

Between Legacy and Self: Filial Expectations, Identity Conflict, And Coping Needs Among LGBTQ+ Youth In Collectivist Cultures.

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Abstract:

This study examines how family expectations, cultural pressures, and support systems influence the emotional wellbeing of LGBTQ+ youth in collectivist societies. The findings show that strong filial expectations, including pressure to conform, protect family reputation, avoid shame, and uphold collective honour, are closely associated with heightened identity conflict. These relationships were extremely strong and the survey confirmed that higher family pressure corresponds with greater confusion, guilt, self-suppression, and emotional exhaustion. Identity conflict emotions were also tightly interconnected, with guilt and fear of rejection showing the strongest link, further indicated that family and cultural pressures are significantly related to suicidal thoughts and psychological distress. Conversely, the study found that supportive coping resources and resilience building strategies strongly reinforce one another. A strong negative correlation showed that youth with greater access to these supports report lower suicidal ideation. The study demonstrates that cultural and familial pressures intensify identity struggles, while accessible and affirming support systems play a crucial role in reducing distress among LGBTQ+ youth.

Key Words: Filial Expectations, Identity Conflict, Coping Needs, LGBTQ+ Youth, Collectivist Cultures

Introduction

In many collectivist societies, the family plays a central role in shaping a young person's decisions, values, and identity. Children are often expected to honour their parents' wishes, uphold cultural norms, and behave in ways that reflect positively on the family. These filial expectations can become deeply rooted, influencing everything from education and career choices to relationships and personal conduct. While such expectations may provide structure and belonging, they can also create intense pressure especially for those whose lived realities diverge from traditional norms.

For LGBTQ+ youth, this tension is often magnified. As they explore and understand their sexual orientation or gender identity, many find themselves caught between two powerful forces: the desire to live authentically, and the fear of disappointing or being rejected by their families. This clash between personal identity and familial duty often results in identity conflict, an emotional struggle that can manifest as confusion, guilt, anxiety, or distress. In cultures where conformity and family honour are emphasised, these youths may silence parts of themselves, leading to long-term emotional and psychological strain.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Katz-Wise, S.L., et al. (2016): LGBT youth often face disruption in parent-child attachment when rejected based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. This parental rejection can contribute to homelessness, poorer mental health, and increased risk-taking behaviours. Supportive family interactions and affirming environments are critical for positive health outcomes among LGBTQ+ youth.
2. Kiperman, S., et al. (2022): Identity development among LGBTQ+ youth is particularly sensitive to minority stressors like peer victimization. Bullying leads to stigma sensitivity, concealment motivation, and makes the coming out process more difficult. Social support—inclusive of affirming peers and family—acts as a buffer against negative mental health outcomes and helps youth cope with discrimination and stress.
3. The Trevor Project (2025): Supportive actions from parents and caregivers significantly reduce suicide risk and bolster mental well-being in LGBTQ+ youth. Common supportive behaviours include affirming gender expression, respectful communication, and proactive engagement with LGBTQ communities. However, transgender, non-binary, and gender questioning youth often report less parental support compared to cisgender LGBTQ youth.

Research Gap

Many studies show that family support, rejection, and minority stress affect the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth, but there is still much we do not fully understand especially in cultures where family expectations are strong. While research mentions that pressures like filial duty can create inner conflict, very few studies explain how these expectations directly lead to identity struggles or emotional distress. Even less is known about how this conflict may contribute to suicidal thoughts or what kinds of support young people truly want during such moments. No existing study looks at filial expectations, identity conflict, mental health risks, and coping needs together within a cultural context. This creates an important gap in understanding the real experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in collectivist societies. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring these Connected Issues through the voices and realities of the youth themselves.

Statement Of the Problem

Many studies show that family support, rejection, and minority stress affect the mental health of LGBTQ+ youth, but there is still much we do not fully understand—especially in cultures where family expectations are strong. While research mentions that pressures like filial duty can create inner conflict, very few studies explain how these expectations directly lead to identity struggles or emotional distress. Even less is known about how this conflict may contribute to suicidal thoughts or what kinds of support young people truly want during such moments. No existing study looks at filial expectations, identity conflict, mental health risks, and coping needs together within a cultural context. This creates an important gap in understanding the real experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in collectivist societies. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring these connected issues through the voices and realities of the youth themselves.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between filial expectations and identity conflict among LGBTQ+ youth in collectivist cultures.
2. To analyse how filial expectations and identity conflict contribute to suicidal thoughts and psychological distress among LGBTQ+ youth.
3. To explore the coping needs and forms of support that LGBTQ+ youth wish to seek when experiencing identity-related stress or suicidal ideation.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- The study is confined to the Youth belonging to the LGBTQ+ Youth residing in Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

Research Methodology

Primary Data:

- Primary data is collected through structured questionnaires.

Secondary Data

- To get more inputs on the study undertaken, various articles, research papers, reports, books, reference books are taken into consideration.

Population and Sampling technique:

- The Population of the study to consist the 100 LGBTQ+ youth respondents who reside in Mumbai Metropolitan Region. The sampling method adopted is Snowball Sampling.

Research Design

- The study is Analytical and Descriptive in nature.
- Data is analysed as a descriptive study with the help of suitable diagrams a

Data Collection

For this study, data was collected from 100 LGBTQ+ youth residing in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region using snowball sampling, where participants referred other eligible respondents. A structured questionnaire was employed to gather information on filial expectations, identity conflict, psychological distress, and coping needs. Participants were approached through both online and offline methods, and informed consent was obtained before administering the questionnaire. The collected data provided the foundation for subsequent analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

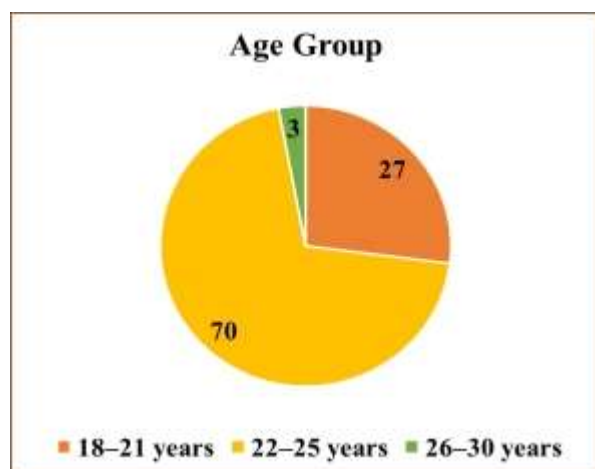
The data collected from 100 LGBTQ+ youth was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, summarized responses related to filial expectations, identity conflict, psychological distress, and coping needs. To test the research hypotheses, The results were presented through pie charts, bar graphs, and tables for clear visualization.

The questionnaire was further divided into 5 categories

Qualitative Analysis

Section 1 – Demographic Variables

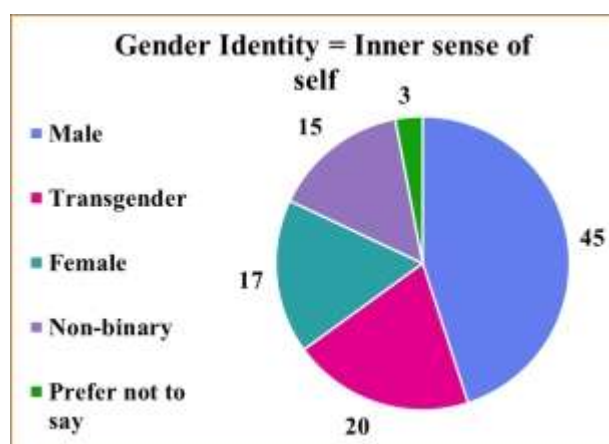
1. Age of the Respondents



The majority of respondents (70%) fall within the 26–30 years age group, followed by 27% in the 22–25 years bracket. Only a small portion (3%) are aged 18–21 years.

This indicates that most participants are young adults who are likely to have developed a stable sense of identity and personal experiences regarding sexuality and gender.

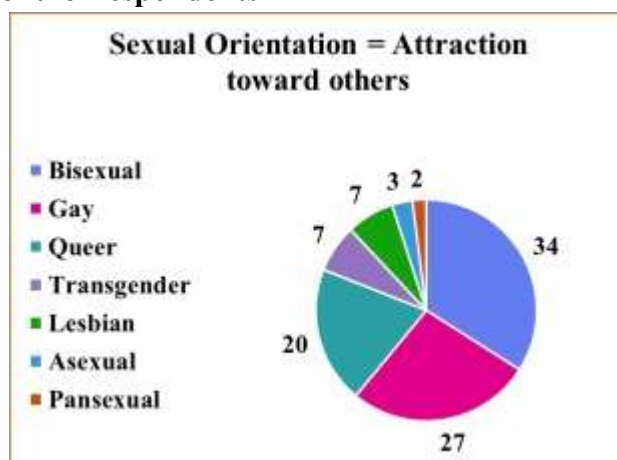
2. Gender Identity of the Respondents



A large share of respondents identifies as male (45%), followed by female (17%) and transgender (20%) individuals. A smaller number identify as non-binary (15%), while only 3% preferred not to disclose their gender.

This reflects a diverse sample with meaningful representation of transgender and non-binary individuals, allowing for a more inclusive understanding of identity experiences.

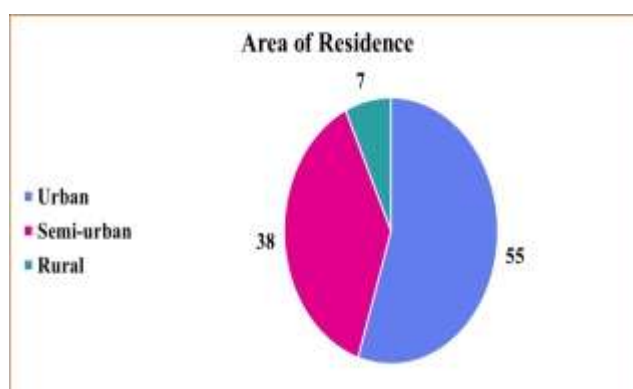
3. Sexual Orientation of the Respondents



The highest proportion of participants identify as gay (34%), followed by transgender attraction (27%), bisexual (20%), and queer (7%). Smaller groups identify as asexual (7%), lesbian (3%), and pansexual (2%).

This diversity suggests varied relationship orientations, contributing to a broad understanding of LGBTQ+ experiences.

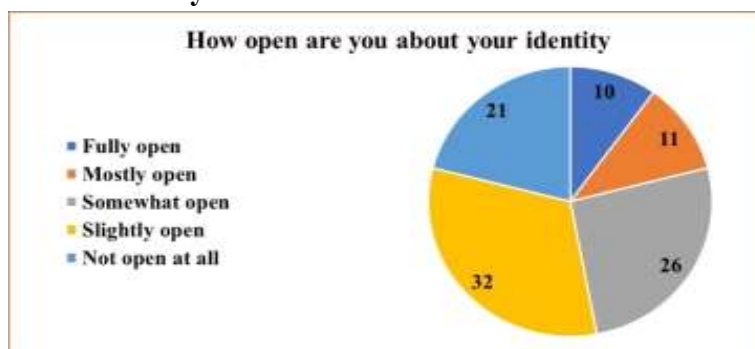
4. Area of Resident



More than half of the participants (55%) reside in **urban** areas, followed by 38% from **semi-urban** regions and only 7% from **rural** areas.

This highlights that urban areas may offer greater visibility, accessibility, and comfort for LGBTQ+ individuals, influencing their willingness to participate in such studies.

5. Openness about their identity

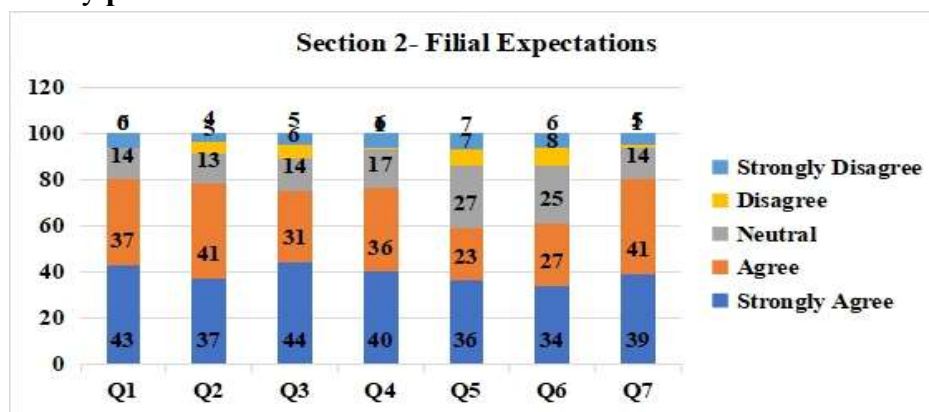


A considerable portion of respondents identify as **somewhat open (32%)**, followed by **slightly open (26%)** and **not open at all (21%)**. Only 11% are **mostly open**, and a very small number (10%) are **fully open**.

This shows that many LGBTQ+ individuals still feel cautious or unsafe about openly expressing their identity, pointing to persistent social, familial, and cultural pressures.

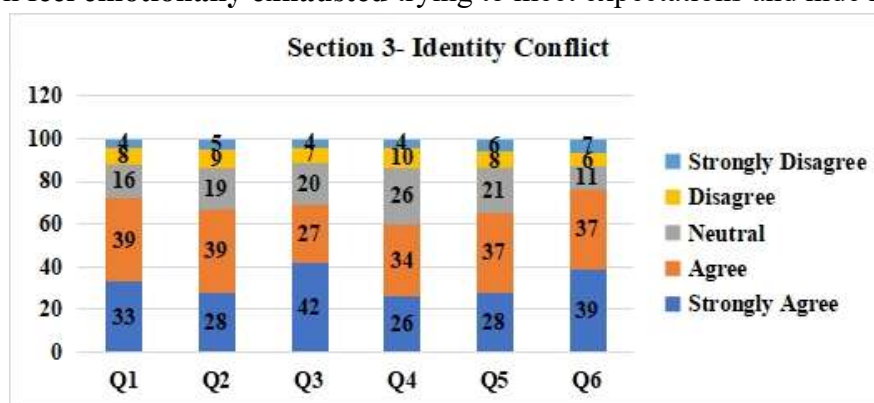
Section 2- Filial Expectations

1. My family expects me to **conform to traditional gender or cultural roles**.
2. I often **feel pressured to make choices** that protect my family’s reputation.
3. I fear that expressing my identity would **bring shame or disappointment**.
4. My family’s opinions about “**what society will think**” affect my personal decisions.
5. I feel obligated to **suppress my feelings** to maintain family harmony.
6. I sometimes **sacrifice my own happiness** to fulfill family expectations.
7. My family **prioritizes collective honor** over individual choices.



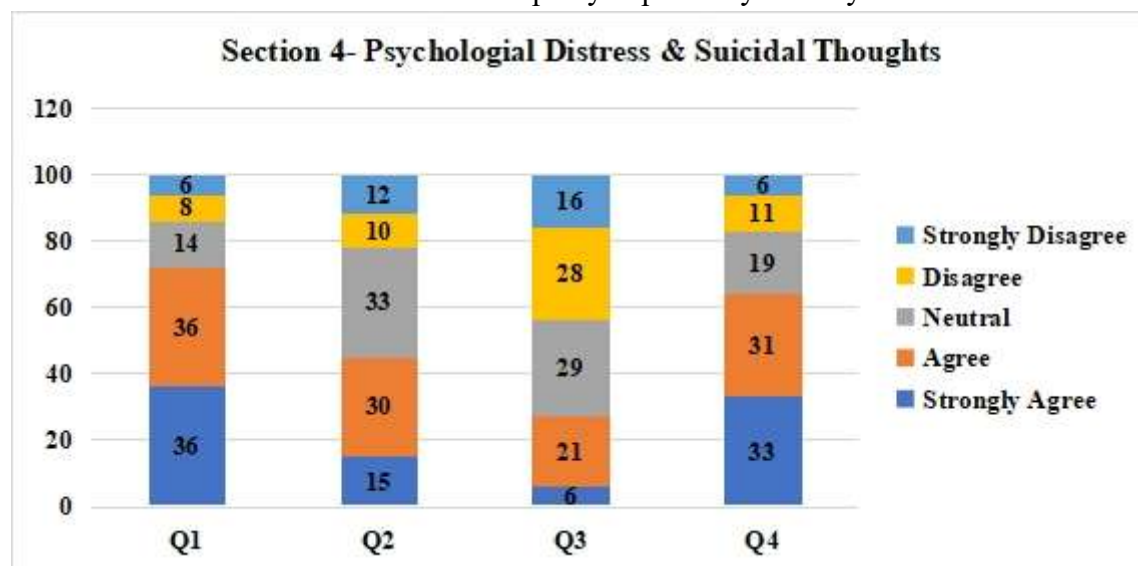
Section 3- Identity Conflict

1. I **feel confused** about whether to be myself or meet my family’s wishes.
2. I **experience guilt or confusion** about my identity.
3. I **hide parts of myself** to avoid conflict.
4. I sometimes **question my self-worth** due to societal expectations.
5. I find it difficult to feel proud of my identity because **I fear rejection**.
6. I often **feel emotionally exhausted** trying to meet expectations and hide my identity.



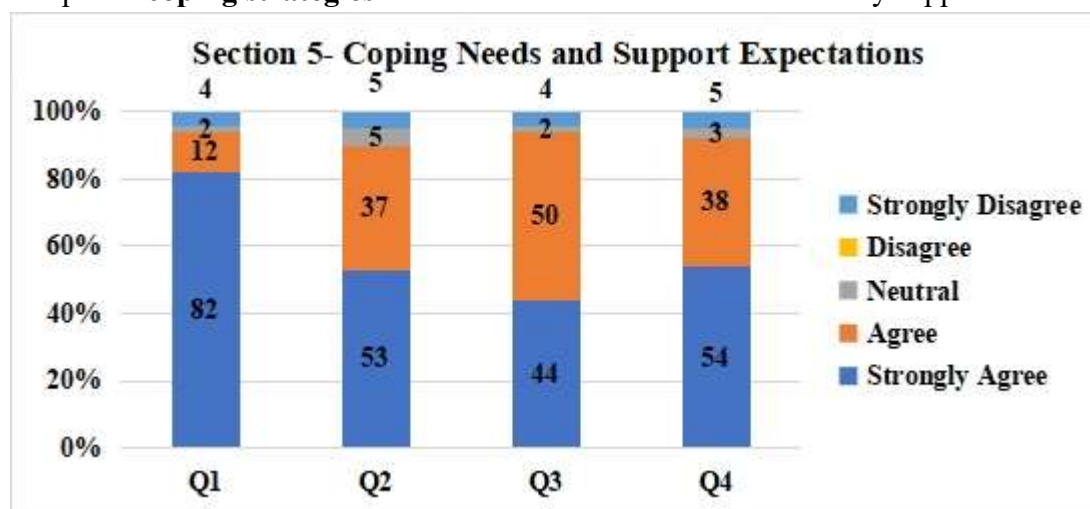
Section 4- Psychological Distress & Suicidal Thoughts

1. I often feel emotionally exhausted trying to meet expectations.
2. I have experienced prolonged sadness, hopelessness, or anxiety.
3. I sometimes feel life has no purpose because of pressure.
4. I have thought about ending my life during extreme stress.
5. I feel isolated because I cannot openly express my identity.



Section 5- Coping Needs and Support Expectations

1. I wish there were safe, judgment-free spaces for LGBTQ+ youth.
2. I expect therapy that understands both cultural values and LGBTQ+ identity.
3. I believe family education programs could improve mental health.
4. I prefer coping strategies that combine resilience and community support.



Major Findings of the Study

Specific Findings of the Study

Based on the analyses of filial expectations, identity conflict, psychological distress, and coping needs among LGBTQ+ youth in collectivist cultures, the following key findings were observed:

Finding 1: Filial Expectations Strongly Intensify Identity Conflict The correlation results show an extremely strong positive association ($\rho \approx 0.90\text{--}0.98$) between filial expectations and identity conflict.

- Expectation to conform, pressure to protect family reputation, fear of shame, and collective honor norms all displayed correlations above 0.92, indicating that they are tightly linked to identity struggles.
- Youth experiencing greater pressure from family and society reported significantly higher levels of confusion, guilt, hiding identity, low self-worth, emotional exhaustion, and fear of rejection ($\rho \approx 0.88\text{--}0.99$).
- The findings demonstrate that collectivist cultural expectations are a major psychological burden, causing emotional turmoil and identity distress among LGBTQ+ youth.

Finding 2: Filial Expectations & Identity Conflict Significantly Increase Suicidal Thoughts and Psychological Distress (Hypothesis 2)

- Respondents with higher distress and suicidal ideation consistently fell in the higher agreement categories, meaning they also reported increased family pressure, identity confusion, emotional suppression, and guilt.
- These mental-health outcomes were significantly clustered, indicating meaningful patterns rather than random variation.
- The findings reveal that cultural and familial expectations play a direct role in psychological vulnerability, increasing risk for suicidal thoughts.

Finding 3: Strong Coping Needs Are Linked to Lower Psychological Distress and Suicidal Vulnerability—Coping-related items—safe spaces, counseling, family programs, and resilience strategies—showed strong correlations with each other, indicating that these protective factors cluster together.

- Counseling showed an exceptionally strong correlation with coping strategies identifying it as the central protective factor.
- Youth who strongly desired safe spaces also expressed higher needs for therapy, family education, and resilience-building.
- Desire for family awareness programs correlated highly with counseling and coping strategies highlighting the importance of family acceptance.
- The findings indicate that LGBTQ+ youth benefit from multilayered support systems, including safe spaces, counselling, community support, and family education.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal a deeply interconnected relationship between filial expectations, identity conflict, psychological distress, and the coping needs of LGBTQ+ youth living in collectivist cultural contexts. The data consistently demonstrate that high levels of familial pressure especially expectations to conform, protect reputation, avoid shame, and uphold collective honour significantly intensify identity conflict. This conflict manifests as confusion, guilt, emotional exhaustion, self-suppression, and fear of rejection. When these pressures accumulate, they contribute directly to heightened levels of psychological distress and, in many cases, suicidal thoughts.

Despite these challenges, the study also highlights the strength and resilience of LGBTQ+ youth. Participants identified clear coping mechanisms that offered emotional stability, such as supportive friendships, online communities, counseling, role models, and personal practices like art, journaling, and future-oriented hope. These coping needs strongly correlate with lower emotional distress, demonstrating that when youth have access to affirming spaces and supportive networks, their mental well-being improves significantly.

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