

Article

Perceptions of LGBTQIA + Inclusion and Discrimination in the Philippines: Insights on Workplace Comfort and Social Attitudes

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Abstract

Workplace diversity and LGBTQIA + inclusion have become key issues in global labor policies, yet disparities persist in many regions, particularly in developing countries. In the Philippines, despite a reputation for being LGBTQIA + -friendly, structural and implicit barriers to workplace inclusion remain. This study employs a mixed-method approach, analyzing survey data from working-age Filipinos in Metro Manila to assess comfort levels with LGBTQIA + individuals in professional settings and perceptions of discrimination. The findings indicate a complex relationship between perceived inclusivity and structural discrimination. Demographic factors that strongly predict comfort with having an LGBTQIA + boss include being female, a middle-income earner, and identifying as Catholic. On the other hand, higher perceptions of discrimination are associated with younger age, female gender, and Catholic affiliation, while higher education, greater income, and identifying as heterosexual are linked to lower perceptions of discrimination. Furthermore, a qualitative analysis of open-ended responses reveals a range of public sentiments, from rejection due to cultural and religious views to complete acceptance for LGBTQIA + inclusion. These findings underscore the gap between perceived societal progress and lived experiences in the labor market, emphasizing the necessity of stronger legal protections and corporate inclusivity measures.

Keywords: LGBTQIA + individuals, workplace inclusion, perceived discrimination

1. Introduction

Workplace inclusivity and equal employment opportunities for LGBTQIA + individuals have become global topics of interest in recent years, particularly as companies and policy-

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makers recognize the importance of diversity in fostering innovation and productivity (Badgett, 2020; Brik & Brown, 2024). Despite significant strides in legal protections and social acceptance in many Western countries, Southeast Asia remains a region where LGBTQIA+ rights are often debated, with varying degrees of progress across different nations (UNDP, 2018). The Philippines, in particular, presents an interesting paradox. Despite being a developing country, it ranks 36th out of 175 countries globally and first in ASEAN for its acceptance of LGBT individuals, showcasing a remarkable level of societal openness and tolerance (UCLA School of Law's Williams Institute, 2021). However, amidst this acceptance, significant challenges persist, with 30% of LGBTI people reporting harassment, bullying, or discrimination at work (UNDP, 2018). Notably, the Philippines lags behind neighboring countries such as Thailand and Taiwan in enacting national laws specifically targeting gender discrimination or protecting sexual minorities. Moreover, this Catholic-dominated country introduces a unique duality, where societal acceptance coexists with tensions stemming from religious doctrines. This interplay between acceptance and conflict provides a fertile ground for understanding labor market conditions and potential workplace discrimination faced by the LGBTQIA+ community.

Research on workplace diversity highlights a recurring disconnect between perceived inclusivity and the lived experiences of marginalized employees, particularly in relation to LGBTQIA+ inclusion. While many organizations promote diversity through corporate policies and public messaging, studies indicate that these efforts do not always translate into tangible workplace protections or cultural acceptance. For instance, Ely and Thomas (2001) argue that diversity initiatives often focus on surface-level representation rather than addressing deeper structural biases that affect daily workplace interactions. Similarly, scholars like Colgan and McKearney (2012) emphasize that LGBTQIA+ employees frequently experience microaggressions, implicit bias, and exclusionary workplace cultures despite formal anti-discrimination policies. In the Philippine context, existing literature suggests that while public perception of LGBTQIA+ inclusion is relatively positive compared to other Southeast Asian countries (UNDP, 2018), workplace realities reveal persistent barriers such as unequal career advancement opportunities, fear of coming out due to potential stigma, and a lack of comprehensive legal protections (Manalastas & Torre, 2017). This dissonance between perceived inclusivity and lived experiences underscores the need to critically evaluate both policy effectiveness and cultural attitudes in shaping workplace equality.

This study aims to contribute to the discourse on LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusivity by examining how the general workforce perceives LGBTQIA+ leadership and how demographic factors shape attitudes toward workplace discrimination. Focusing on Metro Manila, the country's capital and economic center, this study explores whether the urban labor market fosters inclusivity or reinforces broader national tensions regarding LGBTQIA+ professional advancement. Given Metro Manila's role as a hub for both national and multi-

national corporations, the workplace policies implemented in this region may influence broader trends in LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

This study makes several contributions to the existing literature. First, it provides empirical insights into the perceptions of LGBTQIA+ inclusion in professional environments, addressing a gap in the Philippine context, where data on workplace diversity remains limited. Second, it differentiates between perceived discrimination in workplace settings versus broader societal attitudes, adding substance to the public discourse. Third, by analyzing demographic predictors, the study identifies how factors such as age, gender, education, religion, and exposure to LGBTQIA+ individuals shape workplace perceptions. Finally, the findings offer evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, corporate leaders, and advocacy groups seeking to create more inclusive professional environments.

This study utilizes survey data from 611 working-age respondents in Metro Manila to assess attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Respondents provided numerical estimates of their comfort levels with an LGBTQIA+ boss and their perceptions of discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals in both workplace and community settings. The data was analyzed using regression models to determine demographic variations in workplace attitudes, while qualitative responses were examined to capture public sentiments and cultural perspectives on LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion.

The findings indicate a complex relationship between perceived inclusivity and structural discrimination. While some respondents acknowledge workplace inclusivity, many also recognize underlying biases that persist within the workplace. Demographic factors—particularly religion, age, and exposure to LGBTQIA+ individuals—significantly shape perceptions of workplace discrimination. These findings underscore the need for targeted policies and corporate diversity initiatives to address implicit biases in professional environments. Given the link between workplace inclusivity and overall employee well-being, productivity, and organizational success (Badgett et al., 2013), understanding these perceptions is essential for shaping equitable labor policies in the Philippines.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews the existing literature on LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion and discrimination, with a focus on Southeast Asia and the Philippines. Section 3 outlines the study's methodology, including the sample, variables, and analytical approach. Section 4 presents the empirical findings as well as interprets the implications of these findings for workplace policies and social inclusion efforts. Finally, Section 6 concludes the study with a summary of key insights, policy recommendations, and directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the existing literature on LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion, discrimination, and societal attitudes, with a focus on the Philippines and other countries. The discussion highlights key findings from previous studies, identifies gaps in research, and situates this study within the broader discourse on LGBTQIA+ professional experiences.

2.1. *LGBTQIA+ Workplace Inclusion and Leadership Acceptance in the Philippines and in ASEAN*

Research has consistently shown that leadership diversity plays a crucial role in fostering LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion. Firms with gender-diverse leadership teams are more likely to implement LGBTQIA+-inclusive policies, reflecting a broader commitment to diversity and equity in decision-making structures (Cook & Glass, 2016). However, the extent to which LGBTQIA+ individuals attain leadership roles varies significantly across ASEAN nations, shaped by legal protections, corporate policies, and socio-cultural attitudes.

In Taiwan, the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2019 has led to more proactive workplace inclusion policies (Ho, 2018). Thailand has also seen growing corporate discussions on LGBTQIA+ rights, though legal protections remain limited (UNDP, 2021). In contrast, Indonesia and Malaysia maintain strong institutional and religious barriers, actively restricting LGBTQIA+ rights in both public and professional spaces (Manalastas et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, the LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion and leadership acceptance in the Philippines is a growing yet complex issue marked by both progress and persistent challenges. Studies reveal that while Filipino society shows rising social acceptance, queer individuals in the workplace still face subtle and overt forms of discrimination, particularly in corporate and educational sectors (Villarino et al., 2024). In educational and healthcare institutions in the Philippines, studies note the necessity of integrating LGBTQ-inclusive practices and training to address discrimination and promote mental health and retention among LGBTQ staff (Alibudbud, 2024a; Alibudbud, 2023). A queer analysis on leadership among non-heterosexual public servants in the Philippines also found that these leaders often face pressure to conform to heteronormative norms, yet they develop unique leadership models grounded in intersectionality and relational intimacy with communities (Gamboa et al., 2021).

Overall, existing research highlights that policy presence alone is insufficient; true workplace inclusivity depends on cultural attitudes, corporate leadership commitment, and national legal frameworks. The Philippines, despite relative social tolerance, continues to struggle with structural barriers to LGBTQIA+ professional advancement.

2.2. *Perceptions of towards LGBTQIA+ Discrimination in Different Social Contexts*

Discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals manifests across educational institutions, healthcare settings, workplaces, and broader community spaces (Dean et al., 2016; Nadal et al., 2016; Weichselbaumer, 2020). While legislative efforts aim to promote inclusivity, perceived discrimination often diverges from lived experiences, influencing policy attitudes and workplace dynamics.

2.2.1. *Educational and Healthcare Settings*

While universities in the Philippines and globally have made strides toward LGBTQIA+ inclusion through institutional policies, research suggests that these frameworks alone are insufficient to create affirming educational environments. LGBTQIA+ leaders in schools demonstrate transformative leadership and advocate for inclusivity, yet they continue to encounter identity-based biases that call for more comprehensive, inclusive policies (Nieva-Lustanas, 2025). Faculty biases, administrative inaction, and peer interactions continue to shape the academic and social experiences of LGBTQIA+ students, often resulting in subtle exclusion and discomfort (Tomas, 2024). In professional schools such as medicine and law, LGBTQIA+ students frequently encounter stigma, limited faculty support, and inadequate integration of gender-diverse perspectives into curricula, which contribute to feelings of isolation and academic stress (Alibudbud, 2024). Although awareness of LGBTQIA+ rights has improved in universities, implementation gaps persist.

In healthcare settings, LGBTQIA+ individuals frequently encounter bias and discrimination in healthcare environments, which contributes to significant disparities in access to medical care and mental health services (Quinn et al., 2015). In Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, a lack of LGBTQIA+-sensitive training among healthcare professionals reinforces these barriers, limiting both preventive care and specialized treatment options (Alibudbud, 2024). Research also shows that microaggressions and institutional heteronormativity persist in clinical settings, creating environments where LGBTQIA+ patients feel unwelcome or ashamed to seek care, even in the absence of overt discrimination (Dean et al., 2016).

2.2.2. *Workplace and Community Discrimination*

LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face significant barriers in workplace settings, with hiring biases, wage disparities, and career stagnation persisting across multiple industries (.). Research indicates that workplace climate plays a critical role in shaping LGBTQIA+ employees' experiences, as hostility and lack of institutional support contribute to lower job satisfaction and increased psychological distress (Holman et al., 2018; Webster et al., 2018). In policing and federal service jobs, for instance, LGBTQIA+ officers report lower levels of perceived inclusion and higher incidents of sexual harassment compared to their non-LGBTQIA+ counterparts (Yu & Lee, 2023). Furthermore, LGBTQIA+ workplace diversity

policies have been shown to drive corporate innovation and financial performance, yet their implementation remains inconsistent globally (Hossain et al., 2020). Beyond the workplace, LGBTQIA+ individuals also experience exclusion in broader community spaces, where religious and cultural ideologies continue to shape resistance to LGBTQIA+ rights (Cornelio & Dagle, 2019). Even in countries with formal anti-discrimination protections, LGBTQIA+ individuals remain at heightened risk of social exclusion, microaggressions, and institutional biases in everyday interactions (Casey et al., 2019).

2.2.3. Public Perceptions on LGBTQIA+ and Policy Implications Globally and in the Philippines

Public perceptions of LGBTQIA+ rights and identities have evolved significantly in recent decades, yet substantial regional and ideological differences persist. Studies indicate that social norm perceptions—how people believe others view LGBTQIA+ individuals—play a crucial role in shaping public acceptance, often influencing legal protections and anti-discrimination policies (Sweigart et al., 2024). While progressive democracies in North America and Western Europe exhibit high levels of LGBTQIA+ support, many countries in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia maintain restrictive legal and cultural frameworks that reinforce discrimination. Even in countries where legal protections exist, public sentiment often lags behind policy, leading to enforcement inconsistencies and continued stigma. In healthcare, for instance, LGBTQIA+ individuals report systemic exclusion, with health policies frequently overlooking their specific needs (Rosa et al., 2024). Similar disparities are observed in military and emergency services, where discrimination persists despite broader policy commitments to inclusion (Dobek et al., 2023). Encouragingly, research suggests that when LGBTQIA+ rights are framed positively in public discourse, there is greater policy momentum toward anti-discrimination protections (Badgett, 2021). However, when societal attitudes remain divided, efforts to implement workplace inclusion policies often face resistance.

In the Philippines, the situation reflects a nuanced interplay between public perception and legislative action. A 2023 survey by Social Weather Stations revealed that 79% of Filipinos believe gays and lesbians are as trustworthy as any other Filipino, indicating a significant level of societal acceptance (Social Weather Stations, 2023). However, despite this growing public support, the SOGIE Equality Bill, aimed at protecting individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, has faced repeated delays in Congress, largely due to opposition from religious groups and political figures (Time, 2023). This disconnect between public sentiment and legislative action underscores the challenges in translating societal acceptance into concrete legal protections for the LGBTQIA+ community in the Philippines.

2.3. *Role of Demographic Factors in Shaping LGBTQIA+ Attitudes*

Demographic factors such as age, gender, education, and religious beliefs significantly influence attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Research indicates that age is a key determinant, with younger generations exhibiting significantly higher levels of LGBTQIA+ support compared to older cohorts (Hall & Rodgers, 2018). Studies have also shown that younger individuals tend to be more aware of social injustices and more engaged with diversity and inclusion narratives (Herek, 2002). Data from the 2023 Pew Research Center study further supports this, revealing that 17% of U.S. adults under 30 identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, compared to only 2% among those aged 65 and older, highlighting a generational shift in LGBTQIA+ identification and acceptance (Brown, 2023). Additionally, gender differences affect attitudes, as women generally demonstrate more positive views toward LGBTQIA+ individuals than men (Anderson & Maugeri, 2022; Kite & Whitley, 1996). Sexual orientation is another strong influencer; LGBTQIA+ individuals typically express more favorable attitudes toward their community, while non-LGBTQIA+ individuals' acceptance levels vary based on factors such as cultural exposure and personal beliefs (Thomas et al., 2020). In a study by Herek & Capitanio (1996), heterosexual respondents often underestimate the extent of discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals due to a lack of direct exposure to workplace biases or social exclusion.

Furthermore, education level and income significantly impact attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Higher education levels correlate with increased LGBTQIA+ acceptance, as exposure to diverse perspectives and critical thinking skills promote more progressive viewpoints (Agterberg et al., 2025). Conversely, Ohlander et al. (2005) suggest that educational attainment does not always lead to greater LGBTQIA+ acceptance; in some cases, higher education fosters a heightened awareness of systemic discrimination, leading to more critical perspectives on workplace inclusion policies. Firms with greater gender diversity in leadership roles are also more likely to adopt LGBTQIA+-inclusive policies, reinforcing the importance of intersectional representation (Cook & Glass, 2016). Income levels also play a role, with individuals from higher socioeconomic backgrounds generally displaying more inclusive attitudes, potentially due to access to diverse social networks and liberal workplace environments (Andersen & Fetner, 2008). However, disparities remain, as economic insecurity can exacerbate conservative attitudes, particularly in regions where traditional or religious values strongly influence social norms.

Crucially, religious affiliation and intensity of belief are among the most consistent predictors of LGBTQIA+ attitudes globally. More conservative or literal religious interpretations, particularly within Christianity and Islam, are often linked to lower acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals, especially in contexts where religious institutions play a central role in politics and education (Poushter & Kent, 2013). A study in the US documented the association between religiosity and lower LGBTQIA+ acceptance (Sherkat et al., 2011). In the

Philippines, for instance, a predominantly Catholic nation, religious beliefs significantly influence public opinion and legislative progress. While surveys show increasing tolerance—especially among the youth—religious conservatism remains a barrier to the passage of the SOGIE Equality Bill and other LGBTQIA+-inclusive policies (Time, 2023). This tension is mirrored in community life, where LGBTQIA+ individuals report higher perceived discrimination in religious and family settings despite broader social acceptance. These findings highlight the complex and sometimes contradictory interplay of demographic factors—particularly religion, education, and age—in shaping LGBTQIA+ inclusion both globally and in the Philippine context.

3. Data and Methodology

3.1. *Sampling and Data Collection*

The study targeted 611 working-age respondents, ranging from 18 to 65 years old, residing in Metro Manila, also known as the National Capital Region (NCR). Metro Manila was deliberately selected due to its concentration of the country's industry and service sectors, which reflect typical workplace environments. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across key demographic categories, including age, gender, educational background, and religious affiliation. The Conjointly, a platform designed for survey-based analysis and panel provision, was used to pre-profile respondents using a rigorous screening process based on demographics and household characteristics. When respondents accessed the survey link, they first answered screening questions and provided informed consent before proceeding to the main survey. To ensure data quality, the Conjointly platform identified and redirected low-quality responses. Other responses were excluded due to various data quality issues, including technical errors (duplicate IP addresses, incorrect country), engagement-related concerns (failure to review options, minimal interaction), and incomplete or invalid responses (unfinished surveys, unmet quality standards). After completing the survey, participants were redirected to their respective panel providers to claim their incentives. The cost of panel participation was determined based on factors such as country of residence, age group, and other demographic characteristics.

3.2. *Variables and Measurement*

The variables used in this study were designed to measure LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion, perceptions of discrimination, and key demographic predictors. The primary dependent variables in this study include comfort with an LGBTQIA+ boss, perceived discrimination in the workplace, and perceived discrimination in the community. Comfort with an

openly LGBTQIA+ boss was measured on a 100-point scale, where respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of Filipino individuals who would be comfortable with an openly LGBTQIA+ boss. Similarly, perceived workplace and community discrimination were measured by asking respondents to estimate the proportion of LGBTQIA+ individuals facing discrimination in these contexts. Measuring general population perceptions of LGBTQIA+ inclusion and discrimination is crucial for understanding how societal attitudes shape workplace and social dynamics.

The independent variables considered in this study include key demographic factors such as age, gender, self-reported sexual orientation, education level, and income. Additionally, religious affiliation was categorized into major religious groups to assess its influence on attitudes. Another key independent variable is exposure to LGBTQIA+ individuals, which was measured by a binary question: *“Do you have a family member or close friend who is part of the LGBTQIA+ community?”*. These variables were included to explore their predictive power in shaping workplace attitudes and discrimination perceptions.

Table 1: Summary statistics of the variables used

	Mean	SD
<i>Dependent variables</i>		
Comfort with openly LGBTQIA+ boss	58.08	26.96
Perceived discrimination incidence		
Workplace	47.98	27.00
Community	56.00	25.75
<i>Independent variables</i>		
Age (generation)		
Younger generations	0.78	0.41
Older generations	0.22	0.41
Gender (assigned sex at birth)		
Male	0.50	0.50
Female	0.50	0.50
Sexual orientation (self-reported)		
Heterosexual	0.84	0.37
Non-heterosexual	0.16	0.37
Highest educational attainment		
Undergraduate and below	0.35	0.48
At least finished undergraduate/college	0.65	0.48
Income level		
Low-income	0.26	0.44
Middle-income	0.58	0.49
High-income	0.17	0.37
Religion		
Catholic	0.77	0.42
Non-Catholic	0.23	0.42
LGBTQIA+ Exposure		
Yes	0.74	0.44
No	0.26	0.44

3.3. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics summarizing the distribution of respondents' demographic and attitudinal variables. The mean comfort level with an LGBTQIA+ boss was 58.1 (SD=27.0), suggesting a moderate level of acceptance. Similarly, perceptions of discrimination varied, with discrimination perceived at higher rates in community settings (Mean=56.0; SD=25.8) compared to workplace settings (Mean=48.0; SD=27.0). These variations indicate that respondents differentiate between discrimination in professional and social spheres, demonstrating a more nuanced perspective on LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Table 1 further illustrates the distribution of key demographic characteristics, such as income and educational attainment, which may influence workplace attitudes. The age distribution, originally categorized in age ranges, has been recoded into generational cohorts to provide deeper insights. In this study, 78% of respondents belong to the younger genera-

tions (e.g., Generation Z and Millennial cohorts), while 22% to the older generations (e.g., Generation X and Baby Boomer cohorts). The gender distribution is balanced, with approximately equal representation of male and female respondents. Regarding sexual orientation, 84% of respondents identified as heterosexual and 16% identified as non-heterosexual. Income levels varied across the sample, with 26% classified as low-income, 58% as middle-income, and 17% as high-income. Additionally, religious affiliation remained a significant factor, with 77% identifying as Roman Catholic and 23% belonging to other Christian denominations, Islam, or non-affiliated groups.

3.4. Analytical Strategies

3.4.1. Empirical Specification Model (*Quantitative approach*)

To analyze the predictors of LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion, this study employs Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model. To formally assess these relationships, an empirical model was specified as follows:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \cdots + \beta_n X_{ni} + \epsilon_i,$$

where Y_i represents the dependent variable (comfort with an LGBTQIA+ boss or perceived discrimination), X_{1i} , X_{2i} , \cdots X_{ni} are the independent variables including demographic and attitudinal predictors (i.e., age, gender, self-reported sexual orientation, education level, income, religion, and exposure to LGBTQIA+ individuals). β_n are the coefficients estimating the effect of each predictor, and ϵ_i is the error term. This model allows for an examination of the marginal effects of various factors on workplace attitudes and discrimination perceptions.

3.4.2. Text Verbatim Analysis (*Qualitative approach*)

To complement the quantitative findings, text verbatim analysis was conducted on open-ended survey responses. The analysis involves classifying responses into positive, neutral, or negative sentiments based on attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Additionally, thematic coding was implemented to categorize responses into key themes, such as implicit bias against LGBTQIA+ leadership, perceptions of meritocracy versus identity-based hiring, microaggressions and workplace discrimination, and religious and cultural influences on LGBTQIA+ attitudes. The integration of qualitative insights provides a richer contextual understanding of the OLS regression results, explaining why certain groups exhibit differing workplace attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ individuals.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 2 presents the results of three Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) models, each ana-

lyzing different dependent variables related to LGBTQIA+ boss comfort levels and discrimination perceptions. The first model examines perceived comfort with an openly LGBTQIA+ boss, the second model focuses on perceived workplace discrimination, and the third model assesses perceived community discrimination. Each model estimates the effects of key sociodemographic variables, including age, gender, sexual orientation, education, income level, religious affiliation, and LGBTQIA+ exposure, on these dependent variables. The coefficients represent the estimated percentage-point change of each independent variable, with standard errors in parentheses. The table also accounts for city-level fixed effects, controlling for location-based variations in LGBTQIA+ attitudes.

Table 2: Predictors of LGBTQIA+ boss comfort levels and discrimination perceptions

VARIABLES	(1) Comfort with LGBTQIA+ Boss	(2) Workplace	(3) Community
Age (=1 if younger generation)	1.864 (2.657)	8.154*** (2.646)	10.95*** (2.517)
Gender (=1 if female)	4.623** (2.205)	4.701** (2.196)	3.244 (2.088)
Sexual orientation (=1 if heterosexual)	1.367 (2.972)	-9.083*** (2.960)	-8.586*** (2.815)
Education (=1 if finished at least bachelor's degree)	-6.312** (2.445)	-4.923** (2.435)	-4.974** (2.316)
Middle-income earners	9.208*** (2.734)	-4.584* (2.723)	-5.520** (2.590)
High-income earners	3.789 (3.640)	-1.171 (3.625)	-8.684** (3.448)
Religion (=1 if Catholic)	12.05*** (2.560)	10.39*** (2.550)	6.865*** (2.425)
LGBTQIA+ Exposure	5.524** (2.531)	-0.0211 (2.520)	-0.371 (2.397)
Constant	37.95*** (4.741)	44.76*** (4.722)	55.82*** (4.491)
City-level fixed effect	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	603	603	603
R-squared	0.108	0.115	0.134

Standard errors in parentheses: ***p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1

The coefficient plot in Figures 1 and 2 visually confirm these regression findings, illustrating the positive and negative effects of different predictors on each outcome variable. Strong predictors of LGBTQIA+ comfort include gender (female), middle-income earners, Catholicism, and LGBTQIA+ exposure, while higher education is associated with lower comfort levels. Predictors of higher discrimination perceptions include younger age, Catholic affiliation, and gender (female), while higher education, higher income, and heterosexual orientation are associated with lower discrimination perceptions. Notably, LGBTQIA+ exposure significantly influences comfort with LGBTQIA+ bosses but does not strongly predict workplace or community discrimination perceptions. This suggests that while personal interactions can improve attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ individuals in leadership, broader

discrimination awareness is shaped more by structural, cultural, and economic factors.

Figure 1. Coefficient Plot of Comfort with an Openly LGBTQIA+ Boss, 95% confidence interval

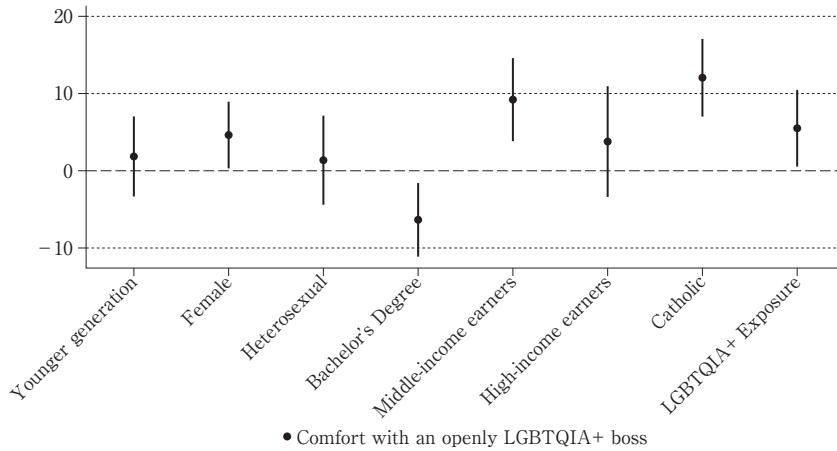
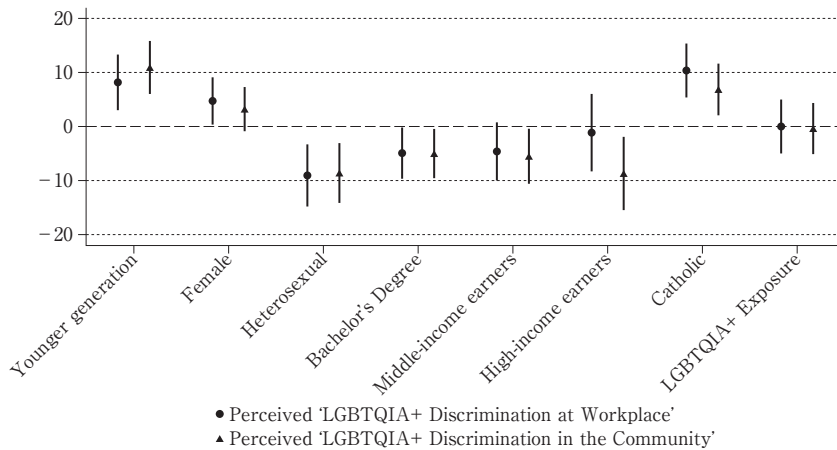


Figure 2. Coefficient Plot of Perceived LGBTQIA+ Discrimination in Workplace and Community Settings, 95% confidence interval



4.1. *Comfort with an Openly LGBTQIA+ Boss and Perceived Discrimination, by demographics*

Contrary to expectations based on prior research, age does not significantly predict societal comfort with an LGBTQIA+ boss, suggesting that generational differences may not strongly influence perceptions of workplace inclusivity in leadership roles. Although existing studies highlight age as a key factor shaping attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ individuals (Hall & Rodgers, 2018), the present findings suggest that comfort with LGBTQIA+ leadership may be less generationally polarized than previously assumed. However, age does appear to play a significant role in perceptions of discrimination. Younger respondents estimate substantially higher levels of perceived discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals

in the workplace—by approximately 8 percentage points—compared to older respondents. This finding aligns with broader literature indicating that younger generations are more aware of structural inequalities and more engaged in inclusion narratives (Brown, 2023). In the context of community discrimination, this generational gap is even more pronounced, with younger respondents estimating 10.9 percentage points more Filipinos perceive LGBTQIA+ discrimination. This suggests that younger individuals may be more exposed to discussions on social inequality and thus more likely to recognize discrimination in both professional and social environments.

Gender also emerges as a significant predictor of LGBTQIA+ comfort and discrimination awareness. Females estimate 4.6 percentage points higher societal comfort with an LGBTQIA+ boss than men. Similarly, female respondents estimate 4.7 percentage points more Filipinos perceive workplace discrimination against LGBTQIA+ employees than their male counterparts. These findings align with previous studies showing that women tend to hold more favorable attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ individuals and are generally more attuned to equity and inclusion issues (Anderson & Maugeri, 2022; Kite & Whitley, 1996). However, in the case of community discrimination, gender does not emerge as a significant predictor. These patterns reflect findings in global research, which report a gender gap in LGBTQIA+ support in institutional contexts, but more uniform perceptions across genders in general community settings (Poushter & Kent, 2013).

While sexual orientation is not a significant factor in predicting comfort with an LGBTQIA+ boss, it strongly influences perceptions of discrimination, with heterosexual respondents underestimating workplace and community discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals. Heterosexual respondents estimate 9.1 percentage points fewer Filipinos perceive workplace discrimination and 8.6 percentage points fewer perceive community discrimination compared to non-heterosexual respondents. This discrepancy highlights a well-documented gap in lived experiences, where non-LGBTQIA+ individuals may underestimate the extent of discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals due to a lack of direct exposure to workplace biases or social exclusion (Herek & Capitanio, 1996). Such discrepancies emphasize the importance of workplace sensitivity training to bridge awareness gaps and foster more inclusive professional environments.

Educational attainment presents unexpected trends in relation to LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusivity and discrimination awareness. Respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher estimate a 6.3 percentage-point decrease in societal comfort with an LGBTQIA+ boss compared to those with lower education levels. This contradicts the widely supported assumption that higher education generally fosters greater inclusivity through exposure to diverse viewpoints and critical thinking (Agterberg et al., 2025). However, this finding aligns with research suggesting that education may not uniformly lead to acceptance, but rather to a heightened awareness of systemic discrimination, which in turn can produce

more critical or skeptical evaluations of workplace inclusion efforts (Ohlander et al., 2005). This pattern may indicate that more educated individuals critically assess societal comfort levels and policy implementation, possibly perceiving that while LGBTQIA+ visibility and legal advancements have improved, underlying structural inequalities still persist. Rather than signaling personal discomfort, lower comfort estimates may reflect a broader understanding of gaps between policy and practice. These findings underscore the complex role education plays in shaping both perceptions and expectations of social progress, particularly as it relates to the inclusivity of leadership in professional environments.

Economic status also plays a crucial role in shaping LGBTQIA+ workplace perceptions. Middle-income earners estimate 9.2 percentage points more Filipinos would be comfortable with an LGBTQIA+ boss than low-income earners, likely due to greater exposure to diverse professional environments that promote inclusivity (Andersen & Fetner, 2008). However, when assessing discrimination, middle-income respondents estimate 4.6 percentage points fewer Filipinos perceive workplace discrimination, while high-income respondents show no significant difference compared to low-income respondents. In the community setting, middle-income earners estimate 5.5 percentage points fewer, and high-income earners estimate 8.7 percentage points fewer Filipinos perceive LGBTQIA+ discrimination. These findings suggest that individuals in higher socioeconomic brackets may live and work in more inclusive environments, leading to lower perceived discrimination. However, this does not necessarily indicate a reduction in actual discrimination but rather differences in social exposure and lived experiences across economic classes.

Religious affiliation remains one of the most significant predictors of LGBTQIA+ workplace perceptions in the Philippines. Catholic respondents estimate 12.1 percentage points more societal comfort with an LGBTQIA+ boss compared to non-Catholic respondents. This challenges traditional research that often associates religiosity with lower LGBTQIA+ acceptance (Sherkat et al., 2011), suggesting that Catholic respondents may subscribe to more progressive or inclusive interpretations of faith (Wilcox, 2009). Furthermore, Catholic respondents estimate 10.4 percentage points more Filipinos perceive workplace discrimination and 6.9 percentage points more perceive community discrimination. This reinforces previous studies that identify faith-based advocacy as a factor in shaping social justice awareness.

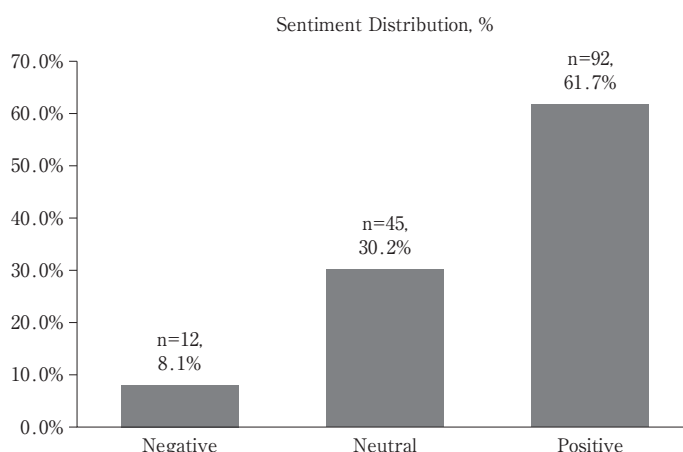
Direct exposure to LGBTQIA+ individuals significantly increases comfort with LGBTQIA+ leadership but does not influence perceptions of discrimination. Respondents with LGBTQIA+ exposure estimate a 5.5 percentage-point increase in societal comfort with an LGBTQIA+ boss, supporting Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, which posits that direct interactions with marginalized groups reduce prejudice and foster acceptance. However, LGBTQIA+ exposure does not significantly predict workplace or community discrimination perceptions. This finding deviates from traditional contact hypothesis expectations (Allport,

1954), suggesting that broader systemic and institutional factors—rather than personal interactions—play a more decisive role in shaping discrimination awareness. This also raises important questions about the effectiveness of exposure-based interventions in addressing workplace bias, emphasizing the need for structural policy changes alongside personal engagement.

4.2. Text Verbatim Analysis

The qualitative analysis of verbatim responses reveals a predominantly positive sentiment (60.7%) toward LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly in workplace and social settings. Consistent with prior studies, responses reveal strong religious influences on LGBTQIA+ attitudes, reflected in comments emphasizing traditional gender norms and opposition to same-sex marriage (Guballa & Miner, 2023). Additionally, many respondents cite workplace experiences—both positive and negative—as key factors in shaping their views on LGBTQIA+ colleagues (Banono, 2023). However, 27.1% of responses exhibit a neutral stance, reflecting conditional acceptance, concerns about LGBTQIA+ activism, or reluctance toward same-sex marriage. A minority (12.1%) of responses are negative, often citing religious beliefs, traditional gender norms, or opposition to LGBTQIA+ advocacy efforts. Notably, the presence of neutral and negative sentiments suggests continued resistance to workplace inclusivity efforts, echoing findings by Manalastas & Torre (2017) that while corporate policies may promote LGBTQIA+ rights, personal biases and cultural norms still present barriers to full inclusion. These results indicate that addressing LGBTQIA+ workplace discrimination requires both policy enforcement and cultural shifts within professional environments.

Figure 3. Sentiment Distribution of Verbatim Responses



The sentiment distribution indicates a growing acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the Philippines, though cultural and religious factors remain significant barriers to full in-

clusivity (see Figure 3). To further explore the nature of these sentiments, a thematic analysis was conducted to categorize responses into key themes.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis, N (count of responses) and % (percentage of total responses for each sentiment category) for each key theme

Sentiment Category	Key Theme	N	%	Description
Negative (N=13, 12.1%)	Religious and Traditional Rejection	5	38.5%	LGBTQIA+ identities seen as incompatible with religious teachings
	Opposition to Same-Sex Marriage	3	23.1%	Resistance to legal LGBTQIA+ rights based on conservative values
	Perception of LGBTQIA+ Advocacy as Aggressive	2	15.4%	LGBTQIA+ activism seen as excessive or manipulative
	Hostility and Dismissal	2	15.4%	Some express outright rejection or apathy toward LGBTQIA+ issues
	Cultural and Generational Resistance	1	7.7%	Filipino culture and elders perceived as barriers to LGBTQIA+ acceptance
Neutral (N=29, 27.1%)	Workplace Inclusion Should Be Merit-Based	6	20.7%	LGBTQIA+ individuals accepted as long as they perform well
	Recognition of LGBTQIA+ Discrimination	6	20.7%	Acknowledgment that discrimination exists, but no strong stance
	Reluctance Toward Same-Sex Marriage	5	17.2%	LGBTQIA+ acceptance does not always extend to legal rights
	Perceived Workplace Favoritism	5	17.2%	LGBTQIA+ leaders may allegedly show bias toward certain employees
	Cultural and Generational Shifts	7	24.1%	Younger Filipinos more accepting, older generations remain resistant
Positive (N=65, 60.7%)	Support for LGBTQIA+ Inclusion	16	24.6%	LGBTQIA+ individuals accepted in workplaces and communities
	Advocacy for Equal Rights	14	21.5%	Support for same-sex marriage and anti-discrimination policies
	LGBTQIA+ as a Positive Influence	12	18.5%	LGBTQIA+ individuals seen as fun and uplifting
	LGBTQIA+ as a Normal Part of Society	12	18.5%	Calls for full societal acceptance
	Hopes for Future Acceptance	11	16.9%	Optimism for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in future generations

Table 3 shows the thematic analysis which identified five key themes for each sentiment category (negative, neutral, and positive), along with their frequency (N) and percentage (%). These themes provide deeper insight into the sociocultural, religious, and workplace dynamics influencing public perceptions.

4.2.1. *Negative Sentiment: Opposition and Resistance*

Among respondents expressing negative sentiment, the most dominant theme is religious and traditional rejection of LGBTQIA+ identities (38.5%). Many responses emphasize faith-based beliefs that gender and marriage should remain aligned with religious doctrine, aligning with prior research highlighting religious conservatism as a key driver of LGBTQ-

IA+ opposition in predominantly Catholic societies (Sherkat et al., 2011; Wilcox, 2009).

Similarly, 23.1% of negative responses oppose same-sex marriage, often citing conservative cultural values and legislative resistance. Some responses reflect perceptions of LGBTQIA+ advocacy as overly assertive or manipulative (15.4%), suggesting that LGBTQIA+ individuals exaggerate discrimination or seek special treatment. Additionally, a small proportion of negative responses express outright hostility or apathy (15.4%), while 7.7% reference cultural and generational resistance to LGBTQIA+ inclusion. (For selected verbatim responses reflecting these themes, refer to Appendix A). These findings highlight persistent barriers to LGBTQIA+ acceptance, particularly within religious and culturally conservative groups. Despite increasing visibility, opposition remains deeply rooted in doctrinal beliefs and societal norms, necessitating targeted educational initiatives to foster greater inclusivity.

4.2.2. *Neutral Sentiment: Mixed and Conditional Acceptance*

Neutral responses reveal a complex relationship between acceptance and reservations regarding LGBTQIA+ individuals. The most prevalent theme, cultural and generational shifts in LGBTQIA+ acceptance (24.1%), acknowledges that younger Filipinos tend to be more open-minded, whereas older generations remain resistant. This aligns with studies indicating that younger cohorts worldwide exhibit greater LGBTQIA+ acceptance due to increased social exposure and education (Twenge et al., 2016). Two additional themes, merit-based workplace inclusion (20.7%) and recognition of LGBTQIA+ discrimination (20.7%), suggest that while many respondents acknowledge LGBTQIA+ individuals as equal colleagues, they also recognize that systemic discrimination persists in professional environments. However, 17.2% of neutral responses express reluctance toward same-sex marriage, often framing their stance as respectful disagreement rather than outright opposition. Similarly, 17.2% of neutral responses reflect concerns about perceived favoritism in the workplace, particularly in instances where LGBTQIA+ individuals hold leadership roles (see Appendix A for selected verbatim responses illustrating these themes). These neutral perspectives underscore the complexity of LGBTQIA+ perceptions in the Philippines, where acceptance is growing but remains constrained by cultural and institutional biases.

4.2.3. *Positive Sentiment: Support and Advocacy*

The majority of responses express positive sentiment, with 24.6% emphasizing LGBTQIA+ inclusion in workplaces and communities (for selected verbatim responses demonstrating these positive themes, refer to Appendix A). Many respondents highlight the importance of judging individuals based on character and skills rather than gender or sexuality. Similarly, 21.5% of positive responses advocate for equal rights, particularly in legal protections and same-sex marriage legalization. Several respondents explicitly call for policy changes, aligning with broader trends in LGBTQIA+ activism, where legal recognition is a critical factor in achieving full social equality (Badgett, 2021). Additionally, 18.5%

of positive responses view LGBTQIA+ individuals as a source of joy and positivity, emphasizing their sociability and contributions to workplace culture. Two additional themes, LGBTQIA+ as a normal part of society (18.5%) and hopes for future acceptance (16.9%), indicate that many respondents believe Filipino society is gradually becoming more inclusive. These findings suggest that LGBTQIA+ inclusivity is increasingly accepted, particularly in workplace settings. However, the presence of persistent societal and legal barriers indicates a need for continued advocacy and education to translate social acceptance into formal legal protections.

Overall, the text verbatim analysis provides valuable insights into public attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ individuals in the Philippines. While the majority (60.7%) express support for inclusivity, a significant proportion (27.1%) hold neutral or mixed views, often accepting LGBTQIA+ individuals but opposing same-sex marriage or activist efforts. A minority (12.1%) continue to reject LGBTQIA+ identities outright, largely due to religious and traditional beliefs. These findings reflect a society in transition, where acceptance is growing, but legal and cultural barriers persist. Overall, the sentiment analysis of verbatim responses underscores the progressive shift toward LGBTQIA+ workplace acceptance, though cultural and personal values continue to influence perceptions. Organizations implementing inclusivity policies should consider targeted education programs and dialogue-based initiatives to bridge gaps in understanding. Further research could explore how workplace experiences shape these attitudes over time.

5. Conclusion

This study examined perceptions of LGBTQIA+ workplace inclusion and discrimination among working-age Filipinos in Metro Manila, focusing on how demographic factors such as age, gender, education, religion, and exposure to LGBTQIA+ individuals shape workplace attitudes. Using survey data from 611 respondents, the findings reveal a complex relationship between perceived inclusivity and structural discrimination. While many respondents express comfort with LGBTQIA+ colleagues, there is still recognition of workplace biases, particularly in hiring, promotion, and leadership opportunities. Younger respondents and women tend to be more supportive of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, whereas religious affiliation and traditional beliefs continue to shape more conservative workplace attitudes. Interestingly, higher education does not always correspond with greater LGBTQIA+ acceptance, as some highly educated individuals demonstrate greater awareness of systemic discrimination, making them more critical of workplace inclusion policies.

The study also finds that direct exposure to LGBTQIA+ individuals increases comfort levels with LGBTQIA+ leadership but does not strongly predict perceptions of workplace

discrimination. This suggests that while interpersonal interactions improve attitudes, broader institutional and cultural factors play a more decisive role in shaping discrimination awareness. The text verbatim analysis further highlights diverse public sentiments, ranging from full support for LGBTQIA+ inclusion to rejection based on religious and cultural beliefs. Many respondents acknowledge existing workplace inequalities but remain divided on how best to address them. These findings reinforce the need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap between perceived and actual workplace inclusivity in the Philippines.

To address workplace discrimination and promote sustainable inclusivity, several policy recommendations can be considered. Policymakers should prioritize passing national anti-discrimination legislation that explicitly protects LGBTQIA+ employees from workplace bias, wage disparities, and career stagnation. Despite the growing awareness of LGBTQIA+ rights, the absence of a national SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression) equality law can exacerbate labor market inequalities (UNDP, 2018). Strengthening labor policies that integrate LGBTQIA+ inclusivity guidelines would ensure compliance across industries, particularly in private sector businesses where diversity efforts remain inconsistent. Additionally, economic empowerment programs should be introduced to support LGBTQIA+ entrepreneurship, leadership training, and financial inclusion initiatives, particularly for individuals facing workplace discrimination.

For corporate leaders and human resource departments, it is crucial to implement clear LGBTQIA+ inclusivity policies that explicitly protect employees from discrimination in hiring, promotions, and workplace interactions. Companies should also mandate diversity and sensitivity training to educate employees on unconscious bias, workplace microaggressions, and LGBTQIA+ allyship. Furthermore, safe reporting mechanisms for workplace discrimination should be established, ensuring that LGBTQIA+ employees can report bias or harassment without fear of retaliation. Encouraging greater LGBTQIA+ representation in leadership roles is another essential step toward ensuring that diversity policies are actively implemented at decision-making levels (Cook & Glass, 2016).

While this study provides valuable insights into LGBTQIA+ workplace perceptions in Metro Manila, several areas warrant further investigation. Future research should explore regional comparisons between urban and rural areas to determine whether inclusivity efforts vary based on economic and cultural settings. Studies suggest that urban environments tend to be more progressive in LGBTQIA+ inclusion, while rural areas remain largely conservative and shaped by religious values (Guballa & Miner, 2023; Poushter & Kent, 2013). Industry-specific studies could also be conducted to assess how LGBTQIA+ workplace experiences differ across sectors such as finance, healthcare, education, and government, where structural barriers may be more pronounced (Sears & Mallory, 2011). Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking changes in workplace attitudes over time would help evaluate the effectiveness of corporate diversity initiatives and emerging legal protec-

tions. Intersectional research examining how LGBTQIA+ identity interacts with other demographic factors such as socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disability would also provide a more nuanced understanding of workplace discrimination. Finally, further studies could explore the impact of openly LGBTQIA+ leadership representation in influencing workplace policies and organizational culture.

By implementing stronger policies, fostering inclusive leadership, and promoting workplace education initiatives, organizations and policymakers can create a more equitable professional environment where all employees—regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation—are valued and empowered to succeed.

Note

- 1) Actual questions used in the survey are: (1)*Out of every 100 Filipinos, I think approximately ____ out of 100 would be comfortable having an openly LGBTQIA+ boss at work*; (2)*Out of every 100 Filipinos, I think approximately ____ out of 100 would agree that the LGBTQIA+ community is being discriminated against at their: (a) Workplace; (b) Community*

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Appendix A: Selected Verbatim Responses by Demographics

The following verbatim responses were selected based on respondents' actual experiences or direct opinions regarding LGBTQIA+ individuals and related societal issues. These responses are categorized by thematic codes to reflect key patterns in the data, along with demographic information for context.

Thematic Code	Verbatim Response	Respondent Demographics
Concerns About Workplace Stigma	<i>"In my opinion, gender preference is one of the major factors why office workspace becomes toxic. It is because the general public did not fully accept those in the third-sex community. This is a major stereotype stigma issue or problem."</i>	(Male, 18 to 27 years old, Born Again Christian, Service and/or sales worker)
Indifference and Disengagement	<i>"Don't care about them."</i>	(Male, 28 to 43 years old, [Religion not specified], Technicians and/or associate professional)
LGBTQIA+ Acceptance Compared to Other Countries	<i>"In my experience, the LGBTQ+ is more socially accepted in the Philippines than in other surrounding Asian countries."</i>	(Female, 18 to 27 years old, Roman Catholic, Service and/or sales worker)
LGBTQIA+ in the Workplace	<i>"I have a supervisor who is gay. He is professional and approachable. I'm not against them. We appreciate how they contribute to our country."</i>	(Male, 28 to 43 years old, Roman Catholic, Clerical support worker)
LGBTQIA+ Inclusion in Society	<i>"I have a lot of LGBTQ friends as well as my sisters and nieces, we treat them as family. I don't see anything wrong with them as long as they are not committing any crimes or something like that."</i>	(Male, 44 to 59 years old, [Religion not specified], Technicians and/or associate professional)
	<i>"I have an LGBTQIA+ friend, and I don't discriminate against them. I accept them as who they are."</i>	(Female, 18 to 27 years old, Born Again Christian, Technicians and/or associate professional)
Perceived Workplace Favoritism	<i>"I'm not against LGBTQ, but I just had a few experiences where gay supervisors in higher positions showed favoritism toward good-looking male colleagues."</i>	(Female, 28 to 43 years old, Roman Catholic, Service and/or sales worker)

Perception of LGBTQIA+ Advocacy as Aggressive	<i>“The LGBTQ+, in my opinion only, they are more aggressive and abusive these days ... Some of them pretend to be discriminated against and always be the victim.”</i>	(Male, 44 to 59 years old, Roman Catholic, Manager)
Perception of LGBTQIA+ as Overrepresented	<i>“The LGBTQA+ community is over-rated.”</i>	(Male, 44 to 59 years old, [Religion not specified], Clerical support worker)
Religious and Traditional Rejection	<i>“The world created equal by Creator. Heavenly Father with man and a woman. I want to see it that way.”</i>	(Male, 28 to 43 years old, Roman Catholic, Professional)
	<i>“There are only 2 persons created—man and woman.”</i>	(Female, 28 to 43 years old, Roman Catholic, Manager)
Reluctance Toward Same-Sex Marriage	<i>“I respect all LGBTQ, but there are laws that are not fit for them, like same-sex marriage. It’s a sacred union and vows for men and women only.”</i>	(Male, 44 to 59 years old, Iglesia ni Cristo, Manager)
	<i>“I’m not homophobic, but same-sex marriage varies on different religions, that’s why I don’t agree to same-sex marriage. As a marriage is meant to be sacred and holy, that follows tradition.”</i>	(Male, 18 to 27 years old, Roman Catholic, Professional)
	<i>“As a Christian, I am against same-sex marriage but do not condemn LGBTQ+.”</i>	(Male, 44 to 59 years old, Born Again Christian, Professional)
Skepticism Toward LGBTQIA+ Advocacy	<i>“I am not against LGBTQ, but sometimes their advocacy seems out of place and adds to the issues facing the country.”</i>	(Male, 28 to 43 years old, Jehovah’s witnesses, Technicians and/or associate professional)