

Academic Workplace Inclusivity Through the Prism of Microvalidations Among Male LGBTQIA+ Faculty Members

Edgardo C. Salazar

Laguna College of Business and Arts, Calamba, Laguna, Philippines

Author Email: salazaregaie@gmail.com

Date received: July 15, 2024

Date revised: July 30, 2024

Date accepted: August 7, 2024

Originality: 99%

Grammarly Score: 99%

Similarity: 1%

Recommended citation:

Salazar, E. (2024). Academic workplace inclusivity through the prism of microvalidations among male LGBTQIA+ faculty members. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 2(9), 197-218. <https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2024.0352>

Abstract. This research explored the lived experiences of male LGBTQIA+ faculty members at a local university in Cabuyao City, Laguna. It focused on understanding how inclusivity in the academic workplace, viewed through microvalidations, impacts these individuals. The study employed a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. Ten male LGBTQIA+ faculty members were interviewed to gather data on their experiences. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyze the data, resulting in thirty superordinate themes. The analysis revealed the following themes: Inclusive Environment; Restrictive Environment; Establishing Respectful Treatment and Boundaries; Discrimination Concerns; Interaction and Perception; Self-Expression Struggles; Acceptance through Positive Actions and Interactions; Colleagues as Source of Motivation and Appreciation; Students as Source of Motivation and Appreciation; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging; Personal Enhancements; Culture of Appreciation and Understanding; Professionalism; Personal Coping Mechanisms; Interpersonal Dynamics; Boosting One's Confidence; Fostering One's Authenticity; Valuing One's Worth; Improving One's Capability; Professional Growth and Confidence; Professional Performance; Positive Work Environment; Emotional Well-being; Job Potential Attainment; Job Satisfaction Fulfillment; Job Performance Improvement; Need for Clear Rules and Guidelines; Inclusive Facility Accommodation; Importance of Gender and Development Functions; Need for Full Acceptance. The study highlighted the crucial role of micro validations in promoting inclusivity and empowerment among male LGBTQIA+ faculty members. Affirmations significantly enhanced confidence, performance, and well-being in academic workplaces. The research emphasized the need to reassess existing norms to create fair and empowering environments for all. It called for fostering spaces where individuals feel valued, respected, and able to thrive professionally.

Keywords: Academic workplace; Inclusivity; LGBTQIA+; Local university; Microvalidations.

1.0 Introduction

Inclusivity is vital in the professional world, requiring organizations to prioritize and integrate diversity. Creating an inclusive workplace involves a deep commitment to incorporating individuals from various backgrounds and fostering a sense of visibility and belonging. The core principle is to treat everyone fairly and provide equal opportunities, contributing to a positive and productive work environment where individuals can thrive. Despite the importance of inclusivity, a study by Faber et al. (2023) revealed that 33% of participants were actively seeking new employment with companies that demonstrated greater inclusivity towards the LGBT+ community. Additionally, 40% of participants reported encountering non-inclusive behaviors at work, such as being disregarded, isolated, or harassed due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Less than 50% of participants

felt comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity to colleagues, and 33% of those who chose not to disclose were concerned about potential differential treatment.

Matthyse (2020) noted that while the visibility of trans and gender-diverse individuals in Western media has increased globally, dominant narratives still focus on discrimination, marginalization, invisibility, violence, and erasure. This persistence is attributed to patriarchal structures that maintain gendered oppression and inequality. Matthyse's briefing examined gender inequalities in South Africa and questioned the effectiveness of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in ensuring the inclusion of trans and gender-diverse individuals. To achieve genuine equality, governments and development organizations must address the specific challenges LGBT individuals face to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Drake (2021) highlighted the growing scholarly attention to strategies promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) in higher education. The main goal of DEI initiatives is to create a more synergistic and harmonious atmosphere, ultimately significantly impacting society.

The Philippines is also actively working towards creating an inclusive workplace environment for faculty members who identify as LGBTQIA+. Luna (2021) reported on the first inclusion survey conducted by Philippine Financial and Inter-Industry Pride (PFIP), highlighting progress in enacting legislation to protect individuals from discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. A study by Tajan et al. (2023) aimed to assess LGBTQ members' views on the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Equality Bill, finding that LGBTQ individuals supported the bill as a means to reduce and eradicate discrimination in society. The Philippine Commission on Women (2019) outlined initiatives to promote SOGIE awareness and inclusion in workplaces and curricula, including training programs, policies against discrimination, support groups, and integrating SOGIE perspectives in courses. Despite these efforts, challenges in implementation and evaluation remain, underscoring the importance of continued dialogue and research with stakeholder participation.

Various governmental, non-governmental, and academic entities have increasingly recognized the need to address gender-related issues and challenges. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued Memorandum Order No. 01 series of 2015 (CMO No. 1, s. 2015), mandating Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to ensure adherence to regulations fostering parity, impartiality, and integration. Pamantasan ng Cabuyao is committed to creating an environment characterized by respect and inclusivity towards diverse gender identities. This commitment includes a comprehensive revision of the gender and development policy, focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion, aligning with the Gender and Development Department's goal of advancing gender equality.

Addressing microaggressions within academic environments is crucial for advancing equality. Implementing microvalidations as a proactive measure can help the academic community ensure that inclusivity becomes an integral aspect of daily life. This research explored the experiences of LGBTQIA+ male professors at Pamantasan ng Cabuyao. It aims to introduce new perspectives into the ongoing discussion on LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in higher education, emphasizing the significance of micro validations in psychology.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to gather and analyze non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, and experiences. The study adopted phenomenology as its philosophical framework, emphasizing the explicit examination and depiction of phenomena as they are consciously experienced, free from unexamined preconceptions or causal explanations. Phenomenology seeks to comprehend subjective experiences by confronting phenomena with an open mind. Specifically, the study utilized Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to investigate the lived experiences of male LGBTQIA+ faculty members at a local university. IPA, a qualitative methodology, explores individuals' subjective significance and interpretations within a particular context. This approach draws from the interpretive tradition, viewing the researcher as a partner in creating knowledge with the participants, thereby providing a deeper understanding of their experiences.

2.2 Research Participants

Ten faculty members served as informants of this study. This study focused on the male faculty members of a Philippine university in Cabuyao, Laguna, who identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Due to the nature of the study, a purposeful sampling technique was employed. The researcher selected participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the study's objectives. Specifically, a homogenous sampling technique was used. According to Nikolopoulou (2022), homogenous sampling is a non-probability method in qualitative research where the researcher selects a subset of individuals or units that share certain characteristics.

In this study, the criteria applied were male faculty members from any department within the university who identified as LGBTQIA+ and had been employed for a minimum of one year, regardless of their appointment status. According to The Center (2024), the LGBTQIA+ community encompasses a diverse range of identities related to sexual orientation and gender, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and other orientations, identities, and characteristics not included in the initialism. Participants in this study met the criteria of being male faculty members who identified as LGBTQIA+ and had been with the institution for at least one year, regardless of their appointment status, from any of the university's departments.

2.3 Research Instrument

The study utilized semi-structured interview guide questions. Some questions asked are: "How do you observe the acceptance and understanding of the LGBTQIA+ community within the university?" "What challenges have you faced as a male LGBTQIA+ faculty member in the academic workplace?" "What examples of microvalidations have you experienced in your academic workplace?" "How do the microvalidations you experience influence your job satisfaction and performance?" and "What institutional policies or practices contribute to a more inclusive environment for LGBTQIA+ faculty members?"

Five experts selected for their expertise and experience in the field under study validated the questionnaire. These experts included a research professor, a qualitative data analyst, and three subject matter experts: two registered psychometricians, psychologists, and one licensed LGBTQIA+ academician. The semi-structured questionnaire was evaluated based on predetermined standards such as relevance to the subject matter, clarity, and conciseness.

2.4 Data Gathering and Analysis Procedure

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews at times convenient for the informants, ensuring they were free from academic and administrative duties. The study's objectives, methodology, and voluntary nature were explained during the interviews, and written informed consent was obtained. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect in-depth qualitative data using a predetermined interview protocol with open-ended questions. Audio recordings were made with the participants' consent, and field notes were taken to capture nonverbal cues and contextual details.

The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the raw interview data were converted into analyzable text for thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was performed to identify patterns and themes, and a coding framework was developed and applied to the data. Codes and themes were refined iteratively, with systematic compiling and clustering conducted using the software "Taguette." Inductive coding, where the researcher developed codes from the data itself, was employed.

The study applied four key criteria to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research, as outlined by the National University (2024): credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with participants and member checking. Dependability was ensured through transparent research procedures. Confirmability was maintained through reflexivity, peer debriefing, and external audits. Transferability was addressed by describing the research context, participants, and data collection methods. These criteria ensured the study's reliability and validity. The researcher practiced reflexivity to acknowledge personal biases and minimize their influence on the research process, ensuring that the study's findings were grounded in the participants' perspectives.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The qualitative investigation was conducted with strict ethical considerations. Informed consent was requested, stressing voluntary involvement, confidentiality, and the freedom to withdraw without repercussions to protect participants' well-being. Pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity, and all personally identifiable data were treated with the utmost caution. The participants' names were not disclosed but were referred to as Faculty 1, Faculty 2, ... Faculty 10 or through their shortcodes of F1, F2, ..., F10. The study secured formal approval from the university, adhering to ethical guidelines outlined in institutional policies. It also followed the LCBA Institution's Research Manual on Ethical Considerations. The emotional and psychological impact on participants was monitored throughout the research process, and adequate support was provided. The principle of reciprocity was upheld, ensuring participants had access to research findings and offering opportunities for member checking to validate interpretations. By adhering to the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the study prioritized the ethical responsibility of preserving participants' privacy rights and maintaining the integrity of their sensitive information. The study aimed to contribute to a culture of respect, understanding, and inclusivity, prioritizing ethical considerations to uphold the dignity and rights of male LGBTQIA+ faculty members.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The analysis resulted in thirty (30) themes that aim to understand the lived experiences of the male LGBTQIA+ faculty member-participants. The themes were developed based on their testimonies on academic workplace inclusivity through the prism of microvalidations and guided by the theories as a lens. These themes are discussed below.

3.1 Acceptance and Understanding Towards the LGBTQIA+ Community Within the Academic Workplace

Inclusive Environment

The theme of Inclusive Environment was derived through the convergence of the subthemes Respected and Acknowledged, Focus on Individual Competency, and Open Communication and Comfortability. These individuals expressed a sense of being esteemed and recognized by their peers and their students, who placed significant importance on their professional accomplishments and aptitudes rather than their gender identity or sexual orientation. Faculty 1 and 6 stated:

*"...I think they are not looking at what I look for in a day but at how I can address a specific topic or subject to the students."
"It is like nothing. No student disrespects us if we do our job as teachers and professors."*

An environment characterized by acknowledgment and affirmation cultivates a feeling of inclusion and tolerance, which empowers LGBTQIA+ faculty members to flourish in their positions in the collegiate body. Furthermore, the significance of assessing faculty members according to their expertise and skill sets, regardless of their LGBTQIA+ identity, is emphasized by the focus on individual competency, which promotes a merit-based approach to professional involvement. The said scenario was exemplified by the statement coming from Faculty 8:

"When HR interviewed me, I did not feel that they were prejudiced against me because of my gender. They accepted me based on..... and assessed me based on my skills and competencies."

These subthemes emphasize the importance of establishing inclusive environments that recognize and appreciate the talents and expertise of LGBTQIA+ individuals, thereby fostering a more equitable and affirming academic workplace.

Restrictive Environment

Under the overarching theme of Restrictive Environment, the subthemes of Limited Expression, Limited Acceptance, and Limited Representation clustered to highlight the common challenges experienced by male LGBTQIA+ faculty members in the academic workplace. These subthemes specifically emphasized the sad realities of being merely tolerated instead of truly accepted by students, which led to limited opportunities for actual gender expression. Faculty 7 and Faculty 8 mentioned:

"It seems like they still do not fully accept LGBT people. It seems just being tolerated, too."

"Because when you say accepted, it means fully...fully...embracing. Because it is still not fully or 100% accepted by the students and maybe by some administrators."

Faculty members feel constrained in their capacity to openly and completely express their identities due to the prevalent climate of limited acceptance, aggravated by a lack of visible representation within the academic community. As Faculty 2 puts it,

"Because there are still many LGBTQIA+ students here who are sometimes afraid to express themselves because they know there will be some discrimination."

The subthemes under Inclusive Environment aligned closely with the principles of the theories used in the study, emphasizing the importance of creating environments that recognize individual competencies regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. In contrast, the subthemes under Restrictive Environment highlighted the challenges faced by male LGBTQIA+ faculty members in environments characterized by limited acceptance and representation, which contradicted the principles of psychological safety and self-determination.

Concerning the impact of having inclusive and restrictive environments as the overarching themes, Bowling et al. (2019) reported the imperative of having a campus-based LGBTQ climate assessment. According to them, institutions of higher education persisted in being unwelcoming and or dangerous for LGBTQ students. Evaluating the campus environment was crucial in pinpointing specific areas of concern and focusing on how evaluations can drive transformation. Their research endorsed conducting surveys on campus climate alongside incorporating several supplementary recommendations. Individuals might find it advantageous to tailor these suggestions to suit their circumstances. Although the strategy undoubtedly demanded increased time and dedication, it can foster more profound community involvement in the transformation process and, ideally, yield enhanced results.

In addition, Cardinal (2021) stated that positive school climates were crucial for creating an optimal learning environment that ensured students felt safe, supported, and empowered to thrive academically, built strong relationships with peers and staff, and enhanced their overall social-emotional well-being. Unfortunately, LGBTQ students often face additional obstacles and encounter hostile school environments compared to their heterosexual counterparts due to the prioritization of heteronormative structures in school policies, practices, and curricula. It was imperative to actively work towards dismantling these structures through the implementation of zero-tolerance policies, LGBTQ-inclusive educational materials, mandatory professional development for educators, and the establishment of safe spaces specifically designed for LGBTQ students within educational institutions.

3.2 Challenges Faced as a Male LGBTQIA+ Faculty Member in the Academic Workplace

Establishing Respectful Treatment and Boundaries

The superordinate themes Establishing Respectful Treatment and Boundaries, Discrimination Concerns, Interaction and Perception, and Self-Expression Struggles were derived from the different subthemes coming from the participants on the challenges they faced as a male LGBTQIA+ faculty member. The superordinate theme of Establishing Respectful Treatment and Boundaries involved the difficulties experienced by male LGBTQIA+ faculty members in setting and upholding boundaries while seeking recognition and respect in the academic environment. Participants emphasized the importance of being treated with dignity, highlighting their need for acknowledgment and acceptance from both colleagues and students, as evidenced by the statements of Faculty 7 and 8,

"Maybe it is how they will give me importance and respect."

"And first, sir, when I first came here, of course, I was hesitant if they would accept me if the students would understand me."

They also dealt with the delicate task of asserting boundaries to protect their personal and professional identities, expressing concerns about potential unequal treatment based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. On setting boundaries, Faculty 7 and 10 said:

"Yes. My challenge is the only thing I avoid; I still set boundaries with the students."

"Although, I know that my students also know. However, maybe not only that, I am also afraid of what... So, as long as I can, I set my boundaries."

Despite these challenges, participants affirmed their dedication to establishing boundaries and preserving a sense of self-respect and integrity within their roles as educators, illustrating the intricate interplay between personal identity and professional expectations in the academic workplace.

Discrimination Concerns

Under the Discrimination Concerns theme, Gender Bias emerged as a key subtheme, shedding light on the obstacles male LGBTQIA+ faculty members encounter in academic settings. Participants highlighted situations where their LGBTQIA+ identity resulted in dismissal or disregard of their emotions by students, showing a concerning lack of respect for their authority in the classroom, as evidenced in the answer provided by Faculty 1 when asked about the question of challenges:

"For the students, it is like, when their teacher is a member of the LGBT, it is like, they ignore the... they invalidate the feelings of their professor."

Moreover, remarks pointed to a systemic bias where classes taught by LGBTQIA+ faculty received lower priority than those taught by heterosexual faculty, exposing deep-rooted discriminatory attitudes in the academe. Faculty 1 also mentioned referring to the challenge of course prioritization:

"Ah, based on my experience, sir, it seems they did not prioritize the course I teach compared to other professors."

These accounts underscored the pressing need for proactive steps to tackle gender bias and foster a fairer, more inclusive environment for all faculty members, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Interaction and Perception

Within the overarching theme of Interaction and Perception, the subtheme of Assumptions and Stereotyping has been identified as a significant challenge for male LGBTQIA+ faculty members in academic settings. Participants have reported pervasive assumptions and stereotypes related to their sexual orientation and gender identity, leading to unfair labeling and accusations based on preconceived notions. Faculty 3 pointed out as an example of the experience of the assumptions:

"...they always assume that we are part of the LGBTQIA, so it is like that... it is like there is always assumptions like that."

These assumptions have resulted in unfounded accusations of power-tripping and inappropriate behavior, reflecting a broader pattern of stigmatization and misunderstanding within the academic community, as shared by Faculty 5 in this statement:

"... it is like they always have assumptions. However, that is not in my personality."

These experiences highlighted the importance of raising awareness and providing education to challenge stereotypes and create a more inclusive and respectful environment for all faculty members, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Self-Expression Struggles

Within the overarching theme of Self-Expression Struggles, male LGBTQIA+ faculty members struggled with distinct subthemes, including Fear of Judgment and Freedom to Express Identity. Their apprehensions about being judged and discriminated against based on their sexual orientation or gender identity resulted in a reluctance to disclose their authentic selves within the academic environment fully. Faculty 8 shared

"So before starting, I wonder if our classroom setting will be okay. Will they accept me, or will they discriminate against me?"

This fear often acted as a barrier to genuine self-expression, leading them to wrestle with concerns about acceptance and discrimination from colleagues and students alike, as verified by the statement of Faculty 10 when he said

"Yes, true self. That is my problem sometimes."

Despite their desire for greater freedom to express themselves, lingering uncertainty about acceptance perpetuated internal conflict and inhibition, underscoring the ongoing struggle for LGBTQIA+ faculty members as they explored their identities within the academic setting.

The emerging themes exhibited connections to the theoretical frameworks employed. Intersectionality Theory showed the complex issues LGBTQIA+ faculty faced, noting how different identities affect their academic experiences. Self-determination theory revealed their drive for recognition and setting personal boundaries in biased settings. The themes aligned with Psychological Safety Theory, which stressed the need for inclusive environments that allow expression without fear, enhancing well-being and productivity in the workplace. Little (2022) reported that the workplace can be challenging for individuals who do not fit into the traditional gender binary. Transgender people had a gender identity that differed from the sex they were assigned at birth, while cisgender people identified with the sex they were assigned at birth. For those who did not identify with their assigned gender, everyday tasks like using the bathroom can cause anxiety. Trans individuals also faced high levels of discrimination and violence, impacting their access to education, housing, and healthcare, as well as their career prospects.

3.3 Micro-validations Experienced in the Academic Workplace

Acceptance Through Positive Actions and Interactions

The themes of Acceptance Through Positive Actions and Interactions, Colleagues as a Source of Motivation and Appreciation, and Students as a Source of Motivation and Appreciation were derived from the different subthemes coming from the participants on the examples of micro-validations they experienced in their academic workplace. Under the superordinate theme of Acceptance through Positive Actions and Interactions, participants highlighted various micro validations in their academic workplace, demonstrating acceptance and inclusivity. These micro-validations were manifested through positive interactions and gestures, such as hugs, smiles, and open communication, which conveyed a sense of normalcy and belonging. Participants noted that colleagues and students treated them with warmth and openness, irrespective of their gender identity or sexual orientation, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. The answers provided by Faculty 4 and 8 best exemplified the warmth and openness experienced by the participants:

"But people around, maybe because I am friendly. I think so. So everybody hugs me the way I am."

"As for the co-teachers, they accept it. They are open to talk about it."

Moreover, students' verbal affirmations and non-verbal cues, such as gestures and respectful behavior, further reinforced their acceptance and recognition within the academic community such as when Faculty 9 stated

"So that is where I feel, sir, that no matter what I am, even as an LGBTQ member, I am still accepted for what it is... how they accept real men and women."

These positive actions and interactions powerfully affirm the participants' identities and contribute to their overall sense of acceptance and belonging in the workplace.

Colleagues as a Source of Motivation and Appreciation

Within the superordinate theme of Colleagues as a Source of Motivation and Appreciation, the subthemes Contribution Recognition and Compliments from Colleagues highlighted the significant role of peer acknowledgment in fostering a positive academic workplace environment for male LGBTQIA+ faculty members. Participants shared instances where their colleagues recognized and praised their contributions, whether regarding work performance, creative talents, or personal attributes. Concerning these types of validations, Faculty 5 and 6 shared

"So she thanked me because... it is an innovative way for the college."

"So my heart is happy because they can see the potential of LGBT people to discuss that subject. They think that I have the experience or substantial experience to deliver such a subject to students."

These micro-validations are often conveyed through verbal compliments and expressions of appreciation. They serve as sources of motivation and encouragement, uplifting their spirits and enhancing their sense of belonging within the academic community. Such affirmations validated their professional abilities and celebrated their individuality, reinforcing the importance of peer support in promoting inclusivity and appreciation in the academic workplace.

Students as a Source of Motivation and Interaction

Under the superordinate theme of Students as a Source of Motivation and Appreciation, the subthemes of Student Support, Positive Feedback, and Appreciative Students underscore the pivotal role of students in providing micro-validations to male LGBTQIA+ faculty members within the academic workplace. Participants recounted instances where students expressed their support, encouragement, and appreciation, serving as sources of motivation in their teaching endeavors, such as when some Faculty stated

"They can consider you their professor and show that they are okay with you."

"So, some people sent messages, sir, that is okay. We accept you even if you are like that."

Whether conveyed through verbal affirmations, written messages, or gestures of kindness, students' reassurance, motivation, and gratitude significantly fostered a supportive and inclusive learning environment. These students' gestures were very evident in the statements given by Faculty 5 and Faculty 7:

"I felt very flattered when one of my students randomly messaged me out of the night, saying, Sir, I appreciate your lecture, I learned. Because you delivered it in a very light tone manner."

"It is like they are thanking me for that. They give me balloons, cakes, stuff like that."

Such positive feedback and expressions of appreciation validated the participants' teaching efforts. They reaffirmed their sense of belonging and acceptance within the academic community, highlighting the importance of student-faculty relationships in promoting inclusivity and mutual respect in the academic setting. The themes, such as Acceptance Through Positive Actions, Colleagues as Motivators, and Student Support, aligned with Intersectionality, Self-Determination, and Psychological Safety theories. Positive interactions reflected Psychological Safety, peer acknowledgment aligned with Self-Determination, and student support demonstrated Intersectionality. These findings affirmed the relevance of these theories in fostering inclusivity and well-being among male LGBTQIA+ faculty.

Traliant (2022) reported on the different micro validations or micro affirmations. According to the blog, microaffirmations were a way to show recognition and validation of an individual's identity, experience, and expertise while building confidence, trust, and a sense of belonging. They can be conveyed through gestures such as nods, facial expressions, choice of words, and tone of voice that convey inclusivity, care, and active listening. Examples of micro affirmations included publicly praising a colleague for their achievements, referencing past conversations to demonstrate active listening, and simply greeting someone as they entered the workplace.

Additionally, the blog enumerated the common micro-validations encountered in the workplace. These included making a conscious effort to pronounce names correctly; respecting and using people's preferred pronouns; inviting someone to participate in a business event, committee, or project; taking the time to chat with someone in their office, socialize, and learn about their life outside of work; actively listening to individuals, paying attention to their words, and asking meaningful questions; recognizing important holidays and milestones in people's lives; giving credit to individuals for their contributions; offering support and standing up for others when they were being discredited or belittled; providing constructive feedback that helped individuals identify and enhance their strengths; acknowledging and valuing the diverse experiences of individuals by inviting them to share their opinions and expertise; using friendly facial expressions and gestures; and maintaining eye contact with others.

These small acts of affirmation and recognition can greatly impact creating a positive and inclusive work environment.

3.4 Significance of Micro-validations on Sense of Belongingness in the Academic Workplace

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

The overarching theme of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging was derived from the subthemes of the male LGBTQIA+ faculty member-participants on the significance of micro-validations on their sense of belonging in the university. Under the superordinate theme of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging are the subordinate themes of Self-expression, Confidence Boost and Motivation, Full Potential Unleashed, Acceptance, Collaboration, Feeling of Belonging and Camaraderie, and Familial Feeling and Happiness. The participants underscored the profound significance of micro-validations in fostering a sense of belonging within the university community. These micro-validations played a pivotal role in affirming their identities and boosting their confidence and motivation. Participants expressed that being accepted and valued for who they are, irrespective of their gender identity or sexual orientation, created a conducive environment for collaboration and camaraderie. Statements from Faculty 3 and 10 saying:

"Besides, I am not afraid to show my true self to them."

"Ah, that I gradually express myself."

Furthermore, micro-validations enabled them to unleash their full potential and feel empowered to express themselves authentically without fear of judgment or discrimination, as mentioned by Faculty 5:

"Sir, it greatly impacts me because they are very open to my ideas. I felt appreciated and uplifted because somehow, sir, that little detail means something to them."

They also highlighted the importance of feeling accepted and supported by colleagues and the broader university community, fostering a familial sense of belonging and happiness. Faculty 6 mentioned

"Um, maybe the significance the school gave me is to continue in the face of adversity."

"...but I feel that I am one of them, not only for friends but also a family."

Participants emphasized that micro-validations significantly contributed to their sense of belonging, empowerment, and fulfillment within the academic workplace, enabling them to thrive and excel in their roles. Micro-validations affirm identity and foster belonging, supporting psychological safety while boosting confidence and aligning with self-determination. Participants expressing full potential unleashed and familial feelings supported Intersectionality. These themes underscored the theories' relevance in promoting inclusivity and well-being among male LGBTQIA+ faculty.

Regarding the sense of belonging, Matsick et al. (2024) stated that people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other sexual and gender minorities (referred to as LGBTQ+) often faced more physical and mental health issues compared to cisgender or heterosexual individuals. This was largely due to the added stress of dealing with discrimination. While it was crucial to acknowledge the challenges LGBTQ+ individuals faced, it was also important to recognize the factors that can help them thrive. A sense of belonging is one key element that can contribute to their well-being and reduce health disparities. Their study outlined various factors from psychological, public health, and public policy studies that impacted the sense of belonging for LGBTQ+ individuals. Using a social-ecological model, they discussed the factors that can enhance or hinder belonging at the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels. The comprehensive approach aimed to support the well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals while addressing the systemic issues that influenced their mental and emotional health. The study was a valuable resource for researchers, healthcare professionals, and policymakers looking to understand the different aspects of belonging related to sexual orientation and gender diversity.

Relative to the main theme, Verlinden (2024) mentioned that Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) were crucial in the workplace. They contributed to organizational success by increasing retention rates, boosting employee engagement, improving productivity, enhancing employer branding, raising bias awareness, and

broadening the talent pool. DEIB principles were a moral imperative and a strategic advantage in today's globalized business world. In addition, Fernandes (2021) said that belonging was crucial for individual and organizational success, especially in the current climate of increased need for connection due to the pandemic. To address this, organizations should take an integrated approach to focus on belonging, combining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) with employee engagement. Organizations can uncover employee experience differences and identify DEI issues by examining employee engagement across demographics.

3.5 Significance of Micro-validations on Overall Inclusivity of the Academic Workplace

Personal Enhancements

The themes of Personal Enhancements and a Culture of Appreciation and Understanding were crafted from the subthemes based on the participants' significance of micro-validations on the overall inclusivity of the academic workplace. The superordinate theme of Personal Enhancements has Strengthened Self-motivation and Improved Performance and Productivity as subordinate themes. Participants highlighted the significant impact of micro-validations on their self-motivation and overall performance within the academic workplace. Faculty 2 remarked

"Since we are talking about micro validation, even if it is just a small thing, you have been told about it, and your confidence has increased. It is like, yes, okay, let us do it. That is it, in performance."

They emphasized that even simple compliments and expressions of validation boosted their confidence and motivation, leading to improved performance and productivity. Participants noted that when individuals feel valued and accepted, particularly within the LGBTQIA+ community, they are likelier to perform well and fulfill their roles effectively. Such statements as those coming from Faculty 3 and 4,

"The overall performance of the faculty is that they can perform well and have no reservations in themselves."

"Because you know, like us, it seems we become more productive if people around us accept us and believe in what we can do exemplified that significance."

They expressed optimism that a workplace environment characterized by micro-validations fosters happiness and enhances the overall performance of faculty members, allowing them to work more productively and contribute positively to the institution.

Culture of Appreciation and Understanding

Culture of Appreciation and Understanding were derived from Appreciation for Diversity and Belongingness, Reduction of Discrimination, and Breaking Barriers and Inclusivity Promotion. Micro-validations, as described by the participants, served as fundamental drivers in nurturing a culture of appreciation and understanding within the academic sphere, as exemplified in the answer provided by Faculty 9,

"So micro validation is essential; that's when you will know if you are accepted in an organization or community. Because of the micro-validation, we can say that you belong to them. There is no discrimination."

Participants expressed their diverse identities and experiences through these subtle yet impactful affirmations, fostering a profound sense of belongingness and acceptance. The participants vividly narrated instances where their colleagues and peers validated their identities, transcending barriers of sexual orientation and gender identity, fostering an inclusivity and diversity appreciation. This emphasis on diversity not only fosters a deeper sense of belonging but also fosters cultural understanding among faculty members, contributing to a more cohesive and supportive work milieu just when Faculty 5 answered:

"So, that is the strongest aspect being validated right now. That is what they appreciate. So, I think it is also very important to inculcate in the minds, not just on students but also in the peers, that when the staff is validated, whether straight or not, it also creates a culture of appreciation."

Participants emphasized the transformative power of microvalidations in dismantling discrimination within the academic workplace. By acknowledging and affirming individuals' identities, micro-validations effectively break down barriers and promote inclusivity, fostering an environment where discrimination is less pervasive. Individuals feel esteemed and valued for their authentic selves. Faculty 5 answered:

"I do think very important, sir, because it prospers this culture of loving a fellow without actually giving importance in his sexual preference."

The profound impact of micro-validations lies in their capacity to blur boundaries and diminish discrimination, creating an environment where faculty members feel genuinely embraced and empowered to express themselves without reservation. Micro-validations significantly impacted self-motivation, performance, and the overall workplace culture, supporting the Self-Determination Theory's emphasis on individuals' intrinsic motivation and psychological needs. Moreover, micro-validations contributed to Psychological Safety by fostering a culture of appreciation and understanding, enabling faculty members to express their authentic selves without fear of discrimination. These themes underscored the importance of recognizing diverse identities and promoting inclusivity, central views of Intersectionality Theory.

In support of the themes generated, Navarro (2023) stated in her article that embracing inclusivity through microvalidation practices was a powerful way to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace. By acknowledging the presence of every individual, validating diverse identities, appreciating contributions, holding people to high standards, affirming leadership potential, and understanding the impact of micro-validations, one can foster a culture where everyone feels valued, respected, and included. Also, regarding total inclusivity in the workplace, Ganesh (2023) mentioned that workplace inclusion was the deliberate effort made by organizations to create an environment where every employee felt a profound sense of belonging, respect, and empowerment, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities. It involved recognizing, embracing, and valuing unique perspectives and experiences and went beyond acknowledging diversity to celebrating and integrating differences. Inclusive workplaces promote higher engagement, motivation, and commitment, lower turnover rates, higher retention of top talent, and catalyze innovation and problem-solving through diverse perspectives.

3.6 Response to Experiences of Microinvalidations in the Academic Workplace

The superordinate themes of professionalism, personal coping mechanisms, and interpersonal dynamics were derived from the participants' different subthemes and how they responded to the experience of micro-validations in the workplace.

Professionalism

The theme of professionalism with subthemes of shrugging off and setting boundaries was derived from the participant's responses or actions when experiencing microinvalidations in the workplace. When confronted with microinvalidations in the workplace, participants exhibited a strong sense of professionalism by employing strategies such as shrugging off and setting boundaries. Rather than engaging in confrontations or allowing such incidents to affect their overall performance, they shrug off the remarks, recognizing that these do not define their worth or competence. Faculty 5 completely demonstrated such an act when he answered:

"So, I just shrugged it off, sir. It is like they do not define who I am."

Some participants chose to ignore microinvalidations altogether, refusing to let them disrupt their mood or productivity as Faculty 9 shared about this,

"So I just ignored that, sir, so as not to feel bad and lose my mood."

Additionally, setting boundaries emerged as a key strategy, with participants establishing clear distinctions between professional and personal interactions, especially with students. Just as Faculty 2 and Faculty 7 mentioned,

"My approach to my students is like, okay, we can be close, but I am still your professor."

"The reason why I am setting boundaries with them."

By maintaining a professional demeanor and firmly setting boundaries, participants demonstrate their resilience and commitment to upholding professional standards despite encountering microinvalidations in the workplace.

Personal Coping Mechanisms

For the second theme of Personal Coping Mechanism with the subtheme of Laughing It Off, participants responded that when faced with microinvalidations in the workplace, they often resorted to employing laughter as a personal coping mechanism. Rather than allowing themselves to be deeply affected or expending energy on defending themselves, they chose to respond with humor, as showcased in the case of Faculty 3 and Faculty 5. Faculty 3 and 5 shared:

"Maybe if they are just joking, I will return the joke to them."

"That is it, sir. Sometimes I laugh around, and it is better than that because, sir, sometimes it is too tiring to defend."

Participants laughed off the microinvalidations in these situations, enjoying the remarks rather than taking them to heart. By responding with laughter, they alleviate the tension and assert their agency in controlling their emotional reactions to such instances. This approach allowed participants to maintain a sense of lightness and resilience in the face of microinvalidations, ultimately enabling them to navigate such challenges with grace and humor.

Interpersonal Dynamics

The superordinate theme of Interpersonal Dynamics was derived from the subthemes of Confrontation, Open Communication, and Educating Others. When confronted with microinvalidations in the workplace, participants opted for confrontation, open communication, and educating others as their chosen strategies within the realm of interpersonal dynamics. Whether in the classroom or during personal interactions, they addressed the issue head-on, expressing their discomfort or offense at the microinvalidation. Faculty 2, referring to a head-on, straight confrontation of the microinvalidations, mentioned:

"In the classroom itself, when there is a microinvalidation, I immediately call their attention to the fact that it is offending. I am reminding them to be careful with their words next time."

Some participants emphasized the importance of setting boundaries and expressing their disdain for bullying, particularly within the LGBTQIA+ community, just like what Faculty 2 mentioned:

"So, in our classroom, I always remind them that I hate bullying, especially for those members of the LGBTQIA community."

They clarified to their students or colleagues that such behavior is unacceptable and must be addressed. Through open communication, they engaged in dialogues to educate others about the impact of their words or actions. This involved expressing how they felt hurt or offended by the microinvalidation and respectfully discussing ways to resolve the issue. This particular scenario was shown in the statement by Faculty 6:

"So during that time, I just talked to him at the end of the class. I said, do not say such vulgar words because those are inappropriate for our class."

By confronting the individual privately, they aimed to foster understanding and promote mutual respect, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and respectful workplace environment. The themes revealed that participants' professionalism, personal coping mechanisms, and interpersonal dynamics aligned with the theories. Professionalism emphasized psychological safety, while Personal Coping Mechanisms demonstrated autonomy and self-determination. Interpersonal Dynamics, involving confrontation and open communication, reflected aspects of the Intersectionality Theory.

In line with the participants' experience and actions regarding microinvalidations or microaggressions, Olsen (2023) pointed out that microaggressions had a significant impact on the mental health of LGBTQ+ individuals, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and feelings of invalidation. They also perpetuated harmful stereotypes and contributed to an unsafe environment. Advocacy was important in raising awareness, challenging microaggressions, and promoting inclusive language and behavior to create a more welcoming society for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Comparable to the participants' responses when experiencing microinvalidations, Washington et al. (2020) discussed how to combat microinvalidations or microaggressions in the workplace for people of color. They offered three main ways to react to microaggressions in the workplace: letting it go, responding immediately, or responding later. Letting it go can be emotionally draining for employees and reinforce beliefs of identity devaluation. Responding immediately allowed the transgression to be called out, but the perpetrator might get defensive. Responding later involved addressing the perpetrator privately, but there was a risk of being deemed petty. It was important to discern how much investment to make in addressing the microaggression and feel empowered to respond when necessary.

Similarly, a video shared by BBC Ideas (2022) delved into microaggressions in the workplace. The video provided insights into microaggressions and emphasized tackling these subtle derogatory comments or behaviors to foster a more inclusive work environment. It also suggested strategies for handling microaggressions at work, such as explaining the impact of the behavior, providing specific examples of how it affects individuals, collaborating with colleagues for solutions, and escalating the issue to higher authorities if needed.

3.7 Influence of Micro-validations on Sense of Identity in the Academic Workplace

Boosting One's Confidence

The themes Boosting One's Confidence, Fostering One's Authenticity, Valuing One's Worth, and Improving One's Capability were derived from the shared experiences of the 10 participants on the influence of micro-validations in their sense of identity in the academic workplace. The first theme is Boosting One's Confidence. Micro-validations played a crucial role in boosting one's confidence within the academic workplace, as highlighted by participants' experiences. Whether through simple compliments or supportive gestures, these micro-validations affirm individuals' sense of identity and worth. Participants noted that such positive affirmations contributed to an increase in self-esteem and self-worth, assuring them that their efforts are recognized and valued by their peers and students, just as Faculty 4 stated in his response,

"Self-esteem, sir. More self-esteem. I feel determined because I am supported in what I do. Even if I make a little mistake, I know they will not criticize me but rather give me constructive criticism."

This boost in confidence translated into improved performance and a willingness to strive for excellence in their roles. Faculty Eight summarized all of these influences in his statement:

"I think, sir, the micro-validations that I experienced here at the university with my students and coworkers, verbal and non-verbal, had a great influence on increasing my self-confidence and self-worth because I feel I belong... I feel accepted... and it also motivates me to do more. Because I think that this university is gender friendly, I think that somehow, it is like that... I cannot say 100%, but I think this university has a high level of acceptance of employees like me, so I am giving my best."

Feeling accepted and supported by the university community motivated them to excel in their work and interactions, as they perceived the institution as gender-friendly and inclusive. Conversely, the absence of micro-validations or experiences of invalidation can have detrimental effects on an individual's morale and confidence, potentially impacting their performance and overall well-being in the workplace, as echoed by Faculty 8 in his statement,

"I think it can break a person. It can break a person's morale and confidence, which might affect his or her performance here at the university as an employee."

Thus, micro-validations are significant because they can uplift individuals, foster a sense of belonging, and empower them to thrive professionally within the academic setting.

Fostering One's Authenticity

The second theme that influences micro-validations in the participants' sense of identity is Fostering One's Authenticity. Micro-validations within the academic workplace served as catalysts for fostering one's authenticity, allowing individuals to express themselves freely without fear of judgment or discrimination. Participants

expressed how these micro-validations allowed them to embrace their true identities and convey their thoughts and ideas without reservation. This was manifested in the testimonies of Faculty 4 and Faculty 5 when they said

"Hmm... it seems it gives me more freedom to be like me. It gives me more freedom to move freely and act most of the time on those gestures. Even in speaking."

"Because I do not have to hide my ideas, those artsy things that I do, or who I am. Even in clinical practice, I do not have to hide who I am. In interacting with my patients, my students, my professors, and even my superiors, I do not have to act in a more socially acceptable way. Moreover, and how we say it, sir, I feel myself."

They felt empowered to be themselves in various aspects of their work, from interactions with students to engagements with colleagues and superiors. This sense of authenticity extended beyond personal expression to encompass a broader acceptance of diversity within the university community, where individuals are valued for their contributions rather than limited by societal norms or expectations.

Valuing One's Worth

From the testimonies of the participants on the influence of micro-validations in their sense of identity came the third theme of Valuing One's Worth. Micro-validations within the academic workplace shape individuals' sense of worth and value. Through positive affirmations and gestures of acceptance from colleagues, department chairs, and superiors, participants have experienced a significant boost in their self-esteem and confidence. As Faculty 7 and 2 puts it in his answer,

"It feels wonderful that your colleagues, department chair, and dean trust you."

"It gives me self-worth that whenever I go home, I feel accepted, and not just only at home."

These microvalidations affirm their belongingness and acceptance within the university community, fostering a sense of worthiness and validation for their contributions. Feeling valued and respected for who they are, participants are motivated to excel in their work and interactions with students. Faculty 9's responded:

"So, in an academic setting, sir, you have improved yourself. Because you are being appreciated, positive things come to you. So, it is heartwarming that even though I belong to the LGBTQ, what I receive from them is all okay, like respect. Those microvalidations help."

This validation extended beyond mere acknowledgment of their identity to a deeper recognition of their worth, empowering them to embrace their authentic selves and strive for personal growth and development within the academic setting.

Improving One's Capability

The last theme is Improving One's Capability. Micro-validations have significantly impacted individuals' sense of identity in the academic workplace by enhancing their capabilities and fortifying their personalities. Through positive affirmations and gestures of acceptance, participants have found strength in their identities, improving their overall performance and resilience. Rather than allowing microinvalidations to undermine their morale and confidence, they have utilized these experiences as opportunities for growth and self-improvement, as showcased by the responses of Faculty 1 and Faculty 7 when they shared these answers:

"So, it makes my personality strong in that way."

"Yes. I will still improve further."

By acknowledging and valuing their worth, participants have been motivated to further excel in their roles within the university community, demonstrating a heightened determination to succeed despite any challenges they may face. Micro-validations cultivated confidence and performance by making people feel valued and welcome, supporting Psychological Safety Theory. Fostering One's Authenticity promoted self-determination and self-expression without criticism, supporting Self-determination Theory. Valuing One's Worth supported both since micro-validations boosted self-esteem and belonging.

In a study conducted by Rolón-Dow & Davison (2020), students shared anecdotes about micro-validations, which encompassed actions, verbal comments, or environmental signals that made the individual believe that their thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and actions related to their racial identity or that of a group they were part of were acknowledged, supported, validated, or appreciated. These micro-validations recognized that an individual's identity and personal experiences offer valuable insights into interpreting events or societal norms. Similarly, Rose (2023) published an article stating the importance of validating identities by respecting pronoun choices, asking about names, and acknowledging individual experiences. It suggested openly appreciating team contributions, especially during dissent, to signal inclusivity. Furthermore, it advocated for holding all individuals to high standards without perpetuating stereotypes or biases, focusing on actual achievements rather than expected traits.

3.8 Influence of Microvalidations on Experience as a Faculty Member

Professional Growth and Confidence

The superordinate themes of Professional Growth and Confidence, Professional Performance, Positive Work Environment, and Emotional Well-being were crafted from the different subordinate themes. They came from the testimonies of the ten male LGBTQIA+ faculty participants on the influence of micro-validations in their experience as faculty members. The superordinate theme of Professional Growth and Confidence stemmed from the subordinate theme of the Drive to Perform Effectively and Boosted Confidence and Motivation. Micro-validations in the academic setting have significantly impacted faculty members by encouraging them to perform better and enhancing their confidence and motivation. Participants noted that these affirmations and expressions of acceptance were catalysts for their professional growth, igniting a competitive spirit and a desire to improve as educators and colleagues continually. These scenarios were accentuated by the statements shared by Faculty 1 and 6:

"Maybe I can further develop my being competitive."

"Because of those experiences, I need to improve further as a teacher and coworker. "

The positive feedback they received fueled their determination to excel, leading to a heightened sense of purpose and a positive outlook on their roles within the university community, as evidenced by the statement of Faculty 9, who shared:

"Yes, sir. You have a positive outlook. You have the drive to do the task at university. You deliver an outstanding work output because the faculty members and the people surrounding you are okay."

This encouragement and support from peers contributed to their individual growth and enhanced the overall output and atmosphere in the workplace as faculty members strived to meet and exceed expectations.

Professional Performance

The emergence of the theme of Professional Performance was from the subthemes of Improved Delivery and Communication and Improved Task Performance. Micro-validations in the academic setting have significantly influenced faculty members' experience by enhancing their professional performance, particularly in improved delivery, communication, and task performance. Participants noted that these affirmations and expressions of acceptance have made it easier to share their knowledge and experiences authentically, leading to more engaging and effective teaching. This was validated by the statement from Faculty 4 when he said

"It is quite easy for me to share those... those I have read and experienced".

They felt more comfortable expressing themselves and incorporating their unique perspectives, such as using gay lingo or sharing personal anecdotes, which enriches their delivery and fosters a stronger connection with students, as reflected in the answer of Faculty 10 when he said

"Little by little, I was able to express myself. I sometimes use gay lingo and throw punchlines with them."

Moreover, faculty members observed a tangible improvement in their task performance, noting the quality of their work and the results it produced, such as when Faculty 4 said,

"I think I teach much better because I can freely share experiences and have never been pretentious."

This enhancement in performance is attributed to the confidence and motivation derived from the positive feedback received through microvalidations.

Positive Work Environment

The theme Positive Work Environment has a subtheme of Positive Workplace Experience. Micro-validations have greatly influenced the experience of faculty members by fostering a positive workplace environment. Participants expressed their happiness and contentment in their workplace, attributing it to feeling accepted and valued by their colleagues. Faculty 5 echoed this experience through his statement,

"Because it's nicer to work, sir, in a place where you're accepted and appreciated for what you do."

They noted that the absence of verbal abuse, discrimination, or mistreatment contributed to a sense of safety and belonging. Faculty 3 testified to this when he shared this:

"I am happy in my workplace because, first, as I said, they accepted me. I did not experience any verbal abuse, verbal discrimination, vulgar or explicit discrimination from them."

While explicit affirmations may be limited, participants acknowledged the presence of implicit affirmations that affirm their worth and contributions, just what Faculty 3 continued in his testimony:

"I do not receive much affirmation either, but maybe a few implicit ones. So, I can say that I am happy in my workplace."

This positive atmosphere has made their work more enjoyable and led to smoother collaboration and improved performance among colleagues.

Emotional Well-being

The theme of Emotional Well-Being has the subtheme of Reduced Emotional Burden. Micro-validations have greatly impacted faculty members' experience by reducing the emotional burden linked to their work environment. Participants expressed that micro-validations, such as feeling accepted and valued, had contributed to their overall happiness and well-being in their roles. Knowing that they are in an environment where their identity is respected and appreciated alleviated the emotional weight on their shoulders. Faculty 10 reflected on this when he shared

"I am happy. No heavy feelings or grudges whatsoever".

This sense of validation and acceptance served as a motivating factor for them to continue their teaching responsibilities within the university. It also indicated that the university fosters a gender-friendly atmosphere, further reinforcing their decision to remain in their current position. Faculty 8 verbalized his motivation to stay with the university based on his experience of micro-validations:

"So, I will continue teaching here because of the microvalidations I experienced. This indicates that the university is gender-friendly."

The participants experiencing micro-validations had lightened their emotional load and contributed to a more positive and fulfilling work experience. The themes aligned with Self Determination and Psychological Safety theories. Micro-validations boosted confidence and performance (Self Determination), creating a positive work environment (Psychological Safety) and enhancing emotional well-being, which is crucial for LGBTQIA+ faculty. Tenney (2023) strongly emphasized the significance of workplace diversity and inclusion in cultivating a positive employee experience. Companies can enhance employee satisfaction and engagement by nurturing a psychologically safe space where all employees feel a deep connection. Acknowledging and honoring the distinct

contributions of a diverse group of team members resulted in increased retention, productivity, and sustainable profitability.

Relative to the experiences shared by the participants, Shapiro (2023) reported that microaffirmations were small gestures, comments, or behaviors that can significantly positively impact individuals in educational and workplace settings. These micro-interactions can promote well-being and create a positive work culture in fast-paced and stressful environments like healthcare. By intentionally incorporating microaffirmations that celebrate strengths and successes, organizations can foster a sense of kindness, understanding, and inclusion among team members. These actions helped to mitigate stress, reinforce strengths, and promote unity within the workplace. He also provided examples of how to incorporate microaffirmations in practical and achievable ways, such as through active listening, validation, acknowledgment, and intentional inclusion.

3.9 Influence of Micro-validations on Job Satisfaction and Performance

Job Potential Attainment

The superordinate themes, Job Potential Attainment, Job Satisfaction Fulfillment, and Job Performance Improvement, were derived from the different subordinate themes and crafted from the participants' answers on the influence of the micro-validations on their job satisfaction and performance. The overarching theme of Job Potential Attainment has subordinate themes, Fulfilling Potential and Self-Assessment. Micro-validations are essential in shaping job satisfaction and performance by enabling individuals to reach their full potential and promoting self-evaluation. Participants noted that experiencing micro-validations contributed to a sense of being at their full potential and executing their responsibilities optimally as teachers. They highlighted that these affirmations not only boosted satisfaction but also motivated them to strive for excellence in their work, as remarked by one of the participants, Faculty 3,

"Oh, yes. I can say that I am at my full potential and am optimally and maximally executing my responsibility as a teacher."

Moreover, microvalidations prompted self-reflection, allowing individuals to assess their performance and progress over time. When Faculty 1 and 10 refer to that self-assessment mentioned,

*"Since I am being motivated, I can reflect on whether I have improved from my previous self."
"Because those assessed how you performed, and even your satisfaction with yourself."*

This self-assessment process was closely intertwined with job satisfaction, as it instilled confidence and assurance in one's abilities.

Job Satisfaction Fulfillment

The superordinate theme of Job Satisfaction Fulfillment was derived from the subordinate themes of Job Enjoyment, Satisfaction Guaranteed, and Motivation. Micro-validations significantly influenced job satisfaction and performance by fostering enjoyment, guaranteeing satisfaction, and providing motivation. Participants expressed that the supportive environment created by micro-validations enhanced their enjoyment of their work, making tasks more manageable and fulfilling. Relative to this, Faculty 9 stated,

"I like my job better if people are like this."

They noted that simple compliments and acknowledgments of their efforts served as affirmations of their achievements and goals, leading to increased satisfaction with their job performance, as echoed in the answer of Faculty 1,

"Once I receive a simple compliment, it is like a job well done because I accomplished my goal, I achieved my set goal, in that activity."

Feeling valued and appreciated by colleagues and students contributed to a sense of fulfillment and contentment in their roles. Moreover, microvalidations were a source of motivation, encouraging individuals to continue

exerting effort and striving for excellence in their work, even amidst challenges and fatigue. Faculty 6 clearly stated that point in his response,

"At work, you have motivations daily. Those praises come from the students. You are motivated to attend your classes daily... to do your best as a teacher, no matter who you are for them, and do what is best for you and your students. So, it seems that it gives me the desire to continue and strive to be the best. That is one of the things that increases my morale as a teacher."

The positive feedback and encouragement received from others were a driving force for maintaining enthusiasm and dedication to their responsibilities as faculty members.

Job Performance Improvement

The overarching theme, Job Performance Improvement, was derived from the subordinate themes of Enhanced Job Performance and Drive for Better Performance. The experience of micro-validations significantly influenced job satisfaction and performance by enhancing job performance and fostering a drive for better performance among faculty members. Participants noted that the trust and confidence they received due to feeling accepted for who they are translated into a sense of ease and motivation in their work. Faculty 4 clearly stated this point in his response,

"There seems to be no hard work given to me. It's like the trust and confidence are there because I am accepted to be me."

This sense of acceptance and encouragement urged them to strive for excellence and bring out their best. They excelled in their tasks and responsibilities, driven to meet or exceed expectations. Moreover, the positive feedback and praise they received from students and colleagues served as motivation to continue improving and refining their teaching methods, just like what Faculty 6 stated,

"At work, maybe you had motivations daily that would motivate you because of those praises coming from the students. You are motivated to go into the everyday tasks... to do your best as a teacher, no matter who you are for them, show who you are and do what is best for you and your students."

This drive for better performance stemmed from fear of making mistakes and a commitment to maintaining high standards in their work. Faculty members expressed that they are inspired to enhance their job performance further, as they believed in the importance of being gender-responsive and creating a gender-friendly environment for both themselves and their students, as echoed in the response given by Faculty 8,

"I am still improving my job performance. As a teacher and as a teacher of future teachers, I also believe that future teachers should be gender-responsive or gender-friendly. These are the issues now about gender. So, I am still improving."

Microvalidations enabled individuals to reach their full potential, fostering job satisfaction and self-assessment (Self Determination). They promoted job enjoyment, satisfaction, and motivation, enhancing overall performance (Psychological Safety). Furthermore, they contributed to improved job performance and a drive for excellence, driven by acceptance and encouragement (Self Determination, Psychological Safety). These findings underscored microvalidations' crucial role in fostering job satisfaction, performance, and potential attainment among faculty members, aligning closely with theoretical principles.

The positive impact of microaffirmations was profound and far-reaching. Van Sambeck (2023) noted that many advantageous outcomes can manifest when individuals consistently provide their colleagues with these small gestures of affirmation. This not only enhanced the well-being of each employee but also significantly influenced the overall dynamics of the workplace. Employees experienced heightened satisfaction within their respective roles when they perceived their efforts directly contributed to the organization's success. She also pointed out that a recent finding from a McKinsey study revealed that work served as a pivotal life purpose for many individuals. However, a mere 18% felt they attained the desired level of purpose, with 62% expressing a desire for more fulfillment. Through microaffirmations, organizations can effectively communicate the value placed on their employees' perspectives and contributions, fostering a greater sense of purpose and bolstering overall contentment within the workforce. Furthermore, each individual nurtured a greater sense of confidence in

executing their responsibilities when they received acknowledgment for their work. Whether it involved public recognition, attentive listening, respect for their viewpoints, or invitations to contribute, these affirmations instilled a sense of assurance in employees, empowering them to approach tasks with increased self-assurance.

3.10 Institutional Policies or Practices for a More Inclusive Environment for LGBTQIA Faculty Members

Need for Clear Rules and Guidelines

The superordinate themes of the Need for Clear Rules and Guidelines, Inclusive Facility Accommodation, the Importance of Gender and Development Functions, and the Need for Full Acceptance were derived from the different subthemes coming from the testimonies given by the 10 participants on the institutional policies or practices that contribute to a more inclusive environment for LGBTQIA+ faculty members. The first of the themes is the Need for Clear Rules and Guidelines. The participants expressed a clear need for explicit and comprehensive institutional policies or guidelines that specifically address the concerns and needs of LGBTQIA faculty members, as expressed in the statement of Faculty 4, saying

“But if there is a clear-cut policy regarding that, maybe it will be easier for the university and us to be able to protect ourselves, to move more in line with what is expected of us.”

They highlighted the absence of written policies or practices that cater to the LGBTQIA community within their respective institutions. Faculty 3 testified on the absence of these policies, stating.

“Sadly, I do not see anything. I don't know about others, but for me, I don't see anything. I do not read anything. I don't know if there exists.”

Faculty 6 echoed the same sentiment in his answer,

“There seems to be none, sir. Nothing yet. I do not know of any written policies for LGBTQIA faculty.”

Faculty members felt uncertain and unprotected without clear rules and guidelines, especially regarding proper dress codes, legal rights, and inclusion. These concerns were seen in the statements provided by Faculty 2 and Faculty 8 when they said,

“But when it comes to what is written, I can't say because I don't really see if there is a policy for the students or even for the staff regarding a proper dress code or proper guidelines for LGBTQIA+.”

“It seems that the university is not yet very inclusive.”

They emphasized the importance of having policies explicitly tailored to address the unique challenges and requirements of LGBTQIA individuals in the workplace. Additionally, they suggested incorporating a gender-neutral approach in institutional policies, such as in forms and legal matters, to ensure inclusivity and protection for all community members, as reflected in the testimony given by Faculty 5, stating:

“So, one great idea that can be incorporated in the current policy is the gender-neutral approach when it comes to forms, in legal matters... there is a difference between being institutionalized and just culturally acceptable only. It seems just like being common law around us and not formally instituted.”

Participants stressed the necessity of formalized policies beyond cultural acceptance and providing clear guidance and protection for LGBTQIA faculty members within academic institutions.

Inclusive Facility Accommodation

Focusing on the theme of Inclusive Facility Accommodation, the participants emphasized the importance of inclusive facility accommodation, particularly in restroom facilities, as a key aspect of creating a more inclusive environment for LGBTQIA faculty members. They noted the existence of gender-neutral or third-gender restrooms specifically designed for students. However, they highlighted the need for similar accommodations for faculty members as stated by Faculty 3 and Faculty 6, stating:

“It is better to have a CR for faculty belonging to the LGBT community.”

"I think it is a good idea that the university put up a CR for all professors."

They expressed appreciation for the steps taken by the university to address gender inequality in restroom facilities for students and suggested extending these efforts to provide inclusive restroom options for professors. The provision of gender-neutral or third-gender restrooms not only ensured a more comfortable and dignified experience for LGBTQIA faculty members but also signified a commitment to inclusivity and respect for diverse gender identities within the academic community.

Importance of Gender and Development Functions

For the theme Importance of Gender and Development Functions, the participants highlighted the importance of Gender and Development (GAD) functions in fostering a more inclusive environment for LGBTQIA faculty members within the university. They recognized the existence of a GAD division or department within the institution, which served as a platform for promoting gender equality and addressing gender-related issues. Faculty 2 mentioned the existence of the Gender and Development office in his statement.

"We have a gender development department, and that's when I realized that I need to pay more attention to it."

However, they expressed uncertainty about whether specific policies or programs are in place to support LGBTQIA individuals within the faculty. Some participants mentioned that while they are aware of the GAD department, they have not encountered any policies or programs tailored specifically for LGBTQIA faculty members, which was clearly stated by the answer of Faculty 3,

"Maybe now, what I can say, I cannot feel it yet. However, even before, there was nothing. I know there is a GAD, but I don't know if they have a certain policy for LGBT."

They emphasized the need for the GAD office to take a more proactive role in implementing clear-cut policies and programs that cater to the needs of LGBTQIA individuals, ensuring that their voices and concerns are adequately addressed. Faculty 10 categorically stated in his answer his perspective on the very existence of the GAD Department by saying.

"There is an office, but it is like it never existed. It is like it was just put there, but as far as I know, I cannot feel its presence. I hope if there is the gender and development, I hope there is a program that is intended for LGBTQ members."

Despite the existence of the GAD office, participants suggested that it is still in its infancy stage and called for more concrete initiatives aimed at supporting LGBTQIA faculty members and promoting a more inclusive campus environment, just as Faculty 4 stated:

"Not really yet. It is just starting. It is in the baby stage. That is it. The way I see it, it is in the baby stage."

Need for Full Acceptance

For the theme Need for Full Acceptance, the participants highlighted the ongoing need for full acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals within the university community. Despite acknowledging some progress in recognition and tolerance, they expressed concerns about the lack of comprehensive acceptance policies and practices. Faculty 5, airing his sentiment on the issue, noted,

"I can see it, but without the proper implementation of appropriate policies, we cannot spread it on a university-wide scale. We should show acceptance. Right now, maybe, all we have is tolerance."

They noted that while there may be instances of tolerance towards LGBTQIA+ faculty members, true acceptance at the institutional level was still lacking. Participants emphasized the importance of implementing appropriate policies that foster an environment of inclusivity and acceptance rather than mere tolerance, as echoed by the statement of Faculty 8,

"Yes, I feel like it's not totally accepted yet. I feel it is just tolerated. Because of what is happening now, it is tolerated but not yet fully accepted."

They stressed that without such policies, the university's efforts to promote LGBTQIA+ acceptance may remain limited to individual experiences rather than being reflected in broader institutional practices. Faculty 9 punctuated the issue with his final statement,

"Ah, yes. LGBT is tolerated but not accepted in the community because there is no stated policy about these things."

The themes generated from LGBTQIA+ faculty testimonies aligned with the theories. The Intersectionality Theory advocated tailored policies for diverse identities, the Self-Determination Theory supported autonomy, as shown in calls for gender-neutral facilities, and the Psychological Safety Theory underscored institutional support for acceptance. These aligned with inclusive workplace practices, emphasizing the need for tailored policies for LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Jain-Link et al. (2020) pointed key points for employers, leaders, and managers to create an inclusive workplace and included the following: Highlighted the importance of diversity and inclusion for business success because, with the changing demographics, companies needed diverse leaders to connect with their evolving customer base, leading to more effective innovation; Addressed bias by actively promoting diverse candidates for leadership roles. Training supervisors to recognize and overcome biases can create a more inclusive environment where employees of color feel empowered and supported. Practiced inclusive leadership by fostering a safe space for all employees to contribute, valuing diverse perspectives, encouraging collaboration, and providing growth opportunities; and Ensured accountability by making inclusion a core organizational value, tracking progress towards diversity and inclusion goals, and holding leaders responsible for meeting these objectives, with bonuses tied to their performance in this area.

Similarly, Business & Human Rights Navigator (2021) defined discrimination in employment and occupation as mistreating someone because of characteristics that had nothing to do with their abilities or job requirements. It also cited that according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, political beliefs, national origin, or social background was prohibited. This list can also include other factors like HIV/AIDS, age, disability, family responsibilities, sexual orientation, trade union membership, or language. Companies should promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace and supply chains to combat discrimination. Recruitment, training, and advancement should be based on qualifications, skills, and experience. Businesses should have policies to prevent discrimination and protect employees from unfair treatment. Companies can also broadly support non-discrimination efforts by participating in government initiatives to promote equality for underrepresented groups in specific industries.

4.0 Conclusion

The study underscored the pivotal role of micro-validations in nurturing inclusivity and empowerment among male LGBTQIA+ faculty members. It highlighted the profound influence of affirmations on confidence, performance, and well-being within academic workplaces. By amplifying the voices of this demographic group, it called for a reassessment of existing norms to create fair and empowering environments. Ultimately, the research emphasized the imperative of fostering spaces where all individuals feel valued, respected, and able to thrive professionally. Additionally, this research contributes to the field of psychology by providing empirical evidence on the positive psychological impact of microvalidations on marginalized groups. It also offers valuable insights for gender and development initiatives, advocating for policies that promote inclusivity and equity in academic institutions.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The paper has only one author, who bore full responsibility for the completion of the research from its conception through to its publication. The manuscript underwent a rigorous peer-review process to ensure its scientific validity and integrity.

6.0 Funding

This work received no specific grant from any funding agency.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflicts of interest about the publication of this paper.

8.0 Acknowledgment

The researcher first and foremost, thank the Almighty God for all His mighty works in his life. Ms. Ronel John E. Tarcilo, the dedicated Research Adviser, for his unwavering support, insightful feedback, and encouragement at every stage of the research; Dr. Ma. Lorena M. Tagala, the esteemed Research Professor, whose expertise and mentorship have been invaluable in shaping the direction of this research; Mr. Alfredo G. Perez, Jr., the ever-supportive Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, for fostering an environment of academic excellence and providing resources essential to the completion of this research; Dr. Marvin R. Vicente, Prof. Hanzon Reyes, and Prof. Edward Francis Gabor, the validators of the instrument, whose expertise made the study more impactful; Mr. Bernard Christopher A. Catam, the meticulous Qualitative Data Analyst, for his expertise in analyzing and interpreting the data, thereby adding depth and credibility to this study; The participants, whose valuable time and experience were selflessly shared to the researcher; The Administration of the University of Cabuyao for allowing the conduct of the study.

9.0 References

- Bowling, J., Miller, R. A., & Mather, N. (2020). Making campus-based LGBTQ climate assessments matter. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 57(2), 197-211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2019.1631837>
- Cardinal, H. (2021). Creating safe and inclusive schools for LGBTQ students. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, 13(2), 17-21. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1304398>
- Drake, T.L. (2021). Doing the Work of DEIB. Retrieved from <https://www.aacsb.edu/insights/articles/2021/11/doing-the-work-of-deib>
- Faber, E., & Codd, E. (2023). Deloitte Global 2023 LGBTQ+ Inclusion @ Work. Retrieved from <https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/issues/work/content/lgbt-at-work.html>.
- Ganesh, K. (2023). Inclusion examples in the workplace: Inspirations and tips to create an inclusive culture. Retrieved from <https://www.culturemonkey.io/employee-engagement/inclusion-examples/>
- Little, B. (2022). The challenges LGBTQ+ employees still face at work. Retrieved from <https://www.wework.com/ideas/research-insights/research-studies/the-challenges-lgbtq-employees-still-face-at-work>
- Luna, E. (2021, November 2021). 2021 PH LGBTQ+ Workplace Inclusion Survey: Understanding the inclusive environment. *Manila Bulletin*. Retrieved from <https://mb.com.ph/2021/10/21/2021-ph-lgbt-workplace-inclusion-survey-understanding-the-inclusive-environment/>
- Matsick, J. L., Sullivan, J. T., Todd, E., Kruk, M., & Cook, J. E. (2024). A social ecological approach to belonging in LGBTQ+ people. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 3, 181-197. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s44159-024-00280-6>
- Matthyse, L. (2020). Achieving gender equality by 2030: Transgender equality in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 5. *Agenda*, 34(1), 124-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2020.1744336>
- Navarro, A. (2023). How micro-validation combats microaggression. Retrieved from <https://anz.peoplemattersglobal.com/article/culture/how-to-combat-microaggression-with-micro-validation-38290>
- Nikolopoulou, K. (2022). What is purposive sampling? | Definition & examples. Retrieved from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/purposive-sampling/>
- Olsen, B. (2023). Navigating LGBTQ+ microaggressions. Retrieved from <https://www.lgbtqandall.com/navigating-lgbtq-microaggressions/>
- Rolón-Dow, R., & Davison, A. (2020). Theorizing racial microaffirmations: A Critical Race/LatCrit approach. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 24, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2020.1798381>
- Rose, J. (2023). Counteracting microaggressions with positive interactions at work seems obvious, yet we need to actually do it every day. *Business Insider Nederland*. Retrieved from <https://www.businessinsider.com/counteract-microaggressions-at-work-with-positive-interactions-2023-6>
- Shapiro, D. N. (2023). The power of microaffirmations. In J. E. Davidson & M. Richardson (Eds.), *Workplace wellness: From resiliency to suicide prevention and grief management* (pp. 181-197). Springer.
- Tajan, M. M., Caraga, R. V., Macapua, D., Lawas, C. J., & Pamulaklakin, J. G. (2023). Perception of Filipino LGBTQ members toward the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression Equality Bill (SOGIE Bill). *BOHR International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*, 2(1), 41-49. <https://doi.org/10.54646/bijsshr.02>
- Tenney, M. (2023). How workplace diversity and inclusion improve employee satisfaction and employee engagement. Retrieved from <https://businessleadershiptoday.com/how-does-workplace-diversity-and-inclusion-improve-employee-satisfaction-and-their-engagement/>
- Traliant. (2022). Practice microaffirmations to help build a more inclusive workplace. Retrieved from <https://www.traliant.com/blog/practice-microaffirmations-to-help-build-a-more-inclusive-workplace/>
- Van Sambeck, R. (2023). What are microaffirmations? Inclusivity through small gestures. Retrieved from <https://www.aihr.com/blog/microaffirmation/>
- Verlinden, N. (2024). Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at work: A 2024 guide. Retrieved from <https://www.aihr.com/blog/diversity-equity-inclusion-belonging-deib/>
- Washington, E. F., Birch, A. H., & Roberts, L. M. (2020). When and how to respond to microaggressions. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions>