

Social Acceptability of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Community among Local Government Legislators in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the social acceptability of the LGBTQ community among local government legislators in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga by identifying the legislators' socio-demographic information; perceived level of social acceptance of the LGBTQ community; factors affecting social acceptability; willingness to create legislation for LGBTQ welfare; and government interventions for LGBTQ welfare and development. Nine (9) out of 13 local legislators were interviewed, supported by key informant interviews with the Gender and Development Office (GAD) focal person and the local LGBTQ organization president. Data gathered were analyzed using descriptive, statistical, and narrative analyses. Results showed that local government legislators were generally accepting of the LGBTQ community but were neutral on issues such as same-sex marriage, homosexual sex, adoption by same-sex couples, LGBTQ individuals as church leaders, establishment of LGBTQ-based religion, and hormone replacement therapy. Socio-demographic characteristics were then associated with acceptance ratings on issue statements. Major factors affecting the social acceptability of LGBTQ among legislators were family upbringing and religion. Local government legislators were also willing to create legislation ensuring LGBTQ welfare and development, on top of government interventions for the LGBTQ community already present in the city. It is recommended that additional government intervention for the LGBTQ community and other stakeholders be implemented to improve their social acceptability among members of the local government unit.

Keywords: *LGBTQ, social acceptability, local legislators*

INTRODUCTION

LGBTQ, which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, is an umbrella term for a group of people composed of different gender identities and sexual orientations aside from the male-female norm. This particular minority social group experiences marginalization and social exclusion that traverse seven (7) thematic areas of Education, Health, Employment, Family Affairs, Religion, Media, and Politics, according to the reports by the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (2014).

In the Philippines, five (5) out of 81 provinces and 16 out of 1,637 municipalities and cities have enacted anti-discrimination ordinances to protect the LGBTQ community (Manalastas, n.d.). Aside from these ordinances, no existing national law specifically protects LGBTQ individuals from discrimination, except for Article II, Section 11 of the Philippine Constitution,

Section 3 of Republic Act 9710 (Magna Carta of Women), and the Memorandum for the Civil Service Commission and Department of Social Welfare and Development. House Bill 4982 or "An Act Prohibiting Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity or Expression (SOGIE) and Providing Penalties Therefore," which aims to protect LGBTQ individuals from discriminatory acts, managed to reach its third and final reading in the House of Representatives (Cupin, 2017). However, toward the end of the 17th congress, the upper chamber failed to pass the bill due to opposition from certain senators, such as Sen. Vicente Castillo Sotto III, Sen. Emmanuel Dapidran Pacquiao, and Sen. Joel Villanueva. Sen. Sotto, current Senate president, strongly expressed his opposition to the bill, saying it has no chance of being passed if it "focused on gays... and religious and academic freedom [is] impeded; [and] smuggling of same-sex marriage [is facilitated]" (Sotto, 2019 as cited in Rey, 2019). The SOGIE Bill has been drafted 19 years ago and until now it has not been passed into law (de Guzman, 2019). The SOGIE bill was refiled in the 18th congress (Rey, 2019).

The LGBTQ community must first be accepted to encourage their participation in society. Social acceptance, defined as the quality of being accepted by a certain organization or group, involves the psychological inclusion of a minority group in a certain community (Chen and Hamilton, 2015) and is positively linked to prosocial behaviors or voluntary behaviors intended to benefit others. However, it is also negatively linked to aggression and disruptive and shy behaviors (Halcrow, 2007). Social rejection could lead to behaviors and actions against the rejecting group and could motivate participation in mass demonstrations, protests, and petition signing (Bäck and Bäck, 2014 as cited in Knapton, Bäck, and Bäck, 2014). Moreover, rejected individuals are more inclined to be politically active toward the outgroup (Bäck and Bäck, 2014). The creation of legislations inclusive of the LGBTQ community, particularly the passage of an anti-discrimination law, is one of the advo-

cacies of LGBTQ organizations and their allies (e.g., LAGABLAB, Amnesty International-Philippines). Enacting legislations or policies for the LGBTQ community would increase their involvement in society and facilitate their social acceptance. LGBTQ organizations focus primarily on the approval of anti-discrimination laws before any other LGBTQ-related laws, since the prevailing prejudices and discrimination against the LGBTQ would water down the successes of LGBTQ-related legislations, such as same-sex marriage, should these be approved (Cristobal, 2015 as cited in Espina-Varona, 2015).

Amid the campaign for the passage of the SOGIE bill and the enduring call for anti-discrimination ordinances nationwide, it is important to determine the attitude of local government officials regarding the LGBTQ community, given that they are the ones tasked to formulate laws and policies in the country. It is with specific interest that the researchers aimed to determine the social acceptance of the LGBTQ community among local government legislators in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga, given that the neighboring Angeles City already has an anti-discrimination ordinance that protects LGBTQ individuals. The researchers also aimed to

determine the willingness of local government legislators in creating ordinances that can help protect the LGBTQ community from discrimination.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted from January to May 2018 in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga. It utilized a mixed methods research design (quantitative and qualitative) in measuring the social acceptability of the LGBTQ community among local government legislators. The method of research adopted involved self-report methodologies and data were analyzed using descriptive, statistical, and narrative analyses. Given that this study focused on the City of San Fernando, Pampanga and that the response rate (nine out of 13) was limited by time and

schedule constraints, results are inconclusive and cannot be generalized for other local government units in the Philippines. Study results, however, were supported by key informant interviews (KIs) with the Gender and Development (GAD) Office focal person and the president of SIWALA, an LGBTQ organization in the locality. An 83-item guide questionnaire was employed for the scheduled interview with local government legislators. The questionnaire consisted of six parts, namely: (a) socio-demographic information (b) perceived thoughts on the LGBTQ community (c) social acceptability of the LGBTQ community (d) factors affecting social acceptability (e) need for a legislation, and (f) willingness to create LGBTQ-related legislation. Each statement was rated from 1 (strongly unacceptable) to 5 (strongly acceptable) using a Likert scale.

The KIs conducted also utilized a guide questionnaire to support data gathered from local government legislators and to identify LGBTQ-related government interventions in the city. In addition, secondary data, such as the GAD code and the profile of SIWALA, were acquired from the GAD office.

Data collected were encoded and analyzed using descriptive (median, mode, and percentages), statistical (Spearman rank correlation and Mantel-Haenszel test), and narrative analyses. Mode, median, and percentages were used to analyze data from the guide questionnaire in assessing the level of social acceptability.

The association between social acceptability and socio-demographic information was analyzed using Spearman rank correlation to identify factors affecting the social acceptability of the LGBTQ community among local government legislators. Spearman rank correlation is used in associating ordinal or continuous variables and is expressed using the following formula:

$$(R) = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{n^3 - n}$$

Mantel-Haenszel test was used to analyze the association of stratified or matched categorical data, namely, marital status and educational attainment against social acceptability statements, and allowed for the association of binary predictors or outcomes. The formula for Mantel-Haenszel test is given below.

$$OR(MH) = \frac{\sum_1^i (a_i d_i) / T_i}{\sum_1^i (c_i b_i) / T_i}$$

In which:

a and *c* are the number of cases exposed and unexposed in a stratum,
b and *d* are the number of controls exposed and unexposed in a stratum.
T is the total for a stratum.
 The sums \sum are calculated for the *i* strata.

Both analyses were tested with 95% confidence interval and 5% level of significance.

Narratives of the key informants were integrated into the results and discussion of the study to complement and support the statistical results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In exploring the social acceptability of the LGBTQ community, this study adopted Chen and Hamilton's (2015) definition of social acceptance, which is the quality of being accepted by a certain organization or group, including the psychological inclusion of a minority in a certain community. Social acceptance is linked to prosocial behaviors or voluntary behaviors intended to benefit others.

Socio-demographic information

The age of local government legislators ranged from 38-71 years old (Md=59; Mo=38). Majority (22.22%) were aged 38 years old, followed by 51-71 years of age at 11.11%. The local legislative body of the City of San Fernando at the time of the study was dominated by male officials, accounting for 88.89% of the total, while the rest were female (11.11%). Moreover, more than half of legislators were college graduates (66.67%), followed by doctoral (22.22%) and master's degree graduates (11.11%). Two-thirds (67%) of respondents were married, 22.22% were single, and 11.11% were separated. One-third (33%)

of respondents have four (4) children, while those having three (3) and two (2) children each constituted 22.22%. Respondents with one (1) and six (6) children, meanwhile, each constituted 11.11% of the total. Majority of respondents were Roman Catholics (77.78%) and the remaining were Born Again Christians (22.22%). The income of respondents ranged from PhP 50,000 to PhP 500,000 per month, although 55.55% of respondents refused to indicate their monthly income. Some (33.33%) respondents reported that they handle personal businesses apart from being public officials, including being a resort owner (11.11%), contractor (11.11%), and delicacy shop owner (11.11%).

Social acceptability of LGBTQ community

This section discusses the results of the social acceptability ratings of local government legislator as regards the LGBTQ community on thematic areas, namely, (1) Politics and Policies, (2) Religion, (3) Family, (4) Education, (5) Media, (6) Employment, and (7) Health.

Generally, being a member of the LGBTQ community is acceptable (Md=4; Mo=4) among legislators, as majority of the statements were rated as acceptable. According to one local legislator, the LGBTQ community has equal rights and deserves equal respect as any other human being. Local government legislators also stated that LGBTQ individuals are committed, competent, and practice exemplary work ethic, so most of them find it acceptable to hire and work with LGBTQ individuals. They also accept LGBTQ individuals holding a senior position in the organization they work for. Additionally, as another local legislator related, gender should never be a basis for employment; instead, competencies and skills should be emphasized.

Politics and Policies. All statements were mostly rated acceptable aside from same-sex marriage, adoption of children by same-sex couples, and homosexual sex, which the local government legislators mostly rated neutral (Md=3; Mo=3). One of the legislators stated that same-sex

marriage is against the teachings of religion (Roman Catholic). Homosexual sex was rated neutral because local government legislators were skeptical of the act since, according to one legislator, it could be a source of diseases that homosexual people are purportedly prone to.

Adoption by same-sex couples was mostly rated neutral. One legislator expressed agreement, given that the couple could provide for the child or children. Meanwhile, most local government legislators rated the formation and existence of LGBTQ organizations as acceptable. Most of them even expressed acceptance of pride march, protests, dialogues, conduct of LGBTQ-related events, and having LGBTQ representatives to the legislative body. Most legislators also rated giving financial and tangible support to LGBTQ organizations and events, encouraging LGBTQ individuals to join LGBTQ organizations, linking LGBTQ organizations to potential partners, sponsoring LGBTQ-related education campaigns, and LGBTQ individuals running for position and being elected as a government official as acceptable. They also expressed their support to the SOGIE bill.

Religion. Some local government legislators held reservations about having an LGBTQ individual as church leader, although this was mostly rated as neutral by legislators. One legislator said that LGBTQ individuals being leaders of a religious organization might be acceptable, as long as they do not engage in sexual relationships and that they are committed to their faith. Legislators were also neutral about the establishment of an LGBTQ-based religion because, according to one legislator, it is against their religion (Roman Catholic). Having an LGBTQ church mate, meanwhile, was acceptable for them.

Family. Being an LGBTQ family member was mostly rated as acceptable by local government legislators.

Education. Being an LGBTQ teacher and student was mostly rated as acceptable, which is

also the case for sponsoring LGBTQ-related education campaigns.

Media. An LGBTQ individual as a media personality was also acceptable to local government legislators.

Employment. Being an LGBTQ military official was mostly rated as acceptable. Hiring and working with an LGBTQ was also rated as acceptable, as well as an LGBTQ holding a senior position in the government and an LGBTQ being part of an LGBTQ organization.

Health. Undergoing hormone replacement therapy was mostly rated neutral by legislators. Hormone replacement therapy, as one legislator who did not find it acceptable reasoned, alters what God has entrusted to an individual. Another was neutral about this topic because of unfamiliarity with the potential health risks of this kind of medical practice.

In addition, having close relationships with an LGBTQ individual (e.g., being neighbors or friends) was acceptable to legislators.

Overall, 83.33% of the statements were rated acceptable ($Md=4$; $Mo=4$). Such results provide a clear picture of how lawmakers viewed the LGBTQ community in terms of their social acceptability.

According to Randy Ocampo, president of SIWALA (LGBTQ organization in the city), the local government is very supportive of the LGBTQ community. In fact, SIWALA started as an initiative of the local government. Ocampo added that discrimination in the city is not that severe and that they feel the residents' acceptance of the LGBTQ community. As pointed out by Amalia Catacutan, focal person of the city's GAD Office, the local government has programs and projects intended for the LGBTQ community.

Factors affecting social acceptability of the LGBTQ community

The study also identified the factors affecting social acceptability of the LGBTQ community among local government legislators. Identified factors were then correlated to the level of social acceptability using Spearman rank correlation and Mantel-Haenszel test.

In general, more than half of legislators (66.67%) credited family upbringing as a factor affecting their social acceptability of the LGBTQ community. This was followed by religion (55.55%), work (22.22%), educational attainment (11.11%), and law (11.11%). A legislator elaborated that family upbringing affects people's acceptance because a person's values are honed inside the family. More than the religious beliefs, which may vary from time to time, values learned inside the family are brought and practiced wherever a person goes. Another legislator explained that some acts of the LGBTQ community are against the teaching of the religious sector (Roman Catholic), leading him to think that religion affects one's social acceptance of the LGBTQ community.

It was also noted that all local government legislators have LGBTQ friends. Most of them (77.77%) have LGBTQ workmates while sixty-seven percent even have LGBTQ family members. A study by Bukowski (2001, as cited in Gifford-Smith and Brownell, 2003) suggests that close interactions and acceptance may result in relationship satisfaction. Bukowski added that friendships may establish normative culture that shapes behavior, which may suggest that friends could affect the local government legislators' acceptance of the LGBTQ community, since majority (88.89%) of legislators have regular contact with LGBTQ individuals. More than half (55.55%) have at least weekly interaction with LGBTQ individuals and a few of them (33.33%) have daily interactions, further explaining why local government legislators were accepting of the LGBTQ community in general. Using Spearman rank correlation, it was es-

established that the more frequent the contact of a local legislator with an LGBTQ individual is, the higher the acceptance rating given to statements such as LGBTQ holding a senior position in the organization they work for ($r=0.680$), LGBTQ running for position in government ($r=0.680$), LGBTQ organization as a representative in relation to legislation ($r=0.680$), LGBTQ as teacher and student ($r=0.680$), making friends with an LGBTQ ($r=0.680$), LGBTQ as neighbor ($r=0.680$), LGBTQ as a health practitioner ($r=0.680$), LGBTQ individual undergoing hormone-replacement therapy ($r=0.689$), and homosexual sex ($r=0.689$).

Age and acceptance rating given by local government legislators per statement were also correlated using Spearman rank correlation. Results showed that there is a statistically significant strong negative association between age and acceptance of local government legislators to LGBTQ elected officials ($r=-0.6784$). This means that as the age of local government legislator increases, the acceptance rating for LGBTQ elected officials decreases. Moreover, a negative association was observed between age and acceptance rating on statements such as LGBTQ as family member ($r=-0.6957$), hiring of LGBTQ applicants ($r=-0.7859$), LGBTQ organizations having dialogues with the local government ($r=-0.825$), and local government sponsoring LGBTQ-related education campaigns ($r=-0.7601$).

Educational attainment was also associated with the acceptance ratings on the statements using Mantel-Haenszel test. It was revealed that local government legislators with higher educational attainment tend to give higher acceptance ratings on statements such as formation of LGBTQ organizations ($r=0.6853$), existence of LGBTQ organizations ($r=0.6852$), workmate as part of an LGBTQ organization ($r=0.7559$), local government giving financial and tangible aid to LGBTQ organizations ($r=0.6736$), and supporting the financial costs of LGBTQ-related events ($r=0.6736$).

Results of the Mantel-Haenszel Test also revealed a negative association between civil status and acceptance ratings on statements such as formation of LGBTQ organizations ($r=-0.685$), existence of LGBTQ organizations ($r=-0.685$), workmate as part of an LGBTQ organization ($r=-0.756$), local government giving financial or tangible aid to LGBTQ organizations ($r=-0.674$), and local government supporting the financial costs of LGBTQ-related events. This means that local government legislators who are single tend to give higher acceptance ratings to these statements.

Moreover, local government legislators with more children tend to give lower acceptance rating on LGBTQ doing hormone replacement therapy ($r=-0.6693$).

Willingness to create LGBTQ-related legislation

More than half of local government legislators (55.55 %) agreed that an LGBTQ-related ordinance is needed. They explained that the LGBTQ community needs support, empowerment, and equality, which could be addressed through legislation. Almost 33% of legislators said that there are already existing legislations in the GAD Office, while 11% stated that there is no need for legislation because the LGBTQ community is already organized and active in the city's development. While all legislators recognized the importance of legislation supporting the LGBTQ community, one of them said that class legislation is neither good nor necessary, explaining that passing an anti-discrimination ordinance meant for the LGBTQ community is a statement that LGBTQ individuals are different from others, which emphasizes that they really are different and excluded. Also, given that the LGBTQ community is treated equally in the city, the anti-discrimination ordinance for LGBTQ could be viewed merely as an electoral campaign. The legislator furthered that a legislation encompassing all genders, similar to what is present in the Gender and Development Code of the city, should be enacted.

When asked whether they know issues faced by the LGBTQ community, 33% of local government legislators said that, to their knowledge, there are no issues, since the city caters to all individuals and recognizes the rights of the LGBTQ community. Another 33.33 % said that an issue faced by the LGBTQ community is the lack of understanding about their community, since they have unique characteristics relative to the male and female genders. Meanwhile, Twenty- two percent of legislators said that the LGBTQ community is still struggling for acceptance, while 11% noted the discrimination and stigma that LGBTQ individuals experience in society.

Local government legislators also recognized the contribution of the LGBTQ community in the development of the city. Almost all legislators (88.89%) said that they are participative and cooperative in the programs and projects of the government, such as HIV awareness projects, cultural and art events, and hosting and events organizing.

In general, local government legislators said they were willing to create a legislation that prohibits discrimination toward the LGBTQ community as regards the following aspects:

Employment. Prohibition of the following: Dismissal of an LGBTQ individual on the basis of SOGIE (sexual orientation and gender identity expression) and rejection in terms of employment on the basis of SOGIE.

Education. Prohibition of the following: Refusal or expulsion by academic officials of students because of SOGIE and publication of information intended to reveal one's SOGIE; Provision of support to the following: Conduct of regular gender-sensitization seminar for different sectors of society.

Health. Prohibition of the following acts: Forcing an LGBTQ individual to take a psychological or medical examination to alter one's gender and refusal of LGBTQ patients; Provision of sup-

port to the following: Conduct of education drive about LGBTQ-related health needs and establishment of LGBTQ desks in health facilities.

Family affairs. Prohibition of the following act: Preventing an LGBTQ individual from adopting a child on the basis of SOGIE by inflicting physical harm or emotional suffering.

Politics and policies. Prohibition of the following: Denial of public service on the basis of SOGIE, denial of accreditation of LGBTQ organizations, denial of access to public facilities on the basis of SOGIE, and harassment due to one's SOGIE. Provision of support to the following: Creation of an LGBTQ desk in municipality and police stations or complaint centers, training of public servants to be LGBTQ sensitive, creation of a committee that specializes in LGBTQ-related concerns, creation of LGBTQ organization/s, provision of financial and tangible support to LGBTQ organization/s, conduct of LGBTQ-related events in the city, institutionalization of regular dialogues between LGBTQ organization/s, and support to LGBTQ-related events.

Government interventions for LGBTQ welfare

Among the present government interventions for LGBTQ welfare in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga are the creation of an LGBTQ organization, support to and participation in LGBTQ-related events, existing policies to protect the welfare of the LGBTQ community, and other future interventions.

Creation of an LGBTQ organization initiated by the local government. According to Catacutan, GAD Office focal person, the office has organized a civic, social, non-profit, non-secular, and non-political LGBTQ organization in the City of San Fernando, Pampanga. SIWALA, previously headed by Randy Ocampo, has been in operation for two years and has over 400 members in 35 barangays at the time of the study. It was founded in response to the need to unite, rally, and mobilize for the welfare and

development of the LGBTQ community (Constitution and By-Laws of SIWALA Organization, 2015). Each barangay has a set of officers and members under the mother organization to maximize participation among LGBTQ individuals in the city.

Participation in and support to LGBTQ community events. Catacutan shared that the city conducted a pride march in June 2017. The program was composed of activities such as pampering sessions, seminars, culture and art events, and the LGBTQ Walk of Pride (Catacutan, 2017 as cited in Arcellaz, 2017). Ocampo added that they conducted pageants and competitions on filmmaking, poster-making, and poem writing to promote LGBTQ rights and welfare.

A candle lighting ceremony and free HIV testing were also held as part of the HIV campaign, in collaboration with the City Health Office. Individuals living with HIV were referred to the Jose B. Lingat Memorial Hospital (a public hospital in the city) for medical attention. Gender-sensitization workshops were also conducted for public officials, in cooperation with UP Babaylan in 2016. Meanwhile, Ocampo identified events such as the team-building activity held every December to strengthen the bond between members and the candle lighting ceremony during HIV week in commemoration of those who died due to HIV/AIDS. Ocampo added that seminars were conducted in order to promote awareness about HIV, emphasizing that everyone, regardless of gender, is at risk of the disease. According to Ocampo, a section called Bahay Lingat in the Jose B. Lingat Memorial Hospital specifically deals with HIV cases.

Existing policies and future legislation for the LGBTQ community. Catacutan stated that while the proposed anti-discrimination ordinance in the city is currently pending due to the revamp of elected officials and shift in designated tasks, LGBTQ protection is already embedded in Section 67 of the city's GAD code. This section states that, "It shall be the policy of

the City of San Fernando, Pampanga to respect and protect the rights of persons with sexual preferences to recognize their full potentials. No one shall discriminate them with respect to employment, access to health, livelihood, education, job training and promotion, and others." Catacutan added that the GAD office has representatives in each barangay, from whom LGBTQ individuals could ask for assistance regarding the discrimination they experience. She admitted, however, that the situation of the LGBTQ community can still be improved, since the city is just beginning to support LGBTQ welfare and development. There were still unreported cases of bullying, discrimination, and physical harassment against the LGBTQ at the barangay level.

Future interventions. Ocampo has recently collaborated with the local government to draft a program that will provide livelihood for adult LGBTQ individuals. He added that he looks forward to the construction of gender-neutral comfort rooms dedicated to LGBTQ individuals.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

Local government legislators were generally accepting of the LGBT community based on seven thematic areas identified in the study, given that 83.33% of statements were rated acceptable. Some statements were rated neutral, such as same-sex marriage, adoption of children by same-sex couples, homosexual sex, and having an LGBTQ leader of a religious group.

It was identified that the level of social acceptability among local government legislators were affected mostly by family upbringing and religion. Also, local government legislators in frequent contact with an LGBTQ individual have higher acceptance ratings on LGBTQ holding a senior position in the organization they work for, LGBTQ running for a position in the government, LGBTQ organization as a representative in relation to legislation, LGBTQ as teacher and

student, making friends with an LGBTQ individual, neighbor as an LGBTQ, LGBTQ as a health practitioner, LGBTQ individual undergoing hormone-replacement therapy, and homosexual sex.

Younger local legislators also have higher acceptance rating on LGBTQ elected officials, LGBTQ family members, hiring of LGBTQ applicants, LGBTQ organizations having dialogues with the local government, and local government sponsoring LGBTQ-related education campaigns.

Local legislators who have higher educational attainment have higher acceptance ratings on such statements as the formation of LGBTQ organizations, existence of LGBTQ organizations, workmate as part of an LGBTQ organization, local government giving financial and tangible aid to LGBTQ organizations, and supporting the financial costs of LGBTQ-related events.

It was also noted that single local legislators, relative to those who were married and separated, tended to give higher acceptance ratings on statements regarding the formation of LGBTQ organizations, existence of LGBTQ organizations, workmate as part of an LGBTQ organization, local government giving financial or tangible aid to LGBTQ organizations, and local government supporting the financial costs of LGBTQ-related events. Local legislators who have children tended to give a lower acceptance rating on hormone replacement therapy.

The City of San Fernando also actively participates in LGBTQ events and interventions. Though the city does not have an anti-discrimination ordinance, it has integrated gender equality policies in their GAD code. The local government also have programs and projects meant for the LGBTQ community.

The study presented the areas of development that the LGBTQ community and local government legislators should focus on communicating to further improve the welfare of the LGBTQ

community. This can be done through the following:

(1) *Have frequent contact with LGBTQ individuals.* Building positive relationships and interactions with the LGBTQ community through events designed to achieve these goals may improve the social acceptance of the LGBTQ community. This is supported by the positive association between frequency of contact with an LGBTQ individual and the acceptability ratings given by local government legislators, as noted in this study.

(2) *Targeted educational drive and discussions with families.* Since family upbringing was identified as a major factor in social acceptability, discussion on issues regarding LGBTQ community targeted toward families may be an effective strategy. Creating this kind of intervention may increase acceptability among present and future local government legislators.

(3) *Targeted educational drive and discussions with religious organizations.* Since religion was identified as a major factor in social acceptability, educational drives, dialogues, and discussions with religious organization may be explored as an option to improve the social acceptability of the LGBTQ community among local government legislators.

(4) Maintain government interventions for LGBTQ welfare and development in general.

Future studies using large sample sizes could explore including the perspective of the public on the issue. Interviewing selected citizens will further confirm or debunk the data gathered and triangulate it with LGBTQ individuals in the community. Other researchers could also analyze the difference in social acceptability of LGBTQ across its spectrum. Moreover, specific social acceptability thematic areas may be further ex-

plored.

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