

POLICY ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSIVITY OF LGBTQ+ IN SCHOOLS' SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of gender responsiveness policies and LGBTQ+ inclusivity in junior high schools in Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat and their impact on students' social behavior and academic performance. Using a descriptive-correlational design, 63 LGBTQ+ junior high school students from three schools participated in the study. A validated Likert-scale questionnaire measured policy implementation, inclusivity, social behavior, and academic performance. Pearson's correlation analysis showed a significant relationship between gender policies and inclusivity, as well as between academic performance and social behavior. Results highlight the importance of effective policy implementation in creating a supportive learning environment for LGBTQ+ students. Schools must strengthen inclusivity efforts through gender-sensitive curricula, teacher training, and inclusive policies. Future research should explore intervention programs that promote a more equitable and welcoming educational environment for all students.

Keywords: Gender Responsiveness, LGBTQ+ Inclusivity, Education Policy, Junior High School, Inclusivity Strategies.

Introduction

Inclusivity and Gender issues were the paramount challenges in today's education scenario, which was always changing. This endeavor was anchored on the D.O. 32, series of 2017, or the Gender Responsive Basic Education Policy. Integrating gender responsiveness into the curriculum allowed students to connect their learning with real-life social contexts, helping boys and girl For children leading in to the era of formal education, these deeply ingrained issues were particularly important, because the home environment played such a critical, deep role in their perceptions. If the impressionable minds of children, most especially girls were not free from gender biases, then this could severely affect their self-confidence and that of their prospects. We must first remember that there still exists a strong tradition in some countries like the Philippines, including customs, policies, and practice that puts sons ahead of daughters meaning there exist gender disparity. This led to uneven dealing with the subject, and, depending on the situation, worsened gender and homosexual inclusivity issues.

Integrating gender responsiveness into the curriculum allowed students to connect their learning with real-life social contexts, helping boys and girls develop a deeper awareness of their roles as males and females. A curriculum that promoted gender fairness supported students in fostering respect, advocating for the well-being of all genders, identifying and addressing biases, exchanging knowledge, and forming networks with like-minded individuals dedicated to gender equality (Rami, 2024).

When school principals actively led efforts to improve school conditions, such as governance structures, institutional culture, policies on student retention, curriculum implementation, and teachers' work environment, student performance was positively impacted (Meyer, 2024). Extending this leadership to incorporate gender and LGBTQ+ inclusivity enhanced the school environment, making it more welcoming and supportive for all students.

Therefore, the researcher aimed to determine the extent of the Policy on Gender Responsiveness and the level of inclusivity of LGBTQ+ individuals

within the academic framework of schools in Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat. This evaluation was crucial in identifying gaps or challenges that hindered the full implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy outlined in DepEd Order No. 32, series of 2017. Additionally, the study sought to explore potential correlations between policy on gender responsiveness, inclusivity measures, and students' social and academic performance, shedding light on the intersectionality of gender inclusivity and educational outcomes.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to assess the extent of gender responsiveness policies and LGBTQ+ inclusivity in junior high schools in Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat. The study was conducted in Maligaya National High School, Lambayong National High School, and Kapingkong National High School, involving 63 junior high school students who self-identified as LGBTQ+ and were enrolled in the 2024-2025 school year. Using proportional allocation and simple random sampling, the sample was determined through Slovin's formula to ensure fair representation.

A structured questionnaire was the primary data collection tool, adapted and modified from the LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Schools: A Self-Assessment Tool. The questionnaire was validated by experts and tested for reliability, yielding high Cronbach's Alpha values (0.769 for gender policies, 0.784 for

inclusivity, and 0.761 for social behavior), confirming its consistency. It used a Likert scale to measure the implementation of policies, inclusivity, academic performance, and social behavior.

The data collection process involved securing approval from school authorities, coordinating with Gender and Development (GAD) coordinators, and distributing the questionnaire to the participants. They were informed about their rights, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. After retrieving the responses, data was encoded for analysis.

For data analysis, mean and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of policy implementation, LGBTQ+ inclusivity, social behavior, and academic performance. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient tested the relationships between gender policies and inclusivity, as well as academic performance and social behavior, using a 0.05 significance level. These statistical methods ensured objective and meaningful results.

Results and Discussion

The study identified three (3) key strategies influencing LGBTQ+ inclusivity in junior high schools: (a) Policy Implementation, (b) Teacher Training, and (c) Inclusive Curriculum. These strategies were examined to determine their relationship with student inclusivity, social behavior, and academic performance.

Table 1: Policy on Gender Responsiveness for LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students in Terms of Curriculum

Indicator	Mean	Description
1. I ensure content and supporting materials are LGBTQ inclusive (e.g., ensure LGBTQ people, history, events, and resources are presented).	4.37	Agree
2. LGBTQ+ representation is present across various subjects in the curriculum.	4.06	Agree
3. The curriculum promotes a positive understanding of gender diversity.	4.16	Agree
4. LGBTQ+ inclusivity is a priority when the curriculum is revised or updated.	4.16	Agree
5. The current curriculum addresses the needs of LGBTQ+ students adequately.	4.30	Agree
Total	4.21	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00 - Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49 - Agree; 2.50 - 3.49 - Neutral; 1.50 - 2.49 - Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 - Strongly disagree

Table 1, the LGBTQ+ inclusivity is present in educational materials, but representation across subjects needs improvement. Inclusive curricula

foster acceptance and a supportive learning environment (UNESCO, 2018). Overall, gender-

responsive policies are positively received, but broader representation is needed.

Table 2: Policy on Gender Responsiveness for LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students in terms of Instructions

Instructions	Mean	Description
1. Teachers incorporate gender-sensitive and LGBTQ+ inclusive language in their instruction.	4.14	Agree
2. Teachers are trained to handle LGBTQ+ issues sensitively during class discussions.	4.30	Agree
3. Instructional materials used in classes reflect gender and sexual diversity.	4.29	Agree
4. LGBTQ+ students feel comfortable and supported in classroom interactions.	4.44	Agree
5. Teachers actively challenge stereotypes related to gender and sexual orientation during lessons.	4.27	Agree
Total	4.29	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00 - Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49 - Agree; 2.50 - 3.49 - Neutral; 1.50 - 2.49 - Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 - Strongly disagree

Table 2, the LGBTQ+ students feel supported in classroom interactions, but gender-sensitive language use by teachers is less consistent. A supportive classroom climate improves student

well-being (GLSEN, 2021). While teachers promote inclusivity, further efforts are needed in gender-sensitive instruction.

Table 3: Gender Responsiveness for LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students in terms of Assessment

Assessment	Mean	Description
1. The teacher behavioral management plan (e.g. establishing classroom routines and procedures, increasing individualized student support) that uses inclusive practices to support LGBTQ+ students.	4.27	Agree
2. Bullying, harassment or stigmatizing language and behaviors, from of students or other adults, in classrooms or leaning areas are not allowed.	4.33	Agree
3. Teachers provide fair assessment opportunities for LGBTQ+ students.	4.29	Agree
4. Assessment methods consider the diverse needs of all students, including LGBTQ+ students.	4.40	Agree
5. LGBTQ+ students perform academically without experiencing any discrimination or prejudice during assessments.	4.38	Agree
Total	4.33	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00 - Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49 - Agree; 2.50 - 3.49 - Neutral; 1.50 - 2.49 - Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 - Strongly disagree

Table 3 shows that assessment methods are inclusive, ensuring fair evaluation for LGBTQ+ students. However, behavioral management strategies are not consistently applied. Gender-sensitive assessments promote fairness and equal learning opportunities (Dixit & Raman, 2017). Halpern (2019) emphasizes holistic assessments that support both academic and social-emotional growth.

Table 4: Summary of the Extent of Policy on Gender Responsiveness LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students

	Mean	Description
Curriculum	4.21	Agree
Instruction	4.29	Agree
Assessment	4.33	Agree
Overall Total	4.28	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00 - Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49 - Agree; 2.50 - 3.49 - Neutral; 1.50 - 2.49 - Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 - Strongly disagree

Table 4, it summarizes the extent of gender-responsive policies in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Assessment received the highest rating, showing strong inclusivity, while curriculum had the

lowest, though still positive. Overall, schools have made significant progress in promoting gender diversity, but implementation varies across schools. Research by Booth & Bennett (2020) and UNESCO (2019) highlights the importance of gender-responsive education, emphasizing the need for continued improvements in policy application.

Table 5: Level of Inclusivity of LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students in Terms of Self and Caring Climates

Self and Caring Climates	Mean	Description
1. Our teachers enforce our non-discrimination, harassment, and bullying policies for all students, including LGBTQ students.	4.60	Agree
2. The anti-bullying and non-discrimination policies explicitly include protection for LGBTQ students.	3.97	Agree
3. Our teachers ensure event (e.g., prom, pep rallies) policy(s) allows the inclusion of same-gender and gender non-conforming couples.	4.06	Agree
Total	4.21	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00 - Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49 - Agree; 2.50 - 3.49 - Neutral; 1.50 - 2.49 - Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 - Strongly disagree

Table 5, the teachers play a key role in enforcing non-discrimination and anti-bullying policies, ensuring a safe environment for LGBTQ+ students. However, explicit policy protections for LGBTQ+ students received the lowest rating, indicating a need for stronger policy enforcement. Research by

GLSEN (2021) highlights that teacher intervention reduces bullying and improves student well-being. Overall, schools are making progress in fostering inclusivity, but further policy reinforcement is needed.

Table 6: Level of Inclusivity for LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students in Terms of Professional Learning

Professional Learning	Mean	Description
1. The teachers work to improve their knowledge and skills by attending training and professional development focused on LGBT inclusive teaching practices.	3.78	Agree
2. The teachers training and professional development focused on creating safe and supportive environments for LGBTQ+ students.	4.29	Agree
3. Educators in our Junior High School actively seek out and participate in professional learning opportunities focused on LGBTQ+ inclusivity. The school provides ongoing professional learning that specifically addresses the academic needs of LGBTQ+ students.	4.22	Agree
4. The school provides ongoing professional learning that specifically addresses the academic needs of LGBTQ+ students.	4.25	Agree
Total	4.14	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00 - Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49 - Agree; 2.50 - 3.49 - Neutral; 1.50 - 2.49 - Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 - Strongly disagree

Table 6, the teacher training on creating safe environments for LGBTQ+ students received the highest rating, while participation in LGBTQ+ inclusive teaching training was the lowest. This suggests that while educators support inclusivity, specialized training opportunities remain limited.

Research by DePalma (2009) and Kosciw et al. (2009) emphasizes the need for institutional support in LGBTQ+ training to address challenges in implementation. Overall, findings indicate a positive perception of professional learning, but greater access to targeted training is needed.

Table 7: Level of Inclusivity for LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students in Terms of Inclusive Curriculum Resources

Inclusive Curriculum Resources	Mean	Description
1. Teachers ensure content and supporting materials are LGBTQ+ inclusive) e.g. ensure LGBTQ+ people, history, events, and resources presented).	4.00	Agree
2. The curriculum and supporting materials are LGBTQ+ inclusive.	4.24	Agree
3. Teachers use curriculum and supporting materials that depict LGBTQ+ people negatively, or LGBTQ+ inclusive content is prohibited by law or policy in my area.	4.13	Agree
4. The school actively seeks feedback from students regarding the inclusivity of curriculum resources.	4.17	Agree
5. The curriculum resources currently used in our junior high school adequately addresses LGBTQ+ inclusivity.	3.89	Agree
Total	4.09	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00 - Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49 - Agree; 2.50 - 3.49 - Neutral; 1.50 - 2.49 - Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 - Strongly disagree

Table 7, the LGBTQ+ inclusivity in curriculum materials received the highest rating, while the adequacy of current resources scored the lowest. This suggests that while efforts toward inclusivity are recognized, gaps remain in fully addressing LGBTQ+ representation. Research by Taylor (2028) and Dodge & Crutcher (2015) highlights the importance of inclusive resources in fostering student belonging. Overall, findings indicate progress in integrating LGBTQ+ topics, but more comprehensive materials are needed.

Table 8: Summary of the Level of Inclusivity for LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students

	Mean	Description
Self and Caring Climates	4.21	Agree
Professional Learning	4.14	Agree
Inclusive Curriculum Resources	4.09	Agree
Overall Total	4.15	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00 - Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49 - Agree; 2.50 - 3.49 - Neutral; 1.50 - 2.49 - Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 - Strongly disagree

Table 8, the Safe and Caring Climates received the highest rating, while Inclusive Curriculum Resources scored the lowest, highlighting gaps in LGBTQ+ representation. Research by GLSEN (2011) and Kosciw et al. (2016) emphasizes inclusive curricula foster acceptance and reduce

discrimination. Overall, schools are progressing in inclusivity, but curriculum representation needs improvement.

Table 9: Level of academic performance of LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students

Academic Performance	F	%	Description
75 – 79	3	4.76	Fairly Satisfactory
80 – 84	3	3	Satisfactory
85 – 89	3	8	Very Satisfactory
90 – 100	4	2	Outstanding

Legend: 90-100 - Outstanding; 85-89 - Very Satisfactory; 80-84 - Satisfactory; 75-79 - Fairly Satisfactory; Below 75 - Did not meet expectations

Table 9, the most LGBTQ+ junior high school students performed in the Very Satisfactory category (52.38%), with fewer achieving Outstanding (22.22%) and Satisfactory (20.63%) ratings. Research by Hernandez & Cudiamat (2018) and Aikman et al. (2005) emphasizes that gender-responsive teaching enhances academic performance by promoting equity in education and inclusive teaching methods.

Table 10: Level Social Behavior of LGBTQ+ students of Junior High Schools in the Municipality Lambayong NHS, Sultan Kudarat

	Mean	Description
1. LGBTQ+ students in my school are socially accepted in their peers.	4.46	Agree

2. Inclusive social interactions between LGBTQ+ students and their peers occur frequently in my school.	4.06	Agree
3. My school's social environment encourages positive social behavior toward LGBTQ+ students.	3.90	Agree
4. LGBTQ+ students in my school feel comfortable expressing their gender identity during social activities.	3.76	Agree
5. Students in my school are likely to intervene or support LGBTQ+ peers if they witness discriminatory social behavior.	4.24	Agree
Total	4.09	Agree

Legend: 4.50-5.00 - Strongly agree; 3.50-4.49 - Agree; 2.50 - 3.49 - Neutral; 1.50 - 2.49 - Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 - Strongly disagree

Table 10, the LGBTQ+ students are generally accepted by their peers, fostering an inclusive school environment. However, comfort in expressing gender identity during social activities received the lowest rating, suggesting ongoing challenges. Research by Linley et al. (2016) and Freeman et al. (2007) highlights that peer and faculty support

enhance academic motivation and performance. Conversely, discrimination in schools can lead to isolation, low self-esteem, and reduced engagement (Sanchez et al., 2023; Suryo et al., 2020). Overall, findings indicate a positive social climate, but challenges in full self-expression remain.

Table 11: Correlation Between the Policy on Gender and Responsiveness and the Level of Inclusivity of LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students

Variables		2. Level of Inclusivity	2.1 Safe and Caring	2.2 Professional Learning	2.3 Inclusive Curriculum
1. Gender and Development Programs	r	.219	-.038	.230	.155
	P-value	.084	.765	.070	.225
1.1 Curriculum	r	-.049	.007	-.014	-.073
	P-value	.701	.958	.912	.570
1.2 Instruction	r	.230	-.005	.241	.146
	P-value	.070	.971	.057	.254
1.3 Assessment	r	.295*	-.081	.278*	.255*
	P-value	.019	.526	.027	.044

Table 11, a significant positive correlation between assessment in gender programs and both a safe environment ($r = .219$, $p < .05$) and an inclusive curriculum ($r = .230$, $p < .05$). This suggests that strong assessment practices enhance inclusivity. However, no overall significant relationship was found, leading to the acceptance of the null

hypothesis. Studies by Russell et al. (2010), Meyer (2015), and Kosciw et al. (2018) highlight those inclusive policies, teacher training, and gender-sensitive curricula improve LGBTQ+ students' safety and belonging.

Table 12: Correlation Between Academic Performance and the Level of Social Behavior of LGBTQ+ Junior High School Students

Variables	r	P-value	
Level of Social Behavior	0.139	0.278	Accept H0
Academic Performance			

The Pearson correlation ($r = 0.139$, $p = 0.278$) shows a weak, non-significant relationship between academic performance and social behavior, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. While higher social behavior may support academic success, factors like school climate and peer relationships influence this link (Poteat et al., 2011).

Conclusion

The study concludes that the Policy on Gender Responsiveness among LGBTQ+ Junior High school students is effectively implemented, with the assessment domain demonstrating the highest level of inclusivity, reflecting strong efforts toward equitable education practices.

LGBTQ+ students generally experience a safe and inclusive environment supported by well-established non-discrimination policies and professional learning initiatives. Their academic performance is commendable, with most students achieving Very Satisfactory and Outstanding ratings. Social behavior towards LGBTQ+ students is largely supportive, marked by high peer acceptance, though there is room for improvement in fostering comfort in expressing gender identity during social activities.

However, the study found no significant correlation between the Policy on Gender Responsiveness and the overall inclusivity of LGBTQ+ students and between their social behavior and academic performance, suggesting that other factors may influence these outcomes.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest by the author in this manuscript.

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