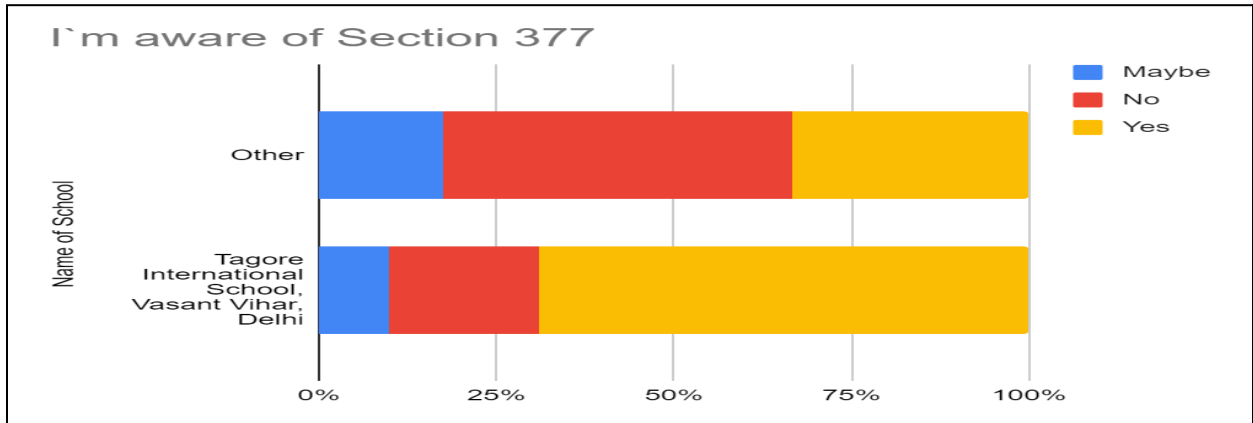
#### Awareness Section



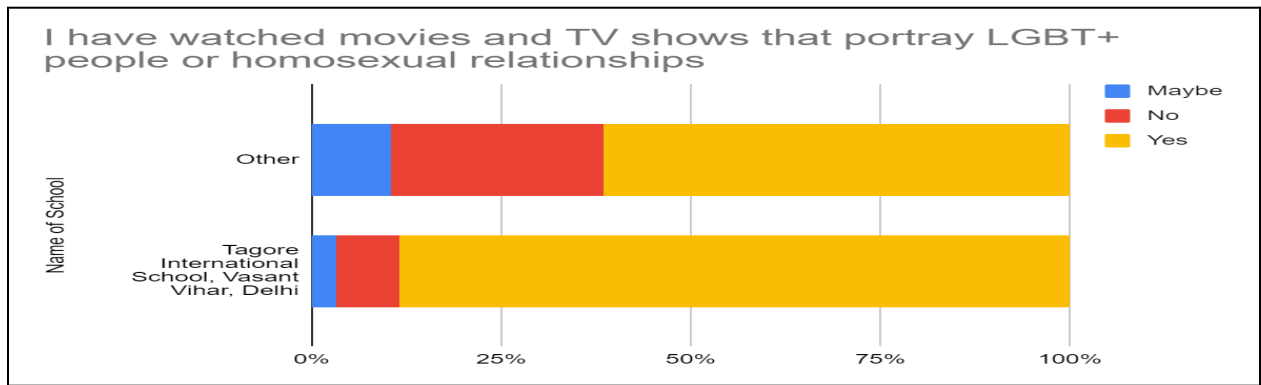
Graph 32



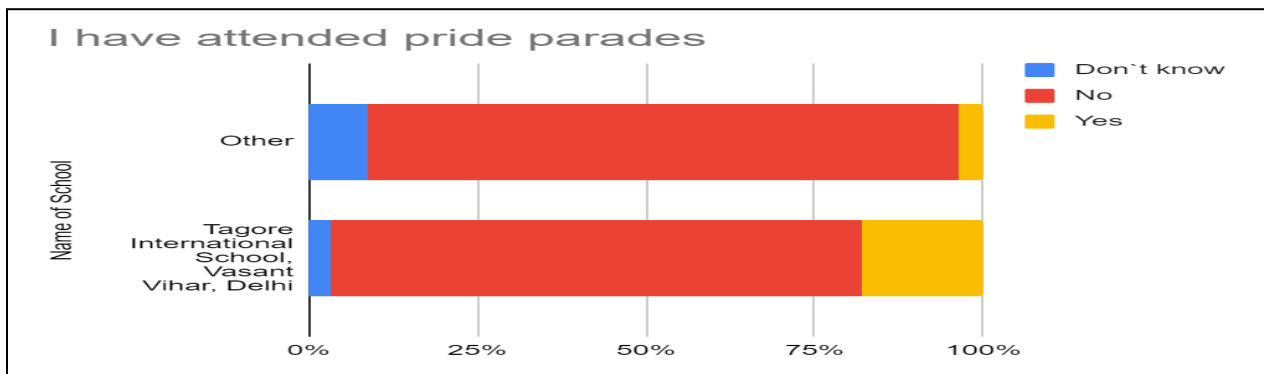
Graph 33



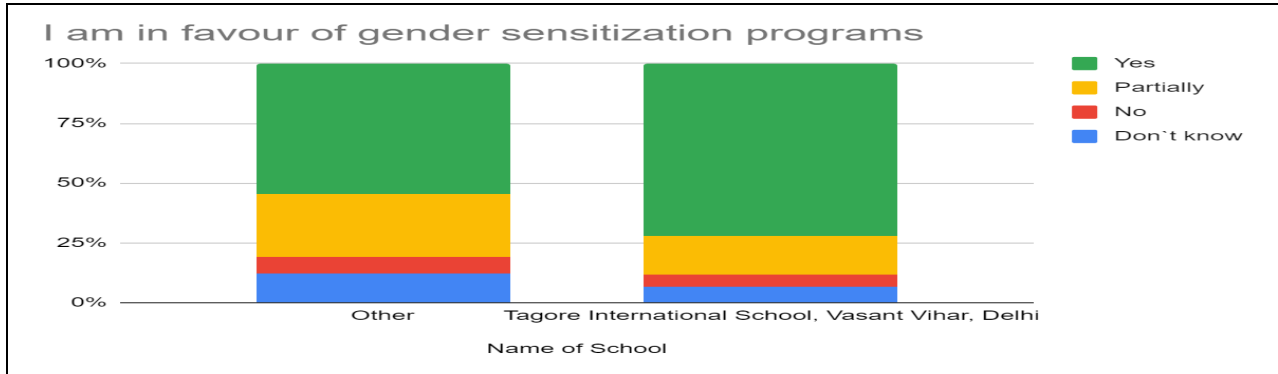
Graph 34



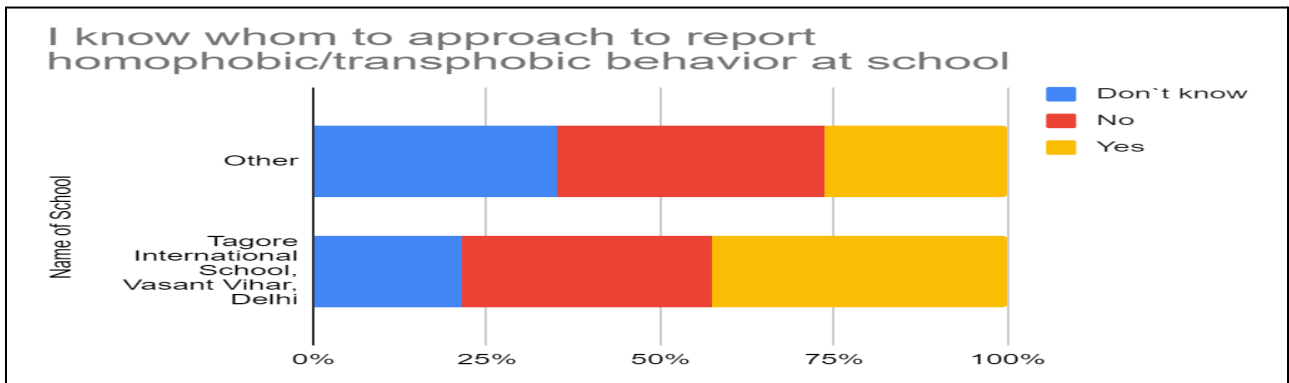
Graph 35



Graph 36

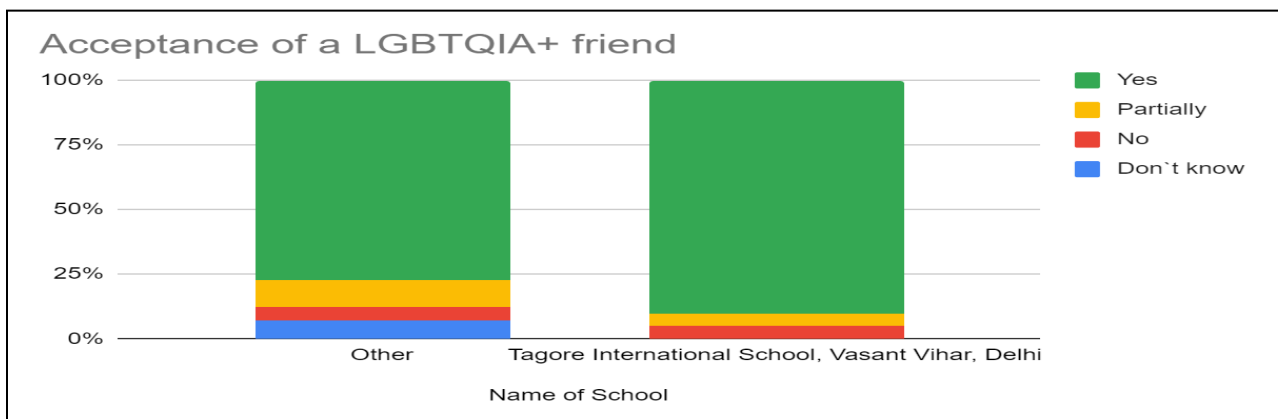


Graph 37

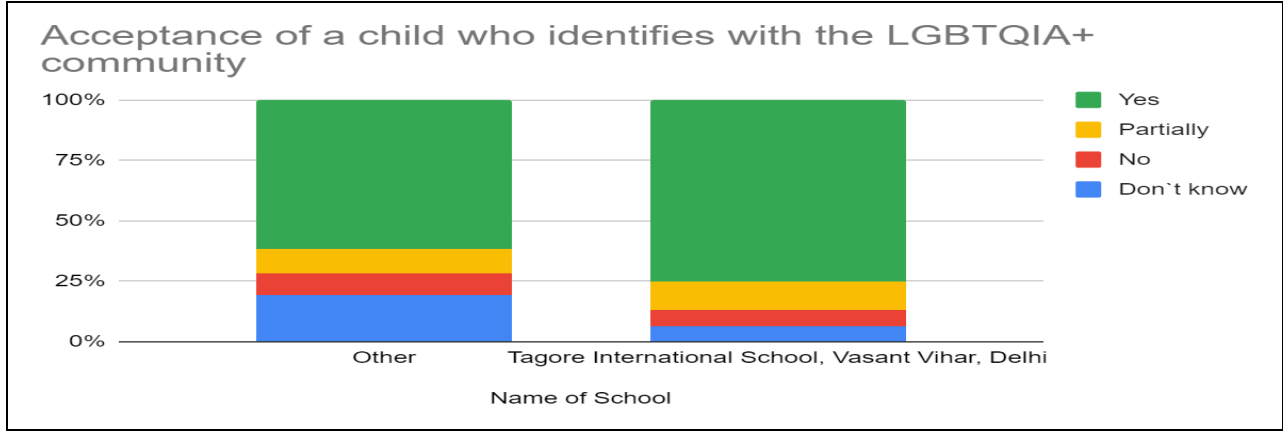


Graph 38

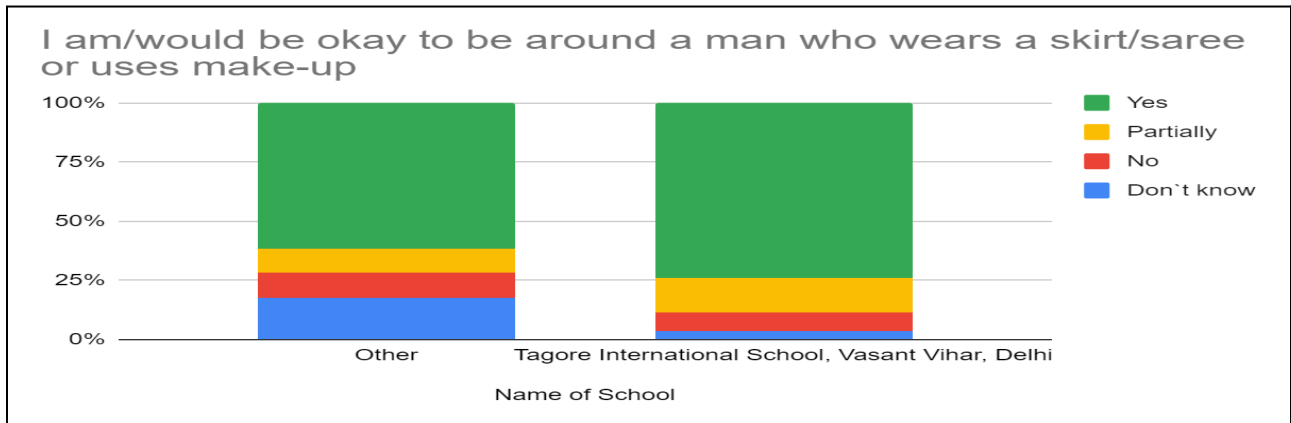
**Acceptance Section**



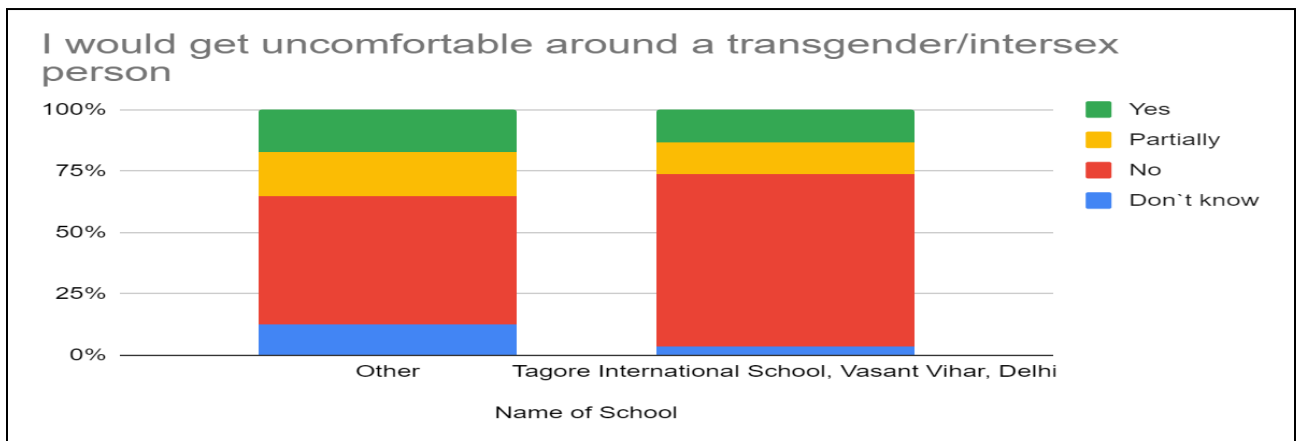
Graph 39



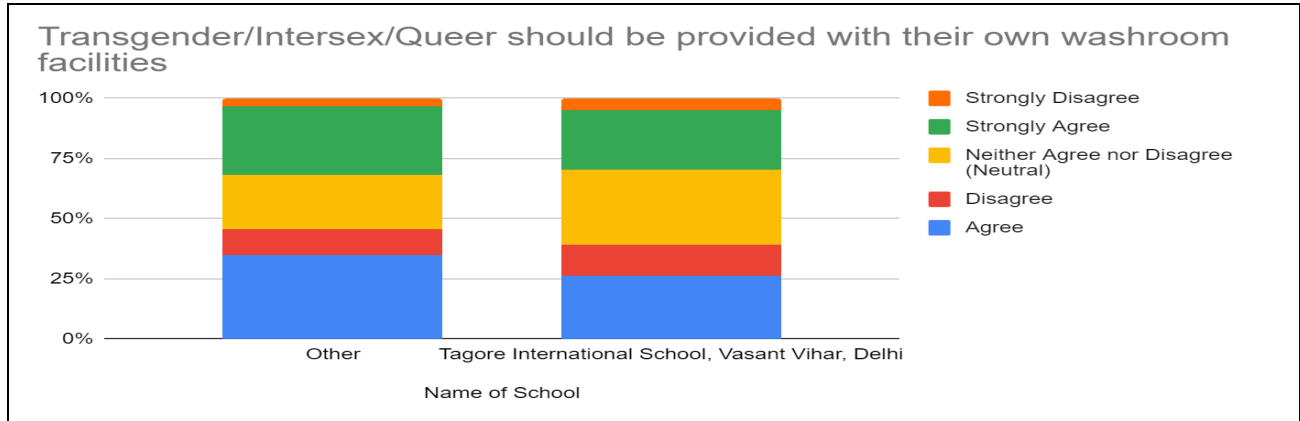
Graph 40



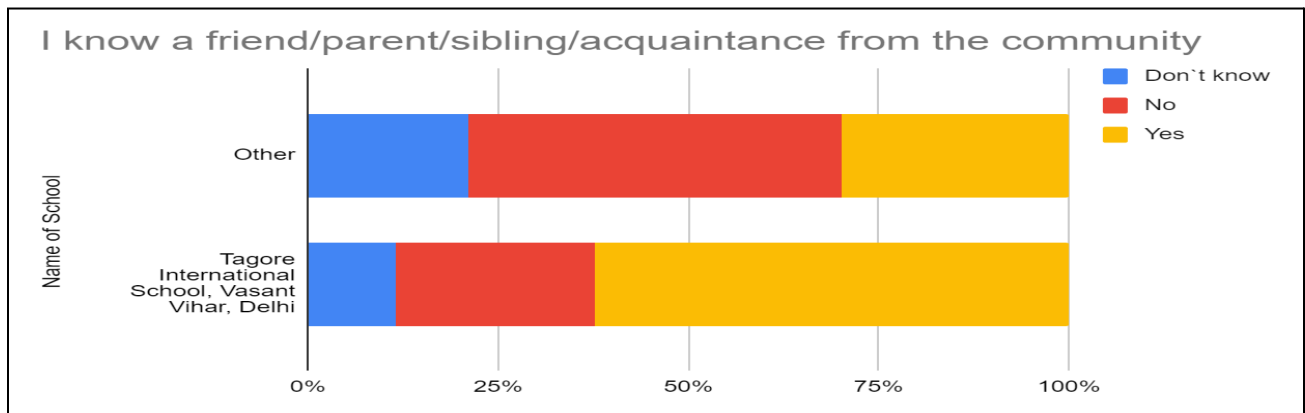
Graph 41



Graph 42

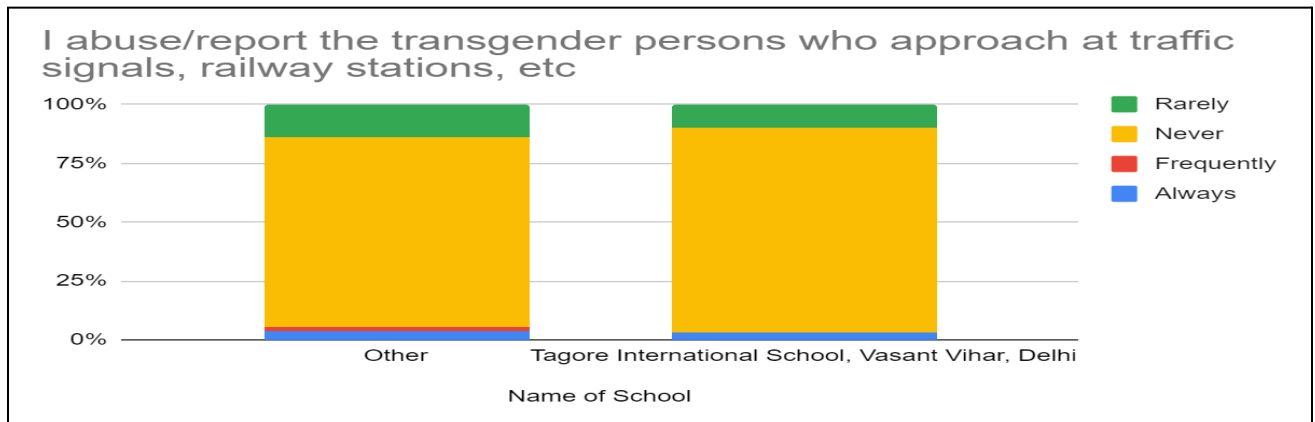


Graph 43

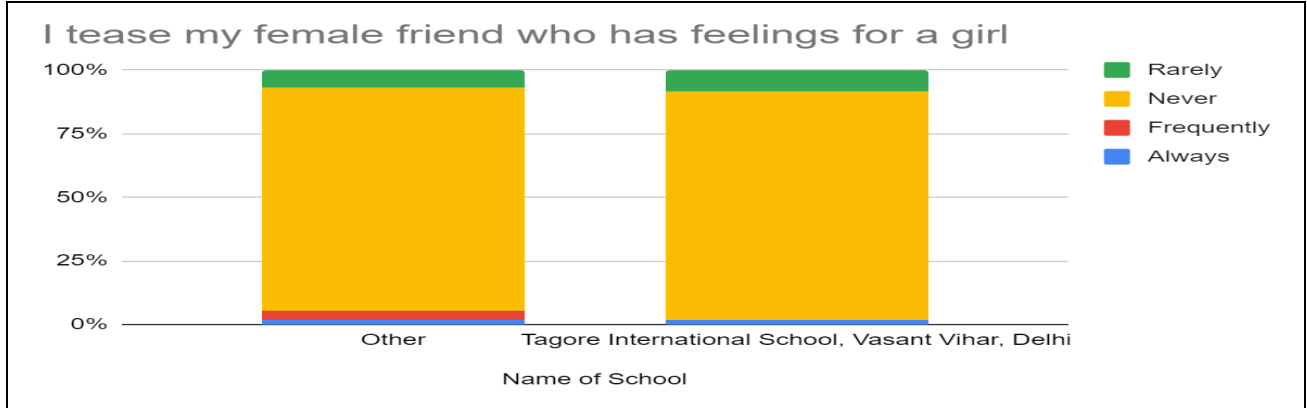


Graph 44

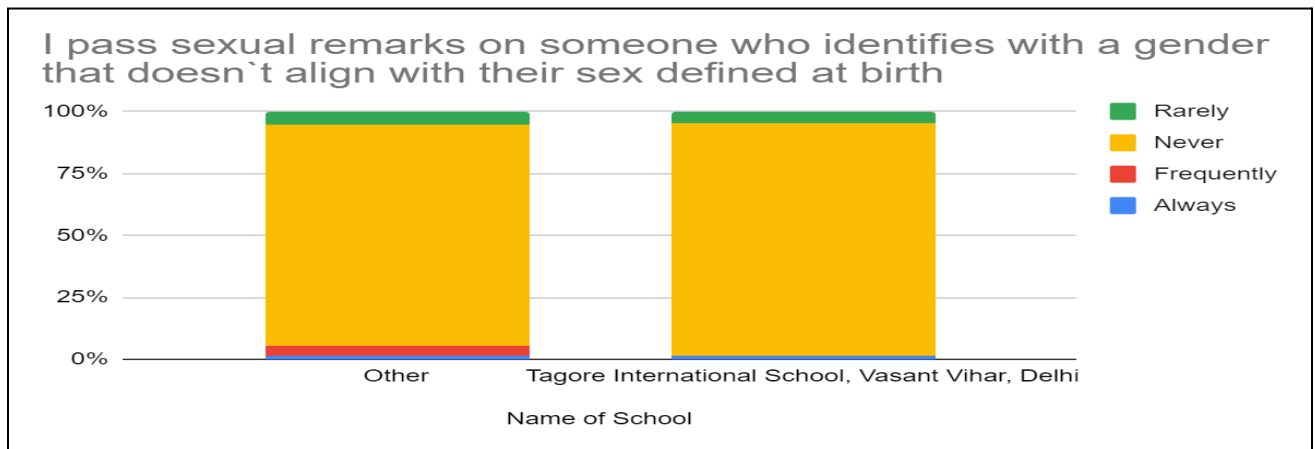
**Attitude Section**



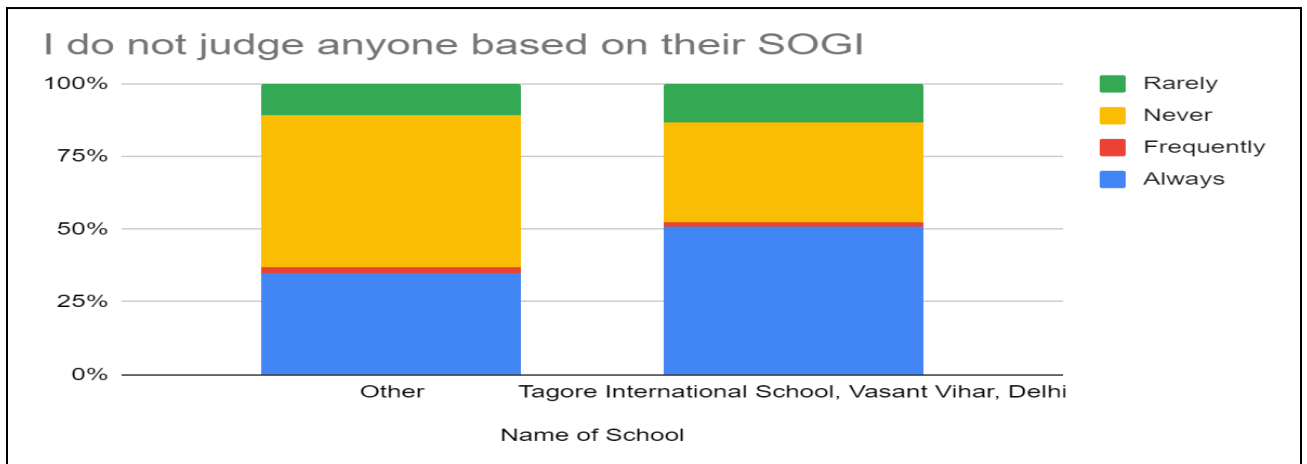
Graph 45



Graph 46

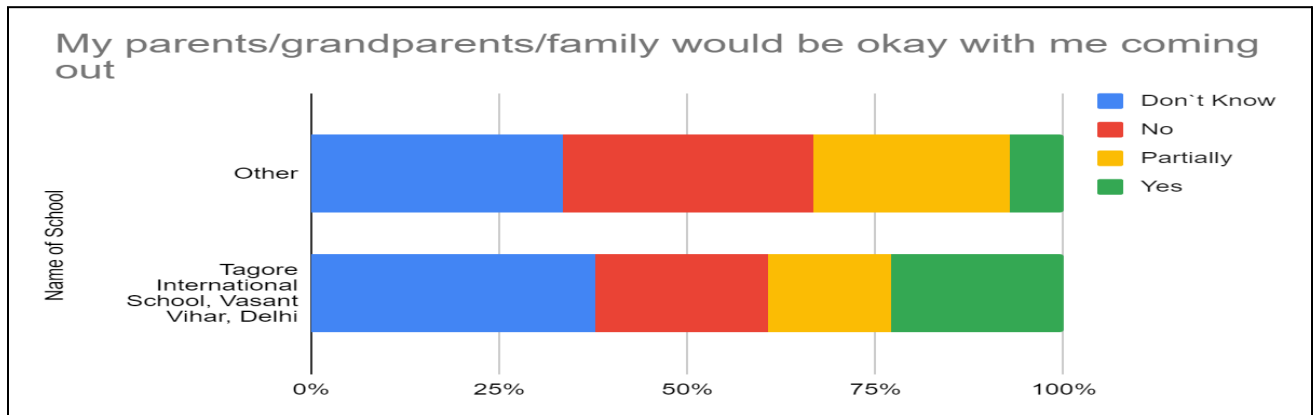


Graph 47

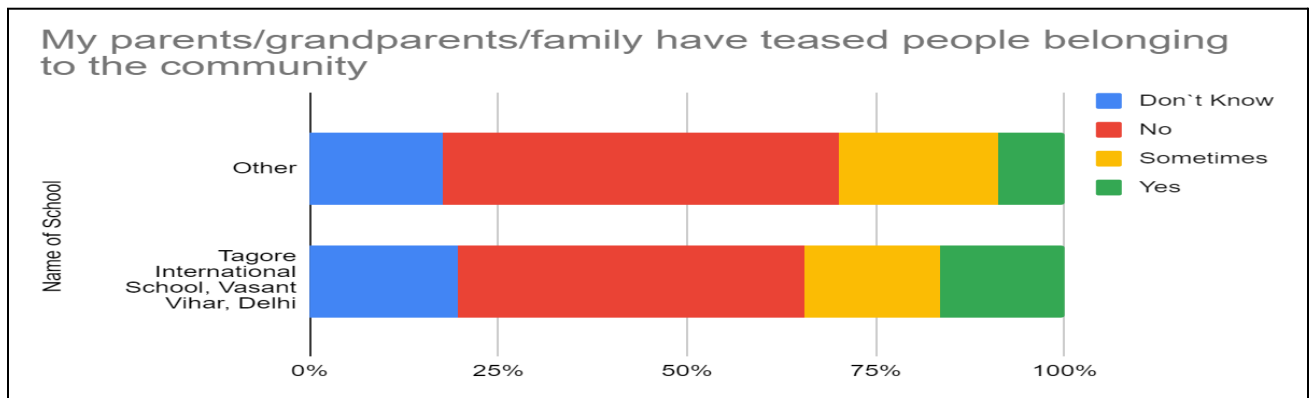


Graph 48

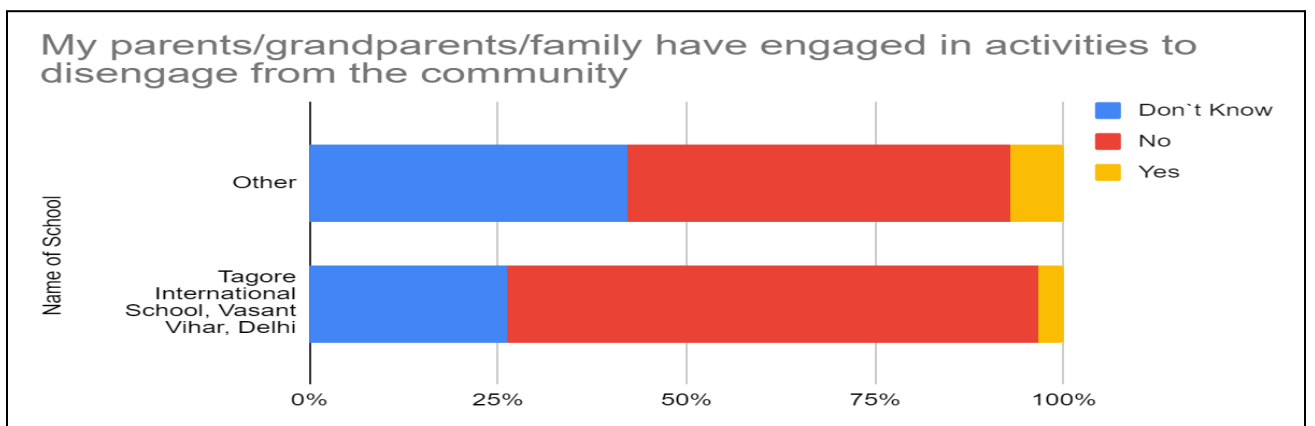
**Effect on Parents Section**



Graph 49

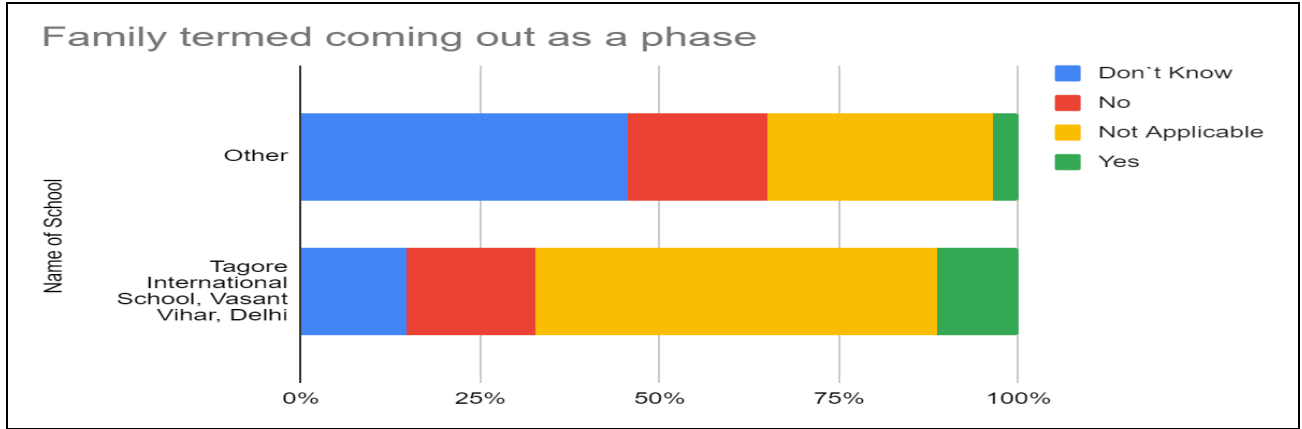


Graph 50

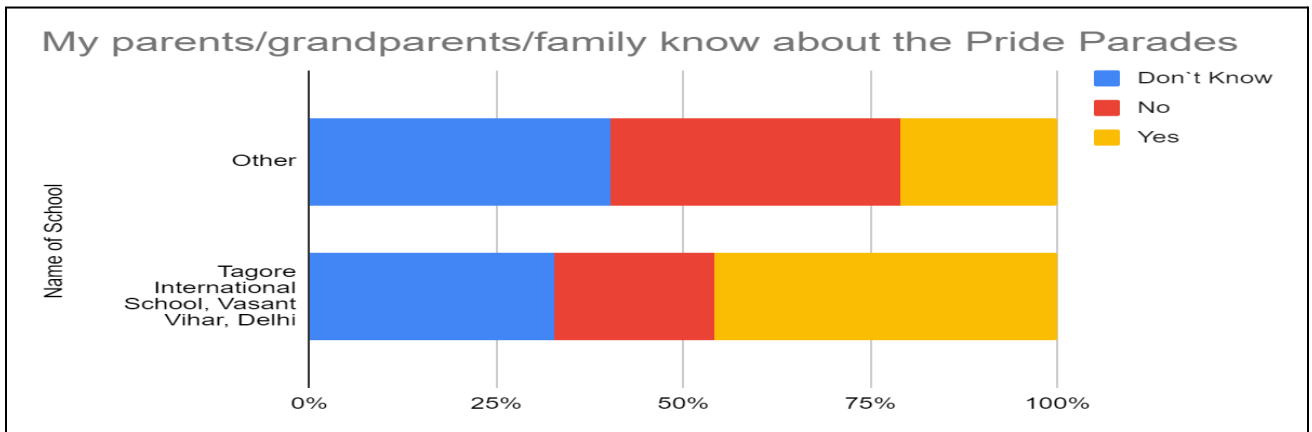


Graph 51

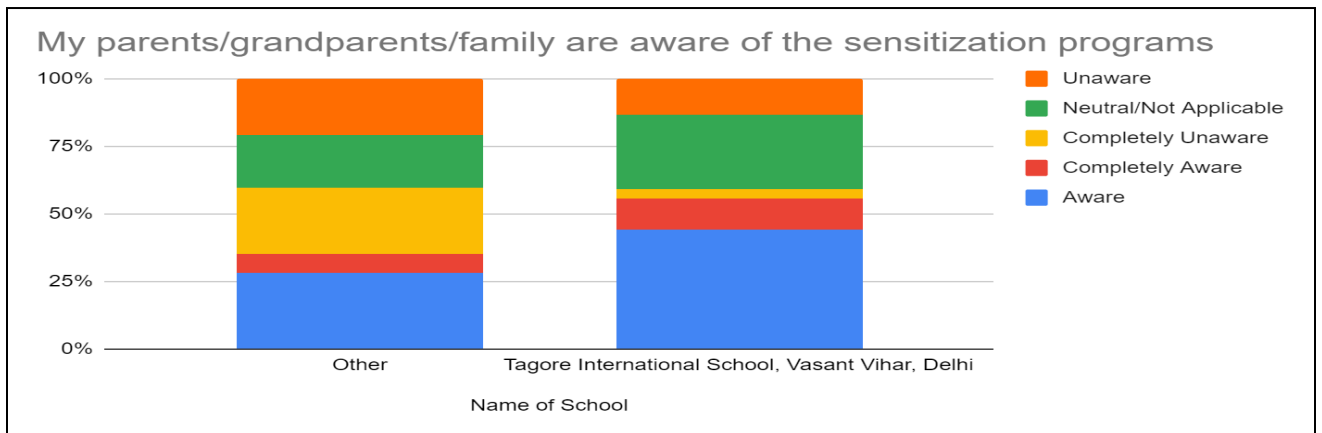




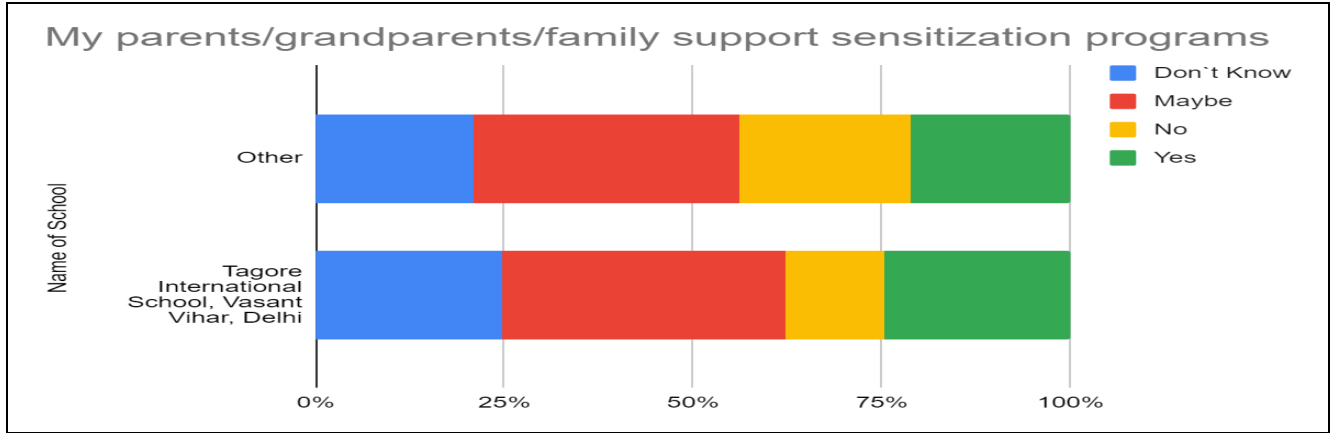
Graph 52



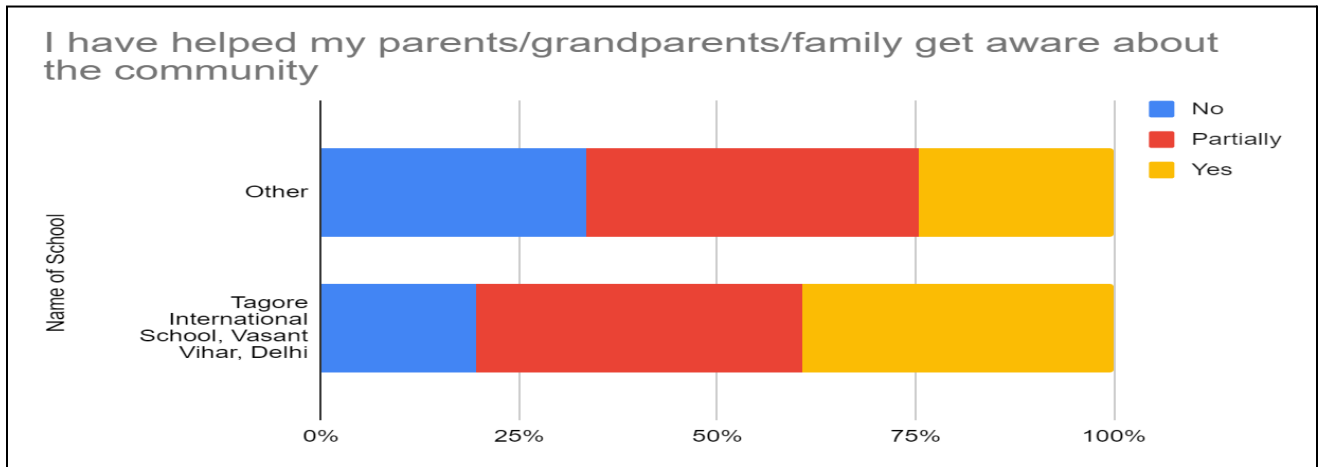
Graph 53



Graph 54



Graph 55



Graph 56