

# PLIGHT OF HOMOSEXUAL LEARNER: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*This study delves into the experiences and challenges faced by homosexual learners within the educational setting. Homosexual students often encounter unique obstacles that can impact their academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. Through in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis, this research explores the individual narratives of homosexual learners from diverse backgrounds and contexts. The study investigates themes such as identity formation, acceptance, discrimination, coping strategies, and support systems within the school environment. Additionally, it examines the role of educators, peers, and institutional policies in shaping the experiences of homosexual students. By shedding light on the plight of homosexual learners, this study aims to inform educational stakeholders and policymakers about the specific needs and concerns of this marginalized group, ultimately advocating for more inclusive and supportive educational environments.*

**Keyword:** - Homosexual Learners, Experiences, Challenges, Coping Strategies, Support System, Educational Environments, Phenomenological Research

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines has created great development in promoting gender equality by implementing measures like the Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710), which mandates the incorporation of gender sides in policies and programs. The Gender and Development (GAD) is a vital framework for addressing gender-related issues to foster sensitivity and equality across all sectors, including education. However, despite these changes, schools in the Philippines continue to face challenges related to the presence of homosexual learners. These students face gender biases which result in bullying, discrimination, anxiety, and stigma caused by their sexual orientation and gender identity. Understanding and addressing these challenges are crucial for establishing wide-ranging and supportive educational environments for all learners. According to research by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in the United States, because of stigma and prejudice, homosexual learners are more likely than their heterosexual peers to experience low academic achievements, absenteeism, and drop out of school [5]. Likewise, a study that took place in Canada discovered that homosexual students had lower grades and higher absenteeism rates because of bullying and harassment [7].

A study conducted in the Philippines by the Philippine LGBT Chamber of Commerce found that 75% of homosexual students faced discrimination in school, which can have an impact on their academic performance [8]. Furthermore, the Department of Education (DepEd) found that harassment and bullying in schools were common, affecting students' academic growth and general well-being, including homosexual learners [6].

In Nabunturan, Davao de Oro, specifically at Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School, class advisers have observed different academic and behavioral outcomes among homosexual learners. Some students flourish academically and demonstrate leadership while others struggle. Despite inclusive education efforts and support for gender equality within the school setting, homosexual learners face challenges such as discrimination,

bullying, and humiliation. These incidents occasionally limit their academic potential and interest in learning as well as low morale.

Due to the present situation, I realized that a study was required to gain insight into the real-life experiences of homosexual students to fully understand them by examining and discovering their perceptions and hopes, thereby adding to the comparatively scant research on the subject. The findings of this study will provide insight into the difficulties they encounter and the strategies they employ to be successful. This can then be utilized to shape procedures and policies that promote inclusivity and assist students who identify as homosexual by adding a specific program included in the Gender and Development Plan of the school.

## 2. METHODS

This explains the research design, research locale, role of the researcher, research participants, data collection procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness, and credibility as well as ethical considerations.

### 2.1 Research Design

This study utilized qualitative phenomenological research design for several reasons. Firstly, the research questions explore the participants' experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and insights. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that focuses on comprehending the common experiences of individuals within a particular group [1]. The primary objective of this approach is to describe the phenomenon. Therefore, this methodology is effective for identifying whether struggles or difficulties exist among homosexual learners. In addition, phenomenology not only seeks to uncover the meaning of the experience but also delves into the participants' inner consciousness. Since interactions are deeply intertwined with personal emotions, it is crucial to examine the underlying consciousness behind their experiences. The researcher will investigate the experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and realizations of junior high school and senior high school students, along with suitable plans, programs, and activities for homosexual learners. This comprehensive approach will serve as a complete understanding of the phenomenon.

### 2.2 Research Locale

The research study was conducted at Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School, Poblacion, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro, a public school and almost 5 kilometers away from the Schools Division Office. Nabunturan was formerly a barrio within the Municipality of Compostela. Buntod, the Cebuano word for "mountain", is where the name originated. Nabunturan is one of the 11 municipalities of Davao de Oro, a first-class municipality labeled as the 'Heart of the Valley'. It is the capital of the province. It is renowned for its extensive agriculture and stunning natural beauty. The town is composed of 28 barangays. As per the 2020 census, the population of this area is 84,340.

The school is easy to access since it is in Poblacion, Nabunturan, Davao de Oro fronting the Nabunturan Central Elementary School SPED Center and neighboring Barangay Hall of Poblacion of the municipality. It is situated along the highway. NNCHS is the only comprehensive school in the province of Davao de Oro.

### 2.3 Role of the Researcher

As a researcher, I evaluated the thoughts and feelings of study participants by adhering to Fink's seven roles: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting [3]. These involve asking individuals to discuss topics that might be very personal to the participants. For this study, I collected information via in-depth interviews. I ensured that the research was ethically conducted while fulfilling the roles of interviewer, transcriptionist, and primary data analyst.

As a researcher and the primary data analyst, my role is crucial to the success of this study. Initially, I got a letter of endorsement from the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research Ethics Committee. Additionally, I asked for the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent for the demeanor of the study, once approved, I drafted a letter addressed to the School Principal where the prospective informants and participants were enrolled. Upon receiving approval, I performed the orientations and interviews with the participants. Subsequently, I turned in the information to have the results transcription verified.

As an interviewer, I served as the main facilitator for gathering information from participants, while also upholding the ethical standards of qualitative research. My foremost objective was to build connections with the individuals involved. They were guaranteed confidentiality and protection, ensuring the research was conducted appropriately. Participants were invited voluntarily and provided their consent through signed agreements, affirming their willingness to be part of the study. This approach ensured that participants were not coerced or pressured into participating.

## **2.4 Research Participants**

For this study, participants were selected via purposive sampling, a non-probability method, from a single subgroup characterized by similarity: JHS and SHS of Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School. The sample consisted of five learners who were officially enrolled during the School Year 2023-2024 and considered homosexual learners.

Participants had to fulfill specific requirements to be included in the study. These criteria included being registered learners of Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School for the School Year 2023-2024 and identifying as homosexual. Additionally, participants needed to agree to engage in an in-person, face-to-face interview and be at ease with the interview being recorded for research purposes. Finally, getting informed consent was crucial to take part in the study.

## **2.5 Data Collection Procedure**

The researcher employed an interview guide to prompt responses from the participants, focusing on their experiences, challenges, coping strategies, realizations, and plans, programs, and activities for homosexual learners. The Dean of Graduate Studies and Review and Ethics Committee had endorsed the research before it was started, and the Superintendent of the Schools Division and the School Principal where these students are enrolled granted approval. Following approval, a form of informed consent that described the purpose of the study and guaranteed the privacy of the supplied data was used to get participants' involvement. Data was collected through in-depth interviews conducted with each participant over a month. Subsequently, responses were transcribed and submitted to the data analyst. The replies were used to identify themes and interpret the data accordingly.

## **2.6 Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, data analysis is pivotal for extracting meaningful insights and understanding complex phenomena. This process involves several key stages that transform raw data into rich, interpretable findings. According to Flick, data analysis, which entailed the systematic and iterative process of identifying, evaluating, and decoding structures, concepts, and patterns within the data, was a significant element of qualitative research [4]. The steps of qualitative data analysis included familiarizing oneself with the data, coding, developing themes, and then analyzing and interpreting those themes. Researchers acquainted themselves with the information by going through it and rereading it, forming written notes, and documenting early observations. Researchers found initial concepts and trends that could direct further investigation using this method.

The next step was coding, which entailed finding and classifying portions of the data that pertained to concepts, notions, or patterns. The data processing took place during the transcribing phase of the results. The individual interview was transcribed for this study, and statements that related to this topic were broken down into central concepts that corresponded to thoughts. The data was categorized before being extensively examined in a thematic analysis as part of the data analysis process. The participants' responses were sorted into significant themes that described the multiple facets of the occurrence. Thematic analysis was used to ensure that the participant replies were properly analyzed. Triangulation was employed by comparing responses across informants to identify commonalities and assess whether the reported experiences aligned with observable student experiences.

## **2.7 Trustworthiness and Credibility**

The correctness, validity, and dependability of study findings were all influenced by principles of trustworthiness and credibility.

Trustworthiness refers to the reliability, credibility, and accuracy of the study's findings. It involves evaluating four factors in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

1. **Credibility:** The study used a reputable research method and expert assistance. Homosexual learners from NNCHS were selected through purposive sampling based on adviser identification. In-depth interviews were conducted with participants who had provided consent, ensuring honesty. The study's findings reflect credible information from accurately transcribed and interpreted interview responses.
2. **Transferability:** The study provided comprehensive overviews of the research topic and participants. Purposive sampling was used to select homosexual learners from NNCHS, ensuring the findings were relevant to similar groups. Rich, contextual information from in-depth interviews supports the applicability of the findings.
3. **Dependability:** The study employed a reputable research method with expert assistance. Rigorous steps, such as obtaining participant consent and meticulously transcribing and interpreting viewpoints, were taken to ensure consistent findings that could be replicated in similar studies.
4. **Confirmability:** The study maintained objectivity and used systematic procedures for data collection and analysis. Detailed records of interviews, including transcriptions and notes, were kept safeguarding findings accurately reflected participants' viewpoints without researcher bias. Expert involvement helped minimize biases and enhance the neutrality of the results.

## 2.8 Ethical Considerations

During the research process, all participants were requested to provide consent and were briefed on the study's objectives, ensuring participation would not harm on anyone. It was emphasized that all information gathered would be used exclusively for the study's purposes. The researcher pledged to conduct the study impartially, striving to minimize bias or self-deception.

Confidentiality was paramount and strictly maintained by the researcher. With participants' consent, all collected data underwent numerical marking and coding techniques, ensuring informants remained anonymous.

In phenomenological analysis, conversational methods are typically employed, with unstructured interviews regarded as particularly valuable for gathering data on sensitive topics [2]. Moreover, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity is an ethical imperative for researchers. In cases where achieving complete anonymity is challenging, every effort is made to uphold the principle of privacy.

## 3. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the research findings related to the questions that explored the experiences, difficulties, coping strategies, and realizations of homosexual learners. The focus of the investigation was on how to understand and help homosexual learners in their different plights. The selection of research participants was through a purposive sampling method at Nabunturan National Comprehensive High School, Davao de Oro. Being a homosexual learner, each of the 5 informants, the essential number of samples for the in-depth interview, has distinct goals.

After conducting a content analysis of the responses, the themes that appeared in each answer were identified. The identities of research participants were concealed using codes, in compliance with the qualitative research's ethical requirements. The presentation of the findings was done following the research questions that have been used in this investigation.

What experiences do the informants have as a homosexual learner?

This section represents the results of the 1st major research question: 'What experiences do the informants have as a homosexual learner?' For this major research question, data and information were gathered using three research questions. The inquiries were anticipated to understand data on how research participants described themselves as being a person, a homosexual learner, and their experiences.

### Description of Oneself as a Person

The themes in this part came from specific research question 1.1. 'How would you describe yourself as a person?'. Five themes were generated from responses: sometimes felt ashamed of gender, dedicated as a person, aware of being gay, insecure of looks, and a good example to family.

### Description of Oneself as Homosexual Learners

This part shows the findings of the given research question 1.2. 'How would you describe yourself as a homosexual learner?' within the 1st major research question 'What experiences do the informants have as a homosexual learner?' The themes that emerged from the study were attracted to the same sex, doubting about own identity, being hectic endeavors, being attracted to both genders.

### Unforgettable Experiences as a Homosexual Learner

This part shows the findings of the given research question 1.3. 'What are your unforgettable experiences as a homosexual learner? Under the 1st major question 'What experiences do the informants have as homosexual learner?' The following themes generated from responses are none, humiliated in public, attracted to a girl, attracted to the same sex, and being discriminated.

#### What are the challenges or problems they encountered as homosexual learners?

This part shows the results of the 2nd major research question 'What are the challenges or problems they encountered as homosexual learners?' Three distinct questions were engaged to collect data for this interrogation emphasizing the challenges encountered by the homosexual learners in their families and school and how these challenges affect them as well as their study.

### Challenges or Problems Encountered in One's Family as a Homosexual Learner

The themes that emerged from the responses of the research informants to the specific research 2.1 'What are the challenges or problems you encountered in your family as a homosexual learner?' are found in this section. The emerging themes were being asked by mother for being lesbian, conflict with family due to gender preference, being told as social scourge, judged being a lesbian, and forced to be straight.

### Challenges or Problems Encountered in School as a Homosexual Learner

The themes that came up from the answers of the research informants to research question 2.2 'What are the challenges or problems you encountered in school as a homosexual learner?' are presented in this part. The emerging themes were the following: dress code set by the school, bullying, none, and discrimination.

### Ways these Challenges or Problems Affect the Informants

This part shows the findings of research question 2.3. 'How do these challenges or problems affect you and your studies?' within the 2nd major research question 'What are the challenges they encountered as homosexual learners?' The themes that emerged from the study were not affected, feeling of being ostracized as gay, made to overthink, and made to feel useless.

#### How do the informants overcome the challenges of being a homosexual learner?

This section represents the results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> major research question: 'How do the informants overcome the challenges of being a homosexual learner?' For this major research question, data and information were gathered using two research questions. The questions were intended to collect information on how research participants cope with the challenges encountered at home and related studies.

### Ways to Cope with the Challenges Encountered at Home

This section shows the findings of the specific research question 3.1. 'How do you cope with the challenges you encounter in your home?' within the 3rd major research question 'How do the informants overcome the challenges of being a homosexual learner?' Five themes emerged from the study; support from the family, offer prayers to God, being understanding, not brood it over, and express self towards other people.

### Ways to Cope with the Challenges Encountered Relating to Studies

This section shows the findings of specific research question 3.2. ‘How do you cope with the challenges you encounter relating to your studies?’ within the 3rd major research question ‘How do the informants overcome the challenges of being a homosexual learner?’ Three themes were revealed from the study; with the help of the teachers, none since not bothered at all, and not brood it over.

Based on real-life experiences, what are the lessons that the informants learn and realizations in life?

This section represents the results of the 4th major research question: ‘Based on real-life experiences, what are the lessons that the informants learn and realizations in life?’ For this major research question, data and information were gathered using two research questions. The questions were intended to hear information on the lessons learned from homosexual experiences and their hopes and dreams for the future.

#### Lessons Drawn from One’s Experiences

The themes in this part came from specific research question 4.1. ‘What lessons have you drawn from your experiences?’. Five themes were generated from the responses: follow the dress code, take everything into consideration, not to make a big deal about it, never give up, and not to depend on others.

#### Hopes and Dreams for the Future Notwithstanding One’s Experiences

The themes in this part came from specific research question 4.2. ‘What are your hopes and dreams for the future, notwithstanding your experiences?’ Four themes were generated from the responses: finish school to help parents, to be an educator, no more bullying against homosexuals and to become a chef.

What are the gender plans, programs, and activities of the school that will be helpful to the informants?

This section represents the results of the 5th major research question: ‘What are the gender plans, programs, and activities of the school that will be helpful to the informants?’ For this major research question, data and information were gathered using three specific research questions. The questions were intended to hear information on how research participants described themselves as being a person, a homosexual learner, and their experiences.

#### Plans, Programs, and Activities of the School Appropriate for Homosexual Learners

The themes in this part came from specific research question 5.1. ‘What are the plans, programs, and activities of the school that will be appropriate for you as a homosexual learner?’ Four themes were generated from responses: make LGBT students feel welcomed, no suggestions yet, venue for homosexual to speak up, and information dissemination on homosexuality.

#### Ways Plans, Programs, and Activities Helpful to Homosexual Learners

The themes in this part came from specific research question 5.2. ‘How will these plans, programs, and activities be helpful to you?’ The emerging themes derived were the following: raising awareness, boosting confidence, and making homosexuals feel welcomed.

#### Number of times Plans, Programs, and Activities will be Conducted

The themes in this part came from specific research question 5.3. ‘How many times these plans, programs, and activities will be conducted for you?’ The emerging themes generated were the following: make it regular and once a month.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The plight of homosexual learners, as revealed through their experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and realizations, underscores the urgent need for inclusive and supportive educational environments. These learners often face significant obstacles, including discrimination, family conflicts, and restrictions on self-expression through dress codes and grooming policies. Despite these challenges, many homosexual learners demonstrate remarkable resilience and independence, navigating their difficulties with determination and resourcefulness.

However, self-reliance alone is insufficient. The reinforcement of family, friends, and educators plays a substantial task in promoting a positive and affirming environment. Schools must recognize this and take proactive steps to raise awareness, boost confidence, and make homosexual learners feel welcomed and accepted.

To address these needs, schools should integrate comprehensive gender plans, programs, and activities specifically designed for homosexual learners. These initiatives should include regular information drives, capacity development training, and gender sensitivity training, ensuring all learners know and value varied sexual orientations and gender identities. In addition, policies ought to be revisited to allow greater freedom for self-expression while maintaining a respectful and secure learning environment. Constructing separate toilets for LGBT learners will effectively address the discomfort they experience when using the existing facilities.

By implementing these measures, educational institutions can create a more inclusive atmosphere that not only supports homosexual learners in their journey but also enhances the whole school group through variety and mutual respect. Ultimately, the aim is to safeguard that every learner, whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity, can succeed intellectually, collectively, and enthusiastically.

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