

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

Understanding Coping Mechanisms by the Filipino Youth

17 FEBRUARY 2021



Introduction

Academician Edward H.M. Wang, *Co-Focal Person on Gender and Development, and Member of the Health Sciences Division, National Academy of Science and Technology*

Sexual orientation and gender identity are different things, but they reflect “gender norm transgression and share an intertwined social and political history”.

The umbrella term for this sector is LGBT, an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. The “LGB” refers to sexual orientation. The “T”, on the other hand, is for transgender which is a general term for those whose gender identity or gender expression is not the same as what they were assigned at birth. The term LGBTQ+ (Q for queer or questioning and Plus) is also used to cover further gender expressions outside traditional norms.

There are no available local data on the LGBT sector but it is the general perception that this is a growing population in Philippine society. Philippine institutions have also recently become more aware and more accepting of the rights of the LGBT community. Beginning in 2008, select provinces, cities and municipalities have begun to pass ordinances for non-discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

While there has been a gradual increase in the global academic literature on the topic, there have not been a sufficiently proportionate number of studies on the management of this sector, for instance regarding health care delivery issues. As a result, members of the LGBT community still suffer discrimination in various areas, including home, school, workplace, including clinics, and the social environment, in general. It therefore becomes important to understand the coping strategies this sector adopts; in order that policy-makers, employers and the community can be made aware of the opportunities and resources available to minimize LGBT discrimination. This will also pave the way for much-needed policy support not only to increase inclusion in developmental programs but also to foster diversity in the workplace.

OBJECTIVES:

The webinar therefore aims to provide us with information about the challenges and coping mechanisms of the young LGBT. Why the youth? It is that stage of growth when we begin to learn more about ourselves and we learn to cope with the society around us. Should interventions be necessary, it will be most effective that the recognition, the understanding and the support are available already in this early stage of development.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS:

1. Recommendation on non-discriminatory management strategies for the LGBT in various settings; and
2. Recommendation on policy support on non-discrimination in schools and workplaces.

Understanding LGBT and their relations with clinicians

Dr. Jimmy P. Dumlao II, *Head, Gender Diversity Center, Medical Center Manila (ManilaMed)*

Dr. Dumlao presented an overview of sexual orientation, gender identity, and the LGBT. He encouraged the participants to have a perspective and mindset of understanding and openness towards concepts of sex and gender.

The concepts and delineations of sex and gender have evolved through time, together with other terms, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sexual behavior, ally, gender non-conformity, transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC), gender role behavior, equality, equity, stereotypes, discrimination, mainstreaming, and integration.

Dr. Dumlao also noted that this NAST webinar is an example of gender mainstreaming and integration which aims to incorporate a gender perspective in policy and promote strategies towards gender equality and equity.

Recognizing that not everyone has a strict binary experience in life, many have experienced inner turmoil and suffered experience conflict between a person's assigned gender and the gender that he/she identifies, known medically as *gender dysphoria*. Such state of incongruence can present discomfort relative to changes in the body during puberty or expected roles associated with the assigned gender, as well as, distress leading to impaired functioning. The negative feelings from gender dysphoria, and not being part of the LGBT group, constitute a mental health disorder recognized and included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5).

Dr. Dumlao shared that there are local and international regulations and frameworks that support the need to practice gender-sensitive health care, which include the Sustainable Development Goals. For TGNCs, there are various factors that affect their health-seeking behavior and lead to reduced access to medical and social services, such as refusal of facilities, harassment and violence, and lack of provider knowledge.

For minors and LGBT adolescents, parental consent is needed. The home, education/employment, eating, activities, drugs (smoking, alcohol, illegal substances), sexuality, suicide and self-harm, and safety from injury and violence (HEEADSSS) assessment is highly-recommended as a proactive approach to health care of adolescents.

Another approach is the establishment of hospital-based centers for gender health, such as the Gender Diversity Center of Medical Center Manila (ManilaMed), which opened in May 2018 and was recognized as the Clinical Service Initiative of the Year in the HealthCareAsia Awards 2019. ManilaMed offers psychosocial screening, psychometric evaluation, individual counseling, pharmacologic intervention (hormone therapy), family counseling, and pastoral care. Moreover, it involves an interdisciplinary team of endocrinologists, infectious disease experts, psychiatrists, psychometricians, and an adolescent medicine physician.

Dr. Dumlao concluded that the lack of awareness of some health care professionals on gender-related concerns, lack of awareness of the TGNC and the public on available service providers, and apprehension among TGNC individuals to seek health care remain as challenges.

Community and Family Support: First Line of Defense of the LGBT Teens

Dr. Jennifer C. Josef, *Chair, Department of Anthropology, Sociology, and Psychology, College of Social Sciences, University of the Philippines Baguio*

Dr. Josef defined and clarified social concepts commonly used in gender and sexuality discourses, presented a “situationer” and coping strategies of Filipino youth/young adults with non-heteronormative identities before the COVID-19 pandemic, reviewed the effects on the sector and their coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, and identified areas for intervention.

She emphasized intersectionality, which means that the LGBTQ+ community should not be classified under just one identity because of diversity or variation in terms of age, class, ethnicity, religion, place-affiliation, among others.

She discussed challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community: conservatism, patriarchy and heterosexism, struggles in coming out to family, restrictive school policies, heterosexual assumptions of medical practitioners especially in sexual and reproductive health, and cases of harassment and violence (rape, hate crime, assaults, and extortion) by the general community.

Lastly, Dr. Josef enumerated some things that need to be done to help the LGBTQ+ community with their struggles: 1) immediate passage of SOGIE-based Anti-Discrimination Bill; 2) implementation of Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313), respectful “all-gender” policies and practices in all spheres (work, school, healthcare institutions, religion and law enforcement agencies); and 3) conduct of gender-sensitivity training in barangays, schools, training institutions and workplace.

Challenges of LGBT youth in schools

Regina Mikaela M. Rebuena, *Research Assistant, Women and Gender Institute, Miriam College*

Ms. Rebuena enumerated the laws in the Philippines that protect the LGBT youth and students.

In 2012, the Department of Education (DepEd) passed the Child Protection Policy that includes the basis of SOGIE. The Congress also passed the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 and SOGIE is included in the prohibited grounds for bullying and harassment. In 2017, 15 municipalities and five (5) provinces passed ordinances that prohibit the discrimination on the basis of SOGIE.

Despite the laws, LGBT youth still experience bullying especially in schools in the guise of “academic freedom”. Educational institutions, especially the exclusive, Catholic, and Christian schools, established policies that are dangerous to LGBT youth, such as gendered uniform restrictions, and haircut policies for boys. Because of these policies, LGBT students have become targets of shame and embarrassment in their schools. Some schools, specifically Catholic and exclusive schools, ban same-sex relationship and cross-dressing. Forms of sanction include refusal of entrance, kick-out, suspension, or worst, expulsion.

LGBT youth who are not "out" or accepted in their homes find refuge in the established safe spaces and social circles of their schools. However, safe spaces become harder to find for LGBT youth when both home and school do not accept who they are. When school policies are discriminatory, coping is hard and becomes evident as extended school absence, school transfer, or dropping-out to avoid hostile teachers and administrators. Students sacrifice their education just because they are not accepted in their schools.

The Miriam College-Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) uses a framework that can make schools better and safer for the LGBT youth. It uses different principles of care such as attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness, and solidarity. School teachers can be allies to communities by having zero tolerance for discrimination, avoiding micro-aggressions and allowing more feminists and LGBT allies in school administration.

LGBTQ Challenges in the Workplace

Dr. Sylvia E. Claudio, *Dean, College of Social Work and Community Development,
University of the Philippines Diliman*

Discrimination of LGBTQ in workplaces is exemplified when an employer refuses to hire applicants on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity or when an employee is required to wear clothes according to their sex-assigned at birth.

Dr. Claudio emphasized that an Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive (EDI) climate and culture is needed by groups like indigenous people, women, disabled and elderly. As mentioned in the Philippine Constitution, non-discrimination and equity are under the provision of Article II, Section 11 which states that “The State values the dignity of every person and guarantees full respect for human rights”.

She highlighted legal bases that protect the rights of the LGBT people and other groups. These include (1) Republic Act 11313 or the Safe Spaces Act of 2019, which prohibits LGBTQ harassment in streets, schools, bars, restaurants and workplaces; (2) Civil Service Commission (CSC) Memorandum Circular No. 2010-29, which prohibits discrimination against LGBT people applying for civil service examinations; and (3) Republic Act No. 10911, an act prohibiting discrimination of any individual in employment on account of age.

She also enumerated good practices towards equitable diverse and inclusive culture. She concluded that the EDI culture boosts morale and productivity, increases human capital, makes a workplace happy and healthy and results in better service provision.

Open Forum

Moderator: Dr. Jayeel S. Cornelio, *Outstanding Young Scientist 2017*, and
Director, Development Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University

On approaching students manifesting a unique behavior

Dr. Josef emphasized the importance of self-identification. Young children are not yet knowledgeable in identities and labels, but older people can start discussing labels and options that a person can identify with. Label is important and it is the choice of a child when to identify.

On the appropriate age when to educate kids about sexual orientation and gender identity

Ms. Rebuena emphasized the importance of starting the discussion at a young age because the change in perspective could be harder at a later time. WAGI has Filipino-made gender-sensitive and progressive storybooks, and programs applicable to pre-schools. Dr. Dumlao suggested that discussion could start in elementary schools and it is best to have a gender-neutral environment because it is during adolescence when identity is being formed. It is also the stage where extra support and encouragement is needed. He also highlighted the relevance to have openness and gender neutrality, for example, in toys, such that cars are not limited to boys and dolls are not limited to girls.

Dealing with tensions within the family

Dr. Claudio highlighted the ethical considerations in talking to adolescents and the values of reconciliation. Since the kids are still living with their parents, there is a certain level of obedience that needs to be respected. If there are values in conflict with the parents' but no abuse is involved, the kid needs to stay in their house, and learn a very important life skill-- understanding differences within the family on basic values and that it can be resolved non-aggressively and lovingly in order.

Traumatic school policies that could cause further bullying

Dr. Josef mentioned private schools as her example. Private schools have the right in crafting their own policies. However, there are progressive schools, such as Miriam College which has active feminists. Dr. Josef suggested learning from the experiences of these schools. She also mentioned that it is much easier in State Universities and Colleges due to the network and the number of committed activists and feminists. However, she mentioned that even if the school is open-minded, there are still backlashes from the parents.

DepEd's initiatives towards teachers who are part of the LGBTQ community

Dr. Dumlao suggested that DepEd should include programs about understanding gender equality. He mentioned that a kid asking a question is an opportunity of learning and should not be a concern for the parent. However, the concern is more on the values of the person answering. Ms. Rebuena agreed to what Dr. Dumlao said. She added that it is the perfect opportunity to teach the kid about the lessons from the webinar and other gender-sensitivity talks. Dr. Dumlao also added the importance of teaching kids that differences between people exist and there are variations of normal. As long as the school emphasizes the thought and the perspective is inclusive, there will be no inner questions and conflict to the individual, because it is included in the realm of reality.

Handling homophobia rooted from trauma

Dr. Claudio emphasized the need to be very clear with the values and programs in schools. There is a need for clear anti-bullying policies. She mentioned the curriculum they have in the daycare center of UP Diliman, which includes non-aggressive reactions to differences. For Dr. Josef, addressing the trauma is more important. She also shared the bullying towards indigenous people and further made a distinction to kids that have been influenced to bully.

Gender-sensitivity in the government

Dr. Josef mentioned that the CSC and even some local government units are now open-minded towards cross-dressing. Some private universities now allow their students to cross-dress without being penalized. However, gender-fair policies are still dependent on the heads and supervisors.

By the end of the open forum, Dr. Cornelio emphasized the importance of respect for diversity.

Recommendations

The following were recommended by the speakers:

1. Community

- a. Enact the SOGIE-based Anti-Discrimination Bill;
- b. Implement the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313), and respectful “all-gender” policies and practices in all spheres (work, school, healthcare institutions, religion, and law enforcement agencies);
- c. Conduct of gender-sensitivity training in barangays, schools, and workplace and require the participation to such training among applicants and institutions in the renewal of licenses and permits; and
- d. Organize government data and research towards the collection of gender disaggregated data and its use in the design of intervention strategies and services.

2. Schools

- a. Review and integrate gender sensitivity in school policies;
- b. Practice zero tolerance to discrimination, bullying, harassment, or retaliation due to gender or sexuality;
- c. Provide clear and working mechanisms for reporting and demanding accountability for gender-or-sexually-based discrimination, bullying, harassment, or retaliation;
- d. Consult feminists and feminist organizations in the review of policies, and allow more feminists, allies, and LGBT individuals to take on leadership positions;
- e. Provide immediate action on misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic or sexist behavior or language, whether online or offline; and
- f. Screen course coverage for gender equality and include women and LGBT+ writers and perspectives in the curriculum.

3. Workplace

- a. Promote awareness on creating an equitable, diverse and inclusive (EDI) climate and culture in the workplace;
- b. Develop programs and commit resources for professional development of core competencies to EDI;
- c. Consider contribution towards cultural change in the evaluation process for key performance indicators;
- d. Promote inclusive leadership in the workplace through the accountability and the enforcement of a hiring criteria that assess self-awareness and competencies in the application of EDI; and
- e. Conduct of gender audit in the review and assessment of the effectiveness of internal practices towards gender mainstreaming;

4. Clinical Setting

- a. Apply standards of care and assess current practices in health care delivery in terms of gender sensitivity;
- b. Provide proactive healthcare services for the TGNC such as the adoption of HEEADSSS screening;
- c. Establish hospital-based centers for gender health and provide health care delivery programs that are more comprehensive and inclusive; and
- d. Address the key challenges that affect the provision of care such as the lack of comprehensive awareness on gender-related concerns among healthcare professionals, lack of awareness of the TGNC and the public on the available service providers, and apprehensions of TGNC individuals to seek healthcare.

Synthesis and Closing Remarks

Academician Agnes C. Rola, *Co-Focal Person on Gender and Development, and Member of the Social Sciences Division, National Academy of Science and Technology*

Academician Rola quoted the poem “The Hill we Climb” by Amanda Gorman:

*“to compose a country committed to all cultures,
colors, characters and conditions of man.
And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us,
but what stands before us.
We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside.”*

She highlighted that the science community needs to do research on how to take away the discriminations being felt and lived by the members of the LGBTQ+ sector. She also invited participants from the academe and research institutions to contribute to the knowledge building on the topics discussed.

She emphasized that discrimination and bullying towards the LGBT community should not only be tackled by discouraging potential abusers, but also by fostering awareness and influencing the social norm.

Magandang tanghali sa lahat!

On behalf of the National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines, I would like to thank everyone for attending this webinar on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Understanding Coping Mechanisms by the Filipino Youth.

To our distinguished speakers, Dr. Jimmy Dumlao, Dr. Jennifer Josef, Dr. Theresa De Vela, represented by Regina Rebuena and Dr. Sylvia Estrada-Claudio, thank you for giving us part of your time and effort to share your thoughts and experience. Your presentations are truly insightful and comprehensive. Our warmest gratitude also to Dr. Jayeel Cornelio, for the keen facilitation as the moderator.

We would also like to acknowledge the participants from various sectors, numbering 654 at this our closing time. Your active and dynamic participation made this event a success.

Indeed, this webinar has been an eye opener for most of us. We have gained a better understanding about the challenges the LGBT community are facing in schools, in the workplace and the society as a whole. Discrimination and bullying towards the LGBT community should not only be tackled by discouraging potential abusers, but also by fostering awareness and influencing the social norm.

Once again, thank you all for attending this webinar.

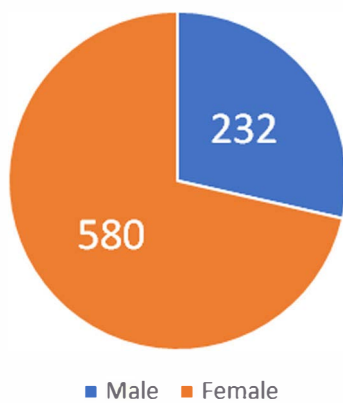
BY THE NUMBERS

812 Number of registered webinar participants

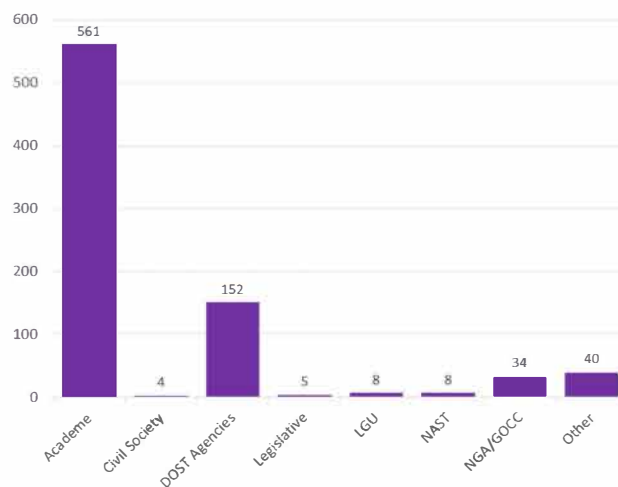
66% Percentage of registered participants who attended the webinar in Zoom*

69% Percentage of participants affiliated with academic institutions

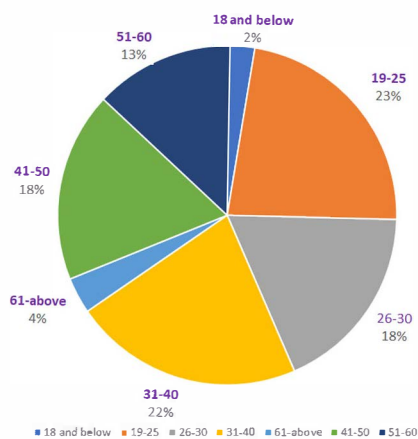
33% Percentage of participants who are based in the National Capital Region



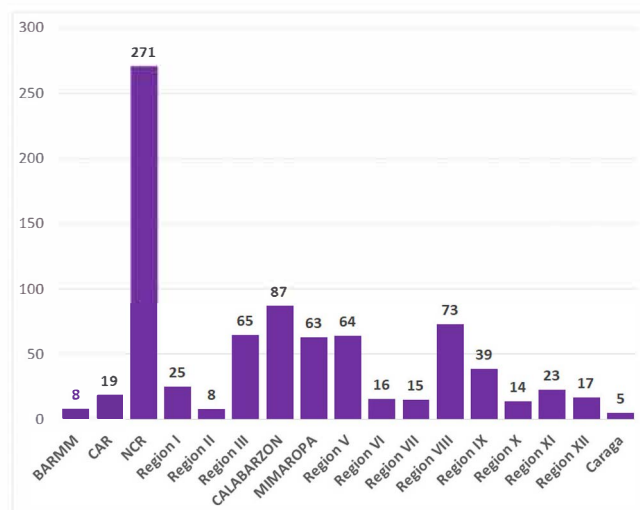
Webinar attendees by sex



Webinar attendees by sector



Webinar attendees by age-group



Webinar attendees by administrative region

*The webinar was also broadcasted via Facebook Livestream in the NAST PHL Facebook Page

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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**Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:
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17 February 2021, 9 AM

PROGRAM

9:00	National Anthem Prayer	
9:10	Opening Message	Academician RHODORA V. AZANZA <i>President, NAST</i>
9:15	Introduction to the Webinar	Academician EDWARD H.M. WANG <i>Co-Focal Person on GAD, and Member, NAST Health Sciences Division</i>
9:20	Defining LGBT	Dr. JIMMY P. DURLAO II <i>Head, Gender Diversity Center Medical Center Manila</i>
9:35	LGBT Relations with Clinicians	Dr. JIMMY P. DURLAO II
9:50	Community and Family Support: First Line of Defense of the LGBT Teens	Dr. JENNIFER C. JOSEF <i>Chair, Department of Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology, College of Social Sciences, University of the Philippines Baguio</i>
10:05	LGBT Challenges in Schools	Ms. REGINA MIKAELA R. REBUENO <i>Research Assistant, Women and Gender Institute, Miriam College</i>
10:20	LGBT Challenges in the Workplace	Dr. SYLVIA ESTRADA CLAUDIO <i>Dean, College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines Diliman</i>
10:35	Open Forum	<i>Discussant and Moderator:</i> DR. JAYEEL S. CORNELIO, OYS 2017 <i>Director, Development Studies Program, Ateneo de Manila University</i>
11:15	Synthesis and Closing Remarks	Academician AGNES C. ROLA <i>Co-Focal Person on GAD, and Member, NAST Social Sciences Division</i>

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