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A New Decade for Social Changes
Rejection, Acceptance, and Support: Experiences of LGBTQIA+ College Students in a Catholic School

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Abstract. Gender is socially constructed beliefs perceived or ascribed to the sex identity of the person. Thus, this study explored, described, and interpreted the social experiences of LGBTQIA+ college students in a Catholic School. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. Hence, it helped to obtain a rich narrative concerning the social experiences of this group of students studying in a private Catholic school. Moreover, this paper came up with six participants determined through purposive sampling and set inclusion criteria. It employed the semi-structured in-depth interview. Also, this study utilized Lichtman’s 3Cs in analyzing the narratives of the participants. This study revealed that LGBTQIA+ college students experienced bullying and discrimination during their basic education years when they were trying to come out as who they were. Alongside the experience of coming out, they felt that they were not accepted by their father as members of the social group since they would be vulnerable to any form of humiliation. However, being a student in a Catholic school, they felt that they were accepted and welcomed. Likewise, they never experienced what happened during their high school years. Hence, the findings may serve as an eye-opener for many about the social experiences of this minority to elicit the practice of gender sensitivity and equality.

Keywords. Rejection, Acceptance, Support, LGBQIA+ college students, descriptive qualitative, Philippine Catholic school

1.0 Introduction

Gender is a socially constructed belief that describes the roles, identities, cultural and psychological characteristics that a society accepts as fitting for people according to their perceived or ascribed sex [1]. Also, gender refers to a range of identities beyond being male or female, while sex refers to biological traits such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs [2]. Hence, it can be expressed in ways, such as gender identity, expression, and roles, and is influenced by societal norms, expectations, and personal experiences [3]. As a complex and multidimensional component of human identity, gender is interpreted and expressed differently in many cultures and societies [2].

Likewise, as gender is complex and multifaceted, there is an acronym LGBTQIA+. It stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual [1]. Moreover, the "+" represents other identities and orientations that are not explicitly included in the main acronym [3]. Every letter stands for a distinct aspect of gender identity, representing a spectrum of people whose sexual orientation may deviate from cultural
expectations [1]. For some, it's a welcoming term for the group of individuals who identify as non-heterosexual or non-cisgender [3].

In addition, the LGBTQIA+ group encounters a range of difficulties around the world. While these people are more accepted and have legal protection in some nations and cultures, they are subject to pervasive discrimination and even criminality in other nations due to their sexual orientations [4]. Globally, activism and advocacy are essential in the advancement of LGBTQIA+’s rights and visibility [5]. Political, religious, and cultural influences have a significant impact on how they are viewed by society which also affects their safety and legal rights [6]. The global viewpoint emphasizes the continuous fight for human rights and equality that these communities face all across the world, emphasizing the value of international support for their rights [5].

Moreover, LGBTQIA+ acceptance and rights differ greatly throughout Asia. Unlike countries where homosexuality is still illegal, Taiwan has made progress toward legalizing same-sex marriage [7]. In fact, social views are greatly shaped by cultural and religious factors, with conservative values frequently predominating in many areas. Meanwhile, Asia’s gender-diverse activists put in a lot of overtime to fight prejudice, increase awareness, and support legislative changes [8]. Notwithstanding advancements in certain domains, obstacles endure, underscoring the multifaceted and intricate terrain of gender minority rights throughout the continent [9]. These rainbow groups confront several severe obstacles in several Asian nations, such as social stigma, a lack of legislative safeguards, and difficulties in receiving social services and healthcare [7].

Furthermore, this minority in the Philippines deals with a combination of legal obstacles and social acceptance [10]. Also, legal recognition and rights are still few, even though this minority enjoys a fair amount of tolerance and exposure in popular culture and media. Legally, same-sex marriage is not recognized, and gender-diverse people may face prejudice in the workplace, in schools, and medical facilities [11]. In the continuous conversations about inclusivity and diversity in Philippine society, this social group is vital in promoting equal rights and combating social stigma [12]. Moreover, students in the Philippines who identify in this community frequently encounter a variety of situations that are influenced by cultural standards, educational guidelines, and individual fortitude [13]. While some educational institutions might be more welcoming than others, bullying, harassment, and discrimination against students with diverse identities are commonplace among classmates, and occasionally even among instructors or officials [11].

Studies have been conducted on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in the Philippines. In fact, Tang and Poudel [13] examined the experiences of Filipino LGBT students in UP Manila. Likewise, Arcelo et al. [11] conducted a study about LGBTQ students in sectarian schools and universities in the Philippines. Similarly, Reloj [14] conducted a study on issues related to lesbian and gay students, which implied the promotion of the Gender Spaces Act. Even though LGBTQIA+ students are still part of society, there are some instances that for other people their behaviors are sort of deviation. Despite these studies, there is a dearth of literature on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ college students in Catholic schools. This study aims to fill that gap.

This study generally explored, described, and interpreted the experiences of LGBTQIA+ college students in a Catholic School in Central Philippines. Also, this study assessed the experiences of rejection, acceptance, and support of LGBTQIA+ college students. Hence, this study may serve as an eye-opener to many about the social experiences of this social group to elicit the practice of gender sensitivity and equality.
2.0 Methodology

In exploring, describing, and interpreting the social experiences of the participants, this study utilized a descriptive qualitative design. This design is suited to obtain a rich narrative concerning the social experiences of LGBTQIA+ college students. Meanwhile, the philosophical assumptions that guided this research's path were reflected in the researchers’ ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological viewpoints. The nature of reality and its attributes were manifested in ontological questions. It is expected that those conducting qualitative research will embrace the notion of enormous realities. The epistemological perspective focuses on how individuals learn new information and determine which of these is true. The function of values in research was addressed by the axiological perspective. It was also crucial to have an open discussion on the values and biases that are thought to be more inevitable in influencing the qualitative research’s conclusions. The methodological view described the process as inductive, evolving, and molded by the researcher's experience in gathering and interpreting data. At this point, the researchers followed an inductive approach in the entire process, starting from specific methods to general.

The researchers employed the purposive and snowball sampling techniques in identifying the participants. The chosen participants were LGBTQIA+ college students in a Catholic School in Central Philippines. The inclusion criteria require participants to be (1) LGBTQIA+ college students, (2) who are enrolled in a Catholic School, (3) who must be 18 years old or above, and (4) willing to participate in the study. In addition, the data were collected using semi-structured face-to-face and online interviews. Likewise, the researchers used open-ended questions to allow the participants to openly share their experiences. The research questions were used to identify the major topics the researcher hoped to discuss.

The researchers wrote a consent letter that was forwarded to the participants. The information sheet and consent forms were provided more than one week before the interview, allowing the participants time to decide. In fact, the researcher used the term conversation to facilitate a more conversational and informal tone to help build rapport with the participants and foster more open and honest responses. The aim of the research was explained before starting the interview, although an information sheet was provided beforehand. After explaining the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study, the participants were asked if they had any questions or clarifications. All questions and concerns were addressed before signing the informed consent form. The participants were informed that if they withdrew, none of their data would be used in the analysis. Furthermore, the participants were also allowed to select a pseudonym for the study.

The researchers asked for the participants' consent to audio record the interview. This would ensure the accuracy and details of the participants' narratives. Also, this would serve as a reference for verification. Likewise, the researchers explained to the participants that the data will be stored with great confidentiality and will be deleted after the research study. Interviews were meticulously transcribed and carefully listened to the audio recording. The researchers read the interviews multiple times to become acquainted with the data. Data were analyzed using Lichtman’s [15] three Cs approach. This approach uses a rigorous process of coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing to draw meaning from the narratives. Throughout the process, the researchers discussed the emerging code list, identified discrepancies in their coding, and confirmed data saturation. Codes were then grouped into categories based on commonalities, and major concepts were established from the categories.
In terms of the trustworthiness of the data, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were considered. In credibility, member checking was done where written transcriptions were returned to the participants for validation of responses. In transferability, thick descriptions were used in presenting the narratives of the participants, which included non-verbal gestures, exaggerations of the words, and eye contact. In dependability, the researcher safeguarded that the research process was clear, observable, and documented by keeping all necessary data, such as recordings and transcribed notes, until the period of the study. Lastly, in confirmability, this is concerned with the findings accurately derived from the data. This is where the audit trail came in. A field expert in social science validated the themes and findings of the entire data analysis. Lastly, the paper adhered to the ethical guidelines set by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (PHREB).

3.0 Results and Discussion

Gender is socially constructed beliefs perceived or ascribed to the sex identity of the person [1]. Hence, this study explored, described, and interpreted the social experiences of LGBTQIA+ college students in a Catholic School. This study arrived with six participants determined through purposive sampling and set inclusion criteria. Also, it employed the semi-structured in-depth interview. Likewise, this study utilized Lichtman’s 3 Cs in analyzing the narratives of the participants.

Theme 1: Finding out myself before college

The six participants shared experiences of finding themselves before entering college. Likewise, they all had experienced the struggle of expressing their true selves. Two subthemes were developed; “A Coming Out Journey,” and “Unaccepted by My Father.” These subthemes were interconnected to the experiences of the LGBTQIA+ students in finding out themselves.

A coming out journey

LGBTQIA students often experience a mix of fear, anxiety, relief, and liberation when coming out. Their experiences can range from receiving support and acceptance to facing rejection and discrimination from family, friends, and school environments. Additionally, cultural attitudes and the intersection of multiple identities can further shape their coming out journey. Supportive communities and mental health resources play a crucial role in helping them navigate these challenges. Mund shared:

“I experienced being bullied when I was in elementary because at that time they (classmates) were not yet open to gays and lesbians. There were times when my classmates in elementary had comments about me which I considered below the belt. When I was being discriminated against, I took revenge on them, like I have a strong foundation when it comes to fighting for my beliefs. When I got bullied or discriminated, I became assertive to protect my identity and my belief in myself.” (Mund, Personal Communication, May 28, 2024).

Likewise, Zionnee experienced the same with Mund. When he started to reveal himself to other people, he experienced discrimination for the reason of being true to himself. Based on his experience:

“When I was in high school, I experienced being discriminated and bullied since I started to expose myself, maybe second-year high school, when I started to reveal myself. My
classmates during my secondary years were very disrespectful. I studied in the public school and students there were very liberated unlike here in the Catholic school where we are following core values.” (Zionnee, Personal Communication, June 1, 2024).

Jorge added:
“I started to have a relationship when I was in grade 10 and I considered myself that I was in the in-denial stage. Then when I was in grade 10 that’s when my attractiveness awakened. That was my first relationship with a lesbian. I experienced bullying when I was in high school and that was the time when I tried to reveal who I am” (Jorge, Personal Communication, May 28, 2024).

Most of the participants expressed that during their basic education, was a hard one. Most of them are considered by their classmates as weak hence they become vulnerable to bullying in school. As Eros mentioned:
“Elementary days, that was the worst one that I experienced being bullied by my classmates. Of course, I have some boy classmates. So, they noticed that I was weak in being gay. So, I was bullied. Verbally and physically bullied by them. Like, for example, they will kick your chair. They will tease you a lot. Most of the time I don’t mind them, and I was surrounding myself with the good people.” (Eros, Personal Communication, June 1, 2024).

Unaccepted by my Father

LGBTQIA individuals who are not accepted by their fathers may experience significant emotional challenges and feelings of disconnection. This lack of acceptance can strain family relationships and contribute to a sense of isolation. It may also impact their self-esteem and mental well-being. Seeking support from understanding peers and communities can be vital in navigating these circumstances and finding a sense of belonging. As Jorge expressed:

“Yes. That’s when I realized that he (my father) bashed other people, especially gays and lesbians. There was a time that he said, and I vividly remember it “What will you get from those gays and lesbians?” that’s what he said. It hurts me so much while hearing it. That prevents me from coming out because I know that my father would not accept me given that he had those comments to the gays and lesbians.” (Jorge, Personal Communication, May 28, 2024).

Some of the participants had these presumptions that their fathers didn’t want them to become LGBT since other people would take advantage of them. They are subject to humiliation and the possibility of labeling them as weak. As Eros freely shared:
“My father even though he doesn’t mind, I felt like he doesn’t like the LGBTQ. Like, once you’re part of LGBTQ. For example, if you’re a gay person, they consider you weak and that is the number one that you become more vulnerable to discrimination. So, they think that you will be used by other guys just for money alone. You will be objectified. So, they will take this as an advantage since you are a gay.” (Eros, Personal Communication, June 1, 2024).

Lj added:
“My father doesn’t like me to become gay since other people will take advantage of you. I remember that he saw a gay person being bullied and teased by other people. Maybe that was the reason that he didn’t like me to become gay. It was something like a protection to me since he witnessed those kinds of things to the gay people. He did not like me to experience the same thing” (Li, Personal Communication, May 28, 2024).

Meanwhile, some LGBTQIA individuals encounter resistance from their fathers who express hopes for them to have their own families. This expectation can create tension and
disappointment when their children come out as LGBTQIA. Negotiating these expectations alongside personal identity can be challenging for both the individual and their father. As Zionne expressed:

“But my dad has an issue because he's still hoping that I'll be a straight guy when I grow up, that I’ll get married soon. Because what he was looking forward to was for me to get married and have my own family like my other siblings. He was hoping that later on, I'll accept getting married. I felt that was his hope for me. But sadly, he passed away last May 5, 2024.” (Zionnee, Personal Communication, June 1, 2024).

Theme 2: Safe Haven in a Catholic school
The six participants collectively described their Catholic school experience as a haven, emphasizing a supportive environment free from bullying or discrimination based on their LGBTQIA identities. One subtheme emerged; “The feeling of being accepted.” This subtheme was related to the experiences of the participants that studying in a Catholic school is like a safe haven.

The feeling of being accepted
The participants expressed gratitude for the acceptance and respect shown by peers and faculty, highlighting the school’s inclusive policies and compassionate community. Each participant noted feeling able to openly embrace their identity without fear of judgment, fostering a sense of belonging and personal growth within the school community. As Drew openly expressed:

“But the time I entered, sir, I was shocked, sir. Because the people here are very welcoming even though I'm gay. They were welcoming like they always say “Hi, gee (gay)”. They always approached me, and I realized that they were not like those people who were homophobic or discriminated against me. I was so close with my classmates and instructors. They were also the reason why I boosted my confidence because I was a shy type of person. In fact, I had a very good relationship with my nun teacher here in school.” (Drew, Personal Communication, May 27, 2024).

As Jorge added:

“I've never experienced discrimination or bullying in this Catholic school institution of being an LGBTQIA+ student. It was so good to study here. My classmates and my teachers were very welcoming and approachable. It was so good to study here in SAC. Unlike during my high school life, where there was bullying and physical discrimination but here, none. I felt being accepted here, in fact, I am one of the officers of the student republic.” (Jorge, Personal Communication, May 28, 2024).

Most of the participants mentioned that they never experienced any form of discrimination or bullying from their classmates or instructors. They described feeling respected and valued for who they are, which contributed to a positive school experience. This lack of negativity allowed them to focus on their studies and personal growth without the burden of prejudice. As Ar shared:

“I had never experienced being discriminated here in this Catholic school institution since I am an LGBTQIA+ student. Um, since we have a small population in our class, I can say
that we're all okay, we get together, and there’s no discrimination about that part of being an LGBT college student. I also never experienced being pointed out in our theology classes. My classmates and teachers are very acceptable and considerate.” (Ar, Personal Communication, May 28, 2024).

Mund added:
“Speaking of discrimination or bullying since I belong to the LGBT, I did not encounter those things, especially in this Catholic school. I felt accepted by my classmates with whom I had a very good relationship and also by my teachers. I am now coming fourth-year student next school year in this Catholic school, I never experienced discrimination.” (Mund, Personal Communication, May 28, 2024).

Theme 3: Aiming for a bit of consideration
The participants expressed their hope for understanding and empathy, especially to the administrators. They believe that small acts of kindness and acceptance can make a significant difference in their experiences and well-being. One subtheme emerged from this theme: “Gender expression and inclusivity in School Policies.” This subtheme was connected to the experiences of the participants that aimed to have a little consideration.

Gender expression and inclusivity in school policies
The participants emphasized the need for school policies to support gender expression and inclusivity. They pointed out issues with uniform regulations, highlighting the desire for members to express their gender identity through their attire and appearance. They advocated for the freedom to dress and present themselves according to their true selves, similar to liberties seen in other schools. Additionally, they stressed the importance of recognizing diverse gender identities, suggesting changes such as gender-neutral restrooms and inclusive enrollment options. As Zionnee expressed:

“We have here issues and concerns about the other members of LGBTQ that they want also to express themselves according to what they want to do to themselves. Like, issues as wearing of uniform. Some of our members want to express themselves as women. So, simply wearing of uniform, a proper haircut.” (Zionnee, Personal Communication, June 1, 2024).

Drew added:
“ I hope that in the Catholic school, about the LGBTQ, we can express ourselves of who we are. Like the other schools, I’m not making comments about the other schools, but what I can say is they have freedom in how they dress, and how they look. They have the freedom to express who they are. It should be like that here sir.” (Drew, Personal Communication, May 27, 2024).

Eros also expressed the need to have a separate comfort room for the LGBTQIA to make them more comfortable and secure from any harassment or abuse.

“Because there are some students that I noticed that they do look at themselves as trans. So, if ever, to have a comfort room for them, it’s a privilege. I feel that I’m not comfortable in the male CR, since I prefer to look at myself as a female.” (Eros, Personal Communication, June 1, 2024).

Mund further expressed:
“Open in the sense, that they consider the gender of every student. Right now, we are in the modern world, and they need to adapt sir to every generation. Like, right now we are
Gen Z, they need to be open, and they should accept. Because this is very trivial sir. It means that when there is an enrollment, the choices are not only male and female.” (Mund, Personal Communication, May 28, 2024).

Discussions

A coming out journey

The participants went through a difficult process of coming out. This indicates that coming out as part of LGBTQIA+ is a great challenge for them. This means coming out as LGBTQIA+ is not an easy task. Rosati et al. [16], mentioned that coming out is an important milestone that, depending on several variables like cultural norms, societal acceptance, and family support, can have both positive and negative effects.

Studies suggest that the choice to come out is frequently impacted by how much acceptance and social support one feels they will receive from friends, family, and larger social networks [17] [16]. In addition, better psychological well-being and self-esteem are linked to positive coming-out experiences, such as feeling supported and acknowledged in one's identity [18]. Moreover, von Humboldt [19] investigated the elements that support happy coming-out experiences and how they affect the formation of identity. These studies shed light on the complex experiences and difficulties that people have when coming out. However, positive coming-out experiences can result in increased authenticity, better mental health outcomes, and improved general well-being for LGBTQIA students [20]. As mentioned by Hadland et al. [21] all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, can benefit from a more equal and affirming society if policies and practices that support inclusivity and respect for varied identities are promoted.

The implications of understanding the coming out journey underscore the importance of creating supportive environments and resources for LGBTQIA students. Likewise, teaching communities, schools, and families about the range of coming out experiences can aid in lowering stigma and fostering acceptance as supported by Madireddy and Madireddy [17]. Hence, the school should promote a safe and respectful environment, especially for the LGBTQIA students.

Unaccepted by my Father

The participants felt that they were not accepted by their fathers for being who they were. This indicates that they are not open to their father about their true selves. This means most of the relationship of the participants to their father has a gap. Stine [22] shows that LGBTQIA youth experience negative mental health outcomes like despair, anxiety, and drug abuse when they experience rejection from their families, especially from their parents. In addition, inadequate acceptance can result in internalized stigma, low self-esteem, and isolated sentiments [19].

Moreover, Stine [22] and Van Der Pol-Harney and McAlloon [23] highlight the significance of parental acceptance and support in cultivating resilience and favorable mental health consequences for those who identify as LGBTQIA. Sadly, there might be obstacles to open communication, trust, and a sense of belonging in the family when fathers do not accept their LGBTQIA children [24]. Furthermore, Van Der Pol-Harney and McAlloon [23] carried undertaken a long-term study demonstrating the effect that parental rejection has on LGBTQIA youth's mental health. Similarly, Johnson et al. [25] investigated how parental acceptance affects transgender and gender non-conforming youth's identity development and well-being.
Hence, these studies highlight the crucial influence that parental views and practices have on the experiences and results that LGBTQIA people encounter. For LGBTQIA students, addressing and enhancing family acceptance can have a substantial positive impact on their well-being and destiny consistent with the study of Marra et al. [24]. Roe [26] and Fernando [27] to lessen the effects of rejection and promote better family dynamics, it might be helpful to teach families the value of acceptance and to offer options for support.

This theme implies that for LGBTQIA students, parental rejection has profound consequences. To create supportive situations where LGBTQIA individuals may thrive and constructively contribute, society as a whole must promote acceptance and inclusivity within families. Also, reducing stigma and discrimination related to LGBTQIA issues can be achieved by policies and initiatives that support education and understanding of these concerns, which will ultimately result in a more inclusive and equitable society.

**The feeling of being accepted**

The participants narrated that when they entered this Catholic institution, they experienced acceptance and support from their classmates and instructors. This theme indicates that the school is attuned to the concept of gender equality. In fact, the school conducted a seminar for the faculty and staff about Republic Act 11313 or Gender-Based Sexual harassment, particularly in school. Likewise, the gender and society subject is part of the school’s curriculum. Hence, these would help in creating a safe environment, especially for LGBTQIA+ students.

Van Der Pol-Harney and McAloon [23] demonstrated that LGBTQIA people's mental health and self-esteem are greatly impacted by their acceptance by peers, family, and society. Also, this acceptance lessens the chance of developing anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems and promotes a good self-concept [28]. Meanwhile, Luvo [29] for many LGBTQIA students, acceptance entails more than just tolerance; it also means that they feel appreciated and cherished for who they are. It enables individuals to establish a solid sense of inclusion and belonging in their communities and social networks. In addition, this theme also emphasizes how crucial supportive surroundings are for encouraging excellent mental health outcomes, such as inclusive schools and LGBTQIA-affirming venues [30] [31]. In fact, González-Álvarez et al. [28] demonstrate how LGBTQIA people's general resilience and well-being are enhanced by community acceptance. However, Meyer [32] has shown how social rejection and discrimination negatively impact mental health, highlighting the significance of creating welcoming surroundings.

The implications of promoting acceptance among LGBTQIA individuals are profound. Encouraging acceptance among members of the LGBTQIA community has significant consequences [31]. Also, families and communities may support LGBTQIA youth's growth and well-being by creating an accepting atmosphere. To lessen stigma and create safer environments for LGBTQIA people to flourish, schools and other institutions should adopt policies that promote gender and sexual diversity. This finding implies continuous integration of gender equality into school activities and programs.

**Gender expression and inclusivity in School Policies**

The participants narrated that they wanted to express themselves and wished to have some adjustment and consideration in the school’s policies. For students who identify as LGBTQIA, inclusiveness and gender expression in school regulations are essential to fostering a positive and encouraging atmosphere. In fact, Taylor et al. [33] show that inclusive education
practices improve students' general well-being, mental health, and academic performance. These regulations usually cover non-discrimination protections against discrimination based on gender identity and expression, inclusive dress rules, and gender-neutral toilets [34] [33]. In addition, Domínguez-Martínez and Robles [35] LGBTQIA students reported feeling safer and more accepted when schools adopt inclusive policies. This improves their sense of belonging and lowers their risk of harassment and discrimination. Meanwhile, by guaranteeing that all students, regardless of gender identity, have equal access to opportunities and resources within the school environment, inclusive policies also support educational equity [34] [33].

In addition, Garland [34] discovered that LGBTQIA students get better academic results and experience less harassment in schools with complete rules protecting gender identity and expression. Likewise, Snapp et al. [36], inclusive practices are critical to fostering a supportive school environment and enhancing the mental health of young people from varied gender backgrounds. These studies highlight the advantages of taking proactive steps to promote gender diversity and inclusivity in school policies. Similarly, by lowering incidents of bullying and discrimination based on gender identity, inclusive policies improve students' general well-being [35].

The implications of implementing gender-inclusive school policies are far-reaching. However, putting in place gender-inclusive school policies has broad ramifications. In addition, schools may create a more secure and encouraging atmosphere where LGBTQIA students can flourish academically and socially by implementing these measures. Additionally, they foster a culture of diversity and equity in educational settings by sending a strong message of respect and welcome. Teachers and legislators are essential in promoting and putting into practice inclusive policies that meet the requirements of kids from a variety of gender backgrounds.

4.0 Conclusion
LGBTQIA students face many obstacles in their road of coming out, especially in the volatile high school setting where bullying and social rejection are commonplace. These encounters can have a significant negative influence on LGBTQIA youth's emotional health and mental health, highlighting the vital need for accepting environments at home and in schools. A critical component is parental acceptance; in the absence of it, people frequently struggle with feelings of estrangement and low self-worth. On the other hand, LGBTQIA students who have supportive parental interactions can be more resilient and confident in navigating their identities. Proactive steps to promote acceptance and inclusivity within schools and larger cultural frameworks are necessary to address these issues. Gender-neutral facilities and inclusive curricula are two examples of gender-inclusive policies that are crucial in fostering an atmosphere where LGBTQIA students feel validated and free to express themselves honestly. Society can foster a culture that values individuality and recognizes the inherent dignity of every person, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, by encouraging awareness and tolerance for multiple identities from an early age. In the end, this study aimed for a future where all LGBTQIA people can prosper and constructively contribute to society without fear of prejudice or marginalization through coordinated efforts in legislation, education, and community participation. By having a thorough understanding of this minority and putting aside personal opinions on the subject, the community could show support for them.

5.0 Limitations of the Study
This paper recognizes various limitations. It employed a descriptive qualitative research design. This paper came up with six participants who were currently enrolled in a
Catholic school during 2023-2024. Meanwhile, the themes and the findings were only limited to the range of the study. This study honestly claimed that it was impossible to generalize the social experiences of all LGBTQIA+ students studying in a Catholic school in the region or even in the whole country. Nevertheless, this research shed light on the participant experiences, which could supplement the limited body of knowledge and studies about LGBTQIA students’ experiences studying in Catholic schools.

6.0 Directions for Future Research
To validate this study, further studies are encouraged employing similar or other research designs like quantitative or mixed methods integrating various demographics like student’s programs in college, and religion and utilizing survey questionnaires as a tool to validate the generated themes of this study.

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