

Research Article

Perspectives of Cisgenderers on Cross-dressing: The Case of a State University in Claveria, the Philippines

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Abstract

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design to determine the perspectives of cisgender toward cross-dressing at a State University in Claveria, the Philippines. The researchers chose this site for the study based on the factual observation that residents, compared to those who live in cities, generally experience limited exposure to this type of content. The study involves students, staff, and faculty who are cisgender and do not cross dress who share their thoughts on the practice of cross-dressing on campus. The results showed that cross-dressing is mainly viewed as a way for people to affirm their gender identity and express themselves as individuals. There is some recognition that cross-dressing has become more accepted and integrated into society. However, there is also cultural pushback and moral objections, with critics citing religious and traditional values. Concerns remain about how cross-dressers will be perceived by society, the possibility of facing discrimination, and the potential impact on academic performance and involvement. The passage presents a nuanced perspective, acknowledging both the personal significance of cross-dressing for gender identity, as well as the ongoing social and cultural challenges faced by those who cross-dress.

Keywords: *cisgenderers' perspectives, cross-dressing, non-cross-dressers*

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Introduction

The youth have revolutionized societal norms by embracing their unique voices, stepping out of traditional norms, and expressing themselves in their own unique ways. People express themselves in different ways and one of this is through the clothes they wear in their everyday lives. Cross dressing, or the act of wearing clothing and accessories traditionally associated with the opposite gender, is a form of self-expression that has been practiced throughout history.

Cross-dressing, commonly referred to as transvestism, means to dress in the clothing of the opposite sex (Anupama et al., 2016). However, it was also added that cross-dressers do not only dress like the opposite sex but act as if they are in the opposite sex. Cross-dressing has been studied in the context of gender identity and sexuality, with ancient Greek and Roman examples showing both acceptance and condemnation of the practice (Govender, 2023). According to Gilbert (2022), the term "cross-dresser" is distinct from "transgender," as transgender individuals identify with a gender different from their assigned sex at birth, while cross-dressers may identify with their assigned gender. Cross-dressers are individuals who dress in clothing typically associated with the opposite gender. They may do so for various reasons, including personal expression, performance, or cultural practices. However, some individuals would not comprehend it because of societal standards and expectations about what constitutes appropriate clothing for men and women, which lead people to view cross-dressing as odd or deviant.

In society, the LGBT community has long been acknowledged, yet in certain instances, individuals still do not embrace them. And the situation with cross-dressing is the same. Cross-dressing is not embraced by some people in the community due to various reasons. One reason is the association of cross-dressing with effeminacy and homosexuality, which leads to hostility and condemnation (Govender, 2023). The lack of understanding and awareness about gender identity and transgender issues can also contribute to the negative attitudes towards cross-dressing (Murphy, 2010). These examples highlight the ongoing resistance and lack of acceptance towards cross-dressing, despite its recognition as a valid form of self-expression.

In the case of a State University of Claveria, the Philippines, incidence where few students cross-dress were observed. As much as an existing policy on this matter exists, this policy has been subject to debates among administrators. This sparked the

conversation about the University community's perception of cross-dressing: Does the current environment at the University truly foster self-expression for all students, particularly those who choose to express themselves through cross-dressing?

This study delves deeper into this question by exploring the viewpoints of cisgender students, faculty, and staff at the State University in Claveria, Philippines on cross-dressing among students. Upon investigating their attitudes and perspectives, this research seeks to bridge the gap between self-expression and acceptance within the University. Understanding these viewpoints is crucial for fostering a more inclusive environment where all students, regardless of their chosen form of self-expression, feel welcome and supported. The significance of this study lies in its potential to raise awareness and understanding within the University community about cross-dressing. The study's findings could also serve as valuable baseline data for future researchers and potentially inform legislative bodies about the needs and challenges faced by cross-dressing individuals in academic settings.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative design to explore the viewpoints of cisgender students, faculty, and staff at a State University in Claveria, Philippines, on cross-dressing among students. Qualitative research allows for in-depth understanding of participants lived experiences and perspectives on the phenomenon, which aligns well with the goals of this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To ensure participants with relevant knowledge and experiences, a purposive sampling technique was used to recruit cisgender individuals who do not cross-dress. The targeted sample size of seven (7) participants aimed to achieve a balance between rich data collection and manageable analysis (Guest, et al, 2006).

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, written informed consent was obtained from all participants. This document explained the study's purpose, data collection procedures, confidentiality measures, and participants' right to withdraw at any time. All participant data was anonymized to protect identities. Interview transcripts were coded, and any identifying information was removed before analysis.



Data collection relied on semi-structured interviews to gather detailed insights from participants. An interview guide containing open-ended questions focused on their thoughts on cross-dressing, acceptance, self-expression, dealing with individuals who dress differently, and perceptions of clothing norms within the University.

Finally, thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes within the interview data. Transcripts were coded based on content, and emerging themes were categorized and analyzed to understand participants' collective perspectives on cross-dressing among students.

Results and Discussions

To evaluate the program, the innovator conducted an informal interview with the teachers, learners, and their parents. Below are their responses which are subjected to thematic analysis.

Theme 1. Gender Identity and Expression

The first theme discusses gender identity and expression, gender identity affirmation and individual expression help to further understand this theme.

Sub-theme 1. Gender Identity Affirmation

Gender identity affirmation is the first subtheme, and it discusses how participants define cross-dressing as a way to express their gender identity. The participants' verbatims are shown below.

"Pertains to LGBTQ wanting to wear like women"

"It's the way they express their gender identity"

"Most of the time, to show who they really are."

The participants stated that cross-dressing is the desire of LGBT people to dress like women. Most of the time, it's how they display their gender identity that reveals who they truly are. Cross-dressing as a means of gender identity expression highlights how crucial it is to acknowledge and value each person's unique form of self-expression within the LGBT community. This discussion highlights how important it is to accept many ways that people express their gender identities.

In the United States, cross-dressing has been associated with the LGBT community, particularly among transgender individuals who may use cross-dressing as a way to express their gender identity (Reddy-Best, 2020). Cross-dressing can serve as a form of gender identity affirmation, particularly among transgender individuals. Psychological gender affirmation involves valuing

oneself as a transgender person and feeling comfortable with one's gender identity (Govender, 2023).

Sub-theme 2. Individual Expression

Cross-dressing as a way to express oneself through clothes is discussed in the second subtheme, Individual Expression. Below are the participants' verbatims.

"Like for example, Kung ma feel nako ang feminine side nako, mag wear ko ug something pang girlie nga style."

[Like for example, if I can feel my feminine side, I'll wear something more girlie in style.]

"Everyone is entitled to express themselves."

"It's a risk, expect stereotyping."

The participants said that cross-dressing is a way to express yourself through clothes that reflect how you're feeling. Which is acceptable because everyone has the right to express themselves, but cross-dressing carries a danger and frequently results in stereotyping. Recognizing cross-dressing as a form of self-expression emphasizes how important it is to value each person's uniqueness and ability to express themselves however they see fit. However, the recognition of related stereotypes highlights the necessity of social consciousness and the need to fight prejudice and discrimination. As a means of self-expression and a target of stereotypes, cross-dressing is complex. The discussion acknowledges the continuous difficulties society faces in fostering acceptance and overcoming harmful stereotypes.

Cross-dressing serves as a form of individual expression, allowing individuals to explore different identities and roles through clothing. According to Janusauskas (2023) it plays a significant role in contemporary men's fashion, challenging and reshaping traditional gender norms. The practice of cross-dressing is not limited to transgender individuals and can be a form of self-expression for cisgender individuals as well. Clothing can also serve as a means to masculinize or feminize the body for transgender individuals in the process of reconciling their identity (Strübel & Goswami, 2022).

Cross-dressing is a form of self-expression for LGBT individuals, often revealing their gender identity. It's a crucial aspect of the LGBT community, but it can also lead to stereotyping. Recognizing this is essential for promoting social consciousness and tackling prejudice and discrimination. Cross-dressing is a complex issue, requiring ongoing efforts to overcome harmful stereotypes and foster acceptance within society.



Cross-dressing, or the act of wearing clothing and accessories traditionally associated with the opposite gender, is a form of self-expression that has been practiced throughout history. Cross-dressing serves as a significant practice for exploring gender identity and expression. Bolich (2007) stated that cross-dressing can be a “behavior involving more than clothes” (p.221). It was added that some crossdressers cross-dress to express their gender identity. These people wanted to express that their “gender identity is not paired with their sexual body in the way their culture expects”.

Theme 2. Societal Acceptance

The second theme, societal acceptance, explores how society views cross-dressing and has several subthemes that elaborate on it, including social normalization, cultural integration, and trend influence.

Sub-theme 1. Social Normalization

Social normalization is the first subtheme, and it discusses how cross-dressing becomes normalized in society. The participants’ verbatims are shown below.

“Sa uban pud is gina consider nila kay gina promote nila ang respect sa usa ka tao, I normalize nalang nila.” [For others, they consider it because they promote respect for one person, they just normalize it.]

“Na normalize nalang bisan dili unta, pero saakoa lang kung unsa mo na gender panindigi ninyu, either men or women.” [It’s normalized even though it shouldn’t be, but to me they should stand up for their gender, either men or women.]

The participants said that because some people encourage respect, cross-dressing becomes more prevalent as a way to show respect for those who engage in it. Even though it shouldn’t be, it was being normalize. The participants also stated that whether they were men or women, they ought to stand by it since they were born with that gender. Cross-dressing has become accepted as a gesture of respect, which emphasizes how important it is to acknowledge and respect each person’s gender identity regardless of the assigned sex at birth. The participants interchangeably referred to gender and sex, indicating the need for increased understanding and education regarding the distinctions between the two. The discussion highlights how cross-dressing is now viewed as a

show of acceptance and respect for those who practice cross-dressing.

The journey towards normalization of cross-dressing in society involves navigating complex intersections of gender identity, societal norms, and cultural evolution (Govender, 2023). This normalization process is rooted in the ideology of normalization, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity and enabling disadvantaged individuals to be valued members of society.

Sub-theme 2. Cultural Integration

The second subtheme, "Cultural Integration," discusses how society has come around adapting cross-dressing. The verbatims of the participants are displayed below.

“It is accepted as a societal norms ky naa man juy ga practice sa cross- dressing, so people adapt.” [It is accepted as a societal norm that cross-dressing is practiced, so people adapt.]

“It is adapting others norms and there is no longer authenticity.”

“Depends on a society, others slowly adapting especially the urban areas.”

According to the participants, cross-dressing has become common since so many individuals do it already and society has adjusted, particularly in urban regions. Cross-dressing, however, is a practice where people adopt the customs of other nations, losing all authenticity in the process. Cross-dressing’s adaption by society, particularly in cities, points to a change in social norms that accepts a range of gender identity expression. But the concern of becoming less authentic emphasizes how important it is to maintain uniqueness and cultural identity in the face of social change. The discussion focuses on how cross-dressing is becoming more and more accepted in urban areas, which reflects a larger societal shift towards embracing variety in gender expression.

While historical attitudes towards cross-dressing have varied, contemporary urban spaces are gradually moving towards acceptance and normalization of diverse gender expressions (Govender, 2023). Veiling, another cultural practice, has been studied for its adaptive functions endorsed by religion and social norms. The process of cross-cultural adaptation involves deculturation of original habits and acculturation of new ones, potentially leading to assimilation into the mainstream culture of the host society (Kim, 2017).



Sub-theme 3. Influence of Trends

The third subtheme discusses how trends have an impact on cross-dressing practices. The participants' verbatims are shown below.

"Sometimes because it's a trend munang ginabuhat nalang pud nila and society adjust." [Sometimes because it's a trend, they just do it and society adjusts.]

"It's more on sa trend, and they are happy to express themselves, dili ta kaboot." [It's more on trend, and they are happy to express themselves, we can't decide for them.]

The participants said that even if some people don't look good in it, people generally follow the trend of cross-dressing. It's a lot closer to expressing oneself through trend following than it is to express oneself freely. The participants also added that it's their happiness which is we cannot control. Cross-dressing has become a popular trend, which implies that society acceptance occasionally values conformity over authentic self-expression. This likely restricts an individual's ability to express one's gender identity. The acceptance of cross-dressing as a means of achieving one's own happiness emphasizes how important it is to accept every form of expression. Through the use of cross-dressing to express gender identification, this topic sheds light on the complex link between society trends and personal autonomy. Even though trend following may be popular, happiness is still a powerful motive for people who cross-dress, even though trend following may be popular.

Cross-dressing is practiced by individuals due to various trends that bring them happiness, impacting gender norms and aesthetic expressions in contemporary fashion. The phenomenon reflects a shift in gender identity perceptions, blurring traditional boundaries (Govender, 2023). Additionally, Cross-dressing may also stem from an individual's desire to temporarily transform and explore identity, as shown in ethnographic studies of passing practices (Wong, 2022).

Society has accepted cross-dressing as normal, and people who do so do so out of respect for the person. Since some people already follow this practice, especially in urban areas, society adjusts to them, but this does not ensure that the norms we adopt are authentic. People are following it as a trend as a result of the influence of other nations. The complex link between societal trends and personal autonomy is highlighted, with happiness being a powerful motive for people who cross-dress. Cross-

dressing is becoming more and more accepted in society as a means of self-expression and respect for people who engage in it, this indicates a move towards more liberal social norms, particularly in urban areas. A complicated interplay between social influence and individual autonomy emerges when society grows more supportive of this practice, leading to a convergence of personal happiness with societal trends.

The acceptance of cross-dressers in society reflects a dynamic process of adaptation, where people learn to coexist with individuals who challenge traditional gender norms (Ussher et al., 2020). Cross-dressing has become prevalent in society, prompting individuals and communities to adapt and adjust to this phenomenon. Individuals engaging in cross-dressing undergo a process of internal change, adapting their cultural habits to function in unfamiliar environments (Kim, 2017).

Theme 3. Societal Integration and Boundaries

The third theme discusses how various influences on cross-dressing can lead to societal integration and boundaries particularly in formal institutions. This theme is further explored by the following subthemes: the impact of media and culture, institutional constraints and acceptance, academic engagement and identity, freedom, and community inclusion.

Sub-theme 1. Cultural and Media Influences

The first subtheme discusses the factors that contribute to cross-dressing's acceptance. The verbatims from the participants are below.

"Varied influences brought by the western that made this cross-dressing acceptable, cultural factor are the media, the entertainment, the urbanize communities and the peers."

"Sa social media gyud kay daghan naman mag cross dress diha unya kataw anan murag okay ra sa mga tao" [In social media, there are a lot of people who cross-dress and people laugh at it, it seems like it's okay.]

"Sa family, dependi sa upbringing kay naa man juy uban nga dawad jud sa ilang family." [In the family, it depends on the upbringing because there are others who are accepted by their family.]

The participants stated that cross-dressing became common in social media and entertainment due to a variety of western influences. In many urban locations, among certain peers and families, cross-dressing is accepted. Cross-dressing has become more accepted due to its influence from western society on



entertainment and social media. The acceptance of this practice, particularly in cities and within specific families and circles, may help create a more welcoming atmosphere for people who are exploring with their gender identities. The widespread depiction of cross-dressing reflects changing cultural influences and trends.

Cross-dressing has gained visibility in social media and entertainment, influenced by Western figures like Chas Bono and Caitlin Jenner (Govender, 2023). This practice is not new and has historical roots, with male cross-dressers using platforms like Instagram for self-presentation due to limited mass media access (Gilbert, 2022)

Sub-theme 2. Institutional Acceptance and Constraints

The second subtheme discusses how cross-dressing is seen as acceptable in schools, though with some limitations. Below are the participants' verbatims.

“Not too revealing, formal way of cross-dressing if ever.”

“Dili lang pud oa, kung naa sa institution naay limit.” [It's not just that, if you're in an institution there's a limit.]

“Yes, acceptance of cross-dressing here in the school is okay for me, pero naa gyapoy limitations.” [Yes, acceptance of cross-dressing here in the school is okay for me, but there are limitations.]

According to the participants, cross-dressing should only ever be done in a formal manner if it is ever going to be acceptable. Cross-dressing in school is acceptable as long as there are limits and it stays within the constraints of the institution. It is possible that the emphasis on formal cross-dressing restricts the range of self-expression and diversity because it conforms to traditional conventions of gender expression. But the fact that cross-dressing can happen in schools with particular restrictions shows willingness to accommodate differences in how people express themselves while upholding institutional standards. The perceptions of the participants reflect the complex attitude to cross-dressing, which strikes a balance between respecting individual expression within educational institutions and traditional expectations.

Cross-dressing has historically been accepted in educational institutions but with limitations. In the late 19th century, cross-dressing was popular in Cambridge University student societies, particularly in drama and social events, where male and female students were segregated (Janes, 2022). However, there were societal fears about the blurring of gender

distinctions due to education, with concerns about masculinity in women and femininity in men. Similarly, records from Cambridge University show that cross-dressing was popular in social events and drama performances, with male and female students segregated due to moral concerns, leading to plays being acted entirely by one gender (O'nions, 2015).

Sub-theme 3. Impact on Academic Engagement

The third subtheme discusses how cross-dressing practices affect students' performance in school. Below are the participants' verbatims.

“Nahitabo man jud ni sa among school before and for me ma-hinder jud ang mga students to express themselves kung dili sila I allow and affect as well their academic performance.” [This has also happened in our school before and for me it will hinder the students to express themselves if they don't allow and affect as well their academic performance.]

“Yes, we do not limit them to express themselves, with restrictions of course and it also affect their academic performance.”

The participants discussed how the issue of cross-dressing had previously occurred in their school and how the school's opposition to students' choice to dress differently had an effect on their academic achievement as well as their ability to express themselves. It is said that students should have given freedom to express themselves through cross-dressing and still with limits. The participants' discussion of how clothing restrictions affect students' academic performance suggests that inclusive standards be adopted, and express a desire for greater autonomy and acceptance of different kinds of identity expression. The discussion emphasizes the connection between academic achievement and the expression of one's personal identity, stressing the value of creating a community in which students feel empowered and confident to express their gender identities in an authentic way.

Cross-dressing, specifically the impact of clothing choices on academic engagement, has been a subject of interest in various studies. Research has shown that clothing can influence perceptions of intelligence and academic achievement (Rutkienė et al., 2022). Opposition to cross-dressing among LGBT students can indeed have a significant impact on their academic engagement. Studies have shown that gender and sexual minority (GSM) students face increased risks of low academic achievement and poor attendance, with factors like



feeling unsafe and lack of support groups contributing to disengagement (Capaldi & Sykes, 2023).

Sub-theme 4. Identity, Freedom and Community Inclusion

The ability and freedom to express one's individuality, in particular, is discussed in the fourth subtheme as a contributing element to acceptance of cross-dressing and further encouraging community inclusion. The participants' verbatims are displayed below.

"I agree, I don't want to be a hindrance about it, depende ra gyud sa ila." [I agree, I don't want to be a hindrance about it, it really depends on them.]

"Yes, because it's a freedom to every humanity unless you are under discipline or any organization."

"Cross-dressing has really a big role when it comes to diversity and inclusion kay the will feel included and belong. Ky kung dili sya okay sa school so it means' it's not gender sensitive ky naa man jud ni sa ila mga third gender." [Cross-dressing has really a big role when it comes to diversity and inclusion because they will feel included and belong. If it's not okay in school, it means it's not gender sensitive because it's part of them as third gender.]

The participants stated that it depends on those who cross-dress, they don't want to obstruct others' desires or hinder one's capacity to express themselves through cross-dressing. For the same reason that they have rights unless they are subject to discipline or belong to groups where they are required to abide by rules and regulations. Additionally, it is said that schools that accepts cross-dressing play a significant role in diversity because those who oppose the practice perceive the institution as being less inclusive and not gender sensitive. The participants' recognition of people's freedom to express themselves through cross-dressing points to the necessity for institutions to strike a balance between fostering diversity while adhering to standards. This discussion emphasizes how difficult it is to strike a balance between freedom and rights of individuals and institutional standards. It also emphasizes how important educational institutions are in shaping attitudes towards gender diversity and sensitivity.

Acceptance of cross-dressing can indeed encourage inclusion, as it falls within the realm of gender diversity and challenges societal norms. Cross-dressing has historical roots in ancient Greek and Roman cultures, where attitudes varied from social acceptance (Salimath et al., 2014). Ball (2019) talks about how

gender-stereotyping theory says that gender isn't always straightforward and can be different for everyone. It suggests that instead of putting people into strict boxes based on gender, we should focus on treating everyone fairly based on how they express themselves. This means giving people equal rights and protections based on how they show their gender, rather than sticking to rigid ideas of what gender should be.

Cross-dressing is generally accepted due to social media and entertainment, especially in urban areas and family. However, participants suggest formal limitations and a focus on comfort, especially in formal organizations. This would improve academic performance and motivation for students, making cross-dressers feel included and valued. It emphasizes how crucial it is to create precise guidelines and restrictions on cross-dressing, especially in educational settings, in order to promote social integration and provide a positive learning environment. By putting in place clear guidelines that value people's freedom of expression, encourage inclusivity, and support academic success. The focus of this discussion is on the role that educational institutions play in helping people navigate social norms and create communities where people of different identities are recognized and respected.

The use of social media by transgender individuals has shown potential in enhancing social support and acceptance, ultimately fostering a more inclusive offline social environment (Stagg, 2019). The presence of transphobic discourse in school settings can lead to marginalization and erasure of trans students' identities, affecting their overall well-being and academic performance (Hazel et al., 2019). The lack of visibility of LGBT experiences in the curriculum can result in alienation and hinder students' sense of belonging, ultimately impacting their academic success (Mitchell et al., 2019).

Theme 4. Cultural Resistance and Ethical Considerations

The fourth theme is cultural resistance and ethical considerations. Culture includes belief, culture, traditions, and religious affiliation. This theme talks about the resistance to acceptance of cross-dressing due to cultural and ethical factors. This is further discussed by ethical and religious objections and cultural integrity and transformation.

Sub-theme 1. Ethical and Religious Objections

The first subtheme addresses moral and theological arguments against allowing cross-dressing, especially in educational settings. Below are the participants' verbatims.



“Cross-dressers are blinded by the truth. Cross-dressing is a joke, it’s unusual, it gains disrespect. But walay makapugong nila. Saunang panahon salawayon man kaayu na, pero kay trending man sa community” [Cross-dressers are blinded by the truth. Cross-dressing is a joke, it’s unusual, it gains disrespect. But no one can stop them. At first it was disgusting, but it’s trending in the community.]

“It violates the values, the law of God”

“I don’t find it nice, no no no. Because my bias is really what the Bible tells.”

Participants said that those who cross-dress are deaf to reality. Cross-dressing is strange and ridiculous, it is also a sin that transgresses God's laws and values. The participants said cross-dressing is unpleasant to observe and their bias is supported by what the Bible says. Cultural norms and religious beliefs intersect to shape attitudes against cross-dressing, as seen by the participants' reliance on religious teachings to support their bias against it. Efforts should be directed towards fostering open dialogue and providing education to foster understanding and respect for different perceptions.

The perception of cross-dressing as a violation of laws and values, including those attributed to God, varies across cultures, historical periods, and belief systems (Korneeva, 2012). Bolton (2020) discusses how cross-cultural ethical disparities can lead to fundamental divisions stemming from incompatible assumptions, posing challenges in comprehending and addressing issues related to cross-dressing.

Sub-theme 2. Cultural Integrity and Transformation

The impact of cross-dressing on culture, its integrity, and its transformation is discussed in the second subtheme. The participants' verbatims are shown below.

“It changes and bends the culture”

“Breaks normal societal standards, it’s somehow telling the world that we are empowered, that we can go against norms.”

“Kung icompare nimo atong culture before actually dili bya na accepted ay ang tradition ka hinahinay nag ka vanish.” [If you compare our culture before, it’s actually not accepted anymore the tradition is slowly disappearing.]

According to the participants, cross-dressing challenges cultural conventions and normal societal standards, while simultaneously sending a message to the world that it is okay to defy established norms and customs. Participants emphasized that, in contrast to earlier times, the culture is currently gradually disappearing. The conventional cultural norms as gradually disappearing may oppose cross-dressing as a form of cultural disobedience, as it is perceived by some. Cross-dressing is seen as a norm-challenging practice and the cause of gradually disappearing traditions, reflect contradictions between progressive and conservative ideals. A discussion that respects culture and traditions while fostering inclusion and diversity is necessary in order to strike a balance between various points of view.

Govender (2023) highlights how cultural resistance and ethical considerations surrounding cross-dressing are often rooted in divergent attitudes and beliefs within societies. This observation underscores the complexity of navigating gender expression across different cultural contexts, where norms and values may vary significantly. Cross-dressing can challenge and redefine cultural and societal norms. Individuals with contradictory identities, like intersex individuals, face challenges in traditional societies where gender and sexual identity are taboo, leading to social instability and condemnation. Ultimately, cross-dressing can both challenge and reinforce cultural and societal norms, depending on the context and perspective (Kornfield, 2011).

Participants criticized cross-dressing as strange, ridiculous, and a sin that violates God's laws. They believed their bias was supported by religious teachings. They emphasized the need for open dialogue and education to understand and respect different perceptions. Cross-dressing challenges cultural conventions and societal standards, while also expressing the freedom to defy established norms. They argued that cultural norms are gradually disappearing, and a discussion that respects culture while promoting inclusion is necessary. The participants' perception of cross-dressing as going against religious and cultural standards exposes cultural resistance and raises important ethical concerns regarding social acceptance. It becomes crucial to provide a space where different viewpoints are respected and integrated into discussions.

The acceptance of cross-dressers in society today remains a debated issue, with considerations of individual rights, societal norms, and religious values (Korneeva, 2012). Shinko (2016) examines ethical dilemmas faced by individuals who, akin to conscientious objectors, resist societal norms based on their



ethical convictions, often encountering opposition and social isolation as a consequence. While some may view cross-dressing as a sin against God due to traditional beliefs about gender roles and expressions, it is essential to consider the diverse historical, cultural, and legal perspectives surrounding this practice before making definitive judgments (Hasan et al., 2012).

Theme 5. Societal Perception and Resistance

The fifth theme, "Social Perceptions and Resistance," explores how society views cross-dressing, its impact and the factors that contribute to resistance.

Sub-theme 1. Psychological Well-Being and Social Perception

The first subtheme discusses how society views cross-dressing and how this influences the psychological health of those who engage in it. Below are the participants' verbatims.

"Cross-dressing I think dili pata ready ani, because diri sa school, diri ang molding to be a professional ug para pud na marespetohan sila." [Cross-dressing I think we're not ready for this, because here in school, here is the molding of students to be professionals and also to respect them.]

"It's gaining disrespect."

"You know what they're torturing their body just to look pretty ang uban ana sa ila panghilantan, naa gani issue ana na namatay." [You know what they're torturing their body just to look pretty some of them had a fever, there's even an issue that someone died because of it.]

The participants stated that we are not prepared for the acceptance of cross-dressing in schools. Because the goal of this institution should be to respect and mold students into professionals. Additionally, it is said that this cross-dressing gain disrespect. Cross-dressers sometimes put pressure on themselves to be attractive in society, yet despite their best efforts, this negatively impacts their bodies and minds. Opposition to acceptance of cross-dressing in educational institution with a reason that it is seen as disrespectful and as a contradiction between one's right to personal expression and one's professional growth. It highlights the conflict that exists between personal freedom of expression and institutional norms. Policies that promote a welcoming climate while respecting individual identities are necessary in schools to manage these complications. Significant psychological and

physical demands are placed on people who cross-dress in an attempt to gain social acceptance. Cross-dressers had difficulties in their attempts to live up to social norms and beauty standards, which are reflections of larger social pressures.

Cross-dressers face significant pressures to conform to societal norms, impacting their mental and physical well-being. Studies highlight how transvestites experience social pressures, such as ridicule and family rejection, leading them to escape from their homes to avoid negative reactions (Fernandez-Rouco et al., 2020). These pressures to be attractive to society can have profound effects on the mental health and self-perception of cross-dressers, highlighting the complex interplay between societal expectations and individual identity (Afrina, 2015). Transgender older adults, who have faced significant trauma and discrimination throughout their lives, are particularly vulnerable to judgment and microaggressions, impacting their mental and physical health (Cook-Daniels, 2019)

Sub-theme 2. Experience of Discrimination

The second sub-theme talks about the experiences of cross-dressers in society, which includes discrimination. The participants' verbatims are shown below.

"Ma judge especially sa mga older generation/ not open-minded." [They will be judge especially by the older generation/ not open-minded.]

"Discriminated tapos ang uban ma sita sa school." [They were discriminated and others were reprimanded from school.]

"Ma feel nila dili sila acceptable, naa gyapon na silay fear, dili sila certain ba kung dawat ba sila sa usa ka community." [They feel they are not acceptable, they already have fear, they are not sure if they are accepted in a community.]

"Bully and they will be ashamed, outcast."

Participants said that cross-dressers frequently faced discrimination in society, particularly from older members of the community. Others face discrimination, warnings, and corrections in school. In addition to feeling unaccepted, cross-dressers worry about their acceptance, knowing that it is uncertain. They are rejected, embarrassed, and bullied as well. Cross-dressers' unfavorable experiences in society indicate a serious lack of societal acceptance and understanding of gender variation. The pressures placed on cross-dressers by society can



also have significant psychological effects. These difficulties draw attention to the larger problem of misconceptions regarding non-traditional gender presentation and underscore the importance of creating an atmosphere where people feel appreciated and accepted for who they are, regardless of how they look and their identity.

Cross-dressers often face societal judgment, including from elders, due to historical and cultural perceptions. In ancient times, cross-dressing was met with varying attitudes, with instances of acceptance in certain contexts but condemnation linked to effeminacy and homosexuality in others (Steadman, 2018). Cross-dressers, often associated with the transgender community, face discrimination and bullying in society. Research indicates that transgender individuals, including cross-dressers, experience various forms of bullying such as verbal, non-verbal, physical, and sexual (Aslam et al., 2022).

Participants expressed disapproval of cross-dressing in schools, stating that the institution should focus on respecting and molding students into professionals. Cross-dressers often exert pressure to be attractive in society, which can negatively impact their physical and mental health. Cross-dressers face discrimination, warnings, and corrections, as well as feelings of unacceptance, rejection, embarrassment, and bullying.

The resistance to cross-dressing in educational institutions reflects society's disapproval of non-traditional gender expression. The way society views cross-dressers affect their mental and physical health and feeds the cycle of discrimination and rejection. In which emphasize policy and transformative discussion to promote diversity in schools and larger communities.

Societal resistance to cross-dressing has been prevalent throughout history, reflecting varying attitudes and norms (Govender, 2023). Similarly, contemporary research on transgender individuals highlights the challenges faced due to societal pressures to conform to binary gender norms. Additionally, they are subjected to social exclusion, victimization, and high-risk behaviors due to stigmatization (Ahmad et al., 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The results of the present study showed that for cisgender non-cross-dressers, cross-dressing is primarily seen as a crucial means of gender identity affirmation, particularly among transgender individuals, emphasizing the importance of

acknowledging diverse forms of self-expression within the LGBT community.

Moreover, it is a significant practice for exploring gender identity, allowing individuals to express that their gender identity may not align with societal expectations tied to their physical bodies. Additionally, societal acceptance of cross-dressers reflects a dynamic process of adapting to individuals who challenge traditional gender norms, although this adaptation varies across different communities.

Furthermore, the use of social media by transgender individuals can enhance social support and acceptance, fostering a more inclusive offline environment, while the presence of transphobic discourse in schools can marginalize trans students and affect their well-being. Despite some cultural resistance and ethical considerations, the broader societal perception of cross-dressing remains a debated issue, influenced by historical, cultural, and legal perspectives.

Also, the study revealed that the current environment at the University does allow for self-expression among students, including those who choose to express themselves through cross-dressing, but there are notable limitations and societal pressures which are (1) Individual Expression and Acceptance: Cross-dressing is recognized as a form of self-expression, and participants acknowledge that everyone is entitled to express themselves. However, this expression often comes with the risk of stereotyping and societal prejudices, indicating a complex and somewhat conditional acceptance; (2) Institutional Constraints: Within the University, cross-dressing is conditionally accepted, particularly when it is done in a "formal manner." This implies that while there is some level of institutional acceptance, it is bound by traditional conventions and formal settings, potentially limiting the full range of self-expression for students; (3) Impact on Academic Engagement: The ability to express oneself through cross-dressing has been linked to better academic engagement. Restrictions on this form of self-expression can negatively impact students' academic performance and their overall sense of belonging and identity within the University community; (4) Societal Influences and Trends: The normalization of cross-dressing in urban settings, influenced by media and cultural trends, has contributed to its broader acceptance. Nonetheless, this acceptance is often superficial, driven by trends rather than genuine support for individual autonomy and identity. In summary, while the University environment does foster some level of self-expression for students who cross-dress, this acceptance is often conditional, influenced by societal norms, and subject to



institutional limitations. There is an ongoing need for greater social consciousness and efforts to combat prejudice and stereotypes to truly support and affirm all forms of self-expression.

From this result, the researchers recommend that (1) schools may promote psychological gender affirmation programs; (2) increase societal acceptance through education and awareness; (3) leverage social media for support and visibility; and (4) address cultural resistance with inclusive policies.

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