

The Voices of LGBTQ+ Teachers: Insights Into Identity, Inclusion, and Profession

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Publication Date: September 6, 2025

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.17143410

Abstract

This study involved eleven (11) LGBTQ+ teachers from the public schools in the City Schools Division of Cabuyao and have employed the transcendental phenomenological approach. The data were gathered from the interview with the participants. The study used the Cresswell method, the researcher worked with a data analyst to transcribe, code, and determine the subordinate and superordinate themes from the narratives of the participants. The study found out that the LGBTQ+ teachers viewed their social relations within the school setting as professionally meaningful but often marked complexity due to the persistent marginalization. They also shared that the ongoing struggles for recognition, equality, and dignity-the problems that reflect the broader challenges of asserting genuine identities

in educational environment that is not always accepting. Despite inequality and identity-based threats, LGBTQ+ teachers continue to exhibit resiliency and commitment to their roles, striving to create inclusive and learner-centered classrooms. It also found out that the internal resilience and the external support system are both crucial in surpassing the marginalization. Building the strong professional networks and advocating for instructional change are essential steps toward fostering equitable and respectful school environments. Further, these teachers emphasized the significance of Gender and Development Training programs in empowering them to understand their rights and underpin their capacity to address social institutional pressures.

Keywords: *inclusion, identity, insights, profession, voice of LGBTQ+ educator*

1. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 aimed to achieve gender quality and empower all women and girls, or simply on Gender Equality. The focus is on pursuing the main goal of real and sustained gender equality in all aspects of women and girls' lives which includes ending gender disparities, violence against women and girls' lives, eliminating early and forced marriage, equal participation and opportunities for leadership, and universal access to sexual and reproductive rights. (United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, 2020).[1]

Putting gender equality first is one of the 2030 Agenda's intersecting issues. Gender equality and women's empowerment are essential to all aspects of inclusive development. There is general agreement that if

women's empowerment and gender equality are given holistic priority, then progress on all of the SDGs can be realistically achieved (SDG, 2020). [2]

In line with the Philippines' commitment in achieving the SDGs, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) Board issued PSA Resolution No. 04 Series of 2016, Enjoining Government Agencies to Provide Data Support to the Sustainable Development Goals. As such, the agencies were also enjoined to monitor the country's performance in achieving the SDGs please spell outbased on the indicator framework determined by NEDA, PSA and relevant government agencies. The PSA was also designated as the official repository of the SDG indicators in the Philippines. (PSA, 2022) [3]

In the Philippines, to make a substantial difference in the lives of LGBTQ+ educators, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Equality Bill and the Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Bill (CADB) have been filed. Moreover, to address the increasing gender issues at school, the "Guidelines and Procedure on the Establishment or DepEd Gender and Development Focal Point System" (DepEd Memorandum Order No. 27, s. 2013) [4], and the "Policy in the Implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education" (DepEd Memorandum No. 31, s. 2018) [5] were released. Its institutionalization provided teachers, students, and parents the opportunity to develop their knowledge on gender-related laws, and policies. However, these policies have not been strongly implemented.

Additionally, Manalo (2020) [6] clarified that some teachers who identify as LGBTQ have endured discrimination from those in their immediate vicinity, leading to feelings of judgment and victimization. Further, he also found out that certain educators have been labeled as bigoted or have a negative reputation because they are seen as unfit to teach and do not serve as positive role models for the students they instruct. Furthermore, students, particularly those in high school, have made insulting remarks to some teachers; some parents and bystanders have also done the same.

The researcher enjoyed working with LGBTQ+ teachers because she has experience doing so. She has seen the teachers' tenacity in defending their rights, their aspirations, and the development of their students. Furthermore, the researcher has personally observed the exceptional qualities of these teachers, including their inventiveness, individuality, and capacity for building positive relationships with those they work with. These teachers have certain traits that have made a lasting impression on the students during the teaching-learning process. They have the ability to fully break the monotony and make the lesson fun while still guaranteeing that the lessons are retained. The negative stereotypes that the public and those around them perpetuate about these teachers represent their other side. Some individuals have been generalizing about LGBTQ+ teachers as negative role models for young people, accusing them of negative deeds and saying offensive things that their students may internalize. Due to these prevalently held misconceptions, LGBTQ+ teachers have been encouraged to avoid closets. Some of them fear criticism, while others are averse to others delaying and stopping their true selves because they are being watched over by others.

The researcher was able to have an interview with the LGBTQ+ teachers because of her close relationship with them. The teachers shared their heartbreak experiences and expressed how disappointed they were by the prejudice and judgment they had received from some people. They are educators with a strong desire to instruct students and support them throughout their journey, and they have similar views about humanity. Individuals who may not know as much as those who do about the experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers have passed judgment on them. Their ignorance of the issues these teachers deal with stems from their judgment, that of others, and even that of the parents.

The City Schools Division of Cabuyao is one of the fast-growing city divisions in the Calabarzon. It has been noted for having a continuously rising teacher population in the basic education. These are teachers with diverse backgrounds, from the culture, age, educational attainment, and gender. It has also been observed that the DepEd Cabuyao observes the principles of GAD from the teachers' application, to hiring,

and promotion. This happened since the DepEd Cabuyao is composed of professionals, and who have been oriented with the laws and issuances about GAD. Most of the problems may be encountered from the people they will be dealing with outside the DepEd personnel. There might be some people who are not aware about the GAD and the rights of the professional teachers to be respected as human and professionals.

Through this interview, the researcher has recognized the needs to compile evidence based on research regarding the actual circumstances and experiences. In this way, she seized the chance to carry out research that examined the difficulties and real-world experiences faced by LGBTQ+ teachers in terms of their social relation. The researcher aimed to propose an Enhanced GAD Framework which specifically aimed to help the LGBTQ+ teachers enjoy their rights as professional teachers, attain better social relation with the people they are dealing with, and to enhance their capabilities, confidence, express themselves, and take space for the overall management of the school. Also, the study aimed to integrate the inclusivity of the Gender and Development to school management which gives a platform for everyone to play vital role in the continuous improvement of the school which is gender responsive and recognize the worth of everyone towards advancement. She deemed that this study will lead to significant advancements in society and the field of education. The researcher found it useful to share the needs, struggles, and social issues that these LGBTQ+ teachers are facing.

2. Methods

This study was a qualitative method of research and Phenomenological in Approach. According to Walter (2013) [7] qualitative research is concerned with exploring the understandings, meanings, and interpretations that people and other groups attribute to their social world. Considering the research problem of this study, which focused on understanding the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ teachers, the phenomenological approach was used. According to Creswell (2014) [8] the Phenomenological Approach is used in qualitative research to discover the rich, deep, thick, textured, insightful, and illuminative essence of the phenomenon while allowing the researcher to set aside personal, preconceived ideas and beliefs.

The present study was conducted among the eleven (11) LGBTQ+ teachers. It was conducted during the 3rd quarter of school year 2024-2025. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with LGBTQ+ teachers of the public schools. Thus, in this research, the researcher is the primary instrument and her guide is the interview protocol. This study was based on 20 research questions to help describe the true essence of the experience. These questions were aligned to the major objectives of the study such as 1. How do the participants describe their lived experiences as teacher-members of LGBTQ+ in terms of their social-relations? and 2. How do LGBTQ+ teachers manage their experiences in social relations that may impact their personal and professional facets? The questions functioned together to discover the true meaning of the experienced phenomenon.

3. Findings

The following were the salient findings of the study:

3.1. The statements shared by the LGBTQ+ teachers have portrayed their social relations as professional teachers as meaningful and complex. The teachers have emphasized that while they find purpose and fulfillment on their teaching roles, they often surpass the significant social relation challenges tied to their sexual and gender identity. The shared testimonies zeroed-in to their personal understanding of the

LGBTQ+ identity is not just a mere label but as dynamic movement for their freedom, identity, and human dignity. They also asserted their right, like other individuals, they have the rights to enjoy their human freedom, and express their authentic selves, as well as to live their dignity and respect. However, despite of this conviction, the teachers also believed that being part of the LGBTQ+ community, they continue to face systematic marginalization within educational setting and broader society. The teachers also shared that this marginalization affects not only their personal well-being but even their professional roles, which sometimes limit the opportunities for their advancement and subjecting them to biases from their colleagues, parents, and immediate supervisors.

3.2. As core participants in the social fabric of the school, the LGBTQ+ teachers encountered range of demands and challenges in terms of their social relation with their colleagues, parents, and learners. This interaction is often compelled with them to navigate their professional identities amidst pervasive social expectations as well as the pressures they receive in school. Among all these challenges they confront, the unequal treatment and limited opportunities emerged as their salient concerns. The teachers have also shared their experiences of social exclusion and identity threat- phenomena which still persist despite of their ongoing efforts to assert their rightful place on their profession.

3.3. To confront and surpass these challenges, the teachers have cultivated and honed both of their internal resilience and adaptive relational strategies. These include their intentional development of their inclusive interpersonal practices, establishment of their professional network as well as conscious effort to assert their identities in various ways that can foster respect and understanding. Despite of the challenges and the marginalization they have faced, the teachers remain future-oriented, they draw strength from a deep sense of self-empowerment and their unwavering passion and dedication in the teaching profession. The testimonies shared by the teachers have shown how the external support from the people around them may help them be more competent of their profession. This may lessen the pressure they feel while working, and they would also be able to do things that they deemed contributory to the improvement of the school. They also believed that institutional advocacy may enable them to persist their professional roles and may help them continue to strive toward a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape.

3.4. The salient findings of the study have provided the researcher the various activities that will be able to help the LGBTQ+ teachers achieve their core professional role of providing the best for the learners. The activities in this proposed output may help them improve their internal resilience in facing the demands and challenges on their social relations. Further, it helps them better understand their rights and their worth in school and in community.

4. Reflexivity Statement

The researcher herself delved into the lived experience of the LGBTQ+ teachers and she realized her own position whether as an interviewer, or observer- influences how she interprets the complex realities of these marginalized teachers. This study has deepened and underpinned the researcher's awareness of the nuanced struggles as well as the strength of these teaches demonstrated within the educational landscape specially in how they perform and sustain their social relation that are mostly shared by a mixed of professional aspiration, their personal authenticity, and institutional constraint.

Also, this study has enabled the researcher to understand that these teachers view their social relationship as professionally meaningful and yet often fraught with their invisible weight of marginalization. Their statements also manifested an ongoing negotiation of their identity and integrity on their work environment which do not always affirm their presence. These are shown to the themes" Living Authentically to Lead

Inclusively', Marginalization and Invisibility", and Professional Integrity and Self Preservation" which have been extracted from the testimonies shared by these educators who managed the relational dynamics not only for their protection but also to affirm their value within the school context.

In terms of the educational management, the salient findings compel a re-evaluation of leadership roles and institutional responsibilities. The educational leaders which include the school heads and the supervisor shall understand that the social relations within the school are not neutral- these are areas where power, identity, and resilience intersect. The resilience and relational strategies of the LGBTQ+ teachers reflect in the themes "Traversing Social Exclusion" and Strategic Help-Seeking" highlighted the needs for the school leaders to foster their relational climates rooted in respect, inclusion, and equity.

Further, the lived experiences of the teachers underscore the vital role of the institutional support to reinforce inclusive professional environment. As such, the school heads shall go beyond surface-level diversity initiatives and integrate the transformative practices to empower and support the LGBTQ+ teachers through the training, professional mentoring and coaching as well as the visible advocacy of GAD. The themes "constructing Safe Space" and "Breaking Barriers through Passion" show how the institutional commitment can create a tangible difference in the experiences of these teachers.

Lastly, the researcher acknowledges that while the LGBTQ+ teachers persist in honing strength, authenticity, and excellence on their roles, their efforts should not be seen as a mere substitute for the institutional accountability. Their experiences challenge the educational leaders to make changes and to transform, from passive tolerance to active inclusion, wherein the policies, leadership practices and the social relations collectively contribute to a just, learner-centered, gender-centered, and equitable school culture.

5. Conclusions

The following are the conclusions derived from the salient findings of this study:

5.1 The LGBTQ+ teachers view their social relation as professionally meaningful and yet complex due to the ongoing marginalization they experienced. Their struggles for recognition, equality, and their dignity is manifests complicated and complex challenges which assert authentic identities within often unwelcoming educational environment. This has captured themes such as their identity, resilience, inclusion, and their professional integrity amid the social and institutional pressures.

5.2 Despite of facing unequal treatment and the ever-evolving identity-based threats, these teachers exhibit their resilience in navigating personal and professional challenges. Their persistence under pressures are all well-shown to their deep commitment to inclusivity in education, as seen on the themes extracted focused on empowerment, reflection, adaptive strategies, and coping with the social exclusion.

5.3 The LGBTQ+ teachers emphasized both internal resilience and external supports are vital to surpass the marginalization they have experienced. With their strong networks and advocacy, they believe they can help to create a more inclusive and respectful school environment. This are all touched in the themes extracted such as safe space, motivation, empowerment, and balancing the authenticity with the demands on their profession.

5.4 The study also concluded that there is still a need to enhance the GAD training initiatives that would strengthen the LGBTQ+ teachers' resilience and awareness of their rights. Also, this is deemed helpful to empower them to better navigate the social challenges and reinforce their vital roles in fostering inclusive, learner-centered educational space.

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