

Exploring the Achievements and Struggles of LGBTQIA+ Community in a Higher Education Institution and its influences on their Academic Progress

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the achievements and challenges of LGBTQIA+ students within the university setting, highlighting both their resilience and the systemic barriers they face. Utilizing a qualitative, phenomenological approach, data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions with LGBTQIA+ students from various colleges. The findings reveal that these students excel in leadership, academics, arts, and athletics, underscoring their talents and contributions to the university community. However, they also face significant challenges, including bullying, discrimination, and restrictive institutional policies that inhibit self-expression and academic progress. The study further examines the complex interplay between the students' successes and struggles, revealing that while achievements foster confidence and skill development, the negative impact of societal prejudice can impede academic performance and contribute to psychological stress. The findings underscore the urgent need for more inclusive and supportive educational environments. Recommendations include the establishment of LGBTQIA+ support systems, accessible mental health services, and initiatives to foster acceptance and reduce stigma. These efforts aim to ensure that LGBTQIA+ students can thrive both academically and personally within a more inclusive university community.

KEYWORDS: Challenges of LGBTQIA+ University Students.

INTRODUCTION

In our modern times, higher education is commonly depicted as a stronghold of intellectual advancement, personal growth, and upward social mobility. Yet, beneath this facade of advancement exists a complex web of experiences, where the convergence of identities and societal frameworks can influence individuals' paths through academic settings. LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and other non-heteronormative identities) students specifically travel a road filled with both chances for success and challenges as they strive to achieve their educational goals within higher education institutions.

Furthermore, it is undeniable that throughout history, LGBTQ+ individuals have encountered systematic prejudice, exclusion, and invisibility in the society. Progress towards inclusivity and recognition has been achieved through significant legal struggles, grassroots movements, and gradual policy adjustments. Yet, despite these advancements, LGBTQ+ students still confront substantial obstacles that affect their educational achievements, mental wellness, and general welfare.

According to Kravig (2022), there are 5 challenges facing the LGBTQ+ community in our society. These challenges include out of reach healthcare services, employment and housing discrimination, gendered violence, discrimination from many adoption and social service agencies and intolerance, hatred, and abuse in their home communities.

The academic environment is not an exception to this occurrence. Previous research reveals that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer students usually experience bullying and discrimination within their school's premises. This would often result to poor mental health, poor academic performance, alcohol, and drug dependence and at worst, suicide. Some transgender students also experience physical and sexual assaults within their institutions. Despite laws and rules that mandate the protection of all students within an institution, abuses done to LGBTQIA+ students marred their rights to have proper education.

A study by Sumbane & Makua (2023) explored the challenges and mental well-being of LGBTQI students in a South African university. It was found out that LGBTQI students faced stigmatization and discrimination from fellow students and lecturers, negatively impacting their mental health and sense of safety. This made the LGBTQI students feel that they do not belong leading to a lowered self-esteem. The study further found out that the coping behaviors adopted by these students include confrontation, passive withdrawal, and active dependent behavior. Hence, the researchers highlighted the need to create awareness about the rights of LGBTQI students to education, safety, and self-determination.

Another study pursued by Couture & Bang (2022) showed that LGBTQ students in higher education face additional challenges compared to their heterosexual, cisgendered peers, such as unsupportive campus climates, marginalization in the classroom, increased mental health needs, academic and career concerns, and unequal access to safe and supportive physical spaces. Hence, the study recommends that there is a need for colleges and universities to address the specific challenges faced by LGBTQ students and create inclusive and supportive environments in higher education institutions.

In the Philippines, lawmakers and schools have passed laws to protect students from bullying and discrimination. The Department of Education which oversees elementary and secondary education in the country has issued DepEd Order No. 32 entitled Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in the year 2017. This orders the integration of the principles of gender equality, gender equity, gender-sensitivity, non-discrimination, and human rights in the provision and governance of basic education. In the tertiary level, the Commission on Higher Education has passed CHED Memo. No. 1 series of 2015 which advocates gender mainstreaming in all higher education institutions in the Philippines, both public and private.

However, despite the memorandums and laws covering the protection of LGBTQIA+ students, they still often experience bullying and discrimination which affects their scholastic achievements. Aslam et al., (2022), studied transgender students' bullying experiences and they found out that transgender students experience verbal, non-verbal, physical, and sexual abuses in the school may it be at the classrooms, corridors, playgrounds, washrooms, hostels, and even on social media or cyberspace. The bullying faced by transgender students led to serious consequences such as depression, the need to hide their gender identity, missing school or classes, and other negative impacts on their well-being. Hence, this study seeks to explore the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in higher education and will focus on their achievements and struggles experienced within the school premises and how such achievements and struggles influence their overall academic progress.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study on the achievements and struggles of students in higher education who belong to the LGBTQIA+ community and the impact of such achievements and struggles on their academic progress is anchored on the Social Role Theory and Social Identity Theory.

Social role theory is a key social psychological framework that aims to explain sex differences and similarities in social behavior. It suggests that these behavioral patterns arise mainly from how men and women are assigned different social roles within society. This distribution is shaped by socialization processes and the development of gender roles (Eagly et al., 2016).

Social role theory highlights the significance of understanding how societal expectations and gender roles influence individual behaviors. It suggests that these roles are not set in stone but can evolve over time as societal norms and expectations progress. This adaptability allows for the acceptance of non-traditional behaviors and for differences among various societies and eras. The theory has found application in a range of areas, such as politics, business, finance, social media, sports, and relationships, to explore the influence of gender on social behavior.

This theory can also be applied to understand the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students. When you look at

LGBTQIA+ students through the social role theory, it's clear that societal norms and expectations have a big impact on how they experience things. LGBTQIA+ individuals commonly encounter stereotypes, discrimination, and societal pressures about gender and sexuality, which can affect how they behave and interact in educational environments.

From the point of view of Eagly et al., (2016), social role theory can help explain how societal expectations around gender roles impact the educational experiences of LGBTQIA+ students. These students may navigate unique challenges related to acceptance, inclusion, and support within schools, influenced by the traditional gender roles assigned to them by society. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ students might encounter various types of discrimination that come from their race, class, religion, or ability, on top of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Social role theory highlights the significance of recognizing how these different identities influence their interactions in the educational setting.

In addition, this study is also based on the Social Identity Theory which was introduced by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s. It suggests that people form part of their self-image based on their involvement in various social groups.

McLeod (2023) explored Social Identity Theory, outlining a process involving three key stages in the formation of identities. The initial stage involves social categorization, where individuals classify themselves and others into social groups based on attributes such as race, gender, nationality, or religion. This categorization serves to simplify the social environment but can also contribute to the development of stereotypes. The second stage, social identification, occurs when individuals, having categorized themselves within a specific group, adopt the identity of that group. This entails viewing oneself in terms of the group's characteristics and embracing its norms, values, and behaviors. The final stage is social comparison, where individuals, having categorized and identified with a group, compare their group to others. Such comparisons often exhibit bias in favor of one's own group, leading to in-group favoritism. Understanding this process is crucial in the context of prejudice, as when two groups perceive themselves as rivals, they engage in competition to uphold their self-esteem.

Regarding LGBTQIA+ students, Social Identity Theory provides insight into how individuals' self-concepts are influenced by their membership in social groups. LGBTQIA+ students frequently encounter challenges stemming from societal norms and discrimination, which can adversely affect their educational experiences. Research indicates that these students often experience heightened levels of stress, depression, and anxiety, which in turn can impact their academic performance (Glazzard et al., 2020). This observation supports Social Identity Theory, which suggests that individuals derive a portion of their identity from their group affiliations and may face prejudice or discrimination because of these identities.

Furthermore, the experiences of LGBTQIA students in educational settings can be examined through the framework of Social Identity Theory, which underscores the significant role group identities play in shaping behavior and interactions. Research has consistently demonstrated that LGBTQ+ students frequently face bullying, harassment, and discrimination in schools, which can have a profound impact on their sense of belonging and academic achievement (Catania, 2020). This phenomenon aligns with the principles of Social Identity Theory, which stresses the profound influence of group membership on an individual's self-esteem and overall well-being.

Finally, the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students, both the challenges they face and the successes they achieve, can be examined based on Social Identity Theory. This theory suggests that people tend to favor those they see as part of their own group while discriminating against those they view as outsiders. For LGBTQIA+ students, finding acceptance and community within the LGBTQIA+ network can provide crucial support and validation. This in-group belonging is associated with positive academic and personal outcomes. However, when LGBTQIA+ students encounter prejudice, stigma, and discrimination from broader society or within their educational environments, it can create significant barriers to their achievements and success.

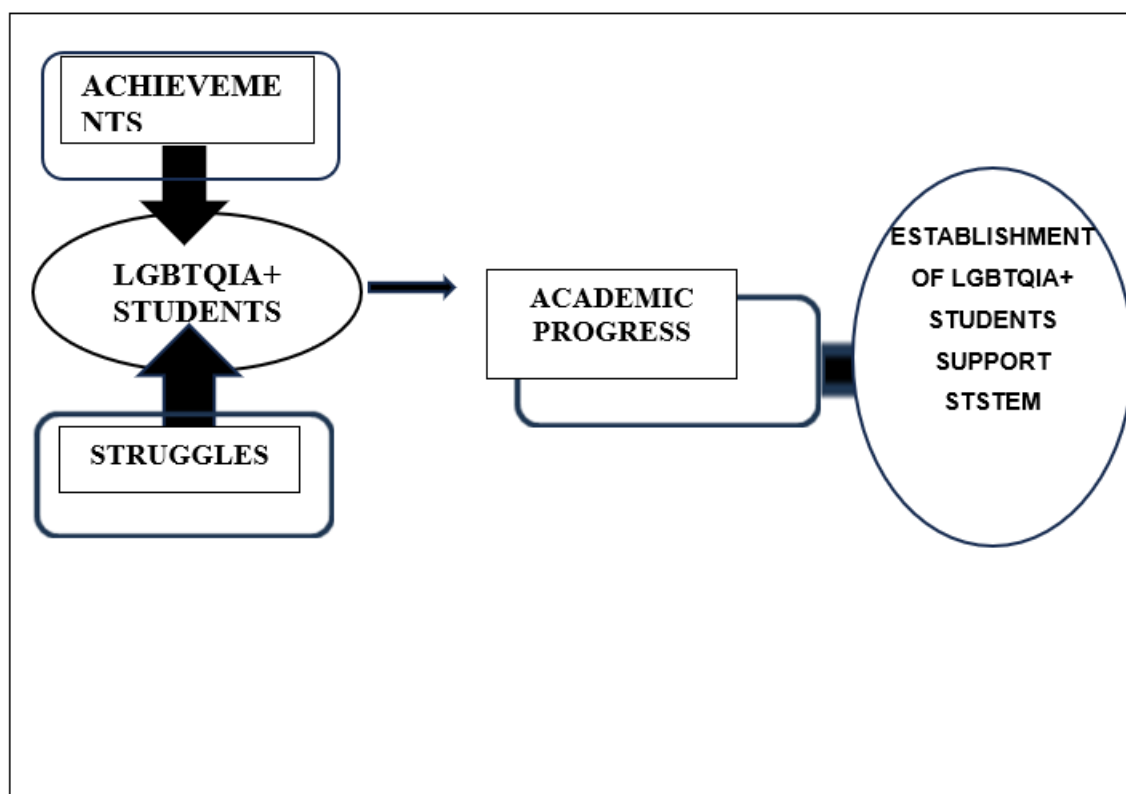


Figure 1: Paradigm of the Study

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study delves into the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in higher education. Specifically, it aimed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the academic, social, and personal achievements of LGBTQIA+ students.
2. To identify the challenges and obstacles faced by LGBTQIA+ students in pursuing their educational goals, as well as the coping strategies they employ.
3. To explore the perceived impacts of both the achievements and challenges on the overall academic progress of LGBTQIA+ students.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant as it tackles one of the most pressing societal issues today: gender discrimination. By highlighting the everyday struggles faced by LGBTQIA+ students within educational institutions, the study offers valuable insights that can inform policymakers and educators, not only in Kalinga province but globally. Moreover, the findings related to the achievements of LGBTQIA+ students have the potential to serve as a powerful catalyst for advancing the acceptance and inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community across society.

SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

This study mainly determined the achievements and struggles of LGBTQIA+ students and recognized the influence of the identified achievements and struggles that LGBTQIA+ students experience on their overall school experience. This study was further delimited to the LGBTQIA+ community of Kalinga State University in the Philippines and was conducted during the second semester of School Year 2023-2024.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are various studies which cover the achievements and struggles of LGBTQIA+ community in our society. A wide range of perspectives has been shared and different areas have been explored by different research regarding the experiences of people who consider themselves part of the LGBTQIA+ group.

In educational institutions, LGBTQIA+ students experience discrimination, harassment, and exclusions. Despite this, there are also many students who identify themselves as LGBTQIA+ who excel academically. Both the achievements and challenges of LGBTQIA+ students will be explored in this study to give fair interpretations and views on the school life of LGBTQIA+ students in Higher Education.

LGBTQIA+ Community

The LGBTQIA+ community has experienced historical marginalization and discrimination. Early literature concentrated on pathologizing LGBTQIA+ identities, such as the listing of homosexuality in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) until 1973. This pathologization played a role in generating widespread stigma and social exclusion. Hence, the removal of homosexuality as a mental disorder signified a crucial change, prompting increased advocacy and the emergence of a more detailed understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues (Drescher, 2015).

In the past years, we have witnessed some wonderful progress in terms of social and legal advancements for LGBTQIA+ rights. The milestone of legalizing same-sex marriage in numerous countries, which began with the Netherlands in 2001, is truly remarkable (Waalwijk, 2001). Moreover, there have been laws put in place to prevent discrimination and safeguard LGBTQIA+ individuals in different areas like employment and housing. It is important to note that the enforcement and impact of these laws can vary greatly depending on the region and may encounter opposition from certain groups. Moreover, the existence of health inequalities among LGBTQIA+ individuals is a matter of great concern. Numerous studies consistently demonstrate that LGBTQIA+ individuals face elevated levels of mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide, in comparison to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. These disparities are frequently associated with encounters of prejudice, bias, and societal exclusion. Furthermore, the ability to obtain medical services poses a notable obstacle, as LGBTQIA+ individuals often recount unfavorable interactions with healthcare professionals, which may dissuade them from seeking essential medical attention (Meyer, 2003).

In terms of social support systems and community connections, affirming environments, such as LGBTQIA+ support groups, community centers, and inclusive educational settings, can significantly mitigate the negative impacts of discrimination and enhance mental health. Research indicates that acceptance and support from family and friends are crucial protective factors against mental health issues (Puckett et al., 2018).

Academic Progress of LGBTQIA+ Students

A substantial amount of research suggests that the atmosphere on campus greatly influences the academic success of LGBTQIA+ students. As stated by Rankin et al. (2010), many LGBTQIA+ students may find the campus to be less inviting and more unfriendly in comparison to their heterosexual peers. This unfriendly atmosphere can take different shapes, such as microaggressions, exclusion, and direct discrimination, all of which can have a negative impact on students' academic achievements and mental well-being (Yost & Gilmore, 2011).

Conversely, institutions that actively promote inclusivity and diversity tend to have better outcomes for LGBTQIA+ students. Campus policies that explicitly protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, along with visible support from faculty and staff, contribute to a more positive campus climate (Garvey et al., 2015). These inclusive environments foster a sense of belonging, which is essential for the academic engagement and success of LGBTQIA+ students (Woodford et al., 2018).

Also, support systems and resources specifically designed for LGBTQIA+ students are critical for their academic progress. LGBTQIA+ centers, counseling services, and student organizations provide essential support that helps mitigate the negative impacts of a hostile campus climate. According to a study by Beemyn (2005), LGBTQIA+ centers offer safe spaces where students can seek support, connect with peers, and access resources tailored to their needs.

Peer support is another crucial factor. Research by Poynter & Tubbs (2008) highlights the importance of peer

networks in providing emotional and social support, which contributes to higher levels of academic success and retention among LGBTQIA+ students. Mentorship programs, where LGBTQIA+ students are paired with LGBTQIA+ faculty or staff, have also been shown to enhance academic and personal development (Sanlo, 2004).

Common Struggles of LGBTQIA+ Students

Numerous studies have also documented the significant barriers faced by LGBTQIA+ students in higher education. One of the most pervasive issues is the experience of discrimination and harassment. According to Rankin et al. (2010), LGBTQIA+ students often encounter a hostile campus climate, with reported instances of verbal harassment, physical assault, and exclusionary behavior from peers and faculty. These negative experiences can lead to heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Woodford et al., 2014).

Despite the passing of years and numerous changes in our society, LGBTQIA+ students continue to face bullying in their schools based on their sexuality or gender orientation. This can have a detrimental impact on their mental well-being, which in turn may affect their academic performance. A study conducted on LGBTQIA+ students in the Philippines highlighted the common challenges and obstacles they encounter, such as discrimination and bullying, mental health concerns, and a lack of acknowledgment from the public (Tang, 2018).

Also, a survey conducted by a nonprofit organization called GLSEN reports that 83% of the surveyed students experienced harassment or assault in their schools. Also, 82% of the surveyed LGBTQ students felt unsafe at school and 58% of them usually hear homophobic remarks from school employees. These mistreatments often lead to anxiety, depression, and academic underachievement of LGBTQ students according to the report.

The struggles faced by LGBTQIA+ students is also manifested in the 2022 National Survey on LGBTQIA+ Youth Mental Health by The Trevor Project in the USA which found that 45% of LGBTQIA+ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year, 36% of LGBTQIA+ youth reported that they have been physically threatened or harmed due to either their sexual orientation or gender identity, 73% of LGBTQIA+ youth reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety, 58% of LGBTQIA+ youth reported experiencing symptoms of depression, 60% of them who wanted mental health care in the past year were not able to get it and that fewer than 1 in 3 transgender and nonbinary youth found their home to be gender-affirming. These disheartening results is also accompanied by the results of the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ students in their schools which include isolation, discrimination, and marginalization. The national survey even found that these challenges result to low grades and financial insecurity among the LGBTQIA+ students.

Another research in a South African University explored the challenges and mental well-being of LGBTQIA+ students and it was found that they experienced stigma, a diminished sense of safety, and low self-esteem, leading to various coping behaviors (Sumbane et al., 2023).

Moreover, a paper focused on the LGBTQIA+ students of Catalan Universities in Spain found psychological violence as the most common type of violence against LGBTQIA+ students. Within the sample, 61.0% reported either being aware of or having experienced some type of violence related to the university context and motivated by the sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression of the victim (Dueñas et al., 2021).

In addition to social challenges, LGBTQIA+ students also face institutional barriers. Garvey et al. (2015) found that many colleges and universities lack inclusive policies and practices, such as gender-neutral bathrooms and housing options. This lack of accommodation can create environments where LGBTQIA+ students feel unsafe and unsupported, further exacerbating their sense of isolation.

The above studies only point in one direction and that is to find ways on how to make schools safe for everyone disregarding their gender orientation. Every student must be included and must feel a sense of belonging in their schools to be able to achieve higher academically and feel secure.

Manifestations of Achievements of LGBTQIA+ Students

LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual) students are valuable members of the educational community. Despite experiencing unique challenges, these adolescents demonstrate a wide range of characteristics and behaviors that benefit the educational environment.

First, LGBTQIA+ students often develop strong coping mechanisms to navigate hostile environments. This resilience is evident in their ability to maintain academic performance and engage in school activities despite the challenges they face.

Second, many LGBTQIA+ students become active advocates for social justice and equality. They often participate in or lead school-based organizations, which promote awareness and inclusivity. Their leadership helps to foster a more accepting school culture and educates their peers about LGBTQIA+ issues. A study by Yarrow (2023), emphasized the significance of LGBTQIA+ leadership in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the higher education sector. LGBTQIA+ leaders were identified as key drivers in creating safe spaces, implementing support services, and advancing LGBTQIA+ rights and representation in the academia.

Third, contrary to some stereotypes, LGBTQIA+ students are often highly involved in academic and extracurricular activities. Their participation in clubs, sports, and academic competitions not only helps in their personal development but also challenges prevailing misconceptions about their capabilities and interests. A paper by Nair, et.al (2023) focused on famous transgender personalities in India. The achievements of these transgender personalities encompass a wide range of successes in various fields, demonstrating their resilience and talent in the face of societal challenges. The study found out that they have excelled in realms of human knowledge, contributing significantly to their respective fields, and making a positive impact on society. Their achievements serve as a testament to their courage, willpower, and self-reliance in overcoming the shackles of gender inequality and societal norms that often suppress their identities. Moreover, the accomplishments of these personalities serve as inspiration and motivation for others within the transgender community, paving the way for greater acceptance and inclusivity.

One notable study conducted by Kosciw et al. (2020) for the GLSEN National School Climate Survey provides a detailed account of the academic achievements of LGBTQIA+ students. This survey reveals that LGBTQIA+ students who attend schools with supportive environments, including LGBTQIA+ inclusive curriculum and access to LGBTQIA+ supportive clubs such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), report higher academic success and increased sense of school belonging. These students are more likely to achieve higher GPAs and express greater interest in continuing their education after high school.

Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania also showcases numerous achievements of its LGBTQIA+ students and faculty. Notable examples include Malcolm Kenyatta, who became the first openly gay person of color elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, and Leonore F. Carpenter, a law professor whose work in LGBTQIA+ rights and legal education has had significant impact. These individuals exemplify how academic institutions can support and celebrate the achievements of LGBTQIA+ students and faculty, thereby contributing to broader societal progress (Temple Now, 2020).

Overall, the literature shows the importance of supportive educational environments in facilitating the achievements of LGBTQIA+ students. By promoting inclusive policies, providing access to supportive networks, and celebrating diversity, educational institutions play a crucial role in enabling LGBTQIA+ students to thrive academically and personally.

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically employing a phenomenological approach. Data collection was carried out through a combination of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. LGBTQIA+ students from various colleges within the university were either interviewed individually or in

groups to explore their achievements and struggles as LGBTQIA+ individuals in the academic setting. The same method was applied to examine how these experiences impacted their overall academic progress.

The study was conducted among LGBTQIA+ students at Kalinga State University in the Philippines using purposive sampling. This sampling technique involves the deliberate selection of individuals or groups who possess significant knowledge or experience regarding the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

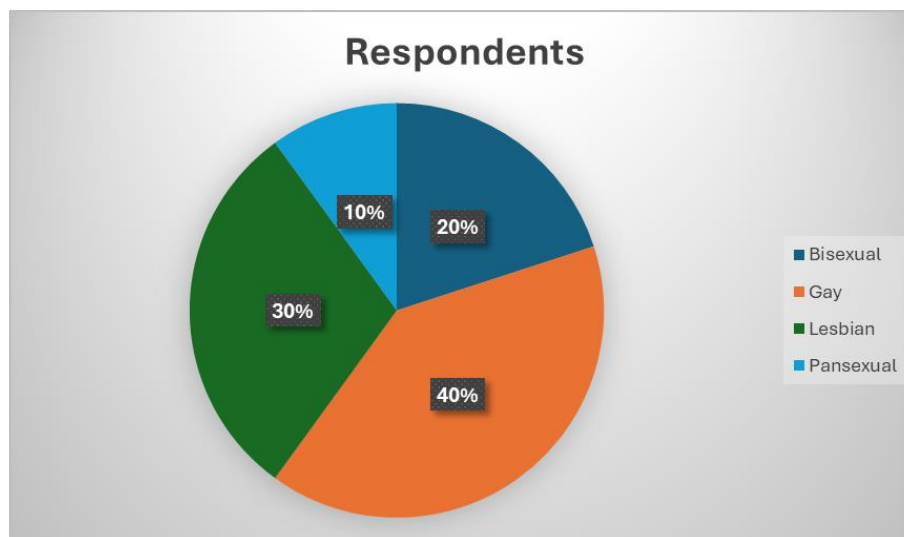


Figure 2. Respondents by Gender Identity

INSTRUMENTATION

The researchers utilized interviews and focus group discussions as the primary methods of data collection. The interview guide was organized into four main sections. The first section gathered demographic information about the students. The second section explored the academic and non-academic achievements of LGBTQIA+ students at the university. The third section focused on the challenges and struggles these students faced during their studies. Lastly, the fourth section examined how their achievements and struggles impacted their academic progress, including the coping strategies they used to navigate these challenges.

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

To achieve the objectives set in this study, several steps were undertaken. First, LGBTQIA+ students were identified with the assistance of club officers from each college, who helped the researchers locate potential respondents willing to participate in the interviews. Once identified, the respondents were contacted, and interviews were scheduled based on their availability. Both face-to-face and online interviews were conducted with the selected participants. After the interviews, the data was transcribed by converting the recorded conversations into written text verbatim. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, the researchers conducted follow-up validation by reaching out to the respondents for clarification or additional questions as needed. Throughout the process, ethical considerations were prioritized, with respondents participating voluntarily and without any coercion, ensuring that only those willing to engage in the interview were included.

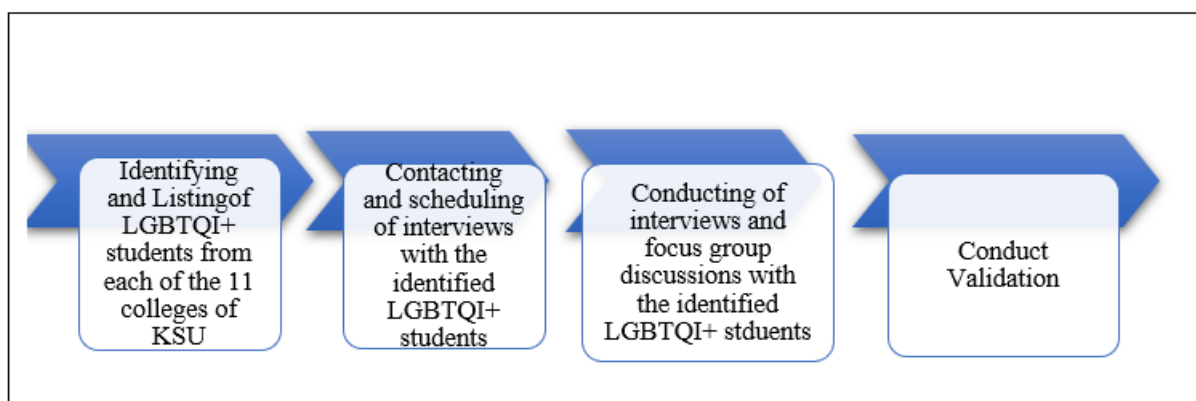


Figure 2. Procedure of Gathering Data

DATA ANALYSIS

This study was conducted using phenomenological analysis, a qualitative research method aimed at understanding and describing the essence of participants' lived experiences. Phenomenological analysis is particularly suitable for exploring subjective phenomena and capturing the depth and complexity of human experiences.

The initial phase of the data analysis involved transcribing the qualitative data collected from interviews and focus group discussions. Each interview and discussion were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The transcription process ensured that the nuanced details and context of the participants' responses were accurately captured. This step was crucial for preserving the integrity of the data, enabling a comprehensive and thorough analysis.

Following transcription, data reduction was undertaken to streamline and organize the vast amount of qualitative data. Data reduction involved three primary steps:

1. Initial Reading and Note-Taking: Each transcript was read multiple times to gain familiarity with the content. During these readings, preliminary notes were taken to highlight key themes, significant statements, and recurring patterns.
2. Condensation: The next step involved condensing the data by summarizing lengthy responses and identifying the core messages without losing the essence of the participants' narratives. Redundant and non-essential information was systematically removed.
3. Categorization: The condensed data were then categorized into broad themes. These themes were derived both inductively from the data and deductively from the research questions and theoretical framework guiding the study. This categorization facilitated a more structured analysis, making it easier to identify patterns and relationships within the data.

The final step involves coding. The coding process was instrumental in breaking down the data into manageable segments and organizing these segments in meaningful ways.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the unique challenges and experiences faced by LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and other gender, and sexual minority) individuals within educational institutions worldwide. A study by McBrien et al, (2022), found that supportive educational policies and programs have been implemented in national and local levels of OECD countries to address the needs of LGBTQIA+ students.

Despite progress in promoting diversity and inclusion, many LGBTQIA+ students continue to encounter discrimination, harassment, and marginalization within academic settings, affecting their academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being.

In the context of Kalinga State University (KSU) in the Philippines, knowing and understanding the achievements and struggles of LGBTQIA+ students are very important. While the university has made strides towards fostering a more inclusive environment, questions remain about the extent to which LGBTQIA+ students are able to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally within the campus.

Hence, this study explored the achievements and challenges of the KSU LGBTQIA+ community and how these experiences affect their academic progress. Through phenomenological analysis of in-depth interviews with KSU LGBTQIA+ students from different colleges, several key themes emerged that provide insight into their lived experiences.

Theme 1: Positive Experiences and Achievements

INFORMANT	RESPONSES (Using their own dialect)	Translation
IN 3	“I consider an achievement dyay pagiging officer ko iti organization ditoy school. Siak ti 2 nd year representative ti department mi.”	“I consider as an achievement my being an officer of an organization here at school. I am the 2 nd year representative of our department.”
IN 4	“My achievements ket dyay dancing. Winner kami ti contemporary dance and dance sports ditoy school. Tapos dakami nangirepresent ti KSU idyay CARASUS ken naging National Qualifier kami.” “Mysa nak metlang nga officer ti SSC idtoy campus maam. Siak ket Class representative.”	“My achievements are on dancing. We were the winner in the contemporary dance and dance sports categories in our school. Then, we represented KSU at the CARASUC and eventually became National Qualifiers.” “I am also an officer of the student council of our campus. I am a Class representative.”
IN 5	“I have been competing and winning iti extra-curricular activities in the school like Bigsayawit, Bench Cheering and lately maysa nak nga delegate nangirepresent ti KSU idyay PASUC.” “Maysa ak met nga officer ti SBO, siak ti Press Relations Officer.”	“I have been competing and winning in extra-curricular activities in the school like the Bigsayawit, Bench Cheering and lately, I have represented KSU at the PASUC.” “I am also an officer of the Student Body Organization. I am the Press Relations Officer (P.R.O).”
IN 6	“I am a Dean’s Lister maam. I have also consistently won in singing competitions. Nangabak nak idyay Pop Solo , Vocal Solo ken Duet competitions ditoy school tapos Debate. Inrepresent ko ti school idyay CARASUC ket nangabak nak ket nagbalinak garud nga National Qualifier.”	“I am a Dean’s Lister maam. I have also consistently won in singing competitions. I won in the Pop Solo, Vocal Solo and Duet Categories. Also, I have won in the debate competition in the school. I also represented the school at the CARASUC and won making me a National Qualifier.”
IN 7	“Nagbalinak nga officer ti department organization mi mula idi	“I have been an officer of our department’s organization from

	first year nak maam aginga nagbalinak nga president ti org mi idi last year. Tadata haanakun simali ta 4 th year nak ket super busy kami.”	when I was a First-year student until I became the President of our organization last year. This year, I did not join because I am now a 4 th year student, and we are so busy.”
IN 8	“Proud nak maam nga maysa nak nga Dean’s Lister. Maysa nak metlang nga Volleyball player ti college mi.”	“I am proud to say that I am a Dean’s Lister. I am also a volleyball player of our college.”
IN 9	“I am a Dean’s Lister.”	“I am a Dean’s Lister.”

The achievements of LGBTQIA+ students at the university as presented by the table are a testament to their resilience, talent, and leadership capabilities. Their accomplishments span a wide range of areas, from leadership roles and academic excellence to artistic and athletic prowess. These successes highlight the diverse contributions of LGBTQIA+ students to the university community and underscore the importance of fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive.

One notable area of achievement for LGBTQIA+ students is their involvement in student leadership. Several respondents highlighted their roles as officers in various student organizations. One student shared their pride in being the second-year representative of their department’s organization. Another student, who has been actively engaged since his first year, became the president of their departmental organization in his third year, demonstrating sustained commitment and leadership growth.

Additionally, involvement in broader student governance structures was highlighted. For instance, one student serves as an officer of the Supreme Student Council (SSC) while another student is the Press Relations Officer (P.R.O.) of the Student Body Organization, showcasing their abilities to take on significant responsibilities and represent their peers effectively.

Greytak et al. (2014) suggests that LGBTQIA+ students often actively participate in extracurricular activities and leadership roles to establish a sense of belonging and community support. Involvement in student organizations can enhance their social connections and provide opportunities for personal growth and development.

Academic achievements were also prominently featured among the respondents. Three students mentioned being Dean’s Listers, an honor that reflects their dedication to academic success. This recognition not only highlights their intellectual capabilities but also their ability to excel despite any additional challenges they may face as LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Research by Kosciw et al. (2018) indicates that LGBTQIA+ students often demonstrate high levels of academic motivation and achievement despite facing challenges such as discrimination and social stigma. Academic success can serve as a source of resilience and empowerment for LGBTQIA+ students, affirming their capabilities and potential.

The artistic talents of LGBTQIA+ students are another area where they have excelled. One student shared their success in dancing, having won in both contemporary dance and dance sports categories at their school. This achievement led to their representation of the university at regional competitions (CARASUC) and ultimately becoming national qualifiers.

Similarly, another student has consistently won in singing competitions, securing victories in categories such as Pop Solo, Vocal Solo, and Duet where she has won competitions at the school level and represented the university at CARASUC, achieving national qualifier status.

Athletic prowess was also evident among the respondents. One student, a volleyball player for their college, balances their academic responsibilities with their commitment to sports. This dual achievement in academics and athletics underscores their versatility and dedication.

The presented achievements of LGBTQIA+ students at the university show their great strength, talent, and leadership. They have done well in many areas—leading student groups, doing well in school, and excelling in arts and sports. These successes highlight the importance of having a welcoming and supportive environment where everyone can do their best. These students not only add to the life of the university but also inspire others with their hard work and successes. Their stories remind us how important it is to celebrate and support diversity in education.

Theme 2: Struggles with Discrimination and Marginalization

Informant	Responses (Using their own dialect)	Translation
IN 1	“Dyay panagbado maam ti naexperiensak ti bullying. Madik nga agskirt maam ta hanko nga feel. Mabul-bully nak gamin maam nu agskirt nak ta amu da met nga tomboy nak. Haan ko talaga makita bagik maam nga agskirt.”	“I experienced being bullied in terms of uniform. I am not comfortable wearing a skirt madam. They bully me once I wear a skirt especially that they know me as a lesbian. I cannot really see myself in a skirt.”
IN 2	“First time ko maam nabagaan ti ada ti prejudice na nga opinion idi one time nga nalate kami kin ma’am *** ijy ket I thought she was so interested ma’am ta nagado damag na so, after the class I opened up myself to her about my gender identity tapos di last ket talaga ba dyta ti kayat mo malay mo in 10 years lalaki tu metlng ta kasdyay met ti kuna ni God kasla ksly ma’am ti ibgbga na tapos ni sir *** di naamwan nan ga lesbian nak... dinamag nak gamin maam nu ada boyfriend kon nu awan py abnormal kanu kase dapat nu 18 dapat ada partner mon nga opposite sex ket tatta dagiti classmate ko ket sir haan nga boyfriend.. girlfriend kunada maam ket kunana ketdin nga abnormal.” “Maysa pay maam ket dyay uniform. Maipilit nga agbado kami ti skirt uray madi mi maam.”	“I first experienced prejudice when one time, I was late in the class of Maam *****. During that time, I thought she was so interested about me for she has lots of questions. Hence, after the class, I opened myself to her about my gender identity. After that, she asked me if it is really what I want. She even told me that maybe after 10 years, I will still be attracted to men because according to her, it is what God tells us. Then one time, Sir ***** asked me if I have a boyfriend already because if none, it is abnormal because according to him, at 18, I should have a partner from the opposite sex. My classmates told him that I do not have a boyfriend but a girlfriend, then he said, that it is abnormal.” “Another issue, ma'am, pertains to our uniforms. We're compelled to wear skirts even if we're not comfortable with them.”
IN 6	“Ada naexperience ko maam jy counselling ni ma’am *** kase uhh aminek tatta ada nak talaga dtuy position ko ti course ko tatta nga I	“I experienced being discriminated during a counselling session with maam *** I admit that this time, I have doubts about my course....I have no

	never... awan talaga ideak nu apay inenroll ko ti ----- in the first place so I'm planning to shift courses ijay education kasi haan ko makita.. maengage ti sarilik as ----- so iti napanunut ko nga asitgan for counselling ket dyay maysa teacher mi, imbes nga jy problem ti iaddress na ket dinamag na nga ada ba boyfriend mo kunana - I can't lie naman ma'am kase alangan nga ideny ko so inbagak ti agpypysu nga ada girlfriend ko ket baka dyta ti reason kunana ma'am – ususaren kano ni kabusor iti relationship ko ti same sex nga pangdistract kinyk isu kano nga nagulo ti panunut ko kasjy kszy – that's not the issue naman, if there's one thing naman na naitulong jy jowabels ko tatta is kanayon nak ayaban nga apan agsimba so what's the point ket ajay person ket very religious met so without knowing the person ket ksla nahurt nak ta nagjump suna ti conclusions gapu lang dyay so dyay ti struggles ko dtuy university siguro pero academically wala naman po pero views and opinions ti daduma nga instructors talaga ket makapasakit." "Kanayun da pay ibaga nga "sayang" nak kanu maam everytime maamuwan da nga lesbian nak lalo nu ibagak ada girlfriend ko."	idea why I enrolled this course so, I am planning to shift course at the College of Education. I cannot really see myself engaging in the works of a _____. Hence, I approach one teacher for counselling. However, instead of focusing on my problem regarding my course, she asked me if I have a boyfriend. Of course, I cannot lie, and I cannot deny it, so I told her the truth which is I have a girlfriend. After that she told me that maybe that is the reason why I have confusion. She even told me that maybe the Devil is using my same-sex relationship to distract me. I thought that time, it was not the issue. For one thing, my girlfriend is the one always inviting me to go to church and she is religious. Why judge her when she does not know her well. So, I was hurt that she immediately jumped into conclusion. These are my struggles in the university. Academically, I have no problem, but the opinions of some instructors sometimes are hurtful." "There are even some who say that it's a waste that I am a lesbian especially when I say that I have a girlfriend."
IN 4	"Nu siak maam, dyay CR ti boys kanayon kami ma-bully nga gays. Isu nga nu apanak ag CR, agayabak kadwak ta agbantay door, tapnu awan sumrek nga daduma nga lalake. Nu gamin sumrek kami ladta nga ada lalake uneg CR maam ket madi kita da kadakami nga kasla nga manyaken mi isuda haha! Isu nga ti ikastak, bago ak ag CR I make sure nga awan tao idyay uneg ken ada pagbantayek ruwar tapnu awan issue hayyyy."	"For me madam, we always get bullied in the comfort room. This is the reason why every time I have to relieve myself; I will call a friend to be a look out outside the comfort room so that other guys will not enter while I am inside. I do this because every time we just enter the comfort room with guys inside, they look at us differently like we are going to sexually assault them (laughs)! So, to stop that issue, I see to it that no one is inside the comfort room before I'll use it and I usually ask someone to watch the door (sigh)."
IN7	"The number 1 bullying maam nga	"The number 1 bullying I have

	naexperience ko ket verbal bullying. Dyay imbes nga awagan dak ti nagan ko ket “bakla” kunada ladtan. Nakaka-offend maam.”	experienced madam is verbal bullying. Like instead of calling me using my name, they call me “bakla” (gay). It is offending on my part.
IN8	“My confidence, bumaba ngay nu maminsan, you know as a member of that family, bullying will occur anytime and anywhere, so as much as possible, I do not really expose and talk too much inside the university.”	“Sometimes, my confidence level diminishes, you know as a member of LGBTQIA+ family, bullying will occur anytime and anywhere, so as much as possible, I don’t really expose and talk too much inside the university.”
IN9	“Discrimination-being discriminated by some of the students and also by some of the instructors.”	“Discrimination-being discriminated by some of the students and also by some of the instructors.”
IN10	“I consider ko nga struggle ko dyay policy da ti haircut. Idtoy gamin college mi maam ket proper haircut kanu, madi da nu long hair ti lalake. Kaya-kayat ko pay met dyay long hair ko ta bakla nak garud, self - expression ko diyay ngem madi ti college mi. Isu kapilitan nagpapakis nak. Insangitak pay diyay ah maam.”	“I consider the policy on haircut as a struggle on my part. In our college madam, they require proper haircut. They do not want long hair for boys. I really like my long hair before because I am a gay, it is one of my self-expression. But my college does not like it, hence, I have no choice but to cut my hair. I cried when that happened madam.”

The table above presents the range of struggles and challenges that LGBTQIA+ students face at the university. These difficulties arise from bullying, discrimination, prejudice, and restrictive policies that hinder their ability to express their identities freely.

Bullying is a common struggle for the LGBTQIA+ students, manifesting in various forms. One student shared their discomfort with wearing a skirt due to being bullied for their appearance. They emphasized the distress caused by being forced into gender-specific clothing that does not align with their identity as a lesbian.

According to a study by Kosciw et al. (2017), LGBTQIA+ students are at a higher risk of experiencing bullying compared to their heterosexual peers. Uniform policies that enforce strict gender norms can exacerbate this issue by subjecting LGBTQIA+ students to ridicule and harassment.

Another student mentioned the verbal bullying they face, with peers using derogatory terms like "bakla" (gay) instead of their name, which is deeply offensive and hurtful. This is corroborated by a study which states that verbal harassment is prevalent among LGBTQIA+ students in educational settings and can have long-lasting effects on their mental health and well-being. Verbal bullying contributes to feelings of isolation and can hinder LGBTQIA+ students' ability to fully engage in academic and social activities (Poteat et al., 2013).

Discrimination also extends to interactions with university employees. One student recounted an experience during a counseling session where their concerns about their academic path were overshadowed by intrusive questions about their sexuality. The counselor's judgmental comments about same-sex relationships, attributing to the student's confusion of her choice of course to her sexuality and labeling it as a distraction caused by the "Devil," were particularly distressing. This kind of discrimination from authority figures exacerbates the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ students.

Prejudice from instructors is another significant challenge. One student shared an incident where their

openness about their gender identity was met with skepticism and moral judgments. The instructor questioned the student's understanding of their own identity and imposed their own beliefs, suggesting that same-sex attractions are against divine will. Similar prejudice happened when an instructor deemed it "abnormal" for her to have a girlfriend instead of a boyfriend, further stigmatizing their sexual orientation.

Research by Greytak et al. (2016) highlights the detrimental impact of discriminatory behavior from educators on the well-being and academic achievement of LGBTQIA+ students. Negative interactions with instructors can contribute to higher levels of stress and lower academic performance among LGBTQIA+ students.

Safety concerns are also prevalent among LGBTQIA+ students. One student described the need to call a friend to stand guard outside the bathroom to prevent harassment from male students who react negatively to their presence inside the comfort room. This constant vigilance to avoid uncomfortable or dangerous situations highlights the anxiety and stress that LGBTQIA+ students endure daily.

Another research by Francis et al., (2014) indicates that LGBTQIA+ students often face harassment and violence in school bathrooms, which can lead to increased feelings of vulnerability and stress. Ensuring safe and accessible restroom facilities is essential for promoting the well-being and safety of LGBTQIA+ students.

Institutional policies can also be a source of struggle. One student shared their distress over a college policy requiring boys to have short hair, which conflicted with their identity as a gay individual who preferred long hair as a form of self-expression. The forced haircut was a painful experience, highlighting how rigid policies can stifle personal expression and contribute to emotional distress. This is also evident in the enforcement of uniform policies, where gay students are required to wear male uniforms, and lesbian students must wear female uniforms.

Scholars like Meyer (2015) argue that institutional policies that restrict self-expression based on gender identity contribute to the marginalization of LGBTQIA+ individuals in educational settings. Such policies perpetuate heteronormative norms and inhibit LGBTQIA+ students' ability to express their authentic selves.

The testimonies of these students highlight the need for greater understanding, acceptance, and institutional support to create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment, where diversity is respected, and all students can thrive without fear of judgment or harassment. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is essential in creating a truly equitable educational experience for all students.

Theme 3: Influence of Achievements on Academic Progress

INFORMANT	RESPONSES (Using their own dialect)	Translation
IN 3	“Diyay achievements ko maam as a student leader, naging mas active nak metlang idyay classroom maam. Haanakun mabuteng agrecite. Nasurok nga i-express ti ideas ko maam.”	“My achievement as a student leader led me to become more active in the classroom. I am not already afraid to recite and express my ideas madam.”
IN 4	“Nadevelop ti confidence ko maam lalo ta nag excel nak iti dancing competitions.”	“My confidence was developed especially that I excelled in dance competitions.”
IN 5	“Dati gamin ket mabulbully nak ngay maam.. bakla baklaa ksja ngay... tapos di nagrugin di ada meten achievements ko mabuibuild meten ti confidence ko. Narealize ko meten nga ada gayam met abilities ko uray bakla nak.”	“Madam, before, I was bullied for being gay, but as I started achieving more, my confidence grew. This made me realize that I have the abilities even if I’m gay.”
IN 6	“Idi adu naach-achieve ko maam jay limits ko nga kunak nu hanggang ijay lang ket mabalin pay gayam manayunan.”	“When I accomplished many things, I realized that my perceived limits were not truly the end and that there is still more to achieve.”
IN 8	“Yes! I learned how to manage time between personal life and academics, since idi ket I don't have interest in focusing my studies.”	“Yes! I learned how to manage time between personal life and academics, unlike before, I don't have interest in focusing on my studies.”
IN 9	“Yes, my achievements have contributed to my personal and professional growth like in my communication and collaboration skills ken mas naging disiplinado nak iti studies especially time management.”	“Yes, my achievements have contributed to my personal and professional growth like in my communication and collaboration skills and I became more disciplined on studies especially in time management.”
IN 10	“My achievements pushed me to achieve more.”	“My achievements pushed me to achieve more.”

Achievements play a crucial role in shaping a student's academic journey. The experiences of various students reveal how personal and academic successes can transform their confidence, motivation, and skill sets, leading to enhanced academic performance.

One student reflected on their experience as a student leader, noting, “My achievement as a student leader led me to become more active in the classroom. I am not already afraid to recite and express my ideas, madam.” This response highlights the confidence boost that leadership roles can provide. Leadership experiences often require public speaking, decision-making, and active participation, which naturally extend to classroom settings. According to Komives et al., (2013), leadership roles in educational settings enhance communication skills and self-efficacy, encouraging students to engage more fully in academic discussions. This increased participation not only benefits the individual student but also enriches the learning environment for peers.

Another student shared that his confidence grew when he excelled in dance competitions. Same with another respondent who stated that his confidence grew as he achieved more. Success in extracurricular activities can significantly enhance a student's self-esteem and confidence. These activities require dedication, practice, and public performance, all of which contribute to personal growth. Research by Fredricks & Eccles (2006) supports the idea that involvement in extracurricular activities is linked to improved academic performance and higher self-confidence. The skills and confidence gained from excelling in these activities often translate into better engagement and performance in academic contexts.

Furthermore, achievements can help marginalized students, including those facing bullying due to their sexual orientation, to affirm their capabilities and gain respect from their peers. Research indicates that success can mitigate the negative effects of bullying and discrimination, fostering resilience and self-assurance (Russell et al., 2012). This increased confidence can lead to a more proactive and engaged approach to learning, positively impacting academic performance.

The realization that personal limits can be surpassed is reflected in another response. Achieving goals often leads to a reassessment of personal potential, encouraging students to set higher aspirations. According to Dweck (2006), achievements foster a growth mindset, where individuals view their abilities as improvable through effort. This mindset is crucial for continuous academic improvement and perseverance in the face of challenges.

Effective time management, a critical skill for academic success, is emphasized by other respondents. Achievements often necessitate balancing various responsibilities, teaching students valuable organizational skills. Britton and Tesser (1991) found that strong time management skills are associated with higher academic performance. By learning to prioritize and allocate time efficiently, students can enhance their focus and productivity in their studies.

Achievements also provide opportunities to develop essential soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and discipline as stated by other respondents. These skills are not only vital for academic success but also for future professional endeavors. Colbeck et al.(2000) suggest that students who excel in collaborative and communicative tasks tend to perform better academically. Additionally, the discipline required to achieve personal goals leads to more structured and effective study habits, further enhancing academic outcomes.

Lastly, the motivational aspect of achievements is captured in the response: "My achievements pushed me to achieve more." Success often breeds further motivation and ambition. The expectancy-value theory posits that the perceived value of success and the expectation of achieving it motivate students to engage more deeply in their academic pursuits (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). This continuous cycle of achievement and motivation can lead to sustained academic improvement and personal growth.

Theme 4: Influence of struggles and challenges on Academic Progress

INFORMANT	RESPONSES (Using their own dialect)	Translation
IN 2	"Maysa nga effect na maam ket dyay mabainak agrecite classroom. Madik unay ti agsao-sao ta baka isu pay pang bully an da kaniak."	"One effect madam is I do not usually recite in the classroom. I usually do not like to talk for it might even become the reason for them to bully me."
IN 3	"Nu kanyak maam, awan met ketdi effect dagita discrimination iti studies ko ta wala akong pakialam nu	"As for me, I believe the discrimination I face doesn't affect my studies because I don't care about it. Even if

	maminsan nu ibull-bully dak. Haan ko ladtan nga panpansinen.”	they bully me, I just ignore them.”
IN 6	“None met maam, uray nu masaktanak kadagidiay prejudice nga maaw-awat ko as a lesbian ngem baybay-ak ladtan, haan met naapektaran studies ko.”	"None, madam. Although I am hurt by the prejudice I face as a lesbian, I simply ignore it. It doesn't affect my studies."
IN 7	“Awan met ketdi effect na maam. Ma-offend ta ngem haan ko met itulok nga apektaran na ti studies ko.”	"No effect, madam. I do get offended, but I don't let it affect my studies."
IN 8	“No, maam.”	“No, maam.”
IN 9	“No, maam.”	“No, maam.”
IN 10	“No, maam. Ignore na lang kasdiyay.”	“No, maam. I just ignore them.”

Responses from students about how their struggles and challenges as LGBTQIA+ individuals influence their academic progress highlight a range of coping mechanisms and outcomes.

One theme among the responses that arose is the reluctance to participate in classroom activities due to fear of bullying. This response underscores how the anticipation of negative reactions can lead to self-censorship and decreased classroom participation. This reduced participation can hinder their academic progress by limiting their opportunities to engage with the material and receive feedback from teachers.

On the other hand, some students adopt a resilient stance. One student stated, "As for me, I believe the discrimination I face doesn't affect my studies because I don't care about it. Even if they bully me, I just ignore them." Another echoed this sentiment, "None, madam. Although I am hurt by the prejudice I face as a lesbian, I simply ignore it. It doesn't affect my studies." These responses suggest that some LGBTQIA+ students develop coping mechanisms to compartmentalize their academic life from the discrimination they face. This ability to separate personal identity struggles from academic performance is indicative of a strong resilience. However, research by Almeida et al. (2009) indicates that while some students may not show immediate academic detriment, the stress of constant discrimination can have long-term effects on mental health, which may eventually impact academic outcomes.

Several respondents reported no significant impact on their studies despite experiencing discrimination. This suggests a determination to maintain academic focus despite adverse experiences. Studies show that a supportive family environment and access to LGBTQIA+ resources can bolster this resilience, helping students maintain their academic performance (Russell et al., 2011).

Furthermore, ignoring bullying and discrimination is a common coping strategy among the LGBTQIA+ students, as reflected in their responses. This approach, while practical in the short term, can be psychologically taxing. Meyer (2003) describes this as minority stress, where the constant need to manage stigma and discrimination can lead to chronic stress. Over time, this can affect both mental health and academic performance, even if the student does not initially perceive a direct impact on their studies.

In summary, the responses from LGBTQIA+ students about the impact of struggles and challenges on their academic progress highlight a spectrum of experiences. While some students report a direct negative impact, such as decreased classroom participation due to fear of bullying, others demonstrate remarkable resilience by compartmentalizing and ignoring discrimination to maintain their academic focus. Research supports the notion that while immediate academic effects may not always be evident, the long-term psychological impact

of constant discrimination and minority stress can eventually influence academic outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The research findings underscore both the remarkable achievements and persistent challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ students within the university environment. Their accomplishments span diverse areas, including leadership, academic excellence, artistic expression, and athletic performance, showcasing the resilience, talent, and leadership potential of LGBTQIA+ individuals. These successes emphasize the critical importance of fostering an inclusive and supportive atmosphere where every student has the opportunity to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the university community.

However, the research also brings to light significant obstacles LGBTQIA+ students encounter, such as bullying, discrimination, prejudice, and restrictive institutional policies that inhibit self-expression. These challenges, deeply rooted in societal biases and systemic inequalities, underscore the urgent need for greater understanding, acceptance, and institutional support to create a more inclusive and nurturing educational environment.

Furthermore, the study highlights the complex interplay between achievements and challenges in shaping LGBTQIA+ students' academic experiences. While accomplishments can enhance self-confidence, motivation, and skill development, challenges like discrimination and bullying can obstruct academic progress and contribute to long-term psychological stress. Understanding this dynamic is essential for implementing targeted interventions and support systems to ensure that all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, have the opportunity to flourish both academically and personally within the university.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The experiences shared by LGBTQIA+ students suggest several important actions for educational institutions, policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals. First, the resilience demonstrated by students who manage to overcome discrimination and focus on their studies highlights the necessity of robust support systems. Universities should offer accessible mental health resources, such as counseling services attuned to the needs of LGBTQIA+ students. Additionally, establishing support groups, such as LGBTQIA+ clubs, can create safe spaces for peer connection and shared experiences. Schools should also implement initiatives like diversity days, inclusive curriculum content, and open dialogues on LGBTQIA+ issues to normalize acceptance and reduce stigma. These cultural shifts can help all students feel valued and respected, enhancing their overall educational experience. Educators play a crucial role in creating an inclusive classroom environment. Training programs that educate teachers about the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ students and equip them with strategies to address bullying and discrimination are essential. Such programs can help educators recognize and intervene in instances of bullying, support students in building resilience, and foster an inclusive atmosphere that encourages all students to participate actively in their education. Although some students report no immediate influence on their academic performance, the long-term psychological effects of persistent discrimination and minority stress must be addressed. Schools may monitor the mental health of LGBTQIA+ students and provide ongoing support to prevent the potential long-term consequences of chronic stress. Promoting a culture of acceptance and respect through school-wide initiatives can create a more inclusive environment.

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