"Going Beyond the Margin" Work Ecology Model: A Filipino Representation of Gay Instructional Leaders in Basic Education

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Abstract

There has been an abundance of foreign studies on queer leadership in schools, but significantly fewer in the country. This study was initiated for this very purpose: to have a vivid description of who the Filipino gay instructional leader is as embodied in his/her work ecology model. Through the use of grounded theory, the inclusion criteria were employed to ensure a thorough exploration of the experiences of seven (7) gay instructional leaders in leading their units. The leaders were selected using theoretical sampling to develop categories that explain the specific phenomenon and form a rich and nuanced theory. Throughout the process, the researcher considered theoretical sensitivity, purposeful sampling techniques, constant comparison, theoretical saturation, and flexibility in data collection and analysis. Queer leadership, as was grounded in the data collected, meant being challenged by the culture of heteronormative leadership in the country, which includes (but is not limited to) encountering pressure to conform to traditional gender roles, navigating toxic work environments, and facing gender stereotyping and biased treatment. Further, Filipino gay instructional leaders are distinguished in their PRIDE qualities-- *Passion*, *Resilience*, *Inclusivity*, *Diversified Role as a Leader*, and *Empowering Others*. These qualities help them to serve and lead schools effectively. The "Going Beyond the Margin" work ecology model, created using these same grounded qualities of a Filipino gay leader, is centered on inclusivity and symbolizes the progress made by these leaders toward achieving complete acceptance and acknowledgment of what they can contribute. However, there remain some individual and systemic issues in leadership that the Filipino gay leader continues to traverse.

Keywords: Gay instructional leaders, Gender stereotypes, Going beyond the margin

Background of the study

In the Philippines, LGBTQ people, especially gays, are subjected to various discriminatory practices under broad categories such as religion, family affairs, education, health, employment, media, and politics (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID], 2014). Macasa (2020) stated that LGBTQ+ members might not be branded due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. Still, Filipino LGBTQ+ members have experienced marginalization through issues in public restrooms, sexual harassment, microaggression, and exploitation. The said counts of discriminatory practices show that our society has not been inclusive of the minority group and show that heteronormative culture exists. With this, Executive Order No. 100 was made to promote diversity and inclusion in all government offices and units that provide anti-discrimination guidelines such as fair opportunities in the recruitment, hiring, training, and promotion of personnel; a program and orientation on diversity and inclusion; mechanisms for accountability; and processes in handling discrimination complaints.

Many Filipino gays work as teachers, school administrators, and supervisors. However, Chamberlain & Kothlow (2012) found out that the school's heteronormativity is an issue that most teachers and administrators encounter. They noted that educators were uncomfortable discussing LGBTQ+ issues in schools, leading to few straight allies, which resulted in poor normalization of the queer community in the academe. In support, Competente (2020b) concluded that homosexuality acceptance is an issue among teachers and school administrators in one of the schools in the Department of Education (DepEd). Based on the participants' responses, they believed that gender is confined only into two binaries (male and female) due to our society's teaching of social norms that gender is always binary, leading to heteronormativity. It was also concluded that the study participants have hesitation and lack of knowledge about what the gender identities of queer people can offer.

For many years as a teacher at the basic education level, the researcher observed the reluctance to open and discuss LGBTQ+ issues among school administrators. This is observed even in the gender and development (GAD) training for teachers and students. The Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy or D.O. No. 32, s. 2017 was made to help DepEd employees promote the rights of the students regardless of their sexual orientation. However, Competente (2020a) noted that there is no effective monitoring, implementation, and evaluation of the said policy. In

support, Talon et al. (2020) asserted that Gender Responsive Basic Education (GRBE) should be reviewed and used as a guide in developing GAD projects and activities in schools. In addition, Galamgam et al. (2021) noticed that the Department of Education had inadequate support for projects or services aligned with GRBE. It was also revealed that there is a lack of monitoring, evaluation, and research to aid in the development of learner support policies and service delivery, including guidance and counseling programs that provide learners with career options aligned with GRBE.

In the Philippine educational setting, there has been a dearth of academic papers focusing on gay instructional leaders, and more research might help in determining the struggles and issues faced by gay leaders in the educational setting toward establishing distinct leadership in their respective work environments. Although there were studies aimed at addressing the leadership of queer people, there are only a few that centered on gay leaders' context. Gamboa et al. (2020) claimed that there were limited or very few studies that tackle queer leadership in the Philippine setting. It also showed that local studies were focused on the collective idea of LGBTQ+ in general; this gave an unresolved portion on the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression (SOGIE) per each spectrum, resulting in poor representation of the gay and queer community, specifically for gay instructional leaders in the field of education. This was supported by Tic & Tic (2021), saying that balanced representation and integration of gender and sex analysis in research might help improve the quality of research culture, which may lead to more acceptance.

Based on the current limitations in local research about the topic, the researcher aims to address the gap in educational leadership by focusing on the experiences and realities of Filipino gay instructional leadership. The goal is to identify their leadership characteristics derived from queer leadership and develop a defined work ecology model integrating their leadership styles and advocacies. The aim is to normalize the presence of gay people in leadership positions in the field of education toward a broader understanding of their accomplishments and leadership traits. The work ecology model can also bring a better understanding of the present phenomenon to pave the way to a more inclusive future and to continuously develop and examine the progress of queer leadership in the Philippines.

Statement of the Problem

This study uncovers the challenges and practices of queer educational leaders to develop a work ecology model. This research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is queer leadership as perceived and experienced by selected gay instructional leaders in basic education?
2. How are gay instructional leaders responding to the heteronormative challenges in the organization?
3. What model can be developed based on the experiences of gay instructional leaders?

Methodological Framework

Figure 1

Methodological Framework of the Study
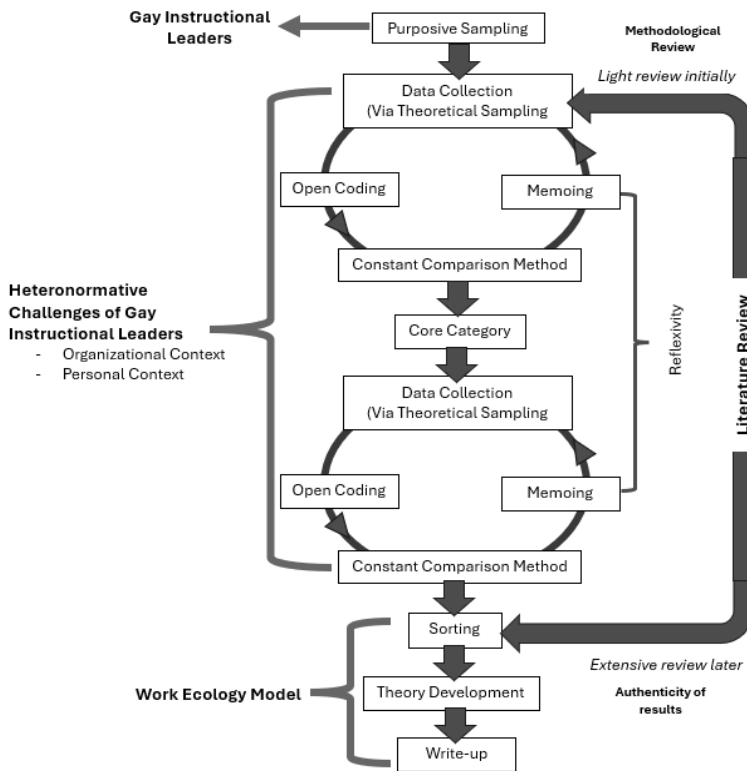*(Modified from the original framework by Hoda et al., 2010)*

Figure 1 shows the methodological framework of the study. A few modifications were made based on the original framework of Hoda et al. (2010) to fit the concept of the original framework to the present study.

The framework showed a clear presentation of the process of how the methods of the current research will be implemented. The variables of the present study were placed on the left side of the framework to show the interconnectivity of the concepts to the methodological flow of the study.

As shown on the diagram, the right side following the blue-green color was the flow of the methods. It started from sampling, data collection, and data analysis to theory development. The last was the final write-up of the study. The researcher carefully planned the methods and process to attain a well-designed theory that would fit the needs of queer leaders by the end of this dissertation.

On the other hand, the left side, represented by a purple color bracket, showed that the queer leaders are the primary samples of the study with a given set of criterion references for selection. The entire process of data analysis from data collection from the first cycle coding to constant comparison in the second cycle represented the analysis of the heteronormative challenges encountered by the queer leader from their organizational and personal context. Lastly, the work ecology model was based on the process of selective coding to develop the theory through a model. Then, the rest was written based on the analysis of the researcher by merging the selective codes of the research questions as the guide.

Methodology

Research Design

The Grounded Theory Method (GTM) was used as the qualitative research design in this study to explore and give a deep understanding of the realities of queer leadership in the Philippines. The Straussian guidelines were used in this study because of the highly complex coding process that permits a literature review to identify the problem to be explored (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Breckenridge and Jones (2009) emphasized the importance of using literature to guide the researcher in identifying the starting point for data collection and clarifying pre-existing knowledge. However, they also noted that this gathered knowledge should not be considered relevant until it is validated or dismissed during the formulation of the emerging theory.

In consideration of this, the researcher focused on the methodology and literature relevant to the research questions as the initial stage of data

collection. Literature directly related to the core idea of the results was intentionally avoided to prevent bias in the analysis. Nevertheless, the cited literature was considered when discussing the findings to provide a more comprehensive analysis.

Participants of the Study

The current study required purposive sampling, which is based on the inclusion criteria that the researcher would like the sample population to innately have (Charmaz, 2014). With these in mind, the participants for the current study were selected using the following inclusion criteria: (1) should be an out gay instructional leader to provide broad experiences without restrictions on gender preference; (2) should be a current leader in the educational field with instructional supervisory and technical assistance functions based on Civil Service Commission (CSC) job description; and (3) have at least three years of leadership experience and part of the Department of Education (DepEd) offices at Division and at Regional levels in the NCR, Region IV-A and Region IV-B. After setting the parameters of the selection based on the inclusion criteria, snowball sampling was used in this study. The snowball selection was utilized to identify possible participants within the community. Often, only one or two participants were conveniently selected based on the inclusion criteria.

The grounded theory method does not have a firm rule on the sample size (Mertens, 2005: Ostick, 2011). The present study interviewed seven (7) participants, which according to Boyd (2001), at least two (2) to 10 informants were sufficient to reach saturation. Theoretical sampling was applied to the data collected from the samples, which helped in the development of categories that have the potential to explain a specific phenomenon to develop the theory. Theoretical sampling began by employing the snowball sampling technique to select the most qualified participants (Patton, 2002).

Research Instruments

The current research conducted a semi-structured one-on-one qualitative interview with the gay instructional leaders. Bullock (2016) said that interviewing is a good method to use if you want to learn about people's attitudes, views, opinions, knowledge, understanding, motivations, feelings, or meanings; it is also a good method to use if you want to learn about their attitudes, beliefs, opinions, experience, understanding, motives, feelings, or meanings. The researcher used an interview protocol to determine the

personal and organizational experiences of the identified gay instructional leaders. In semi-structured interviewing, the interviewer adopted a conversational style and relied solely on a subject aide-memoire in a more unstructured approach. To evoke life stories, more unstructured methods were beneficial. Semi-structured interviews also helped facilitate the better flow of the questioning process for multiple participants using the same set of questions. There was a control of repetition of responses and meeting of data saturation (Gues et al., 2006).

Data Gathering Procedure

Since the study is dealing with gay instructional leaders, the sensitivity of selection was taken seriously to avoid any ethical misconduct.

In the first phase of the data collection procedure, the researcher performed the standard operating procedures in seeking permission from the hierarchy of the Department of Education offices to conduct the research. The researcher considered the "trust bond" to encourage disclosure and lessen non-response to the participants since they belong to the gender minority group (Dillman, 2014). The second phase of the data gathering procedure was composed of three scheduled meetings with the participants. Before conducting the interview, the researcher wrote a reflection journal as part of the data-gathering process. This involved an auditing process to enhance reliability and minimize bias in the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1982). The reflection journal enabled the researcher to document their assumptions, actions, and experiences during the research process, ultimately improving the credibility of the research findings (Smith, 1990). The first meeting with the participant was about building rapport. The second meeting was the conduct of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the participants. Lastly, in the third meeting, the participants underwent a focus group discussion. The researcher gathered the available participants to further discuss their answers from the previous interview. The goal of the FGD was to elicit more complicated personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes through mediated interaction (Hayward et al., 2004).

Mode of Analysis

This study deals with Straussian grounded theory, and the analysis process is constant comparative, which occurs in three phases of coding (open, axial, and selective coding) simultaneously (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). While doing the analysis, the concept of saturation by Glaser and

Strauss (1967) was used, where there is no additional data found based on the broad range of data on the category.

Once the researcher was confident with the categories, the researcher started formulating the diagrammatic illustration and textual explanation of the findings. The credibility and authenticity of the findings could be established through triangulation to support the data using three different sources (Creswell, 2013). The data coming from the interview, experts' reviews, and relevant literature and documents related to the categories were used to confirm the emergent themes. The transcribed data from the interview was reviewed by the researcher together with the three experts in qualitative research and queer studies to refine the coding process and emerging themes in the result. The expert's recommendation in identifying the appropriate literature based on the findings was investigated if it fits the discussion of the experiences of the queer leaders based on the researcher's analysis. All parties involved in the research process were informed and made aware of the nature of the research project, according to the second principle of fully informing researchers and participants based on the good practice guide to researching LGBT communities (LGBT Foundation, n.d.).

Also, to capture a detailed description of the participants' experiences, the researcher wrote memos of some observations such as emotion, social interaction, and truthfulness of the statements (Ponterotto, 2006) throughout the data collection process. By using these observations, the readers would have a full grasp of the information through a thorough description of the findings (Erlandson et al., 1993; Nowell et al., 2017).

Results and Discussion

Perceived Experiences, Heteronormative Challenges, and Responses of the Gay Instructional Leaders

The workplace can be challenging for individuals who identify as gay, as they often face biases and stereotypes associated with heteronormativity. These issues can have a detrimental impact on their professional growth and development. However, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusivity in the workplace can help address these challenges and ensure equal opportunities for everyone. Based on the interviews of gay instructional leaders, it appears that they are selfless and passionate about their work, often going above and beyond to achieve their goals. They are committed to playing diverse roles as leaders, empowering others, and

promoting inclusivity in the workplace. They recognize the value of diversity and strive to create a work environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

Perceived Experiences of the Gay Instructional Leaders

Passion (*nag-aalab na damdamin para maglingkod*). Based on the participants, being single allows them to have more focus on their tasks as leaders. This ability to concentrate on their work helps them to provide exceptional service beyond what is expected by their clients, colleagues, and stakeholders. Furthermore, these gay leaders have a proactive approach to solving problems and creating programs that would benefit the stakeholders and school community.

In their study, Añonuevo & Digo (2023) emphasized how gay individuals maintain professionalism at work. The study participants noted that gay teachers are passionate about their profession and are versatile and competent workers. This passion and competence make them highly capable leaders who can adapt to various work environments and situations.

Resilience (*matatag na kalooban*). The experiences of the participants have shaped them into resilient, determined, and inclusive individuals. They understand the importance of demonstrating moral behavior and maintaining integrity, especially under scrutiny. These leaders face constant struggles due to the discrimination they experience from hetero norms. However, they have developed a unique ability to remain resilient despite the constant misunderstandings from their community. They exhibit a friendly and approachable personality, and their resilience helps them to overcome any adversity they encounter.

The rough situations they encounter are easier for them to handle because they have become thick-skinned (*may makapal na balat*, idiom meaning "not being easily offended") regarding these concerns. This resilience has helped them to endure discrimination and become emotionally strong, making it easier for them to adjust to any situation they encounter. They can handle stress and pressure with ease, and they can adapt to changing situations quickly.

This was proven by Ryan (2022), who justified that gay men excel academically more than straight men. It was discovered that gay boys are more willing and eager to break the gender norms in studies. This shows that, even at a young age, gay men are willing to prove themselves to

become more successful. For instance, gay students experience discrimination and minority stress at school, causing them to be more resilient to stressors. Young and adult gays keep proving themselves, the rough experiences they encounter allow them to be more resilient, leading them to be more successful than other gender groups. Gays use humor as a coping mechanism. Garcia (2008) explained that during the 1970s, humor was used by Filipino gays during the political agony of that time. Their laughter became their escape, which over time developed as a definitive character of Filipino gays.

Inclusivity (*may pagsasaalang-alang para sa lahat*). For the participants, the issue of heteronormativity is a significant challenge for the LGBTQ+ community. To address this challenge, many of the participants have an inherent advocacy for inclusivity. They must embrace inclusivity and educate people about different sexual orientations. For them, encouraging diversity acceptance can help promote understanding and break the stigma surrounding the LGBTQ+ community.

These leaders understand the significance of fairness, equality, and equity for their subordinates. They have personally experienced denial and discrimination and can empathize with those who are not allowed to reach their full potential due to their gender identity or preference. Gay instructional leaders advocate for the rights of queer people and believe that they must make the most of their position of power to push for the rights they deserve. These leaders also focus on planning their programs and projects based on equality and equity.

The experiences of the participants were validated by Pryor (2017), who stated that there is a continuum in activism, advocacy, and allyship. Most queer leaders have identified their unique role as queer activists to demonstrate their position as advocates. As advocates, gay leaders are focused on their identity towards advancing queer causes, such as increasing the number of allies in schools.

Diverse Roles as a Leader (*sari-saring tungkulin bilang pinuno*). The participants have faced heteronormativity in the workplace, but they have been able to overcome it by exhibiting various leadership styles interchangeably to address different concerns of the organization. When planning for programs, these leaders want to make it extravagant by giving their best effort. This approach has helped gay instructional leaders to stand out and deliver exceptional results that challenge the norms of the workplace. The gay instructional leaders also practice leadership styles that are often used by other leaders, regardless of gender. By embracing their

unique qualities and leadership styles, these gay instructional leaders make a significant impact in the workplace and inspire others to do the same.

Based on their experiences, being diverse in many roles as a leader means carrying out responsibilities tied to various leadership styles. According to Añonuevo & Digo (2023), queer individuals in the academe are talented and creative, especially in organizing various affairs. Their artistic planning and innovative ideas help them develop critical and flexible thinking skills. The ability to integrate different leadership styles and skills can help gay leaders to be more effective in addressing diverse challenges in the workplace, and it can inspire others to embrace their unique qualities and perspectives. By doing so, gay leaders can create a more inclusive and diverse workplace that values and respects the contributions of all employees.

Empowering Others (*nagbibigay kakayahan sa iba*). Several participants of the current study have experienced discrimination and prejudice from their colleagues due to being in a same-gender relationship. This is why these leaders must uphold strong moral values, as it helps them maintain a positive reputation within their departments. Integrity is essential for gay leaders, as it influences how they are perceived and judged. To inspire and empower others within the organization, the participants prioritize their dignity and self-respect.

Being humane and understanding leaders is important to empower people around them, their sensitivity to emotional concerns is a characteristic shared by some gay leaders, as revealed in the study of Chee, Noor, & Ahmad (2012). Before being gay leaders, they were teachers who upheld the high value of their profession. They followed the rules and regulations and never broke them. This shows that gay teachers act as role models to their learners and participate in different academic programs and situations with high morals to build a good image of their professions at school and in the community. Añonuevo and Digo's findings (2023) reflect that gay instructional leaders are trying to achieve high moral respect for themselves and others.

Heteronormative Challenges

Based on the experiences of the gay instructional leaders who have participated in the current study, being a gay leader regardless of position can be a particularly challenging experience. These leaders often find themselves in a position where they need to establish themselves with the people around them while, at the same time, working to promote queer

visibility in the workplace. This can be difficult, as every workplace has established norms and practices that have developed over time, and these norms can be difficult to change.

To promote queer visibility, gay instructional leaders need to do better to ensure that they are providing a safe and inclusive environment for all members of the organization. Cochrane (2018) defines heteronormativity as the concept where cisgender and straight identities are considered the standard norms. This norm has a significant impact on queer individuals, as they are seen as non-conforming to gender standards. The assumption that heterosexuality is the standard for leadership manifestation, along with the concept of default gender identities, may fuel discrimination in the workplace. The visibility of gay leaders and their chances of progressing in their professional field may be negatively affected as a result. Based on the participants' accounts, those expectations due to gender norms, gender stereotyping, biased treatment, and toxic pressure to prove oneself are the result of hetero norms for gay instructional leaders. At this point of the paper, a detailed discussion about gay instructional leaders' experiences was elaborated to provide a clearer picture of the challenges they faced.

Expectations due to gender norms. The participants have shared their experiences on how being gay has delimited them due to gender norms. According to them, some people in the workplace tend to question the leadership ability of gay leaders, thinking that gays are identified as weak leaders.

The media has a significant impact on the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and norms, particularly in the portrayal of gays. By depicting them in varying degrees of flamboyance and masculinity, people's perceptions of gender have been influenced. These harmful stereotypes have led to the discrimination and ridicule of gay individuals in Philippine society (Reyes et al., 2012; Garcia, 2008). It is crucial to acknowledge the media's role in shaping societal attitudes towards gender and advocate for accurate and respectful portrayals of all individuals, irrespective of their sexual orientation.

Toxic pressure to prove oneself. The participants also experienced the pressure of being gay in their working environment. For example, one of the gay instructional leaders claimed that colleagues judged him through his gender preference in case he committed a mistake in an education program he oversaw.

The societal norms that link gender with heterosexuality have resulted in unfavorable views towards gay people and their sexuality. Consequently, there is a demand for gay individuals to comply with traditional masculine gender roles, as outlined in a study by Thepsourinthone et al. (2020). The narrow definition of masculinity, which is heteronormative, can create difficult and stressful atmospheres for queer leaders in their professional lives. Society must acknowledge and confront these attitudes to establish an all-inclusive and accepting environment for every individual, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Gender stereotyping and biased treatment. Based on the interviews of the participants, it appears that there are still forms of gender stereotyping happening in the organization, even though there are existing gender and development programs and policies in government offices, specifically in the Department of Education. Discrimination in promotion and sexual harassment issues are presently faced by gay leaders, which leads to biased treatment.

In today's society, discovering that acceptance of homosexuality is still a significant challenge for teachers and school administrators raises concerns. According to Competente's study (2020a), gender is still limited to strict male and female binaries, which is the root cause of the ongoing difficulties faced by the LGBTQ+ community. However, the Philippines has taken steps to increase gender awareness, and while some communities appreciate the talents and contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals, discrimination against this group remains an issue. Despite being considered a queer-friendly country, factors such as religion, misconceptions, and stigma have shaped attitudes towards this community, leading to their tolerance only when they conform to specific stereotypes. Consequently, it is unclear whether acceptance of gay Filipinos exists when they do not adhere to particular job types or perform the expected stereotypes. It is imperative to recognize that such discrimination is unacceptable and that members of the LGBTQ+ community should be embraced for their uniqueness and diversity.

P.R.I.D.E. Leadership as Response to the Challenges

The study revealed the leadership traits of gay instructional leaders in the Department of Education, taking into account their personal and organizational experiences as educational leaders in basic education. Their attitudes and behavior towards heteronormative challenges were found to have commonalities.

Table 1.

P.R.I.D.E. as Leadership Characteristics of Filipino Gay Instructional Leaders

Selective Code	Definition
Passion *(nag-aalab na damdamin para maglingkod)*	Gay instructional leaders take ownership of their responsibility as educational leaders. For them, they must demonstrate selflessness and make sacrifices in their personal and social lives to ensure that they can give undivided attention to their role as leaders. By doing so, they set a high standard for others to follow and move towards a brighter future for the organization. They rise to the challenge with unwavering conviction, assert their leadership responsibilities, and make a lasting impact on those who follow in their footsteps.
Resilience *(matatag na kalooban)*	As gay instructional leaders climb the ladder of success, they face countless obstacles and hurdles. Many have had to endure humiliation and discrimination before reaching their current positions of leadership. However, their sharp sense of humor serves as a powerful shield, helping them to grow stronger and more resilient in the face of adversity. This positive outlook enables them to perform their leadership tasks with greater effectiveness, inspiring others to follow in their lead.
Inclusivity *(may pagsasaalang-alang para sa lahat)*	Leadership is about leading by example, and gay leaders understand this better than anyone. By showing their authentic selves, they are making a bold statement to the world that queer people exist and are an important part of our society. As members of the LGBTQ+ community, they have a deep-rooted sense of inclusivity and fairness. They prioritize these values in their leadership, ensuring that everyone in their surroundings is treated equally and with equity. They can also merge the male and female characteristics to go beyond the heterosexual leadership.
Diversified role as a leader *(sari-saring tungkulin bilang pinuno)*	Gay instructional leaders can exhibit the same leadership traits as other leaders, in addition to possessing specific qualities that make them stand out. As adaptable leaders, they are capable of using different leadership styles and skills interchangeably, based on the situation they face. These unique qualities can help gay leaders bring a new perspective to any team and create a more inclusive and diverse work environment. It is crucial to acknowledge and appreciate the value that queer leaders can contribute to any organization.
Empowering others *(nagbibigay kakayahan sa iba)*	Gay instructional leaders who possess a compassionate and empathetic approach can empower and uplift their subordinates. By demonstrating genuine care and concern for their community, these leaders provide a source of hope and encouragement to overcome even the most challenging of obstacles.

In summary, the selective codes identified in the current study suggest that gay instructional leaders respond to heteronormative challenges in the workplace with P.R.I.D.E., which is shown in Table 1. This acronym stands for Passion, Resilience, Inclusivity, Diversified Roles as a Leader, and Empowering Others. Through their unwavering commitment to these values, gay leaders are creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace for everyone

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Table 2.

Merging the Selective Codes to the Concepts of the Previous Theories

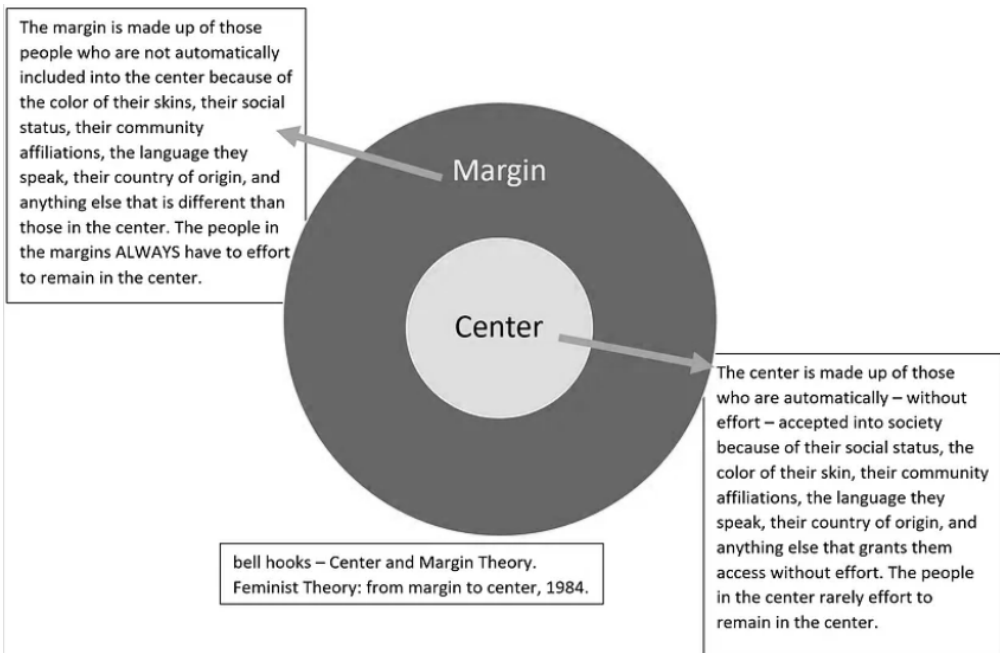| Emerging Codes	Hooks (1984)	Canfield (2019)	Present Model
Selective Code	**Theory of Center to Margin**	**Leading Towards the Margin Theory**	**Going Beyond the Margin Work Ecology**
Passion (nag-aalab na damdamin para maglingkod)	White women are at the center and receive favorable benefits in early American society	Existing norms in university tuition fees are symbolized by the center with a few dots representing the students who can avail of the high cost of tuition fees.	Gay instructional leaders are the center of inclusion in the organization, they utilized P.R.I.D.E. queer leadership characteristics as a response to the heteronormative challenges they encountered. Their visibility and attitude towards their work as leaders allow them to expand their advocacies and promote inclusivity in Basic Education.
Resilience (matatag na kalooban)			
Inclusivity (may pagsasaalang-alang para sa lahat)			
Diversified role as a leader (sari-saring tungkulin bilang pinuno)			
Empowering others (nagbibigay kakayahan sa iba)			
Expectation due to gender norms	Black women lie on the margin; they are not given fair treatment and recognition	Few dots are seen at the margin which signifies the students who are challenged by the financial concerns which are considered marginalized.	The margin symbolizes the organization and the heteronormative challenges it contains.
Toxic pressure to prove oneself			
Gender stereotyping and biased treatment			

Theory Development

The study's methodology used the "margin" as a key indicator of gay instructional leaders' ability to lead, which represents the organizational

norms that influence their leadership. The etymology of the word marginalization is "margin," which represents societal inclusion where edges or borders practically seem to be the end of norms. In Filipino, the word *"hangganan"* best describes the margin, meaning edge, border, limit, or end. The experiences of gay instructional leaders in the Department of Education (DepEd) show how they meet the margin or *"hangganan"* to slowly eradicate the existing norms in the organization. Their shared efforts and experiences helped the queer community to make a progressive move to promote inclusion in the organization and society at large.

One of the core theories cited in this study is Hooks' feminist theory (1984) from margin to center. According to Hooks (1984), black women in the United States of America were part of the margin, which she relates to the societal treatment of them because of marginality. She explained that women of color are not given equal opportunities because some of them work as janitors, maids, and prostitutes, whereas white women are given many opportunities and privileges.

Figure 2.

The concept of the theory of margin to center (Hooks, 1984)

The margin is made up of those people who are not automatically included into the center because of the color of their skins, their social status, their community affiliations, the language they speak, their country of origin, and anything else that is different than those in the center. The people in the margins ALWAYS have to effort to remain in the center.

Margin

Center

bell hooks – Center and Margin Theory. Feminist Theory: from margin to center, 1984.

The center is made up of those who are automatically – without effort – accepted into society because of their social status, the color of their skin, their community affiliations, the language they speak, their country of origin, and anything else that grants them access without effort. The people in the center rarely effort to remain in the center.

Taken from Rekart, T. (2021)

On the other hand, the concept of margin and center has been further explored through another theory that sheds light on queer theory and its application in the field of educational leadership. Canfield's (2019) Leading Towards the Margin Theory is based on the experiences of queer leaders in higher education in the USA. The theory highlighted six (6) categories where queer leaders can help marginalized groups access the center. These categories include the following: oppositionality, positionality and subjectivity, creativity and idea-driven, understanding structure/norms/center, commitment to change, and transparency and collaboration. Canfield explained that the cost of tuition fees is represented by the dots in the center, which often resulted in students being burdened with debt and eventually leaving college or university. This made students who cannot afford tuition fees a part of the margin. Canfield's theory can be utilized to find solutions for these issues, where the six (6) categories listed above can be used to ensure that marginalized students are not excluded and are allowed to access the center.

Figure 3.

*Framework of Leading Towards the Margin Theory (Canfield, 2019)*
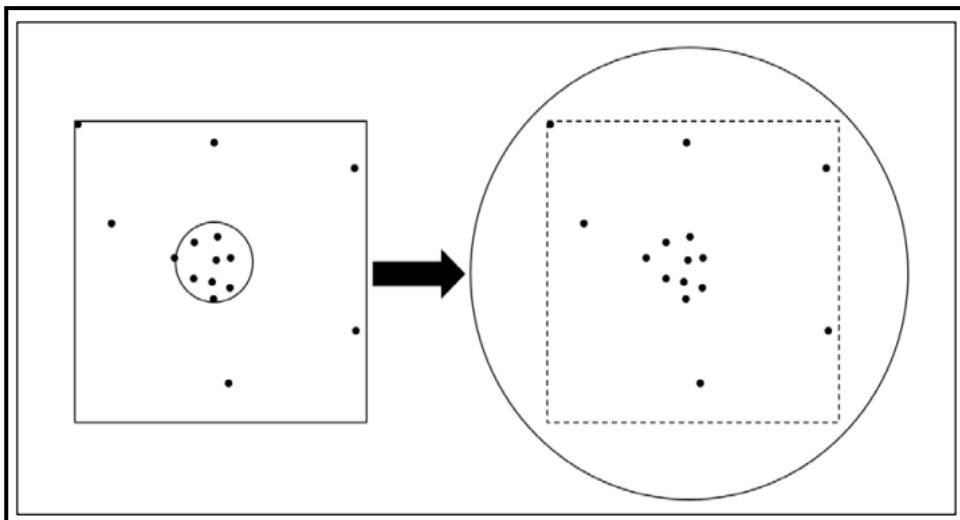
By combining the concepts of Hooks (1984) and Canfield (2019), this study presented a new perspective on how to define queer leadership based on the realities of Filipino gay instructional leaders. This merging of concepts is shown in Table 2, where the idea of "margin and center," similar to Hooks' concept, was used to describe the individuals who are part of the organization's margins, where existing norms and the entire organization are represented. The center, on the other hand, represented the gay leaders who were part of the organization, and their visibility came with the responsibility to be heard and promote their causes. Through this study, the characteristics of Filipino gay instructional leaders were identified, which gay leaders used to make their presence known and enable the organization to become more tolerant and accepting over time.

"Going Beyond the Margin" Work Ecology Model

The model presented in the current study is called the "Going Beyond the Margin" Work Ecology Model which mainly focuses on exploring the journey of gay instructional leaders and their rise as educational leaders. The term "going" describes the journey of gay leaders, while "beyond" represents the idea of maximizing the full potential of gay leaders to exceed expectations. The concept of "*mahigitan ang hangganan*" or "beyond the margin" applies to gay leaders utilizing their common characteristics to excel and become agents of change by promoting inclusion in the organization. Highlighting their gender fluidity allows them to go beyond the margin and exceed people's expectations by combining both traits of male and female leaders.

The figure used in this context was inspired by Hooks (1984) and Canfield (2019) and was a representation of the variables of this study. The figure used the margin and center to depict the challenges faced by organizations that are embedded with heteronormative beliefs. The circle symbolizes the gay leaders who are a part of the organization and are striving to make a change. The central idea of the figure was to show how gay leaders can push the center outward by utilizing their unique qualities to promote inclusion in the organization. Thus, the "Going Beyond the Margin" Work Ecology Model helped illustrate how gay leaders can overcome the challenges of heteronormativity and promote inclusion by pushing the center outward and maximizing their full potential.

Figure 4.

"Going Beyond the Margin" Work Ecology Model
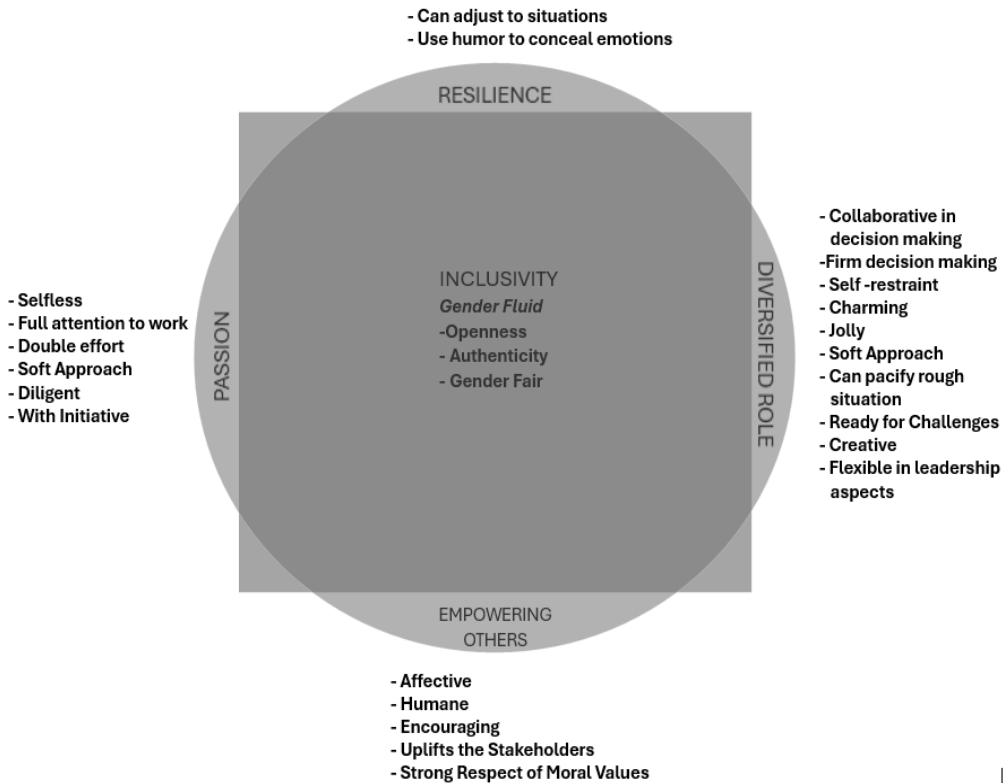
This new model helps in recognizing the similarities and differences of gay leaders across the LGBTQ+ spectrum to help define the true concept and experience of queer leaders in Philippine society. There is no intention to single out any orientation. Instead, the model encourages exploration of other relevant and related areas while being mindful of inclusivity and being unbiased so as not to develop superiority among the spectrum of genders.

The analysis of Figure 4 reveals that the concept of "inclusivity" is at the center of the circle, representing the common characteristic that gay instructional leaders wish to see within the entire organization. Based on data, the majority of gay instructional leaders view inclusivity as the core of their existence, and they strive to promote it within the organization to break hetero norms and achieve full acceptance. As the DepEd increasingly advocates for inclusion by introducing new policies, the presence of gay

leaders in leadership positions today serves as a significant step towards acceptance.

To maintain their stature as leaders, gay leaders possess certain characteristics that help them excel. People within the organization notice their determination to prove their potential as educational leaders, which is evident in Figure 2. The circle in the figure extended beyond the margin and overlapped with the square, indicating that each queer leadership characteristic outlined in Table 2 is present. This signified that gay instructional leaders are pushing their core value of inclusion outward to cover the entire margin. The movement of the circle represented gay instructional leaders breaking the stigma and changing norms within the organization.

However, the current state of the organization is only tolerant towards queer individuals, and the progress to full acceptance is slow. Therefore, there are still parts of the margin that the circle does not cover, indicating that there are people in the department who have yet to be reached by gay instructional leaders and that there are systemic concerns to be resolved.

Implications

The Going Beyond the Margin (GBM) Work Ecology Model is a new framework based on queer leadership that reflects the experiences of Filipino gay leaders. The model provides guidance for practicing inclusive leadership that embodies P.R.I.D.E. values throughout planning, program development, and decision-making. By collaborating with others, these leaders can make more effective decisions. Each code in the model emphasizes traits that enhance management and supervisory skills. For example, the passion demonstrated by gay instructional leaders can be applied during program implementation through hard work and compassion, boosting team morale, fostering empowerment, and strengthening support for program success.

Gay leaders can leverage the Going Beyond the Margin (GBM) Work Ecology Model to continue advocating for inclusivity in their leadership, ensuring that people of all genders and backgrounds in their unit receive support. By challenging existing norms that limit the growth of queer individuals in the education sector, their leadership creates opportunities for minority groups. Additionally, gay leaders can serve as role models within the LGBTQ+ community, promoting greater visibility

and representation of LGBTQ+ leaders across educational institutions and within DepEd units.

From a broader perspective, this study provides a detailed understanding of the current challenges and experiences of gay leaders in the Department of Education. It emphasizes the need for the agency to address systemic issues that hinder the full acceptance of queer individuals within its structure. One way to achieve this is by expanding and strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of the Gender Responsive Basic Education policy, ensuring that staffing practices promote gender equality and that work environments are inclusive for all. By creating a more supportive and inclusive environment, these programs can empower queer employees to reach their full potential and ensure that they feel valued and respected within the workplace.

Conclusions

There are numerous studies on queer leadership in the Philippines, but only a few of them are focused on educational leadership. The present leadership model reflects the current scenario and condition that gay instructional leaders face every day.

This study helps people understand the difficulties that Filipino gay instructional leaders in the Department of Education faced and helps develop their unique model based on their personal and organizational experiences as educational leaders. Based on the explored experiences of the gay leaders, it shows that the present condition of the Basic Education unit of the government is tolerant towards queer leaders. However, few participants experience heteronormative challenges such as expectations due to gender norms, toxic pressure to prove oneself, gender stereotyping, and biased treatment.

To counter the said challenges, gay instructional leaders use their defined queer leadership characteristics: Passion, Resilience, Inclusivity, Diversified Role as a Leader, and Empowering Others (P.R.I.D.E.). Using P.R.I.D.E., gay instructional leaders may continue serving the organization and promote their primary cause, Inclusivity. These five characteristics help gay instructional leaders expand their advocacy to help eliminate the heteronormative challenges and break marginalization towards LGBTQ+ in the organization from the grassroots level to the topmost position.

While many studies share similar concepts and contexts, this study is unique in its focus on the realities of Filipino gay leaders. It may be a milestone for the community to have a work ecology model of their own rather than rely on Western accounts, as there are differences that cannot be fully described by existing literature.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Due to the limitation of time and the number of gay instructional leaders who participated in the study, it is recommended that future researchers find better ways to encourage participation.

2. It is suggested that other units of the Department of Education where queer leaders are numerous should be explored. Other genders may be explored for a more generalized concept of queer leadership.

3. Using the GBM work ecology model, future researchers may explore ways that can reach the uncovered part of the margin to achieve full acceptance of queer people in basic education.

4. The results of the present study can be utilized to find numerical patterns to prove its generalizability.

5. To improve the recording and analysis of data, it is recommended that future researchers utilize data analysis software to enhance the trustworthiness of data.\

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