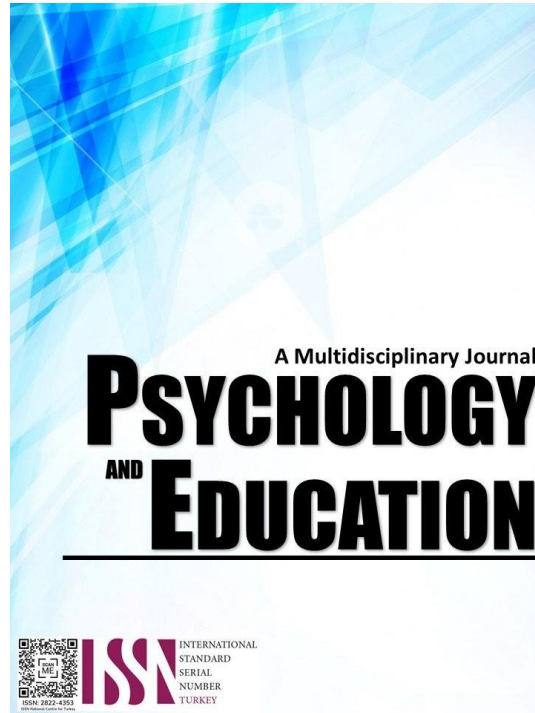


# **INCLUSION OF TRANSGENDER WOMEN TEACHERS IN THE EDUCATIONAL WORKPLACE: A PHENOMENOLOGY**



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# Inclusion of Transgender Women Teachers in the Educational Workplace: A Phenomenology

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## Abstract

The inclusion of transgender women teachers as human beings with rights and privileges deserves respect and equality in their workplace and the community they belong. In the literature, limited studies explore the lives of transgender women in the workplace as this requires careful exploration of their encounters due to their sensitive disposition. This study aspires to deeply understand the personal experiences of the participants on a certain phenomenon such as the inclusion of Transgender women teachers in the Department of Education (DepEd) Guihulngan City Division. This study utilized Heideggerian phenomenology as a research design anchoring the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) popularized by Moustakas and modified by Van Kaam. Three (3) participants saturated the data in the research environment. Inclusive and Exclusive Criteria were established in the study using a snowball-purposive sampling technique. After the analysis, the emerging themes were generated such as the darkest reality, Towards complete acceptance, Favorable Professional Reception, and Women that Matter. These themes provide a clear picture of how transgender women are living their lives in the department. The main issue faced by Transgender women teachers is the question of labeling. Thus, Transgender women teachers must carry on their duties and responsibilities and improve their personal and professional growth to enhance learners' capability in learning amidst the issue regarding their preferences.

**Keywords:** *transgender women, teachers, phenomenology, preferences, department of education*

## Introduction

In recent years, the presence of transgender women teachers in the educational system has drawn more and more attention. Studies reveal that transgender people endure greater rates of unemployment and poverty compared to their cisgender colleagues and that they encounter severe discrimination and employment hurdles (Dray et al., 2020; Huffman et al., 2021). Additionally, transgender people encounter numerous obstacles in their pursuit of an education and a job, including discrimination, harassment, and exclusion from particular professions (Fletcher & Marvell, 2023). As a result of their gender identification, transgender women frequently experience increased levels of harassment and violence (Baboolall et al., 2021).

Transgender people continue to face high rates of harassment and discrimination at work, despite increased attempts to create more diverse and inclusive learning environments in schools (Waite, 2021). For instance, research conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) indicated that 30% of transgender people claimed to have been mistreated, denied a promotion, or fired because of their gender identification. The mental health, well-being, and employment prospects of transgender people can all be significantly impacted by discrimination and harassment (McFadden, 2020). Furthermore, not only does the exclusion of transgender women from teaching positions support prejudice, but it also restricts the variety of role models that are accessible to pupils (Baboolall et al., 2021).

Transgender teachers can work in a setting that is secure and encouraging thanks to inclusive rules and procedures (Meyer & Leonardi, 2020). Some states in the United States have passed legislation defending the rights of transgender people in the workplace. For instance, in *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia*, 2020, the Supreme Court of the United States declared that transgender people are protected from employment discrimination based on their gender identification under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Transgender job applicants can benefit from inclusive hiring practices that remove gender indicators from job applications and use gender-neutral terminology (Payne & Smith, 2022). According to Cabello et al. (2021) and Catulpos et al. (2024), students' academic performance as well as their social and emotional development can benefit from different teachers.

However, despite the potential advantages of inclusion, transgender women instructors continue to face many difficulties (Martino et al., 2022). A hostile work environment can result from harassment and discrimination from coworkers, students, and parents, and transgender people frequently experience higher rates of violence and harassment than their cisgender counterparts (Baum, 2022). For instance, a study of teachers who identify as LGBTIQ in South African schools discovered that they were marginalized and excluded by their coworkers and administrators (Francis, 2023). The difficulties transgender teachers encounter might sometimes be made worse by school leaders' lack of understanding and support (Haffeejee & Wiebesiek, 2021).

There is little but rising research on the experiences of transgender women teachers. According to a recent study by Chan et al. (2022), transgender instructors encountered high rates of harassment and discrimination as well as high levels of job satisfaction. According to Killen and Rutland (2022), friendly coworkers and school regulations can lessen the detrimental impacts of discrimination and harassment. To comprehend the experiences of transgender women teachers in various circumstances and locales, more research is required. The results of this study will help us understand the opportunities and difficulties that transgender women teachers face in the classroom. They will also shed light on how schools can work to make their campuses more inclusive and welcoming for all

students. The ultimate goal of this research is to promote better social justice and equity for transgender people in educational settings and to help create a more inclusive and diverse society.

### ***Theoretical Underpinning***

This study concentrated on the viewpoint of transwomen instructors who were dealing with difficulties in the classroom. Transwomen teachers typically have unique teaching experiences. While some people might get positive results, others might have faced discrimination. Freud's "Concept of Homosexuality and Sexual Identity Development" will serve as the basis for this study. In his view, Freud made a distinction between four manifestations and said that we can choose to appreciate ourselves as unique individuals on a physical, emotional, and cerebral level. A person may love: (1) What he is himself; (2) What he was; (3) What he would like to be; and (4) Someone who was a part of himself, according to Reich (1953), who summarized his distinctions.

These four potential grounds of want that a person may "love" can be selected in narcissistic decision-making. After all, identification involves the desire to "become" the identified object, and Freud stated that a narcissistic object of want is one that "one would like to be". This idea helps the researchers to comprehend why someone chooses to be who they are, regardless of who they were previously. Because the study focused on the experiences of transgender instructors, this idea was pertinent to it. The study sought to understand why and how these teachers respond to the various types of feedback they receive regularly.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are your challenges and struggles as a Transgender Teacher?
2. Did you experience discrimination and harassment for being a Transgender Teacher? In what way? Please explain.
3. What inclusive policies and practices were created by your school to make you feel safe and supported?
4. What is the significance of being a Transgender Teacher?

### **Literature Review**

Members who identify as transgender are coming out and beginning to experience stigma. One group of people who are battling stigma and making an effort to contribute to our society is transwomen teachers (Worthen, 2022). However, despite the welcome transwomen teachers have, there are still problems with their coming out, particularly in the workplace (Jaekel & Nicolazzon, 2022). Many transgender instructors report feeling unsafe at work. One-third of these teachers believed that their jobs were in jeopardy if the administrators or students learned that they were working with a transwomen educator, according to the results of two national surveys conducted by Dr. Wright and her colleagues in 20017 and 2011. This chapter includes various literature related to the study. Particularly, information about the diverse attitudes and realities that transwomen educators confront.

People who identify as transwomen encounter subtle forms of violence, sometimes known as microaggressions (Parr & Howe, 2021). Microaggressions are routine interactions that take place in a variety of social contexts, such as school or the workplace, with family members, or even with other LGBT people (Morris et al., 2020). These observations are connected to feelings of victimization, destructive thinking, increased rates of substance abuse, grief, and other health problems among members of the LGBT community (Freeman & Stewart, 2021). This incident shows that transgender people are not immune to discrimination and other forms of harassment (Tran et al., 2023). In conclusion, transwomen educators encounter prejudice at work and from their peers. Every time they are at work, they experience a sense of unease and worry about facing discrimination because of their gender identification. The input they get is unhealthy, and it has unfavorable side consequences.

Numerous research on the office environment as a factor influencing employee performance have been conducted. The study of Berbeco (2022) examined the degree to which employees believe their employment environment satisfies their extrinsic, social, and intrinsic requirements as well as their desire to remain with the company. He also looked at how perceptions of workplace environments affected employee commitment and turnover in the company. He concluded that if employees have access to supportive workplace environments, they will be highly satisfied and demonstrate a high level of commitment to the company, which will result in a low turnover rate. According to a study by Minster in 2023, enhancing the working environment decreases complaints and absenteeism while boosting productivity. Employee morale and performance will increase with a better physical work environment.

According to a study by Perales (2022), employees are better able to do the duties that are expected of them when the environment is stable. In her research, Bozani (2020) discovered that improving the working environment has a significant positive impact on employee performance. According to research by McFadden (2020), workplace environmental factors like enough lighting, a quiet office, good ventilation, and layout arrangement significantly boost employees' productivity. Manzoor et al. (2021) examined the effect of infrastructure and work environment on employees' performance from the perspective of education in Pakistan and concluded that workplace incentives had a favorable effect on employees' performance.

In a 2009 study of 31 bank branches, Hameed and Amjad found that ergonomic and comfortable office design significantly improved employee motivation and performance. The variables incentives, motivation, and working conditions have a significant impact on employee performance in an Indonesian university, according to Ratnasari et al.'s (2021) study. These studies clearly show the importance of a positive work environment in raising overall employee performance.



In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of transwomen teachers in public schools. These studies and literature can help in understanding the nature of the study and its significance to the community wherein the phenomenon is in existence.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used Heideggerian Phenomenology as the research design. Phenomenology is a design that dives into the life of the participants towards the phenomenon they are in (Redolosa et al., 2024; Gimena et al., 2023). Interpretative Phenomenological Approach was used by this study which was popularized by Moustakas and modified by Van Kaam. This Phenomenological research design was used to deeply understand the personal experiences of the participants on a certain phenomenon which gives the researcher the idea to look for important data to be used and analyzed in the discussions and explanations of the inclusion of Transgender Teachers in DepEd- Guihulngan City Division.

Participants

- 1. Participants must be Transgender women.
- 2. Participants must be Teachers working under DepEd- Guihulngan City Division.
- 3. Participants are willing to participate in the study.

Procedure

A semi-structured guide question was made before the conduct of the interview. After the instrument was created, it was validated by an expert to measure its validity and reliability (Cabello & Bonotan, 2021). The participants gave their consent to conduct the interview. The interview was administered physically. The sessions were recorded for the consistency of the data and to establish the rigor of the study. The data collected was treated with the highest degree of confidentiality and anonymity to protect the participants from any forms of harm (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Data Analysis

In this research, the researchers used a qualitative descriptive design using a thematic analysis. The answers to the open-ended questions were transliterated. Each response is grouped into themes along with relevant quotes. Data were collected from the 3 Transgender Teachers working in DepEd- Guihulngan City Division. Their responses reflect their personal experiences as a Transgender women working in the field of Education.

Table 1. *The Analysis*

<i>Horizons</i>	<i>Textural Language</i>	<i>Theme</i>
The challenges I have encountered as a Trans teacher are unfair treatment from the locals (people living in the barangay) in my workplace and being labeled as a man based on Biblical aspect (P1).	Unfair Treatment	The Darkest Reality
As a transgender educator placed in a rural area, it was difficult for me to communicate my gender preference to both my co-workers and students. Because not everyone was content with it, not everyone understood it, and not everyone was happy, it was difficult (P2).	Communication Gap	
As a transgender person the only struggle I am facing is that people tend to label me as a weak and an incompetent person (P3).	Incompetent	
I have never encountered any form of discrimination in my work place. My colleagues and my students respect and accept me for who I am. They are well educated about Transgender women and our rights (P1).	Respect and Acceptance	Towards Complete Acceptance
Thankfully, despite the fact that not everyone was pleased with my gender identity, I have never experienced discrimination. They addressed me the way I preferred because they honored my preference. There were some minor misunderstandings, but these could be cleared up with a good talk (P2).	Zero Discrimination	
Yes, people will always question me about my credibility and my ability as a teacher at the same time as a transgender woman. They belittle me and my capacity to teach (P3).	Questionable Identity	
My school head allowed me to wear comfortable clothes based on my gender identity, and my colleagues and students address me with proper nouns such as Ma’am and Miss (P1).	Proper Calling	Professional Acceptance
My school enabled me to wear the uniform in my preferred “feminine-cut” and instructed kids to address me as “ma’am” as part of the inclusion initiative. They’ve also given me the option to wear the clothes I want on some occasions (P2).	Negotiated Dress code	
One of the things that I am most proud of about being a transgender teacher in my school is that I am allowed to freely express myself in all forms, be it on how I dress up, and putting make up on (P3).	Free Self-Expression	
I think the significance of being a Transgender Teacher is that we are role models in the community who are living successfully in our careers and it is important to show people that	Women that Lead	Women that Matter

you can be exactly who you are, and people will respect you for that (P1).

Being a transgender educator is challenging yet rewarding. Since not everyone is receptive and accepting, it is difficult. It makes me happy to inspire younger trans children who aspire to become educators. My value as a transgender educator lies in my ability to elevate the trans community and place them on a pedestal so that, via the education we offer to the next generation, we can be seen, heard, and understood (P2).

Women that Inspire

We change lives, inspire dreams, and push the limits of human potential. These are just examples of what a transgender teacher can do. Transwomen are women and we matter (P3).

Women that Motivates

## Results and Discussion

### Theme 1: The Darkest Reality

One of the main issues facing transgender teachers is the question of labeling (Kean, 2020). Many people in society regard gender as a binary construct, with persons being male or female, and may struggle to comprehend or accept those who identify as transgender (Karttunen, 2021). This can lead to misgendering and other types of disrespect and discrimination, both within and outside of the workplace (Goldstein-Schultz, 2022). The treatment and labeling of transgender teachers can have a substantial impact on their well-being and success in the workplace (Abreu et al., 2022).

Participant 1 stated, “The challenges I have encountered as a Trans teacher are unfair treatment from the locals (people living in the barangay) in my workplace and being labeled as a man based on Biblical aspect.”

Participant 2 said, “As a transgender educator placed in a rural area, it was difficult for me to communicate my gender preference to both my co-workers and students. Because not everyone was content with it, not everyone understood it, and not everyone was happy, it was difficult.”

Participant 3 mentioned, “As a transgender person the only struggle I am facing is that people tend to label me as a weak and an incompetent person.”

Researchers discovered that the biggest challenge that the participants are facing is misgendering and unfair treatment of the people (locals) around them who are not yet educated about what a Transgender is.

### Theme 2: Towards Complete Acceptance

Transgender teachers endure substantial discrimination and harassment in the workplace, sometimes resulting in detrimental repercussions on their wellness and professional growth (McKenzie, 2020). Transgender instructors may be subjected to improper comments or jokes about their gender identification, which can be upsetting and insulting (Larson, 2021). Some transgender teachers may be subjected to bullying and harassment, which can cause substantial mental anguish and may even lead to physical violence (Dow et al., 2022).

Participant 1 stated, “I have never encountered any form of discrimination in my work place. My colleagues and my students respect and accept me for who I am. They are well educated about Transgender women and our rights.”

Participant 2 said, “Thankfully, despite the fact that not everyone was pleased with my gender identity, I have never experienced discrimination. They addressed me the way I preferred because they honored my preference. There were some minor misunderstandings, but these could be cleared up with a good talk.”

Participant 3 mentioned, “Yes, people will always question me about my credibility and my ability as a teacher at the same time as a transgender woman. They belittle me and my capacity to teach.”

Researchers discovered that the participants did not experience any form of discrimination in their work environment, hence they are being accepted as who they are by their colleagues and students.

### Theme 3: Favorable Professional Reception

The success and wellness of transgender teachers in schools and educational institutions depend on inclusive policies and practices (Gallardo-Nieto et al., 2021). By creating a safe and supportive workplace environment, using gender-neutral language and terminology, providing access to appropriate medical care and support, and promoting diversity and inclusivity in their curriculum, schools can help to create more equitable and accepting environments for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity (Lewis & Eckes, 2020).

Participant 1 stated, “My school head allowed me to wear comfortable clothes based on my gender identity, and my colleagues and students address me with proper nouns such as Ma’am and Miss.”

Participant 2 said, “My school enabled me to wear the uniform in my preferred “feminine-cut” and instructed kids to address me as “ma’am” as part of the inclusion initiative. They’ve also given me the option to wear the clothes I want on some occasions.”



Participant 3 mentioned, “One of the things that I am most proud of about being a transgender teacher in my school is that I am allowed to freely express myself in all forms, be it on how I dress up, and putting make up on.”

Researchers discovered that the participants are given the freedom to express their true selves through their clothes and are being addressed with the right pronouns, hence they feel safe and supported in their workstations.

#### Theme 4: Women that Matter

Transgender teachers serve as excellent role models for all children, showing the significance of embracing one's real identity and living authentically (Lee, 2022). The teaching profession is significantly and significantly impacted by transgender instructors, who contribute diversity, inclusivity, and valuable views to the classroom (Finkelberg, 2022). By encouraging awareness and acceptance of transgender individuals, schools and educational institutions can assist in promoting a fairer and more inclusive atmosphere for all students and teachers (Mai, 2020).

Participant 1 stated, “I think the significance of being a Transgender Teacher is that we are role models in the community who are living successfully in our careers and it is important to show people that you can be exactly who you are, and people will respect you for that.”

Participant 2 said, “Being a transgender educator is challenging yet rewarding. Since not everyone is receptive and accepting, it is difficult. It makes me happy to inspire younger trans children who aspire to become educators. My value as a transgender educator lies in my ability to elevate the trans community and place them on a pedestal so that, via the education we offer to the next generation, we can be seen, heard, and understood.”

Participant 3 mentioned, “We change lives, inspire dreams, and push the limits of human potential. These are just examples of what a transgender teacher can do. Transwomen are women and we matter.”

Researchers discovered that the participants see themselves as role models to the youth and would want to pave the way for the transgender community for them to be seen, heard, and understood.

## Conclusion

One of the main issues facing transgender teachers is the question of labeling. Many people in society regard gender as a binary construct, with persons being male or female, and may struggle to comprehend or accept those who identify as transgender. The treatment and labeling of transgender teachers can have a substantial impact on their well-being and success in the workplace. Transgender teachers endure substantial discrimination and harassment in the workplace, sometimes resulting in detrimental repercussions on their wellness and professional growth. Some transgender teachers may be subjected to bullying and harassment, which can cause substantial mental anguish and may even lead to physical violence. Transgender teachers serve as excellent role models for all children, showing the significance of embracing one's real identity and living authentically. The teaching profession is significantly and significantly impacted by transgender instructors, who contribute diversity, inclusivity, and valuable views to the classroom. By encouraging awareness and acceptance of transgender individuals, schools and educational institutions can assist in promoting a fairer and more inclusive atmosphere for all students and teachers.

It is the recommendation of this study to create a safe and supportive workplace environment, using gender-neutral language and terminology, providing access to appropriate medical care and support, and promoting diversity and inclusivity in their curriculum, schools can help to create a more equitable and accepting environment for all individuals, regardless of their gender identity, and show the significance of embracing one's real identity and living authentically. To encourage awareness and acceptance of transgender individuals, schools and educational institutions can assist in promoting a fairer and more inclusive atmosphere for all students and teachers.

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