

Pride in the Countryside: A Phenomenological Study on the Adversities Faced by LGBT Students in Rural Areas

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Abstract

This phenomenological study investigates the adversities faced by LGBT students in rural areas, particularly in “Gubang High School,” highlighting the challenge of being an LGBT student in rural areas, and uncovering their coping mechanisms.

Utilizing a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with eight “Gubang High School” students who were part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender gender groups, 2 representatives were selected for each gender group following a criterion. Colaizzi’s method was used for data analysis. This approach

facilitated a comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences. Findings revealed significant challenges including forced pretention, verbal bullying, religious confliction, self-inflicted harm, identity confusion, suppression of identity, social contradiction, severed relationships, and fear of rejection. The insights underscore the need for targeted interventions such as awareness campaigns and further support to alleviate the challenges faced by LGBT students. This study contributes to understanding the intersection of social norms in rural areas and LGBT expression, advocating for more inclusivity in respect to present social ideals.

Keywords: *self-expression, conservatism, challenges, gender, self-actualization, coping mechanisms, lived experiences, qualitative research*

INTRODUCTION

Growing awareness and advocacy has been prevalent for the LGBTQ community over the past years, as educational institutions and government agencies have now been given a responsibility to acknowledge the unique qualities of peers who identify themselves as part of the lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community. However, as the acceptance of these gender identities are subjective, a population remains unimpressed by the advocacy of LGBTQ acceptance.

Educational institutions are fundamental in campaigning for gender equality and human rights. However, for the LGBTQ community, particularly LGBTQ students, this phenomenon causes them to face adversity. A report by the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN, 2021) stated that 81.8% of LGBTQ youth feel unsafe and unwelcome at school due to perceived personal characteristics. These students often employ avoidance among their peers to secure themselves from unsolicited judgement and bullying.

The researchers recognize the wide, present literature which caters to the study topic. However, also found the visible lack of LGBTQ studies in localized contexts, particularly, in rural areas where the plea for gender equality is not responded with equally vocal methods as compared to those initiated in urban areas. According to a study by Henriquez and Ahmad (2021), living in rural areas as an LGBTQ member develops distinctive challenges, as nearly everyone in the community is fond of each other, which creates issues on anonymity and acceptance. Additionally, rural settings are fonder to stigmatize with the lack of resources and supportive services towards LGBTQ cause.

Educational institutions located in rural areas like “*Gubang High School*” in Mankayan, Benguet, caters to significant amounts of students per year. With a current enrollment of 566 for the school year 2024 – 2025, these students come from several and diverse communities which are located closely to Barangay “*Gubang*,” like Bulalacao, Palasaan and Taneg or is located closely to the Municipality of Mankayan, such as the Municipalities of Bakun, Buguias and Tinoc. The great amount of diversity among the students then allows the school to cater to significant amounts of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) students, who can be found in every year level.

With the absence of queer individuals in the institution, the researchers have selected eight respondents for this study from currently enrolled students at “*Gubang High School*” in the grade levels 10, 11, and 12, who identify as members of the LGBT community. By looking into this specific group, the researchers intend to provide accurate understanding of the challenges and coping strategies these students employ. The study has been conducted from December 2024 until March 2025.

This study not only aims to add to the existing academic literature on LGBTQ students, but as well as to address the lack of local institutional policy support for the LGBTQ community, also to highlight their great ability to face adversity and remain resilient through judgement and criticism, this study hopes to offer insights which could benefit LGBT students in similar rural communities.

Statement of the Problem

This phenomenological study seeks to explore and understand the adversities faced by LGBT students at “*Gubang High School*”. Specifically, this study seeks to uncover the unique challenges and criticisms they receive at school and the community, and how they manage these struggles and remain resilient. The findings of this study will provide a deeper understanding into the socio-cultural, social-gender, and educational inference of their circumstance.

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What specific challenges are being faced by LGBT students in rural areas?
2. How do LGBT students manage their gender-related struggles?
3. In what ways do their community, school, and family either help and support them or hinder them from expressing themselves?

Significance of the Study

This study on the adversities faced by LGBT students in rural areas hold significant implications for various institutions, which include the local government units (LGUs), the school, and the community. For the local government unit, this study could aid in legislative crafting for policies to better ensure the safety and comfort of young LGBT individuals, additionally, the LGU can create interventional programs for gender equality based on the results of this study, the LGU can help to create a more inclusive community and can contribute to creating a more comfortable school environment for LGBT students.

For the school, the results of this study can assist the educational institution to provide more support and catered interventional activities towards fostering a more LGBT inclusive learning environment. Through acquiring knowledge and insights on this topic, teachers and faculty members can have better knowledge on how to approach LGBT learners. Additionally, the valuable insights to be acquired could also assist their fellow students on how to properly act and foster mutual respect in the classroom.

Furthermore, this study could help foster understanding amongst the respective communities where these LGBT students reside. Increased community awareness on the adversity faced by LGBT students can shift the stigma towards social-gender criticisms. This, in turn could contribute to building a much stronger and united community which encourages inclusivity amongst LGBT members and their families, schools, and their respective communities.

Finally, this study shall be added to the existing body of literature which deals with gender inclusivity and the unique experiences of LGBT students in a rural and conservative setting. This opens avenues for further studies on local social issues and encourages further studies which cater to less-noticed marginalized groups. Future studies can build off the insights to be gained from this study and use it to explore broader themes related to gender identification, gender inclusivity, youth empowerment, self-acceptance and resilience. Ultimately, this study ultimately seeks to show the resilient abilities of LGBT students, and their leniency towards reacting with the adversity and social inequality that they face, their insights can lead to better understanding of their circumstance, thus creating basis for better and much more effective support systems, and custom educational practices which cater to the adversity faced by LGBT students.

Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses solely on the challenges faced by LGBT students at “*Gubang High School*” in the Municipality of Mankayan, Benguet Province, deeply examining their challenges and coping strategies when faced with adversity brought by their gender identification. The aim of this study is to create literature which encapsulates these student’s lives, how they face societal judgement and embrace their identity.

The scope of this study is limited to the LGBT students who are currently enrolled in the grade levels 10, 11, and 12 at “*Gubang High School*,” regardless of their domicile. These students are the primary respondents whose experiences will be looked into.

Due to the absence of students who identify as “queer” (individuals who do not conform to gender identification norms, or do not identify with any gender), this study does not represent the whole LGBTQ community, this study only caters to studying the experiences of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender gender groups which limits generalizability.

Data collection will occur over a four-month period from December 2024 until March 2025, using a phenomenological approach to document the lived experiences of the students. The researcher will utilize semi-structured interviews and group discussions to gather qualitative data on adversity faced by LGBT students.

This study only focuses on LGBT students of “*Gubang High School*” and does not include respondents outside of the locale or LGBT students enrolled at other schools. The study will also not investigate on the long-term effects of the LGBT students' experiences on their social perspectives and educational trajectories beyond the school year 2024-2025.

Related Literature

The struggles of LGBTQ students in non-LGBTQ inclusive settings have been an attention-grabbing phenomenon, most specially in recent years in urban settings, many studies have highlighted the adversities they faced due to their gender identification and expression. Laitri et al. (2020) studied the experiences of LGBTQ+ students in Junior High School, revealing the inconsistent support towards the LGBTQ+ students, this study emphasized the judgmental environment which prompted discomfort among the students' learning and social life. Similarly, Cederved et al. (2021) found that LGBTQ students are prone to exclusion and social alienation by their peers, highlighting the lack of advocacy towards social acceptance for LGBTQ students in adolescents, while also highlighting the difficulties in other students voicing out for their LGBTQ peers, as they also become subject to bullying and exclusion. Furthermore, Libiran et al. (2024) highlighted mistreatment as a common response to LGBTQ+ members in society, most especially in conservative areas, revealing the harsh discriminatory methods in which a community expresses its unequivocal disapproval.

The unique struggles which LGBTQ students face do not end with the criticisms they regularly face, it extends to lengths affecting their social lives, in which these gender groups now qualify as "marginalized." The study conducted by Escobar-Viera et al. (2022) noted that social isolation is a common route taken by LGBTQ youth in rural areas, focusing paying more attention to their gadgets and social media, as a substitute for getting judged in their attempts to socialize physically. Additionally, Chu et al. (2024) noted the indifference in treatment towards LGBTQ students, whereas, the lack of gender sensitivity in a certain environment minoritizes present LGBTQ student group, thus limiting their ability to socialize outside of their gender group.

The impacts of adversities on LGBTQ students affect them to a psychological level, with negative impacts on their mental health, resulting to bad personal perceptions on their personal being. Williams et al. (2023) emphasized that the accumulated stress from social judgement, verbal criticisms and physical bullying leads to psychological defects which could result in self-harm amongst LGBTQ+ students. Further supporting these findings, Marciano et al. (2024) found that Lesbian students experience emotional distress and fear of rejection from their community given the current circumstance of social acceptance among LGBTQ members, highlighting the great need of institutional support towards aiding them in their mental struggles, and self-acceptance.

Present abilities of law-makers and institutions to promote gender sensitivity amongst an educational environment is a key factor towards reaching inclusivity, most especially in conservative countries like the Philippines and in rural areas, as a key to achieving self-acceptance and developing coping mechanisms. Amistad (2022) Highlighted the role of personal, family, and community acceptance towards creating a more united environment for learning, underscoring the great impact of social understanding towards creating belongingness among LGBTQ students. Meanwhile, Marcelo et al. (2022) argued that the ability of a community to support the "coming out" of an LGBTQ+ individual further strengthens their ability to achieve self-actualization, which then paves the way to being self-confident in their own gender identification. Finally, Joldanero et al. (2024) emphasized the internal abilities among LGBTQ students towards achieving self-actualization, which includes positive thinking and determination to prove self-worth, whilst also highlighting the crucial role of support systems for LGBTQ students in gaining self-confidence and motivation.

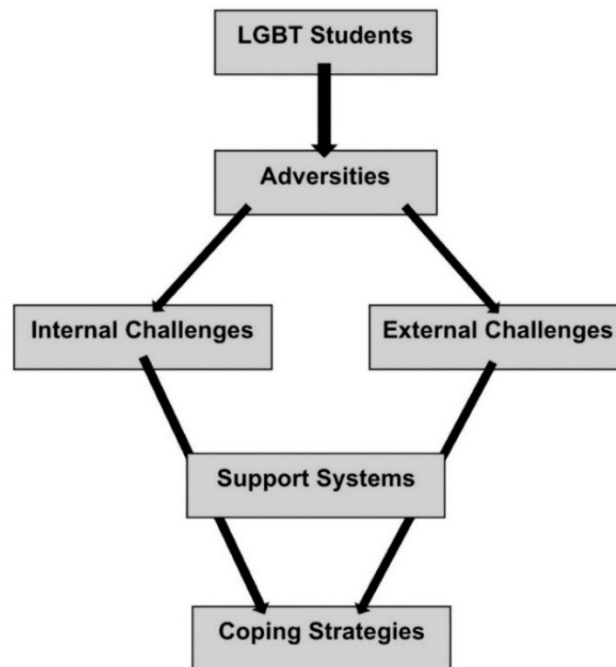


Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

Conceptual Framework

The paradigm diagram visually represents the conceptual framework of the study, the factors present reflect the intricate relationships which affect the LGBT students at “Gubang High School.” This framework shows the factors which create the driving forces behind the challenges faced by LGBT students.

The apex of the framework is the **LGBT Students**, who are the main subjects of this study, these individuals are directly affected by **Adversities** which causes the stigmatization of the gender community in which they identify to be a part of.

The **Internal Challenges** and **External Challenges** to be identified in this study forms these adversities, and contributes to the struggles of LGBT students. The internal challenges shall include the personal perceptions and negative self-made conclusions on their physical and mental nature. While the external challenges tackle outside variables which influence the students' outlook on their gender identification, the social judgement and criticisms LGBT students receive which can affect their overall well-being.

To address these challenges, **support systems** play a significant role in uplifting and encouraging LGBT students to honor their emotions and gender identification, these support systems are critical in building self-confidence and developing belongingness among the young individuals.

Finally, **Coping Strategies** reflect their leniency and resilience. These coping strategies should encapsulate the best practices of these LGBT students in navigating their way through adversity, these coping strategies are yet to be examined and understood, however the context shall be gained through thematic analysis.

This study is grounded on five primary theories: Self-Determination Theory, Minority Stress Theory, Queer Theory, Social Support Theory and Resilience Theory. Each theory contributes valuable insights into the adversities faced by LGBTQ students.

Theoretical Framework

Self Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Psychologists, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (1985), revolves around four primary concepts; Autonomy, Competence and Relatedness, in which these are described as psychological needs. When these needs are met, an individual's motivation increases which could lead to better day-to-day performance and generally self-confidence. This theory embodies the LGBT students' challenge to develop better motivation through social acceptance, where autonomy plays a role in their freedom of self-expression and ability to govern over their actions, competence pertains to self-efficacy, wherein, when better accomplished, LGBT students could be further motivated to accomplish more, whereas relatedness is the crucial feeling of social belonging, all three concepts in this theory helps in understanding the psychological and social aspects that contribute to either the increased motivation or the motivational decline of LGBT students.

Minority Stress Theory, developed by Ilan Meyer (2003), emphasizes that the presence of marginalized communities is due to the visible lack of social support, low economic status race, and gender amongst other factors. In this study, Minority Stress Theory posits that the stigmatized experiences of LGBT students marginalized their community. In a school setting, this theory helps to explain how environments contribute to accumulated stress and struggles amongst LGBT students.

Queer Theory, developed by De Lauretis (1991), explores how constructed norms and expectations in society can be restrictive. It challenges societal struggles and emphasizes diversity and fluidity in gender identification. In this study, Queer Theory mirrors the capacity of LGBT students to call out for gender equality and perspective change, highlighting acceptance as a key factor in achieving inclusivity.

Social Support Theory, by Cohen and Willis (1985), emphasizes improvement in overall well-being due to continuous support from friends, family, and peers. This perspective highlights the reductive properties of social support on stress, and promotes resilience amidst hard situations. In the context of this study, social support theory helps to explain the role of the community in helping identity navigation and acceptance or development of identity crisis amongst LGBT students based on the strength of social support.

Resilience Theory highlights the ability of individuals to remain resilient amidst adversity. This theory is relevant in understanding how LGBT students manage to cope with their internal and external struggles with their identity. This focus on adaptability and strength underscores the students' abilities to

remain strong and true to themselves, strong and true to themselves, further advocating resilience as a great quality to thrive against adversity.

By integrating these primary theories, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the adversity faced by LGBT students at “*Gubang High School*.” This structure facilitates a deep exploration into what specific adversities they face and how they manage their struggles, highlighting their strength, resilience and leniency.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is qualitative, employing a phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of LGBT students at “*Gubang High School*.” The phenomenological approach is chosen in order to effectively uncover the perceptions of the respondents.

Sample and Sampling Method

The sample for this study consists of eight students who are currently enrolled in the grade levels 10, 11 or 12 at “*Gubang High School*,” and are identified as members of the LGBT community. **Purposive Sampling** was utilized to select participants who meet specific criteria, ensuring that the gathered data are valid and authentic.

Name	Grade Level	Sexual Orientation
Arkin	10	Bisexual
Violet	11	Bisexual
Jesi	10	Gay
Rachel	10	Gay
Rhy	12	Lesbian
Mira	10	Lesbian
Gema	12	Transgender
Maria	11	Transgender

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents, Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality.

The researcher has ensured participation from every gender group in the LGBT community, by choosing 2 representatives from each of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and lesbian gender groups.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at “*Gubang High School*” a pseudonym used to maintain confidentiality and ensure security among the participants as part of ethical considerations. “*Gubang High School*,” being located at the center of many communities, represents a rural community which serves as a melting pot for many learners, situated in the community of Mankayan, Benguet. This community is reflective of many similar rural settings wherein conservativity is heavily practiced.

The locale was chosen due to the significant number of students identified as part of the LGBT community. Maintaining anonymity through the use of the pseudonym “*Gubang High School*,” the study ensures that all identifying factors are removed, allowing an unbiased examination of the issues at hand while respecting the privacy and the upholding security of the participants and their community. This ethical approach ensures a broader understanding of the lived experiences of LGBT students without compromising their security.

Research Instruments

This study utilized two research instruments for data collection: **focus group discussions** (FGDs) and **semi-structured interviews**. These instruments are customized to properly document the participants' life experiences, unique challenges, and stress management techniques. The use of semi-structured interviews created a set of open-ended questions that will let the participants openly share their experiences by their own words. These questions followed key themes that are relevant to their societal struggles, stress management techniques, the mental health impacts of social judgement, and the academic and emotional strains they face as members of the LGBT community. To ensure correct data was captured, apart from writing down themes, the researcher has also audio record the individual interviews with the consent of the respondents.

After the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FDGs) has been conducted, by having the participants collectively express their thoughts on similar matters, the FGDs have enabled the researcher to capture deeper insight into the experiences of LGBT students. Similarly to the semi-structured interviews, the researcher has also audio-record the whole duration of the FGDs and also took down notes to capture group dynamics and non-verbal cues.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process for this research has been carried out from December of 2024 until March of 2025, a timeframe chosen to align with the school calendar and has ensured the availability of the respondents. The following steps outline the proposed data collection procedures:

1. **Permission to Conduct the Study:** In January of 2025, the researcher has prepared and submitted a request letter to the School Head of “*Gubang High School*.” A letter of intent has been submitted, stating the research objectives, and ensuring that the conduct of the study will not interfere with any of the participants' studies.
2. **Seeking Parental Consent:** A written consent has been obtained from the parents or guardians of the identified participants before involving them any further. The beginning of January 2025 served as an orientation period for the researcher to explain the study objectives, methods, and ethical considerations to both the participants and their parents or guardians. The researcher has informed that the participation of the student is a voluntary choice and will refrain from forcing participation.
3. **Sampling:** The sampling process begun after both institutional and parental consent were obtained. Twelve students from “*Gubang High School*” have been purposefully chosen as respondents for this study. The sample was chosen based on a study criterion which identified that the respondents needed to be a student who is currently enrolled at “*Gubang High School*,” and identifies as part of the LGBT community.

4. **Preliminary Engagement:** A preliminary engagement session has been conducted on January of 2025 to inform and explain the respondents of their roles in the study. This session has also allowed the respondents to address their concerns or clarify terms. The preliminary engagement session is a rapport building opportunity for the researcher and participants to ensure professionalism and comfort during data collection.
5. **Interviews:** Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted among the participants mid-January 2025. These interviews shall take place in comfortable, private areas within the locale, ensuring the participants were at ease while sharing their personal experiences. Audio-recordings have also been conducted for the whole duration of the interview.
6. **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Focus group discussions have been conducted after semi-structured interviews mid-February of 2025. The venue was held within barangay “Gubang” which is accessible to all participants. These group discussions allowed the participants to interact and collectively discuss and reflect their experiences. Encouraging interaction between the LGBT students has helped reveal shared experiences, challenges, and stress management techniques. The FGDs were also audio recorded, and are supplemented by field notes taken by the researcher to capture group dynamics and non-verbal cues.

Data Analysis

The data to be gathered was analyzed by utilizing Colaizzi's (1978) method of data analysis, a commonly used approach in phenomenological studies. This method developed themes based on the given data about the participants lived experiences.

Data Validation

The researcher utilized **Triangulation method** to validate the results of the study. Firstly, the respondents received the initial result draft from the researcher for validation, editing, or commentary. Revisions to the draft were then done and passed on to the parents or guardians of the respondents for further commentary or validation. Finally, the researcher presented the results to the school body, including students and teachers for final validation.

Ethical Considerations

This study maintained strict adherence to ethical principles at each step of the research process, to ensure the comfort and well-being of all the participants. The **initial stage** was an opportunity in which the researcher will sought out permission from the school head to conduct the study. In order to ensure that the participation of students at “Gubang High School” was safe, and that all steps to achieve this study adheres to school regulations.

In the **seeking parental consent** stage, the researcher endorsed the proposal to the parents or guardians of the identified participants through a detailed orientation, to ensure proper understanding among the researcher and guardians. Informed consent waivers were also distributed to the guardians.

The **data collection stage** was done in the most comfortable manner, all personal information in audio recordings and transcripts were safely secured and stored.

Lastly, in the **interaction stage**, the participants' comfort was prioritized, the individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in private and comfortable locations found at “*Gubang High School*” during the participants' free hours, in order not to interfere with their academics. The participants were be assured their right to skip any question they find uncomfortable answering, additionally, they were assured the freedom to withdraw from the interviews as they wished. This is to ensure sensitivity with the participants' social and psychological well-being, and to ensure that the data collection process was successful, comforting and considerate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this phenomenological study furnish an exploration into the perplexed lives of LGBT students at “*Gubang High School*.” By delving into the pressures and adversities these students face, the study examines the overall experiences of LGBT students in rural areas, specifically in “*Gubang High School*.” Through the lens of Self Determination Theory, Minority Stress Theory, Queer Theory, Social Support Theory, and Resilience Theory, this study delves into the gender-related adversities LGBT students face regularly. The thematic analysis reveals how these students face forced pretending, verbal bullying, religious confliction, self-inflicted harm, identity confusion, suppression of identity, social contradiction, severed relationships, and fear of rejection.

This study also delves into the coping mechanisms LGBT students employ, highlighting positive ignorance, intervening hobbies, peer support, good mentality, and social media outreach. These findings not only delve into the faced adversities and coping strategies, but also the hindrances and support systems that play into their self-expressiveness and openness about their gender identification, revealing the functions of familial roles, institutional support, and the role of friends and the community. The study recognizes and addresses the present adversities faced by LGBT students, and aims to foster a more inclusive and understanding environment for LGBT learners.

Challenges of LGBT Students

Forced to Pretend

Struggling to accomplish self-actualization while forcibly urging yourself to fit in severs not just self-esteem, but also adds to the one's confusion, especially when you're not born into the nature in which you wish to be. LGBT students note the emotional and physical transitions they must accomplish just to reach satisfaction. As Gema noted, “It's hard pretending to be a girl, like copying their style. It's hard pretending to be a girl, it's specially feels harder to pretend when there's a handsome guy.” Working outside of one's identity can be fundamentally disempowering, as one can feel his/her portrayal of inauthenticity, the will to adapt just to fit in remains a commonly taken route for many, making themselves “*chameleons*” (Keane, 2025) This sentiment is consistent with Self-determination Theory, which highlights the need to own your identity and create autonomy for yourself, so that we become freer of constraints, and accomplish self-efficacy (Ryan , 2024).

Verbal Bullying

Certain verbal comments suggest the unwelcomeness of LGBT individuals, negative comments towards the LGBT student's identities in "*Gubang High School*" has created greater gaps towards inclusivity. Gema expressed, "Other students, as I have observed, feel disgusted just because of the fact." This sentiment radiates through the following individual experiences of the participants. The feeling of revolt towards the LGBTQ increases opposition towards achieving inclusiveness, and overall acceptance of the LGBTQ community, leading to disregard to policies aimed towards gender equality, violence then follows as part of the reaction (Logan, 2016).

The uttered negativity towards LGBT students become embedded, continuous expression of opposition to LGBTQ nature is a phenomenon in which the LGBT students of "*Gubang High School*" face. As Maria noted, "Catcalling is one that I do not care what they say because I already have coped up with it. There was this one time where we were just walking on the road, and then some people were catcalling, "bakla" (gay), "bayot" (gay), like that." This sentiment is reflective of Minority Stress Theory, wherein stigmatization is highlighted as common reaction towards exposure to unfamiliar or opposable phenomenon (Frost & Meyer, 2023). This highlights the verbal day-to-day battles which creates marginalization among LGBT students.

Violent reactions towards the LGBTQ community have played a vital role in shaping the present society, public scrutinization has become a way to regulate the presence of sexual minorities (Gruszczynska, 2012). As Rachel expressed, "One time, I went to this place, it was a pool and I was wearing a tank top and a knitted top, and I swam like that, they thought I was wearing a bra and assumed so – A guy shouted 'Are you not disgusted with yourself?' Why would I be disgusted with myself if who I am now is what I wanted, that's why in other communities, or in other places, they really don't like the LGBTQ, they don't accept." The self-promoting sentiments amidst negative commentary aligns with Resilience Theory, where marginalized individuals take shame as an adaptive emotion, as associated with the mental abilities of individuals, the presence of shame resilience in an individual promotes self-efficacy (Arnink, 2020). Communities revolving around different cultures and perspectives react differently to foreign phenomena, LGBT students then are subject to public judgement regardless of their personal acceptance.

Studies have shown that verbal harassment towards LGBT is common in students, due to lack of comprehension or understanding of the nature of negative commentary, however, these derogatory attitudes only promote dispute and stigma, interventions must be ensured to provide support towards the marginalized and guidance towards the bullies (McCabe, Dragowski, & Robinson, 2013). As Maria noted, "There's a question they often ask that annoys me, they say "How do you hide it? Do you not have testicles anymore?" like that, for me, that's very offensive."

Religious Confliction

A common concern found among all of the gender groups of the study was the interventional practices in which religiously affiliated groups or individuals apply, which often appears derogatory to the receiving end, or the LGBT students. As Violet expressed, "Just recently with the conducted symposium, I only caught a glimpse of it, but I felt certain discrimination against people like me with the preaching, they said "Gays and lesbians are not creations of God, they are sins." These sentiments show strong commitment to religious principles, however, also practices derogatory means for intervention. Homosexuality plays a vital role in treatment, especially to those who are religiously inclined, homophobia is shown though

progressive referencing of religion and its supposed limitations, religiosity makes for awkward and uncomfortable LGBTQ-anchored conversations, even to the point of offense (Westwood, 2022).

Religious-based prejudice creates exclusion for LGBTQ individuals, whereas selective ignorance towards LGBTQ concern is commonly expressed. The great opposition towards same-sex relationships is a great advocacy for many anti-LGBTQ affiliated religious groups, promoting dismissive treatment towards LGBTQ concerns (Leach & Gore, 2020).

Anti-LGBTQ campaigns on social media are very much present, with religiously-inclined content discouraging the students of "*Gubang High School*," this reality reshapes the perspectives of students due to religious dismissal of their nature. Arkin mentioned, "They say it's a sin to be this way. I once scrolled on Facebook reels, and a video just popped up about how being in a same-sex relationship is a sin. It said the way it's supposed to be is man for woman, woman for man, and no other way." The oppression of LGBTQ on wide-reaching media endangers LGBTQ individuals, the mobilization of many individuals in protesting LGBTQ does not only marginalize them, but also threaten them of their safety, affecting physical and mental wellbeing (Pain & Chen, 2023).

Social Support Theory suggests that the lack of understanding and consideration towards a marginalized group prompts disengagement towards positive development, social support is not exercised through degrading approaches, it however prompts individuals to negate advocacy and encourages refusal to common understanding (Lake & Cohen, 2000).

Contradiction to homosexual nature is prevalent in the communities which the LGBT students reside in, conservative nature is influenced by the rural community's inclination to religion. As Rachel expressed, "Some of my other family members, they're okay, they accept me, but then again, we are a very religious family, so others disagree with me, they say being a part of the LGBTQ is like a sin, they say it's because gays and lesbians are not creations of God." Religious beliefs play a great role in the acceptance and rejection of LGBT members among their family. Acceptance is a key factor in building inclusivity and bridging the gap towards marginalized groups and disapproving parties who do not entertain the ideology of Homosexuality in the community (Amistad, 2022).

LGBT students perceive the present inclination of their community to religion and traditional norms as a factor which creates contradiction of their identity. Violet shared, "Many people are old fashioned, they don't agree with the idea of same-sex relationships, mostly with those affiliated in the religious sector and the like." Stigmatization of the LGBTQ is a social response which expresses the disapproval of the homosexual gender minority (Libiran, Cepeda, Ramos, Carlo, Alano, & Guballa, 2024). The vocal expressiveness of community members on the "*improper*" nature of these individuals is heavily influenced and centered on their faith.

Guilt also plays a critical role in the LGBT students' perceptions of their identity intertwined with their religion, as Arkin noted, "Being a part of it is hardest when I enter the church." Identity-based guilt and shame is an outcome of religious conflicting perspectives between homosexual individuals who actively participate in church activities, while a compartmentalization of individuality and religion is enacted by most to pursue their beliefs regardless of gender identification (Anderson & Koc, 2020). These sentiments highlight the inclusion of LGBT members of their religious beliefs in their construction of judgement and self-actualization, emphasizing the need to keep faith intact despite the adversities one may encounter due to contradiction of belief.

Self-inflicted Harm

Stigmatized individuals take heavy mental setbacks when opposition to one's being is strongly implied, this prompts individuals to do self-harm. As Rachel expressed, "As a member of the LGBTQ community in our environment, when they see me, they see a disgrace, and it hurts emotionally and physically, I end up slashing my hands for example." These sentiments echo the Minority Stress Theory, wherein negative impacts on LGBTQ members' mental health have been noted, these result to more than just emotional strains but also promotes physical harm, extreme emotion can lead to undesirable actions where individuals relieve stress by taking it out on themselves (Alessi, 2014).

Identity Confusion

Identity development and openness play a vital role in the solidification of personality, and self-actualization, a person's identity development is commonly shaped by the ability to be expressive or take in influence (Syed, 2013). In the case of the "Gubang High School" LGBT students, identity confusion is common as some may find empowering friend groups, while others choose to hide their identity. As Arkin has mentioned, "There are times when my emotions get extreme, it's like I don't know what to do or feel. I question whether to be one of the boys or not. It's always been like that, and then sometimes I feel like it's better to be more female."



Plate 1. This image of a dress placed besides basketball shoes symbolizes the compartmentalized nature of LGBT students in "Gubang High School," their duality in presenting themselves as different genders, and the emotional aspects that go into self-actualization. This showcases their transitioning abilities and reflects their personality.

Expectations in society remain inclined to the normative. Queer Theory suggests that ideologies are most affiliated to normative bases, however, as for LGBTQ, the identification of an individual as part of the LGBTQ is not a play of semantics, but an honest expression of his/her/their emotions (Jagose & Jenschel, 1996). Thus, the open discussion of one's confusion to his/her/their gender is part of identity development.

Suppression of Identity

The students of "*Gubang High School*," being residents of conservative areas also face hardship with self-expression, with all Bisexual students expressing their inability to share themselves with their family and friends. As Arkin expressed, "No one knows. No one knows about how I feel, I haven't expressed myself at all. I voluntarily just set my feelings aside, everything I feel I just keep to myself." Emotional suppression, being a usual problem faced by sexual minorities, are challenged by heteronormative ideologies, a concept which aligns with Minority Stress Theory, highlighting popular decision to mask identity because of normative ideologies and fear of facing potential prejudices (Singh, Dandona, Sharma & Zaidi, 2023).

Queer Theory reflects the adherence of the LGBT students, especially the bisexual group, to social norms and normative perspectives, whereas these students have already fully grasped the nature of their identity, they have no form nor motivation for expression, which are challenges that are culturally and socially anchored.

The distant nature of LGBTQ individuals exacerbates their marginalization, as their adherence to social norms restrict them of their autonomy and self-expression (Watson, 2005). Arkin expressed "I'm not really open to my family, that's why when I open up, I only open up to my friends, the ones I now treat as siblings. To others, I very much show my true self, but to my family, I have never been open, never really." Being closeted not only encourages isolation, but also creates distance in relationships, restrictive measures not only ensures that the identity is hidden, but so is the truth, and that only further stigmatizes the gender minority (Surdovel, 2015).

Cultural and ethnic background play a great role in identity suppression, conservative cultures promote a sense of unwelcomeness for new ideologies and phenomena, it also slows down the acceptance process due to cemented social norms which many have lived by in so long (Robinson, Mu, Webb, & Stone, 2024). The normalized structure of identity in the community in which the LGBT students reside in create conflict with their expression, drifting them farther from their families for fear they fail to meet what society has standardized. Violet expressed, I feel like I can't be open as much, I can't share my real self with other because I'm afraid they will judge me." This shows the created expectations in which the respondents base their perspectives, thus affecting their ability to express themselves.

Social Contradiction

Society plays a key role in either the resumption of expression, or suppression of identity among the LGBT students, as Arkin stated "I regularly hear comments which are corrections, 'It's like you're not a girl,' 'Fix the way you walk,' 'Fix your posture,' 'Dress properly,' 'Girls don't dress that way,' 'Don't dress so sloppy' things like that." Normative ideologies are commonly expressed to "*correct*" improper

actions done by LGBTQ individuals, this disorients the gender-development of the minority, forcing them to adhere to societal standards (Thajib, 2022).

De Lauretis' Queer Theory (1991) is reflected through social limitations present in the locality, the students are limited by the social ideologies which shape the environment they belong in, and these sentiments transpire to more than just clothing, but also in personal life. Rhy shared, "In our community, a small rumor spread about me, they said I, a girl, was having a relationship with a girl. It got to the point where a neighbor got wind of it, and she confronted me about it, I just became silent, she was telling me, 'Why? Are you a boy? Why do you act like a lesbian?'" The revolt towards unaligned action with societal norms suggests aggression towards LGBT individuals.



Plate 2. A transgender student of "Gubang High School" wearing eyeliner as a sign of femininity. These temporary cosmetic enhancements show the manners of self-expression among LGBT learners, particularly in transgenders, this symbolizes their identity and self-determination towards social acknowledgement.

Severed Relationships

Employing conflict avoidance is an adjustment most LGBTQ youth employ to maintain a co-living family situation, especially in traditional families who do not honor the emotional redirection in which prompts a child to identify himself/herself/themselves as an LGBTQ member (Reczek & Bosley-Smith, 2021). Rachel remarked, "They say they accept me, but I always feel some sort of discrimination, then sometimes physical stress adds up to the tension, and it affects my focus and self-esteem." The lack of family acknowledgement declines an LGBT member's determination to improve oneself, when an important relationship is severed, so will one's cognitive abilities, in this case, the LGBT students' lives are reflected and anchored to Deci and Ryan's Self Determination Theory (1985).

Self-disclosure to friends is a critical step towards being accepted in the society as an LGBTQ member, as some of the LGBTQ student participants of “*Gubang High School*” have expressed, they lack the ability to express themselves to their parents and peers because they fear the consequences. To reveal a stigmatized status to unknowing individuals do not always result in acceptance, but rather some result in revolt, thus many members of the LGBTQ choose not to stand out (Herek, 2003). Jesi expressed, “Whenever I hang out with my guy friends, I somehow end up having a crush on them and push them away. They tell me ‘We treat you like a friend and you just become gay?’” The lack of social acceptance among teenagers towards gay nature, and the like, disorients the flow of friendships, instead, it results in revolt and stigmatization, LGBTQ teenagers, thus, are prone to be shunned for emotional expression of affection (Savin-Williams, 2005).

Social Support Theory (1985) suggests that support plays a direct role in one’s perspective towards a relationship, whereas contradiction threatens bonds to severing. Alienation then becomes prominent for LGBTQ individuals in settings where they are not shown acceptance, as there is no support to encourage engagement, there is only grounds to develop solidarity (Walker, 2020).

Fear of Rejection

Many of the “*Gubang High School*” LGBT students, particularly the bisexual gender group, expressed that they still struggle to come out and express themselves, though they’ve personally accepted their gender, they still fear the judgement they could face if ever they admit to their nature. As Violet expressed, “When some of my classmates find out I’m bisexual, I can feel them being disgusted, I feel like I’m being discriminated because of their reactions.” Fear of judgement plays a critical role in the marginalization of the sexual minority, though many of the LGBTQ adolescents adapt and manage to have identity development, the minority still fear the society, and their negative reactions (Baams, Laura, Wouter, & Jessica, 2020). The LGBT learners remain under the regulation of societal ideologies, and the threat of stigmatization.

Meyer’s Minority Stress Theory (2003) aligns with the concerns of these young individuals, the LGBT student group remain a sexual minority because they lack support from their society where conservatism is greatly observed, additionally, the present hesitance to open up to their community suggests the lack of attention to gender identification issues, and overall gender-related development.

These young individuals do not fear their identity, but the possibility that they could end up in isolation due to their identity, Violet expressed, “I don’t say anything. I’m very much afraid of rejection, I keep thinking that if they find out about my sexuality, they’ll see me differently.” Sexual orientation-related rejection does not only promote social exclusion but also leads to mental health disparities among the stigmatized, thus many LGBT individuals who have yet to “*come out*” or openly express themselves, experience anxiety and stress towards different perspectives (Kiekens, Baams, Feinstein, & Veenstra, 2023).

Coping Mechanisms

Positive Ignorance

Positive ignorance emerges as a key coping mechanism for LGBT students, self-provided mental stability was revealed as a means of self-preservation. The disregard of unnecessary opinions towards the

LGBT students has proven effective in maintaining their composure. As Rachel noted, “I just let it be, because if you think about what people say too much, you just end up suffocating yourself, and you might end up not being okay with who you are, that’s why when people say bad thing like ‘He’s gay, he’s not a good person,’ I just take the sentiment in one ear, and let it out the other end. I choose to refresh my mind no matter what they say, because after all I am a human made by God at the end of the day.” This sentiment underscores the importance of resilience found within oneself, understanding the nature of the environment contributes to a stigmatized individual’s overall capability to provide support for themselves (Singh, 2017).

Redirecting perception also plays a key role in promoting positive ignorance, LGBT students opt to focus on achieving greater feat rather than entertain negativity. As Jesi noted, “I just don’t mind them and focus on my studies instead.”

The importance of positive perception also plays a key role in finding self-acceptance and the ability to move on without negative thoughts in any situation, the ability to focusing on their own lives and personal growth results to more positive outlooks in life. Arkin expressed, “I just let things be, because as for me, others really can’t do anything to alter who I am. And from time-to-time it's like others’ perspectives change voluntarily anyways, so I just let things be.” Positive psychology dismisses traditional paradigms to enlighten perception, when negativity is dealt with contradicting response which is in accordance to the want of “living a good life” (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006).

Intervening Hobbies

Pursuing self-interest prompts destigmatisation, as a form of protection against susceptibility towards marginalization, the presence of personal intervention by means of pursuing self-interest and redirecting emotions is intervention at a very affective level (Haghighat, 2001). Hobbies play a key role in deflecting negativity expressed towards the LGBT learners of “*Gubang High School*,” these learners use these avenues as stress relieving mechanisms to cope up with present adversities.

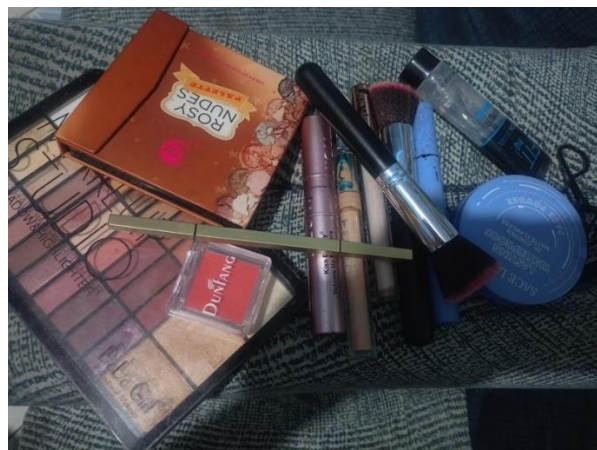


Plate 3. Cosmetic products, either used for concealment of imperfections or enhancement of physical features. These products symbolize the identity of LGBT students at “Gubang High School,” and their developed hobbies in make-up, an interest that also creates identity.

As Maria expressed “I spend my times doing make-up, making transitions, and that's how I cope-up, and sometimes I go out with my friends and hang out. I also do hobbies like taking videos and doing make-up to relieve tension.” Resilience Theory in application is resounded when certain challenges are responded with resistance, in a manner that is clear-cut, and aligns with one’s personal growth (Carlson, Haffenden, Bassett, Buehring, Collins, Folga, & Whitfield, 2012). This habitual response to negativity thrown at LGBT students highlight their ability to stir their focus and attention away from adversity, and instead redirect their attention towards improving hobbies, making these activities intervening at the same time.

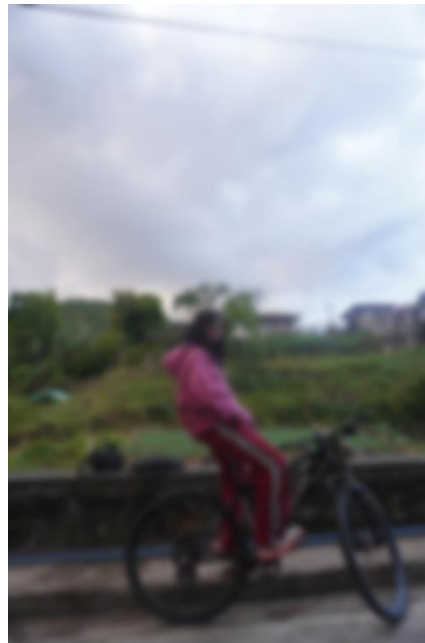


Plate 4. LGBT student of ‘Gubang High School’ bike riding. Showcasing the lean-back nature of the lesbian population, and perspiring methods of stress relieving they employ.

The respondents have also noted that through perspiring hobbies, they are able to let out tension and any emotional carriage they carry, this practice ensures functionality and emotional stability among adversity facing individuals. Arkin shared, “Actually, my best coping mechanism is I go on rides. I own a bike, and to pass those hard feelings, I choose to sweat it out and forget, so I don’t end up affected, but of course other people’s words really make me think.” Stress relieving through leisure sports ensures an avenue which not only contributes to the physical health of an adolescent, but as well as their overall development as an individual, LGBTQ youth, in particular, are prone to marginalization because of societal judgement, however sports acts as an avenue to encourage participation, and achieve self-efficacy through sports development (Theriault & Witt, 2014).

Sport activities play a great role in stress relief and coping up with stress, as Arkin noted, “Basketball, I play basketball with my close friend, it’s kind of like a way for me to adjust and improve with her.” Recreational sports do not only promote physical health, but also mental stability, while it also promotes community engagement, hobbies which leads to perspiration can also become leisure activities, promoting a more positive outlook on reality (Kurniawan, Srijaroon, & Mousavi, 2022).

Peer Support

LGBT students feel more eased at the presence of support from their friends, a heartwarming phenomenon which encourages better partnership and collaboration between peers, knowing that some people understand and support who you are further encourages self-acceptance and self-actualization. Mira stated, "When I see my friends, people who are in the same situation as I, I see them going on and still being themselves even though they experience hardships, and that fact just prompts me to do the same." This encouragement reflects underscores the immense need of support towards LGBT students for self-acceptance and self-promotion. Peer-support which aim to support LGBTQ communities significantly impact the perception of the sexual minority, by providing support, creating advocacy, and promoting developmental perspectives, mental strains are not only alleviated, but could potentially begone (Worrell, Waling, Anderson, Lyons, Fairchild, & Bourne, 2023)

Community support is important for the personal development of minoritized gender groups, through providing acceptance and support towards LGBTQ individual's self-actualization, assurance then reflects on the minority (Soderberg, 2021).

Having peer support networks also means you have an outlet to express heavy emotions, the respondents expressed tension relief once they let out burdening build-up of emotion, and also rather directs them towards better outlooks in life. Arkin mentioned, "For me, I just got closer to a friend, I told her everything, and then after that, I got better on focusing on my goals." Support towards LGBTQ immensely uplifts marginalization, as it acknowledges the presence and faced adversity of the LGBTQ, friends and the community in general assist with creating change through advocating for the sexual minority (Byard, Kosciw, & Bartkiewicz, 2012).

Good Mentality

Besides positive ignorance, positive views on daily struggles posits that Self Determination Theory (1985) echoes resilience by developing personal uplifting strategies, for the students of "*Gubang High School*," the presence of good mentality allows them to relocate their attention towards the better and practical. Rhy noted, "Well, the best way to carry on with life is not to overthink the bad situations, because if you do, you will just stay at a point that you might feel you can't move on or you can't move away from the situation." Setting perspectives anchored to reality ensures that time does not just merely slip away being used for unnecessary thinking, rather, the respondents have developed an easy-going mind set which nullifies negativity.

Social Media Outreach

Living in the technological era, the respondents have acknowledged the influence of social media in shaping their perspectives. In rural areas where open gender expression is not common, it is by the provision of interned that young LGBTQ individuals discover identity and develop self-actualization. Online engagement builds better understanding for the young marginalized gender groups, as individuals facing challenges of identity building, social media offers accessible information on gender development, self-expression, identity, and gender advocacies.

The presence of information combats the restriction which the respondents face living in conservative rural areas, normative approaches are then expanded into dynamic perspectives towards gender and identity. As Violet expressed, "I once thought what I was feeling and becoming was wrong, but when I scrolled through the internet and saw many others expressing themselves, I came to realize it's normal for me." LGBTQ members can identify social media as a '*safe space*' for expression and engagement, noting that media has become a key component in the empowerment of LGBTQ individuals towards self-actualization and identity building (Lucero, 2017).

Hindrances and Support Systems

Familial Roles

Family roles in the lives of LGBTQ individuals play a key factor in either strengthening their identity through expressing support, or creating risk factors by violently reacting to the LGBTQ individual's identity. Many LGBT learners from "*Gubang High School*" have expressed immense support they receive from their families, while some identify their familial support as non-related to their identity, and rather radiates more through other concepts.

Transitioning or adjustment to emotional difference is a great burden, not just because it's the time of discovering different nature, but also because most young individuals who experience adjusting are very much confused, family plays a role by being pillars of understanding and support through it all. As Mira expressed, "At first, I was actually very masculine, but as time went by, I found out I was gay and becoming gayer. But as for my family, I guess they understood and accepted me either way." Positive support during adjustment ensures that the mental and psychological wellbeing of a young individual is not compromised, and ensures better outcome of character (Snapp, Watson, Russell, Diaz, & Ryan 2015)

Institutional Support

Institutional support plays a great role in letting adolescents understand the concept of LGBTQ genders, educational interventions towards reduction of gender discrimination is heavily noted as an important concept which allows for overall gender development. Not only by advocating through seminars and campaigns, but as well as policy and implementation. LGBTQ-friendly campuses are not only adhering to developmental change, but as well as overall inclusivity, adoption of LGBTQ-supportive policies suggest nondiscriminatory practices are institutionalized (Woodford, Kulick, Garvey, Sinco, & Hong, 2014).

Inactiveness towards gender development was easily observed by the LGBT students, this reflects the community's dismissiveness towards topics involving homosexuality, and their conservatism, Violet expressed, "I don't know of any programs here in school which promote gender sensitivity and gender equality."

Advocation of these rights are also considered vital for further actualization of initiatives towards inclusivity. Adhering to the concepts of Queer Theory (1991), social norms shape the restrictions in which minority groups function, thus, reshaping societal views would directly expand those limitations. Jesi shared, "Besides my mom buying make-up and girly clothes for me, I also appreciate the support of our

school through the implementation of gender sensitive rules by sir Bits.” Advocacy towards gender-related causes can create great empowerment for the marginalized, institutionalized policies do not only limit the stigmatization of the minority, but also support its development.

Roles of Friends and the Community

Friendships and community support play a critical role in social acceptance of an LGBTQ individual, the respondents noted that having good friend groups provide comfortable spaces for their self-expression, meanwhile, a supportive community provides empowerment.

The ability to just lean on certain individuals and show your true self is a testament to true friendship and acceptance, “*Gubang High School*” students express that without the presence of these support systems, the community might seem pervasive of their presence, however, even the youth of rural areas grow along with the social perspectives of the majority, thus, understanding is easier to find in the community. Rhy noted, “My friends are all supportive, as long as they see me grow, they give all their support.” Support plays a great role in the development of LGBTQ youth, who are prone to disproportional mental health due to being part of a sexual minority, support plays a great role in development and confidence among these adolescents (Wilkerson, Schick, Romijnders, Bauldry, Butame, & Montrose Center, 2017).

Conclusion

This Phenomenological study provides an in-depth examination of the lived experiences of LGBT students at “*Gubang High School*,” underscoring the adversities which they face. The findings reveal the challenges faced by these individuals, compartmentalized under three major themes: challenges of LGBT students, coping mechanisms, and hindrances and support systems.

The challenges faced by LGBT students appear as significant strain, which affect their social, personal, physical and mental well-being. The issues of forced pretention, verbal bullying, religious confliction, self-inflicted harm, identity confusion, suppression of identity, social contradiction, severed relationships, and fear of rejection. De Lauretis’ Queer Theory (1991) assists the understanding of how social norms constrict the movement and expression of LGBT students in rural areas, while Resilience Theory helps to frame the ability of LGBT students to grow despite the adversities. Meanwhile, Cohen and Willis’ Social Support Theory (1985) underscores need for social support among LGBTQ individuals, which caters to the needed guidance and empowerment the gender minority requires.

Trying to fit in really plays with the emotional health of these students, when exerting extreme efforts to fit in is responded with exclusion and revolt, it’s sure to take a toll on the adolescents’ mental and physical health. These hardships highlight the crucial need for social and emotional support from these individuals’ family, friends, and community.

In spite of all these challenges, LGBT students employ various coping mechanisms, including positive ignorance which is redirection of attention towards the more important aspects of life rather than entertaining negativity. Intervening hobbies play a role in stress relieving and tension release by developing or doing interests which relax the mind and disengage negative emotions. The students reflect optimism towards gaining inclusivity in the community despite the negative realities in which they have already

faced, these hopes are shaped by advocacy and social media outreach which encourage and empower these young individuals.

With the presence of conservatism in the locality, these students face difficulty in adhering to culturally-anchored normative ideologies, or encouraging empowerment and volume amongst the minority gender groups. This study underscores the necessity for awareness campaigns and policy support towards LGBT students to achieve a more inclusive environment while still respecting the living limitations of the community, striving for much more inclusivity in learning environments and the community.

Recommendations

With adherence to the findings of this study, which highlight the adversities faced by LGBT students at “*Gubang High School*,” several suggestions can be made towards providing actionable solutions that support the social, mental and physical well-being of the students. These recommendations aim to address the specific issues identified in the study, suggesting a more-inclusive and developing environment which could enhance the well-being of these students.

Awareness Campaigns

1. **Seminars and Workshops on Gender Equality and Development:** Local Government Units (LGUs) could provide seminars on gender concepts and assist with further comprehension on the nature and science behind the presence of LGBTQ individuals. Allowing educational expansion on gender-related topics and personal growth.
2. **Social Media Campaigns:** Through the use of social media, students, and community members could be encouraged to create, post, share, and browse through content which highlight LGBTQ identity, allowing for accessible information to be absorbed by social media users. And also serves as an advantageous avenue for information dissemination.
3. **LGBT Centered Programs and Celebrations:** Institutions should encourage self-expression through allowing the conduction of gender-based festivities, which aim to develop individuals and celebrate their individuality and the way they were created, creating empowerment for the minorities.

Policy and Institutional Support

1. **Enhanced Policy Implementation:** Given the current regulations, it is necessary that the gender development initiatives be taken into action. Schools should not tolerate gender-based discrimination, nor should they be the ones encouraging revolt against the LGBTQ community.
2. **Gender Equality Discussions:** Schools should facilitate gender equality discussions among their learners, this is to encourage fairness in treatment, and discouragement of violently reacting to the presence of an LGBTQ individual. This also helps build character and politeness among learners.

3. **Research and Monitoring:** Schools and Local Government Units should guide and help initiatives aimed towards gender equality and inclusivity. Researches should be encouraged, specifically longitudinal, in order to properly assess the levels at which our inclusivity stands.

Emotional and Social Support

1. **Peer Support:** Schools and communities should facilitate the formation of peer support groups where LGBT students can voice out or seek comfort in, as a mentioned coping strategy, peer support would encourage and empower the LGBT students to voice themselves out and be proud.
2. **Counseling:** Mental health programs should be established to address the present psychological problems present in LGBT students, this would encourage them to voice out, and act as a means to show support and acceptance of who they are.

Advocation

1. **Partnership with Non-Government Organizations:** The inclusion of other personnel for further learning and exposure to different gender-based circumstances should be encouraged as these organizations are able to provide guidance and seminars which cater to the gender-based developmental goals.

Community and Family Engagement

1. **Family Support Workshops:** Conducting workshops on gender inclusivity and gender equality for families with LGBT members shall not only encourage openness and understanding, but also strengthen family ties and garner education on gender-related concerns.
2. **Community Awareness Programs:** Programs aimed to develop inclusivity among the marginalized gender groups in the community should be practiced to ensure the community is playing a role towards the development of any LGBT child or individual, and should encourage to provide guidance for the young individuals.

These recommendations aim to foster a supportive environment which caters to the needs of LGBT adolescents, and advocate for absolute inclusivity. Collaborative efforts of the community, family, friends, and the school is essential in the achievement of these goals, which promote equality and understanding in the community.

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