

LGBTQIA+ ACCEPTANCE IN THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER INCLUSIVITY

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Abstract

The study attempted to describe the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community in the College of Education – JRMSU Main, which will serve as the basis for gender inclusivity. A descriptive-quantitative research design was used to determine the significant difference between the levels of acceptance among the LGBTQIA+ community with a standardized survey instrument. The quota sampling method was used with a standardized survey instrument adopted from LGBTQ Inclusivity in Schools: A Self-Assessment Tool by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and 192 respondents were given a questionnaire to answer. The findings of the first statement of belief, assumptions, and biases obtained an average weighted mean of 1.45, which implied a 'great deal.' It indicates that the students in JRMSU are highly inclusive in identifying gender identities. The second set is about using terminology and language. This set obtained an average weighted mean of 1.58, which means 'frequently,' which implies students are highly inclusive when using gender-inclusive language. The third set is about advocacy. The set obtained an average weighted mean of 1.83, which means 'occasionally.' Students are yet moderately inclusive; this means they are still collaborating and working with others to do the same to reach the goal of inclusivity. Moreover, the test of a significant difference in the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community when analyzed as to the respondents' profile showed that only the course/program rejected the hypothesis. Therefore, age, sex, and year level were not factors in the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community in the College of Education. It means that programs and policies must seek to reduce vulnerability that could enhance the social status and the rights of the LGBTQIA+ Community inside and outside the school premises.

Keywords: LGBTQIA+, acceptance, college students, gender, inclusivity.

Introduction

With the emergence of diverse gender variants, gender inclusion has become an important global issue. Gender inclusivity attempts to provide a more welcoming environment for everyone, regardless of gender identity or presentation. The LGBTQIA+ population was unable to express themselves because the existence of these new gender identities is not fully acknowledged in the community, especially in those with close-knit cultures. Various concerns concerning gender inclusivity exist in some communities, such as the proper pronouns to be used in addressing them and the unstoppable usage of "name calling" to humiliate the LGBTQIA+ community. A statement by the United Nations in October 2019, headlined, "The inclusion of LGBT people in education settings of paramount importance to leaving no one behind," states that a sizable percentage of LGBT

students worldwide struggle with bullying, harassment, and exclusion from educational institutions. Often motivated by shame and discrimination, it has its roots in deeply held cultural ideas about gender roles and what it means to be a man or a woman. LGBT students have a variety of negative experiences, including name-calling, public mockery, rumors, intimidation, shoving and beating, stealing or damaging property, derogatory notes and graffiti, cyberbullying, social isolation, physical and sexual assault, and even threats of death. It happens online, in restrooms and locker rooms, classrooms, and on the route to and from school.

Day et al. (2019) emphasized the interventions schools can provide to address educational inequalities through inclusive policies and practices. Thus, some of the LGBTQIA+ communities' have experienced more supportive school environments when inclusive policies on addressing sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) are in place. Furthermore, when schools become inclusive to various genders, the students are most likely to develop a sense of belongingness to the community where he is situated. In addition, Schlieff et al. (2023) stated that interventions that are made universally to encourage inclusion and acceptance of various sexual and gender identities in schools may aid in preventing mental health issues. Gender, ethnicity, religiosity, and sexual attraction have a role in adolescents' acceptance of same-sex sexuality and gender non-conformity. "Gender inclusivity" refers to establishing surroundings that respect and value every individual's gender identity and expressions, ensuring fair access to education free from violence or biases, whereas "Acceptance" is the degree to which lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are positively seen and accepted in society both in terms of individual beliefs and policies.

Thus, this study elucidated the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community in the College of Education– Jose Rizal Memorial State University (JRMSU), Dapitan Campus. Specifically, the CED students are at all year levels across the programs offered. It is indeed relevant to test how high or low the level of acceptance of the selected students from all the programs in the College of Education as it measures how gender inclusive our future educators are and how aware they are of LGBTQIA+ topics as they might encounter learners who belong to this community. It also measures their awareness about the existence of various gender identities for the LGBTQIA+ Community to feel more valued and accepted, that they should be more knowledgeable on gender inclusivity. It guides the CED students in terms of their level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA community. This study would inform learners of various factors implicating LGBTQIA+ acceptance, which they can use to shape their behavior, acceptance, and actions toward the LGBTQIA+ community. This study also adds new findings for the school as it would address the shortcomings of gender-related studies, adding unique factors to the previous researcher's findings.

Research Method

The descriptive-quantitative research method was used in the study. The method is appropriate in addressing the objectives of the study, which is to determine the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community among the respondents in the College of Education in general preference and to test if there is a significant difference in the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community among the respondents when analyzed as to

their profile. The study was conducted at JRMSU, Dapitan City, specifically in the College of Education. JRMSU is one of the CHED's (Commission on Higher Education) accredited institutions in the province of Zamboanga Del Norte, situated along Gov., Guading Adaza St., Sta. Cruz of Dapitan City. Since 2010, CHED has been mainstreaming gender and development programs (GAD) in Higher Education. The university's GAD program also addressed and responded to any concerns among LGBTQIA+ students on campus. The study's respondents were the students enrolled in the College of Education, JRMSU Main – Dapitan Campus, the academic year 2023 – 2024 in the following programs: Bachelor of Culture and Arts, Bachelor of Elementary Education, Bachelor of Physical Education, Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English, Filipino, Math, Science and Social Studies. Using the quota sampling technique, the researcher's target sample size was 192 across all programs in the College of Education. Per program, there were 24 respondents, of which the distribution of questionnaires per year level is 6, 3 straight males and 3 straight females from the first to the fourth year of the first semester in the academic year 2023-2024. The table below shows the distribution of the respondents.

The study employed a standardized questionnaire checklist to conduct the study about gender inclusivity and the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community in the College of Education, JRMSU Main Campus. The first part of the questionnaire dealt with the respondents' personal data, which included their age, gender, course/program, and year level, as considered in the study. As of in the second part of the questionnaire, a 10-item assessment was utilized within the context of Beliefs, assumptions, biases, using terminology and language and Advocacy: Using your voice to educate or support others. The aforementioned questionnaire was adopted from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2020). A three-point Likert scale was used to measure and interpret the respondents' responses to the statements related to Beliefs, Assumptions, and Biases. In gathering the data, the researchers were concerned with ethical issues when conducting the action research, particularly in protecting the respondent's personal information. The respondents had the option to omit or withdraw when they felt uncomfortable, and any subsequent data was treated with utmost confidentiality. Furthermore, data were recorded and tabulated in a logical manner solely for purposes only. Once the research has been completed, all the data will be disposed of and deleted.

Results and Discussions

Profile of the Respondents

Age

Table 2 presents the respondents' profiles in terms of age. Table 2 shows the respondents' profiles in terms of age. There were 31 (16.1%) respondents who came from the 17-18 age group, 77 (40.1%) respondents who came from the 19-20 age group, and 84 (43.8%) respondents who came from the 21 years and above age group. Therefore, the highest population came from the age of 21 and above. This implies that most of the study's respondents are well-aware of the existence of the LGBTQIA+ Community and are on a more mature way of thinking that would result in more reliable data to come up with the desired outcome. This corroborates with Mikuska's (2016) study that by balancing

professional work, personal life, and academic obligations, mature students' emotional experiences during their undergraduate studies improve the quality of early years settings. Furthermore, they even termed mature students as anyone above the age of 21 currently enrolled in a Higher Education Institution (HEI). This also provides insights into the multi-layered character of adult students' emotions, stressing the complicated issues they encountered in balancing the numerous demands of professional careers, personal life and scholastic needs linked to their educational accomplishment.

Table 2

Profile of the respondents in terms of age

Age	Frequency	Percent
17-18 years old	31	16.1
19-20 years old	77	40.1
21 years old above	84	43.8
Total	192	100

Gender

Table 3 presents the respondents' profiles in terms of gender. The table shows that 96 (50.0%) respondents were cisgender male or straight male, and 96 (50.0%) were cisgender female or straight female. As reflected in Table 3, the number of males and females is equal due to the sampling technique utilized in the data-gathering procedure. This implies that having an equal number of participants from both sexes effectively achieves the desired outcome. Studies found that the results from quota sampling are similar with those generated from probability sampling (Kalton, 2023). In addition, Brinsky (2006) stated that to obtain the same proportion for each stratum, the interviewers are allowed to select from the population if the person meets the requirements of the stratum. Those who are unwilling to participate are simply replaced by others who are willing. The researchers purposely gather data for those who meet the requirements specifying cisgender male and cisgender female.

Table 3

Profile of the respondents in terms of gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	96	50.0
Female	96	50.0
Total	192	100%

Course/Program

Table 4 presents the respondents' profile regarding the course/program. Table 4 shows that 24 (12.5%) respondents came from the program Science, 24 (12.5%) respondents came from Social Studies, 24 (12.5%) respondents came from English, 24 (12.5%) respondents came from Filipino, 24 (12.5%) respondents from Math, 24 (12.5%) respondents came from BEED, 24 (12.5%) respondents came from BCAED, and 24 (12.5%) respondents came from BPED. As reflected in Table 4, the number of respondents across the course/programs of the College of Education is equal. This is through the sampling technique utilized in the data-gathering procedure. This implies that there are six respondents in each year level of all the programs, three cisgender male and three cisgender female. This constitutes a total of 192 respondents, a good number of respondents. To determine the sample size for research, the type of research utilized and the population being studied must be considered (Olejnik as cited in Galarza-Hernandez, 1993). They state that to). The researchers then utilized quota sampling since the number of cisgender males and females in the college of education is unknown.

Table 4

Profile of the respondents in terms of course/program

Program	Population	Respondents	Percentage
BCAE	65	24	12.5%
BEED	185	24	12.5%
BPE	194	24	12.5%
BSE-English	262	24	12.5%
BSE-Filipino	159	24	12.5%
BSE-Math	93	24	12.5%
BSE-Science	173	24	12.5%
BSE-Social Studies	108	24	12.5%
Total	1267	192	100%

Year Level

Table 5 presents the respondents' profile in terms of year level. Table 5 shows that 48 (25.0%) respondents are from 1st year in every program, 48 (25.0%) respondents are from 2nd year in every program, 48 (25.0%) respondents are from 3rd year in every program, and 48 (25.0%) are from 4th year in every program. The table shows that the number of respondents in every year level is proportionate; the researchers include all year levels in tertiary education across all programs in the college of education except the Bachelor or Early Childhood and Development as it was joined with the BEED since it is under the supervision of the same program head. Differences in terms of their year level are necessary to measure their perceptions of gender inclusivity and the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community in the College of Education.

Table 5

Profile of the respondents in terms of year level

Year Level	Frequency	Percent
First Year	48	25.0
Second Year	48	25.0
Third Year	48	25.0
Fourth Year	48	25.0
Total	192	100.0

Level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community among respondents in general preference in terms of belief, assumptions, and biases

Table 6 shows the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community regarding general preference in terms of beliefs, assumptions, and biases. Statement 1 has a weighted mean of 1.31, categorized as a Great Deal. This means that the respondents highly recognized that gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation can be complex, are unique to an individual, and can be experienced on a continuum. Statement 2 has a weighted average of 1.34, which is categorized as a Great Deal; this implies that the respondents are very aware of their own and others' attitudes toward LGBTQ students, and this can impact their interactions. Statement 3 has a weighted average of 1.70 that falls under the 'Moderately Deal' category, which implies that some respondents cannot assume a student's gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation, and others can. This implies that the college of education is gender inclusive and has a high level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community. According to Fontanella et al. (2013), globally, gender identity is ambiguous due to differing perspectives on how gender can be expressed of experience, which causes variations in attitudes, behaviors, feelings, and beliefs among various identification profiles. This explains why statement 3 is described as moderately deal compared to other statements; there is a recognition of the uniqueness of other genders, gender identities, and sexual orientations, but they cannot assume a person's gender identity by just referring to their physical attributes, way of speaking, the way they dress up or even how they present their self to other people.

In general, preference in terms of belief, assumptions, and biases in the gathered data from the respondents has a weighted mean of 1.45, which is described as a "great deal." this implies that there is an awareness in the College of Education regarding LGBTQIA+ Community. This also implied that there is a high level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community when assessing their beliefs, assumptions, and biases. The respondents have a high level of recognition of the presence of the LGBTQIA+ Community, and they are aware of their attitudes toward them with the impact of the said action. Somehow, the respondents barely assume someone's gender, gender identity and even their sexual orientation, which is reflected in the weighted mean of the 3rd statement of Table 6.

Table 6

Level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community among respondents in general preference in terms of belief, assumptions, and biases

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I recognize that gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation can be complex, are unique to an individual, and can be experienced on a continuum.	1.31	Great Deal
2. I am aware of my own and others' attitudes towards LGBTQ students can impact our interactions.	1.34	Great Deal
3. I cannot assume a student's gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.	1.70	moderately Deal
Average Weighted Mean	1.45	Great Deal

Legend: 1.00 – 1.67 Great Deal: 1.68 – 2.34 Moderately Deal: 2.35 – 3.00 Minimally or not at all

Level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community among respondents in general preference in terms of using terminology and language

Table 7 shows the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community in general preference in terms of using terminology and language with a weighted average of 1.58, which falls under the description; frequently, that implies a high level of gender inclusivity and a high level of LGBTQIA+ acceptance. The statements from 1 to 3 in the General Preference in terms of using terminology and language fall under frequently, which means that students in the college of education utilize appropriate language and terminologies in dealing with the members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

This is supported by the study of Tavits & Perez (2019), who conducted three survey tests to provide evidence about how the usage of gender-neutral pronouns affects public perceptions of gender equality and tolerance for the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community. The findings show that when men employ gender-neutral pronouns independently, their mental salience decreases. This change is linked to a decrease in bias against traditional gender norms and classifications, as evidenced by increased support for women and LGBT people in public life. The college of education students are well - aware of the terminologies they use when communicating with an LGBTQIA+ member.

In general, there is a weighted mean of 1.58, which is categorized as "frequently," which implies a high level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community in the College of Education about general preference in terms of terminology and language. This pointed out that the students in the College of Education use appropriate terminologies and languages to deal with and interact with people in the LGBTQIA+ Community.

Table 7

Level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community among respondents in general preference in terms of using terminology and language

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I use neutral terms (e.g., “partner” instead of “boyfriend” or “girlfriend”) to describe students’ romantic relationships instead of making assumptions.	1.64	Frequently
2. I use inclusive terminology (e.g., using individuals’ chosen names/pronouns, not assuming genders of individuals’ friends, family members, or romantic partners) in conversations with students, peers, and community members.	1.55	Frequently
3. I use students’ chosen name(s) in all school environments, including abbreviations and pronouns [e.g., Jim vs. James; Natalie (she, her) vs. Nathan (he, him)].	1.55	Frequently
Average Weighted Mean	1.58	Frequently

Legend: 1.00 – 1.67 Frequently: 1.68 – 2.34 Occasionally: 2.35 – 3.00 Rarely or Never

Level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community among respondents in general preference in terms of using your voice to educate or support others

Table 8 shows the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community when assessed by their general preference in terms of using one's voice to educate or support others. Statement 1 has a weighted mean of 1.73, which falls under the category occasionally, which implies that there is lesser participation from the respondents upon correcting those around them if they hear others using incorrect, outdated, derogatory, or harmful language or terminology towards LGBT members. Statement 2 falls under the category occasionally as it has a weighted average of 1.73; this implies that the respondents occasionally advocate for LGBTQ-inclusive and affirming materials in all school and classroom environments. Statement 3 has a weighted average of 1.63, which belongs to the category frequently; unlike other statements, the respondents frequently practice this statement. This implies that if they see or hear harmful situations or comments such as bullying, harassment, or physical/emotional violence, they intervene whenever possible. Statement 4 has a weighted average of 2.23, which implies a lesser participation from the respondents in the school's gay-straight alliance/gender and sexuality alliance. Table 8 has a general description of occasionally as it has an average weighted mean of 1.83, which means that in the college of education, there is a lesser movement towards using their voices in educating others regarding the LGBTQIA+ Community. One major theory of social change concerning LGBTQ acceptance of those groups is the idea that contact with members of a minority group increases social acceptance of the group.

Some researchers provide ways to educate and support others toward LGBTQIA+ Community acceptance. According to Russel et al. (2021), schools are often unsafe for LGBTQ students as they experience discrimination from other classmates.

They enumerated ways of protecting LGBTQ+ groups, such as creating a policy that identifies and enumerates protected groups like the LGBTQ+ community. They also include professional development by providing school personnel a tool to protect and support students, including SOGIE-inclusive curricula and providing students with resources, support, and inclusion. Lastly is the presence of student-led clubs to improve students' experience and well-being. Among all the statements, it is observed that statement 3 only has a high remark of frequently, which implies high and strong participation from the respondents to gender-related bullying and violence.

The average weighted mean of Table 8 is 1.83, described as "occasionally," which implies a moderate level of acceptance in the LGBTQIA+ Community. This pointed out that the students in the College of Education barely step up and use their 40 voices to educate others and advocate LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. In addition, the respondents occasionally participate in activities advocating LGBTQIA+ activity.

Table 8

Level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community among respondents in general preference in terms of using your voice to educate or support others

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I correct those around me if I hear them using incorrect, outdated, derogatory, or harmful language or terminology.	1.73	Occasionally
2. I advocate for LGBTQ-inclusive and affirming materials in all school and classroom environments.	1.73	Occasionally
3. If I see or hear harmful situations or comments (e.g., bullying, harassment, or physical/emotional violence), I intervene whenever possible.	1.63	Frequently
4. I participate in my school's Gay Straight Alliance /Genders and Sexualities Alliance (GSA).	2.23	Occasionally
Average Weighted Mean	1.83	Occasionally

Legend: 1.00 – 1.67 Frequently: 1.68 – 2.34 Occasionally: 2.35 – 3.00 Rarely or Never

Table 9 shows the test of significant differences in the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community among the respondents when analyzed according to their profile. The respondents' level of acceptance does not significantly differ with their age, sex and year level as evident with their p-values above 0.05 level of significance (0.751, 0.458 and 0.432, respectively). However, when their level of acceptance significantly differ when analyzed as to their course/program (p-value 0.000).

The results imply that no matter what age group, gender, or year level the respondents belong to, is not a factor in the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community. As presented in Table 9, among all the profiles presented by the respondents,

the course/program rejected the hypothesis. This imposes that the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community matters with the respondents' course/program they are enrolled in.

One way to foster equity in the classroom is to implement a curriculum that includes LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) persons. According to data, stand-alone lessons in social science and humanities courses were the most common settings for teaching LGBTQ-inclusive curricula. LGBTQ-inclusive curricula never fulfilled social justice education criteria, but they frequently provided forums for important discussions about structural discrimination. For example, educators frequently overlooked opportunities to address LGBTQ bullying and neglected to act while an inclusive curriculum was being implemented. Some kids emphasized how the curriculum matched their identities and fostered a welcoming school environment while learning positive LGBTQ themes. The implications for fair education are talked about. (Snapp et al., 2015). This is one of the main reasons why the program/course matters in the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community, especially in a school setting. As mentioned in the literature above, the integration of LGBTQIA+ was applied solely to social sciences. This explains why there is a moderate level of acceptance in the LGBTQIA+ Community when respondents are assessed for their program/course.

Table 9

Kruskal-Wallis Test of significant difference in the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community among the respondents when analyzed as to their profile

Profile	Level of Acceptance			
	Test Statistics			Decision @0.05
	H test	U test	P value	
Age	0.574	-	0.751	Fail to Reject Ho
Sex	-	4324.00	0.458	Fail to Reject Ho
Course/Program	27.389	-	0.000	Reject Ho
Year Level	2.750	-	0.432	Fail to Reject Ho

Conclusion

Most respondents were 21 years old and above, and there was an equal number of males and females. As regards the level of acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community among respondents in general preference in terms of belief, assumptions, and biases indicates students are highly inclusive in identifying gender identities. Legal recognition of gender identities is a vital step towards equality and inclusivity. In terms of terminology and language, the College of Education students habitually exercise language and terminologies that won't reinforce gender stereotypes. In general, the preference for using voice to educate or support other students is still being worked on, broadening their horizons further, addressing barriers, and expanding efforts to move further towards being an ally. Age, gender, and year level of the student do not influence gender inclusivity and for accepting the LGBTQIA+ Community. The course/program influences the acceptance level of the LGBTQIA+ Community in the College of Education.

With the results of the study, the following recommendations are hereby offered: (1) parents play a crucial role in fostering acceptance and gender inclusivity. They can educate themselves about LGBTQ+ issues, engage in open conversations with their children, and create a supportive environment where diversity is celebrated. Encouraging empathy, respecting pronouns, and being allies in the community are impactful ways to promote acceptance; (2) comprehensive organization of any may expand its mission not only to be a source of support for parents of gay children but also to support the siblings, children, and friends of LGBTQ people. Something that an organization should provide support and resources that focus on pro-gay legislation and Youth and Schools, which gives tools and resources to schools to promote a safe environment for LGBTQ students; (3) absolutely, fostering inclusive environments in schools is crucial for the well-being and success of all students, including LGBTQ+ youth. It is about creating spaces where everyone feels valued and supported, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Education is not just about academics; it is also about nurturing a positive and accepting community. Schools are essential to the academic and health growth of all young people, especially LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) kids. One tactic to enhance the well-being and scholastic achievement of all young people is to establish and maintain inclusive educational settings, policies, programs, and practices that include LGBTQ adolescents. When we talk about inclusive education, we mean that there are explicit policies or procedures that cater to the needs of LGBTQ students who might otherwise be marginalized or excluded because of things like their gender identity or expression or sexual orientation; and (4) this tool may be used by district and school personnel who wish to help LGBTQ students feel more accepted in their learning environment. It can also be used to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the inclusive policies, programs, and practices currently in place at the school level and individual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors that promote inclusivity. This tool is designed for school staff to evaluate their understanding, attitudes, and actions that contribute to LGBTQ+ inclusivity. It helps identify areas of strength and weakness in individual and school-level policies, programs, and practices promoting inclusiveness.

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