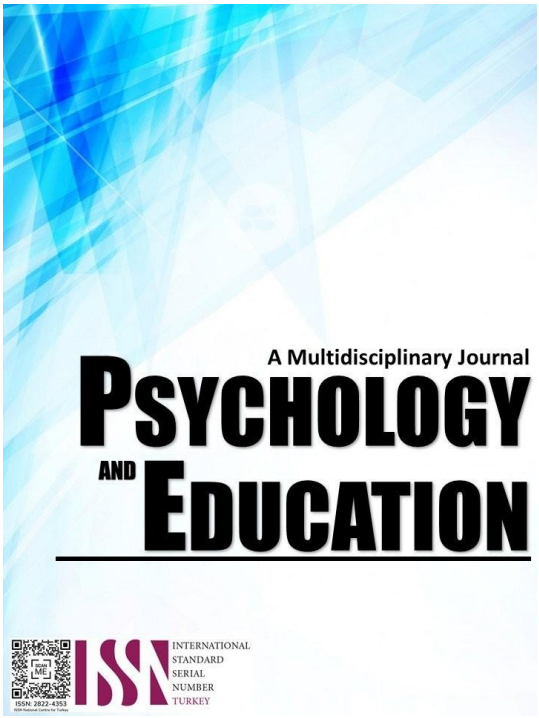
RELIGION'S ROLE AND COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARD LGBTQ SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



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Research Article

Religion's Role and Community Attitudes Toward LGBTQ Senior High School Students

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of religious ideology on community attitudes and psychological well-being among LGBTQ Senior High School (SHS) students at Curuan National High School (CNHS) in Zamboanga City, Philippines. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the study measured community perceptions across inclusion, discrimination, and internalized homophobia using structured survey instruments. Data analysis revealed that social inclusion was generally high (Average Weighted Mean [AWM] = 4.06), while awareness of internalized homophobia was higher (AWM = 4.14), highlighting the psychological burden on LGBTQ students. Regression analysis demonstrated a highly significant negative relationship between the perceived role of religion—particularly conservative interpretations—and positive community attitudes ($\beta = -0.45$, $R^2 = 0.386$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that conservative religious influence functions as a structural barrier, contributing to minority stress and internalized homophobia. The findings also reveal an equity gap in which informal social acceptance outpaces systemic fairness, underscoring the need for targeted interventions. Recommendations include implementing and strictly enforcing SOGIE-aware non-discrimination policies, strengthening psychological support systems, and promoting inclusive community and school environments to enhance the well-being and safety of LGBTQ youth.

Keywords: *religion's role, community attitudes, LGBTQ youth, internalized homophobia, minority stress, conservative interpretations*

Introduction

Religion continues to function as one of the most influential social institutions across societies, shaping people's beliefs, values, and everyday conduct (Davie, 2021). As a moral authority, religion prescribes behavioral norms. It reinforces culturally embedded expectations that frequently determine whether marginalized identities such as those based on sexual orientation and gender identity are accepted or rejected within a community (Mustanski & Liu, 2023). In highly religious environments, perceptions of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) individuals are often mediated through doctrinal teachings, scriptural interpretations, and faith-based moral frameworks that influence social judgments and attitudes (McCormick, 2020; Wood & Barton, 2021).

For LGBTQ Senior High School (SHS) students, community attitudes represent a central component of their developmental context. Research consistently demonstrates that social acceptance or rejection significantly affects LGBTQ youth's psychological well-being, self-esteem, academic performance, and social functioning (Hatchel et al., 2021; Kosciw et al., 2022). When negative attitudes manifest as stigma, exclusion, or discrimination, LGBTQ adolescents experience elevated risks of anxiety, depression, internalized homophobia, and reduced school engagement (Meyer, 2003; Salerno et al., 2020). These effects are particularly pronounced in environments where religious norms heavily influence community behavior.

This study is situated in Curuan National High School (CNHS), located in a semi-rural sector of Zamboanga City, Philippines a context where religious identity plays a dominant role in shaping social expectations. Despite emerging literature on LGBTQ rights and youth experiences, most research within the Philippine context focuses on adults, urban populations, or policy-level analyses (Manalastas et al., 2022). There remains a notable gap in empirical studies documenting the lived experiences of LGBTQ SHS students in rural or semi-rural areas where religious influence is heightened, and community interactions are more intimate and tightly regulated (Aguiling-Dalisay et al., 2021).

In such close-knit communities, deviation from religiously informed norms is often more visible and subjected to greater scrutiny. Consequently, LGBTQ youth may face more immediate forms of social sanction, including bullying, stigma, family rejection, or lack of institutional support (Reyes & Teng-Calleja, 2020). The religious composition of CNHS—where approximately 88% of students identify as Catholic and 7% as Muslim—suggests substantial ideological homogeneity. This increases the likelihood that community attitudes toward LGBTQ students are shaped predominantly by conservative religious interpretations, contributing to heightened vulnerability and psychological distress among gender and sexual minority learners (Gonzales et al., 2021).

Research Questions

This study aimed to examine the role of religion in shaping community attitudes toward LGBTQ Senior High School students at Curuan National High School. The study assessed how various religious interpretations—conservative, progressive, and inclusive—influence perceptions and treatment of LGBTQ learners, and evaluated the extent to which these religious influences correspond with levels of inclusion, discrimination, and internalized homophobia within the community. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of religion's role in shaping community attitudes toward LGBTQ Senior High School students in terms of:

1.1 conservative interpretations;
1.2 progressive interpretations; and
1.3 inclusive interpretations?

2. What are the community attitudes toward LGBTQ Senior High School students in terms of:
2.2 inclusion;
2.2 discrimination and exclusion; and
2.3 internalized homophobia?

3 3. Is there a significant relationship between religion's role and community attitudes toward LGBTQ Senior High School students?

Literature Review

Religion as a Social Institution Shaping Attitudes Toward Sexual and Gender Minorities

Religion remains one of the most influential social institutions globally, shaping moral values, social norms, and people's understanding of acceptable identities and behaviors (Davie, 2021). Across cultures, religious doctrines often prescribe specific moral standards that guide community attitudes toward issues of sexuality and gender (McCormick, 2020). In many faith traditions, interpretations of religious texts regarding sexual orientation have historically leaned toward heteronormativity, contributing to negative or exclusionary attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals (Wilcox, 2022). These doctrinal positions frequently influence public perceptions and reinforce normative expectations, especially in communities where religion is deeply intertwined with daily life.

In Southeast Asia, and the Philippines in particular, religious teachings exert a considerable influence on social norms, given the country's predominantly Catholic and Muslim populations (David et al., 2020). Conservative interpretations of scripture often frame non-heterosexual identities as morally unacceptable, shaping societal attitudes and validating discriminatory practices. As a result, LGBTQ youth in conservative religious settings frequently face heightened stigma, invisibility, and moral judgment from community members whose beliefs are shaped by religious worldviews.

Religious Interpretations and Their Influence on LGBTQ Acceptance

Religious influence is not monolithic. Scholars emphasize three broad interpretative orientations: conservative, progressive, and inclusive. Conservative interpretations tend to view non-heteronormative identities as incompatible with religious morality, reinforcing negative attitudes that manifest in discrimination or exclusion (Wood & Barton, 2021). This perspective remains dominant in many Philippine communities, especially in rural or semi-rural settings. In contrast, progressive interpretations reinterpret religious teachings by situating them within broader human rights and social justice frameworks. These interpretations argue that compassion, dignity, and equality align with spiritual values, thereby supporting greater acceptance of LGBTQ individuals (Sison & Pacquing, 2022). Finally, inclusive interpretations explicitly affirm LGBTQ identities and advocate for full participation of sexual and gender minorities in religious life (Ganzevoort & Van Herck, 2020). These affirming approaches have been linked to improved mental health outcomes and stronger social belonging among LGBTQ youth.

Community Attitudes Toward LGBTQ Youth

Community attitudes are crucial predictors of the lived experiences of LGBTQ adolescents. Positive community climates foster belonging, academic engagement, and psychological well-being (Kosciw et al., 2022). When communities demonstrate acceptance and inclusion, LGBTQ youth experience fewer mental health challenges and report higher self-esteem and stronger peer relationships (Hatchel et al., 2021).

However, in many socially conservative settings, LGBTQ students face exclusion, discrimination, and harassment due to deeply embedded cultural and religious norms (Reyes & Teng-Calleja, 2020). Discriminatory attitudes often manifest through bullying, verbal harassment, or social isolation. These behaviors are frequently justified by referencing religious beliefs or moral arguments, thereby reinforcing stigmatization (Salerno et al., 2020).

Community rejection may also contribute to internalized homophobia, whereby LGBTQ youth absorb negative societal messages and develop feelings of shame or self-hatred (Puckett et al., 2021). Internalized homophobia is strongly associated with depression, anxiety, and lower academic performance among LGBTQ adolescents.

Religion and Community Attitudes in the Philippine Context

Studies in the Philippines highlight the strong influence of religion on public attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals. David et al. (2020) found that religiosity significantly predicts moral disapproval of LGBTQ identities and resistance to LGBTQ-inclusive policies. Manalastas et al. (2022) similarly reported that Filipino communities with higher levels of religious participation tend to exhibit more conservative views about gender and sexuality.

Rural and semi-rural communities often show stronger adherence to religious values, resulting in more pronounced stigma and discrimination toward LGBTQ youth (Aguiling-Dalisay et al., 2021). Because these communities tend to be tightly knit, deviations

from traditional norms become more visible, making LGBTQ students more vulnerable to social sanctions such as bullying, exclusion, or family rejection (Gonzales et al., 2021).

In school settings, the intersection of religion and community norms can significantly shape school climate and the treatment of LGBTQ students. Teachers and school leaders may consciously or unconsciously adopt attitudes that reflect community religious norms, thereby reinforcing structural barriers to LGBTQ inclusion (Flores & Lanuza, 2023). These realities underscore the importance of examining religion's role in shaping community attitudes toward LGBTQ Senior High School students, particularly in semi-rural Philippine contexts such as Curuan National High School.

Although international and national research highlights the relationship between religion and attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals, several gaps persist. First, most studies focus on adult populations rather than adolescents. Second, little research in the Philippines examines how religious interpretations shape community attitudes at the school level, particularly in semi-rural settings. Third, studies rarely explore how religious influence interacts with different dimensions of community attitudes, such as inclusion, discrimination, and internalized homophobia. This study addresses these gaps by examining the extent to which religion shapes community attitudes toward LGBTQ Senior High School students in a Philippine semi-rural school context.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine how religious ideology influences community attitudes and the psychological well-being of LGBTQ Senior High School students. A correlational approach is appropriate when the goal is to measure relationships among variables without manipulating conditions, allowing researchers to determine the extent to which one variable predicts another (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design aligned with the study's objective of determining how conservative religious interpretations shape levels of acceptance, social inclusion, and internalized homophobia within the community context.

Respondents

The study was conducted at Curuan National High School in Zamboanga City, a public secondary school located in a highly religious, culturally diverse community. Respondents were LGBTQ students from Grades 11 and 12 who voluntarily participated in the survey. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that only students who identified as LGBTQ and were willing to share their experiences were included (Etikan et al., 2016). The quantitative phase involved respondents who completed the structured survey, while a smaller set of students was invited for follow-up clarifications to support the interpretation of statistical results.\

Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-developed questionnaire consisting of three sections: (1) the perceived role of religion, especially conservative interpretations; (2) community attitudes toward LGBTQ individuals; and (3) psychological well-being indicators such as minority stress and internalized homophobia. The instrument underwent expert validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and contextual appropriateness following recommended validation practices (Polit & Beck, 2006). Items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, and internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha as recommended in classical test theory (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020).

Procedure

Data collection was conducted after securing administrative approval from the school. The researcher distributed the questionnaires in a confidential and safe environment to protect participants' identities. Before answering, students were informed of the study's purpose and reminded of their rights, including the option to participate voluntarily and to skip any item that caused discomfort. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to maintain data integrity. After the quantitative analysis, selected participants were invited for short clarification interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed to support the interpretation of statistical findings, in accordance with accepted qualitative data-handling procedures (Saldaña, 2021).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were encoded and analyzed using IBM SPSS. Descriptive statistics such as means and weighted means were used to summarize perceptions. Pearson correlation and regression analyses were employed to determine the strength and significance of relationships among religious ideology, community attitudes, and psychological well-being, consistent with correlational research procedures (Reynolds et al., 2021). Qualitative responses from clarificatory interviews were analyzed using thematic coding following Saldaña's (2021) coding framework, which involved initial coding, pattern coding, and theme development.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical standards for educational and social science research. Approval was obtained from the school head and district supervisor before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and their parents or guardians, in accordance with ethical guidelines for research involving minors (American Psychological Association, 2020). Students were

assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. They were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. All collected documents, recordings, and transcripts were stored securely and were destroyed after data analysis. The researcher ensured that participation posed no psychological, social, or academic risk, given the sensitivity of topics related to gender identity and religion.

Results and Discussion

What is the extent of religion's role in shaping the community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students in terms of Conservative Interpretations, Progressive Interpretations, and Inclusive Interpretations?

Table 1. *The extent of religion's role in shaping the community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students in terms of Conservative Interpretations*

Statements	*Mean*	*Description*
Influence LGBTQ acceptance in communities.	4.15	High
Guide public opinion on LGBTQ.	4.30	Very High
Broadly influence stigma toward LGBTQ Individuals	3.95	High
Fuels resistance to LGBTQ rights.	4.50	Very High
Dictate moral judgements.	4.75	Very High
Average Weighted Mean	4.33	Very High

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 – Very High, 3.41 – 4.20- High, 2.61-3.40- Moderate, 1.81 – 2.60 – Low, 1.00 – 1.80- Very Low

Table 1 shows the extent of religion's role in shaping community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students in terms of Conservative Interpretations. The overall mean of 4.33 indicates a "Very High" perception that media strongly influences moral views and social opinions. The media's ability to "Dictate moral judgments" (4.75) and "Fuel resistance to LGBTQ rights" (4.50) is seen as especially strong, while its effect on guiding public opinion (4.30) is also very high. Its impact on basic acceptance and on reducing stigma is slightly lower but still high (4.15 and 3.95, respectively). This suggests that conservatives view media as a powerful force shaping moral and cultural beliefs, framing LGBTQ issues as an ethical challenge rather than a civil rights concern. Because of this perceived influence, they support actions like media regulation, parental oversight, or promoting media aligned with their values. This belief reinforces polarization, as media supporting LGBTQ acceptance is seen as threatening and provokes more vigorous opposition. This aligns with research showing that morally charged issues, especially online, amplify conflict and outrage, and that audiences often select information that reinforces their existing beliefs (Mahlberg & Törnberg, 2023).

Table 2. *The extent of religion's role in shaping the community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students in terms of Progressive Interpretations*

Statements	*Mean*	*Description*
Encourage compassion and respect for LGBTQ individuals.	4.60	Very High
Can positively shape inclusive community attitudes.	4.35	Very High
Foster equality through openness to diversity.	4.45	Very High
Strengthen support for LGBTQ participation in society.	4.25	Very High
Promote greater acceptance of LGBTQ individuals.	4.80	Very High
Average Weighted Mean	4.49	Very High

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 – Very High, 3.41 – 4.20- High, 2.61-3.40- Moderate, 1.81 – 2.60 – Low, 1.00 – 1.80- Very Low

Table 2 shows the extent to which religion shapes community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students, as reflected in Progressive Interpretations. The overall mean of 4.49 indicates a "Very High" perception that media strongly promotes acceptance and social equity. The highest ratings are for the media's ability to "Promote greater acceptance of LGBTQ individuals" (4.80) and "Encourage compassion and respect" (4.60). Media is seen as a powerful cultural tool that normalizes LGBTQ identities, reduces prejudice, and fosters empathy through positive visibility in news and entertainment (Yarchi & Samuel-Azran, 2022). The "Very High" perceived effectiveness suggests that progressives view media as essential for social change, emphasizing the importance of authentic and diverse representation. The media's role in "Strengthening support for LGBTQ participation in society" (4.25) highlights the belief that cultural acceptance should accompany legislative progress (Galvan, 2020). These findings align with the Contact Hypothesis, which holds that media provides "virtual contact" that reduces intergroup bias. Progressive perspectives see media—mainly digital and social platforms—as highly effective in encouraging pro-LGBTQ attitudes, supporting equality, and fostering openness to diversity (Winkler, 2019/2020).

Table 3. *The extent of religion's role in shaping the community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students in terms of Progressive Interpretations*

Statements	*Mean*	*Description*
Promote equal dignity for LGBTQ people.	4.55	Very High
Encourage compassion towards LGBTQ individuals.	4.65	Very High
Influence positive attitudes in society.	4.40	Very High
Guide communities toward justice and equality.	4.30	Very High
Strengthen respect for diverse identities.	4.70	Very High
Average Weighted Mean	4.52	Very High

Table 3 shows the extent of religion's role in shaping community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students, as measured by Progressive Interpretations. The overall mean of 4.52, classified as "Very High," indicates that the media is perceived as having an extraordinarily positive and influential role in shaping social norms. The highest ratings are for "Strengthen respect for diverse identities" (4.70) and "Encourage compassion towards LGBTQ individuals" (4.65), highlighting the progressive belief that media fosters empathy, dignity, and acceptance for marginalized groups (Yarchi & Samuel-Azran, 2022). The "Very High" rating also applies to statements like "Guide communities toward justice and equality" (4.30), reflecting the view that media is not just for cultural visibility but also for promoting social action and political advocacy. Progressives see media as a tool to challenge prejudice, encourage inclusive discourse, and support policies that advance LGBTQ rights (Galvan, 2020). This interpretation aligns with communication theories, such as the Contact Hypothesis, which holds that repeated exposure to positive media portrayals acts as "virtual contact," effectively reducing prejudice. Social media and online platforms, with high user engagement, are particularly influential in shaping pro-LGBTQ attitudes, suggesting that increased media consumption may lead to broader societal acceptance of diverse identities (Winkler, 2020).

Table 4. *The community attitude towards LGBTQ in terms of Inclusion*

Statements	*Mean*	*Description*
I recognize that equal opportunities are given to LGBTQ members.	3.55	High
I notice the community values diversity and inclusion.	4.10	High
I observe LGBTQ individuals being accepted in social events.	4.30	Very High
I acknowledge that LGBTQ voices are welcomed in discussions.	3.85	High
I accept that inclusion strengthens unity in the community.	4.50	Very High
Average Weighted Mean	4.06	High

Table 4 shows the community's attitude towards LGBTQ individuals regarding inclusion. The overall mean of 4.06, classified as "High," indicates a strong belief in the value and practice of inclusion. Statements like "I observe LGBTQ individuals being accepted in social events" (4.30) and "I accept that inclusion strengthens unity in the community" (4.50) received "Very High" ratings, showing that the community recognizes both the social and ethical benefits of integrating LGBTQ members (Yarchi & Samuel-Azran, 2022). However, statements on structural inclusion, such as "equal opportunities" (3.55) and "welcoming LGBTQ voices in discussions" (3.85), received slightly lower "High" ratings. This suggests that while LGBTQ individuals are generally accepted socially and valued for diversity (4.10), there may still be gaps in formal equality and full participation (Galvan, 2020). Overall, the community's high perception of inclusion, especially its role in strengthening unity, provides a strong foundation for further progress. Efforts should focus on translating social acceptance into institutional equity and ensuring that LGBTQ voices have real influence in decision-making. This aligns with research indicating that cultural acceptance often precedes legislative or structural equality, highlighting the next step toward full social justice (Winkler, 2020).

Table 5. *The community attitude towards LGBTQ in terms of Discrimination and Exclusion*

Statements	*Mean*	*Description*
I believe some LGBTQ individuals feel ashamed of their identity.	3.80	High
I observe communities limiting LGBTQ participation in activities.	2.55	Low
I see exclusion happening in schools, workplaces, and churches.	3.45	High
I recognize exclusion from opportunities based on LGBTQ identity.	3.20	Moderate
I experience communities rejecting LGBTQ relationships and families.	2.90	Moderate
Average Weighted Mean	3.18	Moderate

Table 5 shows the community attitude towards LGBTQ individuals in terms of discrimination and exclusion. The overall mean of 3.18, classified as "Moderate," indicates that, while overt exclusion is not widely perceived, internalized and institutional discrimination are still recognized. The highest rating is for "some LGBTQ individuals feel ashamed of their identity" (3.80, High), highlighting awareness of the personal and psychological effects of stigma (Worthen, 2020). Institutional exclusion is also acknowledged, with "schools, workplaces, and churches" (3.45, High) and "exclusion from opportunities" (3.20, Moderate), showing that structural inequalities remain despite social progress (Hagai et al., 2020). In contrast, overt community rejection—such as "limiting LGBTQ participation in activities" (2.55, Low) and "rejecting LGBTQ relationships and families" (2.90, Moderate)—is perceived as less frequent. These findings suggest that interventions should focus on structural changes, such as anti-discrimination policies and inclusive institutional practices, as well as mental health support to address internalized shame. While social acceptance is generally high, there is a need to convert this goodwill into real equity, safety, and equal access to opportunities for LGBTQ individuals (Whitehead & Perry, 2020).

Table 6. *The community attitude towards LGBTQ in terms of Discrimination and Exclusion*

Statements	*Mean*	*Description*
I believe some LGBTQ individuals feel ashamed of their identity.	3.90	High
I observe fear of rejection affecting LGBTQ confidence.	4.15	High
I believe LGBTQ individuals are struggling with the acceptance of themselves.	4.25	Very High
I believe community attitudes can make LGBTQ students doubt their self-worth.	4.40	Very High
I recognize that LGBTQ people sometimes deny their true selves.	4.00	High
Average Weighted Mean	4.14	High

Table 6 shows the community attitude towards LGBTQ individuals in terms of internalized homophobia. The overall mean of 4.14, classified as "High," indicates strong awareness of the psychological distress experienced by LGBTQ individuals. The highest ratings are for "struggling with the acceptance of themselves" (4.25, Very High) and "community attitudes can make LGBTQ students doubt their self-worth" (4.40, Very High), highlighting the significant impact of societal and communal disapproval on self-esteem and mental health (Whitehead & Perry, 2020). Other statements, such as "fear of rejection affecting confidence" (4.15), "shame about identity" (3.90), and "denying one's true self" (4.00), also received high ratings, showing that internalized homophobia is a visible concern. While overt discrimination may be moderate, the psychological effects of stigma remain significant, particularly among youth. These findings imply that interventions should prioritize mental health support, destigmatization, and safe, affirming environments. Efforts must go beyond basic tolerance to actively address shame and fear, fostering resilience and well-being among LGBTQ individuals. The high community awareness suggests readiness to support measures that mitigate internalized homophobia and its long-term effects (Hagai et al., 2020; Worthen, 2020).

Is there a significant relationship between the Religion's role and community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students?

Table 7: *The significant relationship between the Religion's role and community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students*

Variable/Statistic	*R-Value*	*Interpretation*
(Constant)	4.85 (Sig. < 0.001)	Significant
Religion's Role (B)	-0.45	Significant
Religion's Role (Sig. p-value)	< 0.001	Significant
R-Square	0.386	Not Significant
F-Statistic (ANOVA Sig. p-value)	< 0.001	Significant

Table 7 shows the significant relationship between Religion's role and community attitudes towards LGBTQ Senior High School students. The overall regression model is significant, with an F-statistic p-value < 0.001, indicating that the model reliably predicts variations in community attitudes. The R-Square value of 0.386 shows that Religion's role explains 38.6% of the changes in community acceptance (Whitehead & Perry, 2020). The individual relationship between Religion's role and community attitudes is also significant. The unstandardized coefficient (B = -0.45, p < 0.001) indicates a negative relationship, meaning that communities with a more substantial conservative religious influence tend to have lower positive attitudes and acceptance toward LGBTQ students (Worthen, 2020). This significant finding highlights the need for targeted interventions. Schools and communities should develop secular support systems and inclusive programs to counteract the restrictive effects of religious conservatism. The results emphasize that structural and ideological factors, such as religion, remain significant determinants of LGBTQ students' well-being, requiring focused strategies to foster affirming and inclusive environments (Hagai et al., 2020).

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that both media and religion strongly influence community attitudes toward LGBTQ Senior High School students. From a conservative perspective, the media is seen as influential in shaping moral judgments and resisting LGBTQ rights. In contrast, progressive views see the media as promoting acceptance, empathy, and social equity. The community shows generally high inclusion, with LGBTQ individuals accepted in social settings and diversity valued, but structural equality and full participation still need improvement. Discrimination and exclusion are recognized at moderate levels, especially in schools, workplaces, and other institutions. Internalized homophobia is also a concern, with high awareness of shame, self-doubt, and fear of rejection affecting LGBTQ students' well-being. Religion plays a significant role, as communities with more substantial conservative religious influence tend to show lower acceptance of LGBTQ students. This highlights the need for secular support systems, inclusive policies, and educational programs to foster acceptance. Overall, while social acceptance and positive media influence are increasing, structural barriers, internalized stigma, and conservative religious attitudes continue to affect LGBTQ students. Interventions should focus on promoting inclusion, mental health support, policy development, and advocacy to create safe, affirming, and equitable environments for LGBTQ youth.

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