

Evaluating LGBTQIA+ Acceptance: An Exploratory Study Among LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ Students in Selected Sectarian Schools and Universities

Arcelo, Jeremy Mozart¹, Delim, Maria Claudia², Eribal, Drixel Vherniz³, Magno, Marc Ashley⁴, Robles, Diana Teresa⁵, Vallespin, Mc Rollyn^{6*}

^{1,2,5}Student, Institute of Health Sciences and Nursing, Far Eastern University-Manila, Sampaloc, Manila, 1008, Metro Manila, Philippines

³Student, Institute of Accounts, Business, and Finance, Far Eastern University-Manila, Sampaloc, Manila, 1008, Metro Manila, Philippines

⁴Student, Institute of Arts and Sciences, Far Eastern University-Manila, Sampaloc, Manila, 1008, Metro Manila, Philippines

^{6*}Faculty, General Education Department, Institute of Education, Far Eastern University-Manila, Sampaloc, Manila, 1008, Metro Manila, Philippines

Email: mrdvallespin@feu.edu.ph

Abstract— This study systematically investigates persistent discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community within Philippine sectarian schools despite societal advancements. Influenced by conservative religious doctrine, LGBTQIA+ children encounter discrimination. The research, encompassing 60 respondents, employs a questionnaire to compare perceptions of LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ students, analyzing awareness, behavior, and policy perceptions. Results indicate heightened societal awareness ($M = 3.7730$; $SD = 0.7979$) but underscore a substantial gap in discussions about LGBTQIA mental health ($M = 3.47$; $SD = 0.929$) and discrimination in healthcare institutions ($M = 3.52$; $SD = 1.142$) necessitating a comprehensive approach. Empathy emerges as a crucial determinant of behavior among LGBTQ respondents than non-LGBTQ respondents, with a mean difference of 0.4783 at a p -value of 0.003, surpassing awareness levels. At the same time, knowledge significantly shapes perceptions of LGBTQIA policies. Additionally, there were no significant differences among mean scores of SHS and College-level respondents (SHS: 3.3875; College: 4.0667; $p = 0.056$), indicating that lenient dress code policies impact perceptions driven by a desire for identity formation and expression alongside gender expression affirmation. Evaluation of sectarian universities reveals varying levels of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, with De La Salle University ($M = 4.22$) notably surpassing the University of Santo Tomas ($M = 3.04$) significantly at a p -value of 0.001. In conclusion, achieving LGBTQIA+ acceptance demands comprehensive considerations encompassing awareness, empathy, knowledge, and institutional inclusivity. Addressing these aspects is imperative for fostering an inclusive and equitable future in the Philippines.

Keywords—Discrimination, Gender Inclusivity, LGBTQIA+, Sectarian Institutions, Societal Awareness.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is one of the most LGBT-friendly countries in Southeast Asia. Equaldex's LGBTQIA+ equality index shows that the Philippines had an equality index of 57/100, trailing behind Taiwan's 63/100 index score [8]. Boasting a high equality score, however, there is still a lot of discrimination and negative stereotypes about LGBT individuals in the Philippines. According to a report published by the Commission on Human Rights, LGBTQIA+ children face

various forms of discrimination and bullying in schools and physical, verbal, and emotional abuse within their households [5]. Additionally, several activists have highlighted that the LGBTQIA+ community faces tolerance but not complete acceptance in the Philippines [11]. The lack of acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the Philippines may be due to Catholicism's deep influence on gender roles. A study by Reyes et al. stated that the levels of religiosity among Catholics and Evangelicals are directly associated with the levels of homonegative views toward LGBTQIA+ individuals [24]. Moreover, harmful media representations further reinforce these homophobic and transphobic sentiments of Filipinos [30].

According to Perrin & Lindblom (2015), the process of coming out is difficult due to the various reactions of other people toward their sexual orientation and identity, such as shock, rejection, and anger [23]. Due to these reactions, it may develop fear and anxiety. At the same time, discrimination and brutal hate crimes toward LGBTQ+ individuals still exist [28]. Discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community may have a huge impact on expressing their real identity. Thus, people in the modern century are more flexible and tolerant, even of different genders. The relationship between acceptance and the attitude of college students towards the LGBTQ community depends on the perspective of students and factors related to society, and urbanization contributes to a meaningful life for gay and lesbian people [15].

During the past decade, there has been an effort to address the issue of a hostile educational environment against LGBTQIA+ youth, with the Department of Education (DepEd) enacting the Child Protection Policy in 2012 and the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013, in which both guidelines indicate gender-based bigotry as grounds to bullying [6]. However, a report by Thoreson asserted that there is still a lack of effective implementation and thorough monitoring to reinforce these ordinances based on data gathered from interviews conducted in 10 cities from Luzon and Visayas [32]. The respondents felt ostracized through direct harassment from

their peers and teachers as well as micro-aggression from non-inclusive school policies. Up to this date, gendered uniforms, gendered restrooms, and hair length restrictions are still upheld by several universities, primarily Catholic institutions such as the University of Santo Tomas [33]. On the contrary, Far Eastern University, a private non-sectarian institution, advocates for the right of students to express themselves according to their respective SOGIE by providing all-gender restrooms and allowing students to cross-dress inside the campus [9].

The acceptance of LGBTQIA+ continues to grow with each passing day; by now, most people would believe that the members of the LGBTQIA+ community are treated equally, but the reality is far from what others expect. At best, LGBTQIA+ members are only tolerated by society and, at worst, are being denied their rights to receive equal treatment because of other individual’s bias towards gender conformity. The results of this research can be used as a reference to understand the attitude and behavioral patterns of students enrolled in sectarian schools and how their respective institutions took part in shaping their views. Furthermore, the data gathered would also be beneficial in formulating a solution to help school institutions create an environment that would promote the wholehearted acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community and its members. For instance, Russell et al. proposed to have school personnel training on how to properly address and support the needs of LGBTQIA+ students to promote acceptance, inclusivity, and safety in the school environment—formulating effective solutions as this is the first step in making an undivided society where everyone is treated equally no matter their gender [26].

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To compare and elicit perspectives from both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students in sectarian schools regarding their attitudes towards members of the LGBTQIA+ community.
2. To measure and assess the sectarian educational institution’s policy regarding gender inclusivity from the responses of both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ students enrolled in said institutions.
3. To compare the impacts of institutional policies regarding gender inclusivity between sectarian educational institutions

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

The study is exploratory quantitative research that primarily gathers numerical and statistical data to be interpreted to generalize results. Data from 44 LGBTQ and 16 Non-LGBTQ respondents enrolled in sectarian schools, comprising a total of 60 respondents, will be collected using a questionnaire adapted from studies of Jones et al., Duhayongsod et al., and Lannutli & Lachlan, modified to fit the research paper’s objectives [7][14][17]. The questionnaire comprised 41 answerable questions using a 5-point Likert scale. Survey questionnaires will be distributed through online social media platforms such as Facebook.

B. Data Analysis and Limit

Primary data collected through the survey questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Respondent demographics such as age, gender, and educational level will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. T-tests will be utilized to compare average awareness, behavior attitudes, and perceptions on relevant issues of LGBTQ and Non-LGBTQ respondents and College and Senior High School-level respondents. The Institution’s gender-inclusive policies, programs, and community will be assessed by obtaining each institution’s policy scores and comparing them with other institutions using an ANOVA at the University level. The research would only be limited to the comparison of perceptions of LBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents in selected sectarian educational institutions. Sample size and sample composition may not exactly reflect the entirety of the Philippine population.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Respondent Demographics

The researchers were able to gather a total of 77 respondents through the online questionnaire. Among these 77 respondents, only 60 fit the inclusion criteria and are currently enrolled in a sectarian school or university. Most respondents were 16-19 years old, comprising 55% (N= 33), while the other 45% (N=27) were 20-25.

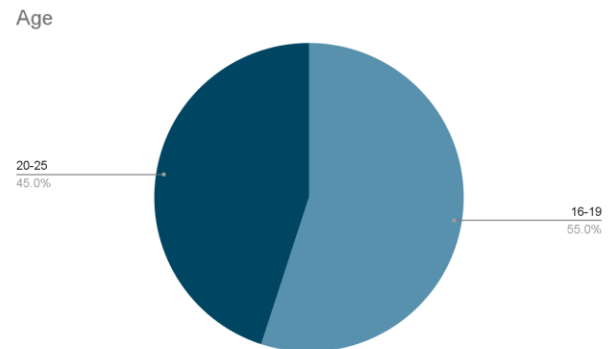


Figure 1. Respondent Demographic by Age

Among the 60 respondents, the majority were male, comprising about 51.67% (N=31), 43.33% (N=26) were female, and 1.67% (N=1) were non-binary, while the remaining 3.33% (N=2) preferred not to disclose their gender.

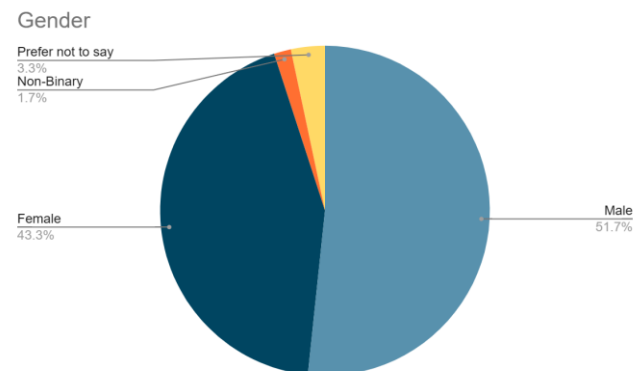


Figure 2. Respondent Demographic by Gender

Additionally, 60% (N=36) of the respondents admitted to being part of the LGBTQIA+ community, while the remaining 40% (N=24) were not. The respondents for this survey comprise 26.67% (N=16)

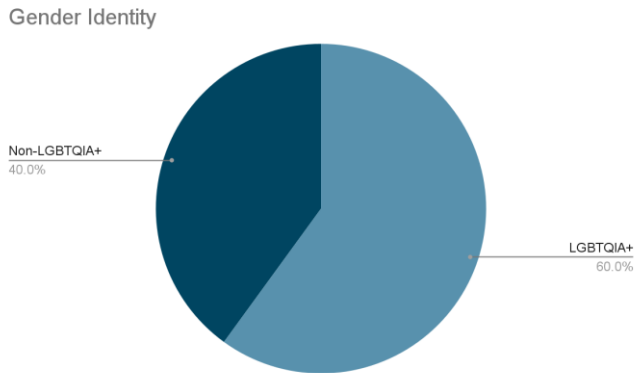


Figure 3. Respondent Demographic by LGBTQIA+ identification

Senior High School students from different schools like Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation (5%), La Consolacion College Novaliches (1.67%), Miriam College (3.33%), Our Lady of Peace School (5%), De La Salle University - Senior High School (3.33), Lord's Hand Academy Inc. (3.33%), Saint Paul College Paranaque (1.67%), and the University of Perpetual Help System Dalta Las Piñas (1.67%). On the other hand, 73.33% (N=44) of the respondents were College students from universities like Adamson University (5%), De La Salle University (11.67%), Our Lady of Fatima University (1.67%), Universidad de Sta. Isabel (1.67%), and University of Santo Tomas (53.33%).

TABLE I. Respondent Demographics by School and University

Senior High School		
Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation	3	5.00
La Consolacion College Novaliches	1	1.67
Miriam College	2	3.33
Our Lady of Peace School	3	5.00
De La Salle University - Senior High School	2	3.33
Lord's Hand Academy Inc.	2	3.33
Saint Paul College Paranaque	1	1.67
University of Perpetual Help System Dalta Las Piñas	2	3.33
Senior High School Total:	16	26.67
College		
Adamson University	3	5.00
De La Salle University	7	11.67
Our Lady of Fatima University	1	1.67
Universidad de Sta. Isabel	1	1.67
University of Santo Tomas	32	53.33
College Total:	44	73.33
Overall Total:	60	100

B. Respondent Awareness on LGBTQIA+ Discrimination

The respondents from sectarian schools have a positive awareness (3.7733) regarding LGBTQIA+ discrimination. The statement they most agree with is Statement 2.4: "LGBTQIA individuals are systematically oppressed in the Philippines" with a mean score of 4.10 (Agree). Results show consistency with sociological studies concerning Gen Z's awareness of

socio-political issues, including but not limited to LGBTQIA+ discrimination. Social media has allowed Gen Z to have increased exposure to news articles, social media campaigns, and other events related to LGBTQIA+ discrimination, resulting in increased political participation and awareness [3]. LGBT mental health and LGBTQIA discrimination in health settings (Statement 2.2 and 2.5) have scored the lowest, with a mean of 3.47 and 3.52, respectively.

TABLE II. Respondent Awareness on LGBTQIA+ Discrimination

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1	2.4 LGBTQIA individuals are systematically oppressed in the Philippines.	4.10	0.986	Agree
2	2.3 LGBTQIA individuals face certain barriers in my community that are not faced by heterosexual individuals.	3.98	1.172	Agree
3	2.1 Members of the LGBTQIA community experience more bullying than heterosexual adolescents in my immediate community (barangay, school, workplace).	3.80	1.022	Agree
4	2.5 Members of the LGBTQIA+ community are not treated equally when availing of general health services	3.52	1.142	Agree
5	2.2 Members of the LGBTQIA community experience more depression and suicidal thoughts than heterosexual adolescents.	3.47	0.929	Agree
	Overall Mean Awareness Score	3.7733	0.797850	Positive Awareness

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree/ Strong Negative), 1.81-2.60 (Disagree/ Negative), 2.61-3.40 (Neutral), 3.41-4.20 (Agree/ Positive), 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree/ Strong Positive)

TABLE III. Comparison between LGBT and Non-LGBT, College and SHS Awareness on LGBTQIA+ Discrimination

		N	Mean	Std.	t	Sig.
			Awareness Score	Deviation		
LGBT	No	36	3.6056	0.88993	-2.048	0.045 ^b
	Yes	24	4.025	0.56357		
Educ Level	SHS	16	3.4375	1.09841	2.017	0.048 ^b
	College	44	3.8955	0.62875		

^b Differences between means are statistically significant (Sig. <0.05)

Overall mean awareness scores are statistically much higher in LGBT respondents (4.025) than in non-LGBT respondents (3.6056), where the p-value (0.045) is less than 0.05. This difference in awareness scores shows that there is still a lack in the depth of understanding of non-LGBT individuals regarding LGBTQIA+ discrimination. A Malay study claims that non-LGBT individuals primarily source their information regarding LGBTQIA+ discrimination through social media. In the study, non-LGBT respondents believe that

LGBTQIA+ individuals face discrimination due to deviation from religious and cultural norms [13]. This, however, does not entirely display the bigger picture of LGBTQIA+ discrimination. LGBT mental health issues and LGBT discrimination in health settings are sensitive topics to be talked about through social media [18]. As such, there is limited awareness regarding these topics by non-LGBT individuals.

Mean awareness scores are also statistically much higher in college respondents (3.8955) than in senior high school respondents (3.4375), where the p-value (0.048) is less than 0.05. The difference in awareness levels could be attributed to a lack of knowledge regarding LGBTQIA+ discrimination due to (1) utilization of social media platforms and (2) difference in subject offerings at the sectarian college and senior high school levels. Even at sectarian universities, college students are often exposed to general education (GE) subjects prescribed by the Commission on Higher Education. These GE subjects often tackle open discussions regarding sexuality and contemporary social issues [2]. As such, the utilization of social media turns into acquiring information, increasing exposure of college students to LGBTQIA+ discrimination to a higher degree than Senior High School students.

C. Respondent Behavior Towards LGBTQIA+ Individuals

TABLE IV. Respondent Behavior Towards LGBTQIA+ Individuals

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1	3.5 I appreciate LGBTQIA+ individuals.	4.52	0.748	Strongly Agree
2	3.3 I can tolerate interacting with LGBTQIA+ individuals.	4.43	0.722	Strongly Agree
3	3.2 I feel comfortable interacting with LGBTQIA+ individuals.	4.37	0.780	Strongly Agree
4	3.1 I initiate interacting with LGBTQIA+ individuals.	4.13	0.911	Agree
5	3.7 I do not feel any strong emotion (e.g. anger, irritation, happiness, empathy, etc.) when I interact with an LGBTQIA+ individual.	3.22	1.166	Neutral
6	3.8 I feel anxious interacting with LGBTQIA+ individuals because I might offend them. ^a	2.62	1.277	Neutral
7	3.4 I would prefer not to interact with LGBTQIA+ individuals if given the chance. ^a	1.78	1.075	Strongly Disagree
8	3.6 I feel a sense of repulsion when I interact with an LGBTQIA+ individual ^a	1.67	1.003	Strongly Disagree
9	3.9 Being in the same place with an LGBTQIA+ individual makes me uncomfortable. ^a	1.60	0.906	Strongly Disagree
	Overall mean behavior score	4.1111	0.61678	Positive Behavior

^a Scores are reversed for the calculation of mean behavior score

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree/ Strong Negative), 1.81-2.60 (Disagree/ Negative), 2.61-3.40 (Neutral), 3.41-4.20 (Agree/ Positive), 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree/ Strong Positive)

The results showed an overall positive behavior (4.1111, SD: 0.61678) of the respondents towards LGBTQIA+ individuals. The respondents agree with statements showing neutral to positive interaction (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7) with LGBTQIA+ individuals. Negative statements (3.4, 3.6, 3.8, 3.9) are strongly disagreed upon by the respondents. The study's results show consistency with other findings in a study conducted by Passani & Debicki (2016); high school and university students generally show positive behavior towards LGBTQIA+ individuals [21].

TABLE V. Comparison between LGBT and Non-LGBT, College and SHS Behavior Towards LGBTQIA+ Individuals

	N	Mean Behavior Score	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
LGBT	No	36	3.9198	-3.159	0.003 ^b
	Yes	24	4.3981		
Educ Level	SHS	16	3.9861	0.946	0.348
	College	44	4.1566		

^b Differences between means are statistically significant (Sig. <0.05)

LGBT individuals are statistically more accepting of their LGBT peers than non-LGBT individuals (LGBT: 4.3981, Non-LGBT: 3.9198, p = 0.003). Results align with social identity theories, indicating that within the LGBTQ community, communal values are maintained, fostering greater empathy among LGBTQ individuals [29]. On the other hand, there is no statistical difference in the behavior of SHS and college-level respondents towards LGBT individuals (College: 4.1566, SHS: 3.9861, p = 0.348). These results suggest that the difference in level of awareness between SHS and college respondents does not necessarily translate into a difference in positive behavior towards LGBT individuals.

D. Respondent Perception Towards Pro-LGBTQIA+ Policies

Senior high school and college students from selected sectarian schools lean on being open about Same-Sex Marriage. The respondents generally agree with statements favoring Same-Sex Marriage (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6). However, they do not strongly support statements against Same-Sex Marriage (4.5, 4.7), ranging only from neutral to disagree. Cox et al. show the shifting landscape on the acceptance of pro-LGBTQIA policies among generations, demonstrating a trend that claims that recent generations lean toward supporting Same-Sex Marriage [4]. Thus, the results of this study affirm that generational effects greatly influence positive perceptions of LGBTQIA+ policies.

LGBT individuals are statistically more in favor of Same-Sex Marriage than non-LGBT individuals (LGBT: 4.4345, Non-LGBT: 3.5913, p = 0). The findings of this study suggest that even within religious institutions, Gen-Z LGBT individuals hold a positive view of same-sex marriage despite potential conflicts with traditional religious teachings. This aligns with research indicating that Millennials, regardless of their religious affiliation, tend to be more supportive of same-

sex marriage than older generations [10]. Consequently, it is reasonable to infer that Gen-Z individuals, in general, also hold positive attitudes toward same-sex marriage.

TABLE VI. Respondent Perception Towards Same-Sex Marriage

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1	4.6 Legalizing same-sex marriage would empower LGBTQIA+ individuals.	4.40	0.827	Strongly Agree
2	4.4 Same-sex couples should also be granted the right to marry.	4.32	1.097	Strongly Agree
3	4.3 If invited, I would attend a same-sex marriage ceremony.	4.27	1.133	Strongly Agree
4	4.2 I would be happy if same-sex couples were allowed to marry.	4.25	1.099	Strongly Agree
5	4.1 Allowing same-sex couples to marry would improve the Philippines.	3.83	1.152	Agree
6	4.5 Same-sex marriage could affect the family structure and upbringing of a child. ^a	3.17	1.224	Neutral
7	4.7 I believe that marriage is a sacred matrimony between a man and a woman only. ^a	2.40	1.291	Disagree
Overall mean perception score		3.9286	0.87650	Positive Perception

^a Scores are reversed for the calculation of the mean perception score
 Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree/ Strong Negative), 1.81-2.60 (Disagree/ Negative), 2.61-3.40 (Neutral), 3.41-4.20 (Agree/ Positive), 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree/ Strong Positive)

TABLE VII. Comparison between LGBT and Non-LGBT, College and SHS Perception Towards Same-Sex Marriage

		N	Mean SSMScore	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
LGBT	No	36	3.5913	0.9278	-4.114	0 ^b
	Yes	24	4.4345	0.4643		
Educ Level	SHS	16	3.5089	1.3258	-2.318	0.024 ^b
	College	44	4.0812	0.59295		

^b Differences between means are statistically significant (Sig. <0.05)

On the other hand, College-level respondents are also statistically more likely to favor Same-Sex Marriage than Senior High School respondents (College: 4.0812, SHS: 3.5089, $p = 0.024$). The results are consistent with Sherkat et al., who claim that higher levels of educational attainment, as most evident in higher education, strongly affect an individual's belief regarding same-sex marriage [26]. The respondent's data in Table 8 reveals a generally positive perception among respondents towards the SOGIE Bill. The mean scores indicate strong agreement that passing the bill would improve the Philippines with a mean of 4.20 and bring happiness if enacted, with a mean of 4.23. Furthermore, respondents generally agree that the SOGIE bill would positively impact them personally, with a mean of 4.03. Some respondents agree that the bill would contribute to lessening

LGBTQIA+ discrimination with a mean of 3.68 and bullying in various settings, with a mean of 3.73. The results show a greater social acceptability of the SOGIE bill in the Philippines.

TABLE VIII. Respondent's Perception Towards SOGIE Bill

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1	4.9 I would be happy if the SOGIE bill would be enacted in the Philippines	4.23	1.015	Strongly Agree
2	4.8 Passing the SOGIE bill would improve the Philippines	4.20	1.054	Strongly Agree
3	4.10 The SOGIE bill would create a positive impact towards me	4.03	1.089	Agree
4	4.12 The SOGIE bill will help lessen bullying (whether in school or in a workplace).	3.73	1.219	Agree
5	4.11 LGBTQIA+ discrimination will lessen once the SOGIE bill is implemented	3.68	1.214	Agree
Overall mean perception score		3.9767	0.97986	Positive Perception

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree/ Strong Negative), 1.81-2.60 (Disagree/ Negative), 2.61-3.40 (Neutral), 3.41-4.20 (Agree/ Positive), 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree/ Strong Positive)

Additionally, most Filipino respondents in the study conducted by Tajan et al. generally favor the SOGIE Bill [31]. However, many things that needed clarification among the respondents were also noted. This suggests growing support for the SOGIE Bill, highlighting the potential positive benefits associated with passing it.

TABLE IX. Comparison between LGBT and Non-LGBT, College and SHS Perception Towards SOGIE Bill

		N	Mean SOGIEScore	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
LGBT	No	36	3.7167	1.06086	-2.864	0.006 ^b
	Yes	24	4.3667	0.69699		
Educ Level	SHS	16	3.4125	1.28886	-2.847	0.006 ^b
	College	44	4.1818	0.75921		

^b Differences between means are statistically significant (Sig. <0.05)

The data indicates that LGBT individuals are more favorable to the SOGIE bill than non-LGBT individuals (LGBT: 4.3667; Non-LGBT: 3.7167; $p = 0.006$). This aligns with the protective nature of the SOGIE bill, which safeguards against gender-based discrimination that LGBT individuals may encounter in their daily lives.

Additionally, college respondents exhibit a statistically more positive perception of the SOGIE bill than senior high school respondents (College: 4.1818; SHS: 3.4125; $p = 0.006$). This could be attributed to the recent SOGIE Bill campaigns among student leaders in the Philippines, both sectarian and non-sectarian, in various universities [22].

TABLE X. Respondent Perception Towards Lenient Dress Code Policies

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1	4.14 It would be happy if lenient dress code policies were implemented within my school/workplace	3.87	1.228	Agree
2	4.13 Lenient dress code policies would positively impact schools, workplaces, and other institutions.	3.82	1.214	Agree
3	4.15 Implementing a lenient dress code policy would encourage students to dress indecently. ^a	2.63	1.262	Neutral
4	4.16 Strict dress codes will help students develop better character and discipline compared to lenient dress code policies. ^a	2.48	1.308	Disagree
5	4.17 Seeing LGBTQIA+ students cross-dressing makes me uncomfortable. ^a	1.82	1.000	Disagree
	Overall mean perception score	3.7500	0.88729	Positive Perception

^a Scores are reversed for the calculation of mean perception score
 Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree/ Strong Negative), 1.81-2.60 (Disagree/ Negative), 2.61-3.40 (Neutral), 3.41-4.20 (Agree/ Positive), 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree/ Strong Positive)

The data in Table 10 reveals a generally positive perception among respondents towards the lenient Dress Code Policies. The survey results align with the study's findings conducted by McCarty (1999). Generally, students are less satisfied with mandatory uniform policies implemented in schools and other educational institutions. The mean scores indicate agreement that they would be happy if lenient dress code policies were implemented within their school/workplace, with a mean of 3.87, and that Lenient dress code policies would positively impact schools, workplaces, and other institutions, with a mean of 3.82. The respondents also disagree that strict dress codes have relations to students developing better character and discipline with a mean of 2.48, and Seeing LGBTQIA+ students cross-dressing makes me uncomfortable with a mean of 1.82. This suggests a predominantly favorable stance among respondents and underscores their positive perception toward lenient dress code policies

TABLE XI. Comparison between LGBT and Non-LGBT, College and SHS Perception Towards Lenient Dress Code Policies

		N	Mean LDCScore	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
LGBT	No	36	3.5389	0.92189	-2.445	0.018 ^b
	Yes	24	4.0667	0.74289		
Educ Level	SHS	16	3.3875	1.13012	1.953	0.056
	College	44	3.8818	0.75368		

^b Differences between means are statistically significant (Sig. <0.05)

LGBT respondents tend to favor more lenient dress code policies than non-LGBT respondents (LGBT: 4.0667; Non-

LGBT: 3.5389; $p = 0.018$). On the other hand, there is no statistical difference between the mean scores between College and Senior High School-level respondents (College: 3.8818; SHS: 3.3875; $p = 0.056$).

Dress codes are still often strictly enforced in some sectarian schools and universities, most evidently in Catholic educational institutions, where values and beliefs of modesty in clothing are instilled within students [20]. LGBT individuals favor lenient dress code policies more than non-LGBT individuals since it allows them to openly express and affirm their gender identity (Rine, 2022). On the other hand, dress codes are statistically equally favored between Senior High School and College respondents. This is because identity formation significantly impacts clothing preferences starting in adolescence, during senior high school, and until adulthood [1]. Thus, leniency in dress codes allows adolescents in senior high school and college levels to express and form their identities fully.

TABLE XII. Respondent Perception Towards All Gender Bathrooms

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1	4.19 I would be happy if all-gender bathrooms were installed within private and public spaces.	3.87	1.255	Agree
2	4.18 All-gender bathrooms would positively impact schools, workplaces, and other institutions.	3.73	1.274	Agree
3	4.20 I would feel comfortable using the all-gender bathroom installed within my school/workplace.	3.57	1.442	Agree
	Overall mean perception score	3.7522	1.27731	Positive Perception

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree/ Strong Negative), 1.81-2.60 (Disagree/ Negative), 2.61-3.40 (Neutral), 3.41-4.20 (Agree/ Positive), 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree/ Strong Positive)

Respondents agree on all three statements (4.18, 4.19, 4.20), which indicates that they generally perceive implementing all-gender bathrooms positively. This supports the study by Lacerna (2019), which reveals that students from Our Lady of Fatima University of Quezon City, a sectarian school, are sympathetic towards the safety and self-esteem of their LGBTQIA+ peers and would, thus, be willing to use gender-neutral bathrooms [16].

TABLE XIII. Comparison between LGBT and Non-LGBT, College and SHS Perception Towards All Gender Bathrooms

		N	Mean ABGScore	Std. Deviation	t	Sig.
LGBT	No	36	3.3056	1.28823	-3.3521	0.001
	Yes	24	4.3472	0.99019		
Educ Level	SHS	16	3.0208	1.736189	-2.698	0.009
	College	44	3.9773	0.96822		

The data shows that LGBTQIA+ individuals are significantly more supportive of the implementation of all-gender bathrooms than non-members of the community, with

the latter exhibiting a neutral perception (LGBT: 4.3472; Non-LGBT: 3.3056; $p=0.001$). The LGBTQIA+ strongly advocates for such facilities as they are more vulnerable to physical and verbal harassment from CIS-gender individuals inside public restrooms. According to Asuncion (2021), transgender people experience ridicule and questioning in both gender-affirming and gender-assigned restrooms.

E. Respondent Perception Towards Educational Policies on Gender Inclusivity

TABLE XIV. Respondent Perceptions of Educational Policies on Gender Inclusivity

Rank	Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1	5.3 University students, faculty, and staff are accepting towards the LGBTQIA community.	3.82	0.833	Agree
2	5.4 The University is a safe space for LGBTQIA	3.45	0.999	Agree
3	5.6 University faculty and staff promote gender inclusivity on the campus.	3.43	1.047	Agree
4	5.1 The University offers adequate policies to protect the LGBTQIA community from bullying and violence.	3.17	1.076	Neutral
5	5.2 The University offers sufficient programs (gender sensitivity seminars, etc.) to promote gender inclusivity.	3.13	1.282	Neutral
6	5.5 Some university students, faculty, and staffs bully and discriminate LGBTQIA+ individuals. ^a	3.00	0.957	Neutral
7	5.7 The university organizes training and seminars for its faculty and staff to improve their conduct and management of LGBTQIA+ individuals.	2.82	1.081	Neutral
	Overall mean perception score	3.2595	0.77155	Neutral Perception

^a Scores are reversed for the calculation of the mean perception score
 Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Strongly Disagree/ Strong Negative), 1.81-2.60 (Disagree/ Negative), 2.61-3.40 (Neutral), 3.41-4.20 (Agree/ Positive), 4.21-5.00 (Strongly Agree/ Strong Positive)

Based on Table 14, the mean average score per institution (School) in ranking is as follows: Our Lady of Fatima University ranks first with a mean of 4.43; De La Salle University ranks second with a mean of 4.22. The results show that the gender-inclusive policies of both institutions—installation of all-gender bathrooms within Our Lady of Fatima University and gender-inclusive student organizations within De La Salle University, are felt at an individual level [16] [19].

Adamson University ranks third with a mean of 3.81; Miriam College ranks fourth with a mean of 3.64; Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation ranks fifth with a mean of 3.29; Our Lady Peace School ranks sixth with a mean of 3.19; De La

Salle University-Senior High School ranks seventh with a mean of 3.14; University of Santo Tomas ranks eighth with a mean of 3.04; La Consolacion College Novaliches ranks ninth with a mean of 3.00; Saint Paul College Paranaque ranks tenth with a mean of 3.00; Lord’s Hand Academy Inc. eleventh with a mean of 2.93; University of Perpetual Help System Dalta Las Piñas ranks twelfth with a mean of 2.79; and, lastly, Universidad de Sta. Isabela ranks thirteenth with a mean of 2.29. Some universities and schools mentioned above are less lenient with uniform, make-up, and haircut policies. According to St. Paul’s (2022) and the University of Perpetual Help System Dalta Las Piñas (2017) student handbooks, students can be denied entry to school grounds until they adjust and comply with the haircut and color guidelines provided by the institution.

TABLE XV. Mean Perception Scores per Institution

School	Mean	Rank
Our Lady of Fatima University ^c	4.43	1
De La Salle University	4.22	2
Adamson University	3.81	3
Miriam College	3.64	4
Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation	3.29	5
Our Lady of Peace School	3.19	6
De La Salle University - Senior High School	3.14	7
University of Santo Tomas	3.04	8
La Consolacion College Novaliches ^c	3.00	9
Saint Paul College Paranaque ^c	3.00	10
Lord’s Hand Academy Inc.	2.93	11
University of Perpetual Help System Dalta Las Piñas	2.79	12
Universidad de Sta. Isabel ^c	2.29	13

^c Institutions with only one respondent

Based on Table 15, the mean average score per institution (School) in ranking, Our Lady of Fatima University is ranked 1 with a mean of 4.43, De La Salle University is ranked 2 with a mean of 4.22, Adamson University is ranked 3 with mean of 3.81, Mariam College is the rank 4 with mean of 3.64, Jesus Is Lord Colleges Foundation is the rank 5 with mean of 3.29, Our Lady Peace School is the rank 6 with mean of 3.19, De La Salle University-Senior High School is the rank 7 with mean of 3.14, University of Santo Tomas is the rank 8 with mean of 3.04, La Consolacion College Novaliches is the rank 9 with mean of 3.00, Saint Paul College Paranaque is the rank 10 with mean of 3.00, Lord’s Hand Academy Inc. the rank 11 with mean of 2.93, University of Perpetual Help System Dalta Las Piñas the rank 12 with mean of 2.79, and the last in rank Universidad de Sta. Isabela is ranked 13th with a mean of 2.29.

Adamson University's policy scores showed no significant deviations compared to De La Salle University ($p = 1.000$) and the University of Santo Tomas ($p = 0.214$). However, De La Salle University demonstrated a significant difference in policy scores over the University of Santo Tomas, with a mean difference of 1.17985 and a statistically significant p -value of 0.001.

De La Salle University's efficacy in fostering gender inclusivity is evident in its policies. The institution houses a recognized LGBT organization, DLSU Prism, which orchestrates events and seminars to enhance gender sensitivity

within the Lasallian community [19]. Additionally, DLSU has abolished its dress code policy to promote inclusivity [12].

TABLE XVI. Comparison of Perception on Gender Policy Scores of Universities

		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Adamson University	De La Salle University	-0.41497	0.47179	1.000
	University of Santo Tomas	0.76488	0.41282	0.214
De La Salle University	Adamson University	0.41497	0.47179	1.000
	University of Santo Tomas	1.17985*	0.28528	0.001*
University of Santo Tomas	Adamson University	-0.76488	0.41282	0.214
	De La Salle University	-1.17985*	0.28528	0.001*

*Differences between means are statistically significant (Sig. <0.05)

In contrast, the University of Santo Tomas needs to improve in these progressive initiatives. UST lacks a university-recognized LGBT organization and enforces strict dress code policies. Notably, UST has faced criticism for its discriminatory clauses in the enrollment conforme, explicitly prohibiting cross-dressing and same-sex relationships, serving as grounds for non-readmission, exclusion, and expulsion [27].

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, the evolution of societal attitudes towards LGBTQIA individuals, particularly noticeable in Generation Z, reflects a significant shift. This change is closely linked to the widespread dissemination of information facilitated by social media, fostering heightened awareness of LGBTQIA discrimination across various aspects of life.

However, a noteworthy gap persists in discussions on LGBTQIA health within social media platforms, resulting in a diminished understanding of discrimination in health settings. To address this, it becomes essential to expand conversations to encompass the entire spectrum of LGBTQIA rights, ensuring that health-related issues are not overlooked.

The role of empathy emerges as a key determinant of behavior towards LGBTQIA individuals, surpassing the impact of mere awareness levels. This underscores the importance of cultivating compassion and understanding to foster a more inclusive society. Furthermore, the influence of knowledge on shaping perceptions towards LGBTQIA policies, such as same-sex marriage, all-gender bathrooms, and the SOGIE Bill, is crucial.

An intriguing aspect arises in exploring dress code policies, revealing that positive perceptions are intricately linked to the desire for identity expression and formation. Lenient dress code policies signify a preference for inclusivity and serve as a means for individuals to express their identities authentically.

Lastly, a comparative analysis of sectarian universities in Metro Manila, specifically De La Salle University and the University of Santo Tomas, highlights varying degrees of LGBTQIA inclusivity. De La Salle University stands out as a

beacon of progress, demonstrating a more inclusive environment than the University of Santo Tomas.

REFERENCES

- [1] Badaoui, K., Lebrun, A. M., Su, C. J., & Bouchet, P. (2018). The influence of personal and social identity on the clothing consumption of adolescents. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences/Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration*, 35(1), 65-78.
- [2] CHED. (2017). CMO-08-s-2017. <https://chedro1.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CMO-19-s-2017.pdf>
- [3] Coleman, S., & Sorensen, L. (2023). Gen Z's civic engagement: news use, politics, and cultural engagement. In *Handbook of Digital Politics* (pp. 181–194). essay, Edward Elgar Publishing.
- [4] Cox, D., Navarro-Rivera, J., & Jones, R. P. (2014). A shifting landscape: A decade of change in American attitudes about same-sex marriage and LGBT issues. Washington, DC: Public Religion Research Institute.
- [5] Custodio, I. (2019). The situation of LGBTQ children in the Philippines. Commission on Human Rights.
- [6] Department of Education. (2013). Policies and Child Protection Related Laws. DepEd. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/deped-policies-and-child-protection-related-laws/>
- [7] Duhaylungsod, S. T., Madrid, C. G. Y., Lapiz, M. L. M., Pongasi, C. S., & Tan, L. M. P. (2018). Attitudes toward the LGBT: a research paper presented to the faculty of the Senior High School Department Iligan City National High School. *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, 09(03). <https://doi.org/10.4172/2151-6200.1000356>
- [8] Equaldex. (2021). LGBT Equality Index: Equaldex. LGBT Rights by Country & Travel Guide. <https://www.equaldex.com/equality-index?region=Southeast%2BAsia>
- [9] Far Eastern University. (2019). Policy on FEU Student's Rights. Far Eastern University. <https://www.feuedu.ph/policy-on-feu-students-rights/>
- [10] Gay, D. A., Lynxwiler, J. P., & Smith, P. (2015). Religiosity, spirituality, and attitudes toward same-sex marriage: A cross-sectional cohort comparison. *Sage Open*, 5(3), 2158244015602520.
- [11] Gutierrez, N. (2017, May 17). LGBTQ activists: We are tolerated but not accepted in the Philippines. *RAPPLER*. <https://www.rappler.com/nation/170091-lgbtq-rights-philippines-tolerated-not-accepted/>
- [12] Isuga, B. F. (2023, August 12). DLSU officially scraps strict dress code for inclusivity, expression. *The LaSallian*. <https://thelasallian.com/2023/08/12/dlsu-officially-scraps-strict-dress-code-for-inclusivity-expression/>
- [13] Jerome, C., Ting, S. H., Yeo, J. J. Y., & Ling, H. N. (2021). Examining discrepant views of LGBT and non-LGBT individuals on societal receptivity towards the LGBT phenomenon in present-day Malaysia. *International Journal of Social Science Research*, 3(1), 55-66.
- [14] Jones, K. N., Brewster, M. E., & Jones, J. A. (2014). The creation and validation of the LGBT Ally Identity Measure. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 1(2), 181–195. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000033>
- [15] Kamarudin, A. S., Ahmad, R., Nasir, M. a. M., & Hisham, H. T. (2021). Exploring college students' acceptance and attitude toward the LGBT community. *ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349042206_Exploring_college_students'_acceptance_and_attitude_toward_the_LGBT_community
- [16] Lacerna, L. (2019). The Perspectives of The People On Having Gender-Neutral Bathrooms in Our Lady of Fatima University-Q.C. *Scribd*. <https://www.scribd.com/document/426900669/The-Perspectives-of-the-People-on-having-gender-neutral-bathrooms-in-Our-Lady-of-Fatima-University-Q-C>
- [17] Lannutti, Pamela J.; Lachlan, Kenneth A. (2007). Assessing Attitude Toward Same-Sex Marriage. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 53(4), 113–133. doi:10.1080/00918360802103373
- [18] Meccrone, S. (2018). LGBT healthcare disparities, discrimination, and societal stigma: The mental and physical health risks related to sexual and/or gender minority status. *American Journal of Medical Research*, 5(1), 91-96.
- [19] Mejico, L. (2020, July 31). DLSU's 1st LGBTQ+ Org pushed to strengthen "fight for Equality." *RAPPLER*. <https://www.rappler.com/moveph/dlsu-lgbtq-organization-pushed-strengthen-fight-equality/>

- [20] Orfanel, C. Z. (2019). School Dress Code in the Light of Judith Butler's Gender Trouble. *Ascendens Asia Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Abstracts*, 3(2N).
- [21] Passani, A., & Debicki, M. (2016). Students opinions and attitudes toward LGBT persons and rights: Results of a transnational European project. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 13(1-2), 67-88.
- [22] Patinio, F. (2018, March 14). Catholic student councils, leaders back passage of SOGIE Bill. Catholic student councils, leaders back passage of SOGIE bill. <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1028682>
- [23] Perrin-Wallqvist, R., & Lindblom, J. (2015). Coming out as gay: A phenomenological study about adolescents disclosing their homosexuality to their parents. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 43(3), 467-480.
- [24] Reyes, M. E. S., Ballesteros, K. C. A., Bandoi, P. A. A., Jimenez, K. A. H., & Malangen, S. D. R. (2019). Religiosity, Gender Role Beliefs, and Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gays in the Philippines. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 21(3)
- [25] Russell, S. T., Bishop, M. D., Saba, V. C., James, I., & Ioverno, S. (2021). Promoting school safety for LGBTQ and all students. *Policy Insights From the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 8(2), 160–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23727322211031938>
- [26] Sherkat, D. E., Powell-Williams, M., Maddox, G., & De Vries, K. M. (2011). Religion, politics, and support for same-sex marriage in the United States, 1988–2008. *Social Science Research*, 40(1), 167-180.
- [27] Sigue, W. R. (2018, July 20). UST's enrollment Conformé-discipline or discrimination? *Lifestyle.INQ*. <https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/300764/usts-enrollment-conforme-discipline-discrimination/>
- [28] Steffens, M. C., & Preuß, S. (2020). Measuring attitudes toward LGBT individuals: Theoretical and practical considerations. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.
- [29] Szanto, T., & Krueger, J. (2019). Introduction: empathy, shared emotions, and social identity. *Topoi*, 38, 153-162.
- [30] Tagudina, I. (2012). Media representations of the LGBT community and stereotypes' homophobia reinforcement. Department of Communication - Ateneo de Manila University
- [31] Tajan, M. M., V. Caraig, R., Lawas, C. J., Macapua, D., & Pamulaklakin, J. G. (2023). Perception of Filipino LGBTQ members toward the sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression equality bill (SOGIE bill). *BOHR International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 2(1), 41–49. <https://doi.org/10.54646/bijsshr.022>
- [32] Thoreson, R. (2017). "Just Let Us Be": Discrimination Against LGBT Students in the Philippines. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/06/22/just-let-us-be/discrimination-against-lgbt-students-philippines>
- [33] University of Santo Tomas. (2018). *University of Santo Tomas Student Handbook Revised 2018*. <https://www.ust.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/UST-Student-Handbook-2018-final-copy.pdf>
- [34] UN General Assembly, Transforming our world : the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57b6e3e44.html> [accessed 20 September 2023]