

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ALONG INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper focuses on exploring the lived experiences of students and teachers in an inclusive setting. It aimed to answer what it takes to be in an inclusive education setting. It utilized a qualitative phenomenological study that investigated the experiences of teacher education students and teachers in an inclusive setting. The researcher selected participants using purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques. The researcher used an informal interview to gather the data. Students and teachers welcome diverse learners to their classes. Some student parents have unpleasant experiences with their classmates, while a few student respondents experienced discrimination or bullying from their teachers. All respondents reported positive experiences with the non-teaching staff. Teachers with diverse backgrounds have pleasant and unpleasant experiences with their students and colleagues. Therefore, the following statements reflect the findings: LGBTQ+ students show their identity to their classmates, and teachers accept them within the educational environment. Most student respondents were welcomed and fairly treated by their classmates and teachers. Some student parents experienced acceptance and fair treatment, but they also experienced discrimination and bullying from their classmates and teachers. The identity of the students was disregarded by the staff when providing their services to them. Teachers have both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. The most effective way to welcome learners into their classes is by encouraging them. The findings and conclusions highlight how important inclusive education is in all aspects of learning and teaching, including the materials for the stakeholders.

Index Terms: COVID-19 pandemic, higher education, inclusive environment setting, life experience, phenomenology, qualitative, special education,

1 INTRODUCTION

Early psychologists and researchers who emphasized individuality inspired the shift to a learner-centered approach in education. Inclusive education fosters diversity, encourages interaction, and supports holistic development, aligning with international laws. The educational system usually separates learners based on many criteria, promoting detrimental practices and societal stereotypes. Inclusive education seeks to integrate students with special needs into regular education contexts through addressing educational achievement, labeling, and educational inequalities (Rafseena, 2018; Wang, 2009). Teachers can use strategies and partner with inclusion advocates to help excluded students join the least restrictive learning environment. Such learners will benefit from being included, as it enhances their educational progress and social integration. Higher education institutions must evolve to include learners with special needs, respond to several issues, and ensure inclusivity in education. Although some research suggests an improvement in inclusivity in higher education, the curriculum and method of assessment still need to be adjusted to suit students' needs (Carrington-Blaidies,

Sanderson-Cole, & Latiste-Francis, 2017). Tertiary level has a significant role to play in equipping students for the labor market, as employers seek bachelor's graduates or above for their cognitive capacity, skill discrimination, fostering equal educational opportunities for all students, and exceptional knowledge (Serrano, 2015; Pollard et al., 2015). In summary, the move towards inclusive education is crucial in combating discrimination and fostering equitable access for all students, regardless of their needs and abilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the value of inclusive education, especially against learning gaps that can potentially widen current inequalities (Tanim, 2021). To realize Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of access to quality, equitable, and inclusive education for all by 2030, higher education institutions need to modify their approaches to respond to the varied needs of learners (Ghanem, 2020).

The pandemic has disturbed higher education, leading to online and distance learning adoption. The pandemic has created difficulties, most importantly for students who are from low socio-economic groups, rural areas, and those who have limited technology skills. There is a need for equality and uniformity in education through curriculum modification, policy changes, and staff training to attain authentic inclusivity (Devkota, 2020; Joaquin et al., 2020).

COVID-19 compelled higher education to adjust to cater to the varied needs of students (Papay & Myers, 2020). As part of the Education for All initiative, inclusive education has modified entry requirements, retention policies, and graduation rates (Andaya et al., 2015). However, challenges remain, and solving these requires cooperation from the different sectors of society (Muega, 2016). The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) guide educators in accommodating diverse learners. Despite resistance from students facing digital divides, HEIs have modified online learning formats to continue education (Department of Education, 2017; Llego, 2019). LGBTQ+ students in the Philippines face bullying and discrimination. Pregnant college students face dismissals and admissions restrictions (ABS-CBN, 2017). This study investigates teachers' and students' experiences with inclusive education, aiming to address the challenges posed by prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes in society to build genuinely inclusive classrooms (Blessinger, Hoffman, & Makhanya, 2018). Inclusive education at the tertiary level is critical in empowering students to work in different workplaces and cultivate non-discriminatory dispositions, interpersonal relationships, and communication. It draws the advantages of inclusive education from primary to higher education levels. It helps students' lives within the community, civic participation, and employment.

Philosophical, Theoretical, and Conceptual Frameworks of the Study

This study highlights idealism, specifically Plato's belief in the potential of every individual guided by teachers and the significance of formalized education that fosters equality (Lamichhane, 2018; Murphy, 2015; Zamosc, 2017). People must deconstruct traditional classifications to create a more inclusive society. Plato's Allegory of the Cave illustrates the importance of embracing human diversity (Anderson et al., 2014; Danforth & Rhodes, 2016). The first pillar, "learning to know," focuses on acquiring knowledge and skills to perform effectively in one's environment. In conclusion, inclusive education supports UNESCO's Four Pillars by promoting knowledge acquisition, skill formation, social transformation, and holistic self-development, leading to empowerment, social change, and economic growth (Montaudon-Tomás, I. M.; Montaudon-Tomás, C. M., 2019; Rodriguez, 2021).

The fusion of these philosophical theories seeks to dismantle stereotypes and uncover hidden abilities and talents in students, ultimately striving towards a more inclusive society. People must deconstruct traditional classifications to create a more inclusive society. Plato's Allegory of the Cave illustrates the importance of embracing human diversity (Allan, 2008; Farahani, 2014; Boston-Kemple, 2012; Shahidzade, 2019).

The bio-ecological system theory points to the development of a child as shaped by his or her environment, suggesting that equitable education fosters holistic development and social justice (Sincero, 2020). As Kamenopoulou (2016) discussed, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory emphasizes the interlinkage of various systems, from microsystems to macrosystems, and their effect on inclusive education. It emphasizes how dysfunctional interaction in these systems can lead to misconduct in children and underscores the role of socio-cultural factors. Furthermore, it acknowledges the influence of macrosystems, including educational systems' attitudes and values, on inclusive education.

The research paradigm illustrated in Figure 1 shows how research is conducted, with input from students' and teachers' experiences, cultural factors, and data analysis, leading to policy outcomes related to inclusive education.

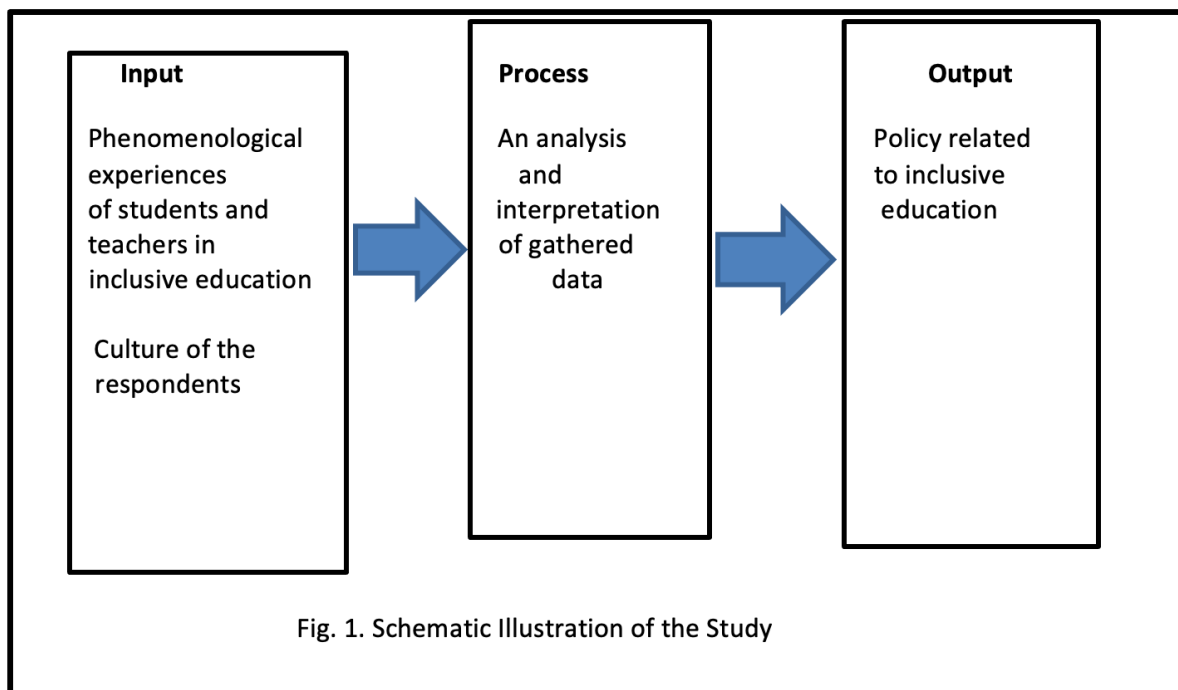


Fig. 1. Schematic Illustration of the Study

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to explore students' and teachers' experiences of inclusion in higher education.

Specifically, it sought to address the question: What does it take to be in an inclusive education setting?

2 DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter of the study discussed the research methodology. This study investigated the research design, population and location, data collection method, procedure, treatment, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study applied a qualitative design, specifically phenomenology, following Husserl. The qualitative research method was most suited because it identified the phenomenological life experiences of the participants by realizing their experiences of inclusive education within higher education. Phenomenology explains the meaning of the respondents' experiences regarding what and how they have experienced it.

Population and Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at Mountain Province State Polytechnic College (MPSPC), Tadian Campus, Teacher Education Department (TED), and focused on understanding the experiences of LGBTQ+ students and teachers and student parents' experiences in the area of inclusive education. The study used purposeful sampling to select primary respondents and employed snowball sampling to identify additional participants. The data-gathering process involved asking potential participants to recommend other people with similar experiences.

The research sought to examine the problems that students and instructors in higher education experience due to social attitudes, including cultural, religious, and societal factors. The study involved TED students from the second to fourth years, excluding transferees and first-year students due to a lack of experience. Disability and health issues, which entail extensive testing, were not included. Respondents' confidentiality was ensured. For visible physical disabilities, such students graduated a few years back. Diversity in origin, tradition, ethnicity, language, and political views influenced learners' acceptance. Religious affiliation was not a problem in a government school, and age differences did not matter.

Teachers from the Teacher Education Department were chosen as respondents because they specialized in teaching future teachers who would implement inclusive education and promote diversity. Those on leave were excluded, as it could affect their participation. Part-time or job-order teachers were not considered to ensure data consistency. The composition of participants in the study followed the phenomenological research guidelines, with thirteen respondents in total. Two of them were LGBTQ+ students, and nine were student parents. Two of the teachers were also members of the LGBTQ+ community. This research sought to uncover the experiences of these groups in the context of inclusive education.

The respondents were presented in a tabular format to facilitate easier identification.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

		Number
Students	LGBTQ+	2
	Student parents	9
Teachers	LGBTQ+	2
Total	13	

The school was selected for this research because it was the sole higher education institution in the municipality. The school's role was considered vital, as it could potentially influence the community's openness to diversity.

Data Gathering Tool

Data for the study were collected using interviews to comprehend a common phenomenon among the participants. The interview questions were open-ended to allow participants to express their perspectives freely. The researcher created the interview tool, which was validated by an expert in the field.

An informal interview format was utilized to create a comfortable environment for participants, encouraging them to openly discuss their experiences. This approach aimed to reduce stress among respondents, potentially leading to more insightful and candid responses, ultimately helping the researcher better comprehend the participants' answers.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before conducting interviews, participants were given a softcopy of the consent form to decide on their participation. Each interview was conducted with the participants' confirmation of the consent letter through messenger or text communication. Participants were informed about the interview process, recording, and asked for their consent before recordings were initiated. Interviews took place on platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, or phone calls at convenient times. Privacy was ensured, and participants were advised to select a location for confidential discussions. Only one interview per participant was conducted, allowing them to seek clarification on the consent letter as needed.

Treatment of Data

The interpretation of data for this study involved a five-step procedure based on phenomenological philosophy. The analysis started with bracketing and phenomenological reduction to ensure objectivity and eliminate personal biases.

The next steps involved delineating units of meaning to determine the essence of data, grouping these units to form central themes, summarizing and validating interviews with participants, and finally, extracting general and unique themes from all interviews to create a composite overview. This method allowed for a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The study employed thematic analysis, enabling a comprehensive exploration, interpretation, and analysis of participants' lived experiences. Thematic analysis centered on identifying meaning patterns and organizing data into themes to capture how individuals experience a particular phenomenon in their lives.

Data is analyzed by beginning from the primary data to identifying ideas, identifying meaning patterns, and then organizing the data into themes. How a person experiences something is how it appears in their own life.

An informal interview format was utilized to create a comfortable environment for participants, encouraging them to discuss their experiences openly. This approach aimed to reduce stress among respondents, potentially leading to more insightful and candid responses, ultimately helping the researcher better comprehend the participants' answers.

3 PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presents and discusses the data analysis and findings obtained from the study. It also presents the experiences of less-represented groups in an inclusive setting where they study or work. Different themes emerged from their experiences.

Lived Experiences in an Inclusive Setting

During the study, only these differences existed between student parents, LGBTQ+ students, and LGBTQ+ teachers in the locale of the study. Therefore, the researcher only investigated these groups since those with evident disabilities had graduated. Still, diagnosing persons with hidden disabilities necessitates formal assessments, which can take more than a year to complete. Interviews revealed diverse experiences, with a prominent theme of "pleasant experiences," including peer acceptance, teacher fair treatment, and respectful staff interactions. Conversely, some respondents noted "unpleasant experiences." The study also explores the techniques teachers employ to foster an inclusive learning environment based on the varied experiences shared by respondents.

Pleasant Experiences

The first theme is the pleasant experience of being in an inclusive setting. Pleasant experiences refer to delightful, sound, friendly, or good experiences. Teachers' experiences with the people at school are delightful. Students have friendly experiences with their classmates, sound experiences with their teachers, and good experiences with the school's staff.

Students were accepted by their classmates

The study highlights the experiences of LGBTQ+ students at Mountain Province State Polytechnic College (MPSPC), emphasizing their acceptance by classmates and the positive effects of such acceptance. Respondents reported feeling welcomed and free from discrimination, reflecting the open-mindedness of their peers. However, not all LGBTQ+ individuals share these positive experiences, as reports of bullying and discrimination persist (ABS-CBN, 2017; Gato et al., 2020). Cultural perceptions also play a role, as lesbians tend to be more accepted than gay men due to societal views on physical strength (Dekdeken, 2019). The findings point to a broader definition of inclusive education encompassing marginalized individuals (Choudhary & Khankot, 2015). Greer (2014) and Macaranas (2018) describe inclusive education as fostering understanding and comfort among students. Additionally, student parents are recognized for balancing responsibilities and admired as role models (Montaudon-Tomas & Montaudon-Tomas, 2019; Moghadam et al., 2017). The support from classmates enhances the learning environment. It aligns with the four pillars of education by promoting empathy and friendships.

The experiences of student parents also connect to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2030, which advocate for inclusive and equitable education to combat inequality. Overall, the text underscores the necessity of creating inclusive educational spaces where all students feel welcomed, aligning with Choudhary and Khankot's (2015) definition of inclusive education and Plato's Idealism, which emphasizes the potential for every individual to learn and thrive (Lamichhane, 2018). Understanding, empathy, and conflict resolution are essential

for achieving the four pillars of education and enhancing community well-being (Rodrigues, 2021; Montaudon-Tomas & Montaudon-Tomas, 2019).

Students were fairly treated by their teachers

This section highlights the challenges faced by student parents and the importance of supportive and fair treatment by teachers. The discussion highlights respondents' experiences of being treated fairly by their teachers. Respondent 3 emphasized that some teachers were sensitive and fair in student interactions, promoting cooperation and enjoyable learning. Respondent 7 shared a similar positive experience, mentioning how teachers considered students' situations, made them feel at ease, and ensured a fair approach.

These supportive policies and practices help student parents balance their responsibilities as both students and parents, motivating them to continue their studies. Respondent 11's experience exemplifies how a supportive environment and the opportunity to catch up on missed activities can lead to personal growth and improved life prospects.

Promoting college success among student parents is essential for achieving equality in higher education access and improving the family's financial well-being, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moghadam et al. (2017) confirm that various forms of emotional and educational support, from teachers to classmates and family members, play a significant role in marginalized learners' lives.

The Philippines' participation in the Salamanca Statement reflects its commitment to providing equal opportunities for diverse learners. Schools emphasize the need for school-based policies that cater to various learners by incorporating them into student handbooks and manuals to ensure recognition of rights, obligations, and responsibilities.

Miranda's (2020) recommendation that the Office of Gender and Development focus on policies benefiting diverse students' academic experiences needs support. In addition to Miranda's recommendations, Gase et al. (2017) conclude that these policies can enhance students' well-being, school climate, academic achievement, and engagement.

Plato's principle of universal and compulsory education, advocated in *The Law*, aligns with the concept of inclusive education, where the community welcomes everyone without hindrance. Furthermore, the reference to the macro system of the bio-ecological theory emphasizes the impact of governing body policies on individuals within the educational system, considering cultural customs, practices, beliefs, and historical events (Sincero, 2020).

Inclusive education, which includes marginalized individuals, fosters understanding and comfort among students (UNESCO & Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2019). Student parents are recognized as role models and are admired for their balancing act of responsibilities (Montaudon-Tomas & Montaudon-Tomas, 2019; Moghadam et al., 2017). Support from classmates enhances the learning environment and aligns with the four pillars of education by promoting empathy and friendships. The experiences of student parents connect to the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030, advocating for inclusive and equitable education to combat inequality (Lamichhane, 2018; Rodrigues, 2021).

Supportive and equitable treatment by teachers is crucial for promoting college success and improving family financial well-being. Respondents shared positive experiences, with Respondent 3 noting that "some teachers were sensitive and fair, fostering cooperation and enjoyable learning." Similarly, Respondent 7 highlighted how "considerate teachers helped

create a comfortable environment, ensuring fairness in their approach. "Such supportive practices enable student parents to balance their dual roles, as illustrated by Respondent 11, whose "supportive environment allowed for personal growth and enhanced life prospects."

The Philippines' adherence to the Salamanca Statement emphasizes the need for school-based policies recognizing rights and responsibilities (Miranda, 2020; Gase et al., 2017).

Plato's universal and compulsory education principle aligns with inclusive education ideals, welcoming all individuals without barriers (Sincero, 2020).

Normal treatment from the school staff

The text discusses how students with diverse backgrounds receive typical, fair, and non-discriminatory treatment from the non-teaching staff in their school, emphasizing that this treatment promotes a sense of belonging and well-being. Respondent 9 reported no differences in the treatment he received from the non-teaching staff. He said, "So far, it's all the same as when welcoming a guest, visitor, or other students in their office and on campus." They treat me like a normal student, a typical student they meet daily. So far as there is no difference between me as a member of LGBTQ+ and the straight individual student on campus. Although Respondent 2 has a different situation from that of Respondent 9, she affirmed the experience of Respondent 9, which is the same for her. She stated, "They treat me like a usual student, a normal student." Similarly, Respondent 3 had a similar experience with the first two students above, as she added, "It's normal." Non-teaching staff maintains positive relationships with the students, so Respondent 2 is fine dealing with non-teaching staff. She feels she is a student of that school because of her positive experience with the non-teaching staff. The staff is accommodating to the needs of the students. This behavior of the staff was confirmed by Respondent 4. She said, "They are accommodating, especially when I get an evaluation, and their approach is ok. I can ask them, and they answer nicely". Students benefit from fair treatment by the non-teaching staff. Students feel secure and safe if they have good experiences. Respondent 5 said, "They are ok; so far, they treat me like they treat others." Going to the offices does not pressure Respondent 5 since she had no bad experience with them. Respondent 8 feels she is part of the school, as she said, "They do not have any bias. They give us equal attention". She was treated similarly to her co-students despite her uniqueness. The students feel they belong to the school as the non-teaching staff treats them appropriately. It was experienced by Respondent 10 when she said, "They treated me as a student. Positive, they welcome me as a part of MPSPC". Respondent 11 has nothing to complain about as she was treated equally with the other students. Respondent 11 said, "It is good. It is fair." She experienced fair treatment from the non-teaching staff. The offices received Respondent 6, similar to the other respondents. He stated, "Yes, I am also welcome in the different offices and my classes."

The consensus among these student participants is that they have positive experiences with the different offices and school staff, receiving equal treatment regardless of gender, civil status, appearance, ability, or differences. This inclusive and accepting environment enhances students' well-being and helps create a positive school climate.

The text also connects these experiences to McCallum's study, emphasizing the importance of non-teaching staff in promoting students' well-being and intellectual development. It aligns

with the biological-ecological systems theory, highlighting the role of the microsystem (the school) in shaping a child's development (Sincero, 2020).

Pleasant Experiences of Teachers

Here, "pleasant experiences" refers to respondents' lovely, agreeable, or remarkable experiences. These experiences encourage more balanced emotions and actions and create a positive outlook, which can influence how someone looks at life.

Teachers feel respected

In promoting respect and inclusivity in education, instructors must create an environment that fosters acceptance and individuality while supporting diverse students and teachers. Supporting LGBTQ+ students is critical, but LGBTQ+ teachers need support and a comfortable environment to work in. For example, Respondent 12 indicated, "When it comes to the colleagues, they are open and relaxed to call me 'tita,' and it's ok with me." However, the acceptability of this varies based on the situation. On the part of the students, they still respect their teachers even if they belong to the LGBTQ+.

Furthermore, according to Lee, teachers in the authentic teacher phase are more likely to confront homophobia in the classroom and curriculum, benefiting LGBTQ+ students. These experiences align with the philosophy of deconstruction, which aims to challenge assumed power dynamics and promote social equality and inclusion. It underscores the importance of inclusion advocacy in educational settings. It underscores the need for robust inclusion advocacy. Derrida's concept of deconstruction specifically targets the display and reversal of hierarchical relationships, particularly concerning notions of "ability" over "disability" and conformity to societal norms.

Unpleasant Experiences

Unpleasant experiences in school lead to conflicts, suffering, doubt, and despair, affecting learners, teachers, and the entire system. These emotions arise from interactions with students, friends, teachers, and colleagues, and non-teaching staff.

Bullied by classmates

Bullying, defined by the American Psychological Association (2022), involves intentionally causing discomfort to another person, affecting their physical, mental, emotional, and academic performance.

Respondent 2 said, "If I cannot answer the question, they will laugh at me, but just this case". When someone cannot answer a question, the usual reaction from classmates is that they will laugh, which is a common situation inside the classroom. The role of teachers is crucial in preventing such instances by promptly addressing students' misbehavior, such as laughing at their peers. In addition to the dual role of student parents, they have to adjust to their classmates' negative perceptions of student parents. Respondent 3 stated, "As a mother student at school, my experiences in my classes are, for instance, when I said that I am a mother, those students who do not know me stare at me. They look weirdly at you as if they have a thousand words running through their mind". Even though being a student mother is not new, some students adversely react when they learn that one of their classmates is a student parent. In the worst-

case scenario, this will result in bullying as they are unaware of how they have become a bully. It is because being a college student is without children or the traditional student. Moghadam et al. (2017) pointed out that student parents face negative comments and discrimination as society prioritizes education. Manalang et al. (2015) added that they suffered a loss of self-esteem due to the incident. These experiences can be understood within the framework of the chronosystem in the bio-ecological theory, where life transitions, such as becoming a student parent, influence adjustment and the reception of criticism (Sincero, 2020).

Unpleasant Experiences with the Teachers

Unpleasant experiences with teachers are distressing situations that cause pain to the respondents. Teachers try to address issues that hinder student learning, which can be challenging. These unwanted experiences impact the students, which teachers aim to prevent. If not addressed, such experiences can lead to unintended discrimination against students, unbeknownst to the teachers.

Discriminated by the teacher

Respondents experienced unfair treatment by teachers. They acknowledged that teachers work hard to educate students and foster their growth as responsible citizens. However, they also noted that teachers, being human, may sometimes carry biases that can hinder their ability to fulfill their roles, potentially impacting students.

One respondent, Respondent 5, says, "Being a student mother is not easy because there are a lot of responsibilities that should be acted upon. As for my experience, it makes me sad that one of my teachers dropped me from his subject because I was absent for almost a month, wherein in that month, I gave birth to my daughter. It took us three weeks at the hospital because of some complications in my daughter's health. But my teacher said that I should enter the school for the fourth week, but I couldn't since I'm still in recovery. In the next semester, I enrolled the same subject where I was dropped". This situation illustrated student parents' difficulties when juggling their responsibilities, which can adversely affect their grades and psychological well-being. The study by Moghadam et al. (2017) corroborates this experience, showing how student parents prioritize their children's well-being over their education.

Furthermore, Lucchini-Raies et al. (2018) emphasized that these overlapping roles can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion, making individuals feel incompetent in their parental or student roles and possibly incapable of fulfilling both roles.

Muega (2016) stressed the importance of a strong conceptual basis for inclusive education to prevent such experiences. Inclusive education needs to define the extent of involvement of those responsible for marginalized learners and address unresolved issues related to its implementation.

Macaranas (2018) further noted the challenges faced by teachers, including a lack of willingness to teach students with disabilities, students concealing their conditions, and difficulties in securing employment after college. This underlines the need for clarity and support, particularly from teachers' perspectives, to create a more inclusive educational environment.

Mocked by the teacher

In educational environments, teasing, referred to as "mocking," can occasionally provide a means for teachers to connect with students. However, this can backfire, as some jokes may unintentionally hurt students. For example, Respondent 6 stated, "Some teachers joke with me being an early father, in which the joke sometimes goes beyond where I feel hurt." This finding highlights student parents' emotional stress due to mockery and judgment. These findings align with findings from Govender et al. (2020), which reveal that student parents often experience feelings of alienation and anger as a result of adverse treatment. Ecoben (2019) notes that teachers must embrace inclusive education, particularly for marginalized groups. Unpleasant classroom treatment can diminish a student's sense of belonging, while positive communication can foster an inclusive learning community. Unfortunately, less-represented students are often at a disadvantage in accessing higher education. Manze et al. (2021) point out that current policies predominantly favor traditional, childless students, neglecting the unique needs of student parents. Greer (2014) discusses "stereotype threat," which negatively affects performance among those in stigmatized groups, underscoring the need for teachers to eliminate such threats. The application of deconstruction to foster empathy, understanding, and social justice is critical for connecting educational practices with the needs of a diversified society. This congruence is critical for achieving the four pillars of education, particularly "learning to live together" and for social inclusion (Montaudon-Tomás, I. M. and Montaudon-Tomás, C. M., 2019).

Unpleasant Experiences of Teachers

Participants in the study described both pleasant and unpleasant experiences, highlighting how unique challenges arise for teachers striving to manage demanding responsibilities.

Teachers are being scrutinized

If scrutinizing becomes ridicule or judgment, it is deemed unacceptable. Insights from respondents reveal how students mimic their teachers, sometimes crossing into mockery. For instance, Respondent 12 revealed that "when it comes to the expressions of the gay like instead of saying yes sir "anofa, flang" they are repeating after me as if I'm at their age or like a student." While learners may employ imitation as a learning method, others may interpret it as an attempt to subjugate them. Respondent 13 stated that "outside the campus, it's different because there are some who are not my students maybe since it's part of their particular interest with me, my person, my being a teacher with makeup wearing earrings, and beautiful and then they call me sir that's why there is still peculiar reaction coming from the students but not my students because once my students meet me, they are used to my style. Whether outside or inside the classroom (if), they were not my students; they still smiled at me when they saw me. I noticed they are quite interested in my personality". This practice underscores the importance of orientation at the semester's start to establish awareness about the teacher's identity and style, enabling students to understand better and accept them.

The study emphasizes challenges faced by diverse educators who feel pressured to conform to traditional gender norms, impacting the school environment for diverse students and faculty. It cites research outlining that the ideal teacher aligns with heteronormative standards, reinforcing conventional beliefs about gender (Llewellyn & Reynolds, 2020). Initiatives to integrate

LGBTQ+ content into curricula have sparked protests, indicating the difficulties in even progressive regions (Lee, 2020). LGBTQ+ teachers frequently conceal their identities to avoid scrutiny and discrimination, adhering to traditional gender classifications influenced by conservative societal norms. Even in educational settings, non-normative sexualities are perceived as threats, contributing to ongoing discrimination and harassment against LGBTQ educators (Gilbert & Gray, 2020).

Teachers feel insecure

Overcoming insecurity is vital to prevent harmful effects on acceptance and goal achievement. Respondent 12 revealed, "With my number of years of teaching experience, especially with the presence of Criminology students before, when I tried to reprimand them, it is the same, so I thought if I am a straight male, will they still behave like this? Will they treat me similarly? Also, when you call their attention, they don't obey, as if they are not afraid. When there is a group of faculty members, a group of gentlemen chatting when I pass by, I feel aloof to join them as if I don't suit them, and their world seems different. I feel somewhat unaccepted in the group, so I pass by." Research indicates that LGBTQ+ teachers face more significant barriers compared to LGBTQ students, with Filipino gays experiencing anxiety over societal gender norms and often facing harsher treatment (Wright & Villaflor, 2019). References to philosophical concepts like Plato's Allegory of the Cave suggest that shifting societal beliefs can foster inclusivity. Addressing insecurities and changing perceptions are crucial for creating a more accepting environment for diverse individuals in educational settings (Zamosc, 2017).

Techniques of Teachers in an Inclusive Setting

The study highlights practical strategies for welcoming diverse learners into classrooms, identifying five key themes: encouragement, responsibility, lesson notes, nurturing support, and equal treatment. These approaches enhance students' personal growth and self-awareness, with teachers fostering rapport to facilitate learning.

The study discusses practical strategies for creating inclusive classrooms and welcoming diverse learners. It identifies five key themes: encouragement, responsibility, lesson notes, nurturing support, and equal treatment. These strategies aim to enhance students' personal growth and self-awareness, with teachers fostering a positive rapport to facilitate learning.

Encourage learners

Encouragement is about providing support and boosting learners' confidence. In a diverse world, the classroom is essential for young people to interact with individuals from various backgrounds and beliefs. It is crucial to treat all learners equally to foster equality, empathy, and self-awareness among students.

Respondent 1 revealed that "during the face-to-face classes, the teachers encourage us to join the activities and that everybody is accepted, especially in group activities. Everybody is accepted, and there should be cooperation among the members. If one is not participating, the teachers advise them to join because it helps develop our confidence." Such encouragement reminds students of their responsibilities in group activities and uplifts those who might feel isolated or discriminated against.

Encouragement will lift the morale of the learners. However, in addition to encouraging them to be friendly, it will strengthen the teacher's words. This experience is supported by Respondent 6 when he declared that the "teacher encouraged us to participate in every activity. They are friendly, that's all". Reminding students of the importance of participation will encourage them to do their best. In addition to reminding, it will also be full of friendliness. Teachers' words are powerful in enabling learners to continue their studies. Aside from telling them they need to participate and be accepted, allowing them to choose their group members would make them work properly.

Respondent 9 said, "My teachers are using common strategies to involve me in some of their activities, for example, group activities. They give me the privilege of which group I will join or the one I feel comfortable with." Involving all learners in the class will make them feel at ease. It would be nice if they had the chance to select their group members so that they have a say in the proposed activity. In doing so, they look forward to attending their classes.

It is appropriate to ask about their participation in sports or any strenuous, foreign activity. It is true for all learners, so neither of you is at risk. Respondent 4 stated, "They ask me when I am free if I can join or if I can participate." The teacher considered asking Respondent 4 if she could perform the activity. Asking them if they can do the activity will make them feel good and like they are a part of the class. Knowing your students by more than name or performance will help avoid getting them in trouble. Other techniques teachers use to allow them to decide what activity they will do on the assigned topic. Change how to group them so they can blend in with others in their respective classes.

As experienced by Respondent 7, said that "They let us participate. In subjects related to culture and literature, we are the ones who choose what activity we are going to do. Sometimes, we were grouped as mothers, neighboring municipalities so that we understand the idea of each other". Giving them a chance to decide what to do on some topics can showcase their talent and creativity. Providing them with the option to control their activities will help them become more effective and give them more power. Students are more inclined to learn from others when arranged in diverse groups. Grouping them in different ways creates an opportunity to capture their differences.

Also, inspire them to keep going. Give tips on time management. Reminding them of the due dates would help them fast-track their requirements. Respondent 8 said, "Most of our teachers are good; they give encouragement, and they give us inspirational talk. They help us with time management, how we can do our work sometimes, and how can we also manage our time for the family and the school activities". The advice teachers provide holds value, particularly for students who appreciate it. This guidance can benefit students in need, reducing their uncertainty and streamlining their approach to schoolwork.

Students who receive reasonable accommodations tend to exhibit tremendous enthusiasm for learning when they feel valued and recognized. Practical demands and positive reinforcement from teachers inspire their participation. However, some students may require additional encouragement to stay on the right track.

Empowering students with a sense of ownership fosters a sense of accomplishment. Amid the global pandemic's challenges, which include mask-wearing, adapting to new school rules, and dealing with technological limitations, maintaining stability can be difficult. Uplifting learners become crucial to help them persevere and find reassurance in their educational journey.

Scientific evidence supports the significant impact of uplifting learners. The American Psychological Association (2022) references Goleman's work (2006), demonstrating that encouraging words trigger hormonal responses that impact the immune system and brain functions, highlighting the importance of positive relationships. Sun (2021) further emphasizes the influence of teachers' behavior and their relationships with students on engagement, emotional stability, and effective learning.

Collaboration between teachers and learners is essential for creating a conducive learning environment. Teachers should actively support student independence, demonstrate enthusiasm for their subjects, and respect students' individuality. Additionally, teachers must assume various roles, including monitoring student feedback, facilitating effective communication, and adjusting classroom management to foster positive relationships.

Sun (2021) further emphasizes the influence of teachers' behavior and their relationships with students on engagement, emotional stability, and effective learning. Collaboration between teachers and learners is essential in creating a conducive learning environment. Teachers should actively support student independence, demonstrate enthusiasm for their subjects, and respect students' individuality. Additionally, teachers must assume various roles, including monitoring student feedback, facilitating effective communication, and adjusting classroom management to foster positive relationships.

Assign them responsibility

Responsibility plays a crucial role in shaping students' decision-making abilities and sense of accountability, directly affecting their learning outcomes and personal development. Respondent 2 highlighted, "The technique of the teachers is that they let us do the activities individually where, in this case, we cannot rely on the ideas of our classmates or from the effort of our classmates." This method reduces reliance on classmates and nurtures independent thinking. Additionally, Respondent 11 noted that while individual work is essential for showcasing unique abilities, collaboration is also beneficial. She mentioned, "The teachers would let us work individually wherein we will independently work independently without relying on someone and to bring out our unique abilities. Teachers group those who know each other. Sometimes, it is counting so we can socialize with our classmates. They welcome me happily." Discussing ideas among peers can clarify doubts and utilize the diverse skills present within a group. A supportive classroom environment, characterized by fairness and warmth, encourages students to collaborate without fear of rejection. These experiences resonate with the educational principle of "learning to know," emphasizing the discovery of hidden talents. According to Delors (2013), as cited by Montaudon-Tomás, I. M. & Montaudon-Tomás, C. M. (2019), education is a foundational step towards empowerment, enhancing individual capabilities, and fostering accountability in personal performance.

Equal treatment

Equal treatment, characterized by fair and unbiased treatment irrespective of factors like gender and social class, is a fundamental expectation in various settings, including classrooms and organizations. It ensures that individuals receive what they rightfully deserve and enables them to function effectively within their groups. The respondents strongly endorse the principle of equal treatment.

Respondent 10 said, "It is the same as they treat other students. No differences". Despite her background, she experienced equal treatment, leading to her acceptance and a sense of belonging in the class. The experience of Respondent 10 was reiterated by Respondent 13 as he emphasized the importance of equal treatment for students. He clearly stated that even if you find that individual's style odd, you should not show disdain for them. To avoid being misjudged by students that you have a favorite in the class, orientation at the beginning of every semester could help.

Respondent 13 revealed that "the number one during the beginning of the semester, I give them a little bit of orientation which is appropriate to be done by all teachers. You tell them who you are, what you want, what you want to happen inside the classroom, your rules and regulation, and then a little bit of welcoming them whomever they are and then telling them also that you are that person whether they like it or not they have to live with you for the rest of the months or rest of the semester. Being a member of the LGBTQ+ myself, I have to admit that I give particular attention to the lesbians and gays inside my classroom. I ask them, but a little part jokingly, how you want me to address you, miss, or mister? How do you want me to classify you in terms of gender, male or female, in a grouping, especially in communication class? It should be a combination of males and females, not homogenous. If a gay wants to be counted as female, respect it; their classmates might say (there might be classmates who would say) hi, you're a male; hi, you're female so if there are four males, then four gays, they have to be mixed if they want to be considered as females. However, if they do not like okay, if you still consider yourself as male, well, in good, that's fine with me. Aside from that, please do not show it. Do not treat them differently; even if you see the makeup of one male or gay, in particular, ignore it. Do not show it obviously or scold him by saying (is that the way a man dresses/is that how a male dresses?) although deep inside you, that's how you think. Let that person realize later on, or I will tell that person later on, particularly those gays whom you feel weird about how they dress. I tell them next time, do not wear a skirt; look sexy but look at your Achilles hill; it cannot be denied that it is an Achilles hill of a male. I have said this to one of our gay students because he might think it suits him while it is indecent to see. His classmates do not like to tell him, so I was the one who reminded him that in the market, gays are being treated rudely, not because they are gay but because of how they dress. They wear clothes for beauty pageants while in the market as manicurists/pedicurists, which is weird. If you are a manicurist/pedicurist, wear something that matches what you are doing". In cases where further assistance is required, LGBTQ+ teachers or allies can be involved to ensure a supportive and respectful environment without causing any embarrassment or discomfort to the student.

Both students and teachers emphasize the role of teachers in inspiring learners to excel. Fairness is identified as a crucial quality for teachers, as it fosters a sense of belonging among students. Despite the ongoing changes in the teaching profession, maintaining these positive traits is paramount. New teachers can create anxiety among students due to uncertainties, making orientation crucial in setting expectations and ensuring a successful start to the semester. This orientation helps students understand the course and prepares them for future success. Furthermore, teachers' traits and orientations play a vital role in implementing inclusive education, with students requiring support from teachers to succeed in their school lives.

Losberg and Zwozdiak-Myers (2021) stress the need for support mechanisms to ensure the success of all learners in the classroom, especially with the increasing diversity among students. This diversity adds complexity to teachers' responsibilities, necessitating their preparedness to accommodate all students. Managing such diverse classrooms presents significant challenges, making the effective implementation of inclusive education, which ensures every student achieves expected progress, difficult. Therefore, teachers' positive qualities play a crucial role in creating an inclusive environment, as these traits are reflected in their behaviors and influence their decision-making during daily activities. To facilitate learners' participation in all aspects of learning, teachers must employ flexible and effective strategies.

Moreover, Shahidzade (2019) argues that the philosophy of idealism aligns with the above statement. It suggests that social justice can be achieved when all social classes maintain harmonious relationships, and this harmony thrives in society when there is equal educational opportunity, enabling individuals to compete fairly with each other. In this context, schools serve as the setting to implement inclusive education, welcoming students from various backgrounds and providing them access to education, allowing them to demonstrate their abilities.

Provide notes on the missed lesson

Providing students with notes for missed classes is a practical and common way to help them catch up on the course material. This approach minimizes the stress experienced by students who could not attend the class for various reasons and contributes to creating a more inclusive classroom environment.

Respondent 5 said, "they gave some notes or photocopies of the previous lessons so that I can follow the lesson". These notes enable students to reconnect with the class, study the missed material, and establish the foundational knowledge necessary to catch up with their peers.

In the work of Naidoo (2015), he specified that inclusion is a multifaceted concept, extending beyond merely being "in or out" of a group. Learners may feel included in certain aspects, such as having access to classes, but excluded when they are labeled and treated differently. Deconstruction, as a process, aims to transform assumed power dynamics in daily life by revealing and reconfiguring social inequalities democratically. This concept aligns with Derrida's emphasis on unveiling and overturning hierarchical relationships.

The experiences of the respondents highlight that differences do not hinder inclusion, and there is harmony despite these differences. Therefore, addressing and eliminating discrimination is essential to ensure a more inclusive and pleasant educational experience, particularly for underrepresented groups. Employing effective techniques is crucial to foster inclusion and mitigate unpleasant experiences.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter contains the conclusions.

The study highlights the significance of fostering an inclusive school environment where everyone feels safe and accepted. The findings reveal that while most students experience fair treatment and acceptance from their peers and teachers, some students still face discrimination and bullying. Teachers also encounter positive and negative experiences in creating inclusive classrooms.

This study emphasizes the importance of continuous efforts to strengthen inclusivity and equity at all levels of education. Schools should implement policies and support systems that promote acceptance and address instances of discrimination through programs like sensitivity training and student-led advocacy initiatives.

Enhancing training that equips employees with strategies to foster inclusivity, handle discrimination, and support diverse student identities would also be better. The school would develop and implement policies that protect everyone from discrimination, with clear reporting procedures that ensure a safer learning environment. Schools would partner with different organizations, local leaders, and policymakers, so there would also be explicit community engagement and advocacy to promote inclusivity beyond the school environment, fostering a community acceptance culture.

By acknowledging the diverse experiences of students and teachers, educational institutions can foster more inclusive and equitable learning environments where individuals, regardless of gender identity or background, are respected, valued, and supported.

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