

Research Paper

Development and Standardization of Homophobia Scale for Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to develop a test to assess homophobia among adolescents. Homophobia is a multifaceted construct that encompasses negative attitudes, fear, prejudice, and discrimination toward individuals perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+). It operates at individual, societal, and institutional levels, influencing personal beliefs, interpersonal interactions, and public policy. The study and measurement of homophobia have gained importance in psychology, education, health, and human rights disciplines. The present scale assesses various dimensions of homophobia. For this purpose, 75 items were generated; after item analysis, 60 items were retained and administered to a random sample of 272 adolescents in Bangalore city. After relevant statistical analysis, all 60 items were finalized. The test was found to be reliable, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.96 and split-half reliability of 0.80. Content and concurrent validity of the test was also established at the 0.05 level.

Keywords: *Homophobia, Adolescents, Scale Development, Psychometrics, Reliability, Validity*

Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to adulthood. Adolescence is usually associated with the teenage years. Adolescents place greater emphasis on close friendships, which become an important source of social support. Adolescence is also a period of rapid change and increasing social influence.

During adolescence, interpersonal relationships take on increasing importance and play a critical role in the development of intimacy, social skills, and self-concept (Klarin, 2006). Adolescent life is surrounded by peers of similar age and cultural background who can influence adjustment during this transitional period. Thus, it is important to understand attitudes toward homosexuality and the influence of social relationships on adolescents' development.

Homophobia

Homophobia is a multifaceted construct that encompasses negative attitudes, fear, prejudice, and discrimination toward individuals perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+). It operates at individual, societal, and institutional levels, influencing

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Received: August 21, 2026; Revision Received: August 24, 2026; Accepted: August 27, 2026

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personal beliefs, interpersonal interactions, and public policy. The study and measurement of homophobia have gained importance in psychology, education, health, and human rights disciplines.

The term “homophobia” was coined in the 1960s by psychologist George Weinberg, who used it to describe the irrational fear and hatred of homosexuals. Homosexuality was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1973, marking a turning point in the understanding of sexual orientation and related stigma.

Homophobia may stem from cultural, religious, and moral beliefs. In many societies, rigid gender roles, heteronormativity, and traditional family structures can promote intolerance of non-heterosexual orientations. Such sociocultural conditioning can affect how individuals perceive and respond to LGBTQ+ individuals.

Homophobia is not a singular construct but comprises multiple interrelated dimensions. Each dimension represents a distinct but interconnected pathway through which negative attitudes toward homosexual individuals are formed and expressed.

Dimensions of Homophobia

- **Cognitive Dimension:** The cognitive dimension encompasses the beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and stereotypes individuals hold about homosexuality. These may include misconceptions such as viewing homosexuality as immoral, unnatural, or a mental disorder. Such beliefs may be shaped by family, religion, media, educational gaps, and misinformation and may provide internal justifications for discriminatory behaviour.
- **Affective Dimension:** The affective dimension involves emotional responses toward homosexual individuals or the idea of homosexuality. These responses may include discomfort, fear, disgust, anger, hatred, or anxiety. Such responses may arise from social conditioning, cultural beliefs, or personal insecurities.
- **Behavioural Dimension:** The behavioural dimension refers to outward expressions of homophobia, ranging from subtle actions such as social exclusion and mocking to overt behaviours such as bullying, verbal abuse, name-calling, and physical aggression. Peer dynamics, conformity, and the desire to assert heterosexual identity may influence such behaviour.
- **Social/Interpersonal Dimension:** Peer groups strongly influence adolescent attitudes. Social norms in schools may promote heteronormativity, while groupthink and peer pressure can encourage conformity to discriminatory behaviour. Adolescents may use homophobic behaviour to gain status or approval, and the use of “gay” as an insult may become normalized.
- **Cultural and Religious Dimension:** Cultural and religious teachings may frame homosexuality as immoral or sinful, potentially reinforcing negative attitudes. In collectivist contexts, family honour, tradition, and marriage norms may reinforce heteronormativity and stigmatization of LGBTQ+ identities.
- **Gender Role Enforcement Dimension:** Adolescents may express homophobia to reinforce rigid gender roles. Boys may reject homosexuality to affirm masculinity, while girls may express negative attitudes because of internalized expectations of femininity. Fear of being labelled “effeminate” or “lesbian” may also contribute.
- **Developmental and Identity Anxiety Dimension:** Adolescence is a period of identity exploration. Some homophobic responses may function as defensive

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responses, while fear of same-sex attraction or being labelled gay may contribute to overcompensating behaviour.

- **Family, Media, and Technological Influences:** Many adolescents absorb attitudes from family values before fully understanding sexuality. Parents may express disapproval of LGBTQ+ individuals, while media and online environments can expose adolescents to homophobic jokes, memes, influencers, and aggressive expressions. LGBTQ+ representation has improved but may remain limited or stereotyped.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Homophobia, defined as prejudice, discrimination, or fear toward individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBTQ+), has been a subject of extensive academic inquiry. It manifests in forms ranging from microaggressions and verbal abuse to systemic exclusion and physical violence. This prejudice may be rooted in societal norms, religious beliefs, gender-role expectations, and psychological factors.

UNESCO (2016)

UNESCO's global report emphasizes the prevalence of homophobic bullying in educational settings and calls for teacher training and inclusive curricula to combat homophobia.

McCormack (2012)

McCormack's ethnographic study of British high schools describes a decline in overt homophobia among youth while noting the persistence of subtle microaggressions and heteronormativity.

Pascoe (2007)

Pascoe's study of high school environments shows how homophobic slurs can be used to police masculinity and function as a tool of gender regulation and social control.

Meyer (2003)

Meyer's Minority Stress Model explains how societal homophobia contributes to chronic stress in LGBTQ+ individuals through external discrimination and internalized stigma, with implications for mental health.

Shidlo & Schroeder (2002)

This study documents harmful psychological effects associated with conversion therapy, including trauma, depression, and suicidal ideation.

Herek (2000)

Herek conceptualizes homophobia as a form of sexual prejudice influenced by gender norms and limited interpersonal contact with LGBTQ+ people.

Herek & Capitanio (1999)

The study reported lower levels of homophobia among individuals who had close LGBTQ+ friends, supporting the contact hypothesis.

Kimmel (1997)

Kimmel links homophobia with the affirmation of heterosexual identity and the management of anxieties related to masculinity.

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D'Augelli (1992)

D'Augelli describes vulnerabilities among LGBTQ+ youth, including victimization and family rejection associated with homophobic beliefs.

Foucault (1978)

Foucault critiques the social regulation of sexuality and examines how institutions and discourse contribute to definitions of normality.

METHOD

Aim

To develop a scale to assess homophobia among adolescents.

Objectives

- To understand the dimensions of homophobia among adolescents.
- To develop subscales to understand the various dimensions of homophobia among adolescents.

Operational Definitions

- **Adolescence:** Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development that generally occurs during the period from puberty to adulthood. Adolescence is usually associated with the teenage years.
- **Homophobia:** Homophobia is a multifaceted construct that encompasses negative attitudes, fear, prejudice, and discrimination towards individuals perceived as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+).

Participants and Sampling

Random sampling was used for standardization of the scale. The sample consisted of 272 adolescents aged 16 to 20 years studying in various colleges in Bangalore city. The sample included male and female adolescents.

Age	Males	Females	Total
16	2	2	4
17	11	10	21
18	15	14	29
19	44	70	114
20	54	50	104
Total	126	146	272

Inclusion Criteria

- Students aged 16–20 years.
- Students from government and private institutions.
- Students from Bangalore city.
- Male and female students.

Exclusion Criteria

- Students outside Bangalore city.
- Adolescents outside the age range of 16–20 years.
- Students from professional courses.
- Adolescents not enrolled in an educational institution.

Scale Development Procedure

Item Generation

Existing scales on homophobia were reviewed, and the specific meaning, vocabulary, and operational definition of key concepts were discussed and finalized. Item pooling produced 75 statements across three subareas, with 25 items under each area. Based on repetitiveness and relatedness, 60 statements were retained.

Expert Review

The statements were sent to two experts along with definitions of each dimension. Experts were requested to verify the relevance of each item as an indicator of the construct and to check ambiguity, social desirability, vagueness, vocabulary, and appropriateness of the instructions.

Pilot Study

The scale was administered to a representative sample of 11 students. Feedback was obtained regarding comprehension of instructions and statements, scale length, administration time, irrelevant sentences, ambiguous or vague words, and difficult words.

Item Refinement

Items that were extremely difficult to comprehend were eliminated, and other appropriate changes were made based on participant feedback. After these changes, 60 items pertaining to three dimensions were retained.

Data Collection

Individuals fulfilling the inclusion criteria were contacted and informed consent was sought. Rapport was established and demographic details were collected. Participants completed the scale following standardized instructions. An already standardized homophobia scale developed by Wright, Adams, and Bernat was also administered to 45 participants for validity analysis.

Response Format and Scoring

The scale uses a five-point Likert response format: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The source manuscript states that 30 items indicate a positive attitude towards homophobia and 30 indicate a negative attitude, with reverse scoring for negative statements. The source reports a maximum score of 300 and a minimum score of 68.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Item Analysis

Seventy-five items were generated, of which 15 were rejected following expert opinion. Other items were modified according to expert recommendations. The remaining 60 items were administered to the sample and statistically analysed; all 60 items were retained in the final scale.

Reliability

Reliability of the final scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The 60-item scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.96, indicating high internal consistency. Split-half reliability, based on odd- and even-numbered items, was reported as 0.80, indicating adequate reliability.

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Reliability statistic	Value
Cronbach's alpha (60 items)	0.96
Split-half reliability	0.80

Descriptive Statistics

Mean	Standard Deviation	Number of Items
189.81	39.63	60

The mean score was 189.81 and the standard deviation was 39.63. The source manuscript describes the normal range as approximately 110–250 and reports that scores above 251.97 indicate higher homophobia, while scores below 98.5 indicate lower homophobia.

Validity

Correlation coefficient	Interpretation
0.43	Moderate correlation

The scores on the present scale were correlated with scores on the standardized homophobia scale developed by Wright, Adams, and Bernat for 45 participants. The reported correlation coefficient was 0.43 and was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, demonstrating adequate convergent validity.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to develop a scale to assess homophobia among adolescents. Following a review of theoretical and empirical literature, 75 items were generated and reviewed by two subject experts. Fifteen items were removed and the remaining 60 items were finalized after expert review, pilot testing, and statistical analysis. The scale was administered to 272 adolescents aged 16–20 years studying in Bangalore city. Reliability and validity analyses supported the psychometric adequacy of the scale as reported in the source manuscript.

Limitations

1. The sample consisted of adolescent students from Bangalore city only.
2. The sample did not include adolescent students from professional courses.
3. The sample size was relatively small for broad generalization.

Implications

1. The scale can be used along with existing measures to assess homophobia among adolescents.
2. Interventions may be designed based on scores obtained on the scale.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Seema, G.B. (2026). Development and Standardization of Homophobia Scale for Adolescents. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(3), 1458-1464. DIP:18.01.128.20261403, DOI:10.25215/1403.128