

## LIVED EXPERIENCES OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER PERSONALITIES AMIDST CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN CONTEMPORARY WORKPLACE

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**Abstract:** *The largely dominated heterosexual workplace and shifting policies of companies pushed LGBTs to either open, hide or deny their sexuality. The conflicting perceptions and acceptance of Filipinos towards the LGBT, lead to limited employment opportunities and conditional acceptance. Thus, this study aimed to discover the experiences of the LGBTs amidst the present work environment, particularly their experience encountered at work, the meanings associated to their career opportunity and how they coped with their experience. This is a multiple case study using qualitative method to unravel the LGBTs lived experiences. Purposive sampling was employed, particularly only LGBTs who are in the height of their career are chosen in the field of sales, banks, and in the business process outsource industry. A validated researcher-made questionnaire was used during the in-depth key informant interview (KII) involving a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. A focus group discussion was undertaken to ensure the validity and reliability of the information gathered from the participants during the KII. Furthermore, informed consent and peer debriefing was done. Based on the transcription the following themes were taken out from their experiences: differences in showing their sexuality during application at work, variance in workplace acceptance, resourceful and practical in viewing the situation, structural discrimination, and unorthodox treatment. For the LGBTs, these experiences meant that work values are more important than questions of sexuality, that as long as the LGBTs work within the bounce of company policies and are productive at work, sexuality is not an issue. LGBTs have the skill advantage, but often became the cause of discrimination and the need for them to be financially stable before reaching the age of 40. Furthermore, LGBTs vary in coping with situation they either ignore the discrimination and avoid conflict, keep a low profile, or embrace sexuality and make it an advantage.*

**Keywords:** *Psychology, lived experiences, workplace, LGBT, discrimination, coping, Davao City, Philippines*

### INTRODUCTION

Many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) have been working in a heterosexual workplace. In these companies, the LGBTs are more productive and

creative in handling various tasks that are given to them. Carlos Bruce, for example, a Peruvian politician, came out of his shell in 2014 and became one of the prominent leaders of civil unions for same-sex couples in Peru. Vice Ganda, a famous Filipino artist-comedian, started to leave a mark in the showbiz industry in 2009. These two personalities, not only turned out to be successful individuals, but they took risk and effort in fighting for the rights of every LGBT in the society. In other countries, Sears and Mallory (2011) stated that there are an increasing number of corporations adopting LGBT-related workplace policies. The Philippines, on the other hand, is considered to be one of the few gay-friendly countries in the world, but only a few companies adopted pro-LGBT policies (Tubeza, 2013).

The presence of the LGBT is recognized, but their acceptance in the society is still vague. For decades, the LGBT in the Philippines want was to be respected and be treated equally and these LGBTs continued to fight for the passing of laws that will protect their rights as individuals (IGLHRC, 2013). Furthermore, the UNDP report (2014) indicated that the LGBT faced challenges in employment where they have experienced discrimination and abuse. It has been observed that discriminations against the LGBT were given in both the recruitment of employees and during the employment. Moreover, it was noted that employers sometimes take advantage of LGBT employees (UNDP, 2014). According to the Labor Code of the Philippines, there were no provision for both direct and indirect discrimination against the LGBT but merely discrimination against men and women. The LGBT is not yet acceptable in some workplaces making it difficult for them to look for jobs without being judged. They were not treated equally just as the same as the non-LGBT (UNDP, 2014). Even though, there is an existing labor code; the LGBT is still hindered from decent jobs and from developing their capabilities (Lopez, 2012).

In the workplace, the employers must provide provisions to protect prospected employees when deciding whether to hire, fire or promote LGBT. But, in some place of work, sexual orientation influenced the decisions of employers not to recruit, promote, and worst dismiss LGBTs (Colgan & Rumens, 2014). According to Badgett, Durso, Kastanis, and Mallory (2013), between 15% to 43% of LGBT workers have experienced being fired, denied promotions or harassed. Moreover, in an article released by Catalyst (2014), about 23.8% of lesbian and gay people do not interact much with anyone at work, and so as 48.8% of bisexual people in the workplace. This article explains why homosexual participants strive much to meet the qualifications of their employers and be one of those to be promoted (Ocampo, 2012).

According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (1986), an individual's behavior towards work is a connection between what a person believes and the occurrences in the surroundings. Moreover, career interests involve personal competency and outcome expectation where people continue to exhibit

lasting learning in activities that result in positive outcomes. But if their personal competency is low, they will avoid activities. Sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and age block personal competency. These resulted in negative outcomes disregard their previous successes in the various field (Bandura, 1986). Another theory that is relevant to the study is the Social Identity Theory of Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) that an individuals' belief are based on the group where they came from (Hornsey, 2008). Moreover, they argued that the human interaction could be purely interpersonal or purely intergroup. A purely interpersonal interaction includes people relating to each other not minding their social categories while a purely intergroup interaction is on the individual's behavior that affects the salience of one's group. The LGBT has a strong sense of personal competency but despite the consequences most of them still have positive outcomes. The LGBT called this psychological flexibility where they can take actions to achieve a certain goal despite the difficulties they are encountering (Hornsey, 2008). The LGBT does all to fit in, to blend in, and to belong. The LGBTs need not struggle too much in the workplace to prove their worth in the organization and experience equality of treatment in the workplace. This situation will somehow explain why a successful LGBT, despite barriers in the environment, they still turned out to be highly successful.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Map of the Study**



LGBT's are important players in our economy. Despite the challenges that they have experienced in the workplace because of their sexuality, they continued to fight and tried to establish their place in the workplace. A lot of discriminations occurred, but they still turned out to be a successful one. They can easily coped with these situations and continue to excel in their different field of careers. There is a need to study the experiences of the LGBT community in the workplace so that we will know if there are still issues going on. Furthermore, society needs to understand better the LGBT community, and by knowing their work experiences, we will be able to know if they have a good interpersonal relationship with their co-workers or if being accepted by co-workers motivates them in working. Also, through this study we will know if the discrimination of the LGBT is existing.

## **Research Questions**

The purpose of this multiple case study was to describe and understand the lived experiences of the LGBT in the contemporary workplace. It aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the experiences of the LGBT in their workplace?
- What meanings associated to career opportunities do the LGBT extract of their experiences?
- How do LGBT's cope with their positive and negative experiences in the workplace?

## **METHOD**

This is a multiple case study that aims to grasp the lived experiences of the LGBT in the workplace. Specifically, this study used a qualitative method in narrating the lived experiences of the LGBT people in the workplace.

The study was conducted in the different workplaces in Davao city mainly in the sales, banks, and business process outsource (BPO) industry. Purposive sampling was employed in choosing the participant, particularly, only those LGBT who are at the height of their career. Moreover, snowball sampling was employed to identify the participants of the study wherein participants were picked by referrals of acquaintance and mentors. This was done since only a few individuals admit that they were gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender and to make sure that they were willing to be a part as informants of the study. A researcher made questionnaire was used as a guide for the interview, but before using it, the questionnaire undergone validity by a group of experts. There were eight primary questions that were answered by the participants during the in-depth interview.

To ensure the credibility of the study triangulation was employed. Specifically this included an in-depth interview and focus group discussion. In the study, four participants—one gay, one transgender, one bisexual and one lesbian were interviewed for several times until all information were exhausted and six participants were asked to take part in the FGD.

The researchers ensured that prior to the data gathering the study participants were given a letter asking for their permission to be interviewed. After the participants gave the permission, an informed consent form was provided for them to indicate their signature. Before the actual interview started, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their role in the study. The researcher also asked permission if they can use a recording device. During the interview, the first few questions that were asked aimed at developing rapport with the study

participant. Moreover, the researcher observed the actions of the participant as additional information for the discussions. In addition, the researchers ensured that all the information that were gathered remained confidential and were not accessed by unqualified persons.

During the process of gathering the data, the student researchers' were accompanied by their adviser to make sure that the interview is done properly. To warrant dependability of the data gathered, the researcher transcribed the recordings made during the first interview and analyzed it before proceeding to the next interview. This was done to make sure that the researchers asked the right questions and the participants will not be annoyed for the questions that were asked before. Persistent observation was done to further know, examine, and investigate the important details being said in order to allow the readers to precisely and sufficiently make their own judgments. To safeguard confirmability of the study, the researchers took down notes on important keywords to grasped more information and used it in the analysis along with the recorded interview. In the audit trail the adviser examined the process of the data gathering, and in determining if the data gathered was acceptable. Furthermore, in the audit trail, the adviser checked the analysis of data if the cited responses used in the discussion was internally coherent. After gathering the data, peer debriefing was done to make sure that none of the researchers was using their biased opinions, especially during analysis of the data. And to guarantee transferability of the study, all recordings done during the interview were transcribed and arranged according to the date it was conducted by the researchers. Furthermore, correct citations were observed and the transcription was properly coded for easy retrieval of information. All findings were reported in detail during the discussion.

Furthermore, a thematic analysis using emergent approach was used in identifying the themes of the study. Through this, the researchers explored all the possible themes that can be found in the study which made the study in-depth. This was done by reading and re-reading the transcription several times. Moreover, the researchers used literatures related to the study to make the discussion rich. Below is the matrix used for the audit trail.

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<i>Data Source</i>	<i>Code</i>
Conversation Participant	KI + Participant number
FGD Participant	P + Participant number

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## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Some corporations and individuals in the Philippines are increasingly embracing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) status as an emerging career asset

(Hewlett, 2013). Many LGBTs emerged and show their potentials to various workplaces in Davao City and this resulted to career opportunities that are greater than the LGBT have expected. But, there are still some workplaces that are sexually exclusive when it comes to hiring their employees and these are the companies where their social institutions, legal frameworks and cultural norms are largely heterosexual in nature. Despite of the challenges that the LGBTs faced, their sexuality was not a hindrance to prove to others what they can do for the organization. Their experiences in the workplace vary, in terms of the kind of treatment they received from their co-workers, the meanings that they have taken out from the experiences that they have, both positive and negative, and their coping mechanisms. Their contribution to the workplace can be summed up to the kind of skill that they have which contribute to their success. Knowledge about these is important for employers so that they can determine which group of people, will most likely work well together, and employers can organize the most effective group of individuals to accomplish certain goals, based on skills (Coghlan, 2008).

### **The Experiences of the LGBT**

Difference in showing their sexuality during their application for work:

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
(KI1) "Oo... Pag apply nako ing ani na jud." (The way I am today was the same during my application)	Self-	Difference in showing their gender identify during their application for work
(KI4) "Girl. Nakadamit pambabae talaga. Naka tube tapos paminsan naka gown kami, minsan naka long sleeves kasi may dress code kami." (I was dressed like a girl with sleeves and tube on because of the dress code.)	Confidence	
(KI5) When I applied I wore formal pants, unisex polo shirt and a women's close shoes with 3-inch heels."	Freedom	
(P2) "it is my first time and then friend nako ang nag interview maam actually... he know na ing ani akong status maam, akoang life and I think dili man siguro siya hindrance sa application nako for that kind of work maam." (The one who interviewed me actually knew my sexuality maam and I think it was not a hindrance during my application.) L 47-50	Determina- tion	
(KI3) "Ah, yes, the usual straight guys would wear on an interview, because, I am although I am gay I never thought of cross-dressing."		

Showing ones' sexuality allows an individual to feel confident (Colgan, Creegan, McKearney & Wright, n.d). This could be the reason why some of the LGBT cross dress during the interview. It can be considered a statement of self-confidence, freedom and determination, that such act could lead them to achieving what they wanted. To the LGBT, cross dressing is a normal thing, since they are just showing their sexuality. This kind of perspective is very much accepted in the business process outsource industry, where they are encouraged to dress freely because they believe it can make them more productive at work. On the contrary, there were still some who prefer the usual. For some gays, being gay does not mean that they have to cross dress and it was easier for them since it is more appropriate. This difference depends on the disposition of the LGBT (Heider, 1958). It could be the environment that some LGBTs were raised; are open and have accepted the LGBTs, for some they may have raised in a family were they accept the LGBT but with certain limitation (Perkins, 2011; Heider, 1958). In an article written by Rich (1993), it said, it is different if a woman crossed dress like a man, or man to cross dress like a woman. Gay men are encouraged to adapt with the straight guy, a position of relative power, and lesbian are to conform to straight women, position of relative oppression. This perspective, on the other hand, is true in workplaces where they still believe in the traditional expectations, that is, in terms of dressing among men and women. Such belief for this company, doesn't necessarily say that they are against LGBT.

### **Resourceful and Practical in Viewing the Situation**

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<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
(KI4) "Malakas lang talaga ang fighting spirit ng mga bakla kasi nakikita mo yung mga maliit na bakla kahit maliit pa sila gulat ka lang nag mamake-up na tina try na talaga nilang mag ka pera." (the fighting spirit is strong. You can see that even younger gays, even if they are still small they really try to earn money.)	Perseverance	Resourceful and Practical in viewing the situation
(P4) "Kasi usually sa mga ing ana nga butang, mag venture lang mi ana sa diskarte sa kinabuhian kung dili siya bayot, bisexual or babae." (When it comes to things, we are just more hardworking in our day to day living.) L 167-168	Self-efficacy	
(KI1) "Lahat rollercoaster ride. Lahat pwede cook, pwede waiter, pwede cashier. Lahat." (It was like a rollercoaster ride where everything is being done).		

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(KI3) “Yes, it is really an advantage especially for those people na passionate when it comes to customer service and proving their self about being a Filipino which is a good English speaker” (It’s really an advantage for us gays especially when it comes to communicating and speaking in English) Skill-oriented

(P2) “we know how to change our mood gud maam in every person na mastorya namo and barely adapt kung unsa man ang environment sa isa ka tao. That’s why siguro maam mao na among edge maong nakataas mi.” (We build up more confidence, know how to change moods that’s why, I think these are our edge towards others.) Versatility

(P3) “Kay kung kabalo lang ka mag communicate sa different kind of people, kanang pasok jud ka maam....” (As long as you can communicate well).

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LGBTs are resourceful and practical in viewing the situation, they set challenging goals and persists to face difficulties (Bandura, 2000). The participants agreed that being LGBT is a plus factor, they are more confident and eager in working. Being an LBGT set them apart from the rest. They can be in any field they like and they excel in it, although it was hard but they were able to surpass the hardship because of the versatility of their skills. Skill oriented and versatility in the workplace would mean they have a higher survival rate. This means that they have to prove first their worth in the workplace. If the LGBTs are choosy in their work, they will end up with nothing. That is why most of the participants started to work in any place of work that they believed can provide their needs (basic needs), just to survive from day to day challenges in life. These experiences gave them high self-efficacy that pushed them to be more open to possibilities in order to manage situations especially when it comes to career opportunities (Bandura, 1994). This kind of attitude of the LGBT will explain why most of them are successful in their chosen career, because in terms of experience, they have a lot of it, that made them more capable compared to others.



**Variance in Workplace Acceptance**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
(P4) "murag advantage man siguro being ing ani.. so walay ingon na nahirapan ko between sa akong co-officemates, siguro mas more pa gani sila muduol sa ako unsay maayo ani buhaton, ing ani na mga idea."(I think it's an advantage and it wasn't hard at the part of my co-officemates. People seek more on you on what's the best thing to be done and the likes.)	Honesty	Variance in workplace acceptance
(K12)"Yeah. They know but i really gave a statement to the entire center. They cried and they were very happy that i gave the statement...There was no instance. It will never be an issue especially in a call center because gender perception or should i say discrimination on that industry is very rare." this is common in our society today as being an LGBT is not new in this generation.	Acceptance	
(K15)"I am proud to say that the company SSI doesn't discriminate.. Gender... Age, for as long as you are capable of the responsibilities that the company would like then there is no way that you will be discriminated."		

Workplace acceptance is important for the LGBT. It allows them and their officemates to be more productive at work (Rasirs, Singh and Cromwell, 2007). As one participant shared, acceptance allows them to communicate and discuss things more openly than before. Teamwork existed, thus, productivity is more possible since it allows people of different expertise to converge and work for one goal. In the BPO, teamwork is important, because productivity can only be achieved if all members work together to make sure that they will be able to sell or close a deal. This is why LGBTs are accepted in BPOs, their ability to work with the team makes them an asset.

On the other hand, one participant shared that he made clear his sexuality to his officemates. Since the participant holds important position in the workplace, his officemates are careful in dealing with him. This situation limits the productivity of the group because there are hesitations. This means further, that his officemates are open to the possibility that their boss might be an LGBT, it is just that confirming it is difficult because of "moral ascendancy". After it was cleared to his officemates

about his sexuality, workplace environment became better.

### Structural Discrimination

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
(P1) "sa isa ka car company man jud kay, first is gi hide jud nako akong identity... kay they say na bawal." (I really hide my identity because they say it's prohibited.) "Thankful pud ko kay wala jud ko gipangutana, naswertihan rako pag apply nako." (I'm just thankful for they didn't ask my sexuality and I got lucky the time that I applied.)	Fears	Structural discrimination
(P3) " So sa word na HRM maam bawal man jud kung lalaki ka, dapat kuan jud bawal ka mag taas taas ug hair, from the word hospitality industry. So mao to siya maam, nag decide nalang ko na mg call center." (in HRM, it was really forbidden for a guy to have a long hair from the word hospitality industry that is why I decided to be in a call center)	Worries	

Structural discrimination was brought about by the existing human resource policies and culture of the organization. This means that the people inside the organization do not necessarily discriminate the LGBTs, it is the system of the organization that lead them to discriminate LGBTs. According to the participant, in the car company where he works before, there were a lot of his officemates are bisexual and gay, but chose to remain closeted because of the existing policies of the company. The manager is supposed to foster an environment where discrimination is non-existent, unfortunately it is different in this car company, the manager took part in the discrimination and because of this, according to the participant, turnover rate is high. Moreover, the other participant was caught between his love for his field and his wanting to have a long hair. Hospitality management, as a profession requires its workers to dressed according to their sex. Thus, gay men are encouraged to conform to the image of straight men, a position of relative power, and lesbians are encouraged to conform to the image of a straight woman, a relative position (Rich, 1993). For the participant, the policy does not allow him to be himself, which is why he chose to work in the BPO. The experience of the participant only proves that there are still "sexually exclusive workplaces", where men should be men and women should be women, and anybody who deviates from it do not deserve to be employed or stay in the company.

## **Unorthodox Treatment**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
(KI4) " Oo meron talaga... Kasi pag nalaman nila na gay ka, parang ilap sila pero pag girl parang seryoso talaga yung mga customer doon." (Yes, because once they knew you're gay, they feel uncomfortable.)	Rejection	Unorthodox Treatment
(P1)" ang uban diha na naay itsura dili na niya i check" (If they are good looking, he will not check them)		
(P3) ..na promote ko, ako lng mali ang bantayan (when I was promoted, they only noticed my mistakes		
(P2)"Na deliver sa individual as a joke. As a joke maam, you believe na joke is half meant true diba maam?" (maybe there are times that they put it as a joke but you believe that jokes are half meant right ma'am?)		

Unorthodox treatment is the negative treatment of the co-workers towards an LGBT employee. In the workplace, employees have a negative expectation towards the LGBT employee, thus, they keep their distance and if the LGBT holds a position, they only notice their mistake. This means that the other employees believed that the LGBT might not do the job well or the LGBT are prone to mistake, thus, the LGBT should not be given positions in the workplace. In reality the LGBTs are professional in dealing with their client and are efficient and productive in their work. This situation may be the reason why the LGBTs experience informal discrimination from their co-workers or maybe some of them were just influenced by the existing policy of the organization or their peers.

On the other hand, the other participant experience informal discrimination by means of a joke. Telling it like a joke could be a way for the co-workers to eased down the tension, but for the LGBT it is disrespect. The LGBTs participate in the joke, is a way for them to say that they are not weak. This type of act means to the LGBT that not all of their co-workers have accepted their sexuality, that is why LGBTs choose who they want to be with. Moreover, the extent to which the LGBT felt bad about the situation depends on who is telling the joke and the content of the joke. If the one telling the joke is somebody whom the LGBT do not consider as friend and the content of the joke is about the LGBTs sexuality, then the joke becomes offensive.

### **Meanings Extracted from their Experiences**

As the LGBT members continue to struggle in their own workplaces; dealing with different situations concerning their gender preference, the respondents through their work experiences have extracted learning insights on how the LGBT should deal with their working environments.

## Work Values Over Questions of Sexuality

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
(KI5) To excel in anything is not the question of what you are. It is the measurement of your dedication and determination to your work.	Self-assurance	Work values over questions of sexuality
(KI1) Dati, mag adjust ko sa ilaha kay handle gud nako sila. Kailangan pud nako sila irespeto para in return madawat pud nako ilang respeto.(before, I would adjust for them because I am the one that will handle them. I also need to respect them so that they will respect me in return.)	Reciprocity	

The participants despite of some of the negative experiences they had in their workplace, the LGBTs are assured that productivity at work is far more important than that of being gay. This further implies that the LGBTs believed that when the organization decides whom to promote is mainly because of their work ethics, that they were given a fair treatment in the workplace and the negative experience they had in the workplace is just confined to some selected few.

Respondents have stated the importance of reciprocity where respect begets respect and that being able to prove that being an LGBT is not a hindrance to ones performance in the company. This scenario means that the LGBTs were given a chance to prove what they can give for the company, and the chance was never wasted by the LGBTs and as long as the LGBTs work within the bounce of company policies and are productive in their work, sexuality is no longer an issue.

## Skill Advantage

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
(KI3)... makaingn man ka na gahot jud ang gays when it comes to things like customer service, because we really give all our efforts, para mapa impress ang tao para dili mi ma underestimate tungod bayota pud ana niya oy..( that gays can be observed as more hardworking when it comes to things like customer service because we really give all our efforts to impress people so that they would not underestimate us just because we are gay.)	Proving self-worth	Skill advantage

The participants professed that the LGBTs, especially the gays, have proven that they are really good in customer service, that in the field, they do the extra mile just to make sure that they will get the outcome. This realization will explain why in the BPO the LGBTs are very much accepted and have been excelling. One participant shared that communicating with foreigners is difficult, but the gay, according to him, can create strategies to make the language easy to understand, that is why, they often close a deal with them, which is an added productivity to their group. Another participant shared, because of their ability to transcend beyond what is expected will explain why some of the LGBTs have negative experiences. Men and women in the workplace who wanted to excel often are threatened by the presence of the LGBT in the organization, that is why some LGBTs experience structural discrimination and unorthodox treatment. The skill advantage of the LGBT is like a double edge sword, it made the LGBT productive but often the reason of the negative experiences that they had.

### **Financial Stability**

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<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
(KI2) As you can see in the society, most of the gays are really working hard because we need to have at least an above average income or financial stability for our future...	Money as self-worth	Financial stability
(KI4) Mahirap magiging bakla kaya minsan hindi kasi masarap lang magiging bakla pag bata ka pa tapos oo nga madali kang kumita ng pera kasi may talent ka. Pag katulad sa akin 40's na ako next year, inisip ko paano.(it id difficult to be gay. (It is ok to be gay when you are younger because it is easy to earn money especially when you have the talent but if you are already in your 40's like me I am already thinking about my future.)	Preparing for old age	

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The LGBTs believed of the need for them to be financially stable. According to them, having a money is a requirement so that they can provide for their family and not be considered a burden. This kind of perception was brought about by the highly conservative tradition that Filipinos have, that children, especially the male, should be able to provide their family and having a child who is gay is a cursed. These culture explains why the LGBTs need to be financially stable, because unfortunately, the treatment of the family towards their LGBT son or daughter changes if the family are well provided by the LGBT. This will also explain why

some mothers have accepted and are proud to have gay children because they are often the one that financially provides the family. Furthermore, for the LGBT having an above average income would mean that they can buy whatever they want, and they can be whoever they want. This situation will explain why the other participant shared that while they are still young they have to work hard because if they reach the age of 40, it becomes more difficult for them to earn money. An LGBTs responsibility to his family does not only involve providing for their immediate family, thus, the need to have an above average salary is a need. The most difficult stage of an LGBT is reaching the old age, because it is a question whether or not the people whom the LGBT supported will still be there. Working hard at a very young age means also preparing for the future, because unfortunately, according to the participants, it will be difficult for them to find a job and earn as they reach 40 years old. This reality will explain the reason why some gays decided to become straight and let go his gay life and get married, while some took the risk of having non-traditional family (LGBT couples).

### **Their Coping**

The LGBTs have varied experiences in the workplace, as a result, each of them have developed a coping mechanism to deal with their experiences. Coping is important since it will help the LGBTs to minimize the effect of discrimination or difficulty that they have experienced in the workplace. It is through the coping mechanism that allows them to succeed despite of negative experience they had. LGBT workers in our society today have already explored various coping mechanisms in relation with their gender preference in the workplace. The following are the different set-ups that the participants used.

### **Ignoring Discrimination and Avoiding Conflict**

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<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
(KI4) "Pinapabayaan lang namin, kasi syempre kung malawak ang pagiisip mo pabaayaan mo nalang. Kasi hindi mo naman ma please ang mga tao, diba pakiusapan mong "wag mo kaming kanyawan ha?" Or "tanggpin mo nalang kami" kaya hindi lahat ang tao maplease." (I just ignore it. If you have an open mind then it is better if you ignore the discrimination. Because you really cannot please everybody. You cannot just ask them to stop teasing you or accept you.)	Emotion Focused Coping	

(KI4) "Mas gusto ko duon sa japan para sa amin.. Kasi walang discrimination. Sa Pilipinas lang naman i-diacriminate nila ang mga bakla... Pero noon mas grabe, ngayon parang tanggap naman nila ang mga kasi ang mga elementary kung makita mong baklang bakla na." (I prefer working in Japan because there is no discrimination. It is only in the Philippines that gays are being discriminated. But nowadays it is already accepted. Even elementary kids are already gay.)

Having a positive mind

(P3)"Kalma lang gihapon ko."(I just stay calm.)  
(P3) "Kanang ginastoryahan lang nako sila in a nice way gud ma'am, para dili sila ma hurt tapos para walay sakit ng loob gud."(I just tell them in a nice way so that they wouldn't take it personally (FGD1)naga pugong lang jud ko."(I am just controlling myself)

Tolerance on discrimination

(KI4)"Wala, pag may naiingit naman sa akin hndi ko pinapakitaan na bad mood ako sa kanila. Kina kaibigan ko kasi gusto ko madiscover nila kung ano talaga ang totoong ako."(when there is someone who envy me I do not show them that I dislike them, I even try to make friends with them so that they will discover for themselves the real me.)

Ignoring discrimination and avoiding conflict

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One of the participant was discriminated, but the participant chose to ignore it. According to him, the discrimination is naturally existent especially for them and it is out of their control. These kind of perception only disseminate discrimination because the LGBT recognize and accept that there is discrimination and allows it to happen.

The participant believed that ignoring the discrimination was the best way to show to other people that it does not affect them. The participant shared that they cannot please everybody. LGBT members who resort to this kind of coping mechanism are afraid of defending themselves, thus tolerating discrimination. According to the model of coping mechanism, the LGBTs employed vigilant strategies (ignoring discrimination) which they believed will lead to minimum

probability of unanticipated occurrence of aversive events (Leddy, 2012). Most of the LGBT resort to working in place where discrimination is minute. This is not only applicable abroad but also in the Philippines on the kind of work they apply in. Many who graduated with good diplomas resorted to working in BPO or open their own business where they know that they will be accepted and not judged. Even if they know for themselves that they deserve better jobs, but they are afraid that their sexuality might be a hindrance for them to get their dream jobs.

Dealing with discrimination in the workplace can be stressful, frustrating, emotionally traumatic, and deciding whether or not to report it is a highly personal choice this is the reason why some of the participants chose not to confront the discrimination they are experiencing. The LGBTs only aimed at reducing or managing their emotional distress associated with the situation (Kahn and Olf et al., 1964; Lazarus and Folkman; 1984). In some countries, it is illegal to victimize someone for reporting discrimination, regardless of whether discrimination is proven or not (Adviceorg.com). However, there might be unpleasant negative consequences if an LGBT report discrimination, however unfair and unjust those consequences might be. This can be a harsh reality in some countries and some organizations, and in some instances this victimization can be unintentional. Studies of the Mind's tool (2010) show that positive social support can reduce feelings of stress and isolation for victims of discrimination.

Moreover, some of the participants shared some instances on how they were able to manage discrimination in the workplace like staying calm, approached their co-workers in a nice way and not showing a bad mood, keep those people that think are not discriminating them and control their emotions to maintain their composure and image in the workplace.

### **They Keep a Low Profile About Being an LGBT**

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<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/ Themes</i>
(KI1)“ Ma miss look lang daw nila ako kung anu ako. pero kung mag salita na ko, yun malaman nila na lesbian pala ako.”(They overlooked on what I really am but when I start speaking then they will find out that I am a lesbian.)	Denial	They keep a low profile about being an LGBT

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<p>(P1)“Kanang gitago jud nako ba kay in the first place they say bawal. So ang nakabalo lang jud after how many months kay akoang work, ka department kung unsa ko. So lisud sa akong part labi na maabot akong boss, di siya si jud siya gusto ug bayot. Ana jud siya ma’am.”(I really kept it as a secret because in the first place they really said that it was forbidden. After how many months the only people who knew about me was my workmates in my department. It was hard for me especially if my boss is there because he really didn’t like gays.)</p>	<p>Concealing gender preferences to people against LGBT</p>
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Many LGBTs pretended and chose to hide behind masks for fear of being recognized and ridiculed at home and at work (Psychology Today, 2011). Moreover, a vast majority of the LGBT remain closeted at work, even though many more are out to their families and friends. LGBT employees are least open about their sexual orientation to their managers. Some of the respondents have kept quiet about their sexuality and just let the people around them find out for themselves about their sexuality. In this manner, not talking about it in the workplace defines an etiquette of civility, thus, decreasing the possibility of discrimination.

This coping mechanism, worked for most LGBT members, however, this mechanism requires one to pretend and hide their real personality. Keeping a low profile inhibits one to talk about their sexuality, thus, really not showing their true self. The LGBTs refused to accept the truth about what is happening in their workplace, they avoid to face the facts because this is what they believe to minimize the consequences of the situation (Mayo Clinic, 2014). Not accepting the reality is good for a short period of time, but there is a need to do something so that the problem will be address.

### **They Embrace their Sexuality and Making it as an Advantage**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Concepts</i>	<i>Objective/Themes</i>
<p>(K12)“It’s the usual application. But nevertheless on the position here and for the company, it’s not an issue. It’s never an issue and will never be an issue. Most definitely, it’s actually an advantage.”</p>	<p>Problem Focused Coping</p>	<p>They embrace sexuality and making it as an advantage.</p>

(KI3) "well, actually ok lang, mas daghan kog na close sa akoang mga officemates right on that very first day na nag training me. Kay of course i work professionally, i show them kung what is expected naman. Tapos being gay murag dali lang ko makakuha ug friends kay neutral. I can make friends with the straight guys, i can make friends with gays as well, and i can make friends sa mga babae, so dali lang siya." (its ok. I actually did gain many close friends right on that very first day of training because I work professionally and I show them what is expected of me. Being gay, its very east to make friends. I can make friends with straight guys, with gays and girls as well.)

Openness to others

(P1) "Kanang kung kaya niya, ipakita pud nako sa akong boss na kaya pud nako. Murag ana gud.kay siyempre pangit na gani ang impression sa amo na mga bayot, sa mga gays, wala naman na imong trabaho. Dili mana sila competitive, siyempre ipapangit pa nimo, more on mag boost hinuon ka. Kay siyempre bayot naka, so kung unsay kaya sa babae ug sa lalaki, ipakita jud nimo. Kay siyempre malugi man gud ka maam, di sa ingnon na malugi ka in a way na kung sa gay pa, papildi paka? Dili na, sa panahon karon dili naman gud siya maam." (If they can do it I also show them that I can do it because there is already a bad impression on us, gays that is why you should try more to not make it worser. Whatever those girls and boys can do, you should show them that you are also capable because in our time today, one should never accept defeat.)

Versatility  
Becoming a  
contender

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The most common treatment is, being open about their sexuality. Making their co-workers accept who they are and making it as an advantage. This is what Lazarus and Folkman (1984) termed as problem focused coping, wherein the

LGBT will show their true sexuality to alter the source of stress. In the case of some LGBT, they are proactive in dealing with the problem and took steps to avoid the problem (Aspinwall and Taylor, 1997). This mechanism is risky, as one can expect their co-workers to either accept or reject them. There is always a risk that some of the co-workers may not be open in relating with the LGBT.

### **IMPLICATION FOR PRACTICE**

The negative and positive experiences of the LGBTs in the workplace would simply mean that slowly different companies are recognizing the capabilities and skill of the LGBT. Further, this means that some selected workplaces are already adopting LGBT friendly policies, but there still remained some companies who have difficulty moving out to the traditional policies due to the nature of the work. Managers are important key players to lessen and eventually remove negative workplace relationship especially when it comes to dealing with the LGBTs. The negative experiences of the LGBTs and their ability to cope with those negative experiences would simply mean that they are aware of the limitations set by the society but they do not allow those limitations to stop them. It instead lead them to set challenging goals and determined to achieve them. Philippine companies, especially the traditionally heterosexual workplace, still have a long way of being able to get out of their tradition, that is why there is a need to look into policy reformulation.

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