"AKO'Y ISANG SIRENA" IN A MACHO WORLD: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HEGEMONIC CULTURE AMONG GAY MEN IN BATAAN

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ABSTRACT

In raising awareness of the prolonged battle against discrimination towards the Gay Community, understanding the source is deemed vital as it establishes knowledge regarding the various phenomena attributed to the diverse backgrounds of affected individuals. Through a qualitative approach, the researchers applied a phenomenological method to investigate the potential existence of a Hegemonic culture in the Gay Community. To gather data, researchers conducted a pre-survey from forty (40) participants of the target population, wherein the executed pre-survey acted as a determinant for the final eight (8) participants who best complied with the criteria needed for the study through a Purposive Sampling Technique. Ultimately, the eight (8) participants emanate from various age ranges to investigate the possible gradual progression of the culture in the province. In discussing the challenges faced by gay individuals, the findings express idealizations and behaviors within the gay community, which manifests in Hegemonic culture. In particular, the presentation of identity in public to ensure the maintenance of image, dividing the prolonged minority group into smaller marginalized sections based on appearances, affecting their dynamics or interactions with potential romantic partners and peers through emotional expression, alongside feelings of superiority over other gay individuals. Illustrating the profound influence of traditional masculine norms on the gay community due to their inclination to their biological sex, shedding light on the impact of Hegemonic masculinity on the lived experiences of the gay community.

Keywords: *Gay Community, Hegemonic Culture, discrimination, phenomena, lived experiences.*

INTRODUCTION

Cotec (2020) expressed that with profound exposure to various social influences, particular thought processes and behavior of individuals exhibit vulnerability to alteration to adapt to the perceived norms of their culture, social roles, and the people they engage with, such as friends and family. Case in point, concepts such as "Hegemonic Masculinity" possess distinct interpretations in different countries. In the United States, people associate Hegemonic Masculinity with social impact and status. Nevertheless, Hegemonic Masculinity characterizes the systematic and pervasive subordination of sexual identities toward heterosexual men. The case exemplifies how gay men learned to exclude themselves from the narrative of "normal masculinity" because they gained hyper-awareness through their interactions with the sex role, emphasizing the various "ideological" interest groups of Hegemonic Masculinity. However, such impressions directed them into remaining as concrete subjugations to bias and discrimination due to their orientation (Edwards, 2018).

Moreover, Hegemonic Masculinity fosters and sustains the stigmatization and discrimination of "racial minority, non-straight, physically disabled, religious minority, elder, and immigrant males" (Basu, 2021). The notion manifests through an established

acceptance of "macho supremacy", which validates concepts of dominance or being a "dominant group". According to the research of Gebhard et al. (2019) and Ravehill and Visser (2019), Hegemonic

Masculinity accounts for how some gay and heterosexual men scrutinize obtained provocation concerning the notion of their perceived "traditional masculinity", consequently leading to their exhibited animosity towards other gay men who defy their perceived standards of Masculinity. As indicated in the results of Gebhard's survey, exclusively assessed heterosexual men indicated a "challenged masculinity, typically through gender disparities, fear, and humiliation". Therefore, it concludes how Hegemonic Masculinity leads to men directing their rage against those of the opposite sex, other heterosexual men, or gay men when experiencing particular shortcomings.

Reporting the lack of "safe gay spaces" in their native country,

many Filipino gay men who migrated overseas, such as to Bangkok, Thailand, emphasized their sense of belongingness within the host country's gay community. Therefore, leading to an enhanced learning experience in practicing their sexuality as gay men - gaining a nurtured appreciation of the diverse activities of their interests without perceived judgment from conservative Filipinos (Ulla & Pernia, 2022). Case in point, the media and advertisement industry in the Philippines often exploit the "concept" of gay men for entertainment purposes, depriving them of the right to feel like a living individual through such depictions of them as a mere source of exaggerated laughter and screams (Bautista & Villaverde, 2019). Consequently, through discriminatory portrayal, they receive mockery from other men who display distinct conducts of Hegemonic Masculinity, such as those influenced by flawed media, wherein they define gay men as couples with excessive intimacy, which resists their vision of "normal masculinity". Conclusively, Hunt et al. (2020) implied that behaviors and thought processes of "Hegemonic Masculinity" extend beyond the doings of heterosexual men. Case in point, gay men who identify with similar sentiments ultimately practice "straight-acting", enabling severe internalized homophobia among the LGBTQIA+ community.

Hence, this research focuses on the Hegemonic Masculinity as a culture in Bataan. Accordingly, striving to raise awareness concerning the prevailing discrimination against gay men in the LGBTQIA+ community as individuals with persevering flawed notions of "Masculinity" constructs social disparity among Filipino citizens. This research also aims to present observed patterns of thought processes and behaviors manifesting from Hegemonic Masculinity among gay men. Therefore, providing those affected with a platform that advances them from distorted perceptions and unjust treatment, strengthening awareness among other individuals and recognized allies in maintaining a safe community throughout the Philippines. The case is exemplified through an emphasis on the danger of separation among the community, which eradicates the needed unified approach in eliminating further de-marginalization of the affected individuals in the country. For instance, the intense abuse and discrimination within the LGBTQIA+ Community, particularly among gay men, as they entail psychological and physical adversities in their daily living. Moreover, gathered results may be used to analyze and adjust the factors needed for the application of the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics Equality Act (SOGIE Bill) in the Philippines, compromising the demands of the local people and the gay community.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The general problem of the study is what occurs when hegemonic culture surrounds gay men.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the lived experience of gay men that compels the culture of Hegemonic Masculinity in Bataan?

SCOPE AND DELIMITATION

The research study covers Masculinity among gay men to identify the patterns of Hegemonic culture. Researchers aim to explore the hierarchy of masculinity in the gay community. Therefore, the study sought out the experiences and hierarchical system based on the masculinity of gay men.

The study was conducted in the province of Bataan. Researchers conducted interviews with eight (8) final participants in private spaces. The selection of participants involves gay men between the age of eighteen and above. This study was conducted with a limited amount of financial resources.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter includes pertinent theories, relevant research, and studies that are seen to be crucial in bolstering the significance of the study. This also includes a definition of each relevant term utilized in the study as well as the conceptual framework and hypothesis.

Relevant Theory

This study is anchored on several theories.

Social Conformity (Solomon Asch).

Challenging the notion of autonomy, Social Conformity as a theory by Solomon Asch emphasizes the tendency of group pressure to affect the thought processes and behaviors of an individual, such as their beliefs and judgment when engaging in social situations. Particular principles of the experiment display the extensive deviation of individuals from their perceived values through behavioral adaptations to satisfy the expectations of their desired group. Exposure to the collective actions of a majority group compels an individual to "conform" to avoid scrutiny or alienation, often simulating agreement or reproducing observed behaviors.

The theory poses importance in the study as the researchers uncover the source of an evident culture of Hegemonic Masculinity in the Philippines. Aligned with the study of Solomon Asch, Stanley Milgram emphasized how the pressure to conform leads to "obedience" under a recognized authoritative figure, thus, enabling ruthless behaviors. Hegemonic Masculinity enforces the perception of immediate subordination demonstrated by other sexualities, including its influence on other heterosexual men. Conceptualizing from the theory, individuals who remain susceptible or tolerate conformity affirm abandonment of principles, conscience, or moral sense upon perceiving how gay men challenge the persevering ideology of "normal masculinity" induced by men who possess direct Hegemonic Masculinity toward them.

Accordingly, the theory of conformity indicates how a heightened pressure to conform transpires through the distinct recognition of a norm among people with authority or impact over a population - enabling the development of a culture. The case exemplifies the reported hostility and discrimination against gay men, qualifying as a behavioural norm manifesting from Hegemonic Masculinity.

Theory of Masculinity (Connell).

The theory of Masculinity (Connell) acknowledges various masculinities that change over time, between cultures, and depending on the person. Hegemonic masculinity is a theoretical theory that seeks to explain the manner in which men continue to exercise dominating social roles amongst women and other gender identities and expressions that are seen as feminine in a certain society. Men's behaviors that exemplify social gender roles are referred to as

"masculinity," and they can take several forms, including physical traits, cultural practices, and psychological traits. The idea of masculinities particularly emphasized the numerous social inequities prevailing at the time. Hegemonic masculinity, or dominating masculinity, provides a base for tyranny to achieve societal acceptance. On the contrary, hegemonic masculinities respond to the causes and effects of patriarchy. Although not all men conform to the hegemonic masculinity paradigm, they nonetheless profit from its authoritative status, which establishes women's enslavement in a way that benefits men generally. Men's interactions with their sexual partners were influenced by personal beliefs about gender expectations, which are complex, context-specific, and socially formed. The idea that males are the main providers of financial support and therefore are superior to women defines traditionally masculine roles. The sociological idea of hegemonic masculinity contains the influences of feminism on the study of masculinities, which describes a collection of social customs reflecting men's dominance over women as well as other men and embodying the far more revered manner for boys to be boys.

The study that the researchers are undertaking concentrates on hegemonic culture as the theory places emphasis on hegemonic masculinity. Existence of a social norm for masculine conduct in society; males are expected to uphold these standardizations of masculinity. As the study tries to find out what gay men experience with hegemonic culture, the theory states the impacts of hegemonic masculinity premises involve "violent behavior, hostility, rejection to the expressing of emotions, and exhibition of toughness." The core structure of society is formed by men's drive for masculinity and their need to demonstrate their macho by dominating other men and women.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

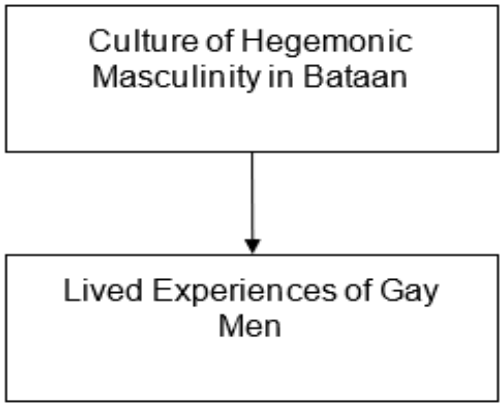

Figure 1

This study revolves around the lived experiences of Gay men upon their reported encounters with gay men who exhibit Hegemonic Masculinity. Case in point, by identifying the source of the culture alongside the discrimination they continuously face, which respective allies of the Gay Community aim to raise awareness for.

RELATED LITERATURE

This section presents the relevant studies and literature referring to the pertinent study themes of the research, "Ako'y Isang Sirena" in a Macho World: A Phenomenological Study of Hegemonic Culture Among Gay Men in Bataan.

The notion of toxicity, which emanates from Theories of Masculinity, manifests itself through aggressive behaviors and mental processes, contributing to the emergence of "Hegemonic Masculinity" among individuals (Deslauriers et al., 2020). Accordingly, S. Reyes et al. (2019) articulated that countries with prolonged practices of the patriarchal system, such as the Philippines, express animosity towards those who transgress their acknowledged conventional roles of "Masculinity", particularly homosexuals. In addition, moral standing and societal norms practiced by Filipinos predominantly acquire influence from accepted religious principles, and with the majority of the population consisting of Roman Catholic members, heterosexual relationships solely attain profound acceptance and support. Hence, the propensity to embrace their sexuality per the standards of the Christian faith is thus justified in those who identify with both the LGBTQIA+ Community and the Roman Catholic church (Campos et al., 2022).

The embodiment of Hegemonic Culture among Filipinos

Enforcing distinct behaviors of misogyny and condemnation of effeminacy, Filipino men succumbed to Hegemonic Masculinity upon constant exposure during the Presidential term of Rodrigo Duterte. Characterized as the head instigator of the toxic culture, Duterte personified a "hypermasculine image" induced through conceptions of violence with military advances and rape jokes. With such a profound position in the country, he inevitably exhibited influence on other Filipino men, further validating toxic Hegemonic Masculinity. The case exemplifies this through statements such as "Men speak that way" to excuse a rape joke, allowing Duterte to implement the notion of Filipino men finding amusement in profane language and sexist remarks. Consequently, the imposed "hypermasculine image" enhanced the prolonged degradation of other sexualities, especially women. As implied by De Chavez & Pacheco, 2020, Filipinos unfortunately tolerated and reaped entertainment from Duterte's misogynistic and violent comments during his political campaigns and presidential speeches. Accordingly, Ramiro et al., 2022, indicated that the oppression of women remains a prevalent issue in patriarchal countries, such as the Philippines, subsequently heightening violence against children, effectuated by women lacking the capacity to defend their children as Hegemonic Masculinity manifests "machismo", which imposes sole authority or power to men. Nevertheless, results from the national epidemiological data indicate how Filipino youth (13-24 years old) who identify as members of the gay community suffered from increased encounters of abuse, including physical, psychological, peer, cyber, and sexual violence, when compared to other heterosexual male and female participants. Furthermore, results revealed that more male participants reported experiences of violence, contradicting the collective belief of primary victims identifying as females.

Such a phenomenon receives emphasis from Devilles (2022), as the notion of "space space" strives to circulate a sense of belongingness by collectively eluding discrimination through mutual support and awareness and media presentation of the LGBTQIA+ Community through the rising popularity of several Pinoy Boys' Love (BL) series, which contradictorily deems inaccurate and poses a further threat for feminine gay men. The case exemplifies the portrayal of the marginalized population and distinct plots of recognized BL series, which reinforce Hegemonic Masculinity through the ideology of "machismo" among masculine gay characters who display "aggressive"

personalities despite being opposite of the "passive" personality of their love interest with perceived feminine qualities. For example, demonstrating ignorance towards the attributed "psychological dependency" and "immaturity" demeanors imposed on feminine gay men, facilitates a notion of borderline oppression from heterosexual men and masculine gay men. Consequently, female viewers reportedly recognize the dramatic romanticization of the power dynamics as they relate to such circumstances. Thus, enabling empathetic urges and self-pity with the need for a perceived reliant partner due to their "aggressive" or authoritative nature instead of the various BL series acting as a medium for awareness regarding the reality of toxic masculinity and Hegemonic Culture in the country.

Factors of Hegemonic Culture in the Lives of gay men

With the values imposed by Catholic educational institutions, individuals who identify as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) often experience difficulties conforming. The case exemplifies this through Catholic schools remaining mindful of the needs of other learners, families, and societal standards, alongside the needed alterations to the broader socio-political environment as they remain bound by the laws of the church. Nevertheless, schools accept LGBTQIA+ individuals as learners, parents, instructors, or administration staff. However, insufficient research highlights the lack of assistance for Catholic instructors to adjust to the diverse population of students. Therefore, bringing awareness to the needed gap to focus on in improving the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students in Catholic schools (Huchting & Fisher, 2019).

Hale & Ojeda, 2018 also commented on misogyny persisting as a frequently disregarded topic in academics and the "queer community" despite it being a prevalent type of sexual identity harassment. The pertained study questions whether some characteristics displayed by homosexual men justify misogyny in forms that remain overlooked because of their status as sexual minorities, challenging the presumed concept of how the "oppressed cannot oppress." Case in point, homosexual male misogyny transpires and provokes the relegation of queer femininities, including feminine gay men, strengthening a hierarchical approach towards gender. Consequently, explaining the rise of a Hegemonic Culture within the LGBTQIA+ Community, wherein gay men incessantly endures detestation for failing to exhibit their presumed femininity as they also create gender issues due to their engagement in misogyny with the such promotion of patriarchal idealisations.

Discrepancies among gay men - Masculine gay men and Feminine Gay Men

As the study delves into the occupational sexual orientation or gender identity of individuals (gay men), eclectic methods to counteract their experienced discrimination gain significant stress from other members of the LGBTQIA+ Community and heterosexual "allies''. Such a movement annually exhibits within the beauty and fashion industry as they market "pride-themed" goods that aim to advocate and empower the LGBTQIA+ Community.

Functioning as an expression of art through garments, Madinga et al., (2019) noted how fashion inevitably shows the character of an individual. The case exemplifies this through the identified shopping habits of gay men compared to heterosexual men, wherein homosexual men (gay men) significantly invest their time and money in conveying their style as it demonstrates their profound value on identity and belongingness to the LGTBQIA+ Community. Nonetheless, Gerrard et al., (2022) diverted attention onto the preference of both homosexual men and heterosexual men for men who display "masculine" qualities. Consequently, providing an essence of Hegemonic Culture as gay men who depict themselves with feminine qualities suffer from a disadvantage and heightened exposure to psychological prejudice, sexism, and potential employment discrimination, particularly during hiring procedures and promotion chances. The conducted experiment revealed how sexism exists as an implicit practice among gay men (homosexual males) and heterosexual males, concluding their shared bias towards the shown masculine-gay performer in comparison to the feminine-gay performer.

The articles used in this research collectively emphasize the prolonged battle to eradicate the "machismo" nature (toxic masculinity) of the patriarchal system integrated into Filipino education, societal standards, and culture. Nevertheless, the various literature expounded on different oppressed or marginalized populations, expressing how such information and belief pose harm as they circulate on the internet and various television channels, accessible to all generations of Filipinos nationwide and around the globe. In most cases, the results of several respective research indicate how misogyny remains a neglected issue within marginalized populations, including women and identified feminine gay men. Therefore, lacking collaborative support against toxic Hegemonic masculinity. Case in point, Filipinos endured the "masculine image" imposed by former President Duterte, which provided men a privileged platform of power over other genders De Chavez & Pacheco (2020). Hale & Ojeda (2018) also remarked how, despite a shared expression of femininity, gay men lack a profound understanding of the precise difficulties women face through misogyny as they continuously benefit from patriarchy, such as the salary gap in various industries or traits induced by biological sex. Case in point, masculine gay men possess a general advantage over feminine gay men and women due to their expression of "straight-acting" and adherence to masculine norms that the toxic culture of Hegemonic Masculinity profoundly favors.

Moreover, women remain physically and emotionally "powerless" in defending themselves or their children from "poly victimization" as Hegemonic Masculinity enforces perceived superiority over other sexualities. However, children, specifically males, who identify with the LGBTQ+ Community reported heightened violence as they remain the second or succeeding abuse victims of heterosexual men and other gay men who possess the thought process and behaviors of Hegemonic Masculinity (Ramiro et al., 2022). Some articles, however, focused on the social factors that intensified Hegemonic Masculinity in the Philippines, such as improper media representation of the LGBTQ+ Community through several trending Boy's Love (BL) series. Case in point, Devilles (2022) indicated that the entertainment industry evokes acceptance of hopelessness instead of awareness through the romanticization of psychological dependence insinuated by power dynamics between the leads, with romance developing between an "aggressive" character and a "passive" character. Moreover, religious beliefs, particularly Catholicism, affect the lack of awareness regarding the discrimination against the LGBTQ+ Community, paving the foundations for Hegemonic masculinity through the condemnation of effeminacy as it challenges "normal masculinity" (Huchting & Fisher, 2019). Convincingly, Zhou (2023) emphasized the internal harm of Hegemonic Masculinity within the LGBTQIA+ Community, particularly, the growing separation between masculine gay men and feminine gay men. Case in point, the aforementioned study reveals the expansive preference for masculine

gay men for their signified power and dominance over other genders, which ultimately, poses threats for feminine gay men when they engage in romantic relationships or sexual intercourse practices with masculine gay men, as Deslauriers et al., (2020) mentioned how toxicity, including Hegemonic Masculinity, exhibits through aggressive behaviors and thought processes.

METHODOLOGY

Methods and Techniques

The current study intends to collect data using a qualitative approach. As defined by Crossman (2020), qualitative research is a type of social science investigation that gathers and examines non-numerical data in order to create meaning from it. By scrutinizing and understanding the occurrence, the pertinent data was obtained in a qualitative study approach. To gather the information needed for this qualitative study, an interview was carried out. The intended participants were asked open-ended questions to gather further insights or information. This enables an interpretative phenomenological analysis, which entails further insights and reasoning into the possibility of the culture existing among the gay community in the Philippines. Consequently, providing data on their subjective views on its effects on their daily lives.

Comparatively, the primary aim of qualitative study is to discover greater detail about an individual's or particular group's experience utilizing a phenomenological approach which assists in ensuring the responses of the participants have significance. In addition, it was also utilized to explore as well as expand on their experiences in order to produce a succinct evaluation regarding the possible responses. According to (Qutoshi, 2018), phenomenology refers to a study of techniques that seeks to capture the essence of a phenomenon by viewing it from the viewpoint of those who have experienced it firsthand. The study used descriptive phenomenology to capture the essence of gay men's lived experiences. Hence, Thematic analysis was applied in the current study to identify and explain patterns and themes in qualitative data gathered from interviews with the gay community in Bataan. This approach enabled the researchers to identify and examine the participants' subjective opinions and experiences, providing a profound understanding of the culture that exists among the gay community in the Philippines.

Population and Sample

In attaining the appropriate population frame for the present study, the applied criteria enabled the researchers to affirm the inclusion of the eight (8) final participants: (1) must be 18 years old and above; (2) have been living in Bataan for their entire life; (3) personally identify themselves in the gay community; (4) have received or given discriminatory remarks concerning gender preference or experience. As articulated by Shaheen et al. (2019), Qualitative studies lacking strict regulations concerning the sample size needed to garner data encourage researchers to ultimately bear in mind the utmost relevance and purpose of such results alongside the administration of qualitative interviews as they profoundly affect the quality or depth of answers. However, compliance with ethical considerations concerning the profound information power of the sample fostered the notion of using a smaller sample size to ensure confidentiality (Vasileiou et al., 2018). In pertinence to the age criteria, the researchers aim to ensure the capability of each participant to provide their permission without the necessity for a guardian, also considering their proficiency in comprehending the provided informed consent.

In securing the elimination of bias during the pre-survey, the present study employed a Purposive Sampling Technique (Bhardwaj, 2019) to narrow the participants into eight (8) final ones, enabling a diverse population of gay men to communicate their lived experiences. The technique offers each participant a chance as they assess the criteria needed to proceed with the interview properly, only selecting the eight (8) who possess similar experiences required for the pre-survey. The study gathered two (2) participants from each age group according to the population of the Philippines (*Philippines Age Structure - Demographics*, 2020): 18-24 years (early working age), 25-54 years (prime working age), 55-64 years (mature working age), and 65 years and above (elderly). Initially, the early working age ranges from 15-24 years old, with the researchers adjusting the age range to fit the legal age criteria of the participants. Case in point, to identify the final eight (8) among the forty (40) participants of the pre-survey, each participant was numbered according to their response rate within their age group (the first participant attains the first position), wherein two (2) from each age group who met the criteria for the pre-survey and rightfully consented to provide their demographic information for contact, will be taken as the sample population for the interview proper. Therefore, facilitating varying perspectives from all age brackets, wherein the provision of evidence of the prolonged culture of Hegemonic Masculinity in Bataan may arise.

Research Instruments

To ensure that the factors anticipated under the problem statement are met, the researchers identified potential participants for the study utilizing a self-made pre-survey by the researchers, containing the demographic information and criteria for participants. The researchers conducted a structured interview upon carefully selecting eight (8) participants who would most effectively comply with the study. In a structured interview, a set of pre-written questions in a set of order for the interview will be provided for the interviewer, who then delivers them to the participants (Mcleod, 2023). This assumes that the guides for interviews shed greater clarity on how gay men realistically perceive cultural conformity, encounters of exhibiting hegemonic masculinity, discrimination within their own community, and the significance they attribute to the phenomena. On the qualitative aspects of the present research, interview-guided questions will be the method used.

The data that was gathered throughout the interviews clarified how the participants perceive their own experiences and provided more context regarding the phenomenology that underlies it. The research instrument that was used to act as a guidance. Therefore, it won't always be applicable under some circumstances and ethical considerations as the participants' responses could vary.

Data Gathering

Upon seeking permission and receiving approval from the Psychology Department of Colegio de San Juan de Letran-Bataan, data gathering ensued following the procedures needed for the study. Essentially, social media utilization will transpire to reach the suitable population within the constrained time, wherein elderly participants for the pre-survey may acquire assistance from relatives or technologically aware individuals around them. Subsequently, the identified participants shall attain an opportunity to sign their consent form under the supervision of the researchers.

Following the ethical considerations embedded in

psychological practices, the researchers strive to provide a coherent discussion with the eight (8) participants preceding the structured interview. Case in point, to ensure the elimination of harm and misinterpretation to the participants, the researchers tackled the numerous ethical research guidelines, the purpose of the study, and the allotted time of completion, which fit their respective time and schedule. Moreover, in ascertaining the confidentiality and privacy of the participants and their disseminated information, each participant remains and will remain anonymous even for the researchers. The autonomy of the participants must also persist with their right to withdraw during any given time of the structured interview. Conclusively, the participants' consent to record the structured interview determines the success of data gathering.

Ethical Considerations

In ensuring the preparedness of the researchers in conducting the study, particularly in data collection and analysis, the following data privacy measures in posteriority, in accordance to RA 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which consists of:

CONFIDENTIALITY - Your responses shall be treated with the highest confidentiality in the survey. Your identity will not be known to other respondents.

ANONYMITY - There is NO mechanism to trace you or any of your personal data based on your answers in this pre-survey alone.
COSTS - The pre-survey may take thirty (30) minutes to one (1) hour of your time. Other than that, NO financial or academic costs IN ANY FORM will be charged from the participants.

BENEFITS AND RISKS - As for participants' concerns, there will be NO direct and tangible benefits nor risks once you participate in the pre-survey.

ACCESS TO DATA - The raw data/response shall only be accessible to the proponents. They shall code the responses and process it quantitatively and qualitatively without determining the identity of each response.

STORAGE AND DISPOSAL - The data that will be gathered from you, shall be kept in Google Drive until the survey has been conducted and finished. After that, the entire database shall be deleted by the proponents.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION - Your decision to participate or not to participate in this study is voluntary and will not affect your relationship with any institutions. If you choose to participate in this study, you can withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

FINDINGS

The Thematic Analysis executed on the responses from the members of the gay community in Bataan enlightened notions corresponding to the phenomenon. The findings of this research rendered persevering themes that foster idealisations proving the existence of a Hegemonic culture among gay men in Bataan.

1. Social Standing

As gay individuals recognize their vulnerability in society, they display behaviors that aim to avoid immense discrimination through social dominance over others in their community (gay).

1.1 Competition
Belonging to a minority group, gay individuals avoid a sense of inferiority in society by competing with fellow gays.
"dapat dito sa minority na ito, dapat ako yung pinaka magaling, dapat ako yung pinaka the best" "pagandahan ng pagandahan, payamanan ng payamanan"

1.2 Authenticity of Gender

Through conformity to societal expectations of masculinity, gay individuals eliminate experiences of discrimination in relationships or the working industry, viewing others as inferior to them for their heightened masculinity.

"hindi ka nag papagawa. Kasi yun talaga ang gay eh"
"Tingin sa'yo parang madumi ka parang gano'n... parang feminine talaga"

"Kapag baklang - bakla…. ayoko, lalapit ka doon?"
"mga whey gays na ito... ayaw nila sa mga malalambot, ayaw nila sa mga fems, ayaw nila sa mga twinks, kasi feeling nila it harms their physique"

1.3 Division of Unity

In presenting themselves in society or the general public, gay individuals remain divided into various perspectives of identity concerning each other.

"tribes... how the community divides themselves by appearance"
"Tingin sa'yo parang madumi ka"
"We have the connotations kapag male-to-male, ay pineperahan niya lang 'yan. Or male-to-gay, ay pineperahan niya lang 'yan"

2. Sense of Control

With masculine norms profoundly influencing the idealizations and behaviors of gay individuals, some strive to maintain an image of dominance to avoid discrimination.
2.1 Emotional Regulation
Viewing the abstract as a weakness, some gay individuals avoid discrimination through emotional resilience, ensuring their image remains constant.

"kahit nasaktan, parang pakita mo lagi na masaya ka pa rin"
"gusto ko lagi yung happy, laging masaya"
2.2 Dominating behavior

Exercising authority and control over others, gay individuals who practice Hegemonic culture hold keen for those with an image or personality they deem inferior.

"kung minsan kasi talaga meron tayong talagang tinatawag na pasaway, na hindi nating mapasunod" "mas ano sa akin yung mas bata sakin... medyo chubby at baby face"

3. Dynamics of Relationships

Subject to limitations and cultural norms, the dynamics of relationships of gay individuals emphasize the complexities of establishing and preserving relationships as they remain marginalized in society.

3.1 Mutual Respect

As they experience constant discrimination, gay individuals seek a reciprocal regard of worth, autonomy, and dignity in any form of relationships they acquire.

"nirerespeto niya bilang ako"
"yung pantay lang tumining ng tao"

3.2 Discretion

Garnering discrimination from fellow gay individuals, some eventually exercise caution in maintaining romantic relationships.

"it's a dogma in the community to be intimate with your partner when you're a same-sex couple" "gusto ko dito lang, tago lang, secret lang ganun"

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research is to recognize the lived experiences of Gay men under the probable existence of Hegemonic culture in Bataan. Various factors that affect the phenomenon of Hegemonic culture went through investigation, such as their perceived identity in the gay community, alongside the effect of constant interaction with potential romantic partners and peers.

With Hegemonic culture enforcing the perspective that those who are deemed more masculine remain at the top of the hierarchy system in the gay community, gay individuals evaluate their social standing through dominance over others, avoiding discrimination. Consequently, it renders the ongoing competition among them, which further imposes "authenticity of gender" according to masculine norms, wherein they view those who present themselves as less masculine or display "effeminate" characteristics as inferior (Zhou, 2023). Hence, the division of unity in the gay community heightens the marginalization of their community as they remain divided due to Hegemonic culture.

Moreover, in collectively avoiding discrimination, some members of the gay community in Bataan also establish a sense of control over others through idealizations that are rooted in masculine norms, viewing emotional transparency as a weakness, particularly its recognized linkage to femininity (Garcia-Fernández et al., 2020). Thus, implementing emotional regulation in public, particularly around other gay individuals concurrently, leads to dominating behaviors over those whom they view as less masculine or "effeminate" when indulging in relationships with peers or a significant other as they present themselves according to the masculine norms of society.

Aside from the discrimination they face from the general public, gay individuals also imply the Hegemonic culture in the gay community surrounding romantic relationships, specifically their need for a partner who may assure mutual respect in the relationship. Consequently, as a minority group, possessing dominance over others provides advantages in securing romantic relationships (Pachankis et al., 2020). Hence, the rising notion of gay individuals towards others, recognizing prejudice from other gays, in instances wherein they deem more feminine compared to others as others possess preference over gay individuals with less effeminate characteristics to avoid discrimination from fellow members of

the gay community, ultimately seeking a partner who views them as equal. Consequently, this leads to gay individuals implementing discretion concerning their romantic relationships.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Ultimately, the findings of this research reveal, to some extent, the existence of a Hegemonic culture among Gay Men in Bataan. Through the performed Thematic Analysis, participants endure the eclectic effects of Hegemonic culture on their daily living or lifestyle, exemplified through idealizations and behavioral manifestations of dominating behaviors anchored to traditional masculine norms. Conclusively, this suggests the need for members of the gay community to secure their social standing to avoid immense discrimination, displaying or submitting to dominating characteristics over other gay individuals. Concurrently, it enables the altered presentation of their identity, which conforms to masculine norms, particularly maintaining a "sense of control" to avoid judgment and secure acknowledgment in different aspects of their lives, including work and relationships. Therefore, it affects the dynamics of relationships they remain involved in, including romantic and peer socialisations, wherein Hegemonic culture constrains the expression of their gender, even around fellow gay individuals.

In addressing the challenges gay men in Bataan face as a result of Hegemonic culture, researchers aim to make the community feel more inclusive. Advocates for legislation that would protect individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity are known as legal protections. To strengthen the gay community in Bataan, community empowerment programs include introducing self-acceptance, leadership, and skill-building seminars. These programs can aid in the growth of resilience and community cohesion. Establishing safe spaces and support groups is crucial in promoting inclusivity and harmony within the Gay community.

Fundamentally, this study enlightens the diverse factors that indicate the effectuation of Hegemonic Culture among Gay Men in Bataan, with the findings providing future researchers with a compass to venture into the profound existence of the culture in the context of other members of the LGBTQIA+ Community or Heterosexual individuals.

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