

## Changing Attitudes Toward Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation in Generation Z: A Review

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### Abstract

The trend in shifting attitude towards gender identity and sexual orientation has become an established characteristic of Generation Z, fueled by the rise of globalization, exposure to digital influences, and the changing socio-cultural standards. This paper will provide a systematic literature review and synthesis to gain insight into the nature, determinants, and implications of these shifting attitudes, especially in the Indian context. The most important goals are to analyze the differences between the generations in their perceptions, determine the factors which influence this, including digital media, education, culture, and evaluate the current challenges and barriers. The presented study is thought to employ a systematic literature review methodology, which follows the PRISMA framework, using Scopus as a database and employing the following inclusion criteria: the period of publication (2020-2026), the type of document, the type of source, the focus on the country, and the availability of the documents as open access materials. There were 31 thematic studies analyzed. The results indicate that the Gen Z generation is more accepting and knowledgeable about various gender identities and sexual orientations, and it is largely because of the Internet and educational resources. Nevertheless, the full inclusiveness is still impacted by long-term socio-cultural barriers, stigma and mental health issues particularly in traditional contexts. The research also concludes that despite the fact that the generation Z is a driver of progressive change, structural and cultural changes must be made to achieve meaningful inclusion and equality.

**Keywords:** Generation Z, Gender Identity, Sexual Orientation, Social Attitudes, Inclusivity

### 1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the world has experienced a significant shift in the discourse on gender identity and sexual orientation that can be explained by more general socio-cultural and political, as well as technological changes. These shifts are especially noticeable in the case of Generation Z, which is typically characterized as a group of people born in the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. Being digital natives, Generation Z has been brought up in a highly globalized world with multiple avenues of internet access and exposure to a greater number of identities, which all played a role in reversing the traditional conceptualizations of gender and sexuality (Twenge et al., 2019; Seemiller and Grace, 2016). This generation has therefore been considered as the most progressive and inclusive in the history in the context of the attitude towards gender identity and sexual orientation (Parker et al., 2020).

Gender identity, or the internal sense of gender felt by an individual, and sexual orientation, or the lifelong patterns of emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction, are increasingly viewed as fluid and multidimensional constructs instead of binary categories (American Psychological Association, 2021; Richards et al., 2016). Male/female and heterosexual/homosexual binary have been contested by non-binary, genderqueer, transgender, and pansexual identities. Their increased acceptance is a paradigmatic change that is mediated by both scholarly and grass-roots activism (Butler, 1990; Diamond, 2008). The queer theory and social constructionism have also been used to gain insights into gender and sexuality as a socially negotiated and culturally dependent phenomenon (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 2004).

There is empirical evidence indicating that Generation Z is much more accepting of LGBTQ+ identity than the old generation (Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers) has ever been (Pew Research Center, 2022; Gallup, 2023). To give an example, recent surveys reveal that the percentage of young people who claim to be LGBTQ+ is continuously growing, with Generation Z having the highest numbers of self-identification (Jones, 2022). The fact that this change occurs not only with the evolving personal identities but also with the overall acceptance of the society and the lessening of stigma linked with non-heteronormative orientations (Flores et al., 2020). Moreover, Gen Z's tend to endorse the policies of same-sex marriage, gender-neutral facilities, and anti-discrimination measures, which indicates a lot of correspondence with the postulates of equality and human rights (Parker et al., 2020).

One of the key factors that have led to these shifting attitudes is the ubiquity of digital media and online communities. Instagram, Tik Tok, Twitter, and other social media platforms are important platforms to explore identity, interact with peers, and activism. These platforms facilitate users to access a variety of narratives, connect with LGBTQ+ communities, and disrupt heteronormative discourses (Craig et al., 2021; McInroy and Craig, 2017). Furthermore, online platforms offer rather secure avenues through which oppressed youth can express themselves and gain social support, thus promoting a positive identity formation and acceptance (Escobar-Viera et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the Internet space is not without problems, such as exposure to cyberbullying, fake news, and polarization of ideology, which may complicate the identity formation process (Abreu and Kenny, 2018).

Schools and families also contribute to the formation of attitudes to gender and sexual diversity. Inclusive school curricula, diversity training, and accommodating school climates, have been discovered to have a positive impact on how students accept LGBTQ+ identities (Kosciw et al., 2020). On the same note, the perception and levels of acceptance of the young individuals are greatly influenced by parental attitudes and family communication patterns (Russell and Fish, 2016). These dynamics are again complicated by intersectionality whereby race, religion, socioeconomic status and geographic location intersect to form attitudes and experiences (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2000). To illustrate, young people in urban and cosmopolitan areas tend to exhibit greater levels of acceptance than young people in rural or conservative areas.

The development of the attitude towards gender identity and sexual orientation is especially complicated in the situation with India and other non-Western societies. Although there has been a major improvement in legal developments, including decriminalization of homosexuality in the landmark case of Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India, social acceptance has not been even (Narain, 2020). Perceptions are still controlled by cultural norms, religious beliefs, and the norms of society, which can cause tension between the traditional values and the progressive ideologies that emerge (Banerjee and Rao, 2020; Dutta and Roy, 2014). However, Indian young people in cities, especially those who are in the Generation Z, are becoming more accepting of inclusivity, which is influenced by education, exposure to the world, and exposure to the digital realm (Das, 2021).

Although these developments exist, there are still difficulties on the way to complete social acceptance and inclusion. The LGBTQ+ youth continue to experience discrimination, stigma, and disparities in mental health even in more accepting generational groups (Meyer, 2003; Russell and Fish, 2016). Besides, it is necessary to conduct a more profound study which would investigate inter-generational distinctions, longitudinal patterns and cross-cultural comparisons in order to learn more about the specifics of attitudinal change. The current literature has tended to focus on the Western context, thus creating a research gap in developing nations and other cultural oriented settings.

With such dynamics, a systematic and integrative review of the existing literature is necessary to synthesize existing knowledge, detect new patterns, as well as outline gaps in research. This kind of review will help to better understand how generation Z is ultimately altering the norms of gender and sexuality, and how these transformations affect the social policy, education, diversity in the workplace, and the overall transformation of society.

#### ➤ Aim and Significance of the Study

The main purpose of the research is to conduct a systematic review and critical analysis of the available academic sources on the shift in attitudes towards gender identity and sexual orientation among Generation Z individuals with a specific focus on determining the main predictors, new trends, and cross-cultural differences. The research is important because it offers a unified body of knowledge that may be used to guide policy making, educational changes and inclusive practices in a more globalized world. Through analysis of generational change, the research enhances the comprehension of the effects of changing attitudes on social cohesion, mental health, and equality programs. In addition, it is incredibly practical to stakeholders including educators, human resource professionals, policymakers, and social scientists who are interested in advancing inclusivity and resolving discrimination both in institutions and in society.

#### ➤ Research Contributions

This review paper makes several important contributions to the existing body of literature. First, it provides an extensive synthesis of the interdisciplinary research that covers sociology, psychology, gender studies and media studies, which offers a complete picture of the topic. Second, it contributes to theoretical insights by applying theories of queer theory, social identity theory, and generational cohort theory to understand the attitudinal shifts. Third, the research also emphasizes the importance of digital media ecosystems and globalization in the construction of modern ideas of gender and sexuality, which separates Generation Z and previous generations. Fourth, it offers considerable research gaps, especially in non-Western and intersectional studies, thereby offering a guideline in future empirical

research. Lastly, the research serves policy and practice by providing evidence-based information that could be used to inform inclusive practices in education, workplace management and social governance.

➤ **Research Questions**

- i. How do attitudes toward gender identity and sexual orientation among Generation Z differ from those of previous generations across various socio-cultural contexts?
- ii. What are the key influencing factors (e.g., digital media, education, family environment, and cultural context) shaping Generation Z’s perceptions of gender identity and sexual orientation?
- iii. How do intersectional factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and geographic location influence variations in attitudes within Generation Z?

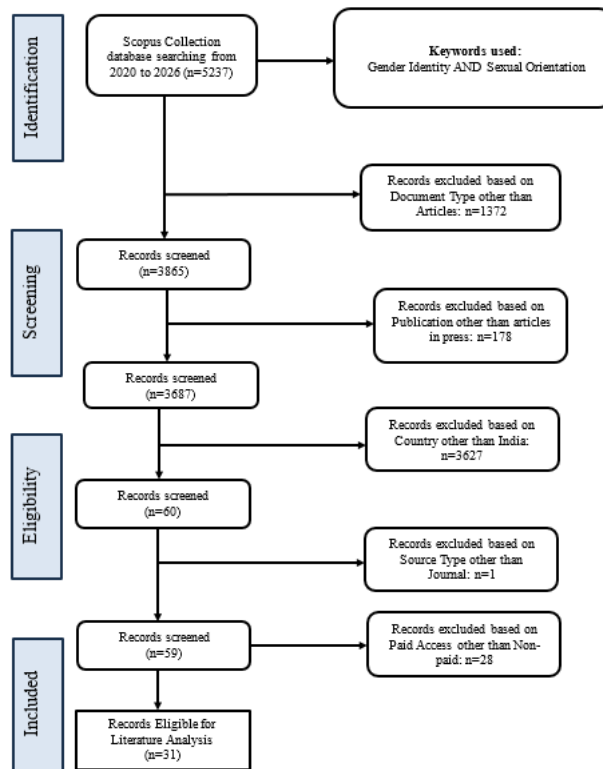
**2. Materials and Methods**

The current paper systematically finds and examines the most appropriate academic literature on the topic of shifting attitudes towards gender identity and sexual orientation among generation Z. The Scopus database was chosen because it is a very complete source containing high-quality, peer-reviewed literature and is reliable in citation-based analysis. The search terms used were Gender Identity AND Sexual Orientation to obtain a comprehensive search including the latest researches on the changing perceptions, inclusion and sociocultural changes concerning gender and sexuality. The search was limited to the period of 2020-2026 to guarantee the introduction of the latest and up-to-date research in accordance with the modern trends in generational changes.

Figure 1 shows the PRISMA model, which reflects the systematic literature review process and the information flow within various stages of the screening. In the first phase, 5,237 records were found using Scopus database. During the identification stage, 1,372 records were eliminated due to document types that were not research articles, leaving 3,865 records to further screening. After that, 178 records that were classified as other publications, not articles in press were excluded and there remained 3,687 records.

In the eligibility phase, a major refinement was done in accordance to geographical relevance. There were 3,627 records that were eliminated because they were not related to India leaving 60 records. Additional screening rules out 1 record because of the source type other than journals and resulted in 59 records. Also, 28 records were eliminated because of limited (paid) access, which guaranteed the exclusion of inaccessible and verifiable studies.

Lastly, having used all the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 31 records were considered to be eligible to undergo detailed analysis of the literature. The chosen articles are a foundation of the systematic review, which offers a narrowed and trustworthy dataset to explore the changing perceptions of gender identity and sexual orientation among Generation Z.



**Figure 1: PRISMA Framework representing Systematic Literature Review Process**  
 Source: Scopus Database

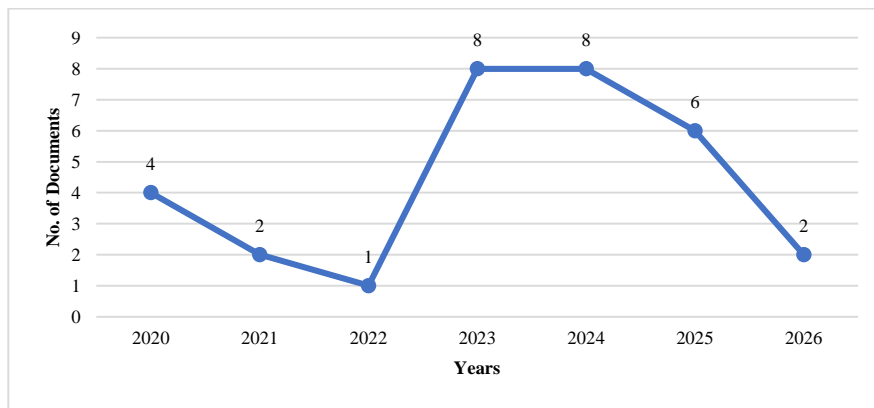
By going through each stratum, the resultant set of articles is appropriate, easily accessible, and of good quality, making up for potential inaccuracies observed in larger samples of scientific databases. Other filters are useful in narrowing the set of articles generated to the ones that are in the correct language, available either freely online or through the members’ institutions, and published as the final version.

**Table 1: Tabular Representation of Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria**

Criterion	Exclusion	Inclusion
Keywords	Records excluded in which variables have no relation.	Records conferring Gender Identity AND Sexual Orientation.
Timeframe	<2020	Concerning 2020–2026
Document Type	Reviews, book chapters, conference papers, editorials, letters, notes	Research Articles
Publication Type	Publications other than articles in press	Articles in press
Country	Studies conducted outside India	Studies focused on India
Source Type	Non-journal sources	Journal publications (Scopus-indexed)
Access Type	Paid/restricted access	Open access (non-paid full text available)

Source: Author’s Own Compilation

The inclusion and exclusion criteria provided in Table 1 represent a regular and thorough filtering approach in accordance with the PRISMA framework enabling the selection of appropriate and high-quality studies. First, to retain conceptual clarity, studies that were unrelated to the core variables of gender identity and sexual orientation were filtered out. To limit research to the most recent and up-to-date findings, a temporal filter (2020-2026) was employed, and only research articles were included, excluding reviews and book chapters as well as other non-empirical literature to guarantee the methodological strength. The filter of the publication stage only included articles in press and made sure that the current and peer-reviewed findings were present. Geographical filtering was used to only include studies that were done in India, which contributed to a more relevant context. Also, journal articles that were indexed in Scopus were only included to uphold academic integrity whereas the paid or restricted-access articles were excluded to guarantee transparency and data accessibility. Together, these requirements greatly reduced the search to the most relevant publications, which led to a narrow and effective sample to conduct an in-depth literature review.



**Figure 2: No. of documents published in each year**  
Source: Author's Own Compilation

The trend in the number of publications on gender identity and sexual orientation as shown in Figure 2 indicates that there were significant changes in the number of studies on the topic during the period of choice (2020-2026). Publications started to moderate speed in 2020 (4 studies) but then continued to decrease in 2021 (2 studies) and reached its lowest level in 2022 (1 study), which means that the research output in these years is relatively low. Notably, however, there is a sharp rise in 2023 and 2024, both of which have the highest number of publications (8 studies each), indicating an academic interest and increased scholarly attention towards the topic, perhaps due to growing societal discussion and policy developments. The number of publications decreases gradually after this peak in 2025 (6 studies) and then decreases again in 2026 (2 studies). In general, the trend shows an increase in research activity in the mid-period as the issue of gender identity and sexual orientation gains relevance among Generation Z and then slightly declines, which could be explained by the constraints of the database or the dynamism of the current research.

### 3. Literature Analysis

**Theme 1: Introduction to Generational Shifts in Gender and Sexuality:** The discussion about gender identity and sexual orientation has been changing tremendously over the last few years, at least in the cohort of Generation Z. This generation, which is digital-native, with a global outlook and forward-thinking social beliefs, is a significant shift in heteronormative standards. The reviewed literature suggests that Generation Z is more tolerant of other forms of gender identities and sexual orientations, as these are part of a larger shift in socio-cultural attitudes and more LGBTQ+ populations are visible.

The research indicates that gender identity is no longer as a binary concept but is becoming more and more a multidimensional and fluid concept. Research articles incorporated in this review point to the fact that younger people are more willing to delve into non-binary and gender-diverse identities, which are shaped by both intra- and interpersonal psychological mechanisms and external socio-cultural factors (Gururaj, 2023; Grubbs et al., 2025). This change reflects a larger shift in the attitudes of society, in which inclusivity and diversity are coming to the forefront of identity discussion.

**Theme 2: Identity Formation and Evolving Attitudes Among Generation Z:** One of the key themes that have arisen in the literature is how identity formation in Gen Z has taken a different form as compared to earlier generations in that Gen Zs tend to question the traditional gender norms and adopt multiple identities. Rathore and Jayalakshmi (2026) critically discuss transgender identity, its construction by lived experiences, marginalization, and resistance. Their results emphasize the fact that identity creation is not an individual process, but it is entrenched within social structures and power relationship.

On the same note, research on adolescents and young adults reveal that exposure to various views has led to more acceptance of sexual minorities. Manya et al. (2025) have discovered that there is growing awareness of various sexual orientations among adolescents, with a significant percentage of adolescents recognizing same-sex and bisexual orientations. This is indicative of the increasing acceptance of diversity in sexual orientation amongst the young people.

Nonetheless, the identity formation is a complicated process that is subject to socio-cultural limitations. Dominic et al. (2025) emphasize the fact that people with differences in sex development (DSD) tend to conform to gender roles assigned by society, despite the fact that his or her experience may be different. This highlights the conflict between personal identity and social conventions, which has been shaping the experiences of generation Z till now.

**Theme 3: Role of Digital Media and Technology in Shaping Attitudes:** Digital media proves to be a significant force that will affect the attitude of Generation Z on gender identity and sexual orientation. Gen Z individuals are digital natives, which implies that they depend on the internet greatly to obtain information, communicate with others, and discover their identity. Manya et al. (2025) prove that the use of smartphones and exposure to sexual content on the internet affect the knowledge of sexuality and gender roles of adolescents greatly. Availability of such content has not only expedited awareness but has also brought in challenges in identity formation. Chakravarthy et al. (2020) also indicate that the effects of exposure to digital media and especially pornography influence the perceptions about gender and sexual norms. Although this exposure may increase awareness, it is also likely to support stereotypes and unrealistic expectations. This twofold effect shows the necessity of critical use of digital content.

Moreover, Horvath et al. (2023) also suggest a cross-cultural outlook, showing that gender and sexual orientation have an impact on behavior patterns in various societies. Their results indicate that digital globalization has led to convergence of attitudes, but also indicate that there are still cultural differences. In general, digital media is transformative in the formation of modern conceptions of gender and sexuality in the generation of the Z.

**Theme 4: Influence of Education, Socialization, and Institutional Contexts:** Attitudes to gender identity and sexual orientation are majorly determined by education and socialization processes. The literature shows that inclusive learning settings bring tolerance and tolerance among the young people. Research by Srivastava (2024) and Ajith et al. (2020) demonstrates that exposure to gender-sensitive curricula and awareness programs have a significant positive effect on diversity perceptions of students. Social networks and peer groups are also important in attitude formation. There is also increased discussion of gender and sexuality by the generation Z, which resulted in more awareness and acceptance. But the role of the family is important. The conservative family values frequently come into conflict with the progressive ideologies, which makes the process of negotiating identities a complicated one (Majumder, 2020).

Moreover, the workplace and institutional contexts are becoming more aware of the need to be inclusive. Shekhar (2025) identifies that the level of engagement of employees and their performance is dependent on how much a person feels that they are accepted and appreciated in their identity. This brings out the wider implications of attitude change to the organizational practices and policies.

**Theme 5: Behavioral and Psychological Dimensions:** There is also literature on the behavioral and psychological aspects that are related to the gender identity and sexual orientation. Research has shown that sexual minorities tend to develop unique behavioural patterns and mental health issues. According to Horvath et al. (2023), there are differences in alcohol use and behavioral preferences among the different sexual orientations that indicate that identity may affect lifestyle decisions. Likewise, the studies by Lee (2023) and Chatterjee (2021) indicate that there is a correlation between sexual orientation and psychological well-being. Sexual minorities are discovered to be in greater danger of mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression and use of substances. These results are consistent with the minority stress theory that argues that social stigma and discrimination are related to poor mental health results.

Meanwhile, the literature indicates that these problems can be alleviated by greater acceptance and support. The progressive nature of Generation Z can help sexual minorities achieve better mental health outcomes, but there are still structural factors.

**Theme 6: Socio-Cultural Barriers and the Indian Context:** Although generation Z is seen to exhibit progressive attitudes, socio-cultural barriers are a major challenge, especially in the Indian setting. As noted in the literature, traditional norms, religious beliefs and societal expectations are still seen to play a role in how we see gender and sexuality. According to Dominic et al. (2025), people tend to be afraid of rejection, stigma, and discrimination, which affect their mental health and quality of life.

Khuman (2024) and Dixit (2023) also highlight that the LGBTQ+ people continue to be discriminated in different social areas, such as education, employment, and healthcare. Lack of awareness and institutional support tends to magnify these barriers.

Nevertheless, gradual change can be evidenced. Research shows that urban youths and educated groups are more tolerant towards various identities and this is a product of globalization and exposure to digital communication. Singh (2023) points out that stigma is still common, but there are a growing awareness and exposure of marginalized communities, including the Hijra community in India.

**Theme 7: Health, Well-being, and Policy Implications:** Having health and well-being is a major concern when it comes to discussing gender identity and sexual orientation. The literature shows that patients that have different identities usually encounter difficulties in seeking inclusive healthcare services. Domic et al. (2025) point to the necessity of better mental health support of people with DSD, whereas Zulu et al. (2024) draw attention to the increased health risks of sexual minorities. The relevance of inclusive policies and healthcare practices is highlighted by these findings. Gender-sensitive strategies in healthcare and education should be integrated to tackle disparities and well-being. Moreover, more inclusive society can be achieved with policy interventions to decrease the level of discrimination and improve the degree of awareness.

➤ **Synthesis and Research Gaps:** The literature reviewed all supports the idea that Generation Z is leading the way to altering the attitudes to gender identity and sexual orientation. Heightened awareness, exposure online, and educational efforts have led to the rise in acceptance and inclusiveness. Nevertheless, the fact that socio-cultural barriers remain underlines the necessity to further take action to ensure equality and make people understand each other.

The analysis results in several research gaps. To begin with, more longitudinal research is required to comprehend the way the attitudes change as time passes. Second, there is lack of research on rural and disadvantaged communities especially in the Indian setting. Third, intersectional studies are required with regard to factors like caste, class, and religion in order to understand the complexity of the identity experiences.

**Table 2: Literature Matrix**

S. No.	Author(s) & Year	Study Focus	Objective	Methodology	Key Findings	Theme
1	Manya et al. (2025)	Adolescents (Gen Z)	Smartphone use & sexuality development	Cross-sectional	Digital exposure shapes sexual awareness and identity	Digital Influence
2	Rathore & Jayalakshmi (2026)	Transgender identity (Gen Z relevance)	Identity & sexuality in literature	Qualitative	Highlights marginalization & identity struggle	Identity Formation
3	Dominic et al. (2025)	Young adults (Gen Z)	Gender identity in DSD individuals	Clinical study	Identity influenced by socio-cultural factors & stigma	Mental Health
4	Horváth et al. (2023)	Cross-cultural youth	Gender & sexual orientation differences	Quantitative	Behavioral differences across orientations	Behavioral Influence
5	Chinchhu et al. (2025)	Education & youth	Curriculum & sexual identity	Empirical	Education impacts awareness of gender identity	Socialization
6	Sehoul et al. (2024)	Clinical youth population	Cultural diversity & sexuality	Clinical study	Cultural exposure shapes identity perception	Cultural Context
7	Pereira et al. (2021)	Youth discrimination	LGBTQ discrimination	Survey	Discrimination persists despite awareness	Social Barriers
8	Leyton et al. (2026)	Health & youth	Gender identity & comorbidity	Clinical	Health outcomes linked with identity struggles	Health Dimension
9	Myers et al. (2022)	Oncology context	Sexual identity & disease	Clinical	Identity affects psychological well-being	Mental Health
10	Koós et al. (2025)	Behavioral science	Addiction & sexuality	Quantitative	Behavioral traits differ across orientations	Behavioral Influence
11	Chakravarthy et al. (2020)	Indian youth	Pornography & identity	Survey	Media exposure impacts sexual norms	Digital Influence
12	Grubbs et al. (2025)	Psychological behavior	Moral conflict & sexuality	Quantitative	Internal conflict in identity acceptance	Identity Formation
13	Muthukris et al. (2023)	LGBTQ inclusion	Social inclusion	Review/empirical	Inclusion still limited in institutions	Social Barriers
14	Ajith et al. (2020)	Nursing youth	Gender identity awareness	Survey	Awareness improving in healthcare students	Socialization
15	Majumder (2020)	Indian society	Gender norms	Empirical	Traditional norms still dominant	Cultural Context
16	Shekhar (2025)	Workplace youth	Engagement & identity	Quantitative	Identity influences performance	Organizational Context
17	Dhankar (2020)	Culture & identity	Gender perception	Survey	Cultural rigidity impacts acceptance	Cultural Context
18	Gururaj (2023)	Attitudes (Gen Z)	Gender attitude analysis	Survey	Increasing acceptance among youth	Identity Formation
19	Lin et al. (2024)	Cross-cultural youth	Gender & behavior	Quantitative	Global variation in acceptance	Cultural Context
20	Sharma (2024)	Medical context	Gender disparities	Empirical	Need for inclusive healthcare	Health Dimension
21	Rangan (2023)	Ethics & identity	Gender rights	Analytical	Ethical frameworks evolving	Social Change
22	Zulu et al. (2024)	HIV & identity	Sexual orientation risk	Clinical	Minority groups face higher risks	Health Dimension
23	Prasitha (2024)	Indian society	Sexual diversity awareness	Qualitative	Cultural ignorance persists	Cultural Context
24	Ajith A. (2024)	Healthcare	Gender identity in care	Empirical	Healthcare inclusivity improving	Socialization
25	Khuman (2024)	LGBTQ youth	Identity & discrimination	Survey	Stigma still prevalent	Social Barriers
26	Srivastava (2024)	Education	Gender perception	Survey	Education drives acceptance	Socialization
27	Dixit (2023)	Transgender issues	Social inclusion	Empirical	Economic and social exclusion exists	Social Barriers
28	Lodge (2023)	Diversity	Gender diversity	Review	Need for inclusive frameworks	Social Change
29	Chatterjee (2021)	Alcohol & identity	Behavioral link	Quantitative	Substance use varies by orientation	Behavioral Influence
30	Lee (2023)	Addiction	Sexual minorities	Clinical	Higher psychological risk	Mental Health
31	Singh (2023)	Hijra community	Identity & society	Qualitative	Strong stigma yet emerging acceptance	Cultural Context

Source: Author's Own Compilation

#### 4. Conclusion

The current systematic review offers a detailed insight into the changing views on gender identity and sexual orientation in Generation Z and demonstrates that there is a substantial change in attitude between the generations toward inclusivity, diversity, and fluidity in identity constructs. Compared to earlier generations, Gen Z is more ready to break the binary and heteronormative ideology, and a range of identities expressed by the generation reflects the wider socio-cultural changes. The literature has repeatedly suggested that this change is highly conditioned by more digital connections, exposure to discourses around the world, and less conservative educational settings, which have led to the normalization of gender and sexuality discourse. Nevertheless, the results also demonstrate a paradoxical fact: as the attitudinal acceptance is growing, the structural inequalities, cultural resistance, and institutional gaps are still present, especially in socio-culturally conservative settings like India. Such problems as stigma, discrimination, and mental health vulnerabilities are still widespread, which indicates the disconnection between awareness and real social inclusion. Moreover, the review highlights that the identity formation among Generation Z is not homogenous but rather determined by the interplay of various factors such as gender, socio-economic status, education, and geography. On the whole, the research concludes that Generation Z is becoming a driver of social change, yet the shift to a completely inclusive society is in the process and needs to be supported by institutional, cultural, and policy-level responses.

#### ➤ Implications of the study

The results of this review have a complex academic, policy, social, and organizational implications. Policymaking wise, there is an urgent requirement to enhance legal and institutional frameworks that can support the rights and dignity of individuals in various gender identities and sexual orientations. Policymakers need to go beyond symbolic acknowledgement to take concrete steps to include anti-discrimination legislations, inclusive healthcare policies, and gender-neutral

government services. Gender sensitive education and gender sensitive curricula coupled with diverse trainers trainings in the field of education can be transformative in instilling inclusive attitudes at a tender age. Schools should also establish secure platforms to talk and supports to students who are experimenting with their identities.

The findings in the healthcare sector reveal the importance of introducing gender-affirmative care practices, enhancing access to mental health services, and educating healthcare professionals to meet the specific needs of LGBTQ+ populations. Companies and workplaces especially those that employ a significant percentage of generation Z workers should focus on diversity and inclusion efforts such as fair policies and sensitization programs, and supportive working conditions, which can help improve both the well-being and productivity of employees.

Also, the contribution of digital media highlights the need to enhance digital literacy and responsible consumption of content. Although digital platforms have made information more democratic and provided a possibility to explore the self, they also have threats connected to misinformation and negative stereotypes. Thus, stakeholders need to make sure that digital spaces are used as an educational, advocacy, and positive social change tool. All of these implications point to the fact that to establish inclusivity, a concerted effort across various sectors is needed to align the values of the society and the institutional practices.

#### ➤ **Limitations of the study**

Although the review has some useful insights, it has a number of limitations which can affect interpretation and generalization of findings of the study. To start with, the research is limited to the Scopus database that, despite its extensive coverage and popularity, may not be able to cover all the literatures that can be found in other databases like the Web of Science, PubMed or regional indexing databases. Such limitation can lead to the exclusion of relevant studies especially those that are in non-indexed journals or new research publications. Secondly, the inclusion criteria limited the analysis to open-access articles, which may have excluded high-quality articles that are only accessible with paid membership, which could have provided more depth to the review.

Thirdly, the geographical targeting of India, as much as it offers contextual specificity, restricts the generalizability of the results to other cultural and socio-political contexts. Cultural norms, legal frameworks, and societal structures have a profound impact on attitudes toward gender identity and sexual orientation, and, thus, the results might not be entirely reflective of the global perspective. Moreover, the studies analyzed have high methodological heterogeneity with both qualitative analysis and cross-sectional surveys, clinical studies, and theoretical explorations. This diversity, though rich, can also bring inconsistency in the findings, and hamper the possibility of making consistent conclusions.

The other restriction is that it uses secondary data; this has an inherent limitation of relying on the scope and quality and accuracy of the initial studies. Some of these dimensions which include intersectionality of caste, religion, and rural to urban inequalities are underrepresented in the literature that is available. Lastly, since the societal attitudes and digital impacts change at a remarkably fast pace, certain results might become obsolete in the nearest future, which is why the ongoing and renewed research in the field is required.

#### ➤ **Future Research Directions**

The subsequent studies should strive to enhance the current body of knowledge by filling the gaps and broadening the field of investigation of gender identity and sexual orientation in Generation Z. The need to conduct longitudinal studies that trace the evolution of attitudes over time is among the most crucial lines, as it will help the researchers to comprehend how initial exposure to inclusive settings, digital media, and educational interventions can affect the identity formation in the long term and social cognitions. These studies can also give more insight into the sustainability, intensification, or the transformation of the progressive attitudes they are witnessing in Generation Z as they enter into older stages of life.

The urgent necessity to target underserved and marginalized groups, especially those living in rural communities and those characterized by caste, religion, and low socio-economic status is also a concern. Intersectional research methodologies are to be used to investigate the interaction of multiple identities to influence experiences and attitudes, which will help develop a more sophisticated picture of diversity. The literature might be further enriched by the comparative cross-cultural study that can determine similarities and differences in attitudes in various regions and cultural contexts to a more global outlook.

Also, the role of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, virtual communities, and digital activism, in identity development and social approval should be examined in future research. Considering the pivotal role of the digital platforms in the lives of Generation Z, it is essential to learn about these dynamics both academically and practically. Methodologically, more mixed-method and interdisciplinary studies are required which integrate quantitative rigor and qualitative profundity, which make a thorough approach to inquiry on complex social phenomena possible.

Lastly, community-based and participatory research should be pursued with LGBTQ+ people to have authentic representation and inclusivity in knowledge creation. These methods can help to close the gap between research and lived experiences, ultimately leading to more effective policies and interventions. Altogether, to move forward in the field of research, it is necessary to consider the holistic, inclusive, and prospective approach that will be dynamic enough to portray the modern society in terms of gender and sexuality.

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