

Exploring Gender Rights of Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+

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Abstract: This qualitative study explores the gender rights of Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+. It attempts to discern the gender rights that need to be strengthened as perceived by Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+ participants; What are the reasons for strengthening these LGBTQAA+ gender rights; In what way these LGBTQAA+ gender rights may be further strengthened; and What the participants would like their community to know about LGBTQAA+? Seven Masbatenyo individuals who considered themselves to belong to the LGBTQAA+ group accepted the invitation to participate in this study. During this Covid Pandemic time, the researcher used Messenger, a social media platform, to gather the data. Specifically, interview questions were sent to the identified participants.

Moreover, they were briefed on the study. Further questions were asked to clarify concerns with their responses. The study generates significant findings. To wit: (1) Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+ perceived that gender rights focusing on discrimination, harassment, and bullying must be strengthened; (2) Distinct reasons for strengthening these LGBTQAA+ gender rights were enumerated; (3) Aid from the government will create a massive impact in strengthening these LGBTQAA+ gender rights; and (4) Respect is among other concerns that the LGBTQAA+ group wants to emphasize to the community.

Keywords:- LGBTQAA+, gender rights, Masbatenyo, discrimination, respect.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender rights concern is just one of the various vital issues people cater to nowadays. With the listed gender disparities and gaps (e.g., hate crime against transgender women in 2014; reported and concealed discrimination cases), the fight for gender rights, specifically gender equality in the Philippines, continues to bridge gaps in crucial areas such as health, education, economy, and politics (Global Gender Gap Report, 2014). These are amid Anti-Discrimination Act and other enhanced gender equality-related laws. When it comes to individuals affected by these disparities and gaps, not only women and men are on the weaker side, but most especially those who belong to the LGBTQAA+ community (United Nations Human Rights, 2020), who outspokenly seeks the same advocacy and support.

For instance, rallies are organized in the Philippines with the international celebration of LGBTQAA+ to express calls for gender equality. Moreover, the presence of the Philippine Commission on Women, the lead agency that works for the promotion of gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's rights, has become instrumental as well for LGBTQAA+ members in different Government and non-government institutions.

Meanwhile, in the province of Masbate, no specific documentation or reports on actual LGBTQAA+ anti-discrimination instances or sponsorship portraying personal support for their gender equality quest. However, according to personal interviews for this study, gender rights deprivation for this community is evident. According to some of the participants of this study, they are 'being taken for granted,' 'disrespected,' and 'abused' in various ways. Therefore, it is valuable to explore the gender rights of Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+ that are worthy of being strengthened to fight gender issues around them and stipulate clarifications on the unique sense and sensitivity of the study.

This qualitative study explores the gender rights of Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+. Specifically, it answers the following: 1) What are the gender rights that need to be strengthened as perceived by Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+ participants? 2) What are the reasons for strengthening these LGBTQAA+ gender rights? 3) In what way these LGBTQAA+ gender rights may be further strengthened? Furthermore, 4) What would the participants like their community know about LGBTQAA+?

This is significant not only for the direct beneficiaries, the members of the LGBTQAA+, but most of all, the entire community to be open-minded about various gender issues and concerns our community is experiencing. Moreover, this will be a vehicle for information dissemination as one of the goals of all gender enthusiasts (e.g., gender awareness, respect for all human beings, and gender rights). Similarly, this will benefit teachers and students in dealing with diverse perspectives on discrimination, harassment, and bullying issues that may be present in different aspects of our society. Finally, this will be helpful for future Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+ research directions.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to achieve the following objectives: 1) To discover the gender rights that need to be strengthened as perceived by Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+ participants, 2) To define the reasons for strengthening these LGBTQAA+ gender rights, 3) To describe in what way these LGBTQAA+ gender rights may be further strengthened, and 4) To disseminate information to the community about LGBTQAA+.

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This qualitative research assessed the gender rights that need to be strengthened as perceived by Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+. The study employed the qualitative descriptive design since the study aimed to explore the gender rights of Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+. This was done from January to September 2020. At this time of the Covid pandemic, the researcher invited several LGBTQAA+ acquaintances and seven (7) of them consisting of one (1) lesbian, two (2) transgender persons, and four (4) gays. It took much work to identify participants for the other components of LGBTQAA+ due to the matter's sensitivity.

Upon the invitation, the researcher explained that research was being conducted, and the participants were asked if they would be part of the study. Those who have signified their willingness were included in the study. Further, the researcher ensured that all information the respondents gave was treated with strict confidentiality. A written interview schedule was the main instrument used in gathering the relevant data. Sets of questions were written in Filipino to cater to participants who are most fluent and expressive using the national language. The researcher later translated the participants' responses. Follow-up questions were made for some clarification.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are four main parts of the findings as depicted in this section: 1) Gender Rights that need to be strengthened as perceived by Masbatenyo; 2) Reasons for strengthening these LGBTQAA+ gender rights; 3) Possible Ways LGBTQAA+ Gender Rights May Be Further Strengthened, and 4) Things the Participants would like their Community to Know about LGBTQAA+.

Table 1: Gender Rights Need to Strengthenas Perceived by Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+ Participants

Participant	In-Vivo Code	Descriptive Code	Theme
A	"Anti-discrimination bill 2017 because still many suffer discrimination, especially those belonging to the LGBTAAQ+ community."	Anti-discrimina-tion	
B	Rights to be accepted and respected	Acceptance and Respect	
C	Freedom in expressing self Being comfortable with what you wear, on what you look like without the fear of going out and being judged by other people Strengthen anti-discrimination Rampant in Masbate, People saw LGBTQAA+ as a clown, as a source of laughter, belonging to the salon, they are name-called "salot," sinners, and even sometimes associated with "devilish" stuff Give them the right to sue people who abuse them and make them feel as if they are not ordinary human beings	Freedom in Expressing Self Anti-discrimination Right to sue abusive people	Anti-discrimination Acceptance and Respect Self – expression Self-protect-ion
D	Bullying, harassment, and discrimination	Bullying, harassment, and discrimination	Bullying
E	Sexual Orientation discrimination	Sexual Orientation discrimination	Harassment
F	Anti-discrimination sa companies	Anti-discrimination at work	
G	Anti-discrimination	Anti-discrimination	

Table 1 presents the Gender Rights that need to be strengthened as perceived by Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+ Participants. Results show that participants perceived Anti-discrimination, Acceptance and Respect, Self – expression, Self-protection, Bullying, and Harassment. Of the many

issues identified, these LGBTQAA+ participants believed that anti-discrimination must be emphasized. This only means that among the listed issues, discrimination is most experienced by them. When asked for instances wherein

discrimination occurred to them, they voluntarily recalled their experiences:

Not allowing the LGBTQAA+ individual to showcase what she or he can do. For example, in an audition for a role (for an acting opportunity in school), when he showed his interest in auditioning for the said role, he was just asked, "Are you Gay?" and being honest with himself, he replied, "Yes ."Then rejection was automatically given without looking at his capability for the role. The participant would like to impart that any person must be given a chance to try things out. If, after showcasing whatever he can, he will accept the decision wholeheartedly. "Unlike my experience, I have not tried it yet, but the result has been decided already."

This is supported by the United Nations Human Rights (2020), the findings of their study on Covid-19, and the Human Rights of LGBTI people. According to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, "Stigmatization, Discrimination, Hate Speech and Attacks on the LGBTI community" is one of the more significant risks that the group may experience. LGBTQAA+ have been "previously blamed for disasters, both manmade and natural ."Moreover, there are also reports on domestic violence and abuse.

Results show that these gender rights the LGBTQAA+ participants perceived require further strengthening attributed to the experience they are into. They speak firsthand based on their own experiences. The following table shows different reasons for strengthening these LGBTQAA+ Gender Rights.

Table 2: Reasons for Strengthening these LGBTQAA+ Gender Rights

Participant	In-Vivo Code	Descriptive Code	Theme
A	"We are also human beings who participate in society and the world... We live in a modern age where our voices speak [sic] relevant things, which is why our voices should be heard?.. Gay rights are also human rights"	Part of the modern society wherein voices should be heard	Giving chances to live a life free from negativities, with equal treatment and respect as a person
B	"Ito’y kailangan at dapat paigtingin upang tuluyan ng maging malaya ang bawat miyembro ng nasabing organisasyon, malayo sa diskriminasyon" [This is needed and needs to be strengthened so that every member of the community will be free from any discrimination]	To be free from discrimination	
C	"For the betterment and for the word ‘equality’ to have a deeper meaning... Being treated right is what you call respect, and respect leads to acceptance, and acceptance creates a world where negativities cannot grow... Because no matter what gender is, we have the right to do what we love"	Betterment and deeper meaning of equality From proper treatment to respect to acceptance with no negativities Right to do we love	
D	"Magkaroon ng patas na pakikitungo sa mga LGBTQAA+ Magkaroon ng pantay na karapatan regardless kung bisexual or transgender" [To have equal treatment for LGBTQAA+ and to have equal rights regardless of being bisexual or transgender]	Equal treatment and equal rights for LGBTQAA+	
E	"Ang katulad namin ay isang tao din na kailangan mamuhay bilang isang malayang mamamayan, may pantay na karapatan pagdating sa trabaho, sa kalusugan, sa eskwelahan, sa lugar na pinagtatrabahuan, sa gobyerno at sa lahat ng aspeto sa lipunan... Ang mga katulad namin ay hindi ginusto ang maging ganito, kusang naramdaman ng aming mga puso ang ganitong pakiramdam, kusang umosbong at hindi pinilit na maramdaman... May mga katulad ko na hindi ganun kalakas ang personalidad, mental health at emotional aspects...kaya nakakaranas ng diskriminasyon o harassment sa kapwa ay na depressed hanggang sa maisipan nilang mawala sa katinuan o mawalan ng buhay, para maiwasan ang ganitong pangyayari, makapamuhay sila ng normal at may pantay na karapatan sa lipunan, pagdating sa trabaho, hindi mabully ng kapwa empleyado at hindi maliitin ng iba" [We are also human beings who need to live like free citizens, with equal rights in the kind of work, in health, in school, at work, in the government, and in all aspects of the society... People like us did not choose to be like we are now. We just felt this kind of feeling in our hearts. It just came out with no force felt. There are people like me who do not have a strong personality ,mental health at emotional aspects...that is why they experience discrimination or harassment from others and feel depressed until resorting to mental	Like other human beings who need equal rights- work, school, health, and other aspects of the society	

problem or worst killing themselves. In order to avoid these scenarios, they must be allowed to live a normal life, with equal right in the society to avoid being bullied and belittled at work by co-employees and other people].

F	“Pagbibigay kahalagahan sa mga taong miyembro ng organisasyon at pagbibigay ng respeto sa kanilang existence sa komunidad” [Giving value for all the members of the LGBTQAA+ community at giving them respect of their existence in the society].	Giving value and respect to their existence
G	“Dahil tao din kami na may karapatan” [Because we are also human beings with rights].	We are also human beings with rights

Table 2 presents different reasons for strengthening these LGBTQAA+ Gender Rights as perceived by Masbatenyong LGBTQAA+ participants. Results show that participants believe that LGBTQAA+ individuals are part of the modern society wherein their voices should also be heard; to be free from discrimination, betterment and deeper meaning of equality; from proper treatment to respect to acceptance with no negativities; right to do what they love; equal treatment and equal right for LGBTQAA+; like other human beings who need equal rights- work, school, health, and other aspects in the society; giving value and respect for their existence, and like them are human beings with rights as well.

The result explains that there is a need a sense of belongingness for LGBTQAA+ members. This sense of belongingness may be possible through hearing their voices,

speaking their heart out, and listening to their calls. Moreover, they feel that the word 'equality' will be better defined by understanding its deeper meaning, extending to them the proper treatment they expect to receive from others to respect them for what or who they are, and finally, acceptance to avoid negativities. The participants also seek a right to do what they love, coupled with equal treatment and equal rights in different contexts.

The indicated findings prove the need for the LGBTQAA+ community to be deserving to be accepted (Tubeza, 2013). However, this is different from the actual scenario in society faced by the participants. A study by Ocampo and Balmonte (2016), describes insults from friends and rejection from their own families. Lucky are those accepted by their families without question.

Table 3: Possible Ways LGBTQAA+ Gender Rights May Be Further Strengthened

Participant	In-Vivo Code	Descriptive Code	Theme
A	"The Government should put right leaders into the position... Stricter and would watch thoroughly what is happening around them, especially to the LGBTQAA+ community... Find ways or implement rules that remediate the problem."	Valuing the power of the Government	
B	“Paglulunsad ng mga programa o aktibidad na maglalayong ipakita ang tunay na hangarin ng organisasyon, pagtuturo ng tama tungkol sa karapatang pangtao at pagiging mabuting imahe ng bawat miyembro sa lipunan upang sa gayon makita ng lahat ang nais nitong ipabatid” [Implementing programs or activities that will show about the sincere aims of the organization, teaching about human rights and how to achieve good image of each member to the society and show them what they really aim for].	LGBTQAA+ programs implementation	
C	"Gender education- including the subject in our early years in school and teaching us the different genders in rainbows make us more clear of the rights of every gender"	Gender education	The Government, through its national and local officials, is a huge factor in achieving these goals for the LGBTQAA+
D	“Kung itoy mabibigyan ng sapat na pagkakataon upang talakayin ang ganitong sitwasyon sa ibat-iabng organization lalo na sa ating gobyerno na hindi nabibigyan ng importansya na mabigyan ng tamang karapatan ang LGBTQAA+	Discussion on LGBTQAA+ issues and concerns	
E	Gumawa ng batas na makakatulong sa LGBTQAA+ community para hindi maranasan o maiwasan ang makaranas ng diskriminasyon mula sa mga taong hindi sila kayang intindihin at magkaroon sila ng pantay na karapatan sa lipunan	More effective laws	
F	Higit na dapat manggaling sa mga opisyal na nakaupo lalo na sa barangay	Support must first come from Local government officials	
G	Bigyan ng ngipin ang batas	Giving more power to our laws	

Table 3 discusses possible ways LGBTQAA+ gender rights may be further strengthened. Based on the result, it shows valuing the power of the Government; LGBTQAA+ programs implementation; Gender education on issues and concerns; More effective laws; Support must first come from Local government officials; and Giving more power to our laws.

The results illustrate the power of the Government through its national and local officials. In other words, the

authority and initiative of the government can create a significant impact on the achievement of the goals of this LGBTQAA+ community which is basically to fight discrimination. Using the actual wordings of one of the participants, "if the act will emanate from the government, especially the local officials, everybody in the area will follow." The following table discusses what the participants would like their community to know about LGBTQAA+.

Table 4: Things the Participants would like their Community to Know about LGBTQAA+

Participant	In-Vivo Code	Descriptive Code	Theme
A	"That we also matter." We also exist like any boys and girls. That our voices matter and should be heard. Moreover, gay rights are also human rights."	LGBTQAA+ matter, and with voices too	
B	Sana ay ituring nilang totoong tao ang bawat miyembro Hindi madali ang pagtanggap sa kanila pero hindi ito mangyayari kung hindi niyo sisimulan Hindi biro ang naranasa nila, huwag nating gawing hayop ang tao, huwag nating gawing bato ang puso Gamitin ang puso para Makita ang tunay na hangarin ng bawat miyembro Puso ang pairalin, wag sariling kapakanan. Tao rinsila, nasasaktan [I hope they treat each member as a real person. It's not easy to accept them but it won't happen if you don't start We don't want to make people feel bad, let's not make people feel bad, let's not make them feel bad. Use your heart to see the true desires of each member The heart is translated, not self-interest. They're human too, hurt]	To be treated as a true person They have feelings too	LGBTQAA+ matters and with voices too need fair treatment, respect, and acceptance Need to prove their worth as productive citizens of the country
C	LGBTQAA+ are normal persons. It is not a disease that can spread. We have to realize that in this world, we are not only living in two genders world Please do not call them by so many names. Please be respectful, and they have feelings, too, you know. They might be immune, but deep inside, they are praying for them to be accepted by everyone	LGBTQAA+ are normal persons too They seek respect and acceptance	
D	Ano man ang kasarian meron tayo, sa lipunang ating ginagalawan, tao pa rin kami na pwedeniyongirespeto[No matter what the gender we are, in the society we live in, we are still human beings who can be respected].	Fair or equal treatment for whatever gender	
E	Humihingi ako ng pang-unawa sa kapwa tao Lumaki akong may takotsaDiyosat isangkristyano, alam kong mali, pinilit koi tong itago sa pamilya ko hanggang dumating na sap unto na hindi ko na kaya, pakiramdam ko kasi dinadaya ko ang sarili ko,... Sana ay bigyan kami ng puwang sa lipunan, wag maliitin agt idiskriminar Sa mgatuladko, matuto tayong irespeto ang pananaw ng iba at magpakumbaba, minsan kasi may sumusobra at lumalagpas sa guhit, matuto tayong lumugar kung saan tayo dapat lumugar Ipakita sa mundo na tayo ay may silbissalipunanat kaya nating sumabay sa kanila at magingkapakipakinabang [I'm asking for understanding from fellow humans I grew up in a God-fearing state and a Christian, I knew I was wrong, I tried to hide it from my family until I realized I couldn't do it anymore, I felt like I was cheating myself... We need a place in in our community, not be discriminated against and discriminated against. For those like me, we must learn to respect the views of others and be humble, Show the	Seek understanding from the society Respect and avoid discrimination Asking LGBTQAA+ to prove their worth as productive citizens of the country	

	world that we are useful in society and that we can go with them and be useful].	
F	Na sila ay nabibilang sa komunidad sa lahat ng larangan, mapa hanapuhay, tulad ng medical or arts at marami pang iba [That they belong to the community in all fields, livelihood, such as medical or arts and many others]	Accept LGBTQAA+ as part of society in different fields of work
G	Humihingi kami ng respeto mula sa ibang tao kagaya din nman ng pagrespeto naming saamingsarili [We need to respect others as much as we respect ourselves.]	Respect begets respect

Table 4 indicated what the participants would like their community to know about LGBTQAA+. The results demonstrate the following: LGBTQAA+ matters and with voice too; To be treated as a genuine person; They have feelings too; LGBTQAA+ are normal persons, too; They seek respect and acceptance; Fair or equal treatment for whatever gender; Seek understanding from the society; Respect and avoid discrimination; asking LGBTQAA+ to prove their worth as a productive citizen of the country; Fair or equal treatment for whatever gender; Seek understanding from the society; Respect and avoid discrimination; Asking LGBTQAA+ to prove their worth as a productive citizen of the country; Respect begets respect, and Accept LGBTQAA+ as part of the society in different fields of work.

The above results emphasize things being envisioned by the participants in dealing with their lives as part of the LGBTQAA+ community. These things were not in a monetary or in-kind form but mostly intangible and abstract, which led to one big question on equality. It can be noted that other participants emphasized proving their worth as LGBTQAA+, doing what is productive for them and the community they are in to support their call for anti-discrimination and equal treatment. Finally, most participants equate acceptance with respect, illustrating that one way of being accepted by society is to respect themselves first by doing respectful acts.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, the findings indicated a necessity to strengthen the gender rights of the Masbatenyo LGBTQAA+ community. Though there is no direct blaming for anyone for the cause of the issue in focus, still, everyone can be part of the solution for this problem. It is therefore recommended that everyone has their part in achieving goals in fighting discrimination, promoting respect for gender equality, and strengthening the gender rights of all people, in all walks of life, no matter what gender they are.

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