



BREAKING THE SILENCE: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LGBT EDUCATION STUDENTS

Charisse B. Felicilda, Julia Jane D. Laganhon, Marc Andrei R. Yongao,
Arman P. Nuezca

*Science Department, Central Mindanao University, Maramag,
Bukidnon, Philippines*

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20427528>

ABSTRACT

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the unique experiences and challenges faced by LGBT students in educational settings. Despite this increased awareness, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of these experiences, particularly in specific contexts such as the College of Education at Central Mindanao University. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the lived experiences of six (6) BSE students who identify as LGBT. Conducted from October to December 2023, the research employed a phenomenological design and semi-structured interviews with six (6) BSE students. Data were analyzed thematically using the Colaizzi Method. The study aimed to describe the experiences, difficulties, and coping mechanisms of these students. Findings revealed that while some students experienced a welcoming environment, many encountered negative experiences such as discrimination, identity constraints, prejudicial treatment, a hostile environment, and homophobia. To cope, students employed strategies such as positive self-image, resiliency, transformative action, creative coping strategies, selective non-engagement, strategic confrontation, adaptation, and positivity. This study underscores the importance of understanding and addressing the challenges faced by LGBT students in educational settings. The research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on LGBT experiences in education and highlights the need for inclusive and supportive environments for all students.

Keywords: *LGBT students, lived experiences, coping mechanism, inclusive education, challenges, college students*

INTRODUCTION

The adolescent stage is the most crucial part of identifying our development and identity. Adolescents tend to explore their preferences, especially their sexual identity, when people start coming out and discussing their sexual orientation (Cox et al., 2011). Challenging as it may seem for most adolescents, it is even more so for LGBTQ+ people, who need to undergo multi-step process such as the presence of family and societal support, cultural values, and several psychosocial factors to be able to navigate this coming-out process (Sahoo et al., 2023). The LGBTQ+ group, which includes those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, has gradually come to be accepted by society over time. Eighty (80) countries have already enhanced the recognition of rights for LGBTQ+. A recent study by Flores (2021) named "Global Acceptance Index" ranks 141 nations worldwide in terms of social acceptance and LGBTQ+ rights. This number shows that the concept of LGBTQ+ in the community is massively accepted all over the globe.

According to Staff (2019), a number of nations have already adopted the "LGBT Pride Parade" or "LGBT Pride Month" celebrations, which support the cause of promoting equality rights and honoring sexual and gender diversity. As society becomes more accepting as a result of Pride Month celebrations, so do attitudes toward and treatment of homosexuals. As a result, LGBTQ+ individuals are no longer marginalized in society. However, the Philippines, which Bernal (2013) cites as being gay-friendly, has given rise to the idea that LGBTQ+ people do not require political representation or anti-discrimination laws (Varona, 2015). In the real world, the lives of Filipinos who identify as LGBTQ+ are extremely vulnerable, which has a significant impact on their daily lives and can even be fatal (Dela Cruz, 2015).

Consequently, as stressed by Tang and Poudel (2018), LGBTQ+ individuals continue to live constrained lives in an allegedly gay-friendly place, particularly the LGBTQ+ students who are struggling with discrimination and bullying coming from the community, the school, and the family itself.

Although there is growing existing literature regarding the challenges by LGBTQ+ students, and despite the importance of this issue, there is a notable research gap. While various coping strategies have been identified and examined, there is a need for further research that explores the coping mechanisms of LGBT education students regarding the challenges they face in school. The general goal of this research is therefore to present the lived experiences of LGBT education students at Central Mindanao University (CMU). By doing so, the researchers aim to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by students belonging to the LGBT community within the university context.

Research Questions

The study was conducted to describe the lived experiences of LGBT education students at CMU. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of LGBT education students?

2. What are the difficulties of these students?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of education students belonging to the LGBT community?

METHODOLOGY

This section contained the methodology used in the study. It began with the research design, locale of the study, scope and delimitation, participants of the study, sampling procedure, instrumentation, data gathering procedure, and data analysis.

Research Design

To understand the lived experiences of LGBT education students at CMU, specifically in the College of Education, the researchers employed a phenomenological research design. This qualitative research approach enabled the researchers to describe and interpret the lived experiences of the participants. The study aimed to uncover and explore the unique experiences shared by the respondents.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at Central Mindanao University, University Town, Musuan, Maramag, Bukidnon, specifically in the College of Education. This university is a well-known state university in the province of Bukidnon, Philippines, and it is considered to be one of the best state universities in the Philippines because it provides a high-quality education at an affordable cost in a setting that is ideal for learning. It is also a level four (4) university with two Centers for Development and four (4) Centers of Excellence. The institution is composed of nine colleges and has approximately twelve thousand (12,000) students. Out of twelve thousand (12,000) students, there are more than two thousand (2000) students in the College of Education. This institution is a program for students who aspire to become teachers, and it is composed of different departments that include the Science Education Department, Physical Education Department, Language Education Department, and Professional Education Department. It also offers six (6) undergraduate programs that include early childhood education and five (5) Bachelor of Secondary Education majors in English, Filipino, Mathematics, Science, and Physical Education.

In addition, it is important to note that the locale of this study would only focus on the College of Education at CMU, specifically the students who were selected for this study. The participants who were selected are enrolled in the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024.

Scope and Delimitation

The study focused on describing the experiences of LGBT students as education students. It was conducted within the vicinity of CMU, situated in Musuan, Bukidnon, from

October to December of the academic year 2023–2024. The participants of the study were education students enrolled at CMU who belonged to the LGBT community.

Among the two thousand (2,000) education students, the researchers selected six (6) participants and interviewed them regarding their experiences in the College of Education, the difficulties they encountered, and their coping mechanisms. The participants were selected through a purposive sampling method. The study employed a phenomenological design to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of the participants. Furthermore, the study did not include the viewpoints of non-LGBT students.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were LGBT students enrolled in the College of Education at CMU, ranging from first-year to fourth-year undergraduate students. These respondents were selected because the study aimed to gather valuable insights into the lived experiences and coping mechanisms of LGBT education students at CMU.

In addition, out of more than two thousand (2000) education students, six (6) participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique. The LGBT education students selected for this study underwent semi-structured interview sessions, which were conducted in the setting where the respondents preferred to do so.

Sampling Procedure

This study was conducted among education students at CMU, with a particular emphasis on the experiences and coping mechanisms of LGBT students. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify participants who could provide insights based on their lived experiences and coping strategies related to their gender identity. From the LGBT education student population, six (6) respondents were selected. Each participant voluntarily provided informed consent prior to taking part in the study.

The data collection process involved conducting face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, scheduled at times and locations convenient for the respondents. The interviews centered on the respondents' experiences and coping strategies regarding their gender identity within the university context. With the respondents' consent, their responses were recorded for accuracy.

To ensure transparency and to gather more comprehensive data, follow-up questions were asked during the interviews. Once all responses were collected, the researcher coded and organized the data, preparing it for further analysis. This method allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and coping mechanisms of LGBT education students at CMU.

Instrumentation

To describe the experiences and coping mechanisms of LGBT education students, a semi-structured interview guide with three (3) primary questions had been developed.

This opened opportunities for the researchers to further explore particular themes or responses. The participants' answers to these questions guided the follow-up questions, allowing for a more in-depth and organized examination of their lived experiences.

The interview questions, constructed by the researchers, were subjected to content validity evaluation by five (5) experts, including the Head of the Guidance and Counseling Center of Central Mindanao University. Data were collected through audio-recorded interviews, ensuring accuracy and authenticity in capturing participants' experiences.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study followed the correct procedures to achieve the objectives of the study. Before the actual collection of data, a letter of approval was sent to the College of Education Dean and Chairperson addressing this research study on the premises of the College of Education. Moreover, the researchers also sought permission from the CMU Institutional Ethics Review Committee (IERC) office to formally conduct the study.

After acquiring consent and permission from the different offices to conduct the study, the researchers asked permission from the respondents in the research study through informed consent distributed to the respondents. The participants could refuse to participate or discontinue at any time. The participants were told the purpose of the research study, reminding them that the study would happen through an interview, so it would take more or less 30 minutes of their time. Additionally, the researchers thoroughly considered the Data Privacy Act (DPA) of 2012, which adheres to protecting the personal information of the person undergoing the interview.

Data Analysis

In the interviews, the questions had their way of making them look back on certain events as a student enrolled in the College of Education for as long as they could remember. Thematic analysis had been done in analyzing and interpreting the data, utilizing the Colaizzi method. The first step was obtaining a general sense of the transcript, where the researchers read the interview transcript three times in an effort to understand the participants' emotions and mental processes. The researchers then extract significant phrases and statements from the transcript to form the whole meaning of the experience. The statements were encoded separately for each participant and coded as a transcript page and line number. The researchers then formulated meanings from the derived significant statements, which were then coded and categorized.

Upon obtaining the formulated meanings, the researchers arrange them into clusters of themes. These clusters are then broken down into emergent themes. The researchers then integrate all the resulting ideas into an exhaustive description of the phenomena, which was achieved by combining all the theme clusters, emergent themes, and formulated meanings into a description to create an overall structure. Findings were then reduced to avoid repetitions and to make a clear and concise description of the

experiences of LGBT education students. The last step conducted was returning to the participants to validate the findings of the study.

RESULTS

This section presented the results and discussion of the data gathered from the responses of six (6) participants. These responses were collected through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews that focused on the experiences of LGBT students in the College of Education. The Colaizzi method was utilized to analyze and interpret the responses.

For confidentiality purposes, the identities of the students were protected. These students have code names starting from Participant A to F. The researchers familiarized the data numerous times during the transcription process. Using the interview transcript, significant statements were identified and extracted. From this, meanings were formulated. Ten (10) themes were found after careful interpretation of the data. These themes are the following: gender inclusive environment, difficulties of LGBT students, positive self-image, resilience, transformative action, creative coping strategies, selective non-engagement, strategic confrontation, adaptation, and positivity.

Out of more than two thousand (2000) education students, there were only six (6) students who were selected as the participants of the study through a purposive sampling technique due to the relatively small population of LGBT students in the College of Education. Purposive sampling technique was deemed appropriate to identify participants with relevant and diverse experiences within this specific context. The students that were selected have been interviewed and shared their first-hand experiences with the given phenomenon. Their answers were consolidated and presented in the following figures.

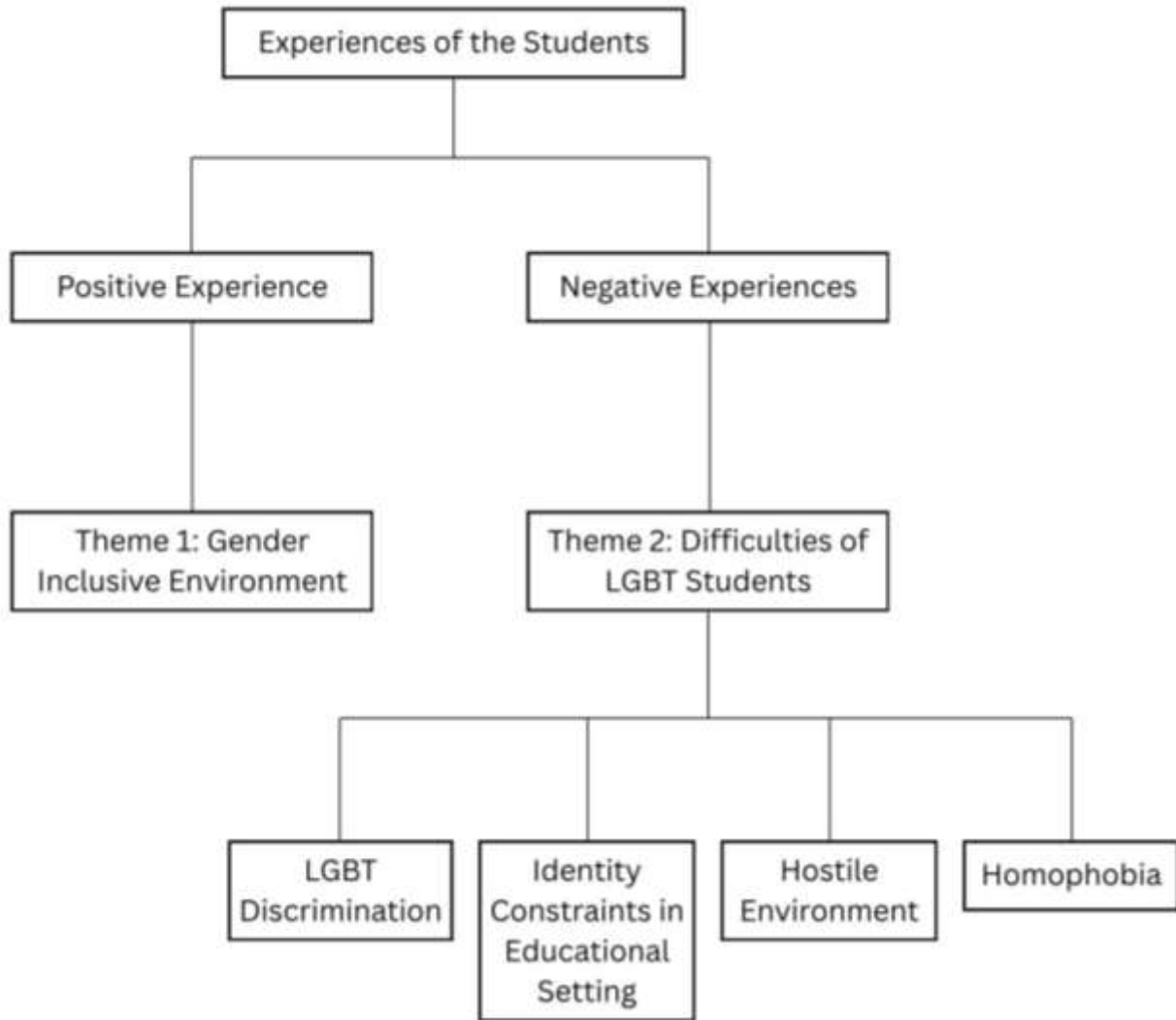


Figure 1. Experiences of LGBT Education Students

Figure 1 above shows the experiences of LGBT students in the College of Education. The students encountered both positive and negative experiences.

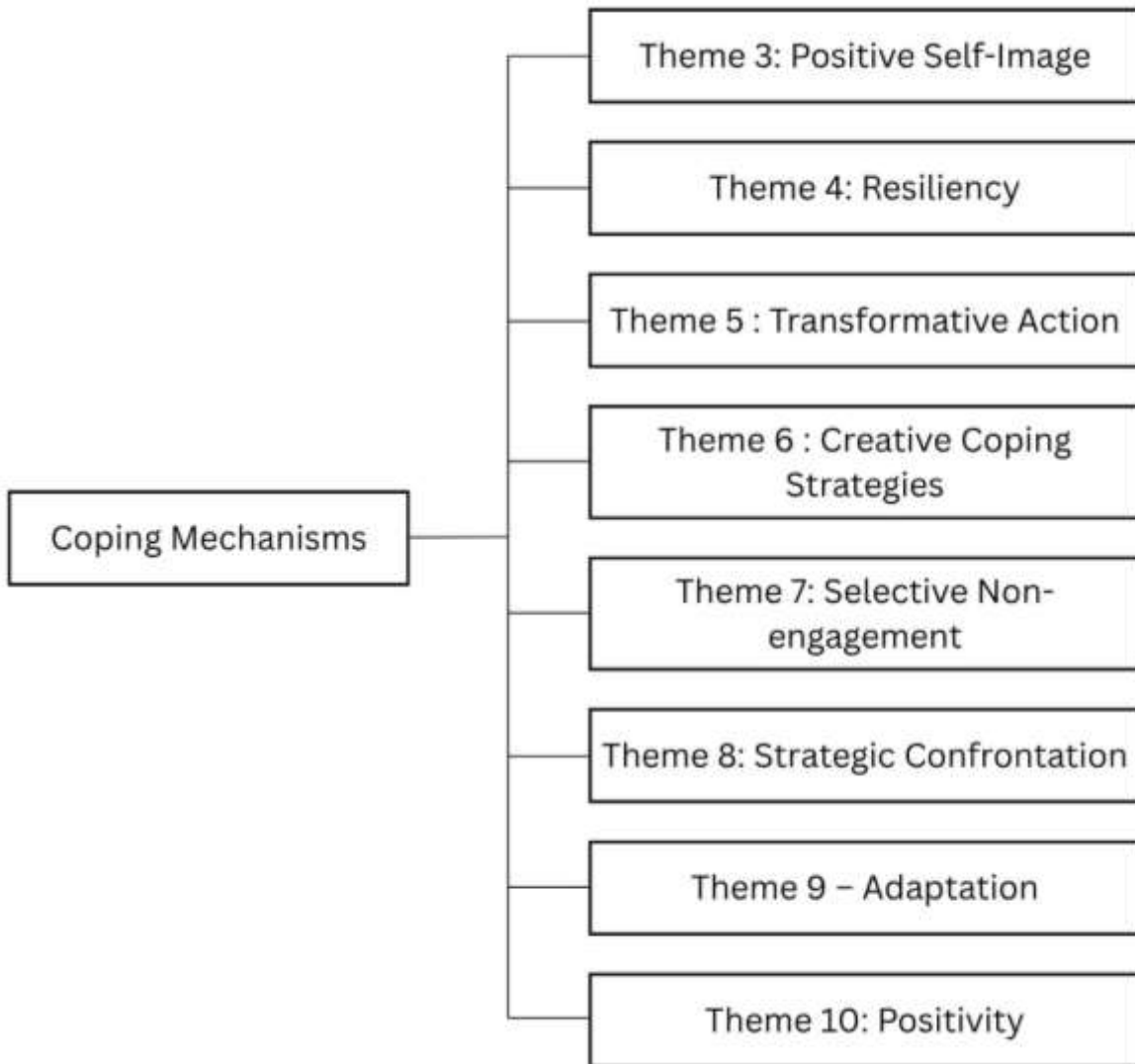


Figure 2. Coping Mechanisms of LGBT Education Students

Figure 2 above shows the different coping mechanisms used by the LGBT education students in the College of Education. Most of the participants mentioned that they have a positive self-image as LGBT education students. Some participants stated that they utilize resilience, transformative action, creative coping strategies, selective non-engagement, strategic confrontation, adaptation, and positivity.

DISCUSSION

Positive Experience of LGBT Students in the College of Education

Based on the data gathered, LGBT students have experienced a welcoming atmosphere in the College of Education. This is due to the awareness of the student regarding the LGBT community, which leads to peer acceptance.

Theme 1 – Gender Inclusive Environment

In pursuit of academic excellence, schools are increasingly recognizing the importance of fostering an inclusive environment. Such an environment not only embraces diversity in all its forms but also actively seeks to create a space where every student, regardless of their background, identity, or ability, feels valued and supported. As a student enrolled in the College of Education, Participant B described his experience as welcoming. This positive reception is attributed to the enlightenment and awareness of the future teachers regarding the LGBT community. The participant's statement suggests that the college has progressively cultivating an inclusive environment where diversity is acknowledged and embraced. He stated:

“So, sa akoang experience is, welcome, very welcoming ang kuan...ang College of Education since kay future teacher naa man diri so ma enlightened, naa na gyud mga awareness ang mga future teachers here sa college of education. (So, in my experience is, welcome, the College of Education is very welcoming since the students here are future teachers so they are enlightened, the future teachers here in the College of Education have awareness.)”

The welcoming environment was also experienced by Participant D. She did not face any direct bullying or discrimination from her classmates, which is a testament to the level of acceptance within the participant's social environment. She claimed:

“Wala ra, wala ra man teh kay murag naa na sa ilang utok bah na lesbian biya pero wala ra pud sa ako, dili man nako gina mind ilang kuan, pero wala man pud ko gisaway diri. (It's okay, it's okay teh, because it seems like it's already in their mind that I'm a lesbian, but it's not in my mind, I don't care about them, but I was never criticized here.)”

The fact that the participant's sexual orientation is known but does not result in negative treatment is indicative of a shift towards a more inclusive mindset among peers. This was also evident to the experiences of Participant E. He shared:

“Wala, even sa kanang naa jud nay mga straight na lalaki sa class pero dili jud sila ga discriminate sa amo, unya akong closest jud na friends karun kay mga straight na mga

lalaki, they don't mind jud na bayot ko like ilang pagtan aw nila nako kay tao, like I am their friend. (There is nothing, even if there are heterosexual males in the class they didn't discriminate against us, and my closest friends right now are all straight males, they don't mind that I am gay like they see me as human, like I'm their friend.)"

The experience of the participant points to the normalization of diverse sexual orientations, suggesting that when awareness and acceptance are present, the potential for bullying and discrimination can be reduced.

The participants' experiences indicated that the College of Education is progressively fostering an environment of inclusivity and acceptance. This nurturing atmosphere is crucial for the holistic development and well-being of all students, with a particular emphasis on inclusivity for students from the LGBT community.

According to Hehir et al. (2016), inclusive classroom environments can provide significant advantages to both disabled and non-disabled children, including improved reading and math proficiency, increased attendance rates, and reduced behavioural issues. Additionally linked to encouraging acceptance of diversity and less prejudicial views in students is inclusive education. Furthermore, UNESCO (2023) highlighted the importance of inclusion in education, acknowledging that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs, which resonate with the experiences shared by both participants, reinforcing the idea that an inclusive educational environment not only benefits individual students but contributes to the overall acceptance of diversity and reduction of prejudicial views among the student body.

Negative Experiences of LGBT Students in the College of Education

Despite progress toward inclusion, many LGBT students have negative experiences that can have an impact on their academic performance, emotional well-being, and overall sense of belonging.

Theme 2 – Difficulties of LGBT Students

Even as society improves and awareness grows, the obstacles experienced by LGBT students in building a more inclusive and accepting society remain an ongoing challenge. This has a huge impact on their educational experience, emotional well-being, and overall sense of belonging. From name-calling, discrimination, homophobia, and identity limitations to overt acts of prejudice, a complete understanding of the entire spectrum of issues experienced by the LGBT community that recognizes their value is required. As a student enrolled in the College of Education, Participant C experiences difficulties being an LGBT member. He stated that:

"Actually ang katuang jud experience nako murag na down jud ko, tssssss, like super down jud ko, super like na kuan like na ulaw jud ko at first kay ngano, kuan man gud"

murag ubos jud ko kaayu ilang pagtan aw sa amoa sa society, like...though kuan siya lisod jud siya e adjust, lisod, lisod jud though kami naglisod jud mi sa among self even ang society nag lisod ang society og unsaon mi pag accept, though kami pud nag lisod pud mi sa among self kung unsaon namo pag adjust ana na standard. (Actually, with my experience, I was so down, very down, I was so embarrassed at first because I felt like the way they look towards us is degrading. We have a hard time adjusting, so hard, that even us had a hard time, even the society, the society had a hard time accepting us. We have difficulties on how to adjust to that standard.)”

Unquestionably, because of how society perceives them, LGBT students are struggling to adjust to society's judgment. Furthermore, as a result of such interactions, they have setbacks for themselves in terms of how to modify society's standards, which gives him the impression that society will also have a difficult time accepting them. The setbacks experienced by LGBT students led to the study of Letsoalo (2016). It addressed the fact that homosexual students confront numerous challenges in college. Bullying, discrimination, victimization, abuse, academic disruption, and insulting remarks from heterosexual peers and academic staff are all common in their context. These difficulties have an impact on their psychological disposition and well-being, academic work, emotional aspects, and even their daily interactions.

Sub-theme 2.1 – LGBT Discrimination

In the twenty-first century, where people are expected to be more accepting and tolerant, LGBT students are still subjected to discrimination, which is a disheartening reality that underscores the ongoing fight for equal rights. Regardless of the growing population, there are still occasions where people, particularly homophobic people, have a difficult time making peace with them. Discrimination against LGBT students in the context of gender identity and sexual orientation remains a pervasive and deeply ingrained issue in the College of Education. Participant A is not exempt from discrimination. He received a lot of discouraging words that led him to experience emotional distress and disengagement in class. He uttered that:

“Kanang one time kay naa koy classmate murag kami gud ang na grupo. Kanang naa koy classmate, na kami nakagrupo sa homophobic, then, murag kanang kato na time murag ako ang ki designated as leader. Then, murag dili bitaw siya ga tuo nga murag kaya nako kay inani ko, ana. Mao to, nga iya kung gi... iya kung ki ano, murag daghan kayo siya ug words of discouragement sa akoo then ato nga time kay murag wala ko ganahi mag skwela then, to the point na musulod ra ko kay mag attendance. (There is this time, where I have this classmate and we are grouped, this classmate is homophobic, then I was designated as a leader. Then, it seems like they won't believe me because I am like this. So

he uttered a lot of words of discouragement for me during those times, and because of that I don't have the motivation to go to school, to the extent that I just attend my class for the sake of attendance.)”

According to Thoreson (2017), everyone should feel comfortable in schools. However, in the Philippines, students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) face bullying, discrimination, a lack of access to LGBT-related information, and, in some cases, physical or sexual assault. These violations can inflict long-term harm and limit students' right to an education, which is protected under Philippine and international law.

Prejudiced judgments are decisions rooted in pre-existing biases, posing a direct challenge to the ideals of equality and inclusivity. These biases disregard individual differences in race, sexual orientation, gender, and other characteristics. Despite the distress it causes, members of the LGBT community frequently endure such discrimination. Participant C has personally faced such bias. According to him:

“Unya naka wear kog make up so since wala man tuy klase so pwede ra tuh na kuan naka wear ko og make up, nakapangbabae jud kog outfit, naka jeans og fitted, unya babae jud ko tan awon since taas taas pud akong buhok and then pag kuan nako sa gate gi kuan gi ana jud ko sa guard, ana siya na asa man ka, ana siya na dili ra bah mi gapasulod og mga kuan. So, mao tuh ni ana ko, nah hala guard, kanang kuan estudeyante man ko sa CMU, ana ko na EDUC student ko, ni ana siya na, no, walay estudeyante diri na in ana, like in ana. (So there is this time where I wore make-up since there is no class, so it's acceptable to wear makeup and wear women's apparel. So I wore fitted jeans, and I really look like a girl since my hair is long, when I reached the gate, the guard approached me and asked me 'Where are you going? We are not allowing someone like you to get in'. That's why I defended, that I am a student here in CMU, I am an Education Student, the guard abruptly told me that there is no such student like me in the University.)”

The participant encountered prejudicial treatment from the security guard and was not about to enter the school because of the way he looked and dressed. He was even belittled by the school because of his looks and gender preference. Research shows, as stated by Huang et al. (2018), that sexual minority students were found to be more vulnerable to school victimization than their heterosexual counterparts. Nonetheless, sexual prejudice and stigma come not only from classmates and teachers but also from school authorities.

Sub-theme 2.2 – Identity Constraints in Educational Setting

The LGBT community's identity is frequently restricted by societal rules and expectations. Because of these restraints, their freedom of speech is limited; they frequently face uneven treatment, are pressured to conform in order to comply with the rules and regulations set by the school and disagree with institutional thinking. However, they are forced to obey what has already been implemented, even if the implications prevent them from expressing their true personalities.

Identity constraints in an educational setting affect participants C and F. They want to express who they truly are as transgender people, but they are unable to do so due to the enforced regulations. According to Participant C:

“So, sa akong isa, for me lang murag though naka practice ko ana before when I was in Junior High School ako jud gi practice is to be to become a professional kay naa man gud usahay na tendency na maka suot jud ko og pambabae pero naa jud siya limitation like mag set jud ko ana na pag abot sa school dapat professional na jud ang outfit like dili na jud siya pangbabae jud necessarily, though naa jud siyay problem kay as a pageant enthusiasts, needed jud namo na mapakita kung unsa jud me like murag mao jud na ang isa ka problem like dili jud namo siya ma show na ma show up diri sa school... as a education students dili namo siya ma show up as a part of the LGBT tungod kay naa jud siyay barriers between ana so mao jud siya ang isa ka problem na akong na encounter and also part na pud dira ang discrimination... bullying then... not equal... not fair of treatment jud sa ano. (For me, though I had already practice even before when I was in Junior High School, I really practiced to become a professional, since there are tendency that I really wore girls apparel, however there is a limitation, I set a limitation when it comes to school, I should be professional in my outfit, I must avoid wearing women's apparel. However, there is a problem for me as a pageant enthusiast, we really need to show who we are, however we can't do that in school as an education student, we can't really show it because there are barriers between, that's the problem. Part of it as well is discrimination, bullying and unequal treatment.)”

Despite being an avid pageant enthusiast, the participant faces constraints in expressing his personal style, which he views as a growing concern. As a member of the LGBT community, he feels unable to fully reveal his identity due to prevailing opposition. Nevertheless, he upholds a sense of professionalism by adhering to the dress code mandated by the institution. Additionally, he has encountered discrimination, bullying, and

disparate treatment from his peers. When questioned about his perspective on the university's core value of 'Unity in Diversity,' he responded thoughtfully:

“Since estudyante ko diri and mo sulod ko sa DepEd so kailan jud ko mo follow so, even though naa siyay Unity in Diversity, pero since gisulod man nako ni na profession or career, ang future career aning EDUC na kailangan pud jud nako mag adjust para murag bitaw siya mahimo ug role model, so mao na nga though naa diyapon siya, pero kailangan jud na murag naa jud limitation para sa akoo as an EDUC student. (Since I am a student here, and I have plans on joining DepEd, I need to follow, even though there is Unity in Diversity, since I enter this profession or career, my future career here in EDUC I really need to adjust in order for me to become a role model, that is the limitation I feel as an Education Student.)”

Despite the underlying beliefs of 'Unity in Diversity', the participant would nonetheless adhere to and adjust to the school's policies. He intends to join the Department of Education (DepEd) now that he has entered the field of education. Adjustment is necessary for him to become a role model, and while this is evident, he must set limits for himself as an education student. Participant F also expressed that:

“Okay, so in College of Education, I think that it is not well practiced, because some of us, we had to cut our hairs and use male clothing to just... to say that as a pre-service teachers, we are able, we were... we able to deliver the lesson well but it is not really the case... clothing and gender has nothing to do on how you will teach students in the future.”

The participant believes that the university's core value of 'Unity in Diversity' is not effectively realized in practice. This is particularly evident in the experiences of some LGBT community members, including himself, who are compelled to conform to hair length standards. This mandate stems from the notion that pre-service teachers must maintain a certain appearance to teach effectively. However, the participant contends that one's attire and gender identity bear no relevance to their future teaching capabilities. Expanding on this point, he further remarked:

“Yes! Sa dress code, especially sa dress code we were so sad very sad that we need to comply these things but somehow it is very... it is very sad but... many positive sides but yeah as for me, and as for us here in the College of Education that is the member of LGBT community it is very discriminating jud. (Yes! Especially the dress code, we were so sad, very sad that we need to comply these things, but somehow it is very sad. As for me, and for us here in the

College of Education that is a member of LGBT Community, it is very discriminating.)”

The participant was feeling down about the dress code because he was forced to comply and felt that he was discriminated against. Participant D also experienced misidentification and reinforcement of gender norms. She stated that:

“Kana pung, ano mag report, kanang mag report mi karun nga ma kuan jud ko sa teacher kay kanang lalaki ka or babae? Ana-on jud nako sila ‘Ma’am babae Ma’am’. Mag formal pud kog attire unya naa pud to last, dili lang ko mag mention sa name sa teacher, naa man koy aritis diri, kuwaon daw ang aritis diri kay bawal daw mag aritis diri ang lalaki sa Education unya Ma’am kuan babae man ko Ma’am ana ko sa iya. (When I am reporting, my instructor would ask me, ‘What are you really, a boy or a girl?’ And I will tell her, ‘I am a girl Ma’am’. I also wear formal attire, and I will just not mention the name of the teacher, since I have an earring, I should get rid of the earring because boys are prohibited to wear earring, and I told her I am a girl Ma’am.)”

In connection, although identity concealment may provide immediate benefits by reducing victimization, it has considerable psychological consequences (Cohen et al., 2016). Identity concealment may increase negative self-directed affect, which is harmful to emotional and mental health (Barreto et al., 2006).

Sub-theme 2.3 – Homophobia

Homophobia, referred to as negative attitudes and feelings towards gay people, continues to be a widespread issue that hinders the LGBT community’s pursuit of complete equality and inclusion. Some people may be unaware that homophobia includes insulting discussions, imitation, stereotypical gestures, and a hostile environment. Participant B has personally suffered from such homophobic behaviour. In his own words:

“Naa koy na kuan, katong, naa to’y isa ka grupo nga kanang mga lalaki puros. Then, kanang, once nga maka... once nga maka agi... maka agi ka sa ilaha kay kanang, lahi ilang expression, kanang, ma ilaha na dayong matopic kay all about na dayon sa kuan kanang bayot, nga ka ana bitaw mag binayot na dayon sila’g isternoryahan. Mauto bitaw’g paglabay pa lang nimo kay, disrespectful kay ilahang pag kuan bitaw, pag... pag tagad. Lain kayo siya paminawon. (There is this group of boys, then once I passed through them, their expression changes and they will divert their topics about gays, and they will mimic how gays talk. I find it disrespecting because of their treatment. It feels wrong.)”

The participant encountered exclusion and disrespect from a group of boys who exhibited a noticeable shift in behaviour, engaging in derogatory conversations focused on gay-related topics and mimicking stereotypical gay mannerisms. This behaviour reflected clear instances of homophobia, creating a hostile and uncomfortable environment. The disrespectful approach upon the participant's arrival had a negative impact on their well-being, with some describing the experience as unpleasant. The researchers infer that coming out of the closet frequently necessitates a logical assessment of the potential costs and rewards of self-disclosure (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). It entails that in a homophobic and LGBT-unfriendly school environment, they are less likely to come out because it may not guarantee support from teachers and peers.

Sub-theme 2.4 – Hostile Environment

A hostile environment includes barriers to access, emotional harm, and a significant impact on self-expression. According to Participant F, he expressed that:

“Um, I must say na, not all... as a student here in the College of Education and as a part of LGBT member... I must say na somehow it is very sad because some of the, yeah, teachers or professors are very... not welcome and distant and very discriminating, for me as a transgender woman and as a part LGBT community that is willing to study, willing to teach someday... through education. (I must say, not all students here in the College of Education and as a part of LGBT member, I must say na somehow it is very sad because some of the teachers or professors are very not welcome and distant and very discriminating, for me as a transgender woman and as a part LGBT community that is willing to study, willing to teach someday, through education.)”

As a student in the College of Education and a member of the LGBT community, the participant experienced unhappiness due to certain lecturers or professors who were not accepting of transgender women. He elaborated on his feelings by stating:

“I have this one instructor that I’m truly... what do you call this... approach me and saying that kanang ‘I think, yes I think we should lessen putting makeups and everything yes’. (I have this instructor that approached me saying ‘I think we should lessen putting make ups and everything yes’.)”

The participant shared an experience where a teacher addressed his makeup usage, implying that he should limit it and be mindful of when it is appropriate. Colvin et al. (2019) addressed the fact that in a school setting, every student has the right to feel included, respected, and safe. Schools, on the other hand, can be a hostile and isolating environment for children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ). LGBTQ youth are more likely to report negative feelings. LGBTQ students

believe schools are unwelcoming or unsafe because of unfriendly peers, personnel, and policies.

Coping Mechanism of LGBT Students in the College of Education

Theme 3 – Positive Self-Image

A coping mechanism is a cognitive or behavioural strategy used to manage internal and external stressors. It's a way for individuals to handle stress, discomfort, or challenging emotions in various situations. Having a positive self-image involves cultivating the confidence for self-acceptance and self-love. It's about acknowledging one's own strengths and valuing them, while also accepting imperfections. Participant A, identifying as a member of the LGBT community, regards his experiences as commonplace and unaffected by external judgment. He views these experiences through the lens of self-assurance, considering himself as 'unreachable'—a person who leads and is not easily swayed by external factors. He expressed his views, saying:

“Ano, kanang akoang experience here kay murag normal lang kay na... normal lang siya kay murag na kuan na man gud nako na murag feel na man gud nako kay taas ko. Kana bitaw leader leader ba. (Like, my experience here seems normal because it seems like I feel superior to others. Like a leader.)”

Additionally, Participant A reflected on the beginning of his journey:

“Pero kato jung pag start nako here murag akong self-esteem kay super low kay nagsugod biya ko sa irreg biya then murag inana gakafeel nako kay naa koy mga classmate nga kanang mga homophobic which is naa jud mga homophobic nga kuan. And until now, pero other than that, kay murag di man ko ga lisod sa ilahag kuan kay ako ra gihapon... bahalag inyo mo diha, gwapa man ko.” (But when I started here, it was like my self-esteem was super low because I started off being an [irregular] student, then it seems like that's how I felt because I had classmates who were homophobic, which is there are really homophobes. And until now, but other than that, it is not hard for me to [be with them] because I will... I don't care about them, I'm beautiful.)”

This narrative demonstrates Participant A's resilience and positive self-image. Despite the initial impact of discrimination on his self-esteem, he chose to focus on his self-belief and confidence. His ability to affirm his own beauty and value in the face of adversity is a powerful testament to his strength of character.

According to Hepper (2023), having a positive self-image is having self-esteem and it is the ability to evaluate our own worth as a person. Self-esteem is significant since it conveys a person's level of acceptance or cultural worth. People are therefore driven to pursue and sustain high self-esteem through a variety of means. Although levels of self-esteem fluctuate throughout life and are influenced by experiences with interpersonal acceptance, most people have reasonably high levels of it. While it has long been believed that a person's degree of self-esteem determines many aspects of life, the evidence is conflicting: while it does affect some psychopathologies, interpersonal interactions, and well-being, it does not affect other outcomes.

Theme 4 – Resiliency

The ability to adjust to and overcome adversity is what makes one resilient; it shows that one can overcome obstacles and prosper in the face of difficulty. It entails developing mental toughness, accepting change, and using failures as lessons to become stronger and more resilient. Participant A's narrative reflects this resilience, portraying his life's challenges as a vibrant tapestry that has contributed to his strong personality. As a member of the LGBT community, he acknowledges that his experiences have shaped him into the resilient individual he is today. He articulated this sentiment by saying:

“So, o, kung e describes nako akoang mga experiences jud sa una kay colorful jud siya. Di jud ko makaingon nga, ay, at some point, mga ingon jud ko na grabi jud diay akong naagian ba pero, at the end of the day, nakaingon jud ko na, kung wala bitaw nako to naagian kay di unta ko ka inani ka strong karon. (So, if I describe my experiences before it was colorful and I cannot say at some point that my experience was tough but at the end of the day, I can tell myself that if I did not experience those experiences, maybe I am not strong right now.)”

In the case of Participant B, he perceived that as a member of LGBT community, it is normal for them to encounter situations in which they will not be respected. He asserted:

“...normal na man gud na sa kuan bay, sa... sa isa ka member sa LGBT nga kanang, once na gi identify ka as gay kay kanang, naa na bitaw, naa... normal bitaw na sila na magsocialize sa ka nga di kayo ka respetuhon. Dili lang ka kanang... kanang ilaha lang kang, ah, direct to the point ka nila estoryahan kanang bisag makasakit na bitaw. Sakit kayo paminawon, bayot man ka ana ana bitaw. (It's already normal that, as... as a member of LGBT, once you were identified as gay what would happen is, there is... it is normal that when you attempt to socialize with them you will be criticize.)”

He further elaborated:

“... kanang sa kadugayan kay imoha na lang dayon, masabtan na lang nimo kadugayan ug kanang, kanang na immune na dayon ka. (... that in the long run you will be able, you will be able to understand over time and that, you will become immune.)”

From the narrative shared by participant B, it is evident that, despite his hurtful experiences, he was able to tolerate and understand their behaviour. And after a long time, he was no longer affected by it. Over time, he has become unaffected by it, developing immunity to the discrimination he faced.

According to De Lira and De Morais (2017), stressful experiences associated with homophobia, such as prejudiced events, concealment of one’s sexual orientation, and internalized homophobia, may lead to adverse effects on physical or mental health. Nevertheless, as individuals navigate these challenges, it may also lead to the development of resilience. A study by Scandurra et al. (2017) pointed out that while discrimination and internalized negative attitudes can harm mental health, the presence of a supportive family environment and personal resilience can mitigate these adverse effects.

Theme 5 – Transformative Action

Transformative action, when viewed as a coping mechanism, is a proactive and intentional strategy employed to navigate and overcome adversities. It involves making deliberate choices that lead to profound and enduring changes in one’s personal journey or within various societal dimensions. The experiences of Participants A, B, and C showed how transformative action can manifest in the pursuit of becoming educators who not only teach but also inspire and lead by example. According to Participant A, the bullying that he experienced in school and at home made him thrive in becoming a teacher in the future. He stated:

“Ano, kanang, base sa akoang mga past experiences sapag bully sa akoa, like sa balay and diri sa CMU kay murag mas eager pa hinuon ko bitaw nga e pursue gyud ang ang akoang pagkateacher... (Based on my past experiences when they bullied me at home and here at CMU, it seems like it helps me to be motivated to pursue becoming a teacher.)”

Participant B also recognizes the importance of raising awareness from his painful experiences. He aspires to become a teacher to be taken seriously and to foster understanding:

“Ang akoa lang e kuan kay, kanang dapat naa japon more awareness kay tao biya japon mi, masakitan japon mi. So, kani siya, naka apekto ni siya sa akoa, ug naka develop

siya sa akoa as a future teacher na kana bitaw dili lang basta bastahon sa mga tao. (My only concern is that there should be more awareness because we are also humans, we get hurt. So, these experiences affect me as a future teacher to become a person that people will take seriously.)”

Furthermore, Participant C has learned that as a pre-service teacher, setting boundaries and being a role model are essential for earning respect. He believes that self-respect and adherence to rules inspire respect from others, which serves as his motivation:

“As a future pre-service teacher murag nahimo ra pud siya na lesson sa akoa na... naa jud siya every ano jud naa jud limitation naa jud tay kanang kanang kinahanglan e set na in ana which is like mahimo tah na role model, mahimo tag kuan para marespeto pud ta sa kuan, marespeto pud ta sa lain tao kay kabalo man ta mo respeto sa tung kaugalingon, murag garespect ta sa rules so that, ang mga tao pud, mga estudyante nako puhon kay mu respeto pud sa akoa, murag mao napud na akong nahimo na motivation or inspiration na in ana na siya. (As a future pre-service teacher, it seems that it became a lesson for me... there is, there is always, always a limitation that we need to set which is just like being a role model, we need to become a role model, to be respected by other people, we are respected by others because we respect ourselves, just like we respect the rules in order for others, my students in the future would also respect me, that became my motivation or inspiration.)”

According to Collier (2016), negative experiences can lead new understandings of oneself, the world, relationships, future prospects, and how to live life. Furthermore, Villaverde et al. (2022) found out that the desire to have an impact on children's education, the inherent worth of the degree, the profession's societal contribution, and the joy of working with children are the primary motivators for choosing to become a teacher.

Theme 6 – Creative Coping Strategies

Having a creative coping strategy is employing creative and innovative methods to get through and handle stressful situations or problems. Through employing their creativity, people can find special and individual strategies to deal with pressures, which promotes empowerment and flexible problem-solving. Participant A shared that when he is faced with adversities, the coping mechanism that he uses is by writing a poem and eating. He expressed:

“And dili man gud ko makahilak na tao, kanang dali makahilak, so akoang ginabuhat jud kay first jud is makasulat jud kog tula.

(I am the type of person that will not easily cry, the thing I do first is write a poem.)”

He added:

“...isa pud sa akoang coping mechanism gyud kay mag kaon. (...one of my coping mechanism is to eat.)”

The coping mechanism described by Participants A highlights the variety of approaches people take when dealing with stress and hardship. Participant A's use of poetry as a coping mechanism is a form of expressive art therapy, which can provide a safe outlet for emotions and foster a sense of emotional release. Poetry writing is a powerful instrument for self-reflection and emotional healing, allowing for the expression of emotions that may be hard to convey verbally.

Participant F shared that when facing discrimination, his coping strategy is to disregard negative comments and find solace in the company of friends and his passion for makeup.

“Also, my coping mechanism will be hanging out with friends and also about this in... with them... and also... especially, really... help me, doing make ups to others because I am a makeup artist, and yeah it is my form of my coping mechanism that I, that I have... experiences.”

Participant F's strategy of ignoring negative comments and focusing on social interactions and makeup artistry underlines the value of receiving support from others and engaging in enjoyable activities. Hobbies such as makeup artistry provide a creative outlet that can boost self-esteem and foster a sense of accomplishment. Both participants' coping strategies demonstrate the importance of creative outlets and social connections in building resilience and maintaining mental well-being.

Xu et al. (2022) highlighted that creative coping is an effective strategy for managing stress. Furthermore, the study implies that individuals who possess stronger psychological capital may be better able to efficiently apply creative coping mechanisms, which could result in more positive emotional outcomes.

Theme 7 – Selective Non-engagement

Consciously avoiding something or disengaging from certain interactions, discussions, or situations is a type of strategy wherein the person sets boundaries to themselves to others in order to keep their mental and emotional health and avoid some unnecessary conflicts or draining interactions. This coping mechanism is called selective non-engagement. Participant B shared his experience with this strategy. He mentioned that after facing derogatory comments, he decided not to take them seriously, which helped him develop resilience and emotional detachment. He stated:

“Since, kanang na realize nako na kanang dili na lang nako e kanang... dili na lang nako. Unsa gani to question? Dili na nako e kanang... kining seryosohon bitaw, kanang sa ilahang mga... ilahang mga pagsaway.” (Since, I realize that I will not... I will not [mind]. What is the question again? I will not...I will not take it seriously, their, their criticism.)”

Furthermore, Participant B explained that he chooses not to pay attention to negative experiences. However, if the negativity becomes overwhelming, he confronts it. He said:

“Ang akona kay... one way, ang akona jud kay, ang pinaka major jud naako gina buhat is kanang dili na lang ko mutagad, dili nako pansinon kay, the more nimo nga siya nga kana bitaw’ng, the more nimo siya nga kanang patulan kay, the more ka nila binuangan. (What I do is... one way, what I do is, the major thing that I will do is I will not entertain them, I will not pay attention to them because, the more you give them, the more you give them attention, the more they will criticize you.)”

Participant F also has the same strategy in dealing with negative experiences. She claimed:

“My coping mechanism is that... it is very cliché though I would do lapus pikas dalunggan...” (My coping mechanism is that... it is very cliché, but I let it go in one ear and out the other...)”

This suggests that she chooses not to dwell on negative comments or experiences, allowing them to pass through without affecting her. According to Mosley (2014), although it's crucial for leaders to be engaged, there are times when disengagement is required to prevent burnout. Moreover, based on the study conducted by Pater (2016), discusses that just showing up for something doesn't always mean that you're really involved because it might not motivate you internally. To avoid problems, it is therefore imperative that one carefully decide when and how to participate.

Theme 8 – Strategic Confrontation

Strategic confrontation is a methodical approach to addressing conflicts or problems. It involves the use of planned strategies to navigate and influence outcomes. The focus is often on achieving long-term goals, managing potential risks, and maintaining a broad perspective. Participant B practices selective non-engagement when dealing with negative experiences, particularly those related to his identity as an LGBT member. He tends to disregard these experiences unless they become overwhelming, at

which point he confronts them. This approach can also be associated with strategic confrontation. He stated:

“Though, naa man pud instances nga kanang kuan... kanang dili dapat ipatolerate ang ilaha, basin sobra na sad kaayo. (Though, there are still instances that you need to... you must not tolerate their behaviour, if it becomes excessive.)”

This statement reflects his belief in standing up against mistreatment when it crosses a certain threshold. Participant B’s strategy is a delicate balance between avoiding conflict, particularly when it pertains to his gender identity, and standing up for himself. He does not tolerate those who mistreat him and confronts them to correct their behaviour. His aim is not just to protect himself, but also to enlighten the perpetrators about the harm they are causing. He hopes that this will prevent them from repeating such actions, especially towards other members of the LGBT community.

Prejudice is less likely to be expressed again when someone is confronted or called out for their discriminatory remarks. But confronting others comes with social costs: Compared to others who have not confronted, confronters are shunned, despised, and ridiculed (Hildebrand et al. 2023). Moreover, Monteith et al. (2019) concluded that in emphasizing the value of preparation and the ability to maintain good impressions while offering a useful manual for handling confrontations successfully.

Theme 9 – Adaptation

When something is adapted, it shows resilience and flexibility in the face of changing circumstances. Adaptation is a dynamic process of changing behaviour, structures, or functions to better accommodate the needs of a new scenario. Participant D also claimed that she adjusted her voice when going to the comfort room because of the stares of the people, who thought that she was a boy. She shared:

“Ano, ang na experience nako, kana laging mag CR ko sa pangbabae mag CR sa pambabae bah, mag tan aw na sila sa ako, kay abi nila na lalaki ko unya, mag pababae nalang pud ko og tingog kay para ma kuan nila bah na babae diay. (My, my experience is that, when I go to the CR for women, they will always stare at me, they thought that I was a boy and, what I will do is that I will adjunct my voice so that I sounded like a girl for they to realize that I am a woman.)”

The adjustment experienced by the participant was a form of adaptation to avoid discomfort and potential conflict. In the case of Participant B, he employed adaptation as a strategy to avoid discrimination. He believed that his posture and attire should have been appropriate to prevent any negative attention. He modified his posture and clothing choices to reduce the likelihood of discrimination.

“In order nga dili kaayo ko prone sa discrimination, gina lantaw jud nako una ang unsa akoang postura, akoang pang... pang suoton. (In order that I'm not too prone to discrimination, I mind my posture first, what I... what I wear.)”

The experiences shared by both of the participants highlighted the importance of adaptation as a coping mechanism. It was a testament to the strength and resilience of individuals who continually adjusted their behaviours and strategies to navigate complex social landscapes.

Adapting to a fast-changing environment is necessary to achieve successful results (Wilkins et al., 2014). According to Ployhart and Bliese (2006), one of the main sources of mental resources is thought to be adaptability. Higher adaptation allows people to conserve more psychological resources than lower adaptability does. Furthermore, for newcomers experiencing a completely unfamiliar environment, psychological resources are extremely crucial. People's capacity for adaptation must always be enhanced due to the rapidly evolving nature of modern life. So, people must be able to change with the times in both their thought processes and their conduct.

Theme 10 – Positivity

Maintaining an optimistic and upbeat attitude in both social and personal settings requires being kind to oneself, which includes looking on the bright side, practicing gratitude, and facing obstacles head-on. This way of thinking can support greater mental health, more solid interpersonal bonds, and a more upbeat outlook on the opportunities and possibilities life offers. Participant C shared that despite the criticism that he came across, he's still positive and wears his smile because if someone hurts him, his friends will also be affected. He stated:

“I am a positive person jud, I am a positive person jud, like even though daghan jud kaayo na discriminate, always jud ko ga wear sa akong smile kay dili ko gusto kay if naay magpasakit sa ako, kay maapektuhan pud akong mga friends, na sakitan ko na ma change ang mood. (I am a positive person, I am a positive person, like even though a lot of people discriminate against me, I always wear my smile because I don't want that if someone hurts me, my friends would be affected, that I was hurt then the mood will change.)”

Participant C also added that if he is discriminated against, he turns this into a challenge, and whatever it takes, despite the criticism, as long as he knows himself, he is still positive. He won't mind being discriminated against, if there is no physical harm done to him. He said:

“For example ma discriminate ko, ako ra pud siya gina kuan na challenge na whatever it takes bahala namo dira

pagdiscriminate mo'g inyu basta kay ako kabalo ko sa akong self na unsa ko, kabalo kung kinsa ko sa akong self, so mao na siya akong gina kuan na ga think ra jud kog positive like ga though naay discrimination dili man jud na siya ma wala pero sa akong self, murag positive lang jud ko like no matter what kay gi gusto man nako ni na ma in ani ko and sila pud gigusto pud nila na ma discriminate ko so then go, wala koy labot sa inyuha basta kay dili lang jud ko ninyu pasakitan like sumbagon. (For example I was discriminate against, I will [take] it as a challenge that whatever it takes I don't care, discriminate me or what because I know to myself who I am, I know myself, so that what I do, I always think positive like even though they discriminate me because it will always happen, but for me, I'm positive like no matter what I choose to become like this and they also choose to discriminate me then [go], I don't care just don't hurt me like punched me.)"

Moreover, Participant C compared his experience to the wind, which he believed would eventually pass. He did not take discrimination to heart, understanding that doing so could lead to depression and stress. He recognized that discrimination is pervasive, and storing up all those criticisms could lead to a personal crisis. His mantra was to always think positively. He shared:

"Actually, murag ra jud siyag hangin (laugh) murag ra jud siyag hangin unya naka experience ko ani mulayus ra jud siya, karun maka experience napud ko ani mulayus napud siya kay ngano? Pag once man gud na imo jud siyang dibdibon ma depress ka, ma stress ka so magpaka kuan ka kanang magpalugmok jud diay ka aning imong problema? No, it's very wrong jud, kay ngano kanang discrimination everywhere jud na siya bisan asa ra jud na makita if imo tung tigumon ma kuan ka na e kuan jud nimo sa imong heart. No! Ikaw ra diyapon kuan ikaw ra diyapon mag hirap, ikaw ra diyapon ang ma luoy ana at the at the end of the day, ikaw ra diyapon ang luoy. (Actually, it is just like the wind [laugh] it is just like the wind and when I experience this it will just go, now if ever I will experience this again it will also go away why? Because once you will take it seriously you will just get depressed, you will get stressed, so will you just let depression take over just because you have a problem? No, it's very wrong, because discrimination is everywhere you will always encounter and if you bottle it all up like you will take it wholeheartedly. No! You will just suffer, you will be the one who will be in the losing end at the end of the day, you will just be one who will lose.)"

Creativity, imaginative and expansive thinking, empathy, collaboration, and connection are all fostered by a positive mentality. Furthermore, having a more expansive mindset helps people be more resilient in the face of hardship (Boas, 2022). According to Hirsch et al. (2009), optimistic explanatory style reduces the impact of negative and potentially traumatic life events, reducing suicidal thoughts even when hopelessness and depression are present.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Several LGBT students at the College of Education had both positive and negative experiences. The respondents felt a welcoming experience as a result of the students' knowledge, which finishes the first theme of the inclusive environment. As a result, the fact that sexual orientation is known but does not result in negative treatment indicates that the College of Education is progressively cultivating an inclusive and accepting environment, which is essential for the well-being and development of all students, including those from the LGBT community.

On the other hand, many LGBT students have negative experiences that can have an impact on their academic performance, emotional well-being, and overall sense of belonging, resulting in Theme 2: LGBT Students' Difficulties. LGBT students are struggling to adjust to society's judgment. Furthermore, as a result of such contacts, they have setbacks in terms of how to adjust society's standards, giving him the sense that society will likewise find it difficult to accept them. Furthermore, LGBT students continue to face prejudice based on gender identity and sexual orientation; this is a prevalent and deeply ingrained issue in the College of Education. Moreover, numerous students, particularly those who want to express themselves, experience identity constraints. They are under pressure to conform to and follow the institution's imposed norms and regulations. Prejudiced treatment is also reported, and many LGBT students experience a hostile environment.

Positive self-image, resiliency, transformational action, innovative coping methods, selective non-engagement, strategic confrontation, adaptation, and positivity are just a few ways that LGBT students in the College of Education might cope with hardship.

Finally, while the College of Education strives to create an inclusive environment for all students, it cannot deny that LGBT students continue to face discrimination and harassment due to a lack of education and awareness, social norms and expectations, institutional discrimination, and resistance to change.

Recommendations

After a thorough analysis of the data, the following recommendations are hereby made:

It might be beneficial for LGBT education students to connect with the LGBTQ+ community. Support groups, online forums, and student organizations could be good places to share experiences and find support. Including LGBTQ+ history, rights, and current issues in the curriculum could empower students and create a more inclusive learning environment. Workshops or seminars on LGBTQ+ issues might also help in fostering understanding. Sharing the study's insights with LGBT students might help them learn about positive coping strategies. Resources and workshops may be made available to help develop these coping mechanisms.

Moreover, working with the University Center for Gender and Development and school administrators is also commended in order to refine non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies that may help protect sexual orientation and gender identity. Clear communication of these policies may foster an environment of shared responsibility.

For future researchers, to understand the experiences of LGBT students more deeply, it might be insightful to explore their experiences since childhood. This could provide a more comprehensive view of their journey and the challenges they may have faced. Expanding future research to include other colleges within Central Mindanao University could offer a broader perspective of LGBT students' experiences. Including a diverse participant pool in future studies could further enrich our understanding of the LGBTQ+ community.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The researchers ensured full compliance with ethical standards throughout the conduct of the study. Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, who were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and all information gathered was protected in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The well-being of the respondents was safeguarded by ensuring that no harm would come to them and that their participation would contribute positively to understanding LGBT students' experiences. There was no conflict of interest in the conduct of this research, and the results were used purely for academic purposes. The researchers avoided plagiarism, ensured honesty in data gathering and reporting, and interpreted findings without bias.

Acknowledgments

The researchers extend sincere gratitude to all individuals who contributed to the successful completion of this study. This work would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and encouragement of many.

First and foremost, deep appreciation is given to God for His compassion and mercy, which made the completion of this research possible. His daily sustenance, wisdom, and direction served as a constant source of strength throughout the process. Truly, all glory and honor belong to Him alone.

Gratitude is also extended to the adviser, Sir Arman P. Nuezca, for his dedicated mentorship and unwavering support during the conduct of the study. His knowledge, valuable insights, and perseverance greatly influenced the direction and quality of this work.

Special thanks are likewise given to Dr. Jennyiza T. Uchang, Sir Daryl Niko Cempron, Sir Ehrlich Magday, Ma'am Freddielyn Pontemayor, and Ma'am Fe Mantong for their collaborative efforts and constructive feedback, which enriched the research with diverse perspectives and expertise.

Furthermore, the researchers want to express our gratitude to the participants who kindly contributed their time and insights, providing critical data for our study. Their willingness to participate in the study was critical to its success.

Lastly, heartfelt appreciation is extended to family members, friends, and loved ones whose encouragement, support, and understanding served as a source of strength and motivation throughout the journey of completing this research.

To all who contributed, whether in great or small ways, each effort is deeply valued and sincerely appreciated.

REFERENCES

- Barreto, M., Ellemers, N., & Banal, S. (2006). Working under cover: Performance-related self-confidence among members of contextually devalued groups who try to pass. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 36(3), 337–352. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.314>
- Bernal, B. (2013, June 14). Is the Philippines really gay-friendly? *RAPPLER*. <https://www.rappler.com/moveph/31276-philippines-gay-friendly/>
- Boas, A. V. (2022). Positivity Is Not Magic. It's Science. IE University. <https://www.ie.edu/insights/articles/positivity-is-not-magic-its-science/>
- Cohen, J. M., Blasey, C., Barr Taylor, C., Weiss, B. J., & Newman, M. G. (2016). Anxiety and related disorders and concealment in sexual minority young adults. *Behavior Therapy*, 47(1), 91–101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2015.09.006>
- Collier, L. (2016, November 1). Growth after trauma. *Monitor on Psychology*, 47(10). <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2016/11/growth-trauma>
- Colvin, S., Egan, J. E., & Coulter, R. W. S. (2019). School climate & sexual and gender minority adolescent mental health. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48, 1938-1951. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01108-w>
- Cox, N., Dewaele, A., van Houtte, M., & Vincke, J. (2011). Stress-related growth, coming out, and internalized homonegativity in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth. An examination of stress-related growth within the minority stress model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58(1), 117–137. doi:10.1080/00918369.2011.533631
- Dela Cruz, P. (2015). '15 Reasons Philippines is Not Gay Friendly' (a webpage of Outrage) <<http://outragemag.com/15-reasons-philippines-is-not-gayfriendly/>>.
- De Lira, A. N., & De Morais, N. A. (2017). Resilience in Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) Populations: An Integrative Literature review. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 15(3), 272–282. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-017-0285-x>
- Flores, A. R. (2021, November). SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF LGBTI PEOPLE IN 175 COUNTRIES AND LOCATIONS 1981 to 2020. School of Law UCLA Williams Institute. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Global-Acceptance-Index-LGBTI-Nov-2021.pdf>

- Hehir, T., Grindal, T., Freeman, B., Lamoreau, R., Borquaye, Y., & Burke, S. (2016, August). A summary of the evidence on inclusive education. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED596134>
- Hepper, E. G. (2023). Self-esteem. *Encyclopedia of Mental Health*, 3, 125-139. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-323-91497-0.00185-5>
- Hildebrand, L. K., Monteith, M. J., & Arriaga, X. B. (2023). The role of trust in reducing confrontation-related social costs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000429>
- Hirsch, J. K., Wolford, K., Lalonde, S. M., Brunk, L., & Parker-Morris, A. (2009). Optimistic explanatory style as a moderator of the association between negative life events and suicide ideation. *Crisis*, 30(1), 48–53. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910.30.1.48>
- Huang, Y., Li, P., Lai, Z., Jia, X., Xiao, D., Wang, T., Guo, L., & Lu, C. (2018). Association between sexual minority status and suicidal behavior among Chinese adolescents: A moderated mediation model. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 239, 85–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2018.07.004>.
- Letsoalo, D. (2016). Challenges faced by gay and lesbian students at the University of Limpopo (Turloop Campus) [Masteral Thesis]. University of Limpopo. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1ef6/0fd81c36b2c87fad24dfb727ea655223780e.pdf>
- Monteith, M. J., Burns, M. D., & Hildebrand, L. K. (2019). Navigating successful confrontations. *Confronting Prejudice and Discrimination*. <https://elicit.com/?workflow=table-of-papers&run=2492af5b-3b4e-4353-90d7-1701536c9e1f>
- Mosley, P. A. (2014). Engaging Leadership: Knowing When to Disengage. *Library Leadership & Management*. <https://elicit.com/?workflow=table-of-papers&run=9d55813f-40ce-4b16-9619-866d6c3de469>
- Newheiser, A.-K., & Barreto, M. (2014). Hidden costs of hiding stigma: Ironic interpersonal consequences of concealing a stigmatized identity in social interactions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 52, 58–70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2014.01.002>.
- Pater, R. (2016). Discovering Safety: Why Participation Does Not Equal Engagement. *Occupational Health & Safety*. <https://elicit.com/?workflow=table-of-papers&run=9d55813f-40ce-4b16-9619-866d6c3de469>
- Ployhart, R. E., & Bliese, P. D. (2006). Individual adaptability (I-ADAPT) theory: Conceptualizing the antecedents, consequences, and measurement of individual differences in adaptability. In C. S. Burke, L. G. Pierce, & E. Salas (Eds.), *Understanding adaptability: A prerequisite for effective performance within complex environments* (pp. 3–39). Elsevier. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1479-3601\(05\)06001-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1479-3601(05)06001-7)
- Sahoo, S., Venkatesan, V., & Chakravarty, R. (2023). 'Coming out'/self-disclosure in LGBTQ+ adolescents and youth: International and Indian scenario - A narrative review of published studies in the last decade (2012-2022). *Indian journal of psychiatry*, 65(10), 1012–1024. https://doi.org/10.4103/indianjpsychiatry.indianjpsychiatry_486_23
- Scandurra, C., Amodeo, A. L., Valerio, P., Bochicchio, V., & Frost, D. M. (2017). Minority stress, resilience, and mental health: A study of Italian transgender people. *Journal of Social Issues*, 73(3), 563–585. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12232>
- Staff, U. T. (2019, June 9). Celebrating Pride Month 2019. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/news/world/2019/06/08/celebrating-pride-month-2019/1393933001/>
- Tang, X., & Poudel, A. N. (2018). Exploring challenges and problems faced by LGBT students in Philippines: A qualitative study. *J Public Health Policy Plan*, 2(3), 9–17. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331166961_exploring-challenges-and-problems-faced-by-lgbt-students-in-philippine
- Thoreson, R. (2017). Just let us be. In *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/06/22/just-let-us-be/discrimination-against-lgbt-students-philippines#20>

- UNESCO. (2023, May 11). What you need to know about inclusion in education. <https://www.unesco.org/en/inclusion-education/need-know>
- Varona, I. (2015). 'Gay Friendly? Discrimination Still Claims LGBT Lives in PH' ABSCBN News,. <http://news.abs-cbn.com/focus/07/01/15/gayfriendly-discrimination-still-claims-lgbt-lives-ph>
- Villaverde, M. A., Alonso, J. D., Lavandeira, L. P., & Pino, L. P. (2022). Initial Motivations for Choosing Teaching as a Career. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.842557>
- Wilkins, K. G., Santilli, S., Ferrari, L., Nota, L., Tracey, T. J. G., & Soresi, S. (2014). The Relationship among Positive Emotional Dispositions, Career Adaptability, and Satisfaction in Italian High School Students. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 85, 329-338. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2014.08.004>
- Xu, C., & Wang, Q. (2022). The Relationships of Creative Coping and College Students' Achievement Emotions and Academic Stress: The Mediating Role of Psychological Capital. *Journal of Intelligence*, 10(4), 126. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence10040126>

APA Citation:

Felicilda, C. B., Laganhon, J. J. D., Yongao, M. A. R., & Nuezca, A. P. (2026). BREAKING THE SILENCE: EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LGBT EDUCATION STUDENTS. *Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(5), 2455–2484. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20427528>

Corresponding author: felicilda.charisse123@gmail.com