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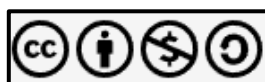
Abstract

Challenges in the workplace can take many different forms, but it generally involves unfair treatment based on characteristics such as gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. This study is an attempt to gain a thorough understanding of the discrimination experienced by employees at quick-service restaurants, guided by the *Gender Spectrum Theory* which refers to the idea that gender is a spectrum not limited to male or female, and that gender is externally communicated through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice and other forms of presentation. This study, which utilized a convergent mixed-method design, aimed to determine the top workplace challenges faced by employees in quick-service restaurants, explain discrimination based on those stated challenges, identify emerging themes, and, lastly, propose an action plan based on the results and findings. Respondents of the study included five (5) currently employed crew members from a quick-service restaurant in Calamba City. Findings revealed that lack of empowerment and career dissatisfaction were the top workplace challenges that the participants encountered. When asked to define gender discrimination, they indicated that it involves the right to express one's gender or the kind of person one is. The most prevalent difficulties they encountered had to do with their physical appearance. The themes that emerged are divided into the major themes of gender discrimination, gender equality, workplace discrimination, workplace challenges, and workplace policies. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating and implementing legal legislations like the Magna Carta for Women and the Safe Spaces Act to ensure equal opportunities for people of diverse SOGIESC.

Keywords: gender, LGBTQIA, restaurant, sexual orientation, workplace challenges

Introduction

The restaurant sector is dominated by men owing to the physically hard nature of the labor and the male-dominated nature of kitchen jobs. With an increasing number of women encountering workplace discrimination, sexual orientation-based inequality has also been a major problem. Twenty percent of Americans with diverse SOGIESC have faced discrimination in terms of job applications, salary, promotions, and exposure to discriminatory jokes because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, according to research published by *National Public Radio*, the *Robert Wood Johnson Foundation* and the *Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health* (2017). Other forms of discrimination include harassment related to restroom access, restrictive dress codes, misgendering, and intrusive questions (Guillermo,



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2018). Transgender employees often face unique forms of harassment compared to other individuals with diverse SOGIESC, such as limited access to restrooms, misgendering through incorrect pronouns, tolerating intrusive or inappropriate questions, experiences of social exclusion, or deliberate avoidance (Rudin et al., 2020).

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights offers organizations a foundation for providing a supportive workplace for all employees, regardless of their identities or gender. Having inclusive and diverse regulations protects people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) from workplace harassment and abuse. Additionally, as businesses become more inclusive of the people with diverse SOGIESC, they gain more than they lose, as it allows for increased creativity, productivity, and personal growth (Guillermo, 2018).

In the Philippine context, there are a number of legal frameworks aimed at promoting equality to eliminate discrimination against women and people with diverse SOGIESC, including the Magna Carta for Women (Republic Act No. 9710), the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313) and the pending SOGIE Equality Bill. Magna Carta for Women (2009) or Republic Act No. 9710, is a comprehensive law that aims to eliminate discrimination against women and promote gender equality. The law seeks to protect, fulfill, and promote the rights of Filipino women by recognizing and protecting their human rights. The Safe Spaces Act (2019), on the other hand, covers gender-based sexual harassment in public spaces, workplaces, educational institutions, and even in the online space. It defined gender-based sexual harassment (GBSH) as unwanted and uninvited sexual actions or remarks. The definition includes catcalling or unwanted remarks directed towards a person, persistent uninvited comments or gestures, relentless requests for personal details, statements of sexual comments and suggestions, public masturbation or flashing of private parts, verbal or physical advances, persistent telling of sexual jokes, and stalking. Finally, the SOGIE Equality Bill, which is still pending for implementation, affirms the rights of every individual, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity. It aims to ensure equitable access to essential social services, opportunities, healthcare, protection, and justice for all, while actively recognizing and addressing the systematic barriers that faced by people with diverse SOGIESC.

Additionally, national GAD mandates require both public and private organizations to integrate gender and development into their systems, structures, policies, programs, processes, and procedures, as outlined in the Joint Memorandum Circular 2024-01 (2024), also known as the Localization of the Magna Carta of Women. This focuses on locally reinforcing equality laws for women. The Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Safe Spaces Act (2019) reinforce the accountability of local government units (LGUs) and employers in upholding and enforcing the law. Specifically, Section 19 of the IRR mandates that employers and individuals in positions of authority within an organization take proactive measures to prevent, address, and sanction gender-based sexual harassment (GBSH) by employees, regardless of whether such incidents occur inside or outside the workplace. These legal provisions collectively emphasize the duty of employers to cultivate a workplace culture that embraces inclusivity and ensures equal treatment for all—including men, women, and individuals with diverse SOGIESC.

However, despite this, according to the Philippine LGBT Chamber of Commerce's Corporate SOGIE Diversity and Inclusiveness (CSDI) Index, no Philippine-based companies have implemented policies to protect their employees from sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) discrimination, despite a 73% acceptance rate of homosexuality among Filipinos (Poushter & Kent, 2020). The majority of businesses feel that safeguarding workers with diverse SOGIESC from discrimination is not a pressing problem, based on the notion that employees with diverse SOGIESC represent a tiny portion of the workforce. In addition, companies assume that inclusivity measures, such as establishing an all-gender restroom and giving insurance coverage for same-sex spouses, are costly, although there

are cheaper options (Casal, 2018; *CSDI Index*, 2018).

Despite improving legislation and public acceptance among people with diverse SOGIESC, discrimination based on sexual orientation has been a continuously explored research topic among scholars due to the prevailing issues. The study by Darroca et al. (2024) utilizes a qualitative narrative analysis to explore the practices related to hiring, promotion, and salary in the Filipino hospitality industry. The research reveals gender segregation, biases in leadership, and a lack of transparency in hiring and promotion processes. Women's responsibilities for childcare and household duties were identified as factors that limit their flexibility, career commitment, and access to training and advancement opportunities. Ahmed and Hammarstedt (2021), on the other hand, investigated whether customers and workers discriminate against gay and lesbian business owners in the US.

The study revealed that the sexual orientation of restaurant owners influenced participants' engagement, particularly in purchasing and applying for jobs. Sears et al. (2021) examine the employment discrimination and harassment against people with diverse SOGIESC. The reports show that 40% of workers with diverse SOGIESC experienced unfair treatment at work related to being fired, not hired, or harassment due to their sexual orientation. Moreover, 37.7% of the employees with diverse SOGIESC experienced at least one form of harassment at work, including physical and verbal slurs and even sexual harassment. Tshisa and van der Walt (2021) investigated Black queer employees' psychological well-being and their experience of workplace discrimination. Participants are said to have experienced derogatory comments, casual transphobia, non-inclusive organizational policies, and hostile working environments. In terms of their well-being, the participants have developed resilience to cope with workplace challenges by accepting, celebrating, and appreciating their identities.

Similarly, Ng et al. (2024) investigated the experiences of workplace discrimination and harassment among people with diverse SOGIESC in Singapore. Half of the participants (50.86%) reported experiencing at least one instance of harassment. Among them, 38.78% experienced verbal harassment through humiliating or offensive jokes.

Although previous literature has provided insights into workplace challenges related to sexual orientation, this research has not examined the restaurant industry, which is highly hierarchical and can exacerbate power imbalances, making it difficult for marginalized groups to report misconduct (Burrell et al., 2024). Moreover, it can be observed that all reviewed research focuses on a global setting, particularly in countries such as the US and Singapore. However, in the Philippines, which has a different geographical context due to the general public having high tolerance towards people with diverse SOGIESC compared to other Asian nations (Oducado, 2023) and a more progressive legal and institutional framework towards SOGIE, there are still negative experiences towards gay men and lesbians due to societal divide (Alibudbud, 2024).

Through the literature reviewed, it was identified that there is a research gap focused on the restaurant industry, leading the researchers to conduct a study focused on investigating the workplace challenges based on sexual discrimination experienced by employees working in quick-service restaurants. This highlighted not only the gaps in the policy implementation but also the pressing need for greater employer accountability and gender equality in a gender-stereotyped industry like the restaurant industry.

Materials and Methods

Combining descriptive and case study methods, this research used a convergent design. As defined by Creswell (2022), qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously. In a convergent mixed-method design, both data sets provide different insights, and the combination offers

multiple angles and perspectives. The quantitative results yield general trends and relationships, while qualitative results provide an in-depth personal perspective of individuals. In this study, the quantitative data focused on identifying the demographic profile. In contrast, the qualitative data focuses on determining the experience of the participants towards discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace. With this method, the combination of the gathered data not only provided more information but also a more complete understanding of the topic being undertaken.

The researchers initially identified the workplace problems encountered by 100 restaurant workers in Calamba City, Laguna. The instrument was adapted from Ali's (2014) study entitled *Challenges Facing Female Employees in Quick Service Restaurants: A Case Study in Egypt*. While the qualitative phase involved five individuals, they were selected from the initial 100 using purposive sampling for in-depth interviews. The small sample size reflects both the exploratory nature of the research and the difficulty of identifying participants due to the sensitivity of the topic. This also implies that generalizing the study's findings should be done with caution. The following criteria were used to screen participants for the interview: (1) currently employed as restaurant personnel or crew; (2) individuals with diverse SOGIESC; and (3) at least three years of work experience in the restaurant industry. Structured interviews were conducted to explore their experiences of employment discrimination. To gain a comprehensive understanding of gender discrimination in quick-service restaurants, the researchers also designed a systematic questionnaire.

In the study, two types of data were gathered. Primary data refer to information obtained firsthand by the researchers. This includes survey questionnaires as well as the experiences and thoughts shared by the participants during structured interviews. Secondary data, on the other hand, refer to information gathered from already published books, journals, and other publications.

Before the questionnaires and guiding questions were distributed and the interviews conducted, these instruments were first evaluated and validated by the panel. Due to the limitations on face-to-face engagement imposed by COVID-19, the survey questionnaire was transferred to Google Forms upon approval. After the panel members approved the Google Form surveys, the researchers disseminated them to their respective respondents, who were instructed to complete the questionnaire as truthfully as possible.

As for the ethical considerations of the study, the researchers sought consultation and instrument validation from the campus chairperson of the Gender and Development Office to ensure that the questions would avoid causing any harm, discomfort, or distress toward the participants. Moreover, this led the researchers to use the *Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines* (HGDG) to ensure that the research complied with the standards to be gender-responsive. Before conducting qualitative interviews with the target participants, the researchers prepared a letter of request and intent. This highlighted that their participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw at any time. It also included provisions that the results and findings will be utilized purely for academic purposes and that all responses would be kept strictly confidential. To protect participants' confidentiality, coding was used in all transcripts and reports in replacement of their names and the place of employment. To avoid researcher bias, triangulation was utilized to cross-check and validate findings through interview findings and related literature.

Quantitative data were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation. On the other hand, to analyze the qualitative data, the researchers began by preparing the data through transcription and translation of interview results, while also taking note of the observations and on-site analysis. The data were then transferred to a spreadsheet application to assign codes and categorize the responses. After the initial coding, codes were reviewed to combine similar ones. This was followed by using spreadsheet

applications to identify themes and generate a word cloud.

Results and Discussion

Workplace Challenges

Workplace challenges of employees with diverse SOGIESC of quick service restaurants are presented in Table 1. Respondents rated their experiences on workplace challenges based on Ali's (2014) research, suggesting lack of empowerment ($\bar{x} = 3.00$, $SD = 1.00$) and career dissatisfaction ($\bar{x} = 2.80$, $SD = 1.10$) as the most significant challenges. Although the composite mean of 2.19 ($SD = 0.971$) is overall moderate, the relatively high means of lack of empowerment and career dissatisfaction appear to be a pressing issue in the respondents' workplaces.

Table 1

Workplace Challenges of LGBTQIA+ Employees of Quick Service Restaurants

Workplace Challenges	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Too much workload	1.80	0.837	Slightly evident
Moral problems	2.40	0.894	Slightly evident
Low payment	2.40	1.140	Slightly evident
Physical Problems	2.20	0.837	Slightly evident
Uncomfortable work environment	2.60	1.342	Evident
Extra working hour without payment	2.60	0.894	Evident
Job is not combined with parenthood	1.80	0.837	Slightly evident
Ignoring personal opinion	2.40	1.342	Slightly evident
Difficult working condition	2.20	1.304	Slightly evident
Promotion discrimination	2.40	1.140	Evident
Disrespect from society	2.00	1.000	Slightly evident
Discrimination in evaluation	1.60	0.894	Slightly evident
Boring work routine	2.40	1.140	Evident
Lack of empowerment	3.00	1.000	Evident
Unsuitable working shift	2.00	1.000	Evident
Lack of motivation	2.20	1.095	Evident
Career dissatisfaction	2.80	1.095	Slightly evident
Payroll discrimination	2.20	1.304	Slightly evident
Lack of job responsibility	2.20	1.095	Slightly evident
High turnover	2.00	1.000	Slightly evident
Skills development problems	2.20	0.447	Slightly evident
Employment discrimination	2.40	1.140	Slightly evident
Lack of participation	2.40	1.140	Slightly evident
Lack of training opportunities	1.40	0.548	Slightly evident
Obligatory changes in my habits and traditions	1.60	0.548	Slightly evident
Lack of communication with colleagues and managers	2.60	1.140	Slightly evident
Difficulties when working as a team	2.40	0.548	Slightly evident
Unsuitable uniform	2.40	0.894	Slightly evident
Bad treatment from customers	1.60	0.548	Not evident
Family reject my career	1.80	1.304	Not evident
Difficulties in working with hair cover	1.80	0.837	Not evident
Composite Mean	2.19	0.971	Slightly evident

Legend: 4.00–3.50 = strongly evident; 3.49–2.50 = evident; 2.49–1.50 = slightly evident; 1.49–1.00 = not evident

The results of the study suggest that respondents are experiencing lack of empowerment which is considered under personal challenges (Ali, 2014). When employees are neither empowered nor motivated, the second-highest mean of career dissatisfaction tends to be common among respondents.

In relation, Lee et al. (2018) stated that empowering employees leads to stronger job performance, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization.

In a highly stressful environment such as that of the quick service restaurants, the high workload experienced by everyone in the workplace can lead to the lack of empowerment and motivation from the managers. Lao and Borbon (2021) cited reasons like burnout, sense of underappreciation and undervaluation, unfair compensation, and unreasonable workload, excessive overtime, ineffective management, lack of clear alignment between work and corporate goals, and adverse workplace culture.

The conducted survey does not further explain why employees feel disempowered or whether discrimination plays a role in these results. To address this gap, the qualitative data focused on the participants' definition of gender discrimination, and gender equality, discrimination experiences, established policies in the workplace were investigated.

Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation

Before beginning the qualitative interview, the demographic profile of the participants was gathered. Five participants, all aged between 22 and 23, were currently working in quick service restaurants in Calamba City. Three of the five participants are female. The researchers chose representatives from people with diverse SOGIESC. They reported earning a monthly income between ₱5,001 and ₱10,000, and all were employed as service crew. Two participants had been working for less than a year, two for 1–5 years, and one for 15–20 years.

When asked about their definition of gender discrimination, they mentioned the right to express what gender or type of person they are. Participant 1, a female bisexual, quoted:

Para sakin ang gender discrimination and gender equality ay same situation lang. This issue is something that needs to be prevented because discriminating against someone just because of their identity is not a proper act of a normal person. Ang pagiging lesbian, gay or any gender ay hindi isang krimen o kasalanan and anyone has a freedom to express what gender or type of person they are and all people must be respected and treated as human for being a lesbian, gay, woman, man, bisexual or whatever gender identity a person has. (Gender discrimination and gender equality are the same thing. This is an issue that needs to be addressed, because discriminating against someone based solely on their identity is not the proper behavior of a decent person. Being lesbian, gay, or of any other gender is not a crime nor a sin, and everyone has the right to express their gender identity and who they are. All people—whether lesbian, gay, women, men, bisexuals, women, men, or of any identity—deserve to be respected and treated as human beings.)

From this response, it is evident that regardless of an individual's gender, all people must be respected and treated as humans, regardless of their SOGIESC. One of the most common challenges they experienced was related to their physical appearance. Participant 4, who is a homosexual female, shared that she was judged for cutting her hair and was assumed to be a lesbian without anyone knowing her reason for the haircut. Meanwhile, another participant, who is gay, was reminded to maintain a "standard" haircut for boys. Participant 5, who identified as gay, mentioned that:

...Like ng hair length hindi kami allowed na mag pahaba ng buhok at dapat laging proper hair cut tulad ng sa boys even Naka hair net kami, hairband and Cup. They always say mga "lalake" mag pagupit kayo ang hahaba na ng buhok nyo then titingin sila sakin then say ng "pati ikaw". my point is why are we not allowed, anong pinag kaiba sa mga girls na naka duty na mahaba ang buhok, we're the same proper uniform na sinusunod. They are know those Gays na hair is so much important part of our confident and It is part of our personality. ("...like the hair length, we

are not allowed to have long hair and must have a proper hair cut for boys, even if we wear a hairnet, a hair band, and a cap. We would always hear them say, 'To all boys, you need to have your haircut done,' and then they would look at me and say, 'You included.' Why we are not allowed? What's the difference between us and the other girls who are also on duty with long hair and wearing the same uniform as we do? For us gays, hair is very important—it's part of our confidence and personality.")

These responses show that the physical appearance of employees with diverse SOGIESC remains a significant issue in their workplace. Although this concern is particularly prevalent among gay and transgender employees, the study also revealed that even individuals who do not identify within the SOGIESC spectrum were judged based on changes in their appearance. According to the *Gender Spectrum Theory* (Tharp, 2016), gender is not confined to the traditional binary of male and female but instead exists on a continuum with a wide range of identities and expressions. This suggests that when participants express themselves in ways that deviate from social norms or expectations—regardless of whether they identify as LGBTQIA+—they are often subject to judgment based on appearance. The concept of gender stereotyping further explains this phenomenon. Gender stereotyping refers to generalized views or preconceptions about the attributes, characteristics, or roles that men and women are expected to possess or perform (United Nations, 2014). Such stereotyping is harmful as it limits individuals of diverse SOGIESC in developing their personal abilities, pursuing professional careers, and making autonomous life choices. As a result of these experiences, participants often feel compelled to conform to expected norms.

For gay and transgender individuals, this is very important part of their identity, as it helps them to gain confidence while working. The findings coincides with the study of Sims (2018), stating that the restaurant industry often enforces strict dress codes that inadvertently perpetuate gender stereotypes, making it difficult for employees to express their identity. The lack of understanding of diversity within these establishments—and even across the industry—leads to increased pressure on gay and transgender individuals to conform to traditional appearance norms to just avoid discrimination.

These situations can explain the lack of empowerment that the respondents experienced in relation to the quantitative results of the study. Physical appearance, which is considered one of the main mediums of identity expression among participants, was being restricted by the management. The strict appearance code among employees led to the decreased feeling of belongingness in the organization and low self-confidence (Fletcher & Swierczynski, 2023).

According to the ILO (2012), a significant number of transgender job applicants are denied employment during interviews solely based on their appearance. Common workplace challenges include the lack of access to identity documents that align with their affirmed gender and name, employer resistance to their gender expression—such as through clothing—and restrictions on using restrooms that match their gender identity. These issues are often compounded by heightened exposure to bullying and harassment from colleagues. Another challenge that they encounter pertains to the prejudices that society have towards persons with diverse SOGIESC. Participant 5 quoted:

I think yung time na na-experience ko yung discrimination and inequality is nung iba na yung treatment sakin dahil nga sa identity ko or gender ko if gay or bakla ka it means you're automatically a war freak, maingay, magulo at bastos kase some of those gay kahet hinde naten aminen may ganon klaseng bakla or gay so nag rereflect yung ganong tingin sa lahat so may time na iniwasan ako maybe because of that issue dahil don wala akong magawa kung hinde hayaan sila. ("I think the time I experienced discrimination and inequality was when others treated me differently because of my identity or my gender. If you are gay or lesbian it means you're automatically a war

freak, noisy, chaotic and rude because some gays are like that, so it reflects on other gays. So they avoided me and maybe because of that issue, I couldn't do anything but to let them.")

It shows that people often associate negative behavior with individuals of a different gender. Anti-gay arguments typically depend on a view of homosexuality as a behavior, whereas liberator arguments focus on homosexuality as an identity. These persist due to hostile environment (Maji et al., 2023), lack of comprehensive policies that protect employees with diverse SOGIESC (Sachdeva, 2024), and social stigma (Villarino et al., 2024).

Four out of five respondents stated that their restaurant had no policy on gender equality or discrimination. This lack of formal protection for employees with diverse SOGIESC is concerning given that there are legal and national frameworks in the Philippines that are put into place to promote equality and inclusive workplaces for all. This includes the Magna Carta for Women (Republic Act No. 9710), the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313) and the yet to be signed SOGIE Equality Bill. Mane (2023) stated that the absence of robust anti-discrimination laws further exacerbates the challenges faced by employees with diverse SOGIESC, who may fear retaliation for reporting incidents of discrimination. Amongst the participants, only one acknowledged having a gender and development policy. Participant 3 who identifies as a male homosexual, stated the following when asked whether the programs or policies in promoting gender equality are effective:

"I think no, but I hope that all restaurants or quick-service restaurants have a program and policies about gender discrimination and gender equality."

These findings suggest a disconnect between national legal mandates and the actual workplace practices. Through the lens of *Gender Spectrum Theory*, the lack of policy implementation further limits employees of diverse SOGIESC to conform with the norm and move within the barriers of gender binary, (Williams, 2022) thus limiting their authentic self and workplace inclusion.

There are several reasons why businesses should actively avoid fostering or permitting gender prejudice. Another reason is that doing so exposes firms to litigation, fines, and significant income loss. However, the some reasons are not as straightforward as simply avoiding a lawsuit. Ethical businesses choose to eliminate gender discrimination in the workplace because they aim to foster a culture and community that honors workers regardless of gender (*SelectOne*, 2019).

Table 2

Emerging Themes on Gender Stereotyping Based on Participant Statements

Themes	Statements
Stereotyping	"Being called tomboy even if they recognize themselves as lesbian or bisexual" "If you're a gay or lesbian, they are automatically classified to be war freak, noisy, chaotic and rude" "Just because they are lesbian, they were asked to do responsibilities for a man" "Transgenders should be allowed to be able to wear their preferred outfit, length of hair" "A straight participant was called lesbian after cutting her hair short"
Undervalued employees	"Extra workload without payment" "Lack of communication to colleagues and managers" "Bad treatment from customers" "No program or policy for gender discrimination" "Policy exists in the restaurant but not effective"

Table 2 presents the emerging themes from the participants' responses, highlighting issues stereotyping and the experience of being undervalued as employees.

Stereotyping emerged from the participants' responses, revealing that they were often placed into boxes simply because they are gay, lesbian, male, or female. Based on their statements, these stereotypes stemmed from labels, behaviors, assigned responsibilities, uniforms, and haircuts. For example, a female homosexual participant was judged when she cut her hair and was immediately assumed to be a lesbian, without anyone knowing the reason behind her haircut. It supports the lack of empowerment and career dissatisfaction reported on the quantitative results. This indicates that having short hair is often equated with being a lesbian, simply because it does not conform to conventional expressions of femininity—leading to unwarranted assumptions from others. Interpreted through the lens of *Gender Spectrum Theory*, the participants' experiences reveal how they are persistently confined within binary gender norms in the workplace. Tabassum and Nayak (2021) mention that stereotyping women leads to disempowerment. In the context of this research, when LGBTQIA+ individuals are stereotyped based on their physical appearance and what they are perceived to be capable or incapable of doing, it results in a lack of empowerment among them.

“Undervalued employees” is another theme that emerged from the participants' responses. It is based on the topics related to inadequate financial rewards, poor communication, mistreatment from customers, lack of policy provision, and ineffective implementation of policy related to gender discrimination. Just like stereotyping, being undervalued supports the quantitative results of lack of empowerment and career dissatisfaction. As Ridzki (2025) explained, as employees feel undervalued, their sense empowerment weakens, which can further lead to decrease in morale and productivity. Intersectionality theory helps explain how employees of diverse SOGIESC can be undervalued due to their gender because of overlapping social identities—like race, gender, sexuality, class, etc.—which interact to shape unique experiences of disadvantage in the workplace (Hudson et al., 2023).

Both themes of stereotyping and undervalued employees present the persistence of the issues related to the gaps in the implementation of national mandates of gender and development. Under the national legal frameworks of Magna Carta of Women (Republic Act No. 9710) and the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313) these may be constituted as a violation, especially since both of these frameworks mandates equality and inclusivity in the workplace.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights significant workplace challenges. Based on the results, there is an overall moderate workplace challenge experienced, however the lack of empowerment and career dissatisfaction emerged as crucial issues among LGBTQIA+ employees. Physical appearance brought by strict appearance policies, like uniform and hair cut attributes to stereotyping. The themes of stereotyping and feeling undervalued are closely related to the lack of empowerment and career dissatisfaction. These issues arise from defying gender norms in appearance, limitations placed on responsibilities, neglected financial rewards, poor communication, mistreatment from customers, and the lack of clear policies or the ineffective implementation of existing policies related to gender discrimination.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend that the Local Government of Calamba, through its Gender and Development Office and Business Processing and Licensing Office, pass a City Ordinance mandating the creation of a Gender Discrimination Policy in each establishment. This should be adopted by all tourism- and hospitality-related businesses as part of the requirements for

business permit renewal. After the initial submission of the policy crafted by each establishment, quarterly monitoring reports on its enforcement and implementation should be required.

Furthermore, future researchers may consider increasing the sample size and including a more diverse population, covering different service sectors and exploring intersecting identities such as age, socioeconomic class, and religion.

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