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**Archie Niño Aguilar**

Laguna College of Business and

Arts Calamba City,

Philippines.

## Microaggression and Social Acceptance of Gender Expression Among Heterosexual Students in Local Universities and Colleges in Laguna

**Archie Niño Aguilar**

### Abstract

This study investigated microaggressions and social acceptance of gender expression among heterosexual students at three local universities in Laguna. It aimed to understand the types, frequency, and psychological effects of microaggressions and identify interventions for a more inclusive environment. Using mixed methods, 450 heterosexual students participated, and data analysis included frequency distribution, weighted mean, Pearson-r correlation, and interpretative phenomenological analysis. Findings contributed to understanding gender and sexual orientation intersectionality and informing inclusive policies.

The findings of the study on microaggression on gender expression revealed a mixed picture. The quantitative data showed that some variables had a significant relationship between micro-aggressive behavior and gender expression, while others had no relationship and should be considered separately. On the qualitative side, the identified themes were "Internal and External Challenges in Self-Expression." This supported the quantitative results, indicating that there was indeed a certain level of microaggressive behavior affecting social acceptance of gender expression. As a result of these findings, a Gender Policy was developed and implemented in a specific location (LUC) in Laguna.

**Keywords:** microaggression, microinvalidation, heterosexist language gender, conformity, gender binary, explanatory sequential mixed method research.

### Introduction

"It is time that we all see gender as a spectrum instead of two opposing ideals."

-Emma Watson

This comment raises an essential point concerning the concept of gender and its impact on society. Look at gender as a continuum and its ramifications for individuals and communities in this conversation. Gender as a spectrum has far-reaching repercussions for many elements of society. It compels people to reconsider gender-related policies and practices in areas such as education, healthcare, employment, and legal institutions. It advocates for gender equality and the rights of those who do not fit neatly into standard gender categories. While many individuals appreciate the concept of gender as a continuum, it is not without obstacles and disagreement. Due to cultural or religious beliefs, some people may find it difficult to let go of the binary perspective of gender. Concerns may arise regarding the influence on conventional family structures, social dynamics, or the potential erosion of gender-specific rights and safeguards.

According to Puspita and Antoni (2019), Emma Watson's statement encouraging people to view gender as a continuum challenges them to rethink their concept of gender and embrace a more inclusive attitude. They can create a more egalitarian and tolerant society by recognizing and respecting the multiplicity of gender identities. Open dialogues, education, and challenging established norms will be critical in driving a positive transition toward a more inclusive perspective of gender.

The United Nations Human Rights Council (2022) renewed the adopted resolution on discrimination and violence against people based on their sexual orientation and gender

**Correspondence:**

**Archie Niño Aguilar**

Laguna College of Business and

Arts Calamba City,

Philippines.

identity, the resolution called on all countries to take action to end such discrimination and violence and to ensure that everyone was able to enjoy the human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed by international human rights law. This was the most recent action taken by the international community to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

In terms of social acceptance of gender expression, there is no single answer to this question, as social acceptance of gender expression varies widely across different cultures, locations, and eras. Generally, however, an increase in social acceptance of gender expression is associated with more positive outcomes for individuals who identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, or non-binary. This includes improved mental health outcomes, increased access to resources and support, and improved social and economic opportunities. This can also lead to a more diverse and inclusive society, where all individuals can express their gender in ways that feel comfortable and authentic to them.

In addition, increased social acceptance of gender expression can have a positive impact on society. By reducing stigma and discrimination against transgender, gender nonconforming, and non-binary individuals, more people can live openly and authentically, which can lead to greater understanding and acceptance of diverse gender identities. This can help create a more inclusive and equitable world for all.

This study explored the beneficial implications for the field of psychology concerning microaggressions, aiming to provide valuable insights and advancements in understanding this phenomenon. The main objectives include gaining a deeper understanding of the psychological impacts of microaggressions on individuals and groups, identifying the underlying psychological mechanisms driving these experiences, and developing tailored interventions to address their effects effectively. Additionally, the study seeks to elucidate the role of microaggressions in perpetuating systems of oppression, examine their relationship with other forms of discrimination and marginalization, and contribute to the psychological well-being of marginalized groups. Furthermore, it aspires to foster empathy and understanding among the majority population and inform the creation of interventions and policies geared towards reducing and preventing microaggressions and promoting social equality. Ultimately, this research holds the potential to enhance psychological knowledge, support marginalized communities, and work towards a more inclusive society. Ultimately the goal is to be able to draft a gender policy for LUC.

### Research Methodology

The researchers used the explanatory sequential mixed methods. It was a two-part data collection study in which the researchers first collected quantitative data, analyzed the results, and then used the results to structure (or build upon) the second, qualitative phase.

The quantitative portion of this study entailed gathering and analyzing numerical data. This information was gathered using the modified questionnaire and analyzed using statistical approaches such as regression analysis and factor analysis. The quantitative phase of research sought to identify trends, connections, and patterns in the data that

could be utilized to make decisions and draw conclusions. This finally aided in the formation of research hypotheses.

The qualitative phase of this research included a variety of methods such as interviews and focus groups. This qualitative research explored a problem or phenomenon in-depth and sought to understand the motivations and experiences of individuals in a natural setting. This research specifically utilized Inductive Thematic analysis to analyze the data of the respondents from the ground up.

The researchers utilized two types of sampling techniques. For the quantitative phase, the researcher utilized stratified random sampling. The researcher chose this sampling technique because it accurately represented important population traits in the sample. This sampling technique yielded features in the sample that were proportionate to the entire population, much like a weighted average. For qualitative, the researcher utilized purposeful sampling. It refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that they need in their sample.

The researchers got the total population and utilized G\*power and stratified sample formula to obtain the desired sample size that served as the respondents of the study. G\*power is a user-friendly and free-to-use software for calculating statistical power which is available online and can be downloaded freely. This software allows users to calculate an ideal sample size given that it has a desired level of precision, desired confidence level, and the needed respondents in the population.

The researchers only included heterosexual students regardless of their program and year level since there were more freshmen students the chunk of the respondents belonged to the students who were in their freshmen year which was 72.1 % of the entire four hundred fifty (450) respondents. About 20.1 % belonged to the sophomore heterosexual students, 6.2 % belonged to graduating students lastly, and 1.4 % came from the third year. All these were spread across target LUCs in Laguna.

The respondents of the study were comprised of heterosexual students of the City College of Calamba, Laguna University, and Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng San Pablo across disciplines from freshmen up to graduating students to be able to manifest the true discrimination climate of the college/university.

**Table A:** Distribution of Respondents of the Study.

University/ College	Number Of Samples
CCC	150
PLSP	150
LU	150
<b>Total</b>	<b>450</b>

As shown in Table A, a total of four hundred fifty (450) heterosexual students were the respondents of the study. They came from different programs and year levels of their respective institutions. Three hundred fifteen (315) freshmen year while sixty-five (65) second year. Thirty-five (35) Third Year and lastly 35 Graduating Students.

The participants of the study were comprised of heterosexual students of City College of Calamba, Laguna University, and Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng San Pablo across disciplines from freshmen up to graduating students to gauge an in-depth understanding of microaggression in the targeted LUCs.

**Table B:** Participants of the Study.

Respondents	Population Size	School
<b>Heterosexual</b>		
Male	4	CCC
Female	6	CCC
<b>Heterosexual</b>		
Male	3	LU
Female	7	LU
<b>Heterosexual</b>		
Male	4	PLSP
Female	6	PLSP

As shown in Table B a total of thirty (30) heterosexual students were the participants of the study. They came from different programs and year levels ten (10) came from CCC, another ten (10) from LU and lastly, ten came from PLSP.

To measure the microaggression of the respondents the researcher utilized the Sexual Orientation Microaggression scale. The Sexual Orientation Microaggression Scale (SOMS) is a 25-item Instrument that measures social orientation microaggression and it is divided into five subscales: Microinvalidations (i.e. "I have been told that I should stop complaining about heterosexism."), Assumption of Pathology (i.e. "Someone has tried to keep their children from coming into physical contact with me because of my sexual orientation"), Heterosexist Language (i.e. "People have made negative comments or jokes about LGBTQ people in my presence without realizing my sexual orientation."), Enforcement of Binary Gender Roles (i.e. "I have been criticized about not wearing clothes that are normal for my gender."), Environmental Microaggressions. (i.e. "I have seen LGBTQ people portrayed positively in movies"), The scale is scored on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

To measure gender expression the researchers adapted the Gender Expression Attitudes Towards Transgender Client Scale (GEATC). The Gender Expression Attitudes Towards Transgender Clients Scale (GEATC), was adapted and patterned as an instrument to measure the gender expression attitudes of heterosexual students. The instrument is divided into three subscales: Factor 1 Emphasis on Assign Sex Expression (i.e. "I should make sure that students who identify as women but were born men emphasize a masculine appearance"), Factor 2 Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms (i.e. "I should make sure that students talk the way they wish to talk (masculine, feminine, etc.) regardless of their assigned or affirmed sex."), Factor 3 Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression (i.e. "I think it is critical for transgender clients who identify as men but were born women to practice speaking with strong voices."), The scale is scored on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The gender expression attitudes towards transgender client's scale: Development and initial psychometric evaluation. Rizvi & Witten (2020). The researchers used the adapted instruments to obtain relevant information for the study. To measure the level of microaggressions and gender expression attitudes among heterosexuals in a local university and college. The researcher adapted The Sexual Orientation Microaggression Scale (SOMS) and Gender Expression Attitude Transgender Scale (GEATC) This was distributed through Google Forms.

To measure the level of microaggression and gender

expression attitude of the respondents, the researcher-made questionnaire was utilized. This consists of statements related to student characteristics, and psychological environment that the respondents responded to through a five-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree down to Strongly Disagree. And three-point Likert scale from Strongly Agree down to Strongly Disagree

Agreement Quotient Level.

Value	Range	Interpretation
3	2.5 – 3	Agree
2	1.5 – 2.49	Neutral
1	1 – 1.49	Disagree

For the qualitative part, the researchers utilized guide questions which were used for the feedback of the heterosexual college students. Thereafter, the researchers approached the concerned respondents and explained the purpose of answering the questions.

To make the results of this study meaningful, the researchers used statistical treatment for quantitative data and thematic data analysis for qualitative data. The following were the statistical techniques employed in the treatment of the quantitative data gathered.

1. Frequency was used for figure representation among collected data.
2. Mean and Likert Scale were used to determine the level of microaggressions of gender expression attitudes among heterosexual students in local universities and colleges.
3. To establish any significant relationship between the level of microaggression and acceptance of heterosexual students about gender expression Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed.

The researchers utilized thematic analysis to reveal storylines and themes that emerged during the collection of qualitative data and extract the most reliable qualitative data from the participants. After collecting relevant data from multiple sources (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.), the researchers carefully read the data. It was important to familiarize oneself with the data. Next was identifying potential themes which involved noting recurring topics and ideas, noting patterns, and making connections with the data. Next was coding. Once the potential themes have been identified, the researchers coded the data accordingly. This means assigning codes to each theme and sub-theme. After the data has been coded, the data can be analyzed by identifying any trends or patterns. This involved looking for relationships between themes, and exploring how themes interact with each other. Lastly interpretation and write-ups. The final step in the thematic analysis process was interpreting the data and writing up the results.

## Results and Discussion

The succeeding paragraphs discussed the findings and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data obtained. The data were studied and assessed to obtain results, conclusions, suggestions, and the proposed gender policy from this study.

Purpose Statement 1. Determine the level of microaggression among heterosexual college students in an

LUC in terms of Microinvalidations, Assumption of deviance, heterosexual language, Endorsement of Gender Conformity, and Environmental Microaggression.

**In terms of Microinvalidations**

Table 1.2 shows the level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of microinvalidations. The level of microaggression among heterosexual college students in terms of microinvalidations had a general

assessment of 2.97 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate as shown in Table 1.1. The indicator "When I thought something was biased based on sexual orientation, someone who identifies as heterosexual provided alternative explanations." had the highest mean score of 3.30 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate. Meanwhile, the indicator that ranked seventh "I have been told I was being paranoid when I thought someone was being

**Table 1.1**

*Level of Microaggression among Heterosexual LUC Students in terms of Microinvalidations*

Indicators in terms of Microinvalidations	$\bar{X}$	VI	Rank
I have been told I was overreacting when I confronted someone about their behavior that could be perceived as biased towards people based on their sexual orientation.	2.92	N	5
I have been told that I should stop complaining about bias based on sexual orientation.	2.74	N	6
When I thought, something was biased based on sexual orientation, someone who identifies as heterosexual provided alternative explanations	3.30	N	1
When I thought something was biased or discriminatory based on sexual orientation and suggested that I was being too sensitive when it came to LGBTQ issues.	3.03	N	4
Someone has responded defensively when I pointed out their homophobic language.	3.07	N	3
Someone has responded defensively when I pointed out their homophobic language.	3.14	N	2
I have been told I was being paranoid when I thought someone was being heterosexist.	2.58	D	7
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>2.97</b>	<b>N/M</b>	

Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (SA)/ Very High  
 3.40 – 4.19 Agree (A)/ High  
 2.60 – 3.39 Neutral (N)/ Moderate  
 1.80 – 2.59 Disagree (D)/ Low  
 1.00 – 1.79 Strongly Disagree (SD)/ Very Low

heterosexist" received the lowest mean score of 2.58 verbally interpreted Disagree/Low.

It implies that dismissing concerns of heterosexist behavior as paranoia can be seen as a form of gaslighting. It undermines the validity of individuals' experiences and makes them question their perceptions. This not only perpetuates the invisibility of the issue but also hinders efforts to address and eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation. To create a more inclusive environment, it is crucial to provide validation and support to individuals expressing concerns about heterosexist behavior, thus empowering them to speak out and contribute to a more inclusive college community.

The results are attributed to the study of Amodeo et al. (2020) said that to build a diverse and welcoming campus community, a synthesis of the studies highlights the significance of addressing covert forms of heterosexist discrimination on campus. Wilson and Cariola, (2020) revealed that due to higher rates of stigma, discrimination,

and victimization, LGBTQI+ youth confront unique difficulties.

**In terms of the Assumption of Deviance**

Table 1.2 shows the level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of the assumption of deviance. The level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of Assumption of Deviance had a general assessment of 2.57 verbally interpreted as Disagree/Low. The indicator "Someone has tried to keep their children from coming into physical contact with someone because of his/her sexual orientation" had the highest mean of 2.94 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate. The indicator "A friend of mine has stopped talking to someone when he found out that he is gay?" had the lowest mean of 2.34 verbally interpreted as Disagree/Low.

**Table 1.2**

*Level of Microaggression among Heterosexual LUC Students in terms of Assumption of Deviance*

Indicators in terms of Assumption of deviance	$\bar{X}$	VI	Rank
Someone has tried to keep their children from coming into physical contact with someone because of his/her sexual orientation.	2.92	N	1
Someone that is gay/lesbian were assumed to have HIV/AIDS.	2.46	D	4
Someone assumed that certain person be a child molester or sexual predator because of his sexual orientation.	2.58	D	2
Someone I know avoided sitting beside a person who is a member of LGBTQ.	2.54	D	3
A friend of mine has stop talking to someone when he found out that he is gay?	2.34	D	5
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>D/L</b>	

Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (SA)/ Very High  
 3.40 – 4.19 Agree (A)/ High  
 2.60 – 3.39 Neutral (N)/ Moderate  
 1.80 – 2.59 Disagree (D)/ Low  
 1.00 – 1.79 Strongly Disagree (SD)/ Very Low

The study's findings underscore the potential long-term impact of perpetuating assumptions of deviance through microaggressions. It may lead to increased stress and mental health issues among LGBTQ+ students, adversely affecting their academic performance and the overall campus climate. To combat these issues, clear policies against discrimination and microaggressions, along with accessible reporting mechanisms, are essential to empower students to address incidents of bias effectively. Wilson and Cariola (2020) reiterated in their study that due to increased levels of stigma, discrimination, and victimization Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning or Intersex (LGBTQI+) youth faced particular challenges in society. With the intention of better understanding the challenges and issues that LGBTQI+ youth were experiencing, they conducted qualitative research that systematically examined the expressed thoughts and feelings of the research participants, and made reflective analyses of the themes and links discussed, that

provided rich and nuanced understanding. A synthesis of the included studies identified five core themes: (1) Isolation, rejection, phobia, and need for support; (2) Marginalization; (3) Depression, self-harm, and suicidality; (4) Policy and environment; and (5) Connectedness.

**In terms of Heterosexist Language**

Table 1.3 shows the level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of heterosexist language. The level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of Heterosexist Language had a general assessment of 3.20 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate as shown in Table 1.3. The indicator "People have made insensitive gay or lesbian jokes in front of me" had the highest mean score of 3.42 verbally interpreted as Agree/High. However, " People have used the term like “fag/dyke/queer/homo” in front of me " had the lowest mean score of 2.80 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate.

**Table 1.3**

*Level of Microaggression among Heterosexual LUC Students in a in terms of Heterosexist Language*

Indicators in terms of Heterosexist language	$\bar{X}$	VI	Rank
People have made negative comments or jokes about LGBTQ people without knowing my sexual orientation	3.16	N	4
I have heard the term “That’s so gay” when someone was talking about something negative.	3.27	N	3
People have used the term like “fag/dyke/queer/homo” in front of me	2.80	N	5
I heard a person call someone else “gay” because she/he was “weird” or “different	3.36	N	2
People have made insensitive gay or lesbian jokes in front of me.	3.42	A	1
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>N/M</b>	

Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (SA)/ Very High  
 3.40 – 4.19 Agree (A)/ High  
 2.60 – 3.39 Neutral (N)/ Moderate  
 1.80 – 2.59 Disagree (D)/ Low  
 1.00 – 1.79 Strongly Disagree (SD)/ Very Low

The implications of this highlight the need to promote inclusive language practices to create a more inclusive environment. By being mindful of the language being used and avoiding heterosexist or discriminatory terms, people can help challenge societal norms, reduce discrimination, and foster a more cohesive and inclusive society.

In the study by Mudge (2021), she found that inclusive language was the most important factor in creating an inclusive environment. Exposure to heterosexist language was shown to increase heterosexist behaviors and attitudes and decrease team cohesion. Language had been established as a tool that was often used to convey social norms and stigmatize those who violated those norms. The use of heterosexist language became part of normal communication and reinforced sexual norms regardless of the intentions of the speaker.

The level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of Gender Conformity had a general assessment of 3.52 verbally interpreted as Agree/High. The indicator "I have seen LGBTQ members being criticized

about their clothing choices as being out of character with their assigned sex" had the highest mean of 3.55 verbally interpreted as Agree/High. On the other hand, the indicator "I have seen members of the LGBTQ being told to act masculine or feminine" had the lowest mean of 3.47 verbally interpreted as Agree/High.

**In Terms of Endorsement of Gender Conformity**

Table 1.4 shows the level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of gender conformity. The level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of Gender Conformity had a general assessment of 3.52 verbally interpreted as Agree/High. The indicator "I have seen LGBTQ members being criticized about their clothing choices as being out of character with their assigned sex" had the highest mean of 3.55 verbally interpreted as Agree/High. On the other hand, the indicator "I have seen members of the LGBTQ being told to act masculine or feminine" had the lowest mean of 3.47 verbally interpreted as Agree/High.

**Table 1.4**

*Level of Microaggression among Heterosexual LUC Students in a in terms of Endorsement of Gender Conformity*

Indicators in terms of Endorsement of gender conformity	$\bar{X}$	VI	Rank
I have seen members of LGBTQ being criticized for not conforming to clothing norms associated with my gender.	3.54	A	2
I have seen members of LGBTQ being criticized about the way they dress as to non-conformity with their assign sex.	3.55	A	1
I have seen members of the LGBTQ being told to act masculine or feminine.	3.47	A	3
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>A/H</b>	

Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (SA)/ Very High  
 3.40 – 4.19 Agree (A)/ High  
 2.60 – 3.39 Neutral (N)/ Moderate  
 1.80 – 2.59 Disagree (D)/ Low  
 1.00 – 1.79 Strongly Disagree (SD)/ Very Low

The table reveals that heterosexual college/university students in LUC perceive a significant presence of microaggressions related to gender non-conforming behaviors among LGBTQ individuals. Criticism towards LGBTQ individuals' clothing choices is frequently observed, while pressure to conform to traditional masculinity or femininity is comparatively less prevalent. These findings shed light on the experiences of LGBTQ individuals and the attitudes of the surveyed student population toward gender conformity and microaggressions.

Based on the findings of Thoma et al. (2021), individuals were more likely to be categorized as LGB if they exhibited gender nonconformity, so gender nonconformity could influence the concealability of sexual orientation among LGB individuals, carrying important implications for the

visibility of their stigmatized sexual orientation identity and for how they experienced and cope with minority stress. Results indicated gender nonconformity was associated with experiencing more prejudice events, less concealment of sexual orientation, lower internalized homonegativity, and higher expectations of rejection related to sexual orientation among LGB individuals. Gender nonconformity was more strongly associated with experiencing prejudice events among gay and bisexual men than among lesbian and bisexual women. Gender nonconformity was systematically associated with minority stress experiences among LGB individuals, and future research must measure and examine gender nonconformity when investigating the role of minority stress in degraded health outcomes among LGB populations.

### In Terms of Endorsement of Environmental Microaggression

Table 1.5 shows the level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of environmental microaggression. The level of microaggression among heterosexual LUC students in terms of Environmental Microaggression had a general assessment of 3.75 verbally

interpreted as Agree/High. The indicator "I have seen LGBTQ people portrayed positively on television" had the highest mean of 3.82 verbally interpreted as Agree/High. On the other hand, the indicator "I have seen advertisements/ commercials that include same-sex couples" had the lowest mean of 3.52 verbally interpreted as Agree/High.

**Table 1.5**

#### *Level of Microaggression among Heterosexual LUC Students in terms of Environmental Microaggression*

Indicators in terms of Environmental microaggression	$\bar{X}$	VI	Rank
I have seen LGBTQ people portrayed positively in magazines.	3.80	A	2.5
I have seen LGBTQ people portrayed positively in movies.	3.80	A	2.5
I have seen LGBTQ people portrayed positively on television.	3.82	A	1
I have seen advertisements/ commercials that include same sex couples.	3.52	A	4
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>A/H</b>	
Legend: 4.20 – 5.00 Strongly Agree (SA)/ Very High	1.80 – 2.59 Disagree (D)/ Low		
3.40 – 4.19 Agree (A)/ High	1.00 – 1.79 Strongly Disagree (SD)/ Very Low		
2.60 – 3.39 Neutral (N)/ Moderate			

This implication highlights the increasing acceptance, visibility, and positive attitudes towards same-sex couples in advertising, which aligns with the broader societal trend towards inclusivity and diversity. Furthermore, these results imply a relatively favorable environment in terms of LGBTQ representation, as reflected by the students' agreement. However, it is important to note that the interpretation is limited to the specific context provided and the indicators used in the table. Overall, these implications suggest that there has been a positive trend towards LGBTQ representation in different forms of media, such as magazines and sports media. This progress has the potential to contribute to greater acceptance, understanding, and inclusivity for LGBTQ individuals both within these industries and in society.

This was supported by Sandler (2022) in the article entitled "Progress... Slowly, but Surely: The Sports Media Workplace, Gay Sports Journalists, and LGBT Media Representation in Sport" which revealed that an increase of LGBT athletes (especially gay male athletes) coming out of the closet and being positively framed by sports media. Little was known, however, about how these shifts impacted gay men in sports media. Through 12 semi-structured interviews, this article was the first empirical examination of openly gay male sports journalists' experiences in the sports media workplace. Adopting inclusive masculinity theory (IMT), results indicated that, despite the continued presence of heterosexism, all participants "outed" to colleagues, and almost all were unconditionally accepted when doing so. Additionally, findings indicated a nuanced perspective that contrasts with the oft-sensationalist reporting of LGBT issues by sports

media. This article

therefore extending the current body of IMT research on improved attitudes toward sexual minorities in sports media.

**Purpose Statement 2.** Determine the level of social acceptance of gender expression attitudes among heterosexual students in the local university and college in terms of Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression, Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression, and Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms.

### In terms of Assigned Sex Expression

Table 2.1 shows the level of social acceptance of gender expression attitudes among heterosexual LUC students in terms of Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression. The level of social acceptance of gender expression attitude among heterosexual LUC students in terms of Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression had a general assessment of 1.85 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate. The indicator that ranked first with a mean score of 2.02 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate was "I think students must participate in activities that are traditional for their assigned sex." On the other hand, the indicator that ranked last with a mean score of 1.74 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate was "For people to be treated effectively, they should learn to identify with their assigned sex".

**Table 2.1**

*Level of Social Acceptance to Gender Expression Attitude among Heterosexual LUC Students in terms of Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression*

Indicators in terms of Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression	$\bar{X}$	VI	Rank
I should make sure that students who identify as women but were born men emphasize a masculine appearance.	1.82	N	2
I think it is critical for students who identify as men but were born women to practice speaking with soft voices.	1.80	N	3
I think it is critical for student to participate in activities that are traditional for their assigned sex.	2.02	N	1
In order for people to be treated effectively they should learn to identify with their assign sex.	1.74	N	4
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>	1.85	N/M	

Legend: 2.34 – 3.00 Agree (A)/ High  
1.67 – 2.33 Neutral (N)/ Moderate  
1.00 – 1.66 Disagree (D)/ Low

These findings demonstrate the complexity of gender attitudes among heterosexual students, reflecting a spectrum of beliefs and highlighting the ongoing dialogue surrounding gender expression and acceptance within educational institutions. The presence of both traditional and inclusive perspectives indicates the need for ongoing discussions and efforts to promote understanding, inclusivity, and respect for diverse gender identities and expressions on campus.

Karakurt and Aricioglu’s (2022) study revealed that gender roles predicted the need for social approval. When the need for social approval was considered, it was found that it significantly predicted the quality of sexuality. It was revealed that gender roles significantly predicted the quality of sexuality. When the confidence intervals were interpreted, the model was noticed to be significant and reliable. When the mediating effect of the need for social approval was analyzed, it was found that the variable of the need for social approval played a full mediating role in the whole model.

**In terms of Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression**

Table 2.2 shows the level of social acceptance of gender expression attitudes among heterosexual LUC students in terms of generalized emphasis on gender binary expression. The level of social acceptance of gender expression attitude among heterosexual LUC students in terms of generalized emphasis on gender binary expression. It had a general assessment of 2.48 verbally interpreted as Agree/High. The first rank indicator with a mean of 2.57 verbally interpreted as Agree/High was the statement "I think it is critical for people who identify as men but were born women to practice speaking with a strong voice." On the other hand, the last rank, with a mean of 2.43 verbally interpreted as Agree/High, was the statement "I think all people must learn the proper way to sit for their affirmed sex”.

**Table 2.2**

*Level of Social Acceptance to Gender Expression Attitude among Heterosexual LUC Student in terms of Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression*

Indicators in terms of Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression	$\bar{X}$	VI	Rank
I think is critical for people who identify as men but were born women to practice speaking with strong voice.	2.57	A	1
I should make sure that people who identify as men but were born women emphasize a masculine appearance.	2.49	A	2
I think it is critical for all people to learn the proper way to sit for their affirmed sex.	2.43	A	4
I should help people learn the proper way to walk for their affirmed sex.	2.44	A	3
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>	2.48	A/H	

Legend: 2.34 – 3.00 Agree (A)/ High  
1.67 – 2.33 Neutral (N)/ Moderate  
1.00 – 1.66 Disagree (D)/ Low

The results reflect a general acceptance or agreement among heterosexual students towards gender expression, with particular emphasis on vocal characteristics and appearance. These implications underscore the need for critical examination of societal norms and the promotion of inclusive and diverse understandings of gender expression within educational environments.

Morgenroth and Ryan (2020) argued that one of the reasons why people reacted negatively to challenges to the gender/sex binary lay in their psychological investment in gender as a self-defining category. Drawing on social identity theorizing, challenges to the gender/sex binary threaten the clear distinction between the group’s “women” and “men”. They emphasized that the social identity approach assumed that individuals derived a sense of identity from their membership in social groups. Because group memberships were consequential for people’s sense of self, individuals become motivated to perceive self-defining groups as positive and distinct from relevant comparison groups. In the context of gender/sex, women and men who identify strongly with their gender/sex should be motivated to also see women as clearly different from men.

**In terms of Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms**

Table 2.3 shows the level of social acceptance of gender expression attitudes among heterosexual LUC students in terms of affirmation of gender expression in all forms. The level of social acceptance of gender expression attitude among heterosexual LUC students in terms of Affirmation of Gender in All Forms. It had a general assessment of 1.90 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate as shown in Table 2.3. The indicator with the highest mean of 2.00 and verbally interpreted as neutral/Moderate was the statement "I should understand that some people benefit from not choosing a male or female gender identity." The indicators that got the lowest mean of 1.84 verbally interpreted as Neutral/Moderate were the indicators “I should make sure that people should talk the way they wish to talk” and “I should make sure that people appear (e.g., in terms of mannerisms) the way they wish to appear (masculine, feminine, etc.) regardless of their assigned or affirmed sex.”

**Table 2.3**

***Level of Social Acceptance to Gender Expression Attitude among Heterosexual LUC Student in terms of Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms***

Indicators in terms of Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms	$\bar{X}$	VI	Rank
I should make sure that people should talk the way they wish to talk (masculine, feminine, etc.) regardless of their assigned or affirmed sex.	1.84	N	3.5
I should make sure that people appear (e.g., in terms of mannerisms) the way they wish to appear (masculine, feminine, etc.) regardless of their assigned or affirmed sex.	1.84	N	3.5
I should understand that some people benefit from not choosing a male or female gender identity.	2.00	N	1
I should understand that some people benefit from not choosing a male or female pronoun.	1.92	N	2
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>1.90</b>	<b>N/M</b>	

Legend: 2.34 – 3.00 Agree (A)/ High                      1.00 – 1.66 Disagree (D)/ Low  
 1.67 – 2.33 Neutral (N)/ Moderate

These findings show a modest level of acceptance and openness toward non-binary or non-conforming gender identities among the surveyed heterosexual students. Accepting and supporting individuals' choices in language and appearance, on the other hand, has room for improvement, as these areas obtained lower mean values. The findings offer suggestions for increasing inclusivity and understanding of gender diversity among students at the local university and college.

This was highlighted by the study cited by Palmer and Clegg (2020) given the prevalence of individuals who identified as gender nonconforming and transgender people, now was the time to focus on the origins of gender identity. If a biological definition of gender identity was developed, there might be a reduction in discriminating

practices towards gender non-conforming and transgender individuals. Accordingly, it can be a good sign that people were moving toward a more tolerant and inclusive society if 50% of the people today accepted non-conforming people regardless of how they displayed their gender. Maybe they had a better future as time progressed.

Purpose Statement 3. Identify if there is a significant relationship between the level of microaggression and the level of social acceptance of gender expression among heterosexual LUC students in the local university and college

**Table 3**

*Test of Significant Relationship between the Level of Microaggression and Level of Social Acceptance of Gender Expression among Heterosexual Students in the Local University and College*

Level of Microaggression	Level of Social Acceptance of Gender Expression	r value	P value	Remarks	Decision
Microinvalidations	Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression	.125*	.008	Significant	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression	.054	.250	Not Significant	Accept H <sub>0</sub>
	Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms	.121*	.010	Significant	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Assumption of Deviance	Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression	.117*	.013	Significant	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression	.035	.455	Not Significant	Accept H <sub>0</sub>
	Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms	.097*	.039	Significant	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
Heterosexist language	Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression	.006	.899	Not Significant	Accept H <sub>0</sub>
	Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression	.126**	.007	Significant	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms	.026	.583	Not Significant	Accept H <sub>0</sub>
Endorsement of gender conformity	Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression	-.097*	.039	Significant	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression	.239*	.000	Significant	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms	.070	.141	Not Significant	Accept H <sub>0</sub>
Environmental microaggression	Emphasis on Assigned Sex Expression	.042	.373	Not Significant	Accept H <sub>0</sub>
	Generalized Emphasis on Gender Binary Expression	.396**	.000	Significant	Reject H <sub>0</sub>
	Affirmation of Gender Expression in All Forms	.020	.673	Not Significant	Accept H <sub>0</sub>

\*Correlational at the level 0.01

\*\*Correlational at the level 0.05(Two-tailed)

In terms of microinvalidation as the level of microaggression, specifically emphasizing assigned sex expression, the R-values 0.125\*, .121\* indicated a positive correlation between microinvalidations and the social acceptance of gender expression. In terms of assigning sex expression and gender expression in all forms, it indicated that this correlation was statistically significant. The p-value of 0.008 also supported the significance of this correlation. Consequently, the decision was to reject the null hypothesis suggesting that there was a genuine relationship between microinvalidations and social acceptance of gender expression. However, in terms of generalized emphasis on gender binary expression, the r-value of .054 was interpreted as not significant.

In terms of the assumption of deviance as the level of microaggression the r values .117\*, .097\* indicated a positive correlation between the assumption of deviance as a microaggression on gender expression in terms of assigned sex expression and affirmation of gender expression in all forms. There was a significant relationship between these variables as supported by the p values .013, and .039. This suggests that the relationship observed is unlikely to be due to random chance. However, in terms of generalized emphasis on gender binary expression the r value of .035 suggested no significant relationship and it implies that the two variables are independent of each other.

In terms of heterosexist language as the level of

microaggression the R-values .006, and .026 suggested a very low or no correlation between variables and it was supported by the p values .899, .583 which suggested a no significant relationship between the two variables with a very weak positive correlation between heterosexist language and the emphasis on assigned sex expression and affirmation of gender expression in all forms. However, in terms of generalized emphasis on gender binary expression an r value of .126\*\* showed a perfect positive correlation between variables and it also suggested a significantly high relationship.

Finally, in terms of Environmental microaggression the r value .396 was interpreted as having a positive correlation on social acceptance of gender expression supported by the p-value .000 suggested a significant relationship with the variable. However, the r values .042, and .020 were interpreted as having no correlation and no significant relationship supported by the p values .373, and .673.

Overall, findings suggest that certain types of microaggressions are significantly related to specific forms of social acceptance of gender expression, while others are not. These findings can help in understanding the dynamics between microaggressions and social acceptance, highlighting the need for addressing and reducing microaggressions to promote a more inclusive and accepting society.

This was congruent to the study of Davis and Mirick (2022) who suggested that there was a relationship between

experiencing microaggression and participants' social identities, specifically gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status were just some of the factors that might affect the level of microaggression on social acceptance of gender expression.

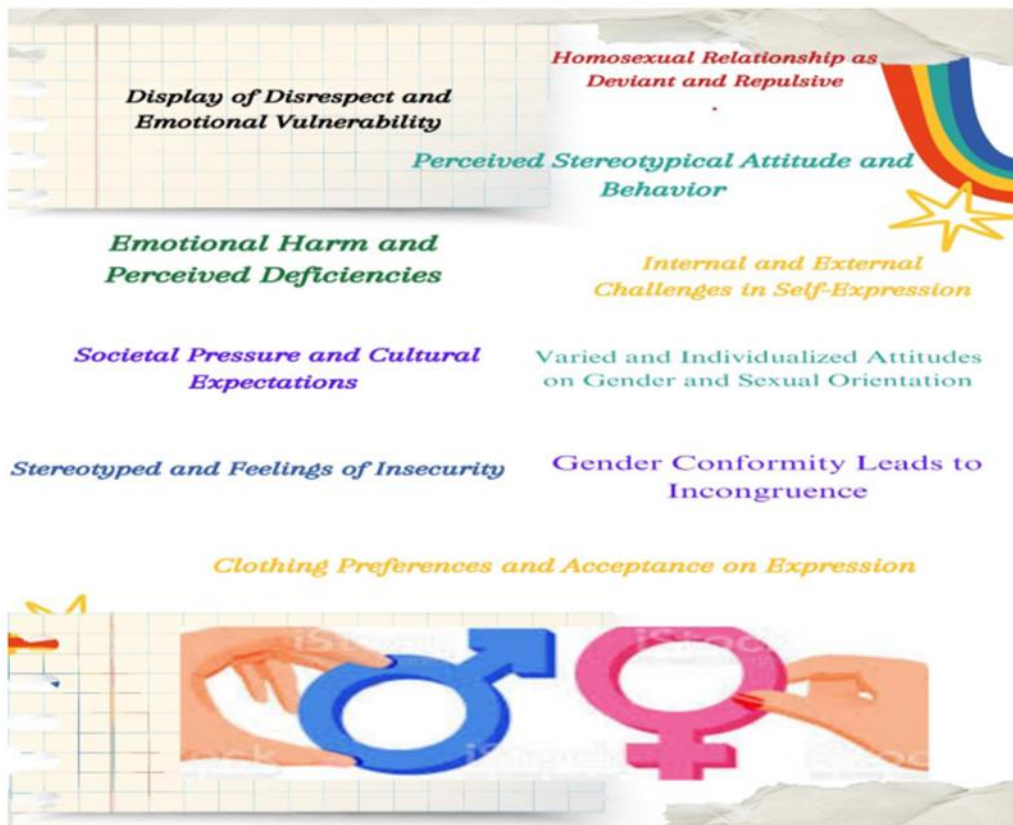
Purpose Statement 4. Describe the lived experience of all heterosexual students on the level of microaggression and social acceptance in terms of gender expression in the local universities and colleges.

Figure 2 shows the themes that emerged from the testimonies of the participants. It signifies several concepts about gender, sexual orientation, and societal attitudes. Theme A is concerned with the manifestation of disrespect and emotional fragility, in which individuals are mistreated by others, harming their well-being and relationships. Theme B explores the negative opinions of gay relationships, labeling them as abnormal and unpleasant, resulting in discrimination and emotional harm for those involved. Theme C discusses perceived stereotyped attitudes and behaviors, emphasizing the pressure to adhere

to gender stereotypes and the consequences on self-image and expression. Theme D covers the emotional suffering created by societal expectations, which leads to feelings of lack and inadequacy when norms are not followed. Theme E delves into the internal and external barriers of self-expression, highlighting the difficulties people have in remaining true to themselves in the face of society's pressures and judgment. Theme F focuses on societal pressure and cultural expectations, demonstrating how sticking to traditional conventions can lead to frustration and a lack of authenticity. Theme G recognizes the many viewpoints towards gender and sexual orientation, emphasizing the necessity of societal diversity. The propagation of stereotypes is covered in Theme H, which leads to emotions of uneasiness and self-doubt in individuals. Finally, Theme I delve into the incongruence that arises when individuals adhere to gender norms that do not align with their true identities, stressing the significance of self-discovery and acceptance.

**Figure 2**

**Themes**



They were placed in the graphics with their symbolism. Starting from the top, the red stripe symbolizes life, embodying the passion, vitality, and resilience of the LGBTQ+ community. The orange stripe represents healing, acknowledging the process of self-acceptance, recovery, and overcoming adversity that many individuals within the community face. Moving down, the yellow stripe signifies sunlight, symbolizing hope, happiness, and the bright future that LGBTQ+ individuals strive for. The green stripe represents nature, highlighting the interconnectedness of the LGBTQ+ community with the environment and

underscoring the importance of sustainability and eco-consciousness

The heterosexual emblem, commonly known as the straight pride symbol, has sparked much discussion and debate. It is a sign of heterosexuality, or sexual attraction and partnerships between people of different sexes. Figure 2 had a direct relationship with the emerging themes the study mainly focused on the perception of heterosexual LUC students on the gender expression of members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Overall, these themes show the intricate link between

cultural ideas, individual identities, and emotional experiences regarding gender and sexual orientation. They emphasized the significance of empathy, acceptance, and an open mind to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace for all.

This implies the challenges faced by LGBTQ whenever, and however they introduce their authentic self in the world and the impact all these entail. There is even participant who said “lalakihan ko boses ko para lang hindi nila ako taksuhin ng bakla” this indicated people will go such great lengths just to fit in to societal expectations.

**Purpose Statement 5. Propose a Gender Policy.**

Based on the Key Result Area data interpretation, a gender policy that aims to promote inclusivity of all gender expression, manifesting universality of all expression regardless of sexual orientation was created.

**ANCA Gender Policy**

In Local Universities and Colleges (LUC), where individuals from various backgrounds come together to pursue their education, fostering an environment of respect and inclusivity is paramount. It is essential to address and mitigate microaggressions among heterosexual college students to ensure that all students feel safe, valued, and supported throughout their educational journey.

This action plan aims to provide strategies and initiatives to address microaggression specifically among heterosexual college students within the LUC setting. By acknowledging the existence of microaggressions and implementing targeted interventions, a more inclusive and equitable environment for all members of the college community can be promoted.

**Objective:** To promote inclusivity and reduce bias based on sexual orientation at Local Universities and Colleges by fostering understanding and open dialogue among students and staff.

**Table 4:** Action Plan for ANCA Gender Policy.

Activity	Objectives	Strategies	Evaluative Measures	Time Frame	Key Person/Office
Awareness and Sensitization	To raise awareness about microaggressions, including their definition, impact, and common forms	a. Conduct workshops and training sessions for students and staff on LGBTQ+ issues, including sexual orientation and gender identity. b. Organize awareness campaigns, such as Pride Month events, to promote a more inclusive campus culture. c. Develop informational materials, brochures, and posters that highlight the importance of respect and acceptance for all sexual orientations.	Develop a survey questionnaire to be administered before and after awareness and sensitization workshops.	2023-2033	GAD OSA Student Organizations
Student Support and Resources	To enhance existing counseling and support services to provide specialized assistance for heterosexual students impacted by microaggressions	a. Establish a student support group or LGBTQ+ alliance where students can find a safe space to discuss their experiences and receive support. b. Enhance counseling services by providing training to counselors on LGBTQ+ issues and offering specialized support for students who may face bias or discrimination based on their sexual orientation. c. Develop and distribute a comprehensive list of LGBTQ+-friendly resources, both on-campus and in the community, including mental health services, support groups, and helplines.	Develop a satisfaction survey questionnaire to be administered to students who have utilized the available support and resources related to microaggressions.	2023-2033	GAD OSA Student Organizations
Curriculum and Education	To ensure the curriculum relevance, inclusivity, and alignment with industry standards	a. Integrate LGBTQ+-inclusive content into relevant courses across different disciplines to foster understanding and empathy. b. Offer elective courses or modules that explore LGBTQ+ history, social issues, and human rights. c. Encourage faculty members to use inclusive language and provide examples that encompass diverse sexual orientations in their teaching materials and classroom discussions.	Schedule regular meetings (e.g., quarterly or semi-annually) to discuss curriculum updates, industry trends, and emerging technologies	2023-2033	VPAA Deans
Policy Review	To explicitly address	a. Review existing policies and	Assess the timeliness and	2023-	OCP

and Implementation	microaggressions and their impact on the campus community	<p>procedures to ensure they are inclusive and protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation.</p> <p>b. Establish clear protocols for reporting and addressing instances of bias or discrimination related to sexual orientation, and provide avenues for anonymous reporting if desired.</p> <p>c. Promote a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination based on sexual orientation and communicate this policy widely to the college community.</p>	effectiveness of the college's response to reported incidents, including the handling of investigations and the enforcement of disciplinary measures.	2033	VPAA VPA GAD OSA Student Organizations
Peer Education and Dialogue	To establish safe spaces or affinity groups for heterosexual students to discuss their experiences and concerns related to microaggressions	<p>a. Train student leaders and volunteers to act as peer educators on LGBTQ+ issues, encouraging open dialogue and facilitating discussions on campus.</p> <p>b. Organize panel discussions, guest lectures, or town hall meetings where students, staff, and community members can share their experiences and perspectives on sexual orientation bias.</p> <p>c. Encourage intergroup dialogue between individuals with diverse sexual orientations, fostering understanding and empathy among students and staff.</p>	Analyze the feedback to identify strengths and areas for improvement in the peer education and dialogue initiatives.	2023-2033	College Officials OSA Student Organizations
Collaboration and Partnerships	To develop resources, events, and campaigns that promote awareness, allyship, and understanding	<p>a. Train student leaders and volunteers to act as peer educators on LGBTQ+ issues, encouraging open dialogue and facilitating discussions on campus.</p> <p>b. Organize panel discussions, guest lectures, or town hall meetings where students, staff, and community members can share their experiences and perspectives on sexual orientation bias.</p> <p>c. Encourage intergroup dialogue between individuals with diverse sexual orientations, fostering understanding and empathy among students and staff.</p>	Analyze the feedback to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in the collaboration and partnership initiatives.	2023-2033	College Officials GAD OSA Student Organizations Partners and Linkages
Evaluation and Feedback	To assess the prevalence and impact of microaggressions among heterosexual college students.	<p>a. Regularly assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies through surveys, focus groups, and feedback mechanisms.</p> <p>b. Use the collected data to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to the action plan.</p> <p>c. Continuously involve students, staff, and the LGBTQ+ community in the evaluation process to ensure their voices and perspectives are considered.</p>	Use survey results to inform future actions and interventions, ensuring that strategies remain responsive to the evolving needs of the college community.	2023-2033	College Officials OSA Student Organizations

## Conclusion

Based on the above-mentioned results of the research, the following conclusions are made:

1. There is a need for increased awareness and education about gender-nonconforming behaviors among heterosexual college/university students in LUC. LGBTQ people encounter microaggressions because of their clothing choices, especially when those choices depart from cultural standards associated with their

ascribed gender.

2. The findings highlight the continued need for debates and activities within educational institutions to promote inclusivity, respect, and understanding of varied gender identities and manifestations. The LUC must stimulate discourse to establish a more inclusive workplace.
3. Microaggressions targeting assigned sex expression, the assumption of deviance, endorsement of gender conformity, and a generalized emphasis on gender

binary expression have a notable impact on the social acceptance of gender expression. The results reveal that when there is an emphasis on assigned sex expression or a strict adherence to the gender binary, there tends to be higher levels of microaggression and lower levels of social acceptance. Conversely, when there is a comprehensive affirmation of gender expression in all forms, there is a decrease in microaggression and an increase in social acceptance.

4. That there are detrimental effects of inappropriate language on LGBTQ+ people, emphasizing the need for respectful and inclusive communication. The diverse attitudes toward homosexuality among heterosexual students highlighted the importance of understanding and acceptance. Misconceptions about LGBTQ+ individuals, such as stereotypes and assumptions, are identified and underscore the need for education and awareness.
5. The gender expression policy is needed for local universities and colleges in Laguna. Having a gender policy is essential to ensure fairness, inclusivity, and respect for all individuals. It helps create a more positive and productive environment, drives progress towards gender equality, and contributes to overall development and well-being

### Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are based on the results and conclusions reached

1. To cultivate a culture of respect, acceptance, and inclusion, colleges and universities may actively work towards creating a campus-wide environment that values all individuals, regardless of their gender identity or expression. This can be achieved through diversity and inclusion training programs, awareness events, and the creation of safe spaces where LGBTQ students feel supported and valued.
2. LUC may implement comprehensive diversity and inclusion programs, including workshops and awareness campaigns, to educate students about different gender identities and expressions. Implementing these recommendations will create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students at LUC.
3. To promote inclusion, organizations, institutions, and communities may be encouraged to implement inclusive policies and practices that promote and affirm the diversity of gender expression. Implementing gender-neutral dress regulations, encouraging pronoun inclusivity, and ensuring that various gender representations are presented in media and advertising can all contribute to this.
4. LUC may create guidelines and policies that promote the use of respectful and inclusive language in all settings, including classrooms, workplaces, and public spaces. Provide training and resources to help individuals understand the impact of inappropriate language and encourage them to use inclusive and affirming language.
5. LUC may implement the proposed ANCA Gender Program of this study to promote inclusiveness and equality among its students and all

stakeholders. 6. Future researchers may consider examining existing policies to discover their strengths, shortcomings, and effects to effectively contribute to the field of gender policy. Comparative research between countries can also give useful lessons and best practices for policy implementation. Exploring new gender-related issues and identifying gaps in existing knowledge can help define future policy initiatives. Because gender policy is multidisciplinary, collaborating with experts from diverse domains such as sociology, political science, economics, and public health can provide a more comprehensive view of the subject. Ethical considerations are critical, especially when working with sensitive themes and vulnerable groups, as they provide informed consent, confidentiality, and the avoidance of harm.

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