

Understanding Queer Identity as Fellow Humans - A Study

- S. Sountharya

M.Phil. (English)

Chevalier T. Thomas Elizabeth (C.T.T.E.) College for Women

Chennai. 11

email id: sountharyasrini1397@gmail.com

Background of the Study:

Queer theory is a part of the field of Queer studies whose roots can be found in women's studies, feminist theory, and gay and lesbian studies, as well as postmodern and poststructuralist theories (Parrillo et al. 737). The works of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler are considered as the founding texts of Queer theory. The term 'Queer' is often used as an umbrella term by and for persons who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or intersex, or by and for individuals who use the term as an alternative to LGBTI labels (Parrillo et al. 738).

Earlier the deeply-embedded homophobic and transphobic attitudes, often combined with a lack of adequate legal protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, expose 'Queer' of all ages and in all regions of the world to egregious violations of human rights (*Born Free and Equal* 7).

No proper communication and lack of understanding about sexual orientation and gender identity lead to family disruption and increase family conflicts that would result in queer person(s) being removed from or forced out of their home(s) during adolescence (Jawale 408). Every year, they face huge issues related to violence, unemployment, discrimination, poverty, and lack of healthcare (Choudhary 2018).

Sexual orientation and gender expression form an integral part of an individual's identity. Supreme Court's decision in 2018 which decriminalises homosexual behavior is an important step towards providing equal status and rights to the Queer community in India. The prime fact is that queer people are also human beings, and therefore entitled to all human rights as well as fundamental rights in India. Hence Queer community in India are at peace after striking down the key component of IPC Section 377 by the Supreme Court of India.

In spite of strict societal norms and taboos, some people from queer community work hard and make greater achievements in various fields like arts, music, film, architect, media, etc. At present, the society witnesses their suppression as well as their efforts to overcome obstacles and achieve success.

Today, homosexuality and Queer identity are acceptable by more Indian youths than ever before, within the boundaries of families, homes, and schools. There are still many places in India where people are not aware of what LGBT stands for, so the acceptance still remains a constant struggle for the 'Queer' as a whole (Choudhary 2018).

This study attempts to explore how heterosexuals understand Queer mindset or attitude - whether they treat them equally as fellow humans (by showing respect or rendering support) or condemn, criticise, or curse them due to social, cultural, and religious constraints. It also aims to do a qualitative study about Queer people, their achievements, general awareness, and suggestions to improve their status in the society.

Statement of Problem:

- Exclusion of Queer Community from mainstream activities due to religious and societal constraints is disheartening.

Need for the Study:

- People from Queer Community break barriers and stand up for themselves. It is important to find whether the society treats Queer people as equals, without showing any disrespect to them.

Objective of the Study:

- The objective of the study is to analyse how mainstream people view Queer Community in the modern era.

Hypothesis of the Study:

- Youngsters understand the nature, attitude, efforts, and achievements of Queer people better than elderly people.

Location of the Study:

- The study is conducted in selected Arts and Science colleges in North Chennai.

Samples of the Study:

- Undergraduate students in the age group of 18-23 years are the samples for the study.

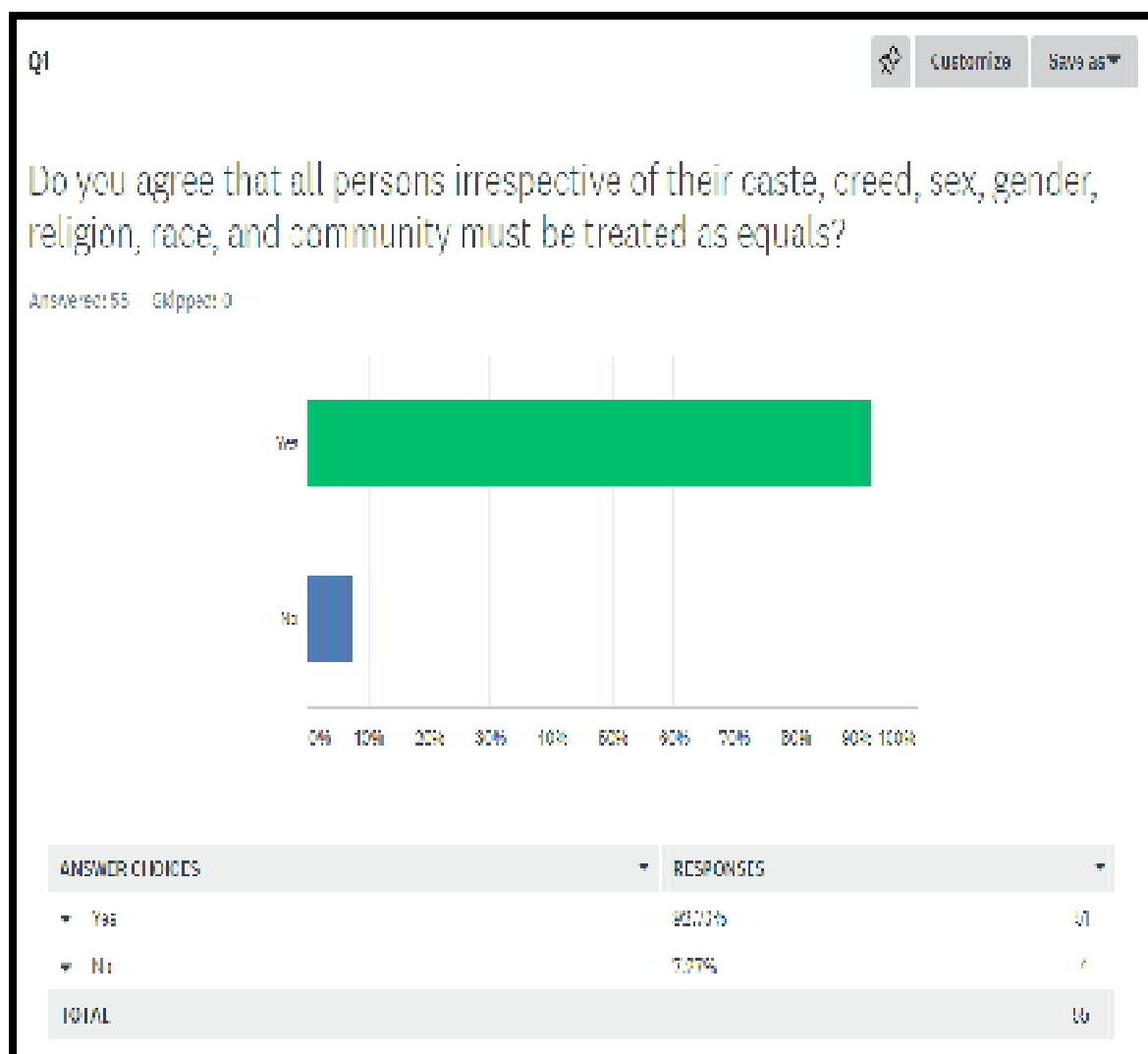
Research Tool:

- *Survey Monkey* questionnaire is used to collect data for the study.

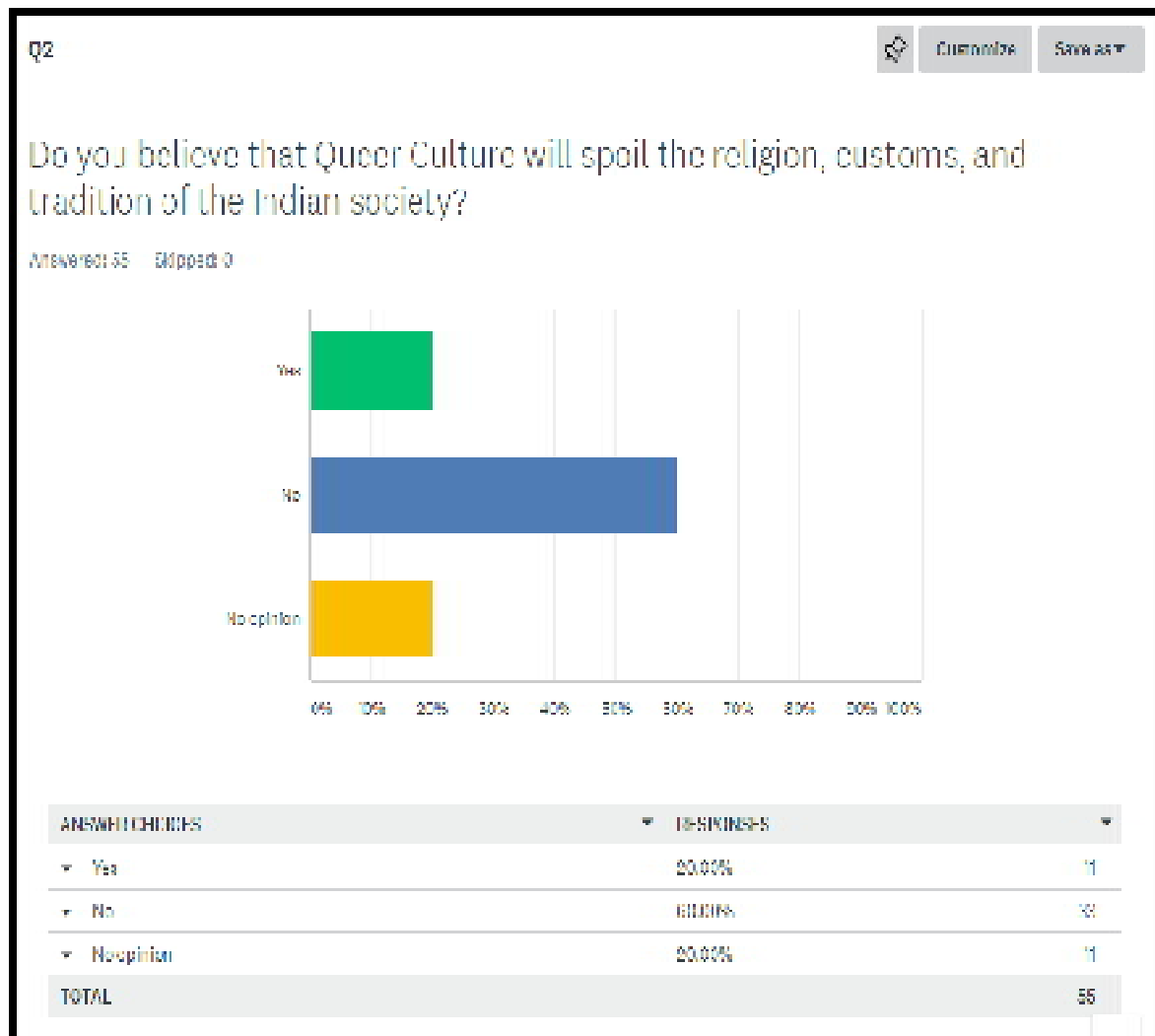
Steps Involved in the Study:

- A survey questionnaire with 10 questions is designed using *Survey Monkey app*.
- Young adults in the age group of 18-23 years are allowed to fill the survey questionnaire online.
- Quantitative and Qualitative data are consolidated for further analysis.

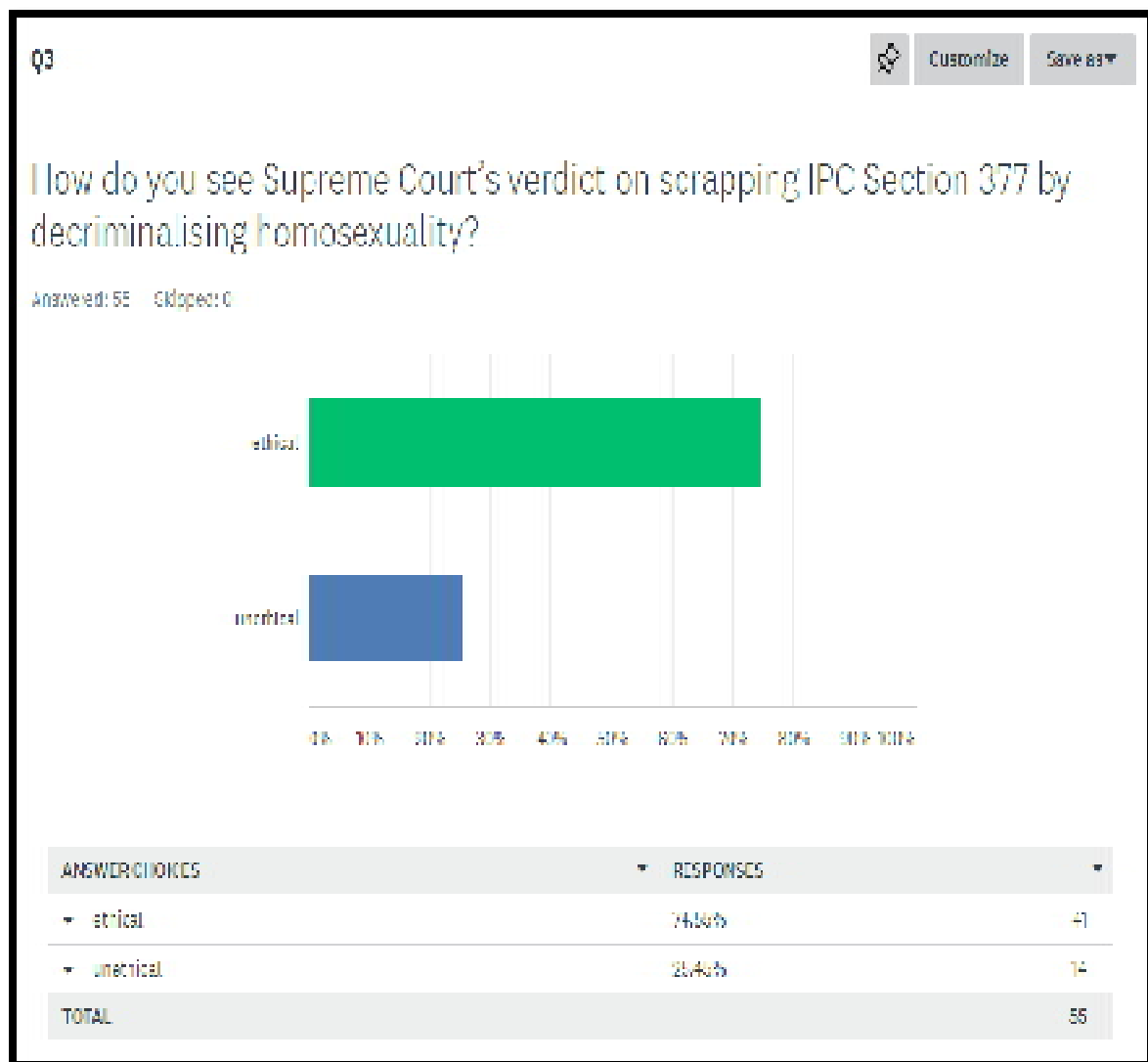
Data Analysis and Interpretation:



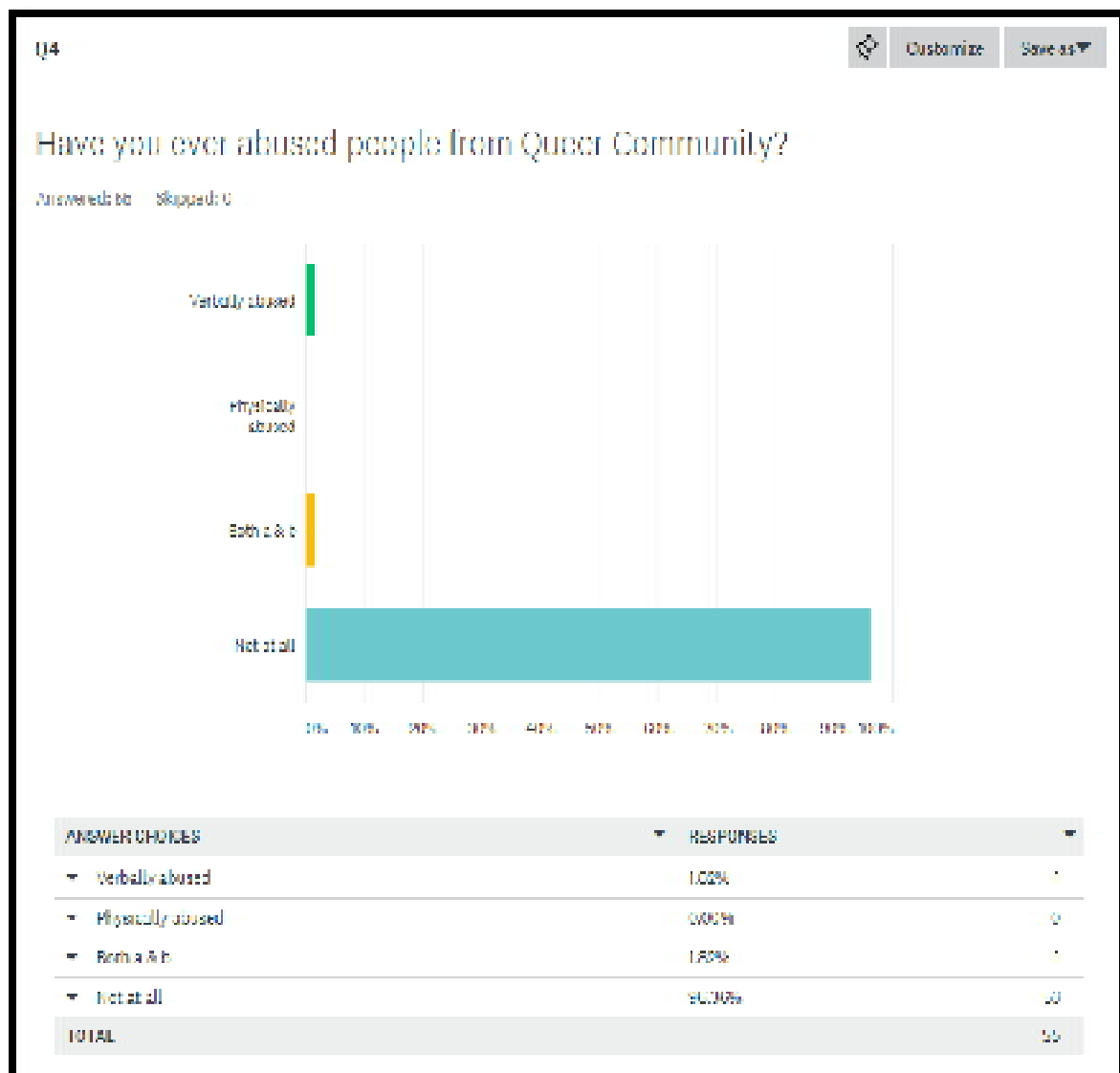
- Out of 55 students, 51 of them (93%) agree that all persons irrespective of their caste, sex, gender, race, and community must be treated as equals.
- 4 students (7%) do not believe in treating all human beings as equals.



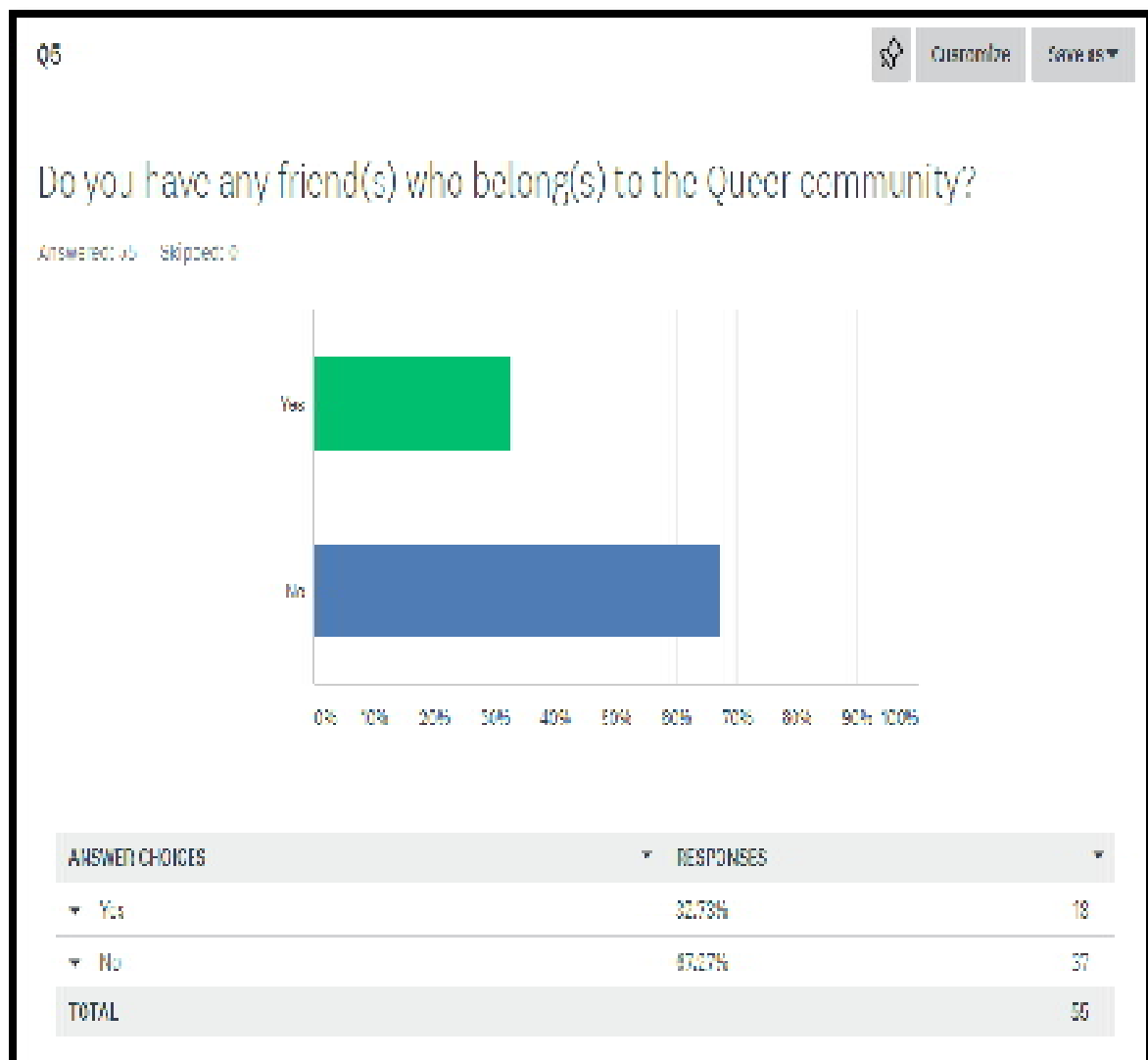
- Out of 55 students, 33 of them (60%) believe that Queer Culture will not spoil the religion, customs, and tradition of the Indian society.
- 11 students (20%) have no opinion whether Queer Culture will spoil the religion, customs, and tradition of the Indian society or not.
- 11 students (20%) believe that Queer Culture will spoil the religion, customs, and tradition of the Indian society.



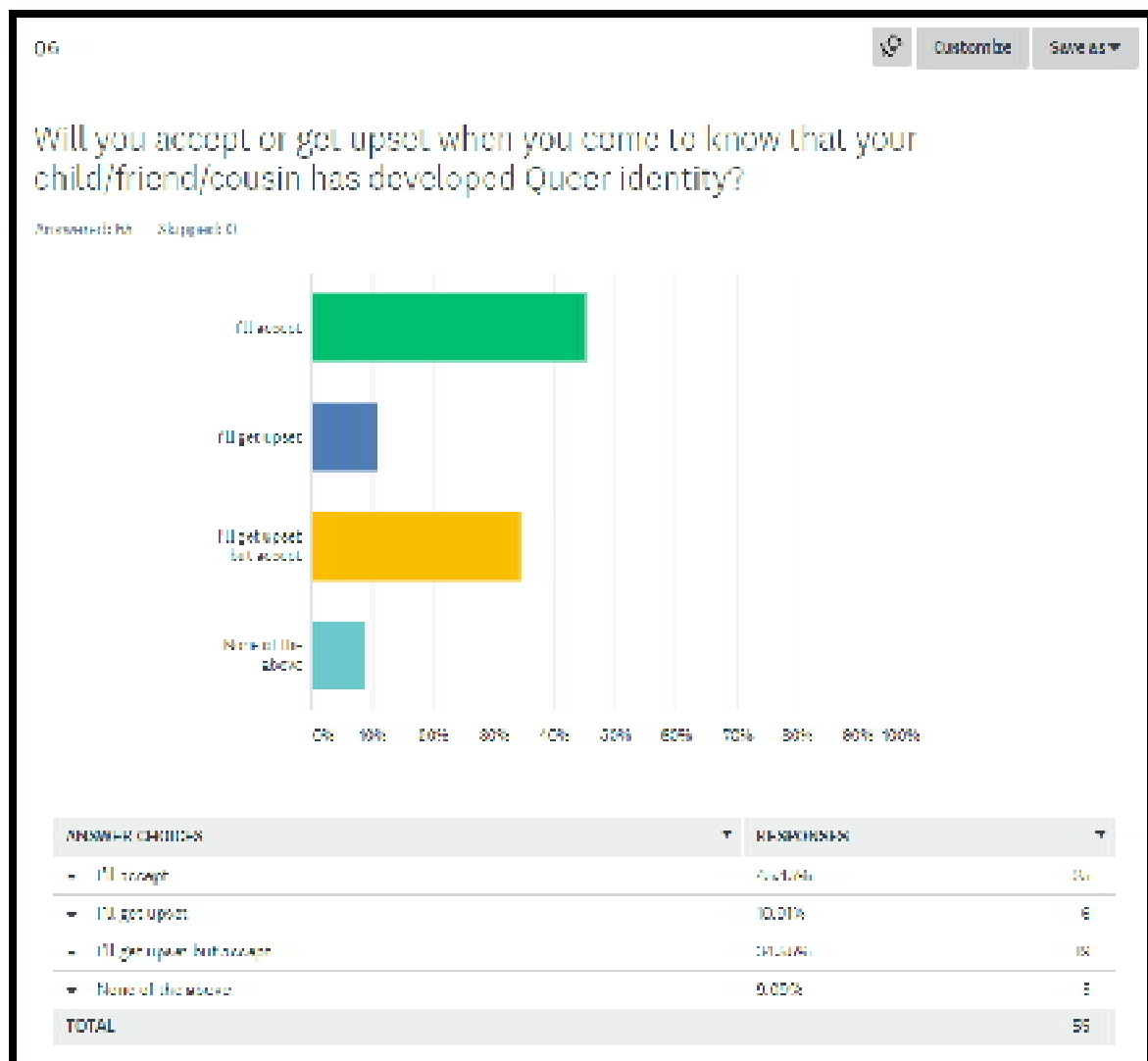
- Out of 55 students, 41 of them (75%) consider Supreme Court's verdict on scrapping IPC Section 377 by decriminalising homosexuality as ethical.
- 14 students (25%) consider Supreme Court's verdict on scrapping IPC Section 377 by decriminalising homosexuality as unethical.



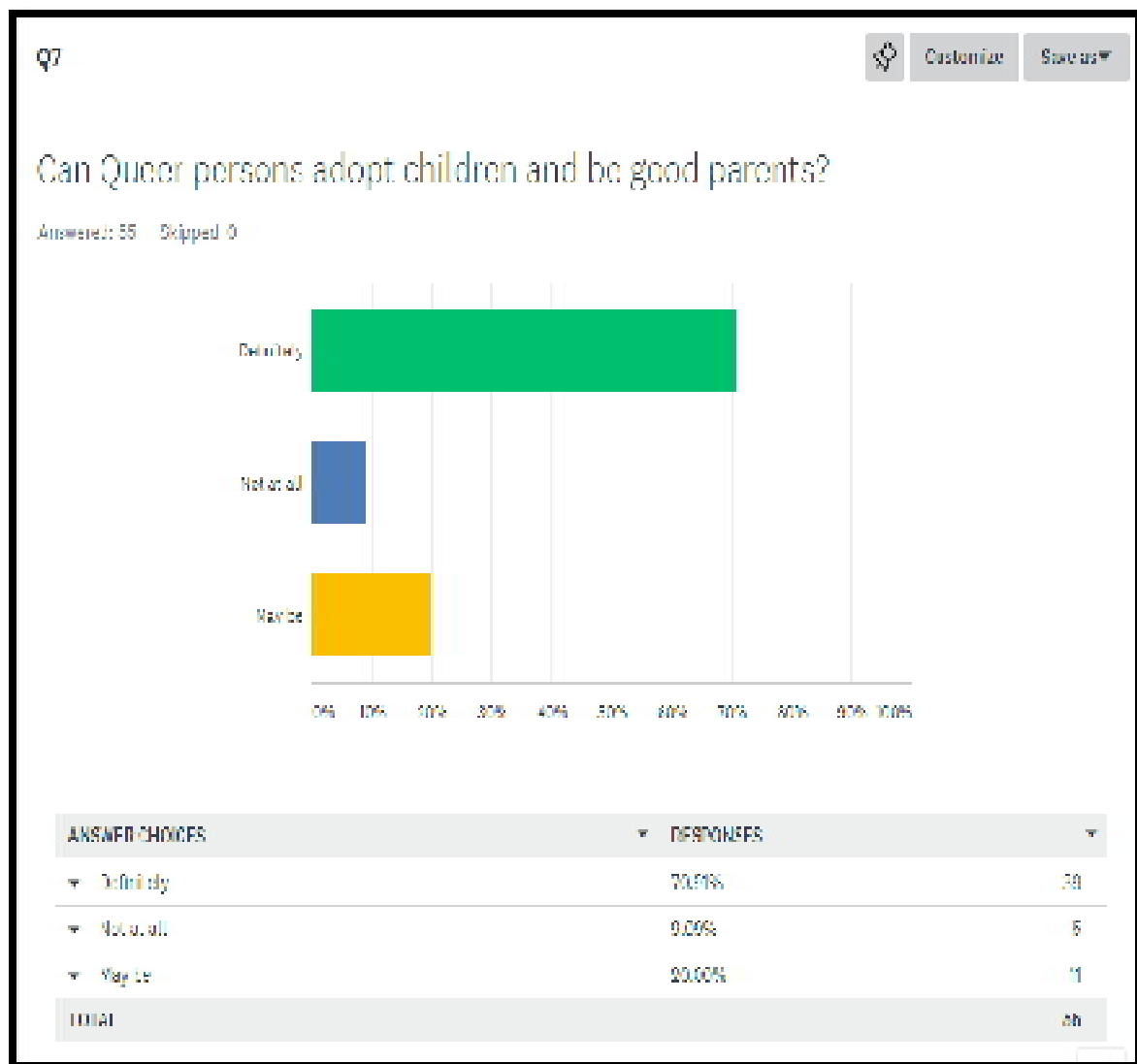
- Out of 55 students, 53 of them (96%) have never abused people from Queer Community.
- 1 student (2%) agrees that he/she has verbally abused people from Queer Community.
- 1 student (2%) agrees that he/she has verbally and physically abused people from Queer Community.



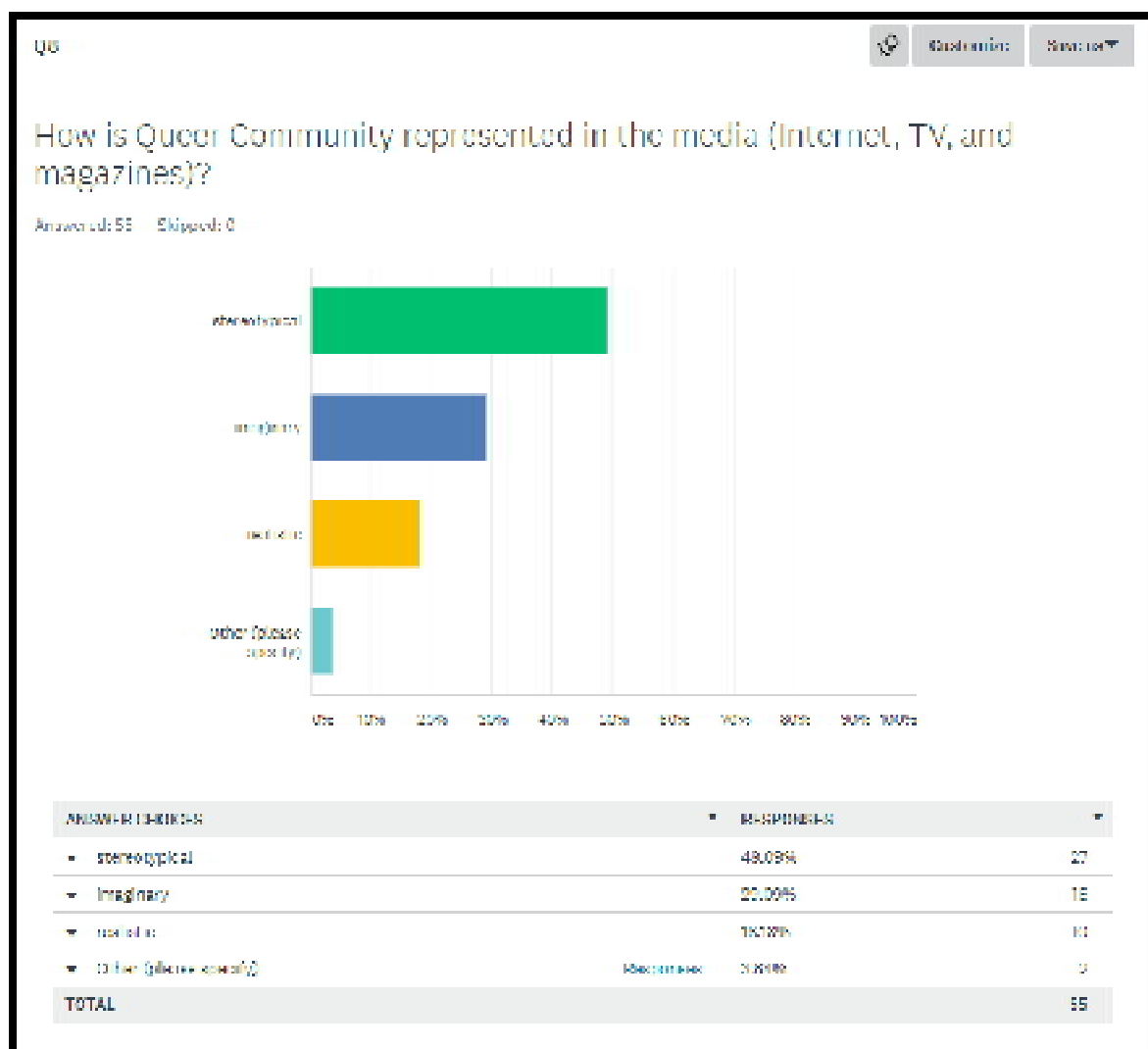
- Out of 55 students, 18 of them (33%) have friend(s) who belong(s) to Queer community
- 37 students (67%) do not have friend(s) who belong(s) to Queer community.



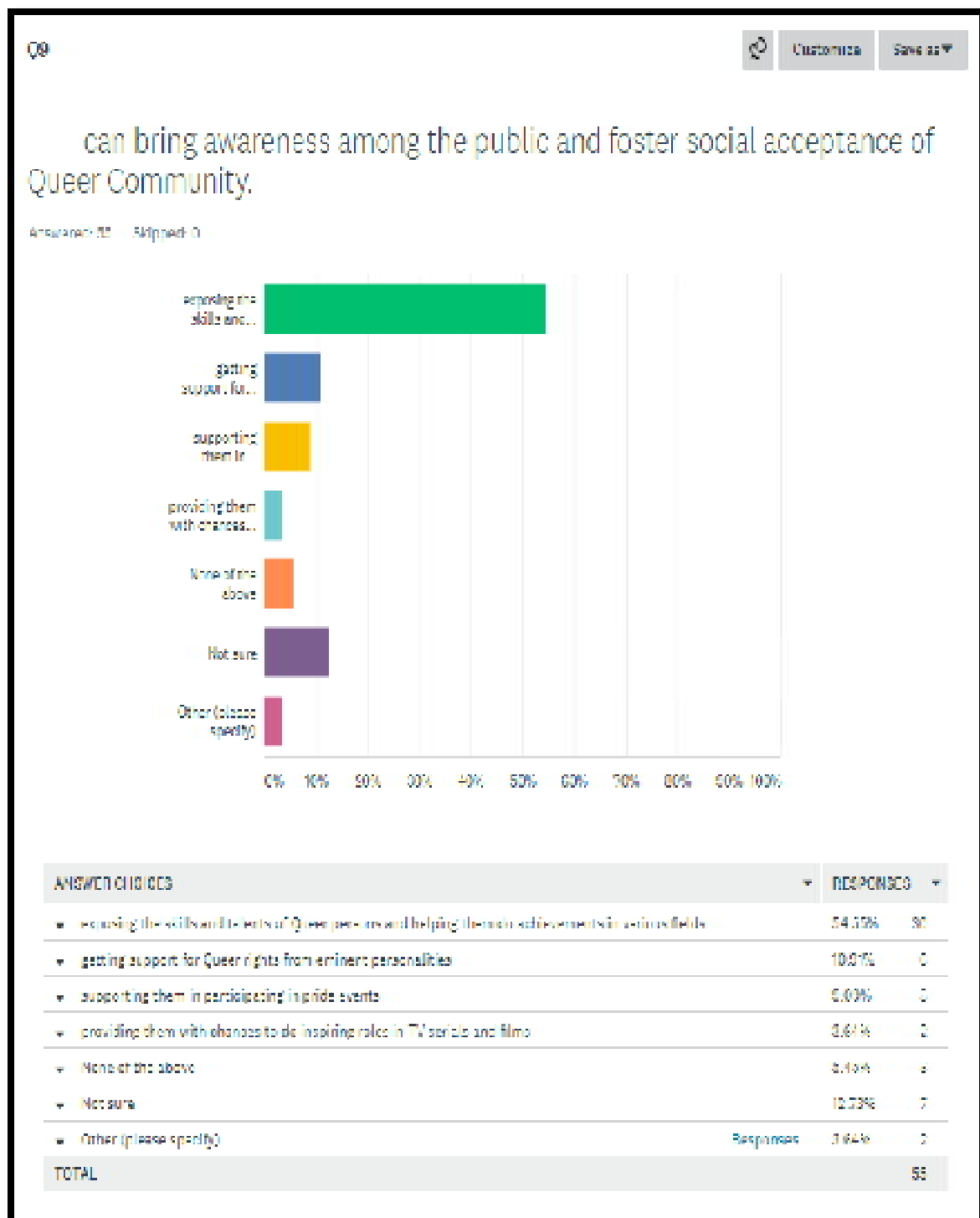
- Out of 55 students, 25 of them (45%) say that they will **accept** if they come to know that their child/friend/cousin has developed Queer identity.
- 6 students (11%) say that they will get **upset** if they come to know that their child/friend/cousin has developed Queer identity.
- 19 students (35%) say that they will get **upset but accept** if they come to know that their child/friend/cousin has developed Queer identity.
- 5 students (9%) have **no idea** about how they will react if they come to know that their child/friend/cousin has developed Queer identity.



- Out of 55 students, 39 of them (71%) agree that Queer persons can adopt children and be good parents.
- 11 students (9%) are not sure whether Queer persons can adopt children and be good parents.
- 8 students (9%) feel that Queer persons cannot adopt children and be good parents.



- Out of 55 students, 27 of them (49%) remark that the way Queer Community is represented in the media (Internet, TV, and magazines) is stereotypical.
- 16 students (29%) remark that the way Queer Community is represented in the media (Internet, TV, and magazines) is imaginary.
- 10 students (18%) remark that the way Queer Community is represented in the media (Internet, TV, and magazines) is realistic.
- 2 students (4%) remark that the way Queer Community is represented in the media (Internet, TV, and magazines) gives exposure about Queer people to the general public.



- Out of 55 students, 30 of them (54%) remark that exposing the skills and talents of Queer persons and helping them do achievements in various fields can bring awareness among the public and foster social acceptance of Queer Community.
- 6 students (11%) remark that getting support for Queer rights from eminent personalities can bring awareness among the public and foster social acceptance.

- 5 students (9%) remark that supporting Queer people in participating in pride events can bring awareness among the public and foster social acceptance.
- 2 students (4%) remark that providing them with chances to do inspiring roles in TV serials and films can bring awareness among the public and foster social acceptance.
- 3 students (5%) have no specific suggestions.
- 2 students (4%) remark that providing them with right opportunities (in education or employment) would bring changes in public attitude towards them.
- 7 students (13%) remark that they are not sure about what will bring awareness among the public and foster social acceptance.

Q10

State your recommendations to make the Queer Community live in a better position in the society.

Answered: 55 Skipped: 0

RESPONSES (55) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0)

Apply to selected Filter by tag Search responses

Showing 55 responses

☐ Inadequate awareness and cheap image on queer community (which has been cultivated by the wireless society) . to overcome this adequate awareness should be created among this generation people which is already in progress. believe and their talent should be addressed through this they should be given more opportunities to succeed.

11/11/2019 6:56 PM View respondent's answers Add tags

☐ Give their rights to live

11/11/2019 7:47 PM View respondent's answers Add tags

☐ Educate the people so that they know and must be different.

11/11/2019 8:34 PM View respondent's answers Add tags

☐ Accept yourself

11/11/2019 8:42 PM View respondent's answers Add tags

Some of the positive responses from the samples are:

- Treat Queer people equally and provide them with right opportunities to improve.
- Accept them as they are.
- A cheesy image on Queer Community has been cultivated by the society. To break this image, more awareness should be created among this generation, which is already in progress. Queer people's talents should be recognized, and they should be given more opportunities to succeed.
- Educate the public about how Queer community is as normal as other people.
- People must accept the fact that everyone has the right to live his/her life in their own ways. No one should abuse anyone or get abused by anyone.
- We have to give space for the Queer community and accept them as fellow human beings
- Different people different perceptions! For me, everyone should accept other people as they are.
- They are also human beings. We should respect their feelings. We should see their individuality rather than sexuality.
- Change should start from within every individual for bigger transformations to happen in the society.
- Parenting and schooling play a vital role in creating bad or good perception about Queer Community. We have to teach our children that every sex in this society is the same, and everybody has equal rights for life and freedom.
- We should conduct awareness programs deconstructing the social construction of gender and make people become aware that there are more than two genders. LGBTQ community should also take efforts to educate people about their sexual orientations or interests, and the kind of the problems they face in the society.
- Nothing needs to be done specially; they just need to be prepared not to stand out in the crowd... be it their dressing or behaviour. If they should be considered inclusive in the society, they have to take efforts and get a proper career, not just seeking attention that they are Queer i.e. strange people.
- The stereotypical society is so sturdy that its chain of rules and restrictions are adamant and non-flexible. Each member in the society should bend the rules and practise tolerance/acceptance. We may not have liking for certain things, but we could

definitely try to accept and embrace dissimilarities. Let us be broad-minded and learn to accept non-stereotypes.

- As equals we should have our rights to live as commoners in the society which includes the Queer community. Queer people should be able to mingle with everyone. They should be accepted as normal people instead of being treated as out-caste in their own society. Instead of being treated as an exhibit object or a fun element, they should be able to mingle with everybody and be like a commoner in the society.
- We need to encourage all staff and students to challenge negative comments and jokes about LGBT people and/or LGBT issues, and ensure that people realise that this is their individual responsibility. This particularly applies to leaders who have the responsibility of ensuring equality in the workplace and in services provided under statutory employment regulations, and it should become a legislative duty.
- Give opportunities to Queer people to work in government offices as well as private sectors.
- Media is one of the biggest platforms through which people get inspired mostly. Hence, media and popular culture should expose the non-stereotypical Queer Community to the rest of the society. Everyone should learn to accept them by undoing the stereotypical portrayal of LGBTQ people and become examples for future generations.
- It is very important to treat Queer Community as humans with respect and dignity. It is our responsibility to support them in making all their dreams come true by motivating them to achieve success in their life and also to inspire others.
- They should accept themselves as unapologetically Queer, and feel proud of their identity. All human beings are created equal. So if anyone is prejudiced about their identity, they should not feel disheartened. They should celebrate it, and that will irk them further. *I will support you as an ally. You have friends, family, supporters, and fellow community. Stay strong and stay fabulous!*
- Acceptance is a huge hurdle for the people. It requires an enormous amount of courage to accept facts and acknowledge all the hardships. People who are really strong and determined only will succeed. So why not give a chance to these hard working people? Just accept them as they are. Giving opportunities to Queer Community matters. It will bring about a positive change in the society.

Some of the negative responses from the samples are:

- Actually speaking, the society is doing more for Queer Community and will be doing more, so no recommendation from me.
- I disagree with the Queer Community then how will I recommend?
- Don't expose your love very publicly.
- I recommend not to support Queer Community. So I don't think they need a better position in the society.
- They should realise the consequences of their actions.
- Teach the Queer Community that conventional sex is moralistic. Don't practise the other way
- Counselling should be given to them. Prayer can also help.

Recommendations:

Youngsters should become more broadminded with respect to their societal and spiritual views. They should be taught to accept and embrace differences in the society.

Limitations of the Study:

- Samples are chosen only from selected Arts and Science colleges in North Chennai.
- Sample size is limited only to 55 students.

Scope for Further Research

- ▶ Personal Interviews with Queer people can be conducted to find how they experience(d) physical and psychological abuses in the family during their adolescent age / adulthood.
- ▶ Case studies can be done to find out whether the Supreme Court verdict has influenced their lives in any way.
- ▶ Research can be done to find how Queer Community has been portrayed in Media, and how it has influenced the public perception about Queer Community.

Annexure

Survey Questionnaire

1. Do you agree that all persons irrespective of their caste, creed, sex, gender, religion, race, and community must be treated as equals?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Do you believe that Queer Culture will spoil the religion, customs, and tradition of the Indian society?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No opinion
3. How do you see Supreme Court's verdict on scrapping IPC Section 377 by decriminalising homosexuality?
 - a. Ethical
 - b. unethical
4. Have you ever abused people from Queer Community?
 - a. Verbally abused
 - b. Physically abused
 - c. Both a & b
 - d. Not at all
5. Do you have any friend(s) who belong(s) to the Queer community?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Will you accept or get upset when you come to know that your child/friend/cousin has developed Queer identity?
 - a. I'll accept
 - b. I'll get upset
 - c. I'll get upset but accept
 - d. None of the above
7. Can Queer persons adopt children and be good parents?
 - a. Definitely
 - b. Not at all

- c. May be
 - 8. How is Queer Community represented in the Media (Internet, TV, and magazines)?
 - a. Stereotypical
 - b. Imaginary
 - c. Realistic
 - d. Other (please specify)
 - 9. _____ can bring awareness among the public and foster social acceptance of Queer Community.
 - a. exposing the skills and talents of Queer persons and helping them do achievements in various fields
 - b. getting support for Queer rights from eminent personalities
 - c. supporting them in participating in pride events
 - d. providing them with chances to do inspiring roles in TV serials and films
 - e. None of the above
 - f. Not sure
 - g. Other (please specify)
 - 10. State your recommendations to make the Queer Community live in a better position in the society.
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