

Navigating Stigma: A Phenomenological Investigation on the Experiences of College LGBT Students on Gender Stereotypes

Brainy Lynne R. Damasin¹, Eugene S. Abuloc, LPT, RGC, PhD (C)²

Assumption College of Nabunturan, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Gender stereotyping continues to persist even in Higher Educational Institutions. It directly and indirectly influenced the educational experiences of college LGBT students in terms of identity formation and self-expression, interpersonal relationships, psychological well-being, and curricular and extracurricular participation. Related exploration on the achievements and struggles of LGBTQIA+ community in Kalinga State University, Kalinga, Philippines, find no immediate influence on the academic performance of students, but a focused study on the long-term effects of persistent discriminations and minority stress was recommended in order to monitor mental health of LGBTQIA+ students and provide support and prevention measures. In address, this study explored the experiences, struggles, coping strategies, insights, and recommendations regarding gender stereotypes within the academic institution and examined their implications for the development of gender-responsive Guidance and Counseling programs. Anchored on the Gender Minority Stress Theory, the study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to capture the essence of the lived realities and stories of informants. The eight self-identified college LGBT students were selected through purposive sampling technique, while data were gathered through semi-structured In-depth Interviews and were analyzed through content thematic analysis. Findings revealed that informants commonly experienced gender stereotypes through discriminatory remarks, gender role expectations, appearance-based judgments, biased treatment, and identity invalidation contributing to various struggles, including feelings of being judged, underestimated, pressured, and discriminated against. Despite these struggles, informants demonstrated resilience through self-acceptance, boundary-setting, selective trust, leadership development, and reliance on social support systems, such as peers, family members, and supportive educators, in mitigating the negative effects of gender stereotypes and fostering positive identity development. Also, the informants developed greater awareness of diversity, authenticity, social bias, and the importance of inclusive environments. Based on these findings, informants recommended the implementation of gender sensitivity programs, safe spaces, anti-discrimination initiatives, SOGIE-informed counseling services, and inclusive institutional policies. Thus, creating affirming and gender-responsive educational environments is essential in reducing minority stress and promoting the holistic well-being of college LGBT students. These findings serve as a basis for strengthening Guidance and Counseling programs and developing interventions that foster inclusivity, equity, and support for gender-diverse learners.

Keywords: Guidance and counseling, college LGBT students, gender stereotypes, phenomenology, lived experiences, gender minority stress, gender responsiveness, higher education, MonCAST

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Gender stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination on the gender minorities such as LGBTQIA+ community persist even in higher learning institutions and continue to marginalize LGBT students despite the advancement in social awareness and education. School environments may contain systemic barriers, such as historical marginalization and bias in classroom, curriculum, and extracurricular activities, that prevented the Gender and Sexually Diverse youth from thriving (McCabe and Anhalt, 2021). Althoff (2023) discussed that

the university setting has become a home to a variety of environmental microaggressions that negatively impact the experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) students, decreasing their mental and physical health and their perception of safety and acceptance within their academic institutions.

In India, a qualitative exploration on the victimization experiences of the LGBT students in academic institution had led to the generation of the following themes: bullying, interpersonal and environmental microaggression, queer battle fatigue, avoidance and approach coping, disclosure dilemma, and campus climate. The results have shown that LGBT students experienced diverse forms of victimization at college or university levels, leading to negative mental health, and are aggravated through negative campus climate and unhealthy coping (Sarika and Maji, 2025).

In the Philippines, research exploring the struggles of LGBT students at Kalinga State University, Tabuk City, Kalinga, Cordillera Administrative Region, sheds light on the various difficulties and barriers that LGBT students face, such as bullying, discrimination, prejudice, and institutional policies that hinder self-expression. These challenges, which stem from societal prejudices and systemic obstacles, really highlight the pressing need for more understanding, acceptance, and support from institutions to build a more inclusive and nurturing educational space (Mamaril and Calsiyao, 2024).

In Davao Region, a study on the coming out process of identified LGBT individuals in Davao del Norte reveals their experiences of unfair treatment in the forms of social stigma, exploitation, and social exclusion from their classmates, families, relatives, and neighbors (Baay, et.al, 2022). Most of their reactions feature adverse effects that led to melancholy, excessive thought, and physical and mental abuse. Some individuals even have trouble recognizing themselves as LGBT, have difficulty forming relationships, and in transitioning to the environment they live in.

In Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences and Technology (MonCAST), Monkayo, Davao de Oro, a survey conducted by the Newly-Enhanced Community for Transformative and Active Rebuilt Society (NECTARS) presented that 60% of its LGBT members have experienced gender stereotyping through the expression of avoidance and aversion and even of offensive verbal jokes and comments because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Studies have indicated that these microaggressions due to gender stereotyping may result to academic distractions, challenged self-esteem, and dampen mental health of the College LGBT students.

The Office of Guidance and Counseling, alongside MonCAST Peer Support Group, works hand in hand to facilitate programs and activities that intervene with students' concerns in academic, social, emotional, and mental health. But, the implementation of the Guidance Services was in general manner without taking into account the specified needs of each gender due to lack of informative gender statistics and gender studies. This calls for a deeper exploration of the lived experiences, struggles, coping strategies, insights, and suggestions of the LGBT students of MonCAST, Monkayo, Davao de Oro, to serve as a basis for a gender sensitive and responsive program planning in the guidance office and informed policy making within the institution.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate the lived experiences, struggles, coping strategies, insights and suggestions of the college LGBT students from Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences and Technology in their realities brought by gender stereotyping eventually contributing to the designing of inclusive school guidance programs and interventions that are responsive to the needs of the students with diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provided a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, struggles, coping strategies, insights, and suggestions of LGBT students of Monkayo College Arts, Sciences, and Technology in Monkayo, Davao de Oro, in navigating stigma from their personal and social relationships within the institution. By documenting their lived realities, the study contributes to both academic discourse and gender

responsive interventions in the programs and services offered by the MonCAST Guidance and Counseling Center.

Students. The findings of this study would help students of MonCAST to reflect on their own personal and social relationships with the LGBT community and gain awareness of the unique experiences and struggles lived by the college LGBT students.

Teachers. The documentations of the lived experiences of the college LGBT students inside the Higher Educational Institution would broaden their awareness and sensitivity to gender issues and concerns that may emerge in the teaching and learning processes in classrooms and in the extracurricular activities within the academe.

Guidance Counselors. Insights from this study could guide the Guidance personnel in planning and designing guidance programs and services that are responsive to the diverse needs of college LGBT students.

School Administration. The results of this study would offer evidence-based recommendations that can inform policy reviews and adjustments, particularly in assisting the guidance office, the OSAS, and student organizations in designing and planning non-stereotypical activities and programs towards college LGBT students.

GAD Coordinator. Recommendations would provide gender analysis records to the Office of the Gender and Development Coordinator which can practically inform the planning of programs and projects that are gender responsive. Also, gender analysis data would support effective gender mainstreaming efforts within the institution.

Parents. Key findings from this study would shed light to the familial perceptions and interactions of college LGBT students. Also, results could reveal the significant role parents play in developing positive self-identity of their LGBT children.

Future Researchers. This study would contribute to the growing literature of gender studies within the academic institution serving as a reference for future studies on the gender sensitivity and responsiveness of higher education institutions and their respective Guidance and Counseling Centers.

Research Questions

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of the LGBT students of Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology, Monkayo, Davao de Oro, in terms of social acceptance and discrimination to serve as a basis for policy-making and program planning. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of college LGBT students in gender stereotyping?
2. What struggles did the college LGBT students encounter in gender stereotyping?
3. How did college LGBT students cope with the gender stereotyping?
4. What insights do college LGBT students gain from gender stereotyping?
5. What suggestions do college LGBT students offer to the Guidance and Counseling program?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Gender Minority Stress Theory (1995) of Meyer, explaining how societal prejudices and discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals can lead to negative mental health outcomes. This suggests that gender minorities such as gender non-conforming individuals experienced unique

stressors related to their marginalized status, highlighting the impact of external societal factors like stereotypes and stigma. Gender Minority Stress Theory provides a significant lens in exploring the unique experiences of LGBT students in terms of stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination against their sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Gender Minority Stress Theory identifies three core components: Distal (External) Stressors, Proximal (Internal) Stressors, and Resilience and Coping Factors. Distal stressors are objective, external events and conditions that occur regardless of one's perception including stereotypes and discrimination in employment, education, or healthcare, harassment and violence, and institutionalized stigma. While proximal stressors are subjective processes internalized by the individual, often stemming from exposure to distal stressors such as internalized transphobia, like adopting negative societal stereotypes and prejudice about one's own gender identity.

Lastly, resilience and coping factors are mechanisms that buffer the negative effects of gender minority stressors, which include community connectedness (belonging to supportive LGBTQIA+ or transgender networks), affirmation of gender identity, and social support from family, peers, or allies. Testa et al. (2015) explained that these factors not only mitigate distress but also promote positive identity development and mental well-being.

In the context of the stigma that the LGBT college students have been navigating within the academic institution, distal and proximal stressors such as stereotypes and stigma have accompanied their experiences, struggles, coping mechanisms, and insights. A major percentage of a survey supports that LGBT students who are members of the NECTARS in MonCAST have received verbal harassment and encountered rejection due to their gender identity and sexuality. Grounded on this theory, this theoretical lens affirmed not only the unique stressors that LGBT people experience but also the coping strategies and resiliency that they develop and utilize to survive in this scrutinizing society.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative research design employing the phenomenological approach to deeply explore the lived experiences, struggles, coping strategies, insights, and suggestions of the LGBT students of Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology in navigating the stigma and gender stereotypes on their gender identity and sexuality. Qualitative research emphasizes understanding of a phenomenon from the perspective of informants, providing rich and detailed accounts of complex social realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research design is particularly suited for the study as it aims to explore the personal perceptions of the college LGBT students towards their lived experiences of negative gender stereotypes within the academic institution.

According to Tiwari et.al. (2025), a phenomenological investigation revolves around the lived experiences of a group of people around a particular phenomenon. Additionally, Christensen (2010), as cited by Tiwari et.al. (2025), emphasized that phenomenological research is a qualitative inquiry that aims to comprehend the essence of a phenomenon from the viewpoint of the people who have personally experienced it. Through phenomenology, the study sought to capture how college LGBT students experience negative stereotypes, attitudes, and discrimination due to the stigma on their diverse SOGIE, and identify the coping strategies they developed and the insights they learned throughout their experiences, including suggestions for policy review and revision.

Research Informants

The informants of the study were selected through purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are knowledgeable about or who have experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Clark, 2011 as cited by Mamaril and Calsiyao, 2024). The use of this sampling technique in selecting the eight informants of this study ensured the richness,

depth, and relevance of the data that were gathered regarding the experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and insights of college LGBT students regarding the gender stereotypes within the academe.

The eight informants, which comprised two Lesbians, two Gays, two Bisexuals, two Transgenders, were purposively selected to gather in-depth experiences and insights from gender stereotyping due to diverse SOGIE within the academe. Morse (1994) emphasized that the recommended number of informants for a phenomenological study is at least six and a maximum of ten allowing an in-depth understanding while ensuring data quality and richness.

Informants must: first, an officially enrolled at MonCAST during the current academic year; second, an active members of the duly recognized NECTARS student organization; third, a self-identified member of the LGBTQIA+ community, specifically belonging to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender categories; fourth, have experienced gender stereotypes within the academic institution; fifth, willing to participate voluntarily and share their lived experiences, struggles, coping strategies, insights, and suggestions related to navigating stigma; and lastly able to communicate their experiences clearly during interviews or data-gathering procedures.

Students were excluded from participation if: first, they are not officially enrolled in MonCAST during the current academic year; second, they are not members of the NECTARS organization; third, they do not identify as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender categories; fourth, they have not personally lived gender stereotypes within the academic institution; fifth, they are unwilling or uncomfortable to participate in the study or withdraw their consent at any stage of the research process; or, they are unable to participate in the interview sessions due to scheduling conflicts or other limitations that may affect the completion of the data-gathering process.

Data Gathering Methods

Before conducting the actual interviews, the researcher ensured that all procedures adhere to ethical standards in research. Formal approval was secured from the Ethics Review Committee (ERC) of the Graduate School, which served as the basis for ensuring that the study's design and methodology respect the rights and dignity of informants. Following the ERC approval, the researcher submitted a request for permission to conduct to the Administrative Office of Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology and to the Research, Development, and Extension Office.

After the institutional approval, each prospective informant was provided with an informed consent form clearly explaining the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, the procedures involved, and their rights as informants. They were informed that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Informants were also assured that all information shared were treated with confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

Upon the conduct of the informant's interview, the researcher prepared the necessary data-gathering instruments, including a validated interview guide composed of open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives, as well as audio-recording devices to accurately capture informants' responses. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and was conducted at a time convenient to the informants. The interviews took place in a quiet and comfortable setting, through an online platform of Google Meeting and Facebook Messenger, in order to attend to the informants' availability and preference, ensuring openness and ease during the discussion. The recorded interviews were securely stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the researcher. The data collection phase was conducted within one-month period following the approval of the research proposal, allowing sufficient time for scheduling interviews, conducting the sessions, and ensuring data completeness.

Since the study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design, primarily the data were gathered through In-Depth Interviews (IDI). According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), the use of interviews is best in order to explore issues that might be personal or sensitive in nature. The topics on the experiences of stereotypes,

prejudices, and discrimination against one's SOGIE is very personal and sensitive, so the use of interviews is befitting in the collection of data on this phenomenon. Qualitative interviews are particularly appropriate for this study as they provide rich, in-depth insights from the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of college LGBT students that cannot be adequately captured through structured questionnaires alone (Creswell & Poth, 2021).

Data Analysis

This study employed thematic analysis, framework by Braun and Clarke (2021), as the central approach to examining qualitative data. Thematic analysis is valued for its adaptability and rigor in uncovering recurring patterns and meanings within informants' accounts. It is particularly suited for phenomenological research because it enables the researcher to delve into the lived realities of individuals and interpret how they construct meaning from their experiences.

The analytic process commenced with the careful preparation of the dataset. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and notes were systematically organized to ensure accuracy and completeness. After the transcripts were ready, the researcher consolidated all the individual transcripts of data in a one-set document following the format given by the Graduate School Office. The consolidated data were then submitted to the respective data analyst assigned.

In the part of the designated data analyst, the next stage involved coding, where significant statements and expressions were identified and tagged with conceptual labels. These codes may include direct phrases from informants to preserve authenticity and highlight the language they use to describe their experiences. Through this process, recurring ideas were grouped together, forming the foundation for more abstract categories.

From these categories, themes that represent the central patterns emerging from the data were constructed. These themes were refined to ensure clarity, coherence, and relevance to the research questions. The final themes were woven into a narrative account that integrates informants' voices with scholarly interpretation. This narrative did not only present the themes but also illustrated them with quotations, examples, and multiple perspectives to capture the richness of informants' lived experiences.

Thematic analysis provides a structured yet flexible pathway for moving beyond descriptive summaries toward deeper interpretive insights, making it especially relevant for exploring the experiences, struggles, coping strategies, and insights of college LGBT students in navigating the stigma and stereotypes on their gender identity and sexuality within the academic institution. The data generated contributed to a broader awareness and sensitivity to the unique experiences and differential needs of the LGBT community.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presented the major findings collected from comprehensive and In-Depth Interviews. The primary focus of the investigation was on how college LGBT students navigate the existing stigma within the academic institution that they are enrolled in. The research informants were selected through the recommendation of the MonCAST NECTARS, a student organization leading the empowerment of LGBTQIA+ community in MonCAST. The inclusion criteria included only the LGBT students who have experienced gender stereotyping in the academe brought by their diverse gender identity and sexuality. A total of eight informants, two Lesbians, two Gays, two Bisexuals, and two Transgenders, were recommended as a desired number of informants for a phenomenological in-depth interview.

The responses were subjected to content analysis where the themes across all responses were drawn. In keeping with the research ethical considerations for qualitative research, informant's codes had been used in order to conceal the identities of the research informants ensuring anonymity. The presentation of the result was done according to the order of the major and specific research questions utilized during the conducted

interview. Answers and responses of the informants were verbatim; that was, transcribing them was based on the language which the informants were using during the conducted interview.

Emerging Themes on the Research Question 1. What are the experiences of college LGBT students regarding Gender Stereotypes?

Presented in this section were the findings of the specific questions from research question 1; 1.1 ‘How did you perceive gender stereotypes within your institution?’ 1.2 ‘What types of gender stereotypes did you commonly encounter in academic and social setting?’ And 1.3 ‘How did gender stereotypes influence your sense of identity and self-expression?’

After thematic analysis, the responses of the informants elicited five themes that corresponded to the experiences of gender stereotypes within the academic institution. The themes were; *Facing Discriminatory Remarks, Facing Pressure Conforming to Traditional Gender Roles and Appearance, Ability and Role-Based, Leading to Self-Suppression and Caution, and Leading to Self-acceptance and Personal Growth.*

Facing Discriminatory Remarks. This theme reflects the presence of verbal discrimination experienced by LGBT students within the school environment. It highlights how stereotypes are often expressed through jokes or casual comments that diminish or invalidate gender identity. These remarks contribute to feelings of exclusion and reinforce unequal social treatment. Informant 1 noted the presence of discriminatory remarks disguised as humor, stating,

“In our school, sometimes I can hear jokes or comments like “your gay, you cannot join that”, So somehow, I felt that the school is not yet fully inclusive.” IDIRPL1

Informant 3 also emphasized that feminine-presenting LGBT individuals are often perceived as weak in his statement,

“But at the same time also, some people assume that we are weak since we are feminine. There are times that I can say that the stereotypes are negative because of the pressure.” IDIRPG1

While Informant 4 rejected the stereotype that LGBT individuals are unfit for leadership roles, arguing that many are actually effective leaders as he pointed out,

“To be honest, I can identify it as negative because some leaders are part of the LGBT community and they are good in leadership. That is why I do not agree that people say that we are not to become a leader of an organization.” IDIRPG2

Facing Pressure Conforming to Traditional Gender Roles and Appearance. This theme reflects how LGBT students experience pressure to conform to traditional expectations of masculinity and femininity. These pressures are reinforced through school norms, peer expectations, and institutional practices such as dress codes. As a result, students may feel constrained in expressing their authentic identities. Informant 1 described traditional expectations, stating;

“At first, I thought it was just normal and didn't really pay much attention to it. But as time went on, I realized that there is really discrimination. Like, if you are a man, you should be macho, if you are a woman, you should be gentle and quiet.” IDIRPL1

Also, Informant 6 shared that such expectations limit self-expression and create emotional pressure as he emphasizes,

“In my experience, gender stereotypes in school are often seen through expectations about how student should act or present themselves. These stereotypes appear in both academic and social settings where people assume we must fit traditional roles. At times, this makes me feel limited in expressing my true identity and affects my confidence. It also creates pressure to conform to standards that do not reflect

who I truly am. Despite these challenges, I try to remain authentic and find my strength in supportive peers” IDIRPB2

Meanwhile, Informant 8 recalled school rules in earlier education that restricted hair length and gender expression stating,

“But base from my previous school before I enter college, there is really stereotyping especially in school rules and regulations. Like when I was in Junior High School, long hair is not allowed.” IDIRPT2

Ability and Role-Based. This theme reflects assumptions about academic performance, leadership ability, and assigned social roles based on gender identity. Such stereotypes reinforce unequal expectations among students. They also influence how responsibilities are distributed in academic tasks. Informant 1 stated:

“In academic setting, it is very common that “Boys are better at Math and Science, and girls at Arts ug Languages”. Then in terms of groupings, boys are always called leader, then girls are assigned as secretary or as decorators.” IDIRPL1

Informant 6 added that LGBT students are often assumed to excel in leadership or social interaction roles expressing,

“As a bisexual student, I often encounter stereotypes such as assumptions about my interest, leadership ability, or how I should behave in groupwork. These stereotypes usually reflect traditional ideas on masculinity and femininity which do not capture the diversity of each student. Even so, I continue to show my capabilities through dedication and perseverance. With the support of my LGBT friends and girlfriend, I am able to rise above assumptions and remain confident.” IDIRPB2

This was supported by Informant 2, who pointed;

“All gays are expected to be good at academics and all LGBTQ+ individuals are expected to be good at socializing in other people.” IDIRPL2

Informant 3 added;

“Since people’s expectation or stereotypes if you are an LGBT is you should be extra, creative. So, as an LGBT, we need to do extra just to meet their expectations. It makes me to do something and turned it into positive way.” IDIRPG1

In contrast, Informant 4 expressed the common stereotype on LGBT individuals in school asserting,

“In our school, it common that LGBT individuals struggled in gender stereotypes. Because some people said that the LGBT individuals are not suitable for leadership.” IDIRPG2

Leading to Self-Suppression and Caution. This theme reflects how stereotypes cause students to restrict or carefully manage their self-expression. Fear of judgment often leads to emotional restraint and identity concealment. This affects confidence and authenticity in social interactions. Informant 1 stated:

“In the beginning, I really doubted myself, I felt like I had to suppress who I really was just to fit in, I was afraid to wear the clothes I like or speak the way I wanted to, because I was scared of being judged or laughed at.” IDIRPL1

Informant 7 also shared that they became more cautious due to fear of criticism stating that,

“It affected ne especially my self-confidence and my self-expression because I become more careful especially to the people around me. I felt sometimes pressured to hide who I really am, what my true

colors are because it is inevitable that there's a lot of people that would criticize us or judge us even though you are straight person." IDIRPT1

In affirmation, Informants 2 expressed;

"Maybe, in a way I became more careful on how I express myself to avoid judgement from other people" IDIRPL2

This was supported by Informant 4, who highlighted;

"Because of their labels that LGBT individuals are noisy, it led to self-restriction. Instead of expressing my true self, I filter it out because of the stereotypes I hear from people." IDIRPG2

Informant 6 also shared the pressure to hide and be cautious stating that,

"Gender stereotypes sometimes create pressure to hide certain parts of myself, making me cautious in how I express my identity." IDIRPB2

Leading to Self-Acceptance and Personal Growth. This theme reflects how some students transform negative experiences into personal motivation and self-growth. Exposure to stereotypes can encourage resilience and identity acceptance. Support systems play a key role in this transformation. Informant 3 shared that stereotypes became motivation in expressing,

"It affected me because I need to do something and it is also helpful personally because I became aware of who I am and what are my capabilities. It helps me to do so many things to go out of my comfort zone. Like when people say that I cannot do it, it turned out that I can do it too." IDIRPG1

Informant 7 supported by stating,

"I perceive it as an experience that will help me to understand my identity better. Because I learn to accept myself and express who I truly am despite of the opinions of other people." IDIRPT1

Additionally, Informant 6 emphasized that acceptance from family and friends strengthened self-confidence in highlighting that,

"However, being bisexual has taught me resilience and the importance of self-acceptance, my parent's acceptance and the encouragement of my girlfriend and closest friends who gave me the confidence to embrace my uniqueness. These experiences motivate me to inspire others to be proud of they are." IDIRPB2

Informant 1 also shared,

"When I graduated from High School and I got to college and witnessed that the LGBT individuals are proud of who they were, it's slowly gave me the courage to accept myself too. So, the stereotypes that downgraded me before have encouraged me to be authentic." IDIRPL1

Essential Themes on the Research Question 2. What struggles did the college LGBT students encounter in gender stereotyping?

Presented in this section were the findings of the specific questions from research question 2; 2.1 'How can you describe the struggles you faced with gender stereotyping?' 2.2 'In what ways did you experience gender discrimination and prejudice related to gender stereotyping?' And 2.3 'What challenges did you face when participating in group activities or student organizations because of your gender identity and sexuality?'

After thematic analysis, the responses of the informants developed four themes that highlights the different struggles and challenges faced by college LGBT students brought by the persisting gender stereotypes in the academe. The themes were; *Feeling Judged, Underestimated, Controlled, and Dictated, Through Experiencing Homophobic Reactions, Jokes, and Comments, Underestimated and Excluded, and Restricted from Leadership Roles.*

Feeling Judged, Underestimated, Controlled and Dictated. This theme highlights how LGBT students experience judgment, underestimation, and control due to gender stereotypes. It reflects how external perceptions often dictate their behavior, identity expression, and participation in school activities. These experiences contribute to feelings of restriction and reduced autonomy. The findings reveal that LGBT students are often judged based on their gender identity and expression, leading to experiences of exclusion and control. Informant 2 shared that as a bisexual individual, she is often judged and told what she should do or who she should like, limiting her freedom of self-expression. She stated:

“One of the struggles that I experience as an LGBT is to be judged by people based on my gender expression ug sexuality. There are people who would dictate me on what I should do or who I should like, though I only want to be free.” IDIRPL2

Similarly, Informant 6 described being labeled and underestimated in school activities, which affected participation. She explained that,

“The struggles I faced include being judge or underestimated which can make participation in school activities more difficult because some of them called me “tomboy” or “lesbian” even I’m bisexual. So, at times, I feel pressured to adjust my behavior to avoid criticism. But I have learned to stay true to myself. My family’s acceptance and my girlfriend’s support give me strength to overcome these challenges. These experiences have helped me grow to a more confident, resilient person.” IDIRPB2

In addition, Informant 4 share his experience of being thought of incapability because of his sexuality.

“To be honest, I have a lot of struggles, specially that time I competed in Festival Queen Pageant. There are thoughts that told me I cannot do that; I cannot handle such pageantry because I am not fit and I am not a good communicator and I admit because nobody’s perfect.” IDIRPG2

Meanwhile, Informant 7 share his sadness of being called out expressing,

“To be honest, there is one instructor that called me out because I am wearing uniforms for girls. At that time, I feel so very sad because even though it was already accepted in the school, there are other instructors that do not allow. But I still feel so very great because in that way I realized that I should really fight for it. We have been given opportunities; there are just still other instructors who do not allow.” IDIRPT1

Informant 8 supported this by stating;

“The real struggle is outside the school, especially that we are now accepted and allowed to wear girls school uniform. I can hear comments “Why are they wearing girls’ uniform that they should not be wearing”. The struggle is even if we ae allowed by the school but the people outside that are still not educated about LGBT community will still be strict about tradition and belief especially here in the Philippines that is very religious.

Through Experiencing Homophobic Reactions, Jokes, and Comments. This theme captures verbal discrimination through jokes, comments, and stereotypes. It reflects how homophobia persists in everyday interactions within and outside the school. These experiences contribute to misunderstanding and emotional discomfort. Informant 4 shared being reduced to stereotypes, stating:

"I experienced discrimination through jokes, side comments, and questions that are very invalidating on my part. There are some people that would say "It is just a phase" or LGBT are just confused, which made me feel misunderstood." IDIRPG2

Informant 8 added that discrimination continues even in the present, emphasizing that,

"The struggles that I still experience today in terms of discrimination is when people treat it as a joke without knowing how big its impact on us if people really try to discriminate us. It is really difficult because we cannot please people to respect us because it is their perceptive. That is why we find it hard to overcome the struggle because no matter how much we make them understand about LGBT, at the end of the day, they will follow their own perceptions." IDIRPT2

This was supported by Informant 4, who pointed;

"I often encounter gender stereotypes, especially when they label LGBT individuals or a gay just like me as just for entertainment only. That our very purpose in this world is to be made of fun. The most common that I hear is "You are not fit for this because your role is to entertain us". But, since we are independent person, I just face it and do not dwell on it." IDIRPG2

On the other hand, Informant 5 highlighted,

"I also experience homophobia from the students. When my classmates got touched by me, they would response like "Do not hold me, I do not like it". IDIRPB1

Underestimated and Excluded. This theme highlights how LGBT students experience exclusion and underestimation in group settings due to gender stereotypes. It shows how assumptions about ability and identity influence participation in academic and physical tasks. The findings reveal that LGBT students are often excluded from group decisions and activities based on their identity rather than their abilities. Informant 1 shared;

"The challenge was that I wasn't always included in group decisions." IDIRPL1

Informant 3 added by describing,

"Aside from that, in terms of group activities, especially in terms of physical task, people will say "Do not include him, he's gay, he is weak, he will just be girly girly", without knowing my real ability. Specially in PE class, a lot of people especially my classmates will not include me in their groups of boys versus boys because they believe that I cannot do it without knowing that I can play basketball." IDIRPG1

Restricted from Leadership Roles. This theme reflects the limitation of leadership opportunities for LGBT students due to stereotypes and bias. It shows how identity-based assumptions influence organizational roles and participation. Informant 1 shared that,

"I was often assigned to do designs or documentation, but not given leadership roles," IDIRPL1

Informant 4 added that stereotypes portray LGBT individuals as unfit for leadership, stating,

"One thing that they would also say to me is I am not a speaker, I am not good in oral communication, and I am not fit to lead and control." IDIRPG2

Informant 5 further described bias during organizational elections, questioning,

"During my first year, it was election time in my organization then there is voting system. I can say that there is bias, because I was appointed that time but others did not agree with the decision,

especially the boys because they want their straight friend to be the leader. So, I thought “Do they not like a leader that is LGBT?”. ” IDIRPBI

Essential Themes on the Research Question 3. How did college LGBT students cope with the gender stereotyping?

This section presents the findings related to the specific questions on the research questions 3; 3.1 ‘How did your coping strategies emerge and evolve from your encounters with gender stereotyping?’ 3.2 ‘In what ways did you navigate and manage gender stereotypes in your daily academic and social interactions?’ And 3.3 ‘How did social supports, such as peers, family, and faculty, shaped your coping experiences?’

Subsequently, using the thematic analysis, the replies of the informants impelled six themes that reveals how coping strategies emerged, developed, and were sustained through lived experiences of discrimination and support systems within the academic environment. In precise, the emerging themes were; *Through Repeated Experiences of Discrimination, Selecting and Surrounding Self with Trusted Peers, Being Confident with Self-Identity, Maintaining Calmness and Understanding, Helps to feel Comfort, Inclusivity, Worthy, and Accepted, and Helps to Build Confidence and Become Stronger.*

Through Repeated Experiences of Discrimination. This theme highlights how continuous exposure to gender stereotyping contributes to the development of coping strategies over time. Repeated discrimination serves as a catalyst for emotional adaptation and resilience-building. However, it also reflects the psychological burden experienced by LGBT students. These experiences often led to emotional exhaustion but also long-term personal growth. Informant 3 shared that,

“During my high school days, there was so much discrimination. Because of the day-by-day encounter with discrimination and stereotypes from other people, I was strengthened. You become stronger as a person, so you will understand the realities of life. You will understand the kind of life for LGBT people and you cannot do anything about it. Because no matter how much you defend yourself, you will still lose. Somehow, you lose hope to fight but understand instead. So instead of fighting them back by speaking or by debating, it’s good to fight them back in silence.” IDIRPG1

Informant 6 similarly explained that,

“My coping strategies developed from repeated encounter with stereotypes, teaching me resilience and self-acceptance. Overtime, I learn to focus on my strength and embrace my uniqueness. My parent’s acceptance and my girlfriend’s support made these process easier. These experiences continue to shape me into a more confident and determined individual.” IDIRPB2

Informant 8 added that,

“Way before I enter college, I was so immature back in high school that whenever people try to discriminate me, I always fight back. But there was some time that I fought back but was ganged up the group of friends. So, I learned to just ignore it, because I know that it is wrong to fight and the fight will get bigger. Also, mostly as we see in social media, when an LGBT is discriminated and fought back, they always play violent with us. We can say that we are on the losing end if we fight because people especially the older generation, they always choose to side with the straight community due to religious belief.” IDIRPT2

Selecting and Surrounding Self with Trusted Peers. This theme highlights the importance of building relationships with supportive individuals. Trust becomes a key factor in navigating social environments safely. Peer selection helps reduce exposure to discrimination. Informants emphasized surrounding themselves with understanding and positive individuals. This strategy strengthens emotional well-being and social stability. Informant 1 shared that,

"In social interactions, I choose to whom I open up. Sometimes I would also throw a joe to lighten up the situation but not to the point that it would degrade me." IDIRPL1

Also, Informant 2 supported that,

"And, surrounding myself with positive and understanding people." IDIRPL2

Further, Informant 4 added that,

"My coping strategies develop though my experiences and the support of trusted people around me. At first, I ignore and avoid the negative comments. But later, I realized that we should find trusted friends. We must not talk carelessly with other people. We just focus on ourselves." IDIRPG2

Being Confident with Self-Identity. This theme reflects how confidence in one's identity serves as a coping strategy against stereotypes. Self-assurance helps resist external judgment. It also supports authentic self-expression. Informants described actively asserting their identity despite negative perceptions. Confidence becomes a form of resistance. Informant 5 stated,

"I stand for my own and boost my confidence in order to convince them that I deserve it. I did not let them to degrade me just because I am na LGBT. I fought them, stand in my own feet, I did not let them. I did not back out from my position. I raised and used my confidence to showcase my skills or capabilities and my experiences." IDIRPB1

This was supported by Informant 2 in sharing that,

"I managed stereotypes through staying confident with my identity. I express myself freely without stepping the rights of other people." IDIRPL2

Meanwhile, Informant 6 expressed her confidence in stating that,

"In my daily interactions, I manage stereotypes by staying true to myself and surrounding myself with supportive people. I choose safe spaces and practice patience when dealing with misunderstanding. My family's acceptance gives me courage while my LGBTQ friends and girlfriend encourage me to remain confident. These strategies give me balance academic and social life positively." IDIRPB2

Maintaining Calmness and Understanding. This theme highlights emotional regulation and empathy as coping mechanisms. Students choose calm responses rather than confrontation. Understanding others' perspectives reduces emotional distress. Informants emphasized patience and awareness in handling discrimination. Informant 7 explained that,

"For me, I managed it by staying calm lang in a good way. I stay calm even when I am angry. When people maybe think that being an LGBT is a sin, I tried to understand their perspective because we cannot please them. I also remind myself that my identity does not define my abilities and worth. That strategies really help me to handle challenges both in academic or in a social situation." IDIRPT1

Informant 3 also noted that,

"I cope with that by understanding them really. I understand them more because maybe they are not just aware, maybe that is just their mindset. I always try to understand." IDIRPG1

Helps to feel Comfort, Inclusivity, Worthy, and Accepted. This theme emphasizes the emotional benefits of supportive environments. Acceptance from peers, family, and institutions reduces the impact of discrimination. This strengthens their ability to cope with challenges. Informant 7 shared that,

"First with my family, I feel I'm one of the luckiest people in the world because they give me an opportunity, they would accept me for what I am. Next, I have friends who are straight boy or girl, like we were so very colorful because they accepted me for what I am, so I don't feel neglected. Lastly, MonCAST is very diverse school and I feel so very happy because when I was in first year, I experience MonCAST as very colorful school. They give opportunities to LGBT, to straight person, they give justice to what every student deserve." IDIRPT1

Informant 8 similarly emphasized that,

"Even when I was a child, I was given so much when it comes to how my parents motivates me, even I am a child before they already given me so much support. I can say that I am so grateful having this family who uplifts me, motivate me without discrimination and without violence because of being LGBT. Then it is easy for me to come out with myself kay even before I do not need to hide. With my friends, even though we are such pranksters but when it comes to stereotypes, they always uplift and motivate me. And sometimes if ever people make fun of me, they are someone who protects me. Then, with the instructors of MonCAST, they also uplift us and give us advices as an instructor. And of course, something that I am very lucky about myself having educated here in MonCAST, I feel free about myself, there is nothing wrong I can hide because I know how MonCAST is very inclusive in terms of LGBT members." IDIRPT2

Informant 3 also supported by stating,

"They are really helpful for me, especially the institution since it gives a lot of events or activities, and programs for inclusivity. Also, my classmates help me to fight or deal with discrimination and stereotype in way that they give me comfort, especially my circle. They make me feel that I am worthy. If I am overwhelmed with problems, they comforted me with motivational words and wisdom." IDIRPG1

Meanwhile, Informant 5 talked about how supportive the people that surrounds him. He shared that,

"Throughout my like, I can say that all the people that surrounds me are all supportive. Our OSAS, our college President, they are very supportive. My family are very open. And to my friends, we encouraged one another that sooner or later we will be accepted. In school, all the people I know are very supportive. We can see in their actions the way they support our events, the way they support our freedom." IDIRPB1

Informant 6 agreed with the statement;

"Support from friends, family, and faculty are very important in shaping my coping experiences. Their encouragement lessens the negative impact of gender stereotypes and reminds me that I am not alone." IDIRPB2

Helps to Build Confidence and Become Stronger. This theme reflects how social support contributes to empowerment and self-confidence. Encouragement from others strengthens identity acceptance. It transforms coping into personal growth. Informants emphasized that support from family, friends, and faculty helped them become more confident and emotionally strong. Informant 6 noted that,

"My parent's acceptance and my girlfriend's presence give me strength to face challenges with confidence. Their supports motivate to keep moving forward and to embrace my identity proudly." IDIRPB2

Informant 4 shared the influence of the school community in stating,

"And then overtime, I become stronger because of my friends, I become stronger emotionally, and more confident naman to express myself, despite those judgements from others. Specially, with the

NECTARS club, the club has taught me and giving me the lessons that I have to adapt to myself because of with the situations. And they oriented us; they give us learnings and lessons so that overtime we will become strong independent LGBT individuals.” IDIRPG2

This was supported by Informant 2, who pointed;

“I can say that that the support and love of my friends, family, and some faculty members who are open-minded and accepting greatly helped me. Because of them I build my confidence and felt accepted.” IDIRPL2

Essential Themes on the Research Question 4. What insights do college LGBT students gain from gender stereotyping?

This section presents the findings related to the specific questions on the research questions 4; 4.1 ‘What realizations or perspectives emerge from reflecting on your encounters with gender stereotypes?’ 4.2 ‘How did your insights shape your understanding of gender, identity, and social expectations?’ And 4.3 ‘In what ways did your insights influence your sense of self-perception and personal growth?’

Through thematic analysis, seven emerging themes were collated from the response of the informants in relation to the insights that they have gain in their encounters of gender stereotyping within education institutions. In particular, the themes were; *Recognizing the Need to Strive Harder for Social Acceptance as LGBT*, *Recognizing Gender Stereotypes as Social Constructs*, *Recognizing Gender and Identity as Personal and Diverse*, *Recognizing the Harm of Stereotypes and Social Expectations*, *Recognizing the Need for Emotional Strength Amid Social Realities*, *Establishing Self-Worth and Confidence*, and *Gaining Compassion from Shared Struggles*.

Recognizing the Need to Strive Harder for Social Acceptance as LGBT. This theme reflects the realization that LGBT students often feel the need to exert greater effort to gain recognition and acceptance. It highlights the perceived inequality in how achievements are valued when linked to gender identity. This insight underscores the pressure to continuously prove one’s worth in social and academic spaces. Informant 5 shared;

“I realized that no matter how hard you work or what impact you do, some other people will still neglect your actions. They are neglecting what you’ve done it’s because you are LGBT. Though they are benefitting on your actions on your service, they didn’t give recognition on how hard you’ve been through just to make it.” IDIRPB1

Informant 8 added that;

“I think my biggest realization with all of the experiences that I have is, I always look up to myself and strive for something good. As an LGBT member, it is very disheartening living in this kind of gender identity where you must to prove something if you want people to respect you, you must really prove something, you must do something, you must strive something, that’s why I keep on doing things. Here in the Philippines if you are LGBT member, if you don’t have nothing, you will be miserable, you will be discriminated, you will be downgraded. And if you have something, people will look up to you, people will really see the value in you. When you are LGBT member you must do good about yourself, you must amplify the things that you must do.” IDIRPT2

Recognizing Gender Stereotypes as Social Constructs. This theme highlights the realization that gender stereotypes are not natural truths but socially created expectations. It reflects a critical understanding of how societal norms shape perceptions of gender roles. This insight encourages questioning of traditional beliefs about masculinity and femininity. Informant 1 stated;

“I realized that stereotypes are just social constructs, not absolute truths. Dili not all men should be macho and not all women should be gentle.” IDIRPL1

Informant 2 added that;

"I realized that those who have stereotypes are just having less or no understanding of societal expectations." IDIRPL2

While Informant 6 emphasized that;

"From these experiences, I realize that stereotypes do not define my worth but only shows society's limitations." IDIRPB2

Recognizing Gender and Identity as Personal and Diverse. This theme reflects the understanding that gender identity is individual and exists beyond binary classifications. It emphasizes diversity in expression and experience. This insight challenges traditional norms. Informants described gender as a spectrum rather than fixed categories as Informant 1 stated;

"I came to understand that gender is a spectrum, not just male or female. And that identity is personal and should not be dictated by the society." IDIRPL1

Informant 6 added that;

"My insights shapes on how I understand gender and identity, showing me that diversity should be valued. I now recognize that identity is personal and should not be dictated by others." IDIRPB2

Informant 2 supported that;

"These experiences helped me to understand that gender and identity are personal and diverse. Not all people should follow the traditional expectations because we have different personalities and the way, we express ourselves." IDIRPL2

Informant 3 also shared;

"It makes me to understand who I am as a gay. Like I am still discovering of what is being gay and what a gay can do." IDIRPG1

Recognizing the Harm of Stereotypes and Social Expectations. This theme highlights the awareness that stereotypes can negatively affect mental health and self-worth. It reflects critical understanding of societal pressures. This insight emphasizes the need to question harmful norms. Informant 4 highlighted that,

"One thing that comes to my mind when it comes to gender stereotypes is that it is very hurtful, and it is really saddening. It can cause stress, anxiety, and even cause death of an LGBT individual." IDIRPG2

Informant 1 added that social expectations should be questioned in expressing that;

"Social expectations can and should be questioned if they harm mental health and self-worth." IDIRPL1

Recognizing the Need for Emotional Strength Amid Social Realities. This theme reflects the realization that resilience is necessary to navigate societal expectations. It highlights emotional endurance in the face of discrimination. This insight emphasizes coping within imperfect social systems. Informant 7 asserted that;

"For me, I think there is no change on how I perceive gender and its social expectations because we have so called progress. So that experience shown me that I need to be stronger, even though we are already heard, we still cannot please other people." IDIRPT1

Informant 8 added that stereotypes create limiting expectations for LGBT individuals in sharing

“So social expectations on lesbian, people expect that you are strong. On gay and transgender, people expect you that you can do everything, you are always the bread winner. Those are the perceptions when it comes to LGBT community. If ever you are a gay and you don’t have capabilities, people will really downgrade you because they expect that gay should be skilled, somehow, they dictate on what an LGBT member is. This is the most disheartening when it comes to stereotypes on gender.” IDIRPT2

Establishing Self-Worth and Confidence. This theme reflects the development of self-confidence independent of external validation. It highlights self-acceptance as a foundation for growth. They learned to value themselves beyond societal judgment as Informant 1 shared;

“I became more confident in myself. I stopped basing my worth on other people’s opinions.” IDIRPL1

Informant 2 also affirmed that;

“My experiences have helped my personal growth and self-confidence. I know myself better and I realized the importance of self-respect and acceptance of ourselves.” IDIRPL2

While, Informant 4 emphasized that;

“Yes, my insights really helped with my personal growth. At first, I was scared to share my feelings, to share the identity I have. It also shapes my personal growth because when it comes to this kind of issues, I realized where I belong. It helped me to understand and accept myself.” IDIRPG2

Gaining Compassion from Shared Struggles. This theme reflects increased empathy toward others facing similar challenges. It highlights emotional connection through shared experiences. This insight fosters solidarity. Informant 6 emphasized this in stating;

“These reflections influence my personal growth by making me stronger, more confident, and more empathetic. They encourage me to embrace authenticity despite challenges. My bisexual identity supported by my family, friends and girlfriend help me shape my journey and the lessons it brings. These experiences guide me in supporting others who face similar struggles.” IDIRPB2

Also, Informant 1 noted that;

“It also helped me become more empathetic toward others who were going through the same struggles.” IDIRPL1

Essential Themes on the Research Question 5. What suggestions do college LGBT students offer to the Guidance and Counseling program?

This section presents the findings related to the specific questions on the research questions 5; 5.1 ‘What suggestions can you offer in improving the Guidance and Counseling programs to be gender responsive?’ 5.2 ‘What needs and concerns emerged from your experiences with gender stereotyping that inform your recommendations to the guidance and counseling programs?’ And 5.3 ‘How do you envision a gender responsive Guidance and Counseling program based on your experiences?’

Consequently, employing the thematic analysis, the responses of the informants prompted five (five) themes that paralleled to the experiences of the slow reader parents in teaching their frustrated reader children during the pandemic. The themes connected In particular, the themes revolved on the coping strategies of parents in helping their kids during the contagion. The themes were; *Sharing Background Knowledge, Neglecting and Skipping the Difficult Part in the Module, Seeking Help from the Neighbors, Reprimanding the Children, and Encouragement and Rewards.*

Conducting Regular Gender Awareness and Sensitivity Programs. This theme highlights the informants' strong recommendation for continuous education on gender diversity and inclusivity. Students emphasized that awareness programs are essential in reducing misunderstanding and discrimination within the institution. Informant 2 suggested;

"For the guidance and counseling programs to be more gender responsive, there should be more seminar and awareness program." IDIRPL2

Similarly, Informant 3 emphasized the need for sustained education, stating that;

"As an educator myself and also as a beauty queen, as an advocate for self-love, I suggest that the Guidance Office will conduct more seminars on self-love. Seminars and workshops for students to for them to understand the real meaning behind inclusivity, LGBT, and gender identity." IDIRPG1

Informant 4 reinforced this by recommending;

"For me, I suggest that there should be weekly orientation about gender stereotypes issues in order to give value on the LGBT individuals, especially the students of MonCAST community. This would also help lessen the spread of negative issues, especially gender stereotypes for LGBT community. So we must make them aware of the is the LGBTQIA+ community." IDIRPG2

Also, Informant 5 added that;

"When it comes to programs, maybe some educational awareness on stigma on HIV. Mga seminars and symposiums on how to handle homophobia." IDIRPB1

While Informant 7 stressed that;

"The guidance office should conduct a seminar about the SOGIE or we need to educate the whole campus. Or give opportunity to speak up about LGBTQIA+ community. Even through it is controversial, for as long as the guidance and the MonCAST will give us chance and give as voice." IDIRPT1

This was supported by Informant 6 who expressed that;

"Programs should also include awareness activity to educate the community and reduce stereotypes. My family's acceptance shows me how powerful support can be and school should reflect that same care. Such efforts can create a healthier and more welcoming environment for all students." IDIRPB1

Providing Safe Space for Students. This theme highlights the importance of creating physical and emotional spaces where students can express themselves freely without fear of judgment. Informants emphasized confidentiality, inclusivity, and accessibility of counseling services. Safe spaces were seen as essential for emotional security and identity affirmation. Informant 1 suggested that;

"Also, there should be safe space or counseling room that are confidential, so that students will not fear in sharing. And, there should be more inclusive materials and posters in the Guidance Office." IDIRPL1

Informant 2 supported this by recommending;

"And safe spaces for LGBT students to feel comfortable in expressing themselves without fear of discrimination." IDIRPL2

Informant 6 further emphasized that;

"I suggest that guidance program should be more inclusive and gender responsive recognizing diverse identities and providing safe spaces for dialogue." IDIRPB2

Inclusive Awareness, Education, and Support. This theme emphasizes the need for broader awareness and continuous education on LGBTQ+ concerns within the institution. Informants highlighted the importance of emotional support and inclusive understanding among faculty and students. Informant 2 had stressed that;

"Based on my experiences, it is important that there should be emotional support, understanding and proper awareness about LGBT concerns." IDIRPL2

Informant 1 affirmed by stating;

"Another concern is the lack of awareness among faculty and students, so regular seminars and workshops are needed." IDIRPL1

Informant 4 further emphasized that;

"We should listen first to the unheard voices of LGBT individuals who are scared to share their thoughts about what they've experience in order ofr us to know their experiences and treat them equally and give them respect. There are students in MonCAST who still fear to speak up their needs or their true identity because of the existing stereotypes from their fellow students." IDIRPG2

Further, Informant 6 added that;

"Based on my experiences, the main needs are addressing discrimination, promoting acceptance, and ensuring equal opportunities. These should guide counseling interventions; students must feel that their concerns are heard and valued. Programs should also provide emotional support for those who are affected by bias. This will strengthen trust in the institutions." IDIRPB2

This was supported by the needs identified by Informant 8 in asserting that;

"In terms of discrimination, I have heard that within a classroom, a transgender student was stereotyped because the classmates are not well-educated when it comes to gender. I think there is a need to educate about gender because if people, especially the students, have the knowledge, they could bring this outside and they could use it to educate people outside MonCAST." IDIRPT2

Mental Health Support without Judgment. This theme highlights the psychological impact of discrimination and the need for non-judgmental mental health services. Informants expressed concerns about anxiety, depression, and emotional distress caused by stereotyping. Informant 1 explained that;

"The main need is mental health support without judgment. Many of us experienced anxiety and depression because of bullying and discrimination." IDIRPL1

Informant 2 added that;

"It would be much better if the counselors are approachable and open-minded to all students." IDIRPL2

Action Against Stereotyping and Discrimination. This theme emphasizes the urgent need for institutional intervention against verbal abuse and discrimination. Informants expressed concern that stereotyping remains prevalent in everyday interactions. They called for stronger policies and immediate action from authorities. Informant 5 noted that in sharing;

“Straight guys might verbally tease us like “Gay! Gay!”. This type of verbal discrimination should be immediately acted upon by the office because we can still encounter them even in this generation.” IDIRPBI

Meanwhile, Informant 7 added that;

“I think it is very need especially in this generation, we need to address this specially the students of MonCAST, not just part of LGBT but even you are straight person, they can also feel stress and anxiety because of isolation and fear of stereotyping. Because gender stereotypes do not only focus on LGBT, even the straight individuals. It should not only focus on Gender and development but also mental health support wherein students are learning at the same time taught with manners.” IDIRPT1

Promoting Safe and Proactive Support for LGBT Students. This theme highlights the need for counseling programs that actively reach out to students rather than waiting for them to seek help. Informants emphasized safety, empowerment, and proactive engagement. They envisioned inclusive spaces that support authenticity. Informant 1 stated that

“I envision a program that is open, safe, and proactive. It shouldn’t just wait for students to come forward but actively reach out to LGBT students. It should have peer support groups, counseling sessions, and clear policies against discrimination. A place where you can be your true self without fear.” IDIRPL1

Also, Informant 4 emphasized in stating that;

“There should be safe spaces for individuals and I suggest that the guidance office should collaborate with the students’ clubs in order to give orientation to students. So that, 5 years from now, all the LGBT individuals, and the students of our institution will be equally treated.” IDIRPG2

Informant 6 added that;

“I envision a program that respects diversity, actively counters stereotypes, and empowers students to succeed academically and socially without fear of bias. It should encourage open dialogue and foster inclusivity such as a program would help students to feel safe and supported. By promoting fairness and equality in the school community. With the inspiration of my LGBTQ friends and my girlfriend, I believe that such programs can truly make a positive difference.” IIDIRPB2

Informant 7 further envisioned in recommending that;

“The guidance office or the whole MonCAST is already very well-known as inclusive. The Guidance Office will conduct programs that made every student feel safe and welcome. There are friendly classroom and spaces, students are free to act truly, like there is no bullying and there is zero tolerance to gender stereotypes.” IDIRPT1

Informant 8 agreed by stating,

“I think if I’ve given a chance to look up for the future, aside from having NECTARS organization, I do hope to see where every LGBT community feel safe when it comes on how they bring themselves within the school without discrimination, without marginalization, if people will really know how to respect LGBT members. And I do hope that the counseling office will recognize the LGBT community especially that discrimination still exist. I hope in the near future, more inclusive, my LGBT members in MonCAST will live peacefully and with harmony.” IDIRPT2

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the discussion, conclusions, and recommendations of the study that sought to investigate the live experiences, struggles, coping strategies, and insights of college LGBT students on gender stereotypes as basis for planning and designing of Guidance Programs and Services. The study was conducted at Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology, Monkayo, Davao de Oro. Eight research informants, as recommended by the MonCAST NECTARS, were interviewed through In-Depth Interview. These informants have become the primary sources of information and data for the phenomenon being studied.

Since this study required a thorough investigation and in compliance with reliability and transferability concern in qualitative studies, the research employed the qualitative phenomenological research design. In so doing, the researcher was able to undergo in-depth investigation through one-on-one interview and triangulated the data using informant observation and literature confirmation.

For this chapter, the sequence of the presentation was based on the order of the research questions in the interview guide. The presentation of the discussions was divided into five subsets; a) Experiences on Gender Stereotypes, b) Struggles brought by Gender Stereotypes, c) Coping Strategies on Gender Stereotypes, d) Insights from experiences of Gender Stereotypes, and e) Recommendations to the Guidance Office. The discussions section highlighted the themes, which were the findings in the study, and corroborated with related literatures, studies, and theory.

The structured themes and the emerging themes therein were made as bases in broadening the discussion of the findings in this study. As each theme was linked to related literature and studies, substantial discussion was made in order to find their alignment with the theme.

Ways Gender Stereotypes Manifested and Experienced within the School Environment. The findings revealed that gender stereotypes manifested through discriminatory remarks, gender role expectations, appearance-based judgments, biased treatment, and the mislabeling of gender identity. These experiences suggest that LGBT students continue to encounter both overt and subtle forms of stereotyping within educational environments. Informants described situations where assumptions about their abilities, behaviors, and identities were shaped by societal expectations of masculinity and femininity. Such experiences indicate that gender stereotypes remain embedded in everyday interactions and institutional practices, affecting how LGBT students are perceived and treated within the school community.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that LGBTQ+ students frequently experience stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination in educational settings. According to Kosciw et al. (2022), LGBTQ+ students continue to report verbal harassment, exclusion, and identity-based discrimination within schools. Similarly, Jones et al. (2016) found that transgender and gender-diverse students often experience invalidation of their identities through misgendering and the enforcement of traditional gender norms. Recent studies have also shown that appearance-based judgments and gender role expectations remain significant barriers to inclusion, often leading to feelings of alienation and reduced school belongingness (Bailey et al., 2024; Zongrone et al., 2022).

The findings can be understood through Gender Minority Stress Theory (Testa et al., 2015), which explains that gender-diverse individuals are exposed to unique stressors resulting from societal stigma and prejudice. The discriminatory remarks, biased treatment, and identity invalidation reported by informants represent distal stressors, or external events that create chronic stress for gender minorities. Repeated exposure to these stressors may negatively affect psychological well-being and educational engagement. Consequently, the experiences of the informants demonstrate how school environments can either reinforce minority stress through discriminatory practices or reduce it through inclusive and affirming approaches.

Types of Gender Stereotypes Commonly Encountered in Academic and Social Settings. The informants identified various forms of stereotypes, including ability and role-based stereotypes, personality and behavior-based assumptions, appearance-based stereotypes, biased treatment, and traditional gender classifications. These findings demonstrate that gender stereotypes extend beyond identity labels and influence how LGBT students are expected to behave, perform, and interact within academic and social environments. Informants

reported being judged according to rigid expectations regarding appropriate masculine and feminine roles, reflecting the persistence of binary gender norms in educational institutions.

This finding supports the work of Salvati and Koc (2022), who argued that traditional gender norms continue to shape perceptions of competence, behavior, and social acceptability among gender-diverse individuals. Likewise, research by Abes and Kasch (2022) found that LGBTQ+ students frequently experience pressure to conform to dominant gender expectations, particularly within educational settings where heteronormativity remains prevalent. Such stereotypes can influence classroom participation, leadership opportunities, and peer interactions, ultimately affecting students' educational experiences.

From the perspective of Gender Minority Stress Theory, these stereotypes function as distal stressors that communicate social devaluation and exclusion. The repeated exposure to assumptions regarding competence, appearance, and behavior can contribute to internalized stigma and expectations of rejection. Consequently, informants may become more cautious about expressing their authentic identities, reinforcing the theory's proposition that social environments significantly influence the well-being of gender minority individuals.

Ways of Gender Stereotypes Influence the Sense of Identity and Self-Expression. The findings demonstrated that gender stereotypes influenced identity formation and self-expression in diverse ways. While some informants experienced self-suppression, discrimination, and reduced self-esteem, others reported increased self-acceptance, resilience, and personal growth. These contrasting experiences suggest that responses to stereotyping vary according to individual coping resources, social support, and personal resilience.

These findings align with research indicating that discrimination and stigma can negatively affect identity development among LGBTQ+ individuals. Russell and Fish (2016) noted that minority stress often contributes to psychological distress, self-doubt, and identity concealment. However, studies have also shown that overcoming discrimination can strengthen self-awareness and self-acceptance, particularly when individuals have access to supportive relationships and affirming environments (Mann et al., 2024; Bailey et al., 2024).

Gender Minority Stress Theory provides a useful explanation for these findings. The self-suppression, fear of judgment, and lowered self-esteem reported by informants represent proximal stressors, which involve internal psychological responses to experiences of stigma and discrimination. At the same time, the development of resilience and self-acceptance reflects protective processes that enable individuals to adapt positively despite exposure to minority stress. Thus, the findings support the theory's assertion that both vulnerability and resilience coexist within the experiences of gender minority individuals.

Ways to Describe the Struggles Faced with Gender Stereotyping. The findings revealed that LGBT students experienced various struggles associated with gender stereotyping, including feeling judged, underestimated, controlled, pressured, degraded, discriminated against, and questioning their self-worth. These experiences demonstrate how stereotypes extend beyond social perceptions and directly affect emotional well-being and academic participation. Informants described situations in which they felt constantly evaluated according to societal expectations regarding gender and sexuality, creating additional pressures within their educational environment.

These findings are supported by previous studies indicating that LGBTQ+ students often experience stigma, marginalization, and identity-based discrimination within educational settings (Kosciw et al., 2022; Russell & Fish, 2016). Feelings of being judged and underestimated are common consequences of social prejudice, which can undermine confidence and contribute to psychological distress. Research further suggests that persistent exposure to discriminatory attitudes increases vulnerability to anxiety, depression, and reduced self-esteem among sexual and gender minority students (The Trevor Project, 2024).

From the perspective of Gender Minority Stress Theory, these struggles represent both distal and proximal stressors. External experiences of discrimination, judgment, and social control function as distal stressors, while internal experiences such as self-doubt and questioning self-worth represent proximal stressors. The

findings therefore support the theory's assertion that minority stress accumulates through repeated exposure to stigma and negatively influences psychological well-being.

Ways of Experiencing Gender Discrimination or Prejudices Related to Gender Stereotypes. Informants reported experiencing discrimination through extracurricular activities, instructors' biased treatment, homophobic jokes and comments, and expectations imposed by others. These findings demonstrate that discrimination occurs across multiple institutional contexts and is not confined to classroom interactions alone. The experiences suggest that prejudice can become normalized within both formal and informal educational environments.

These findings are consistent with studies showing that LGBTQ+ students frequently encounter discrimination from peers, teachers, and institutional systems (UNESCO, 2021; Zongrone et al., 2022). Homophobic language and exclusionary practices remain common forms of discrimination that contribute to hostile school climates. Similarly, instructor bias may reinforce feelings of marginalization and reduce students' sense of belonging within academic institutions.

Gender Minority Stress Theory explains these experiences as distal stressors that communicate social devaluation and rejection. Repeated exposure to discriminatory comments and unfair treatment may contribute to expectations of future rejection and heightened vigilance. Consequently, these experiences reinforce minority stress and increase vulnerability to adverse educational and psychological outcomes.

Challenges Faced When Participating in Group Activities or Student Organizations Because of Gender Identity and Sexuality. The findings showed that informants encountered challenges such as being underestimated, excluded, mocked, restricted from leadership positions, and becoming cautious in social interactions. However, some informants also reported experiencing no significant challenges, suggesting variability in institutional climates and levels of inclusivity.

These findings align with previous research indicating that LGBTQ+ students may face barriers to participation and leadership opportunities due to stereotypes and prejudice (Abes & Kasch, 2022; Jones et al., 2016). Exclusion from collaborative activities can limit opportunities for social development, leadership growth, and academic engagement. Nevertheless, inclusive environments can promote equal participation and positive educational experiences.

Through the lens of Gender Minority Stress Theory, exclusion and ridicule represent distal stressors that signal social rejection. The resulting caution and self-monitoring exhibited by informants reflect proximal stress processes. These findings demonstrate how discriminatory experiences influence participation and social engagement within educational communities.

Ways Struggles in Gender Stereotyping Influence the Interactions with Peers, Faculty, and the Wider College Community. Informants reported becoming more cautious and selective in trusting others, experiencing reduced confidence, feeling anger while practicing acceptance, maintaining positive relationships, or remaining unaffected by stereotypes. These findings indicate that experiences with gender stereotyping influence interpersonal relationships in complex ways.

Similar findings have been documented in studies showing that experiences of stigma often affect trust, social engagement, and relationship-building among LGBTQ+ individuals (McConnell et al., 2021; Day et al., 2020). While some individuals withdraw from social interactions as a protective mechanism, others develop stronger interpersonal skills and resilience through navigating discrimination. Gender Minority Stress Theory suggests that anticipated rejection may encourage selective trust and social caution. These coping responses emerge as adaptive mechanisms to manage minority stress while preserving psychological well-being. Consequently, informants' experiences demonstrate the dynamic relationship between discrimination and interpersonal adaptation.

Ways Coping Strategies Emerged and Evolved from Encounters with Gender Stereotyping. The findings revealed that informants developed coping strategies through establishing personal boundaries, self-acceptance, selective trust, leadership development, parental guidance, and learning from discriminatory experiences. These strategies illustrate active efforts to protect emotional well-being and maintain positive functioning despite adversity.

These findings support previous studies highlighting resilience and adaptive coping among LGBTQ+ individuals (Meyer, 2016; Bailey et al., 2024). Establishing boundaries and cultivating supportive relationships are recognized as effective approaches for managing stigma-related stress. Leadership involvement and family support likewise contribute to positive identity development and resilience.

Gender Minority Stress Theory identifies resilience factors as important protective mechanisms that mitigate the effects of minority stress. The informants' coping strategies demonstrate how individuals actively respond to stressors by developing personal and social resources that promote adaptation and well-being.

Ways to Navigate and Manage Gender Stereotypes in Daily Academic and Social Interactions. Informants reported managing stereotypes by surrounding themselves with trusted peers, maintaining confidence in their identities, remaining calm, ignoring negative comments, and focusing on academics. These strategies reflect both emotional regulation and practical approaches to dealing with discrimination.

These findings are consistent with research demonstrating that LGBTQ+ students often employ cognitive, emotional, and behavioral coping strategies to manage minority stress (McConnell et al., 2021). Maintaining supportive relationships and focusing on personal goals have been associated with greater resilience and psychological well-being. According to Gender Minority Stress Theory, these coping mechanisms function as resilience processes that buffer the effects of distal and proximal stressors. By strengthening self-confidence and limiting exposure to harmful interactions, informants reduced the impact of discriminatory experiences on their daily lives.

Ways Social Support Shaped the Coping Experiences. The findings showed that social support helped informants feel accepted, valued, included, motivated, and emotionally stronger. Informants emphasized the importance of peers, family members, and faculty members in helping them cope with stereotyping experiences.

This finding is strongly supported by previous literature emphasizing the protective role of social support among LGBTQ+ individuals (Ryan et al., 2020; Bailey et al., 2024). Supportive relationships contribute to improved mental health, stronger identity development, and greater resilience against discrimination. Gender Minority Stress Theory identifies social support as a central resilience factor that buffers the effects of minority stress. The findings therefore reinforce the theory's proposition that affirming relationships can reduce psychological distress and promote positive adaptation among gender minority individuals.

Realizations or Perspectives Emerge from Reflecting on the Encounters with Gender Stereotypes. Informants developed greater awareness regarding social acceptance, authenticity, diversity, and the socially constructed nature of gender stereotypes. They also recognized the need for self-monitoring and understood how stereotypes often arise from generalized assumptions about LGBT individuals.

These findings align with studies suggesting that experiences of marginalization can foster critical consciousness and deeper understanding of social inequality (Vaccaro & Mena, 2018). Reflection on discriminatory experiences often encourages individuals to challenge dominant norms and advocate for greater inclusivity. From the perspective of Gender Minority Stress Theory, these realizations represent adaptive cognitive responses that promote resilience. By critically understanding the origins of stereotypes, informants transformed stressful experiences into opportunities for personal learning and empowerment.

Ways Insights Shaped Understanding of Gender, Identity, and Social Expectations. Informants came to recognize gender and identity as diverse and personal experiences rather than rigid social categories. They also became more aware of the harmful effects of stereotypes and the persistence of social bias.

These findings support contemporary perspectives emphasizing gender diversity and the importance of challenging binary understandings of identity (Salvati & Koc, 2022). Educational experiences often serve as important contexts for developing critical awareness regarding social expectations and inequality. Gender Minority Stress Theory suggests that increased awareness of social bias may help individuals contextualize experiences of discrimination, reducing self-blame and strengthening resilience. Such insights contribute to healthier identity development and improved coping.

Ways Insights Influence the Sense of Self-Perception and Personal Growth. Informants reported increased self-worth, confidence, self-understanding, compassion, motivation, leadership aspirations, and personal adjustment. These findings indicate that reflection on adverse experiences can contribute to positive personal development.

Research suggests that resilience and post-adversity growth frequently emerge among LGBTQ+ individuals who successfully navigate minority stress (Meyer, 2016; Mann et al., 2024). Experiences of discrimination can foster self-awareness and strengthen commitment to authenticity and advocacy. These findings align with Gender Minority Stress Theory's recognition of resilience processes. Despite exposure to chronic stressors, informants demonstrated growth-oriented responses that promoted psychological well-being and personal empowerment.

Suggestions to Offer in Improving the Guidance and Counseling Programs to be Gender Responsive. Informants recommended gender awareness programs, disciplinary measures against stereotyping, inclusive curricula, safe spaces, and SOGIE training for counselors. These recommendations reflect a desire for systemic institutional change.

These findings are consistent with UNESCO (2021) and McGuire et al. (2025), who emphasized the importance of inclusive policies, staff training, and anti-discrimination initiatives in supporting LGBTQ+ students. Effective counseling programs must address both prevention and intervention strategies. Gender Minority Stress Theory suggests that reducing institutional stigma can decrease minority stress and improve well-being. Consequently, these recommendations target structural sources of stress while promoting protective factors within educational settings.

Needs and Concerns Emerged from Experiences with Gender Stereotyping that Inform Recommendations to the Guidance and Counseling Programs. Informants emphasized the need for inclusive education, nonjudgmental mental health support, assistance with identity-related concerns, and stronger responses to discrimination. These needs highlight existing gaps in institutional support systems.

Previous research has consistently identified accessible mental health services and affirming school environments as essential for LGBTQ+ student well-being (The Trevor Project, 2024; Ryan et al., 2020). Institutions that fail to address these concerns risk perpetuating exclusion and psychological distress. Within Gender Minority Stress Theory, these concerns reflect the need for resources that reduce exposure to minority stress while strengthening resilience. Effective support systems can serve as protective factors that mitigate the adverse consequences of discrimination.

Ways of Envisioning a Gender Inclusive and Gender Responsive Guidance and Counseling Program Based on Experiences. Informants envisioned a counseling program characterized by safety, fairness, inclusivity, community collaboration, proactive support, and accountability for discrimination. Their vision reflects aspirations for an institution that actively affirms LGBT identities rather than merely tolerating diversity.

These findings correspond with contemporary recommendations for LGBTQ+-affirming educational practices that prioritize equity, advocacy, and student empowerment (UNESCO, 2021; McGuire et al., 2025). Inclusive counseling programs have been shown to improve school climate, student well-being, and educational outcomes. Gender Minority Stress Theory provides strong support for these recommendations. By creating affirming environments and addressing structural sources of discrimination, educational institutions can reduce minority stress, enhance resilience, and promote the holistic development of LGBT students. Thus, the informants' vision represents a practical framework

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study provide important implications for educational institutions, guidance and counseling programs, faculty members, student affairs practitioners, and policymakers in promoting gender-inclusive and supportive learning environments. The experiences of LGBT students with gender stereotyping, discrimination, minority stress, coping, and resilience underscore the need for comprehensive interventions that address both individual and institutional factors contributing to exclusion and inequity. So, the following implications for practice are recommended.

On Ways Gender Stereotypes Manifested and Experienced within the School Environment. The findings suggest the need for educational institutions to establish clear anti-discrimination policies and strengthen monitoring mechanisms that address discriminatory remarks, biased treatment, and identity invalidation. Faculty members, staff, and students should undergo regular gender sensitivity and SOGIE awareness training to promote respectful interactions and reduce stereotypes within the school environment. Guidance counselors can also facilitate educational programs that challenge gender-based assumptions and encourage inclusivity.

On Types of Gender Stereotypes Commonly Encountered in Academic and Social Settings. The prevalence of role-based, personality-based, appearance-based, and traditional gender stereotypes highlights the need for schools to critically examine practices that reinforce rigid gender norms. Educators should adopt gender-inclusive teaching approaches and avoid assigning responsibilities or evaluating students based on stereotypical assumptions. Student development programs should emphasize diversity, equity, and respect for individual differences.

On Ways of Gender Stereotypes Influence the Sense of Identity and Self-Expression. The findings indicate that educational institutions should provide supportive spaces where LGBT students can freely express their identities without fear of judgment or discrimination. Guidance and counseling services should incorporate identity-affirming interventions that strengthen self-esteem, self-acceptance, and emotional well-being. Programs promoting self-expression and diversity appreciation may help reduce the negative effects of stereotyping on identity development.

On Ways to Describe the Struggles Faced with Gender Stereotyping. The emotional and psychological struggles reported by informants highlight the importance of accessible mental health services within educational institutions. Guidance counselors should proactively identify students experiencing distress related to stereotyping and provide appropriate counseling interventions. Schools should also implement programs that foster emotional resilience, self-worth, and coping skills among students.

On Ways of Experiencing Gender Discrimination or Prejudices Related to Gender Stereotypes. The findings suggest the need for stronger institutional accountability in addressing discrimination across academic and extracurricular settings. Reporting mechanisms should be confidential, accessible, and responsive to incidents of prejudice and harassment. Administrators should ensure that all members of the school community understand the consequences of discriminatory behavior and their responsibility to uphold inclusivity.

On Challenges Faced When Participating in Group Activities or Student Organizations Because of Gender Identity and Sexuality. Student organizations and academic groups should adopt inclusive policies that promote equal participation regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. Leadership opportunities should be

based on competence and interest rather than gender stereotypes. Student affairs offices can conduct regular assessments to ensure that extracurricular programs remain inclusive and free from discriminatory practices.

On Ways Coping Strategies Emerged and Evolved from Encounters with Gender Stereotyping. The findings highlight the importance of helping students develop adaptive coping mechanisms. Guidance counselors may integrate resilience-building, self-advocacy, and boundary-setting skills into counseling and student development programs. Leadership development activities can also empower LGBT students to become active contributors within the school community.

On Ways to Navigate and Manage Gender Stereotypes in Daily Academic and Social Interactions. Schools should equip students with practical strategies for managing discrimination and social stressors through workshops on emotional regulation, assertive communication, and conflict management. Counseling programs may focus on helping students strengthen self-confidence while maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships. Such interventions can enhance students' ability to navigate challenging social situations effectively.

On Ways Social Support Shaped the Coping Experiences. The findings underscore the critical role of social support in promoting student well-being. Educational institutions should strengthen peer support groups, family engagement initiatives, and faculty mentoring programs that foster acceptance and encouragement. Guidance offices can facilitate support networks specifically designed to address the needs of LGBT students.

On Realizations or Perspectives Emerge from Reflecting on the Encounters with Gender Stereotypes. The informants' reflections suggest the value of reflective learning opportunities that encourage critical thinking about gender, diversity, and social inclusion. Schools may integrate discussions on stereotypes, prejudice, and respect into co-curricular activities, seminars, and classroom instruction. Such initiatives can help students develop greater empathy and social awareness.

On Ways Insights Shaped Understanding of Gender, Identity, and Social Expectations. The findings support the integration of gender education into student development programs and institutional initiatives. Educational activities should emphasize the diversity of gender identities and challenge harmful stereotypes that reinforce exclusion. Increased awareness may contribute to more inclusive attitudes and behaviors among members of the school community.

On Ways Insights Influence the Sense of Self-Perception and Personal Growth. The findings indicate the importance of programs that promote self-discovery, leadership development, and personal empowerment. Guidance counselors can design interventions that strengthen self-confidence, self-awareness, and positive identity formation. Encouraging students to recognize their strengths and capabilities may contribute to long-term personal growth and resilience.

On Suggestions to Offer in Improving the Guidance and Counseling Programs to be Gender Responsive. The recommendations provided by informants suggest the need for comprehensive reforms in guidance and counseling services. Institutions should implement regular gender sensitivity programs, establish safe spaces, provide SOGIE competency training for counselors, and strengthen anti-discrimination initiatives. These efforts may improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of counseling services for diverse student populations.

On Needs and Concerns Emerged from Experiences with Gender Stereotyping that Inform Recommendations to the Guidance and Counseling Programs. The identified needs emphasize the importance of inclusive, accessible, and nonjudgmental support services. Guidance offices should ensure that counseling services address concerns related to identity development, mental health, discrimination, and social belonging. Institutional support systems should be strengthened to respond effectively to students experiencing minority stress and identity-related challenges.

On Ways of Envisioning a Gender Inclusive and Gender Responsive Guidance and Counseling Program Based on Experiences. The informants' vision highlights the need for a transformative approach to guidance and counseling that prioritizes inclusivity, equity, advocacy, and accountability. Schools should adopt comprehensive policies that promote safe and affirming environments for LGBT students while encouraging collaboration among counselors, educators, families, and community stakeholders. Such efforts can contribute to the development of a genuinely gender-responsive educational institution that supports the holistic well-being of all learners.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In as much as the study's focused was on examining the experiences, struggles, coping strategies, insights, and suggestions of the eight LGBT students of Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology in Monkayo, Davao de Oro, during the Academic Year 2025-2026, it does not include the experiences of the other gender spectrum and of the LGBTQIA+ community from other higher educational institutions. So, the following implications for future researches are suggested:

First, a future research study may be conducted on a wider inclusion of informants from the same Higher Education Institution but instead of limiting to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, the stories of Queer, Intersex, Asexual and the rest of the gender minorities on Gender Stereotypes are also included.

Second, another research with a differential focus, from gender stereotypes, the focus might be on experiences on Gender Prejudices and Discrimination.

Third, a research study with the same focus of the experiences of college LGBT students on gender stereotypes but on a wider scope of locale may be conducted, considering all the local colleges in the whole Davao de Oro Province.

Fourth, getting from the ultimate goal of having a gender responsive guidance and counseling programs and services, a study assessing the gender responsiveness of the guidance office on chosen educational institution is considered to be conducted.

Moreover, as revealed from the findings that gender stereotyping is prevalent way during basic education, a study focusing on the experiences of elementary and high school LGBT students on gender stereotypes is recommended.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study mainly focused on gender stereotyping in its investigation, so the exploration of the experiences, struggles, coping strategies, and insights of the LGBT college students were conducted. Findings have revealed that even in educational institution, there is still prevailing gender stereotyping in form of remarks, biases, and exclusion. Recommendations highlights the significant role of the student organizations, OSAS, Guidance Office in providing students support as college LGBT students navigate the stigma on their gender.

Understanding of the lived realities and unique stressors of the college LGBT students can inform the Guidance and Counseling Office and the whole MonCAST Community to mechanized guidance programs, systems, and services and execute policies and regulations that are responsive to the needs of specific gender identity and sexuality. As emphasized by Ferbezar et al. (2024), in the presence of continued experience of minority stress, a well-designed school-based interventions would play a crucial role in strengthening the resilience of college LGBT students. Programs, projects, and activities that are tailored to the specific needs of gender can ensure that support is meaningful and effective.

Gender Stereotypes is a societal issue that concerns not only the LGBTQIA+ community but also the gender binary of men and women. With the differential treatment and exclusion of certain gender just because of the preconceive stereotypes limits the self-expression, curricular and extracurricular achievement, and personal growth of an individual. Also, the observed psychological and social distress experienced by the college LGBT students calls for both prevention and cure initiatives from the Guidance and Counseling office. Moreover, the unequal and unequitable opportunities given to gender minorities has deeply rooted from the systemic problems of the society. And, as educational institutions, schools are the primary agents of cultural transfer and structural transformation, thus it is the fundamental duty schools to perpetuate culture of compassion, respect, discipline, and social responsiveness.

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