

Dress Code Inclusivity and Its Influence on LGBTQ+ College Students' Well-Being

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ABSTRACT

Dress code policies in higher education institutions are commonly implemented to promote discipline, professionalism, and institutional identity. Such policies may have unintended consequences for students whose gender identity and sexual orientation do not conform to traditional gender norms. In particular, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other gender-diverse (LGBTQ+) students may experience limitations on self-expression, emotional discomfort, and social exclusion when dress codes are restrictive or inconsistently enforced. The study determined the level of dress code inclusivity at ISPSC–Tagudin Campus and examined its influence on the well-being of LGBTQ+ students. The researchers employed a descriptive-correlational research design to gauge the relationship between dress code inclusivity and LGBTQ+ students' well-being. Through stratified purposive sampling, the respondents of the study consisted of 60 LGBTQ+ students officially enrolled at the college. Data were collected using a structured, self-administered survey questionnaire developed by the researcher and validated by subject-matter experts. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools, including frequency distribution, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson product-moment coefficient correlation. The overall level of perceived dress code inclusivity at ISPSC–Tagudin Campus is moderately inclusive. The LGBTQ+ students exhibit a moderate level of overall well-being. Higher mean scores were observed in indicators related to peer acceptance and self-expression, while lower scores were noted in emotional safety and perceived institutional support. A significant positive relationship between dress code inclusivity and LGBTQ+ students' well-being indicates that higher levels of perceived dress code inclusivity are associated with improved psychological comfort, emotional security, self-esteem, and sense of belonging among LGBTQ+ students. Dress code inclusivity is not merely a matter of clothing preferences but a significant factor that influences students' mental health, emotional stability, and academic engagement. Restrictive or ambiguous dress codes may unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes, contribute to stress and anxiety, and hinder students' ability to fully participate in campus activities. This research demonstrates that dress code inclusivity has a significant influence on the well-being of LGBTQ+ students at ISPSC-Tagudin Campus. By fostering inclusive dress code policies, higher education institutions can create safer, more equitable and more supportive environments that enhance students' well-being and promote academic success for all learners, regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation.

IndexTerms: Level of dress code inclusivity, LGBTQ+ students' well-being, gender expression, influence, policy recommendations

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions have large impact on students' individual self-concept, social growth, general well-being, and academic success. Institutions of higher learning are generally expected to promote diversity, critical and independent thought, and to provide students with an environment in which they felt respected, safe, and valued. Concerned educational settings more specifically, dress codes are less developed but still

critical areas of acceptance. Defined gender norms in dress code policies are enforced in educational settings and this discriminates students for their gender identity and expression, most specifically toward those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other gender-diverse LGBTQ+ members. This is true whether or not dress codes are sometimes enforced for the purposes of professionalism, discipline, or institutional identity.

Students' self-expression and sense of acceptance on campus could have been greatly impacted by dress code regulations. Clothing is an important way for LGBTQ+ students to express their gender and validate their identities, rather than just being questioned about appearance. Their capacity to express who they really are might have been restricted by gender-binary or restrictive dress requirements, which cause discomfort, anxiety, and feelings of exclusion. Inclusive dress code regulations that acknowledge and value a range of gender expressions can help create a more encouraged campus environment, which would benefit students' emotional health, sense of security, and self-worth. Discussions surrounding school dress codes and uniforms highlighted the sexualization of girls' bodies, with boys portrayed as perpetrators or observers. But researchers are highlighting the narratives of diverse groups and are beginning to present the negative impact of such policies on boyhood and schooling, especially regarding racial minorities and expansive expressions of gender or sexuality (Bragg, Renold, Ringrose, & Jackson, 2018; Epstein, Blake, & Gonzalez, 2017; Knipp & Stevenson, 2021). Recently, students' negative reactions to dress codes and uniform policies provided useful lens to examine how hegemonic masculinity and emphasize femininity can be disrupted, particularly in a digital world.

Given the lengthy amount of time that students spend in formal schooling and the impact institutional bodily regulations had on life experiences, schools had designed and implemented dress codes and uniform policies to either support or discriminate against young people in terms of gender and sexual diversity that may represent worthy problem of investigation (Reddy-Best, Dong, & Choi, 2017). Kelly (2017) suggests that cultural debates around school uniforms and dress codes had widened from critiques regarding the uncomfortableness and impracticalities of dresses and skirts for girls to include issues of gender identity relating especially to transgender students.

While people knew more about LGBTQ+ rights and gender diversity in the Philippines, especially at academic institutions, the rhetoric of national gender equality and gender diversity policies like Gender and Development (GAD) frameworks clearly differs from institutional practice. This is seen when gender dress codes persist in schools and schools require that students dress in accordance with their sex assigned at birth. To LGBTQ+ students, these codes might have been especially questionable, irrational and harmful. These students may face discrimination, consequences, or punitive measures for gender nonconforming behavior.

Oxford Learner's Dictionaries (2022) reflects that a school uniform consisted of special attire worn by students at specific schools was a tradition which tended to be more popular in Britain than in the United States. In complement, dress codes involve regulations regarding which clothes people are permitted to wear at school, in the worked environment, or in social clubs, etc. However, both uniforms and dress codes represent the historical agenda of universal schooling, which highlighted a respect for discipline and effort in the working classes.

Educational institutions shape students' personal identity, peer relationships, and overall well-being, not just their academic development. Colleges and universities have a duty to provide a friendly and conducive campus climate where every student, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or personal expression, treated with respect and had the same access to support and opportunities. On many campuses, dress codes shape daily life by influencing how students express themselves and how much they feel they belong in the campus. Historically, dress codes in schools often reflect a strict male–female gender binary, setting different rules and expectations for students based on whether they were seen as male or female. For LGBTQ+ students who express their identities through clothing, hairstyles and other aspects of appearance, rules like these could restrict gender expression and increase pressure to conform. When dress code rules do not account for gender diversity, some students may face discrimination or felt anxious and excluded. These experiences could harm mental health, make it harder to focus and participate in school, and lower overall well-being. In contrast, inclusive dress codes that support gender expression can help students feel more comfortable, accepted, and psychologically safe at school.

In recent years, LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion had received more attention in Philippine society, especially in schools and universities. National initiatives, such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)'s focus on inclusive education and nondiscrimination, had encouraged schools to reassess their current policies and day to day practices. Even with these efforts, institutions often apply inclusive policies in different ways, and there are researches revealing that such dress code affect the well-being of LGBTQ+ students, especially in provincial and public schools.

Just like other universities and colleges, Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) Tagudin Campus provides rules embedded on the Students' Handbook about what students ought to wear; mostly to make sure everyone look put-together and respectful. It was really important to look as if the clothing code works for lots of different gender identities and expressions, despite the fact that these goals are legitimate. The LGBTQ+ students feel that dress code's inclusivity is crucial that reflects the value of equality, diversity, and inclusion and this directly impacts their overall well-being. When LGBTQ+ students felt accepted and seen in their social circles and at school, it made a big difference in how well they could accomplish. When folks deal with stress, afraid of being judged, or face internalized bias because of limitations, it could really mess with their emotional well-being. When students experience things like verbal or virtual harassment, being treated differently, or ruled being enforced unfairly, it could really mess with how safe they feel at school. When students are made to feel bad about who they are inside because of what they wear, or told that their gender identity is wrong, it can really hurt their self-esteem.

The study looked at how LGBTQ+ students interpret the campus dress code, whether they see it as inclusive or restrictive, and how their views relate to their overall well-being aimed to promote equality, ensure safety, and maintain discipline. Dress code inclusivity is setting flexible rules that respect people's gender identity and how they express it. This kind of openness may support the well-being of LGBTQ+ students of ISPSC-Tagudin Campus. Universities and colleges as such may help them achieve their goals, open avenues for academic collaborations, bring back the lost self-esteem and self-respect, establish social cohesion and foster fuller understanding of the nature of man's social interactions inside and outside the campus.

Theoretical Framework

Micro-aggression Theory by Pierce, et al as cited by Barger, et al. (2020) is often automatic, non-verbal exchanges and had similar tenets specific to LGBTQ+ communities like sexual prejudice, anti-gay harassment and sexual stigma. Three formed micro-aggressions perpetuated based on individual's LGBTQ+ status are micro assaults (overt verbal or non-verbal insults targeting on one's sexual prejudice); micro-insults (verbal or behavioral expressions which served to demean a person's LGBTQ+ identity); and micro-invalidations (negations of the personal experiences of sexual and gender minority persons without an explicit intention to harm (Nadal, et al., 2011). It focuses on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, status, religion and other identities. Micro-aggression against LGBTQ+ people could be in various forms, such as social stigma, hated crimes, and legal discrimination. Understanding the difficulties faced by members of LGBTQ communities and other oppressed groups could have been done through micro-aggression. Everyone may create a more just and equitable society for all by acknowledging and challenging structural forms of prejudice and discrimination. Comprehending this theory, the researchers surmised that LGBTQ+s are facing prejudice and discrimination but an orderly society could evolve if its members could understand and acknowledge the LGBTQ+'s identity and accepting them as part of the community.

The Theory of Reasoned Action, anchored on Azjen and Fishbein (1980) as cited by Nicherson (2023), provided a valuable perspective that would give understanding by the dynamics surrounding including dress codes in school settings. It underscores the rational decision-making of individuals before adapting a behavior. It provides insight into how students and the institution assess the potential benefits of inclusive dress codes. Moreover, the theory emphasizes the significant role of social influence and norms in shaping individuals' attitudes and behavioral intentions. In the context of inclusive dress codes, it is crucial to consider how societal attitudes toward diversity, inclusion, and personal expression impact students' acceptance of these policies. Furthermore, knowing the students' perceptions of the consequences of adopting an inclusive dress code would promote inclusivity and could foster a sense of belongingness that could pave to strategies for effective communication and implementation. The Theory of Reasoned Action guided this study in exploring the

multifaceted factors influencing attitudes, beliefs, and decision made processes regarding inclusive dress codes in educational settings. The Theory of Reasoned Action suggests that a person's behavior is determined by their behavioral intention. It was described as the intention to perform a certain behavior in a specific way in certain situations. This theory also focuses on a person's attitude towards a behavior and the subjective norms that potentially affect their behavior, attitude, views, and perception. These subjective norms are influenced by the beliefs of the people around them like parents, friends, partners, colleagues, etc. In addition, Ryu and Han (2010) advocate that attitude and past behaviors are significant predictors of tourists' behavioral intention. They founded that the inclusion of the past behavior as a predictor significantly enhance the predictive ability of the TRA model in intentions and/or actual behaviors. Findings showed a positive causal relationship from past behavior to behavioral intentions.

According to Kaveh et al. (2015), the theory of reasoned action could have been efficiently used in determining students' behavior regarding university dress code. Based from the surveyed 472 students of Shiraz University of Medical Sciences in Iran, 26 percent of the students had negative attitude towards the dress code. For the student's subjective norms, the result was considerably far from the expected level as only 8 percent conform about the dress code through professors and other students but 67 percent reported that it was important for them because of the support of parents, instructors, and peers. Meanwhile, the behavioral intention of the participants towards dress code-based dressing was relatively good, with 62.3 percent of the students adhering to the dress code, while 26.4 percent did not have the same intention. Most importantly, Kaveh et al. (2015) stated that subjective norms played a more critical role in explaining the dress code behavior among the students.

In other studies, Cepe (2014) used the delayed of gratification theory to measure the self-discipline of college students but still required a multi-informant approach, while Mbaluka (2017) used the self-determination theory which also needed an additional questionnaire to gather reports from parents and teachers. Furthermore, the self-regulation theory, paired with the theory of reasoned action, seemed to be the most appropriate theoretical approaches in assessing student's perspectives and self-report on their self-discipline. Lastly, Walukouw and Simbolon (2019) stated that there was a significant relationship between self-regulation and discipline. Self-regulation theory fitted the investigation of self-discipline and how it related to dress code policy adherence as an individual's goals could have attained by their standards, motivation, monitoring, and will power.

Statement of the Problem

This study assessed the inclusivity within the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College Tagudin Campus dress code and its effect on the wellness of the LGBTQ+ students.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the level of the dress code inclusivity among Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College students along:
 - a. gender expression;
 - b. fairness of implementation; and
 - c. student comfort?
2. What is the level of well - being of LGBTQ+ students of Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College Tagudin Campus as measured in terms of:
 - a. emotional well-being;
 - b. sense of safety within the campus environment; and
 - c. self – esteem?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of dress code inclusivity and the well-being of LGBTQ+ students at ISPSC-Tagudin Campus?
4. Based on the findings, what policy recommendations may be formulated to enhance dress code inclusivity in all genders?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quantitative descriptive-correlational design was used to examine how inclusive the dress code was and whether it is related to the well-being of LGBTQ+ students at Ilocos Sur Polytechnic Stated College (ISPSC), Tagudin Campus. This study used a descriptive approach to assess how inclusive the dress code is in relation to gender expression, how fairly it is enforced, and how comfortable students feel with it. It also examined the well-being of LGBTQ+ students by looking at their emotional well-being, their sense of safety on campus, and their self-esteem. It used a correlational approach to examine whether dress code inclusivity is related to the well-being of LGBTQ+ students. This design fits the study because it supports quantitative measurement and statistical analysis of variables while keeping the research setting unchanged.

Population and Sample

The study was conducted at Ilocos Sur Polytechnic Stated College (ISPSC) Tagudin Campus, located in Brgy. Quirino, Tagudin, Ilocos Sur. This campus was selected as the site because it implements a formal institutional dress code and had a student population with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Conducting the study in this setting allowed the researchers to examine the impact of existed policies on students' perceptions of inclusivity, comfort, and well-being. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), selecting research locales that reflect the natural context of the phenomenon ensures that data accurately represent the lived experiences of participants. Similarly, Putri, Rezani, and Hermina (2025) highlight the importance of studied policy related experiences in the actual environment where they are implemented to enhance the validity of quantitative findings. This study covers all ISPSC Tagudin Campus students who identified themselves as LGBTQ+ and enrolled during the academic year 2025–2026. The researchers chose those who had direct experience with the campus dress code policy, since they were best persons to comment on how inclusive, comfortable, and fair it felt in practice. Purposive sampling was used choosing the selected respondents. In addition, respondents self-identified themselves as members of the LGBTQ+ community. Furthermore, they personally experienced the implementation of the campus dress code policy, and their insights are essential in assessing its inclusivity and impact. This approached aligns with recent quantitative researched in higher education that stresses defining the studied population by used targeted sampling (Thomas & Zubkov, 2023; Alias, 2023).

Data Gathering Instrument

A structured survey questionnaire meticulously designed to quantitatively capture data related to the key constructs identified. It was specifically about LGBTQ+ students who attended Ilocos Sur Polytechnic Stated College, Tagudin Campus. This work incorporates their perspectives regarding the campus dress code inclusivity. The focus is on how they link this dress code inclusivity to their personal well-being. The instrument defines dress code inclusivity as the independent variable and measured it through three related areas: gender expression, consistent and fair enforcement, and student comfort. The gender expression dimension looked at how far the dress code let students expressed their gender identity in a way that felt true to them, without being limited by traditional expectations or strict male female categories. This involves statements measured how flexible and accepted the dress code policies by diverse gender identities. The results served as benchmark in the development of proposed policy on dress code inclusivity that is still non-existent in the college as of the writing of this study. Part 1 of the instrument was the level of the dress code inclusivity along gender expression, fairness of implementation and student comfort. Part II is the level of well-being of the respondents along emotional well-being, sense of safety and self-esteem. The instrument was content validated by three expert researchers with several revisions. Upon rectification and checking by the same, the instrument was utilized to gather the needed data.

Data Gathering Procedure

After the rectification of the initial draft of the gathering tool, such was approved by the research experts as to its content validity. The researchers obtained formal permission from the college administration to float the questionnaire to the respondents. They likewise sought permission from the Gender and Development (GAD) Office and the academic deans to administer the questionnaire to the willing LGBTQ+. Along this point, ethical considerations were established. To safeguard the respondents' rights, the researchers explained that the

anonymity of respondents will be kept and the shared data will be for this study alone. They provided informed consent forms to the respondents which they acknowledged and signed. This measure was indispensable to maintain integrity throughout the process. It was explained that participation is voluntary, and all information provided by the participants are treated confidential. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and that their withdrawal would not result to any penalty or negative consequences. For two weeks, the questionnaire was then distributed to the LGBTQ+ student respondents through two methods: a secure online platform and paper-based copies for those with limited internet access. The data collection process spanned a week, during which the researchers monitored responses and followed up politely to increase participation rates. Likewise, they also downloaded the online responses through secure access to keep the data accurate and unchanged. The researchers used the mean to determine the level of the dress code inclusivity and the level of well-being of the LGBTQ+ students. Pearson product moment coefficient correlation was likewise used to determine the significant relationship of the level of the dress code inclusivity and the level of well-being of LGBTQ+ students. From the findings, a list of proposed policy recommendations are offered to the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College-Tagudin Campus administration as panacea to arising dress code concerns in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of the Dress Code Inclusivity

The summary of the level of dress code inclusivity among LGBTQ+ students of ISPSC-Tagudin Campus is presented on Table 1.

Table 1. Summary Table of the Level of Dress Code Inclusivity

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent Rating
Gender Expression	3.67	High
Fairness of Implementation	3.90	High
Student Comfort	3.91	High
Grand Mean	3.83	High

Findings revealed that the overall level of the dress code inclusivity in the campus was high, as reflected in the consistently elevated mean scores across all three indicators: Gender expression got 3.67 mean rating while fairness of implementation got 3.90 mean value. The last component, student comfort had 3.91 mean rating, the highest indicator. The results imply that students generally perceive that the dress code made them cool and comfortable because the implementation of the dress code inclusivity in the college is high. They feel accepted of what they wear as the campus staffs apply the dress code inclusivity without discrimination and prejudice. Even the lesbians and gays can comfortably wear clothes that coincide with their taste; the lesbians wearing men's polo while gays wear decent blouses. It should be noted that the dress code is enforced consistently for all students regardless of gender which implies that LGBTQ+ students are treated the way others are treated. The LGBTQ+ students feel safe and they feel the respect of their fellow students and the teachers as to the ways they clothe themselves. They felt belonged and they are encouraged to explore and learn without distress and hesitation and that they are free to express themselves through what they wear as long as it is not contrary to school regulations. Although there were some concerns particularly regarding occasional inconsistencies like verbal harassment in enforcement and subtle fear of punishment or penalty that are detrimental to their mental health, the results proved that the ISPSC-Tagudin Campus promotes equality of self-presentation, self-identity, artistry, and freedom of gender expression. These clearly indicate that the ISPSC Tagudin Campus dress code largely support diversity and inclusivity that makes the learning environment safe and free-harassment college. The findings concur with that of Kosciw, et al. (2020) stating that LGBTQ+ students who felt supported at school had better educational outcomes than those who did not had access to LGBTQ support and resources. Contrary to the study of Eckes (2021), dress codes had been subject to legal proceedings when policies discriminate on the basis of sex. Requiring female students to wear dresses and males to wear tuxedos in accord with school policies is an example of gender binary being enforced in schools which the court ruled against the school on the grounds of sex discrimination. In another study, Saggu (2022) cited that an LGBTQ+ inclusive education ought to guarantee that pupils had a sense of security and that they are understood,

acknowledged and accepted inside the educational setting. As noted by Potvin (2023), policies that promote gender equality and diversity are necessary since schools still struggle with sexism, homophobia, and transphobia despite anti-discrimination legislation. Likewise, the findings concur with the micro-aggression theory fostering that the difficulties of the marginalized groups like the LGBTQ+ should be considered and be given importance in deciding dress code inclusivity to arrive at equity, fairness and acceptance.

Level of Well-being of the LGBTQ+ Students in Relation to Dress Code Inclusivity

The summary of the level of well-being of the LGBTQ+ students of ISPSC_Tagudin Campus comprising emotional well-being, sense of safety within the campus environment, and self-esteem is shown on Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of the Level of Well-being of the LGBTQ+ Students

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent Rating
Emotional well-being	2.42	High
Sense of safety within the campus environment	3.82	High
Self-esteem	3.50	High
Grand Mean	3.38	High

In terms of well-being, LGBTQ+ students are reported with high level of overall well-being, with sense of safety (3.82 mean value) obtaining the highest mean, followed by self-esteem (3.50 mean value) and emotional well-being (3.42 mean value). The grand mean was 3.48 categorized as high. These findings clearly imply that the LGBTQ+ students of ISPSC-Tagudin Campus are generally accepted without bias, safe and confident within the campus environment as they find approval of their presence, clothes and looks. As LGBTQ+ students, they do not fear to join organizations like the Supreme Student Council and other provincial organizations of the college. They feel proud of what they are because they are accepted. They feel comfort and safe from humiliation even men wear earrings while women are with tattoos. While moderate levels of stress and anxiety related to dress code concerns were observed, these did not outweigh the overall positive emotional experiences reported by respondents. Peer support and institutional acceptance appeared to serve as protective factors that enhanced students' psychological stability, resilience and sense of belongingness. The finding is supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action proving that adopting a relevant dress code in ISPSC-Tagudin Campus after a thorough deliberation among the stakeholders promotes inclusivity and fosters the satisfaction of the LGBTQ+s' need to belong.

Relationship between the Level of Dress Code Inclusivity and the Well-being of LGBTQ+ Students

Table 3 reveals the significant relationship between the level of dress code inclusivity and the well-being of the LGBTQ+ students of ISPSC-Tagudin Campus.

Table 3. Relationship between Level of Dress Code Inclusivity and Well-being of LGBTQ+ Students

	r-value	p- value	Decision	Interpretation
Extent of Well-being	.625**	.000	Reject H ₀	Significant
Legend:** - .01 level of significance				

The table established a statistically significant moderate to strong positive relationship between dress code inclusivity and the well-being of LGBTQ+ students ($r = 0.625$, $p = 0.000$). The rejection of the null hypothesis confirms that higher level of inclusivity in dress code policies are associated with higher level of emotional well-being, safety, and self-esteem among LGBTQ+ students. The results affirm that inclusive dress codes are more than administrative guidelines; they are essential mechanisms for fostering equity, dignity, and respect within educational institutions. When policies allow authentic self-expression, are enforced fairly, and prioritize student comfort, they contribute significantly to a positive campus climate. When they are accepted without prejudice, students are believed to have higher self-esteem and higher motivation to learn; they socialize in a wider circle of groups and they genuinely patronize their cultural roots. The students felt acceptance in the campus and they got higher self-esteem in their self-expression and in their socialization.

With such, they felt motivated to learn. It is lucidly revealed that dress code inclusivity enhances the well-being of the LGBTQ+ college students. Guiao (2023) explains that gender-neutral uniform allows students particularly the LGBTQ+ to freely express themselves without fear of harassment while Abasola (2023) discloses that wearing gender-neutral uniforms could improve student mental health while fostering an inclusive learning environment. The findings underscore the vital role of institutional policies in shaping students' psychosocial outcomes. Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College Tagudin Campus demonstrates a generally inclusive dress code environment that positively influenced the well-being of LGBTQ+ students. Continuous improvement remained necessary, particularly in strengthening consistent enforcement, reducing perceptions of discrimination, and addressing moderate emotional stress related to dress concerns.

Policy Recommendations on Dress Code Inclusivity

ISPSC recognizes the right of all students to dress consistent with their gender identity, cultural and religious beliefs, provided attire meets safety, decency, and course-specific standards. From the findings, the following Dress Code Inclusivity Policies are proposed to school administrations in the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College covering its seven (7) campuses:

1. To respect gender identity and gender expression, no student gets sent home for "wrong uniform" just because it does not match their gender assigned at birth, instead, LGBTQ students may request uniform modifications for gender identity;
2. Public shaming or public reprimand is a NO policy in all learning institutions; Protection policy for non-discrimination is highly encouraged in higher learning institutions;
3. Bullying and unsavory remarks due to not wearing the prescribed dress because of gender are prohibited. The college must adopt gender-neutral language and avoid gender-specific restrictions;
5. Gender identity, culture and religion are respected in the learning environment;
6. To promote psychological safety and comfort, non-inclusive and gendered language should not be practiced;
7. Same rule must apply for everyone to foster equality and equity ensuring fairness and uniform enforcement;
8. Faculty members should correct attire privately and focus only on safety and decency violations, not gender expression;
9. Dress code requirement must not restrict students' access to academic programs and extra-curricular activities including leadership roles unless justified by professional and legitimate standards.
10. The ISPSC administration and its grievance system should make avenues for the acceptance, dissemination and use of the proposed policies on Dress Code Inclusivity. With the help of the GAD office, inclusion of these proposed policies in the student manual/handbook is highly encouraged.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions are the following:

1. The ISPSC dress code generally supports diverse gender identities, however, the student manual seems to be lacking provisions to promote student comfort;
2. Emotional support, safety and confidence among LGBTQ+ students are felt and experienced. Although moderate level of stress, anxiety, and observed discrimination were noted, positive emotional status and peer support are dominantly seen;
3. When inclusive dress code policies are enhanced to fit student diversity, the emotional well-being, sense of safety and self-esteem are benchmarks to learning readiness and student satisfaction.
4. Continuous strengthening policy clarity, conducting gender-sensitivity training, establishing clear grievance mechanisms, and ensuring equal enforcement of policies are essential to sustain and improve LGBTQ+ student well-being of Ilocos Sur Polytechnic Stated College-Tagudin Campus.

The researchers' suggestions are:

1. The implemented dress code based on the student manual should generally and equitably support all

genders, that is, to include the LGBTQ+ group.

2. The college is encouraged to, in collaboration with GAD office, review cases of gender discrimination and provide strengthened and concise policies to protect them from inconveniences, anxiety or fear.
3. The college is deemed to continue its march to a pro-genderized learning environment that provides equal opportunities to all students.
4. The policy recommendations should be forwarded to the Office of the GAD Director and the Office of the SUC President III of ISPSC and these may serve as baseline information towards policy reformation and amendments of the Student Manual when it deemed relevant and responsive to the needs of time.

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