Unveiling the Shadows: Exploring Microaggressions Towards the LGBTQ Community at BASC as a Basis for Gender Responsive Interventions

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objectives: People of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), better known as the LGBTQ community, often face a myriad of challenges that stem from societal prejudices and biases. One significant issue they encounter is the microaggression; a subtle yet pervasive form of discrimination that can manifest in everyday interactions, often going unnoticed by those who may not be directly affected. Microaggressions can appear in various forms, including dismissive comments, inappropriate jokes, or other behaviors that may seem innocuous on the surface but convey a deeper negative message. These interactions can create a hostile environment for LGBTQ individuals, as the cumulative effect of such microaggressions can undermine their sense of belonging and self-worth. This study aims to delve into the lived experiences of LGBTQ students and staff at Bulacan Agricultural State College (BASC). Through an in-depth examination of their encounters with microaggressions, this research seeks to highlight the emotional and psychological impact of these experiences, as well as the broader social dynamics at play within the college community. Moreover, addressing the issue of microaggressions is a crucial step toward creating a supportive and safe space for LGBTQ individuals in educational settings and beyond.

Methodology: A qualitative research method design was employed in this study. This involved in-depth interviews with 18 participants, all conducted within a hermeneutic phenomenological framework. This approach emphasizes understanding the lived experiences of individuals and focuses on how they make sense of their realities.

Main Results: From the interviews, several significant themes emerged that reflected the participants' experiences. These themes were hidden harms, silenced voices, institutional walls, and resilience and resistance.

Discussions: Hidden harms suggests that there are types of harm that may not be immediately visible or acknowledged, either by the individuals affected or by institutions. Participants shared experiences of subtle forms of pain and distress that often

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go unrecognized, highlighting the complexity of their situations. Silenced voices reflect the idea that many participants felt their perspectives and experiences were not heard or valued. There was an overarching sense that, despite their struggles, their stories and opinions were sidelined, which contributed to feelings of isolation and frustration. Institutional walls capture the barriers created by institutional structures and policies that can hinder effective communication and support. Participants discussed how these walls can trap individuals in cycles of misunderstanding and disconnection from the help they need, leading to a systemic failure to address their concerns. Resilience and resistance depict how amidst the challenges, many participants exhibited remarkable resilience in coping with their circumstances.

Conclusions: The findings illuminate the complex interplay of harm, voice, systemic barriers, and individual strength, offering valuable insights into the participants' experiences and the broader implications for understanding and addressing their needs. These results were vital to the formulation of gender-responsive services and interventions aimed at promoting gender-inclusive and safe spaces for people of diverse SOGIESC at BASC.

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Introduction

Bulacan Agricultural State College (BASC) is dedicated to providing quality education while fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone. However, like many educational institutions worldwide, microaggressions directed toward LGBTQ individuals may occur, which can adversely affect their academic success, mental health, and overall experience.

Microaggressions are subtle forms of discrimination that are often unintentional or unconscious Maji and Sarika (2024). They can manifest through comments, actions, or behaviors that convey negative messages to a specific individual or group. These acts can lead to feelings of isolation, distress, and marginalization among LGBTQ students and staff, hindering their personal and academic growth.

While several studies have documented microaggressions against LGBTQ individuals in Western educational contexts, this study offers a unique contribution by exploring these phenomena within the context of Southeast Asia, particularly at BASC, which is located in the Philippines. The environment at BASC is marked by its own unique culture, traditions, religious norms, and political history. Together, these characteristics shape both the nature and perception of microaggressions. It is of utmost importance to acknowledge and address these microaggressions to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within educational institutions.

Therefore, this study aimed to identify the prevalence, nature, and impact of microaggressions targeting LGBTQ students and staff within the BASC community. This step is necessary to take actions that create more gender-inclusive and safe spaces, allowing everyone to thrive.

Addressing microaggressions is not just an act of compassion, but a fundamental step towards fostering a genuinely inclusive and safe space where all students and staff feel valued, respected, and empowered. Actively confronting these subtle forms of discrimination within educational institutions can create meaningful change, cultivate cultures of respect, and ensure that people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) have the opportunity to succeed without fear of bias or exclusion.

This research seeks to inform future policy changes and initiatives aimed at fostering a more inclusive and accepting atmosphere for all students and staff, regardless of their SOGIESC.

Related Literature

Research on microaggressions toward the LGBTQ community in the Philippines reveals a complex landscape. Abesamis and Alibudbud (2023) highlight the challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals, including discrimination, lack of legal protection, and negative attitudes. To advance LGBTQ + rights in the country, it is essential to prioritize solidarity among the community. This includes finding common ground with opposing legislators, emphasizing shared values and issues that affect all Filipinos, addressing privilege within the LGBTQ + community, advocating for local anti-discrimination ordinances, improving the competencies of policy implementers regarding SOGIESC, and conducting research to better understand public discourses and beliefs surrounding sexual rights in the Philippines. While the Philippines is known to be a welcoming country for the LGBTQ+ community, reports show that members of this community, particularly students, still face bullying and discrimination from their families, schools, and communities. This study delves into the experiences of the first Filipino student LGBTQ organization, known as UP Babaylan. Both the challenges they encountered and potential solutions were explored. Through qualitative research, 13 members of UP Babaylan were interviewed and their responses were thematically analyzed using NVivo 11. The findings indicated that the organization has undertaken various initiatives, such as educating and sensitizing the campus community, coordinating with HIV clinics and other organizations to assist LGBTQ students, advocating for the anti-discrimination bill, and organizing UP Pride at the University of the Philippines. However, significant challenges remain for Filipino LGBTQ students, including inadequate government support, the lack of both funding and a designated workforce, and the absence of legal protections. Furthermore, mental health issues and the discrimination faced in various settings pose significant challenges. Religion also exerts a strong influence in many areas, including education and politics, which is not supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. The study recommends that more individuals be educated and sensitized and that LGBT individuals be engaged in advocacy efforts. The government is urged to pass the anti-discrimination bill, and other stakeholders, including universities and communities, are encouraged to adopt various recommendations. The influence of religion and the lack of support from the government continue to exacerbate these issues Abesamis and Alibudbud (2023).

Adeyemo (2020) underscored the negative implications of these attitudes, particularly for gay and lesbian international students, whose level of social acceptance in the Philippines' higher education system remains unclear. The author explored the acceptance of gay and

lesbian university students in the Philippines and how it affected the sociocultural transition of international students who identify as LGBTQ+. A survey was utilized to gather opinions from both local and international students across all academic departments from a private university located in Cavite province. Participants were chosen using a proportionate stratified convenience sampling technique, which grouped them by academic department and selected them based on their availability and proximity. In 2011, 368 questionnaires were distributed and 358 responses were received, resulting in a remarkable 97.3% response rate. Based on transition theory, Adeyemo (2020) argued that negative attitudes towards sexual orientation may have adverse effects on gay and lesbian international students as they transition into the sociocultural environment of the Philippines.

However, Adihartono and Jocson (2020) provide a contrasting perspective, noting the seemingly high tolerance for gay individuals in the Philippines compared to Indonesia. This suggests a need for further research to better understand the nuances of microaggressions toward the LGBTQ community in the Philippines. While progress has been made toward achieving equality and acceptance, there is still much work to be done. Unfortunately, some countries continue to show intolerance towards the LGBTQ community, making it difficult to accurately determine the size of this population. Prejudices and stereotypes surrounding homosexuality further complicate efforts toward acceptance. This study aims to examine the various cultural, religious, and ethnic factors that contribute to discrimination and to better understand the challenges that must be overcome to achieve true equality.

A study conducted by Umar et al. (2023) examined the microaggressions in academic settings in Indonesia. They aimed to design a scale that can be used to understand the types and causes of gender prejudice behavior by microaggressions. The study focused on a simple random sample of 100 elementary school teachers from Makassar. They made use of two instruments for data collection: The Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale (GRMS), and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)-qualified tested instruments for microaggression factors. The data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical tests and structural equation modeling (SEM) with the JASP application. The results of the study revealed that gender bias is the most prevalent type of microaggression, particularly when it comes to stereotypes and specific gender discrimination. The study also identified two factors contributing to microaggressions, comprising internal (cultural awareness) and external (colleagues, family culture, and social media) elements. Based on the findings, the study suggested that it is important to improve gender awareness in basic education units, promote positive family education practices from a young age, and encourage selective social media use.

A systematic review by Maji and Rajeev (2024) identified environmental and interpersonal forms of microaggressions experienced by LGBTQ individuals on campus, which negatively impact their academic outcomes and mental health. The study featured the issue of microaggressions experienced by members of the LGBTQIA+ community in educational institutions. The study reviewed 59 articles published between 2010 and 2022 using the PRISMA model to identify, screen, and review them systematically. The results showed that microaggressions can take different forms, including environmental and interpersonal. Moreover, intersectionality was found to further increase vulnerability to experiencing microaggressions. The study also found that microaggressions negatively affect academic outcomes and mental health, leading to absenteeism, attrition, and decreased productivity. In summary, the study underscores the need for educational institutions to take steps toward

creating a safe and inclusive environment that supports the well-being and academic success of all students, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Objectives

The general objective of the study is to explore the microaggressions directed at the LGBTQ community of BASC. In particular, the study aims to:

1. Describe the lived experiences of LGBTQ students and staff in regard to their encounters with microaggressions at BASC.
2. Analyze how these microaggressions impact the academic, social, and psychological well-being of LGBTQ students and staff at BASC.
3. Establish recommendations for gender-responsive services and interventions that can be proposed to create a more inclusive environment and to mitigate the occurrence of microaggressions at BASC.

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher employed qualitative research methods utilizing a hermeneutic phenomenological design. A hermeneutic phenomenology is a research approach well suited to exploring the subjective experiences of individuals and understanding how they interpret and make sense of their lived experiences (Godden & Kutsyuruba, 2023). This approach makes it possible to delve deeply into the lived experiences of participants, and in this case, reveal a nuanced and complex understanding of microaggressions. Hermeneutic phenomenology emphasizes the importance of understanding experiences in their specific cultural and social contexts. Therefore, it is particularly useful for understanding the microaggressions experienced at BASC. In the course of this research, participants were encouraged to share specific examples, feelings, and coping mechanisms.

Data Collection Techniques and Sampling Procedure

To select a comprehensive pool of possible participants and select the most qualified, the researcher used the following scheme. First, an open call for participants was posted on a Facebook page in addition to posting on message boards, and distributing flyers. Those interested could reply and communicate privately with the researcher via messenger. The next step involved using a personal network of contacts. Participants were selected using homogenous and purposive sampling techniques (Creswell, 2015). Criteria for the selection of participants included: (1) Bona fide status as a student or staff member at BASC, (2) Willingness to be open about their SOGIESC, (3) Willingness to participate in the study, and (4) Having had the experience of encountering microaggressions at the college.

Participants of this study included 18 members of the LGBTQ Community (*n*=16, 88.89% students and *n*=2, 11.11% staff) for A.Y. 2024-2025. Most of the participants of this study were assigned male at birth (*n*=11, 66.67%), and a smaller number were assigned female (*n*=7, 33.33%). The most frequently reported sexual orientation was gay (*n*=11, 61.1%), followed by bisexual (*n*=4, 22.2%) and lesbian (*n*=3, 16.6%). In terms of age, the participants range from 19 to 32, with a relatively narrow age distribution.

The researcher strictly adhered to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and thereby protected the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. They were encouraged to share honest responses. To protect their confidentiality, participants were not asked to give their names, and their identities were hidden during the data presentation. The researcher and the participants agreed on how the interview was conducted, either using Google Meet or with the aid of audio-recording devices (e.g., cell phone or video recorder). Participants were made aware that video recording was not required. Before the data gathering commenced, all participants were informed that they could refuse to participate in the study. The interview questionnaires consisted of questions adopted from Kiekens et al. (2022) as well as additional open-ended questions designed by the researcher.

In this study, data collection ended after the 18th participant, as a clear pattern of recurring subjects and experiences emerged. This showed that the researcher had gathered rich and sufficient qualitative data to meet the research objectives. The aim was not to generalize to the entire population of students and staff but to gain a deep, relevant understanding of microaggressions within the LGBTQ community at BASC. By carefully selecting a diverse and information-rich sample, the researcher reached data saturation with 18 participants and can confidently assert that the findings offer a reliable and detailed account of students' and staff's experiences.

Table 1

Participants' Profile

Pseudonym	Sex Assigned at Birth	Sexual Orientation	Age
Anie	Female	Bisexual	20
Benie	Female	Bisexual	22
Chinie	Female	Lesbian	21
Donie	Male	Gay	20
Effie	Male	Gay	20
Fanie	Male	Gay	21
Genie	Male	Gay	22
Honie	Female	Lesbian	29
Ivie	Female	Lesbian	20
Janie	Male	Gay	21
Kelie	Male	Gay	22
Lovie	Male	Gay	19
Manie	Male	Gay	21
Nerie	Male	Gay	22
Odie	Male	Gay	32
Patie	Male	Gay	21
Queenie	Female	Bisexual	19
Rockie	Female	Bisexual	20

Data Analysis

Qualitative data collected from the interviews were analyzed. After the interviews, all data were transcribed verbatim. Follow-ups were also conducted to seek additional clarification from the participants. Hermeneutic phenomenology was used to analyze the qualitative data, involving a process of bracketing, listening, and interpreting the participants' narratives. The aim was to understand the underlying meanings and themes that emerged from their experiences. Themes were identified from the shared experiences of the participants. By exploring these themes through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, significant contributions to a deeper understanding of the experiences of LGBTQ students and staff at BASC could be made, which in turn help inform efforts to promote inclusivity and equality.

Rigor

Trustworthiness was ensured through cross-validated findings, where participants were involved in checking the accuracy of the findings. All generated transcripts and themes were sent back to the participants to check the accuracy of the extracted data before writing the terminal report. This step is crucial in improving the reliability of the findings.

Reflexivity

The researcher of this study identifies as a transwoman and a proud advocate of the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, the researcher has encountered microaggressions based on her sexual orientation and gender identity in both the workplace and religious congregations. The researcher ardently seeks to address the persecution faced by people from diverse SOGIESC at BASC. The experiences of the researcher as a transwoman and as a science educator may have influenced the observations, interviews, analyses, and interpretations of the data collected within the study.

Results and Discussions

The present study examines the prevalence and impact of microaggressions on LGBTQ individuals at BASC. Based on participants' narratives, the researcher explored the subtle but persistent nature of these acts of discrimination, their unfavorable effects on mental health and well-being, and the institutional and cultural factors that contribute to their persistence. By exploring the experiences of LGBTQ students and staff, the researcher seeks to shed light on their challenges in educational settings and advocate for creating more inclusive and supportive spaces.

Experiences shared by the participants captured four emergent themes crucial to presenting how microaggression towards LGBTQ individuals affects their presence at BASC. These themes include (1) *hidden harms*, (2) *silenced voices*, (3) *institutional walls*, and (4) *resilience and resistance*.

Theme 1. Hidden Harms

As the participants of this study shared, microaggressions may appear to be minor, yet they have a profound effect on their mental health and well-being. To the members of the LGBTQ community at BASC, seemingly subtle effects may be very significant.

Patie shared during the interview that microaggressions seem like an invisible wound. These subtle acts of discrimination can leave lasting scars that are often overlooked or disregarded.

> *"One of my instructors in the institute said that she does not agree or is in favor of LGBTQ members. She said that it is a sin and because of that, there is a part of me that I am afraid to express myself as a part of it."*

Corroborating this claim, Odie disclosed the same experience where discrimination among their peers could lead to minor but long-lasting effects on their well-being.

> *"I've got a group of Ex-friends because they were bad-talking a gay guy saying "Ah he is gay that is why he has a bad attitude" and when I confronted them, they defended themselves by saying "You are exempted there since you are not that kind of gay". Then weeks later, I found out that they made a new group chat without me, which was named (GC without gays)."*

Substantiating this, Benie attested that calling them names like *"Bakla"*(faggot) might seem harmless, but this can deeply wound a person.

> *"I encountered it a lot of times, but not only that, it also happened to one of my friends. Most of the time, they're called names by people because of their identity."*

Microaggressions, subtle forms of discrimination, can have a significant negative impact on mental health and well-being, particularly for marginalized groups such as LGBT individuals and those with mental illness (Gonzales et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2011). These seemingly small actions can lead to increased stress, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and even physical health problems such as hypertension (Khalid, 2023; Williams, 2020). In healthcare settings, microaggressions can undermine patient-centered care and are associated with poorer health outcomes for marginalized communities (Khalid, 2023). Perpetrators of microaggressions often include close friends, family members, and authority figures, including healthcare providers, who may not be aware of their harmful behavior (Gonzales et al., 2015). The cumulative effect of microaggressions can lead to isolation, treatment nonadherence, and stigma internalization (Gonzales et al., 2015). To address these issues, clinicians must recognize and address their own implicit biases to avoid continuing mental health disparities (Williams, 2020).

Through the implementation of comprehensive strategies to address microaggressions, BASC can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for its LGBTQ students and staff. This may include providing mandatory microaggression training, developing clear anti-discrimination policies, establishing safe spaces and support services, supporting diversity and inclusion initiatives, and partnering with local LGBTQ organizations. These efforts will not only reduce the prevalence of microaggressions, but also contribute to improved mental health outcomes, academic success, and overall well-being of the LGBTQ community at BASC.

Theme 2. Silenced Voices

Most of the participants reported fear of retribution. LGBTQ students and staff were very hesitant to report microaggressions because of fear of being marginalized or punished. Relevant to this, they have also shared the pressure they feel from the cultural norms that hinder them from expressing themselves and being free from discrimination.

Effie recounted that the strict norms and discrimination made his academic journey at BASC very different from what he had first thought it would be.

> *"In school, they advised me to cut my hair and according to them, it is not appropriate for an Education student or male student to have long hair because they said that the student will become confused in gender and this might lead to discrimination."*

Queenie supported this claim. She also mentioned how society and culture at BASC hindered her from living in truth.

> *"As I said in the other questions, I felt uncomfortable with society and I'm not open when it comes to my gender identity as of now, I'm scared to share it with society because of discrimination."*

Several research papers on silenced voices reveal a common theme of marginalization and fear in different contexts. In cases of student mental stress, they often feel unable to discuss their experiences due to social stigma and self-silencing (Maple et al., 2010). Similarly, the historical record of Judeo-Conversas shows how women's voices and marginalized groups were systematically silenced through archival processes and historical narratives (Arsic, 2023). In many settings, marginalized voices are often suppressed due to barriers, unconscious and stereotypical perceptions, leading to limited understanding and potential silence (Elsrud et al., 2017). The workplace environment also exhibits silencing, especially for homosexuals in heterosexual-dominated environments. LGBTQ individuals may be reluctant to share their thoughts due to the fear of rejection and pressure to conform to a heteronormative space, often opting for excessive expressions of silence (Mahrukh, 2017). Together, these studies highlight the pervasive nature of voice silencing in a variety of social, cultural, and institutional contexts.

Creating safe spaces and support groups, promoting advocacy and representation, providing training and education in listening and empathy, challenging stereotypes and prejudices, and advocating for policy reforms are essential to addressing the pervasive silencing of marginalized voices. These strategies will help ensure that marginalized voices are heard and their needs are addressed, contributing to a fairer and more just society.

Theme 3. Institutional Walls

Bulacan Agricultural State College does not have adequate policies and resources to address microaggressions. Furthermore, a safe space and inclusive environment for LGBTQ people are still far from realization due to institutional barriers.

Kelie expressed his agony, which is connected to the lack of a support group. The institution is filled with people who are unaware and unwilling to understand their predicament. This led to his frustration.

> *"It makes me feel frustrated sometimes because there are a few people I know who are not open about it especially here in our institute with a male-dominated course."*

Ivie mentioned that the institution is not addressing issues about dress affirming their SOGIESC.

> *"So far, I'm concerned about the proper dress code, especially those skirts for girls, cause not all females are comfortable wearing dresses."*

LGBTQ+ students in higher education face significant challenges, including discrimination, microaggressions, and feelings of isolation (Jaekel, 2021; Woodford et al., 2018a). Institutional policies and resources play a key role in addressing these challenges and promoting inclusivity. Woodford et al. (2018b) found that comprehensive non-discrimination policies, LGBTQ courses, and student organizations were associated with lower levels of discrimination and improved psychological well-being among LGBTQ+ students. However, many institutions lack clear guidelines for implementing inclusive policies, especially at the community school level (Jaekel, 2021). Elliott et al. (2013) identified discrepancies between diversity concepts and practices in higher education and revealed that Hispanic/Latino and LGBTQ individuals regularly experienced demeaning behaviors. To address these institutional barriers, universities must bridge the gap between diversity concepts and practice and focus on low-cost or free inclusive practices to support LGBTQ+ students (Elliott et al., 2013; Jaekel, 2021).

To address the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ students and staff in higher education institutions, comprehensive strategies must be implemented that include: inclusive policies and resources, training and education, mental health promotion, community engagement, and data collection. By taking these steps, State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) can create more welcoming and inclusive environments that support the academic success and well-being of LGBTQ+ students.

Theme 4. Resilience and Resistance

Participants of this study exhibited resilience and still managed to cope with adversities despite encountering microaggressions. Some participants shared stories about becoming active advocates for LGBT rights, and how they work hand in hand with the Gender and Development (GAD) Office and different organizations to promote a more inclusive atmosphere on the BASC campus.

Chinie mentioned that an organization at the college called "Malayang Hiyas" (Free Gems), which supports LGBTQ students helped her in making her academic journey at BASC bearable.

> *"When I found out about Malayang Hiyas, I did not have any second thoughts and joined the Organization. It gave me a sense of community, that reminds me that I am not alone."*

Supporting this claim, Nerie also shared how different LGBTQ advocates at the school helped them in their struggles.

> *"From my perspective, LGBTQ advocates are such a big help for these individuals to be more confident in who they are and not to feel isolated."*

The same sentiments were reported by Donie. He mentioned that friends and supporters made them resilient.

> *"Friends support and some strangers. They gave me advice not to hide myself and build my confidence. I feel accepted by them. Also, they help me to be strong in any judgment I face."*

Recent research on LGBTQ college students and staff highlights the importance of resilience and resilience in coping with challenges. Studies show that resilience is a protective factor against depression and suicide attempts, especially in the face of microaggressions and victimization (Woodford et al., 2018b). Environmental factors such as a sense of belonging and engagement in intercultural dialogue contribute to resilience among queer students (Correia-Harker et al., 2024). However, scholars argue for a shift from resilience to resistance and emphasize the need to recognize the power of LGBTQ youth in shaping their social worlds and dismantling oppressive structures (Robinson & Schmitz, 2021). This view is consistent with findings that LGBTQ young adults reframe identity challenges as enriching experiences and develop different understandings of resilience (Schmitz & Tyler, 2018). Together, these studies highlight the importance of fostering a supportive environment and recognizing LGBTQ student agency in overcoming adversity.

To further foster resilience and agency among LGBTQ+ college students and staff, higher education institutions should create inclusive and supportive environments to ensure access to mental health services, empower students to develop their coping strategies, connect students with supportive communities, and continue to conduct research and advocate for policies that promote their well-being and inclusion. By implementing these strategies, institutions can help LGBTQ+ students and staff overcome adversity and create positive change in this academic arena.

Conclusion

This research delved into the experiences of people of diverse SOGIESC at BASC. The study revealed four key themes. First, *hidden harms* highlight the subtle but profoundly damaging impact of microaggressions on the mental and emotional well-being of LGBTQ+ students and staff. *Silenced voices* highlight the challenges these students and staff face in speaking out against these subtle forms of discrimination due to fear, shame, and a lack of support systems. *Institutional walls* point to systemic barriers in the higher education environment that perpetuate and normalize microaggressions, such as a lack of inclusive policies and a heteronormative culture. Finally, *resilience and resistance* show the strength and determination of LGBTQ+ students and staff in meeting these challenges, including their efforts to create safe spaces, advocate for change, and build community. The study provides valuable insights into the lived

experiences of LGBTQ+ students and staff and highlights the urgent need for gender-responsive services and a more inclusive and supportive college environment.

The four themes extracted from the participants were congruent with previous research findings regarding microaggressions and people of diverse SOGIESC. Through understanding the subjective experiences behind these challenges, some gender-responsive interventions and initiatives may be considered by BASC in promoting an inclusive and safe space for people of diverse SOGIESC.

"Unveiling the shadows" serves as a fitting title for this research as it captures the essence of presenting the often-difficult realities (shadows) faced by LGBT students and employees at BASC. The "unveiling" involves participants sharing their narratives and challenging the current situation within the academic institution. The title reflects both the problematic hidden aspects of microaggressions and the crucial task of making them visible to foster understanding and change.

Recommendations

The following gender-responsive services and interventions are hereby recommended based on the results of this study:

1. Awareness and education should be promoted among the BASC Community. This should emphasize the importance of fostering understanding and support for people of diverse SOGIESC and the issues they face within educational institutions. Regular and comprehensive training for faculty, staff, and students on topics related to gender identity and sexual orientation should also be advocated for. The results also suggest integrating LGBTQ+ topics into relevant courses, such as sociology and history, to foster empathy and provide a more accurate historical perspective. Additionally, the establishment of resource centers for LGBTQ+ students is proposed, aimed at offering information, support services, and safe spaces.

2. A supportive environment should be provided for people of diverse SOGIESC. To foster a supportive and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students, it is essential to implement Safe Zone training for staff, to establish mentorship programs that connect LGBTQ+ students with supportive faculty and staff, and to create peer support groups where students can share experiences and provide mutual support.

3. Policies and procedures regarding SOGIESC rights should be reviewed and revisited. There is a need to emphasize the importance of reviewing and updating anti-discrimination policies to explicitly address LGBTQ+ issues and establish clear procedures for reporting harassment and discrimination. Additionally, this study advocates for the use of inclusive language in official communications and recommends regularly conducting climate surveys to assess LGBTQ+ students' experiences and to improve efforts to combat bullying.

4. Collaboration and partnerships should be established. There is a need to ensure that anti-discrimination policies explicitly include LGBTQ+ issues and provide clear procedures for reporting harassment and discrimination. The importance of using inclusive language in all official communications should also be emphasized. Furthermore, it is suggested that conducting regular climate surveys to assess the experiences of LGBTQ+ students is needed in addition to enhancing efforts to address bullying.

Author Contributions

ABR: Study design, method conception, data collection, data analysis and manuscript writing.

Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used Grammarly (1.154.0.0, WebUI 2.12.2) to check grammar, punctuation, and formatting. Semantic Scholar AI was also used to check and recheck references. The author has reviewed and revised the output as necessary and takes full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

Ethics

This study received ethical approval from the Research, Extension, and Production Office of Bulacan Agricultural State College. All procedures adhered to relevant ethical guidelines, and informed consent was obtained from all participants in accordance with the National Ethical Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants (Philippine Health Research Ethics Board [PHREB], 2022).

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