

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Support for identity formation issues of learners from state-run educational institutions

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### ABSTRACT

This article studies research on sexual orientation and identity crisis among students during their formation journey, and to determine the support and guidance the participants needed in navigating their identity development. Identity formation is a crucial aspect of a learner's development, and it can be particularly challenging for individuals exploring their sexual orientation. Gathering 10 instructors working directly with 10 junior high school students from different public schools in Calbayog City, the purpose of this case study is to improve the resources available to students who are experiencing a sexual orientation identity crisis. Through an examination of a student's experiences grappling with their sexual orientation, this research offers valuable insights into the obstacles encountered by students. This article also suggests methods to enhance existing support networks of the participants with the help of their instructors. The results emphasize how crucial it is to establish welcoming and inclusive learning settings, offer specialized counseling services, and encourage awareness and comprehension among instructors. This case study highlights how important it is for teachers to take the initiative to meet the special needs of students who are struggling with their sexual orientation in order to improve their general well-being and academic performance. Recommendations for future research and interventions are discussed.

**Keywords:** Identity formation; learner's development; sexual orientation; identity crisis; support networks, inclusivity

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## 1. Introduction

The area of education has paid considerable attention to and acknowledged the issue of sexual orientation and identity in recent years. According to Morgan<sup>[1]</sup>, educators have to establish welcoming, encouraging settings that meet the various needs of all students, including those who might be going through a sexual orientation or identity crisis.

An important part of a young person's identity is their sexual orientation and gender identification/expression. Developing linked identities and comprehending and expressing one's gender and sexual orientation are common developmental activities that differ for children and young people. To help these people travel their path with resilience, self-acceptance, and confidence, it is crucial to offer them the right tools, mentorship, and support networks<sup>[2]</sup>.

Furthermore, junior high school is a crucial time in the development of students' identities and self-

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perceptions, according to Torkelson<sup>[3]</sup>. Many young people start to investigate and comprehend their gender identity and sexual orientation during this time, which can be accompanied by serious difficulties and crises. It is critical to comprehend how peer dynamics and social interactions affect the experiences of kids going through identity and sexual orientation crises.

While some young people may have known their sexual orientation since they were small children and have expressed it, others may not have known. It is common for young people to express and explore their gender identification and roles. According to Chivers & Bailey<sup>[4]</sup>, every person has a different path for coming to terms with and expressing their gender identity and sexual orientation. It is a continuous process, and how one presents their gender identity and sexual orientation can be influenced by societal, cultural, and personal variables.

To better serve students who are negotiating the complexity of sexual orientation and identity, this case study will investigate tactics and interventions. Teachers can learn a great deal about the special needs and concerns that emerge during this crucial stage of personal development by exploring the experiences and difficulties that these kids confront in an educational setting.

## **2. Research objectives**

The research objectives for enhancing support for learner identity formation in the context of sexual orientation and identity crisis include:

1. Identify barriers encountered by students during their identity formation journey, particularly concerning their sexual orientation.
2. Determine the needed support and guidance to learners navigating their sexual orientation identity development.

## **3. Literature review**

Important documents supporting this study were gathered to better comprehend and finish it. Homosexual-straight alliances, the school experiences of sexual minority youth, care and counseling, the new homosexual teen, and the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our country were among the topics covered. Formation of identity *is* a vital process that every person must go through as they navigate a variety of aspects of their lives, including their sexual orientation. Chavez and Ceneciro<sup>[5]</sup> observed that religious systems and beliefs have a significant influence on how people feel about same-sex relationships. Religious communities contain a wide variety of viewpoints. Some members of these organizations uphold traditional beliefs that forbid homosexuality, while others undergo a process of reinterpretation to accommodate and condone same-sex partnerships. LGBTQ+ youth may find this phase particularly challenging due to social shame, persecution, and the potential for identity crisis. Therefore, it is essential that more resources and assistance must be made accessible to help these individuals on their journey toward identity and self-acceptance.

This literature review looks into the body of research on enhancing support for learners' identity construction, with a focus on a case study of sexual orientation and identity crisis. To learn about practical strategies and interventions that can help LGBTQ+ kids in the process of creating their identities, this review examines books, reports, and research studies that are relevant to the subject.

According to Futterman and Ryan's<sup>[6]</sup> work "Young Lesbian and Homosexual People: Support and Guidance", gay and lesbian youth encounter particular difficulties when forming their identities. Their work

also talks about how important it is to give these people supportive care and therapy so they can come to terms with their sexual orientation and form a healthy sense of self.

It is explained in Savin-Williams<sup>[7]</sup> entitled “The new gay youth.” from Harvard University Publications that the experiences of gay teens and the difficulties they have in accepting their sexual orientation are examined by Savin-Williams. The book includes methods for assisting young people on their path of self-discovery as well as insights into the identity-building process.

Kosciw, Palmer, Greytak, and Boesen<sup>[8]</sup> stated the lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, and transgender youth's experiences in American schools are documented in the 2013 National School Climate Survey. The results of a nationwide study on LGBTQ+ youth experiences in schools are presented in this paper. It draws attention to the detrimental effects of a hostile school atmosphere on the development of identity and offers suggestions for building welcoming and encouraging learning settings.

Statements by Cohn and Leake<sup>[9]</sup> in gay-straight partnerships and young people who identify as sexual minorities in schools looks at how Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) help young people who identify as sexual minorities. It examines how GSAs affect LGBTQ+ students' school experiences and identity development, highlighting the significance of these groups in establishing welcoming and safe environments.

In the journal entitled “Developmental patterns in LGB and heterosexual youth's experiences of emotional discomfort and peer victimization “, Rivers, Robinson, and Espelage<sup>[10]</sup> 131(3) of *Pediatrics*, 423–430 look into the patterns of growth in LGBTQ+ and straight youth's emotional discomfort and peer persecution. It draws attention to the detrimental effects of victimization on the process of forming one's identity and underscores the necessity of supporting actions to lessen the harm that bullying causes.

## **4. Methods**

### **4.1. Research design**

Through a planned, homogenous sampling process, the researcher was able to choose participants and create a diverse sample that is representative of the lesbian and homosexual community in selected secondary public schools in Calbayog. A qualitative research methodology is used in this case study, which also includes document analysis, observations, and interviews. Participants include educators/teachers who work with students and students who identify as LGBTQ+ and have gone through an identity crisis because of their sexual orientation. The research investigates the participant's experiences, obstacles encountered, and opinions regarding the assistance at their disposal.

This study used a purposive exploratory research design to investigate the analysis of sexual orientation and identity crisis in addition to students who need the teachers' help. Through the use of an exploratory design, the study produced a thorough understanding of how educators might improve a support network for all students who identify as LGBTQ+ and are experiencing an identity crisis. Examining strongly held convictions, individual experiences, and thoughts around sexual orientation and identity crisis was made simpler by this approach. This study design uses a case study methodology and is qualitative.

### **4.2. Participants**

The Participants in this study included 10 public school teachers chosen from various schools from different districts in Calbayog and 10 students who interact directly with the public-school teachers, that are going through a sexual orientation and identity crisis. Willingness to participate and prior experience with sexual orientation and identity crisis are the main selection factors. The study will employ a technique known

as purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allows researchers to discover a great deal from a tiny sample and get sufficient insight into the subject to determine which facts are crucial for the job at hand.

The amount of data was used to establish the sample size, guaranteeing that enough data was collected to appropriately answer the study objectives. To capture a variety of experiences and viewpoints, an attempt was made to include participants from a variety of backgrounds. However, due to the nature of qualitative study, the researcher ensure that the article is free from potential bias by choosing the appropriate way of data collection and analysis methods, and reporting on the findings and interpretations clearly and honestly. Interviews with public school instructors from various schools were conducted for this study.

### 4.3. Instrument

This study created a research tool to record participant replies according to the study's goals. The case study on sexual orientation and identity crises included pertinent experiences from public school teachers and students, which were gleaned from **table 1**. Esterberg<sup>[11]</sup> produced recommendations for conducting interviews, which were employed in this study. The purpose of the interview questions was to give participants the opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings, and worries regarding inclusive education.

**Table 1.** Instrument of the study.

Objectives	Interview questions	Participants	N
<b>Determine the obstructions experience by learners in their process of identity formation of their sexual orientation</b>	1. With regards to your sexual orientation, what obstructions have you experience during your identity formation? Explain further.	Learners with issues in their sexual Orientation and Identity Crisis state-run schools	10 instructors; 10 junior high school students
	2. What intrinsic confusion or conflict did you experience during this journey and tell us its effects to your identity formation? Tell us more.		
	3. What is your experience in terms of your teachers' perception and treatment toward these issues? Elaborate further		
<b>Identify support mechanism or services the learners need in the journey of their identity formation.</b>	1. Tell us your experience on how teachers provide support mechanism and services to you during your identity formation in relation to their beliefs and attitudes toward identity formation? Explain further.		
	2. Based on your experience, what specific exposure do the teachers need to support students experiencing the process of identity formation? Explain further.		

### 4.4. Research procedure

Qualitative data collection methods were used to document the individuals' experiences with sexual orientation. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were the primary means of obtaining data from the subjects. More information regarding the participants' unique experiences of relief from barriers and compliances in inclusive education may be obtained through the interviews.

Before conducting interviews, this study got a consent form to gather data. In the consent form, the researcher included a clause regarding the participants' voluntary participation, the study's objectives, the data's usage, confidentiality, and dissemination of the results. The researcher scheduled a time for a talk and in-person interview after the sign-off. During the chat-based interviews, field notes were taken to capture contextual details and non-verbal messages. Using an audio recording device, the researcher conducted several one-on-one interviews with the participants, going over their in-depth experiences with the

phenomenon using an interview technique created especially for this study. The researcher employed doing memos and coding during the data-analysis phase to extract the core of the study participants' lived experiences.

#### **4.5. Data analysis**

The interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis in order to find recurrent themes and patterns. According to Creswell<sup>[12]</sup>, a methodical approach to data coding involves examining individual statements and grouping them into themes that best capture the relevant phenomenon. The qualitative data must be coded, categorized, and interpreted as part of the data analysis process.

Data was collected during the focus group discussion. Data honesty is increased and information bias is decreased when diverse backgrounds are represented in the data collection process. To get in-depth viewpoints, the participants will be questioned. The interviews will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy during the data processing phase. The researcher will be creating several open-ended questions to look into the students' experiences. The key areas of investigation will be the types of content people consume and how it influences how they see themselves. The interview will be recorded by the researchers as it progresses.

### **5. Results**

**Objective 1:** Determine the obstructions experience by learners in their process of identity formation of their sexual orientation

Question 1. With regards to your sexual orientation, what obstructions have you experience during your identity formation? Explain further.

#### **1.1 LACK OF SUPPORT**

Twelve (12) respondents said that a lack of support from peers, educators, and family members, exacerbated their identity crisis. Lack of representation and visibility in educational institutions can be a barrier for students. The absence of LGBTQ+ inclusive curricula or supportive resources may leave them feeling isolated and unsupported. This can result in a limited understanding of their own sexual orientation or even internalized homophobia.

“Since in Islam, it is not acceptable, the 3rd sex is always present in bullying, especially straight men who tend to bully gays and lesbians. It is really difficult to deal with because they are close-minded just like the surroundings or community.”

“Feeling confused since my family does not support me and I feel like my choice is wrong and just be the same as others as a two-gender identity that is known by all and recognized.”

#### **1.2 ACCEPTANCE BUT THE COMMUNITY**

Eight (8) respondents state they encounter a lot of bullying in school surroundings but their parents accept who they are. They always tell the respondents that no matter their gender, as long as they do good for themselves and for others, it's not a problem. The participant also highlighted positive experiences, such as the support received from a supportive counselor and LGBTQ+ support groups.

“The mother of the student already knows and accepts her that she is a lesbian but the one who supports her studies is against but according to the students it is in their genes”.

“My family accepted me when I told them I’m a lesbian but my classmate bully for the reason that I do not belong there”

Question 2. What intrinsic confusion or conflict did you experience during this journey and tell us its effects to your identity formation? Tell us more.

#### 1.1 KEPT A SECRET

Twelve (12) respondents state that they tend to choose to keep it to themselves since they can't overcome the consequences. Even thinking about it they tend to choose the safe way without trying to act. Students can strengthen their sense of identity by accepting their sexual orientation and embracing who they truly are. Instead of hiding behind an act, their newfound genuineness enables them to create healthier interactions with others.

“Yes, the parents do not support so they tend to keep within themselves and they begin to compare other LGBT because of their acceptance within the family members.”

“The student is bothered since her aunt tells her that it is sinful, against God’s law since they belong to a religious family, that student does not recognize that feeling since she is boyish.”

#### 1.2 ACCEPT AND ADVICE

Eight (8) respondents said that for teens who are unsure about their sexual orientation, the path to self-acceptance is an important component of identity development. It requires reflection, introspection, and the capacity to question social conventions. Throughout this process, students may feel a variety of emotions as they work through their understanding of their sexuality, including fear, shame, and guilt. When you accept yourself, other people can accept you, especially your family and you can also ask for advice since you can open up the topic in your family without worrying.

“Yes, when my parents don’t know my identity and accept who am I so it’s a relief, and they gave me a lot of advice.”

“Yes, since being a lesbian acceptance in the family is the biggest relief since you can act freely without secrets in the family.”

Question 3. What is your experience in terms of your teachers’ perception and treatment toward these issues? Elaborate further

#### 1.1 ORIENTATION

Eight (8) respondents said the educators need an orientation so that they have awareness on how to deal with the students especially in the behavior so that no one can misunderstand and having a strong sense of professionalism is the best way to solve these issues so that they can still act according to their role.

“Teachers need orientation in dealing with the learners, especially the behavior, and conducting the HEADS form to have the awareness and support for learners.”

#### 1.2 OPEN-MINDED

Twelve (12) respondents stated that from the moment I entered the school premises, I could sense their genuine desire to impart knowledge and shape young minds. Their positive attitude creates a conducive learning environment that fosters growth and development. They take the time to understand each student's strengths, weaknesses, and individual needs. This personalized approach ensures that every student receives the attention they deserve. The educators in my school exhibit a strong sense of professionalism.

“From the school, we don’t receive training regarding identity crisis and sexual orientation it’s through personal counseling.”

” As for the teachers, there is no problem we encounter in dealing with LGBT students they support us in what we do we will give our best.”

**Objective 2:** Identify support mechanism or services the learners need in the journey of their identity formation.

Question 1. Tell us your experience on how teachers provide support mechanism and services to you during your identity formation in relation to their beliefs and attitudes toward identity formation? Explain further.

#### 1.1 CONFRONT

Ten (10) respondents said that educators who hold negative attitudes towards non-heterosexual orientations may create a situation of confrontation even when the students are not ready; this can inadvertently create an unwelcoming environment for LGBTQ+ students. This can lead to feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and even mental health issues among these students.

“Intake interview, counseling, and home visitation.”

“Teachers must be open-minded and approachable so that students can open up their issues regarding their sexual orientation and gender identity crisis.”

#### 1.2 LISTENED

Ten (10) respondents state that educators who possess positive attitudes towards diverse sexual orientations can foster an inclusive atmosphere where all students feel safe and accepted. They listen to you when open up they give you time to have courage and open up reassuring you that it will be okay and accepting for who you are.

“They simply listened and assured the person that it is who they are, emphasizing that being gay is not their fault. Their parents are aware of their identity, accepting them for who they are, and offering guidance for their development.”

Question 2. Based on your experience, what specific exposure do the teachers need to support students experiencing the process of identity formation? Explain further.

#### 1.1 ORIENTATION AND SEMINAR

All Twenty (20) respondents said that teachers need to have a thorough awareness of the numerous kinds of sexual orientations and gender identities that are out there. This entails understanding concepts like lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ+), and the difficulties encountered by people who identify in these categories. Teachers must have specialized training knowledge and abilities in order to support students as they explore their sexual orientation identities. They may establish an inclusive learning environment where all students feel comfortable and supported in their journey for self-discovery by gaining this expertise.

“Orientation and seminars on how to deal with the learners’ identity crisis and sexual orientation. Invite a speaker who is experiencing identity crisis in their journey concerning their sexual orientation. Teachers must be open-minded in terms LGBT.”

## 6. Discussion

**Objective 1:** Determine the obstructions experience by learners in their process of identity formation of their sexual orientation

The study provides light on the complex difficulties that students often confront by thoroughly examining their experiences as they develop their sexual orientation and identity. The frequency of barriers that students encounter that prevent them from developing their sexual orientation identities is an important discovery. These difficulties include prejudices in society, a lack of empathy from classmates, and, most significantly, the attitudes that teachers display in the classroom. One important factor influencing how kids establish their identities related to their sexual orientation is the opinions of their professors. The study emphasizes how important it is for teachers to have the right attitudes in order to either lessen or increase the challenges that pupils face. The educational environment is greatly influenced by educators, and fostering a friendly setting for students to explore their sexual orientation is greatly aided by their positive attitudes. This theory is consistent with Chavez and Ceneciro's<sup>[5]</sup> findings, which suggest that women in the lowest economic groups should receive more attention. The study explores the emotional landscape that students move through as they consider and come to terms with their sexual orientation. Their total identity formation is significantly impacted by the complicated emotions and psychological conflicts they deal with. Beyond issues of self-perception, these emotional concerns pose problems that impact students' overall well-being.

Butler<sup>[13]</sup>, a researcher on gender and sexuality, claims that one of her most important books is "Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity" (1990), in which she questions conventional ideas of gender and identity. She presents the idea of performativity, arguing that gender identity is not an innate quality but rather a recurring performance. "The 2017 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth in Our Nation's Schools"<sup>[14]</sup> states that Joseph G. Kosciw is well-known for his study on school climate, specifically concerning the experiences of LGBTQ+ students. His writing frequently discusses the importance of training and the responsibility of educators.

"The New Gay Teenager," Savin-Williams, 2005. This book delves into the experiences of gay teenagers as they grow older, providing a window into their struggles, lives, and the shifting terrain of LGBTQ+ identity. It explores the intricate interactions between family dynamics, cultural attitudes, and personal growth throughout the critical years of adolescence. While Savin-Williams<sup>[7]</sup> discussed the obstacles and challenges faced by gay teenagers, offering a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence their experiences during adolescence, "The New Gay Teenager" covers aspects of identity formation, shedding light on how gay teenagers navigate their self-discovery process and establish their identities within societal contexts. Discussions regarding LGBTQ+ experiences have been influenced by this work, with an emphasis on the special difficulties gay youth face. Savin-Williams's contributions enhance the discourse on sexual orientation in general, offering insightful viewpoints for scholars, educators, and individuals with an interest in LGBTQ+ issues. This idea aligns with Chavez and Cuilan's<sup>[15]</sup> research, which demonstrates how gender-based humor uses language to reinforce power disparities, discriminatory practices, and stereotypes.

**Objective 2:** Identify support mechanism or services the learners need in the journey of their identity formation.

The findings of the research highlight the significant influence that teachers' attitudes and beliefs around sexual orientation have on their capacity to effectively support and mentor students. The clear relationship between teachers' views and the environment's support for kids experimenting with their sexual orientation identity is a crucial finding. Positive attitudes were linked to the development of a more encouraging environment, whereas negative attitudes were recognized as possible roadblocks preventing pupils from progressing. To improve teachers' ability to assist students in a meaningful way, the study highlights the need



for focused instruction, specialized knowledge, and improved skills. Teachers should become well-versed in LGBTQ+ issues so they can help kids negotiate the complexity of exploring their sexual orientation. This knowledge is essential for educators to use inclusive teaching strategies and create a culture that values individual identities and embraces variety. This theory is consistent with Cuilan's<sup>[15]</sup> research, which found that gender-based humor on the internet improved the language used to convey prejudices against women and the LGBT community. The study emphasizes the significance of teachers having effective communication skills. Good communication is essential for building trust and fostering an open discourse between teachers and students, as well as for fostering an inclusive and accepting learning environment. Since it creates a safe environment where students feel heard and understood, this open discussion becomes especially important for kids navigating the development of their sexual orientation and identity.

Gerald Corey's book is a commonly utilized resource in counseling education, according to Corey's<sup>[16]</sup> work "Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy". It may not discuss gender identity or sexual orientation directly, but it does teach the essentials of counseling, such as conducting intake interviews and fostering an open relationship.

Fisher<sup>[17]</sup> discusses "Teaching and Counseling LGBTQ Youth: A Life-Teaching Life Approach" and how the education system frequently ignores, misunderstands, and rarely prioritizes the needs and rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students and families. This book offers school-based mental health professionals a helpful and practical manual to assist kids, families, teachers, and administrators in creating a welcoming and safe school environment for all LGBTQ children and families. The first section provides an overview of the particular problems and difficulties LGBTQ adolescents and their families encounter, as well as a discussion of how sexuality and gender identity grow within the interwoven contexts of the family, school, and community. This idea is in line with the findings of Chavez and Madrazo<sup>[18]</sup>. Practical steps are provided for establishing an inclusive school environment, putting prevention and intervention techniques into practice to address bullying, violence, and discrimination, and setting up successful counseling programs for LGBTQ students. Without understanding and addressing the existing gender types, both straight males and females and the LGBTQ, we cannot continue to plan, implement, and assess our curriculum innovations. Working with families and communities to support actions performed within the school setting is the next stage in these school-based initiatives. Numerous handouts, sample letters, and other materials are included on an accompanying CD to help the school-based mental health professional adopt affirmative and responsive practices for LGBTQ students and families.

## **7. Conclusion**

This case study clarifies the difficulties encountered by students who are having a hard time figuring out their sexual orientation and offers suggestions for improving the support networks that help them create their identities. Learners can acquire the help they require through fostering inclusive learning settings, offering specialized counseling services, and encouraging awareness and understanding among instructors. A concentrated effort is needed to overcome social stereotypes, encourage empathy among peers, and, most importantly, create good attitudes among educators to foster a positive and affirming identity for children who are investigating their sexual orientation. The report promotes a proactive strategy and stresses the value of providing educators with LGBTQ+ concerns education. To promote understanding, provide safe spaces, and eventually aid in the creation of inclusive and tolerant learning environments, educators must complete this course.

The study emphasizes that providing educators with focused training is essential to giving them the skills they need to provide a secure and encouraging environment for kids as they explore their sexual

orientation and identity. To provide an educational atmosphere that is welcoming and supportive of varied sexual orientation identities, this training should include the subtleties of LGBTQ+ problems, inclusive teaching approaches, and effective communication strategies.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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