

Navigating the Maze: Exploring Bulacan Agricultural State College Transgender On-the-Job Training Students' Experiences for Policy Recommendation

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: On-the-job training (OJT) program environments, particularly on campuses, have typically been perceived as homogenous spaces. The failure to recognize the diverse experiences and challenges faced by transgender students can be alarming in the Philippine environment. These misunderstandings have resulted in a significant gap in how we perceive the way in which transgender OJT students navigate both their education and the world, thus hindering the creation of policies that effectively support their success. This study aimed to bridge this gap by examining the lived experiences of transgender OJT students at Bulacan Agricultural State College (BASC), both at school and in the field. It also sought to determine possible gender policy recommendations that will create a safe space and a gender-inclusive atmosphere for transgender students. There are currently no policies or guidelines in place for transgender or LGBTQ+ students at BASC. Although the Gender and Development Office (GAD), together with the Office of Student Affairs (OSAS), are very supportive, there has yet to be a blueprint for how to make the college a gender-fair campus.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative research design. Thirteen self-identified transgender OJT students from across all colleges and institutes who were enrolled at BASC during the academic year 2022-2023 were interviewed through the phenomenological lens. These students were open with both their gender identity and sexual orientation. Emergent themes were extracted based on in-depth interviews with the participants.

Main Results: The results of the study revealed the following substantial emergent themes: (1) the navigational struggle, (2) the resilience compass, and (3) the bridge reimagined. These themes go beyond mere description to capture the essence of their struggles, triumphs, and the subtle meaning of their OJT experiences.

Discussions: The navigational struggle captures the experiences of transgender college students from the time of their acceptance and integration into the school, and throughout the challenges they face with institutional standards. It emphasizes the importance of creating supportive environments and policies for transgender students that promote diversity and inclusivity, while enabling academic and personal success. The resilience compass covers the importance of understanding understanding of the aforementioned challenges, creating inclusive policies, and taking effective measures to ensure

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the well-being and success of transgender students in the educational system. The bridge reimagine captures the impact of the educational system on transgender students. It highlights the challenges that transgender students face, such as the dynamics of struggling for inclusion in the workplace, and how the educational system can either positively or negatively impact their personal and academic growth. These themes were essential in generating gender policy recommendations for BASC-OJT that are in the interest of promoting a gender-inclusive and responsive student environment.

Conclusions: The themes extracted from the study are consistent with previous research on the challenges faced by transgender individuals in education and employment. However, the phenomenological approach provides a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences behind these challenges, emphasizing the human costs of exclusion and the capacity for resilience. These gender policy recommendations will be of immense benefit to the proposal for policy formulation and implementation, which is to be submitted to the BASC Board of Trustees. Ultimately, this study has the potential to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for transgender students and contribute to their overall success and well-being.

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Introduction

The Philippines is an Asian country that is moving forward in terms of LGBTQ+ awareness and tolerance. There is a wide range of research covering such areas as society and education. The presence of the transgender community in the school is very evident nowadays. They have continuously flourished in the time since LGBTQ+ advocacy has gained prominence in the country. Transgender inclusion on campuses, on the other hand, has created tension and as a result, marginalization of trans students has occurred (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014).

Because not everyone welcomes their existence, problems and challenges have become commonplace in the community. Transgender people experience different microaggressions and discrimination not only at school, but also in the community. This has led to mental and physical problems that transgender students must face (Nadal et al., 2022).

There are currently no policies or guidelines in place for transgender and LGBTQ+ students at Bulacan Agricultural State College (BASC). Although the Gender and Development Office (GAD), together with the Office of Student Affairs (OSAS) are very supportive, there is a genuine need for tools to make the college a gender-fair campus. Consequently, on-the-job training (OJT) programs tend to operate under the assumption that the student body is cohesive, ignoring the unique social, emotional, and practical barriers faced by transgender individuals. This one-size-fits-all approach can unintentionally perpetuate existing inequalities, preventing transgender students from succeeding in their OJT roles, thus making them feel unprepared for their careers in the real world.

By shedding light on the experiences of transgender OJT students at BASC, this study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of the complexities they face. More importantly, it offers valuable insights and practical recommendations that can inform the development of

inclusive and effective OJT programs, paving the way for a future in which all students, regardless of gender, can succeed in their chosen fields.

Related Literature

The mental health of queer spectrum college students was studied to assess their academic engagement and success. The results of this analysis showed that there is a negative effect on the mental health and academic success of students who are on the queer spectrum on campus. Greathouse (2021) goes on to say it is recommended for these students have access to the following: assistance services, risk management, educational programming, peer mentoring, training, and high-quality off-campus assistance and academic support.

There was a study focused on a national program called Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, which promotes the fight against sexual violence on college campuses. The researcher utilized the queer theory to explore the positive effects and possible harm stemming from the implementation of the program. It was revealed that educators and administrations can create environments that are safe and inclusive for diverse learners that reimagines what is possible (Nicolazzo, 2015).

A policy discourse analysis study was conducted in ten schools from 1992–2010. It aimed to understand the status of transgender people on the campus. The results showed that there was a great discrepancy between the status of transgender people and the university's effort to make the campus welcoming for them. Furthermore, it was discovered that there is a need to reframe the university discourse about transgender students to make the school a gender-neutral environment (Dirks, 2011).

Objectives

The objective of the study was to critically explore the lived experiences of transgender OJT students at BASC to provide a basis for policy recommendations.

Specifically, the project aims to: (1) describe the lived experiences of transgender OJT students, (2) provide educational leaders and administrators with recommendations with which to formulate policies and guidelines for transgender OJT students at BASC.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research method that utilized a phenomenological design to enable in-depth analysis of the challenges, opportunities, and experiences of transgender OJT students. By choosing a qualitative research framework, the researchers could acknowledge the inherent subjectivity of human experiences. Quantitative data may not capture the nuances of deep, individual emotions or rationalization. Methods of qualitative observation, such as in-depth interviews and open-ended observations, allowed participants to tell their stories in their own words. Thus, this research was guided by the phenomenological approach.

Phenomenology adds a powerful element to qualitative insight. It goes beyond mere description to explore the essence of lived experience. Through techniques such as bracketing and eras, the researchers try to let go of their preconceived notions and biases and make the phenomenon appear in its authentic form. It is not the aim to comment on generally or predict but to understand the unique meaning of a particular experience holds for the individual (Churchill, 2022).

This study used a phenomenological approach to capture the opportunities and challenges faced by transgender OJT students. The researchers believe that by understanding the lived experiences of BASC's transgender OJT students, stakeholders and policymakers might develop effective and inclusive interventions that meet these students' needs.

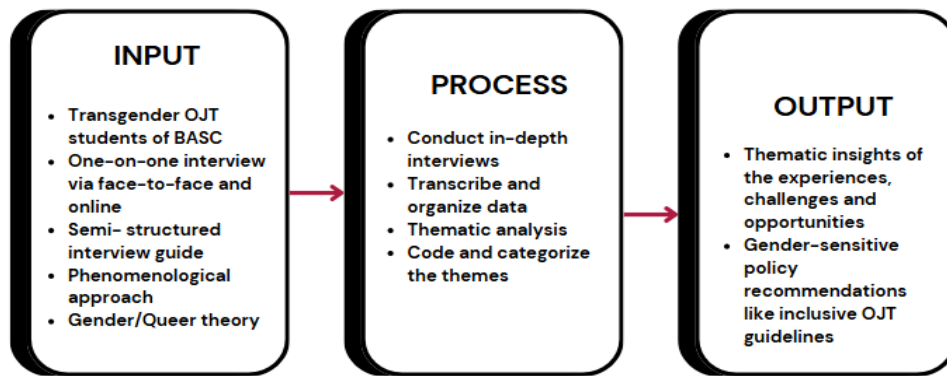


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The Input Process Output (IPO) model was utilized by the researchers to structure the study. Additionally, this study utilizes a phenomenological approach to explore and understand the lived experiences, challenges, and opportunities that transgender OJT students at BASC face.

The input component of the research framework involved transgender students who were currently or previously undergoing OJT at BASC. Data was collected using a semi-structured interview guide and conducting interviews either face-to-face or online, depending on participant preference and availability. The research, which was grounded in phenomenology, focused on the lived experiences of the participants. It was also supported by gender and queer theory to provide a deeper understanding of the social context and identity dynamics involved.

The process component involved the gathering of data from the interviews. After the data collection process, the interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis. This involved coding and categorizing significant statements to draw out emerging themes related to the participants' challenges, experiences, and opportunities during their OJT.

The output component of the process involved generating a set of thematic insights into the real-life experiences of transgender OJT students. These insights identified their common experiences, challenges, and opportunities. The results were then used as a basis for generating policy recommendations.

Data Gathering Techniques and Sampling Procedure

The process of gathering data began with the screening of informants, whereby the researchers also discussed the goals of the study with the participants. To comply with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and research ethics in general, informants received and provided informed consent forms, which provided information about the study. The form also included information about the privacy policy and any potential risks and benefits related to their participation. Additionally, informants were notified about any conflicts of interest. If the informants agreed to participate by signing the consent form, the interviews were scheduled and conducted via a video conferencing tool or in person. This study made use of a series of semi-structured interview questions. The interview form included open-ended questions that explored students' experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms in academic settings. The instrument was validated through expert review, ensuring that the questions aligned with research objectives and were clear and relevant for the informants. The researchers recorded both audio and video of the responses and took notes. The entire interview procedure was conducted under strict adherence to interview protocol.

Instructors, professors, school administrators, staff, classmates, and parents were randomly selected and questioned through focus group discussions to verify the information

provided by the informants. The interview protocol in qualitative research conducted by Origenes (2022) was adopted and modified to fit the purpose of the study.

To select a comprehensive group of possible informants and to pick out the most qualified among them, the researchers employed two strategies. The first strategy involved the issuance of an open call for participants on Facebook and postings on bulletin boards and flyers. Those who were interested could respond and communicate in private via messenger. The second strategy involved the utilization of a personal network of contacts. Informants of the study were chosen using homogenous and purposive sampling techniques (Creswell, 2015).

The inclusion criteria for this study required participants to be transgender students currently enrolled in an OJT program at BASC. Additionally, they must have had prior experience in both school and field settings during their OJT and must be willing to participate by providing informed consent. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria ruled out non-transgender students, individuals not enrolled in an OJT program, students from other institutions, those who have not completed or started their OJT, and those unwilling to participate or discuss their experiences. These criteria ensured that the study focused specifically on the lived experiences of transgender OJT students within the institution.

To ensure accurate self-identification, students were asked to provide their demographic details, including age, gender, year level, and program of study, which helped classify them into relevant groups for analysis. The researchers ensured confidentiality by anonymizing responses and using pseudonyms in the report.

Table 1. Participants' Profile

Pseudonym	Sex Assigned at Birth	Age	Course
Anie	Male	22	BSED-Science
Barbie	Male	22	BSED-Science
Candie	Male	21	BSED-English
Daphnie	Male	23	BSED-English
Ernie	Male	28	BS Agriculture
Franie	Female	24	BS Agriculture
Ginie	Male	23	BS Agriculture
Honie	Male	21	BS HM
Ivie	Male	21	BS HM
Jackie	Male	23	BS HM
Kathie	Male	22	BS BA
Lanie	Female	25	BSABEn
Minie	Female	23	BS IT

The participants in this study comprised 13 self-identified transgender OJT students (across all colleges and institutes) open about their gender identity and sexual orientation, and were currently enrolled at BASC during the academic year 2022-2023.

The age of participants ranged from 21 to 28, with a majority falling between 21 and 23. Participants came from a variety of academic disciplines, including education, agriculture, hospitality, business, and information technology. Several participants were associated with institutions located in San Ildefonso, indicating a local focus. As for gender assigned at birth, 76.9% of participants were assigned male at birth (transwoman), and 23.1% were assigned female at birth (transman).

Data Collection

The process of gathering data began with screening, where a discussion about the study's goals were held with informants. Likewise, the informants' expectations about the research were elicited. Participants received an informed consent form, which contains information about the study, and a request for a date for the initial interview. To comply with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and research ethics, participants were required to sign an informed consent form that included all study-related information, risk benefits, permission to access private information, confidentiality policies, and conflict of interest. Depending on the agreement of the researchers and the informants, the interviews were conducted via a video conferencing tool and in-person face-to-face. This study made use of a series of semi-structured interview questions. The researchers recorded both audio and video of the responses and wrote notes. The entire interview procedure was conducted under strict adherence to interview protocol. Instructors/Professors, school administrators, staff, classmates, and parents were randomly selected and questioned through focus group discussions to verify the information provided by the informants. The interview protocol in qualitative research conducted by Origenes (2022) was adopted and modified to fit the purpose of the study.

Data Analysis

After performing the initial evaluation of the transcripts and data, the coding procedure was carried out to assign codes to text segments, checking for overlap and redundancy. These codes were then collapsed into broader themes (Creswell, 2015). Follow-up interviews were conducted for additional information and clarification. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that allows for effective coding and grouping of data into distinct topics. This technique is ideal for the current study as it facilitates the identification of key themes across the dataset.

Majumdar (2022) explains that thematic analysis has become one of the most widely used and effective qualitative research methods in social and organizational contexts, due to its theoretical flexibility, ability to provide detailed insights, and its capacity for offering a complex analytical perspective. To ensure the accuracy of the data, all generated transcripts and themes were sent back to the participants for verification before drafting the final report.

Results and Discussion

Navigating the educational maze is not easy, especially for marginalized communities. For transgender students, traversing their academic journey poses unique challenges. The OJT program at BASC is an important bridge between theory and practice. For transgender OJT students, however, this bridging is burdened with unseen barriers, shaped by social prejudice and institutional differences.

This research was guided by a phenomenological lens, exploring the lived experiences of transgender OJT students in BASC, and revealing themes they extracted from their journeys. It goes beyond mere description to capture the essence of their struggles, triumphs, and the subtle meaning of their OJT experiences.

Through a series of in-depth interviews and thorough thematic analysis, this research unravelled a significant collection of themes including: (1) the navigational struggle, (2) the resilience compass, and (3) the bridge reimagined.

Theme 1. The Navigational Struggle

Participants of this study encountered challenges such as misgendering within institutions that often fail to address their needs.

Barbie mentioned during the interview, *“The day before my teaching internship, I experienced pressure and fear because, at that time, I wanted to wear the appropriate uniform based on my gender. The teachers and my adviser asked me if I wanted to cut my hair just for my own sake, they said, to avoid confusion among the students. So, I had a lot of struggles at that time. But with the help of Gender and Development and other teachers, I wore the appropriate uniform I wanted to, and I promised them that I didn’t have any problem in my teaching internship.”*

This corroborated the narratives of Anie on the positive and negative experiences at the institution to which she belongs.

“My negative experience in BASC last year was that some students bullied me based on my gender identity, but not all of them. My positive experience in BASC is the pageant competition that I joined as one of the candidates and this pageant can show all the students that my gender identity is not a hindrance to becoming a teacher in the future.”

Anie and Barbie's experiences highlight the pressures and challenges faced by individuals conforming to gender norms. Their experiences, which focus on the impact of fear of conformity, external pressures to change appearance and gender stereotypes, as well as on individual identity and well-being, provide opportunities to touch on gender interrelation, inclusiveness, and the importance of support systems in navigating such experiences.

Ernie, Ginie, and Ivie also shared a similar negative OTJ training experience where they felt pressure and fear when trying to wear attire that matched their gender identity. The teachers suggested trimming their hair to avoid confusion. Furthermore, microaggressions were quite evident during their stay at BASC as well as at the institution where they conducted their OTJs. As explored by Maji and Sarika (2023), extreme microaggressions were indeed faced by LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other sexual orientations and gender identities) individuals. This incident highlights the challenges transgender individuals face in navigating institutional norms and expectations. In conformity with Maji et al. (2023), LGBTQ+ individuals face a variety of negative experiences in the workplace, such as direct discrimination during the hiring process and within their housing arrangements. Moreover, broader issues like unsafe work environments, microaggressions, and harassment are also apparent. These challenging experiences contribute to work-related stress and require individuals to navigate their professional lives carefully when remaining true to their sexual identity and preferred manner of personal appearance. This stress can ultimately affect their job satisfaction, work-family dynamics, and career decision-making. Likewise, the aforementioned experiences may also happen to trainees and students in addition to those who are already established in their professional lives. The instances underscore the importance of support systems like the Gender and Development program as well as empathetic educators in helping transgender students overcome these obstacles.

Candie also disclosed their transgender identity, expressing their dedication to serving and educating students while maintaining a professional teaching role. This disclosure has multiple implications, including promoting open communication, advocacy, and education, prioritizing professionalism, promoting inclusivity, and establishing a supportive network. As pointed out by Hull and Johnson (2018), the phenomenon of “coming out” as LGBT has been examined across various disciplines for many years. However, most of the research in this area has focused primarily on the experiences of lesbian and gay individuals, with less attention

given to those who identify as bisexual and transgender. Until recently, psychological perspectives have largely prevailed in this field. Coming out involves the process of acknowledging and embracing one's divergence from societal norms regarding sexual orientation or gender identity. Individuals who come out must share these aspects of themselves with others, including family, friends, colleagues, and the larger community.

The individuals in this study opted to be open and honest about their gender identification. By doing so, one can foster an atmosphere of openness and confidence among peers and colleagues. Furthermore, it facilitates a more genuine manifestation of one's true self. As claimed by Armstrong and Griffiths (2023), the bond with the queer community involves utilizing dating apps to create platonic connections with other sexual and gender minority (SGM) individuals, as well as to promote trans4trans (T4T) romantic and sexual relationships. The use of such apps highlights the positive aspects of choosing to be open about one's gender identification while promoting a supportive environment in which to do so. Furthermore, it allows for the expression of one's true self and enables connections to be made within the queer community, whether the relationships be platonic or romantic. This is especially true for the transgender community.

The use of an individual's preferred pronouns - in this case, Mx - signifies recognition and respect for their gender identity. This indicates that those choosing to use another individual's preferred pronouns are trying to honor that individual's identity and pronoun preferences. The Philippines has established a national policy that mandates the use of non-sexist language in all official documents, communications, and issuances, as outlined in the Gender and Development (GAD) Code and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Memorandum Circular No. 12 series of 2005. (Vizcarra-Garcia, 2021). The gender-fair language aims to identify and rectify elements of language that create confusion and misunderstandings regarding gender. It addresses issues related to the generic use of 'man' and the ambiguous use of 'he' in English, which often promote a male-centered interpretation of language and hinder gender-inclusive communication. Despite efforts, terms like 'mankind,' 'salesman,' and descriptions like 'average working man' persist and are widely accepted in English and contribute to the problem. In a report by Ratanaphithayaporn and Rodrigo (2020), the process of neutralizing language involves substituting gender-specific words with gender-neutral alternatives. For instance, one might use "humankind" in place of "mankind," or "firefighter" instead of "fireman." As such, people must be mindful and sensitive about using the proper and preferred pronouns of LGBTQIA+ community members, as it is a form of showing acceptance and respect.

Focusing on professionalism demonstrates an individual's commitment to their role and responsibilities as a teacher, and also helps to combat stereotypes and biases. Encouraging inclusivity promotes a welcoming and accepting atmosphere and fosters politeness and admiration among individuals. Building a supportive network can provide valuable assistance and encouragement from experienced individuals.

It is up to the individual to decide whether or not to reveal their gender identity and sexual orientation. However, the approach outlined in the response shows a proactive and positive stance towards promoting inclusivity and understanding. Overall, this theme focuses on the different ways in which transgender individuals communicate their identity. Openness and professionalism are effective strategies that benefit the individual and helps to increase recognition and acceptance of diverse gender identities and orientations in academic or professional settings.

The theme captures the experiences of transgender individuals in college and the industry or school where they have conducted their OJT. From the point of their acceptance and integration into the program and throughout the challenges they faced with institutional standards. It emphasizes the importance of creating supportive environments and policies that

promote diversity and inclusivity, enabling academic and personal success for transgender students.

Theme 2. The Resilience Compass

The study found that individuals who identify as transgender often face difficulties in institutional settings that may not adequately meet their unique needs. These challenges include issues such as accessing facilities. To further explore this topic, the theme of resilience compass delves into how transgender individuals deal with challenges and opportunities while undergoing OJT.

Daphnie disclosed *“I think sometimes because there are times when there are women who, when I go to the women's room, look at me and whisper that you feel that they don't want you to go there because of my gender identity.”* This gave her a feeling of discomfort, which gave the impression of no safe space for them.

Supporting this claim, Kathie mentioned that during her OJT, people would express derision toward her, which made her OJT experience a challenging and stressful endeavour.

“I encountered a lot of discrimination in my OJT when some staff and clients made fun of me, and others said that there was no place for me there and no place for me in heaven.”

It is a fact that there are ways to shape policies that positively support these individuals, such as gender-neutral facilities, and educators and peers who are inclusive. Multiple studies indicate that gender-neutral facilities have positive impacts on LGBT individuals and the broader population. All-gender signage in workplaces can improve attitudes towards transgender and nonbinary people (Gillig et al., 2023). Gender-neutral bathrooms reduce average wait times, particularly for women, and can be cost-effective for businesses (Bovens & Marcoci, 2020). For transgender youth, access to gender-inclusive bathrooms is crucial for mental health, educational functioning, and physical safety (McGuire et al., 2021). Additionally, gender-neutral facilities benefit parents with small children and people with disabilities (McGuire et al., 2021). Beyond bathrooms, LGBT-inclusive initiatives like Safe Zone projects can positively impact campus climate by increasing visibility and support for LGBT individuals (Evans, 2002). While challenges remain, such as safety concerns and possible discomfort, improved designs, and behavioral strategies can help overcome resistance to gender-neutral facilities (Bovens & Marcoci, 2020). It is important that all students feel safe and supported, creating support groups led by the students themselves (Hobaica et al., 2021). Negative impacts, on the other hand, can involve discrimination, harassment, or limited access to resources and facilities. In some cases, the impact can be mixed, with both positive and negative elements.

It is important to keep in mind that the impact of microaggression can vary depending on factors such as location, school policies, and individual experiences. Therefore, it's crucial to understand these effects, create inclusive policies, and take effective measures to ensure the well-being and success of transgender students in the educational system.

The participants' experiences illustrate the incredible strength that transgender people need to navigate a world often filled with discrimination and prejudice. Their ability to cope with such challenges is a testament to their resilience. The theme designated as the resilience compass emphasizes the importance of identifying an inner guidance system for weathering life's storms. Transgender people exemplify this resilience by finding their inner compass,

allowing them to navigate adversity and lead harmonious lives. This theme highlights the need for support systems and changes in the policy to help individuals build resilience and thrive.

Theme 3. The Bridge Reimagined

This theme encompasses the impact of the educational system on transgender students. It highlights the challenges that transgender students face, such as struggling for inclusion in workplace dynamics, and how the educational system can either positively or negatively impact their personal and academic growth.

Jackie mentioned, *“Yes, there are times that they treat me differently because they are not informed about me. Despite that, I understand that they have strong beliefs or they are just confused. I think it is important for them to be aware or educated in terms of different SOGIESC.”* This gave the impression that she faced challenges in the industry where she conducted her OJT.

Transgender individuals face unique challenges in the workplace, including discrimination, lack of organizational support, and inadequate policies (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). These issues stem from direct and indirect forms of discrimination, which can significantly impact well-being and performance (Boncori et al., 2019). Elements that impact workplace inclusion for transgender employees consist of the ease of discussing personal matters, the level of confidentiality, the perception of a supportive workplace environment, and the backing from immediate teams or workmates. The transition period is particularly challenging due to insufficient organizational support (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). Discriminatory effects are often industry and occupation-specific, highlighting the need for tailored approaches to diversity management (Ozturk & Tatli, 2016). To address these issues, organizations should develop trans-inclusive non-discrimination policies, foster supportive cultures, and implement practices that consider both relational and practical factors (Boncori et al., 2019; Davis & Yeung, 2022). Further research is needed to develop comprehensive strategies for achieving transgender equity in the workplace (Davis & Yeung, 2022).

The impact can vary depending on location, school policies, and individual experiences. According to Meyer and Leonardi (2020), to improve the school climate, the entire educational community must be involved. Moreover, communication channels must be created where everyone has a voice. Therefore, it is crucial to understand these effects, formulate inclusive policies, and implement effective procedures to ensure transgender students' well-being and success within the educational system.

The participants' experiences are powerful representations of the challenges faced in building understanding and acceptance. The theme "The bridge reimagined" focuses on the need to rebuild social structures to promote inclusion. The participants' call for education and awareness highlights the importance of transformation awareness and empathy between sections of society. By reimagining these bridges, we can create a just and harmonious world where everyone feels valued and respected regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

Conclusion

The themes extracted from the study are consistent with previous research on the challenges faced by transgender individuals in education and employment. However, the phenomenological approach provides a deeper understanding of the subjective experiences behind these challenges, emphasizing the human costs of exclusion and the capacity for resilience.

Based on the discussion and the findings of the study, some policy recommendations that educational institutions can consider in creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for transgender students are suggested.

The first recommendation is the establishment of a gender-inclusive dress code and gender-neutral facilities. As an educational institution, it is important to ensure that all students feel safe and welcomed on campus, regardless of their gender identity. A gender-inclusive dress code policy is a crucial step in achieving this goal. This policy should allow students to express themselves through clothing without fear of discrimination or pressure to conform to gender norms. In addition to a gender-inclusive dress code policy, it is important to provide gender-neutral restrooms and changing facilities throughout the campus that can accommodate the needs of transgender students. These facilities should be easily accessible and marked to ensure that all students feel comfortable and safe using them.

The second recommendation involves the creation of anti-discrimination and inclusivity policies. Strengthening and enforcing anti-discrimination and inclusivity policies in schools to protect transgender students from discrimination, harassment, and bullying based on their gender identity is crucial. It should emphasize the need for clear reporting mechanisms and consequences for those who violate these policies. Additionally, creating support programs like the GAD program, which provides guidance, counselling, and mentorship to transgender students, is essential. Finally, establishing a centralized resource center that provides information on healthcare options, legal rights, and support organizations for transgender individuals is crucial. Overall, these measures can help create a more inclusive and safer environment for transgender students in schools.

The third recommendation involves teacher and staff training. It is recommended that training be mandatory for teachers and staff to raise awareness and promote sensitivity towards the issue of gender identity. Educators should be knowledgeable about the experiences and challenges faced by transgender students and be provided with tools and resources to offer support and create inclusive classroom environments. Faculty should be encouraged to develop inclusive syllabi that reflect diverse perspectives, including those of transgender individuals, in various academic disciplines. Furthermore, it is important to support the inclusion of LGBTQ+ studies or related courses.

The fourth recommendation involves transparency and accountability. Creating a transparent system for reporting, tracking, and addressing incidents of discrimination or harassment against transgender students is an essential step toward creating a safe and inclusive environment. It is crucial to hold institutions accountable for meeting their inclusivity goals and commitments to ensure that they are committed to providing a safe and supportive environment to all students, including transgender students. Conducting regular climate surveys is also an important step towards assessing the experiences of transgender students and identifying areas in need of improvement. These surveys can help institutions understand the challenges faced by transgender students and prompt them to take appropriate measures to address them.

The fifth and final recommendation involves student organizations and allyship. By promoting the formation of LGBTQ+ student organizations and allyship groups on campus, the college can create a sense of community and support among students, which is essential for the academic success and personal well-being of transgender students. Providing resources and funding for these groups to organize awareness campaigns and events can help raise awareness about the challenges faced by transgender students and promote a culture of acceptance and understanding on campus. This can go a long way in creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for transgender students and ultimately, contribute to their overall success and well-being.

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