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## Language of Inclusivity - A Content Analysis of LGBTQ+ Terminology in Newspaper Dailies

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### **Abstract:**

*LGBTQ+ people and communities have a rich history documented in Indian literature. However, as of the middle of the twenty-first century, news about the LGBTQ+ community has not received much attention or discussion in public. Consequently, there is a significant amount of information that needs to be shared with the public to address this knowledge gap. One of the fundamental rights guaranteed by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution is the right to live with human dignity. Since the media plays an educational role, it bears the responsibility to inform the public about the presence of the LGBTQ+ community, using inclusive language and focusing on their fundamental rights.*

*The Press Council of India issued guidelines for inclusive LGBTQ+ reporting in August 2023. The frequency with which the media reports on LGBTQ+ people and issues is crucial, as it indicates how often and consistently the public encounters this community. To analyze and assess the current state of coverage and language, this study selected three widely read Indian newspapers: The Times of India, Hindustan Times, and Indian Express. This study focused on the months of September, October, and November 2023, which are three months after the guidelines were published.*

*This study demonstrated that the media hasn't entirely adhered with the guidelines, as evidenced by the 30% of offensive terms found in well-known newspaper dailies. This suggests that the media still needs to exercise greater sensitivity and conduct thorough study on the guidelines.*

**Keywords:** LGBTQ+ community, Inclusive Language, Media, content analysis, newspaper dailies.

### **Introduction:**

India demonstrates remarkable efforts and a journey to preserve its customs and culture while simultaneously advancing its economic agenda. Its extensive heritage of rich culture instills a sense

of pride in many. Customs and traditions have evolved over time, yet India has embraced these changes without compromising their core significance and meaning.

There is a long discussion underway regarding gender in the Indian knowledge system. Many historical pieces of evidence exist that discuss the presence, challenges, and issues faced by women and the LGBTQ+ community in India.

The queer community has had a significant influence on Indian culture. LGBTQ+ is an inclusive term that covers lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex individuals and the + in 'LGBTQ' refers to that additional categories, such as pansexual, asexual, intersex, and so forth, are included in the above list, which is not all-inclusive. These communities generally celebrate pride, diversity, individuality, and sexuality.

According to the IPSOS report, 17% of the Indian population identifies as homosexual (including gay and lesbian), 9% as bisexual, 1% as pansexual, and 2% as asexual. The majority, 69%, identify as heterosexual, excluding those who chose 'do not know' or 'prefer not to answer' (IPSOS, 2021).

The objective of this study is to analyze the representation of LGBTQ+ communities in prominent English newspaper dailies in India. Researchers aim to examine the language and narratives used by these newspapers in their coverage and portrayal of LGBTQ+ communities in Maharashtra edition.

Table 1. Daily Circulation of Newspaper Dailies Under Study

No.	Newspaper Daily	Daily Average Circulation IRS (Lakhs)
1.	Times of India	485910
2.	Hindustan Times	233177
3.	Indian Express	104172

(Source: RNI Report 2021-22)

### 1.1 Challenges Faced by LGBTQ+ Community:

Despite the decriminalization of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code by the Supreme Court of India, the LGBTQ+ community still lacks full acceptance from the citizens of the country. They face numerous challenges in their daily lives, even though the legal change is just the beginning of their journey to a healthier and happier life. One major challenge they encounter is societal judgment based on their behavior and physical appearance (WHO, 2015).

The media has an important job when it comes to talking about LGBTQ+ people. They can either help people understand and accept LGBTQ+ individuals, or they can make things worse by spreading stereotypes and wrong information. It's crucial for the media to talk about LGBTQ+ topics respectfully and accurately. This means using the right words and avoiding unfair portrayals. Media

can also give a voice to LGBTQ+ people and share their stories. This helps others learn about their lives and struggles, which can lead to more understanding and acceptance. Indian Constitution gives equal opportunities and rights to their citizens, Article 21 of Indian Constitution ensures that every person has the right to life. The right to life covers different elements like living with dignity, earning a livelihood, and having a healthy environment (India, 1950). Keeping legal provisions in mind, appropriate portrayals of LGBTQ+ lives in media, politics, and public life can dispel prejudice, minimize discrimination, and foster acceptance. Because visibility matters, media coverage can thereby humanize isolated cultures and educate viewers. However, in order to accurately portray these shifting demographics, more representation of LGBTQ+ individuals are required.

### **1.2 Theoretical Framework:**

In agenda-setting theory, "framing" refers to how issues are presented to the public, influencing how they are perceived and understood (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). When it comes to analyzing inclusive language for the LGBTQ+ community within this framework, framing becomes crucial. The language used in media, policymaking, and public discourse can shape perceptions and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ issues. Inclusive language that respects diverse gender identities and sexual orientations promotes acceptance and understanding, while language that perpetuates stereotypes or excludes certain identities can reinforce discrimination. Therefore, examining language choices within the context of agenda-setting theory allows us to understand how frames impact societal attitudes and behaviors towards the LGBTQ+ community.

### **2. Review of Literature:**

Human communication is dependent on language since it allows us to express complicated concepts and feelings. It affects how people see things, especially in relation to gender and events. Language norms are shaped by human behavior and societal shifts, particularly in the LGBTQ+ community. Gender and biological sex should be set apart from one another, as they are frequently used interchangeably. Hence, it has become highly significant to standardize the language for LGBTQ+ inclusive individuals. Michele J. Eliason's paper "An Exploration of Terminology Related to Sexuality and Gender: Arguments for Standardizing the Language," conducted by Michele J. Eliason (Eliason, 2017)), discusses the diverse terminology surrounding gender and sexuality over the past century, questioning further the significance of the words we use and the need for meaningful discourse. Instead of promoting binary variations, it promotes language that represents the diversity of sexes and genders. To reduce discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, journalists are essential in addressing these concerns appropriately. As suggested by author Christina Chan-Meeto (Meeto, 2013) Workshops are important for journalists to avoid assumptions about gender roles and use gender neutral language. Gender sensitization essentially broadens readers' ethical standards by



enhancing their viewpoints and knowledge. To ensure equitable treatment and fair reporting, media organizations should, nevertheless, actively investigate gender issues, include them into their training education, and create laws. The media's influence on the public's perspectives is highly evident which further highlights the need for inclusive representation of LGBTQ+ people to study its impact on public views. The 2020 study "Media Impact on Public Opinion: LGBTQ Issues" by Gabriel M. Galvan (Galvan, 2020) investigates how media consumption affects the public's perception of LGBTQ+ people. Essentially, there is a relationship between media representation and social attitudes towards LGBTQ+ it has examined by Krishayveer Sultania (Sultania, 2023). Increasing the general public's exposure to LGBTQ+ individuals is crucial for improving their knowledge base. This can be achieved through appropriate use of inclusive terminology and consistent reporting.

### 2.1 Press Council of India guidelines:

On August 21, 2023, the Press Council of India released guidelines for reporting on LGBTQ+ news, urging that media avoid using specific terminology. The goal of these guidelines, according to the Press Council of India, is "to enhance the understanding of gender, sexuality, its terms and usage". When reporting about the LGBTQ+ community, journalists need to be aware of a number of terms. According to PCI, for example, it's preferable to use neutral language like 'them/they' rather than 'he', 'she', or 'it', if someone's gender identity is uncertain. Secondly, it is easier to report news when terms are normalized as opposed to being labeled based on one's sexuality. When describing LGBTQIA+ topics, it's important to think carefully about whether terms like 'gay', 'lesbian', 'bisexual', or 'transgender' are appropriate. Beyond gender identification and sexual orientation, diverse identities should also be highlighted. Apart from that, the word "alleged" (such as 'alleged transgender person' or 'alleged relationship') should not be used to characterize LGBTQIA+ identities and relationships. Additionally, it has become pivotal to constantly use umbrella terms like 'LGBT', 'LGBTQ', and 'LGBTQIA+' rather than "the gay community," as the latter word is not inclusive. These are but a few recommendations.

### 3. Research Design:

To conduct the research and analyze its objectives and aims, the following research design was implemented.

#### 3.1 Aim:

In order to determine the implications of the findings for media practice, it is now crucial to analyze language patterns and look at the contexts in which LGBTQ+ terminology is used. Since the Press Council of India announced guidelines for inclusive LGBTQ+ terminology, it is critical to examine the content published by widely distributed Indian publications to see whether they are adhering to these rules.

The aim of the paper is to provide a thorough research of LGBTQ+ representation in newspapers dailies (Times of India, Hindustan Times and Indian Express), with a focus on how language usage incorporates patterns and contexts and how well guidelines for inclusive LGBTQ+ terminology are adhered to.

### 3.2 Objectives:

Newspapers are essential for influencing public opinion and societal views towards the LGBTQ+ population as society advances towards broader awareness and acceptance of a range of sexual orientations and gender identities. Nonetheless, the degree to which the publication of inclusive language guidelines while covering news on LGBTQ+ and how well and accurately remains a subject of inquiry.

- A. To examine if the contextual use of LGBTQ+ terminology aligns with the guidelines for publishing on the LGBTQ+ community.
- B. To highlight evolving trends in newspaper language and identify any patterns or shifts in the use of LGBTQ+ terminology over time.
- C. To measure the frequency of inclusive LGBTQ+ language used during a specific time frame in varied newspaper articles.
- D. To examine how well news outlets follow inclusive language guidelines while covering LGBTQ+ subjects.

### 3.3 Research Questions:

The primary purpose of content analysis is to answer the critical research questions about LGBTQ+ news coverage and usage of inclusive language.

- A. How frequently do varied newspapers use inclusive language for LGBTQ+ when publishing stories?
- B. How closely do newspapers adhere to inclusive language guidelines stated by the Press Council of India when reporting on LGBTQ+ issues?
- C. Are there differences in how LGBTQ+ terminology is used in different newspapers and subjects?

### 3.5 Hypothesis:

This study's hypothesis explores the relationship between the frequency of LGBTQ+ community news coverage in newspapers and the adherence to the guidelines of inclusive LGBTQ+ terminology.

H1 : Selected newspapers for the research are adhering to the issued guidelines for LGBTQ+.

H2 : Selected top widely read Indian publications follow precisely the same guidelines while covering the news .

H0 : Selected newspapers are not following the guidelines released by the Press Council of India

### 3.6 Methodology:

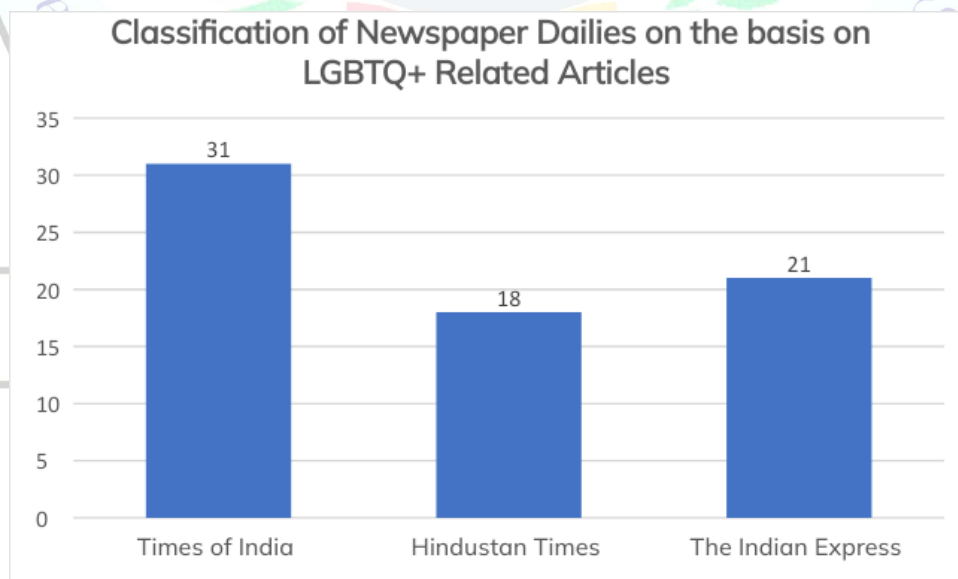
To analyze the language used in leading daily newspapers in India, researchers selected three prominent national English dailies: Indian Express, Hindustan Times, and Times of India. They employed content analysis to examine news articles addressing LGBTQ+ community issues published in these newspapers. For the analysis, articles from the months of September, October, and November 2023 were chosen, which followed the guidelines issued by the Press Council of India on 21/8/2023. After collecting the data and adhering to the set parameters outlined by the Press Council of India, researchers scrutinized each article and drew their observations.

### 3.7. Limitation of the Research:

- A. The study was done for a period of three months (September, October and November) in the year 2023.
- B. Only the Times of India, Hindustan Times and Indian Express (Mumbai Edition) were selected for the study.
- C. The Content Analysis method was used for the gathering and analyzing the data.
- D. Focus of this research is only based on the qualitative aspect of the language used by the newspaper dailies with special reference to LGBTQ+ community.
- E. The released guidelines are only in one foreign language i.e. English.

## 4. Result and Discussion:

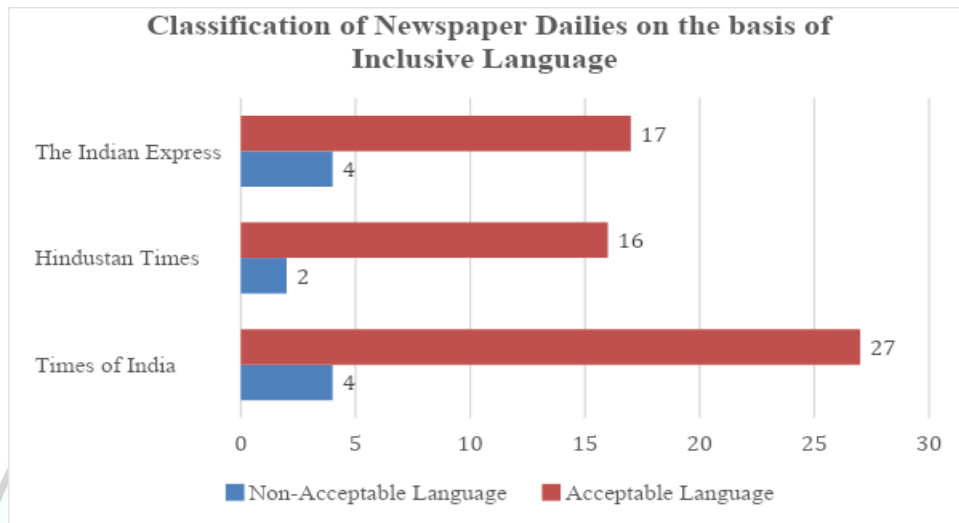
**Chart No. 4.1 Classification of Newspaper Dailies on the Basis on LGBTQ+ Community**



The public needs to be exposed to news about the LGBTQ+ community more frequently in order to change their beliefs. After analyzing the entire three months of all three top newspapers, from above chart no. 1.4, it has been observed that, The Times of India has published 31 articles.

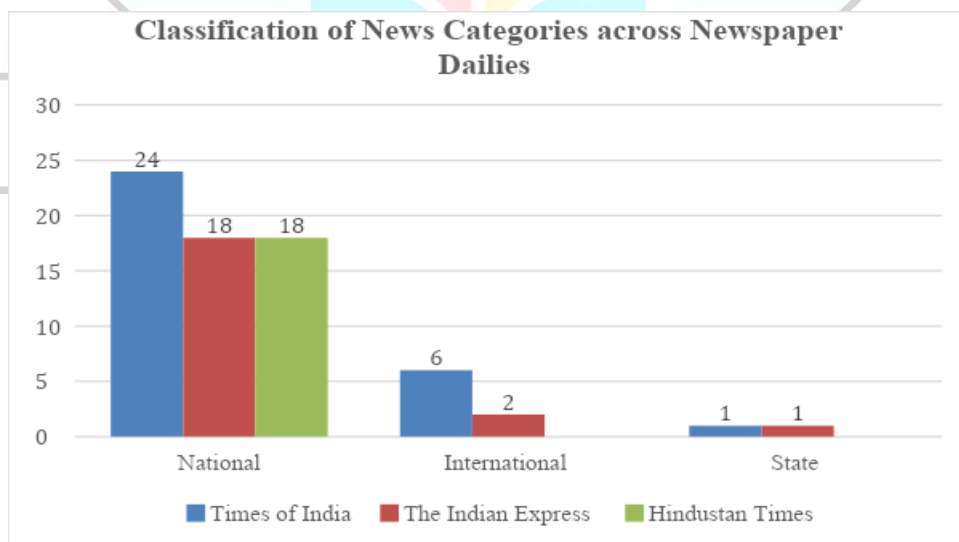
Furthermore, The Indian Express released 21 pieces in the months of September, October, and November 2023, and Hindustan Times covered about 18 news stories and articles about the LGBTQ+ community.

**Chart No. 4.2 Evaluation of inclusive language's level of acceptability**



The media has a huge impact on public opinion because it serves two primary purposes: first, the media tells us the news and second, the media tells us what to think about the news. Furthermore, in order to preserve inclusivity, the media must also be mindful of the guidelines. According to the study's analysis, chart no. 4.2 shows that, The Times of India employed unsuitable terminology in four of its news stories. On the other hand, Hindustan Times has also employed inappropriate language in two of its stories, while The Indian Express has done the same in four of its pieces. Therefore hypothesis no.1 proved false, selected newspapers for the research are not adhering to the issued guidelines for LGBTQ+ suggested by Press Council of India.

**Chart No. 4.3 News category Across Newspapers Dailies**





In order to gain a thorough understanding and knowledge of the LGBTQ+ community, it is crucial that people are presented with news from all around the world. Nevertheless, the study's analysis suggests that Hindustan Times has exclusively covered national news, while The Times of India has mostly covered stories falling under the national category. Furthermore, The Indian Express has yet again published more national news and stories than international ones. The selection of stories for the national section is based on the fact that, three months after the guidelines were released, same-sex marriage was a focal point of discussion.

**4.4 Table of objectionable terms used across diverse newspaper dailies**

Newspaper dailies	Objectionable terms	Appropriate terms to use according to PCI
<b>The Times of India</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Homosexuals</li> <li>2. Sex-change operation, Gender reassignment surgery</li> <li>3. Gay marriage.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Outside of scientific and clinical discourse, the word homosexual has outdated and discredited connotations of psychological disorder.</li> <li>2. Avoid use of words such as sex change surgery or sex reassignment surgery instead use the more appropriate "Gender Affirmative Surgery (GAS)"</li> <li>3. Avoid using headlines like 'Let the Gays Marry' as oversimplifies diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Use LGBTQ+ to be more inclusive instead.</li> </ol>
<b>Hindustan Times</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Transgender</li> <li>2. Transgender rights.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do not use transgenders in your article; 'transgender' is an adjective. Use transgender person, transwomen, transmen,</li> </ol>



		and/or trans* persons
<b>The Indian Express</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sex reassignment surgery, Gender reassignment surgery.</li> <li>Transgenderers.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid use of words such as sex change surgery or sex reassignment surgery instead use the more appropriate "Gender Affirmative Surgery (GAS)"</li> <li>Do not use transgenderers in your article; 'transgender' is an adjective. Use transgender person, transwomen, transmen, and/or trans* persons</li> </ol>

According to the study's hypothesis, newspapers chosen for the research correspond with the published guidelines for LGBTQ+ people. This hypothesis results in positive findings. The news is covered by widely read Indian publications that adhere more precisely to the published guidelines; however, the test results are negative. Therefore hypothesis no. 2 proved false, Selected top widely read Indian publications not following the same guidelines while covering the news related to LGBTQ+ community in their respective news paper dailies. Also from this observation, null hypothesis no. 3 proved true, selected newspapers for the study are not following the guidelines released by the Press Council of India.

### 5. Conclusion:

Through an analysis of the ways in which different newspapers depict LGBTQ+ problems and identities, this study is sure to highlight disparities in language usage, priority, and context. The use of inclusive language and the degree to which the media has taken guidelines into account are the most crucial factors. The research's results demonstrated that the media hasn't entirely adhered with the guidelines, as evidenced by the 30% of offensive terms found in well-known newspaper dailies. This suggests that the media still needs to exercise greater sensitivity and conduct thorough study on the guidelines. Furthermore, the guidelines are only available in English, the dominant language, which makes it even more challenging for regional journalists to figure out and report on. Basically, there should be greater sensitivity to regional language; it should also reflect our diversity in terms of tastes, morals, and opinions. Therefore, it's critical to educate upcoming journalists about inclusivity so they can cover this community with greater care and awareness. Universities should host

workshops for newcomer media professionals to help them understand how important it has become to uphold one's dignity. Most significantly, editors and editorial policies should involve LGBTQ+ individuals in their work environment to gain deeper understanding of each individual and ultimately gain more insights that will surely encourage both diversity and inclusivity.

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