



Research Article

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Self-Concept and College Readiness of Filipino LGBTQ⁺⁺ K-12 Graduates

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Abstract

Does a healthy self-concept yield better college readiness? Does this hold true among LGBTQ⁺⁺ youth in the Philippines? These questions were examined in this study using the first-year students who disclosed themselves as members of the LGBTQ⁺⁺ (n=572) and who were enrolled in one state university in the northeastern part of the Philippines. The study utilized descriptive correlational design, and data were elicited from the Students' Profile Questionnaire (SPQ), Tennessee Self-concept Scale (TSCS-2), and College Readiness Test (CRT). Results revealed that the LGBTQ⁺⁺ Filipino K-12 graduates had average positive self-concept and were college-unready. Notably, sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation explained the variations in their college readiness. The test of relationship showed that self-concept was negatively associated with college readiness which could be attributed to the respondents' low academic self-concept. It is recommended that counseling and related support services have to be accorded to transgender, pansexual, asexual, and queer students to enhance their personal, social, and academic self-concept. Finally, transition interventions have to be designed and implemented to improve LGBTQ⁺⁺ students' college readiness. These are potential measures to ensure their effective and seamless transition from basic to college education.

Keywords: LGBTQ⁺⁺, self-concept, college readiness, K-12 graduates

1. Introduction

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) worldwide face continuing challenges on education (Burns, 2011). In schools, they experience discrimination, harassment, bullying,

victimization, and abuse compared to their heterosexual peers (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2012) leading to their poor educational outcomes (Kosciw et al., 2013). The LGBTQ do not only experience low educational outcomes due to their gender expression (Toomey et al., 2010) but they also show low self-concept due to their marginalization and discrimination (Bridge & Rimes, 2019). Several researchers have established that the adversative and intimidating social environment negatively impacts the self-concept of sexual minority youth (Woodford et al., 2014). This kind of social environment forces the LGBTQ to conceal their feelings and sexuality for fear of rejection, prejudice, and other forms of discrimination (Rivers, 2001).

Significantly, students' self-concept plays a crucial factor in their academic performance (Villaroel, 2001). Students with positive self-concept perform better in examinations (Boulter, 2002) while those with poor self-concept have low academic performance (WAEC, 2012). These pieces of evidence show that, indeed, self-concept plays an indispensable role in determining students' learning outcomes. Investigating the significant influence of self-concept on academic performance has been established in past studies but most of them were conducted in Western countries (Laryea, Saani & Brew, 2014). Very few, if any, studies exist in the Philippines relating self-concept with academic performance. With the recent implementation of K-12 program in the Philippines, much is desired in examining the relationship of self-concept with college readiness using the K-12 graduates in general, and the LGBTQ⁺⁺ in particular, as respondents. The interest springs from the fact that college readiness is a new construct in the Philippine educational system conceived with the introduction of the K-12 program and the graduation of the program's first two batches.

Given the foregoing gaps, a study in this regard is imperative for three-fold reasons. First, the implementation of the K-12 Program is new in the country, and examining the relationship of self-concept and college readiness using the LGBTQ⁺⁺ K-12 graduates may provide policy and programmatic actions needed for this marginalized group to transition smoothly and seamlessly from basic to college education. Second, there are scant studies showing the impact of self-concept on college readiness among K-12 graduates, especially among LGBTQ⁺⁺ youth. This study seeks to fill in the extant gap in this area, specifically in the Philippine cultural context. Third, the study contributes to the paucity of literature establishing the direct or indirect relationship between self-concept and college readiness using the LGBTQ⁺⁺ K-12 graduates who may need effective counseling and student support services that promote their well-being and academic success. Specifically, the study seeks to ascertain: (a) the level of self-concept of the respondents; (b) the college readiness of the respondents; (c) the level of self-concept of the respondents when grouped according to sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation; and (d) the relationship between the respondents' level of self-concept and their college readiness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 LGBTQ⁺⁺ Defined

The acronym LGBTQ⁺⁺, otherwise known as sexual minority group, stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. The pluses (++) cover other categories of sexual orientation like pansexual and asexual. The use of this term defines the members of this community in two distinguishing characteristics namely; sexual orientation and gender identity. Sexual orientation "refers to the sex of those to whom one is sexually and romantically attracted" (APA, 2012). The categories under this construct are: (a) gay men or lesbian (having attraction to same sex); (b) heterosexual (having attraction to opposite sex); (c) bisexual (having attraction to both sexes). However, since sexual orientation occurs in a continuum and it is also fluid (Peplau & Garnets, 2000), two categories emerged under this construct namely pansexual and asexual. People who self-identify as pansexual define their "sexual orientation outside of the gender binary of "male" and "female" only (APA & NASP, 2015). Specifically, "pansexual indicates attraction to all genders across the gender spectrum or "regardless of gender" (Elizabeth, 2016). This is the exact opposite of asexual as these are people who are not attracted

neither or to both sexes (Elizabeth, 2016).

Meanwhile, gender identity refers to one's sense of oneself as male, female or something else (APA, 2012). The categories under this construct include, among others, transgender and gender-queer. Transgender people "are those whose biological sex is not congruent with one's gender identity" (APA & NASP, 2015). The exact opposite of transgender is cisgender (cisgender man or cisgender woman) whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth. On the other hand, gender-queer "refers to people whose gender identity falls outside of the gender binary, thus, they do not identify themselves with neither or both genders" (APA & NASP, 2015). These people reject the term "transgender" because it implies a change from one gender category to another.

2.2 *Self-Concept of LGBTQ Youth*

Campbell (1990) defined self-concept simply as an established belief about one's self. While self-concept may be an issue among heterosexual youth, tremendous pressure is experienced by LGBTQ+ because of their unique gender identities and sexual orientations. Being part of the minority sexual orientation, these individuals are challenged to develop a healthy self-concept as a consequence of society's stigma (Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007). Concerning gender identity, Hossain and Ferreira (2019) argued that the LGBTQ's self-concept is intricately related to their social environment. This finding was affirmed by Russel et al. (2014), who claimed that homophobic bullying significantly influenced the decline of the self-esteem of sexual minority youth. Such happens because a hostile environment may bring about distorted self-perception, low self-esteem, and unhealthy self-concept (Rosario et al., 2011).

Similarly, LGBTQ who hide their sexual orientation may interrupt the development of their healthy self-concept (Bos et al., 2008) as demonstrated in their low self-esteem, negative attitude toward the self, and rejection of one's sexuality (Bauermeister et al., 2010). A significant factor for such a condition is when their sexual orientation does not conform with the established and accepted social norms of sexual identity and expression (Woodford et al., 2014). Additionally, the concealment of one's sexual orientation is significantly related to higher self-stigma and lower life satisfaction and identity strength (Jackson & Mohr, 2016).

Interestingly, differentials in the self-concept among LGBTQ exist, according to Savin-Williams & Cohen (2015). They reported that the self-esteem of lesbians is slightly higher than those of gay males. In terms of association, studies of Snapp (2015) identified that self-concept is positively correlated with sexual identification among LGBTQ. This information means that the LGBTQ with higher self-concept yield positive sexual identification. However, this finding was not concurred by Dahl & Galliger (2010) as they revealed no association between self-concept and sexual identification.

2.3 *Concept on College Readiness*

A comprehensive definition of college readiness is articulated by Conley (2007) who operationalized it into two (2) dimensions namely: (a) ability to be admitted in college; and (b) ability to succeed in college without remediation in a credit-bearing General Education Course (GEC). Specifically, Conley presented that college readiness constitutes four (4) cardinal elements: content knowledge, academic behavior, cognitive strategies, and contextual skills and awareness.

In the Philippines, the construct on college readiness came only with the recent implementation of the K-12 Program. This educational reform began when the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued the College Readiness Standards (CRS) which defined the competencies needed for the K-12 graduates to master and develop upon entry to college (CHED En Banc Resolution No. 298-2011). The standards were drafted by the Technical Working Group from the CHED, Department of Education (DepEd), and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The CRS explicitly measures the content and performance standards in the seven (7) learning areas namely: English, Filipino, Literature, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Humanities.

2.4 College Readiness among LGBTQ⁺⁺

The college readiness of LGBTQ has been reported to be poor compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Poteat et al., 2011). Among members of this community, gays and bisexual males have lower academic performance than the lesbians or bisexual females (Pearson et al., 2007). Using Grade Point Average (GPA) as an indicator of college readiness, it was found out that male and female bisexual youth have lower grades than those who are attracted to same-sex only (Russell et al., 2001), hence, it is evident that grade disparities exist between and among the LGBTQ youth.

Since senior high school track matters in college preparation, some findings reveal course-related differences among sexual minority and heterosexual youth members. For instance, sexual minority males show lesser interest in taking advanced mathematics and science courses than their heterosexual male counterparts (Poteat et al., 2011). In the same vein, sexual minority females show lesser interest in taking advanced science courses than their heterosexual female peers (Pearson et al., 2007). Stewart (2015) also reported that LGBT tend to enroll in fewer course hours than the heterosexuals. These differences in course-related interest may explain why there is a growing proportion of first-year college students who need remediation (Attewel et al. 2006) which may include the members of the LGBTQ⁺⁺.

2.5 Association of Self-Concept and College Readiness

A longitudinal study conducted by Guay, Larose, & Boiving (2004) has proven that improved academic self-concept ushers better academic achievement and vice versa. They reported that academic self-concept predicted the educational attainment of students over ten years. This study was affirmed by Gerardi (2009), who also claimed a positive correlation between self-concept and academic achievement as indicated by the students' GPA. Similarly, Zahra, Arif, Yousuf (2010) investigated the positive association between students' physical and social self-concept to their academic achievement. They reported that students with higher physical and social self-concept achieved higher scholastic performance. This result was validated by Rady (2016) who claimed that students' academic self-concept influences their academic achievement. On the contrary, Choi (2005) found that self-concept is not a strong predictor of academic achievement. Laryea, Saani & Brew (2014) found a similar finding which revealed that positive self-concept among Ghana high school students does not relate to their academic performance.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Gender studies in the past have generally grouped the LGBTQ as sexual minority students (Carpenter, 2008) which resulted in little knowledge on the differences of their status and experiences (Sanlo, Rankin & Schoenberg, 2002). In this regard, the present study used the term LGBTQ⁺⁺ to refer to the combination of sexual orientation categories covering lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual and gender identity to include transgender and gender-queer. This is to reflect the dividing experiences of this community with respect to their self-concept and college readiness. The term LGBTQ is widely used and accepted for researches on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth as it covers a broader range of sexual and gender identities (Stewart, 2015). However, the present study employs LGBTQ⁺⁺ to cover pansexual and asexual as other emerging sexual orientations. Technically, the study revolves around four (4) dimensions of LGBTQ⁺⁺ namely, sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. These constructs were all self-reported identities and orientations of the respondents. Sex refers to one's being male or female based on his/her genitalia, while gender identity is one's internal identification of being a man, woman, transgender, and gender-queer (neither man nor woman or both). On the other hand, gender expression is one way of communicating one's gender of being masculine, feminine, or gender non-conforming (i.e., self-presentation is not congruent to the gender expression of being masculine or feminine imposed by society). Meanwhile, sexual orientation refers to whom one is sexually or romantically attracted to which helps identify himself/herself to be

lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual.

The construct on self-concept is anchored on the Self-discrepancy theory by Higgins' (1987) in which LGBTQ++ youth try to align their self-concept in a heteronormative way. As society's socially acceptable ways, the heteronormative context becomes the reference point of gender identification, expression, and sexual orientation. The theory posits that if such congruence is not met, the LGBTQ++ are more likely to feel and experience high self-discrepancy leading to a negative self-concept. Fundamentally, the present study assumes that self-concept makes a big difference in the lives of LGBTQ++ students, especially in preparing them for tertiary education. Such is premised on the finding that adolescents with high self-concept achieve more and have healthier and more successful lives (Naz & Gul, 2016).

On the other hand, the study's self-concept was measured using the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale: Second Edition (TSCS:2). The scale measures the self-view of the LGBTQ++ in reference to six (6) dimensions of self-concept namely; physical, moral, personal, family, social, and academic. Respondents with high Total Self-Concept (TOT) score have positive self-concept as they feel to be people with value and worth.

The concept of college readiness in this study was operationalized using Conley's (2010) framework and the Philippine CRS. Thus, the study defines college readiness as the Filipino LGBTQ++ K-12 graduates' ability to: (a) show advancement and mastery of the essential entry competencies defined in the CRS; and (b) pass the GEC without remediation. In measuring the college readiness, the College Readiness Test (CRT) was utilized. Figure 1 below shows the conceptual framework of the study.

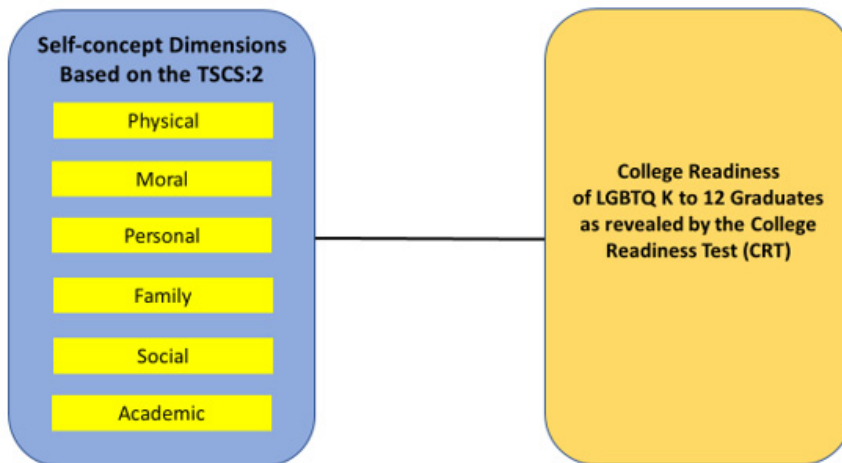


Figure 1: Conceptual Paradigm of the Study

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed descriptive correlational design as it determined the association between self-concept and college readiness. This design was utilized to investigate the nature of the relationship between and among variables and to examine whether a change in one or more variables is related to the change in another variable/s (Walker, 2005).

3.2 Respondents and Sampling Procedures

The respondents were the 572 K-12 graduates who disclosed themselves as members of LGBTQ++ community. They constituted 6.65% of the 8,601 first-year students enrolled in one state university in the northeastern part of the Philippines for School Year 2019-2020. In terms of sex, 266 identified themselves as females and 306 as males. In terms of gender identity, 308 have personally identified themselves as men, 253 women, 8 as gender-queer, and three as transgender females. Regarding gender expression, 139 have reported themselves as masculine; 90 as feminine; and 343 as gender non-conforming. Concerning sexual orientation, 79 reported themselves as lesbians, 163 as gays, 319 as bisexuals, four as pansexuals, one asexual, and six did not disclose their sexual orientation.

3.3 Research Instrument

The data on sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation were obtained from the Students' Profile Questionnaire (SPQ) which is utilized in profiling the first-year students enrolled in the university. The last portion of the SPQ is a self-identification questionnaire that elicits the students' sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

The Tennessee Self-concept Scale (TSCS-2), developed by Fitts and Warren (1996), was employed in measuring self-concept. It is composed of 82 items that examine how one feels about himself/herself. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) = Always False to (5) = Always True. Students who obtained a high score have a positive self-concept, while those with a low score have a negative self-concept. The respondents' T-scores were interpreted as follows: Less than 20-30 (very low); 31-40 (low); 41-59 (average); 60-69 (high); and 70 & above (very high). The TSCS-2 has a reliability coefficient of 0.82 for the adult form while it has a 0.72 coefficient for the child form (Pauldine, Warren & Swails, 2017).

On the other hand, the college readiness was measured using the College Readiness Test (CRT) designed and validated by the Project Research Team of the Discovery and Applied Research and Extension Trans/interdisciplinary Opportunities (DARE TO) Research Grant. The CRT measures the competencies in the seven (7) learning areas defined in the CRS. Each learning area has 28 to 30 items, and thirty-percent (30%) of the items measure content standard (covering knowledge and comprehension). In contrast, seventy-percent (70%) measures performance standards (covering application, analysis, evaluation, testing assumptions, hypotheses, and relevant information). Students who scored below 100 out of the 200-item test are considered college-unready while those who obtained a score of 100 and higher are college-ready. Additionally, the CRT had a difficulty index of 65.64, a discrimination index of 0.22, distractor efficiency of 68.91%, and inter-item consistency of $r=0.796$ (Tamayao et al. 2020).

The CRT and the TSCS-2 were administered in the eight (8) campuses of the university by the researchers, select faculty members, guidance counselors, and psychometricians. Standard testing procedures were strictly followed as there was proper orientation of all test administrators through the licensed psychometricians' technical assistance. The response rate was 100% because the researchers obtained the assistance of the university and campus officials who provided the necessary logistics, scheduling, and orientation to carry out the test administration. The results of the tests were checked by the registered guidance counselors and licensed psychometricians.

3.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was employed in examining the profile, level of self-concept, and college readiness of the respondents. Independent t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with Tukey post hoc test were used to compare differences in college readiness score among sex, gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation where the parametric tests' assumptions were satisfied. However, for groups with college readiness score that deviated slightly from a normal distribution, bias-corrected bootstrap

estimates were utilized. Kendall's tau-b was used to determine the association between self-concept score and college readiness since the self-concept variable did not meet the normality assumption.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) was sought from the respondents before administering the SPQ, TSCS-2 and CRT. This procedure was done after explaining the study's objectives to the respondents and after assuring the confidentiality of their responses and the anonymity of their identities.

4. Results

4.1 Level of Self-Concept of the Respondents

Table 1. Level of self-concept of the respondents

	Very low		Low		Average		High		Very high	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Sex										
Female	6	2.3	56	21.1	189	71.1	13	4.9	2	.8
Male	3	1.0	46	15.0	242	79.1	13	4.2	2	.7
Identity										
Man	3	1.0	45	14.6	245	79.5	13	4.2	2	.6
Woman	6	2.4	51	20.2	183	72.3	11	4.3	2	.8
Gender queer	0	0.0	5	62.5	1	12.5	2	25.0	0	0.0
Transgender	0	0.0	1	33.3	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Expression										
Masculine	3	2.2	31	22.3	100	71.9	4	2.9	1	.7
Feminine	0	0.0	16	17.8	69	76.7	3	3.3	2	2.2
Gender non-conforming	6	1.7	55	16.0	262	76.4	19	5.5	1	.3
Orientation										
Lesbian	2	2.5	16	20.3	58	73.4	2	2.5	1	1.3
Gay	2	1.2	20	12.3	132	81.0	8	4.9	1	.6
Bisexual	5	1.6	60	18.8	238	74.6	14	4.4	2	.6
Pansexual	0	0.0	3	75.0	1	25.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Asexual	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Overall	9	1.6	102	17.8	431	75.3	26	4.5	4	0.7

Overall, most of the respondents (431 or 75.3%) have an average positive self-concept (Table 1), implying that they have a favorable view about themselves. This finding also suggests that they tend to have a modest level of self-image with a confident feeling that they are persons of value and worth.

In terms of sex, both male and female respondents have an average self-concept. This finding means that both sexes have a moderate confidence level in anticipating events that might inflict threat or injure their ego. In terms of gender identity, most respondents who identified themselves as men, women, or transgenders have average self-concept while those who are gender-queers have a low self-concept. It means that gender-queer respondents are likely to doubt themselves and say negative things about themselves compared to those who identify themselves as men, women, or transgenders.

Furthermore, the majority in each gender expression group has an average self-concept, implying their tendency to say positive things about themselves without necessarily being self-efficacious. With such a self-concept level, they are more likely to be spontaneous, creative, and original leading to a desirable self-image. In terms of sexual orientation, majority of the respondents who are lesbians, gays, or bisexuals have an average self-concept. Meanwhile, most pansexual and the only asexual respondent

have a low self-concept, signifying that they tend to have negative beliefs about themselves and experience low self-esteem.

4.2 Self-concept of the respondents by dimension

Table 2. Self-concept of the respondents by dimension

Dimensions of Self-concept	Mean Raw Score	T-score Range	Descriptive Interpretation
Physical self-concept	45.17	41-59	Average
Moral self-concept	41.17	41-59	Average
Personal self-concept	38.88	31-40	Low
Family self-concept	42.17	41-59	Average
Social self-concept	40.41	31-40	Low
Academic self-concept	37.52	31-40	Low
Total Self-concept Score	285.74	41-59	Average

Table 2 reveals that the respondents have average self-concept along physical, moral, and family dimensions. Their average physical self-concept implies that they have a modest view of their bodies, health, physical appearance, skills, and sexuality. On the other hand, the respondents' average moral self-concept suggests that they are generally satisfied with their conduct, and they express a more consistent moral code. Meanwhile, the respondents' average family self-concept connotes that they have moderate satisfaction with their family relationship and view themselves with worth as family members.

Interestingly, the respondents showed low personal, social, and academic self-concept. The low personal self-concept indicates their tendency to avoid risky situations or challenges and their likelihood of being reactive to others' opinions and behavior. On the other hand, the respondents' low social self-concept is a sign of their social awkwardness which may be related to a perceived lack of social skill. Meanwhile, the low academic self-concept is a sign of their difficulty in performing tasks in school settings which may be related to actual scholastic performance or indicate unrealistic expectations about how they should perform in school (Fits & Warren, 1996).

4.3 College Readiness of the Respondents

Table 3. College Readiness of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
College readiness		
Not ready	319	55.8
Ready	253	44.2
Total	572	100

Table 3 illustrates that a greater proportion of the respondents are college-unready (319 or 55.8%). This result is reflected in their general mean score of 97.51, which is lower than the CRT's passing score. The finding revealed that the LGBTQ++ youth admitted in the university lack the needed preparation for college. They also showed the likelihood of not mastering the entry competencies in the seven learning areas identified in the CRS. Notably, these are the potential students needing remediation and urgent instructional intervention in the university.

4.4 Differentials in the College Readiness of the Respondents by Sex, Gender Identity, Expression, and Sexual Orientation

Table 4. Differentials in the College Readiness of the Respondents by Sex, Gender Identity, Expression, and Sexual Orientation

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Sex					
Female	94.51 ^A	19.42	94.00	92.12	96.82
Male	100.11 ^B	20.96	100.00	97.62	102.87
Gender Identity					
Man	99.51 ^{AB}	20.86	99.50	97.17	101.85
Woman	94.66 ^A	19.32	95.00	92.27	97.06
Others (gender-queer & transgender)	106.91 ^B	25.70	102.00	89.64	124.18
Gender Expression					
Gender non-conforming	97.63 ^A	19.65	98.00	95.30	99.82
Masculine	97.12 ^A	21.57	94.00	93.57	100.74
Feminine	97.64 ^A	21.76	95.50	93.18	101.94
Sexual Orientation					
Lesbian	87.46 ^A	19.33	88.00	83.13	91.78
Gay	98.65 ^B	21.52	96.00	95.32	101.98
Bisexual	99.09 ^B	19.24	99.00	96.97	101.21

Means of the same letter are not significantly different at 0.05 level

Table 4 shows that males have significantly higher college readiness mean score than females, $t(570)=3.299, p<0.001$. This finding implies that the LGBTQ++ who identify themselves as males tend to show more advancement and mastery of the entry competencies defined in the CRS as compared to females. Results also indicated that there were significant differences in the mean college readiness test score when respondents are grouped according to their gender identity, $F(2,569)=5.1666.278, p=0.0026$. Specifically, post hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated that "women" have significantly lower mean college readiness score compared to gender-queer and transgender. No significant differences were found in other pairwise comparisons in terms of respondents' gender identity.

Furthermore, there was no significant difference in the mean college readiness test scores when the respondents are grouped according to their gender expression, $F(2,569)=0.034, p=0.967$. This result suggests that their college readiness remains the same irrespective of their self-presentation. However, when respondents are grouped according to their sexual orientation, a statistically significant difference was found, $F(25,55866)=2.85911.287, p=0.015<0.001$. Multiple comparison test results showed that the lesbian respondents have significantly lower college readiness score than those who are pansexual and asexual. However, there was no significant difference in the college readiness between gay and bisexual respondents.

4.5 Relationship Between Self-concept and College Readiness

Table 5. Correlation between Self-concept and CRT Score

		Self-concept
CRT	Correlation Coefficient	-.060*
	Pvalue	.033
	N	572

Correlations were computed to investigate a statistically significant association between self-concept

and college readiness test scores (Table 5). Considering the whole dataset of LGBTQ⁺⁺ respondents, self-concept was significantly associated with college readiness ($\tau_b = -.060$, $p = 0.033$). However, the correlation was negative, which means that respondents with higher self-concept scores have lower college readiness test scores or vice versa.

5. Discussion

Central to this study is the examination of self-concept and college readiness and the relationship of these variables using the LGBTQ⁺⁺ K-12 graduates. Results indicated that the respondents generally consider themselves as persons with "average" value and worth irrespective of their sex, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. Their positive self-concept may indicate that they have supportive families, friends, schools, and communities since LGBTQ⁺⁺ youth who have a healthy self-concept have a positive and nurturing environment (Wilkerson et al., 2017). Hossain and Ferreira (2019) claimed that gays and lesbians tend to be more open about their identities and sexual orientation if they live in a more accepting and understanding environment which is an essential factor in developing their healthy self-concept. Supporting evidence also shows that the favorable social context of the LGBTQ youth is associated with a positive attitude toward their sexual identities (Snapp et al., 2015).

Of the six dimensions of self-concept, the respondents showed weakness and need for self-enhancement along personal, social, and academic self-concept. The low scores on these three dimensions indicate their difficulty in taking risks, relating well with people, and performing well in school settings. The weakness in these areas may be attributed to the fact that some may still have concealed their identities because the average age range of coming out is from 24 to 27 years old (Groves et al., 2006). Hiding one's identity is a negative factor associated with LGBTQ self-concept (Higa et al., 2014), and concealing one's sexual orientation is significantly associated with lower levels of self-esteem and identity strength (Jackson & Mohr, 2016).

Although the LGBTQ⁺⁺ respondents have average positive self-concept, they display a lesser ability in demonstrating the content and performance standards being tested in the CRT. The respondents' college-unreadiness affirms that LGBTQ youth earned lower grades than their heterosexual peers (Poteat et al., 2011). The college-unreadiness is evident among gays and bisexual males (Pearson et al., 2007) and female bisexual youth (Russell et al., 2001). They have less likelihood to take advanced math and science courses (Pearson et al., 2007) and take fewer course hours than their heterosexual peers (Stewart, 2015).

Remarkably, the differentials in the college readiness of the LGBTQ⁺⁺ are explained by sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation. In terms of sex, males showed a higher advancement and mastery of college entry competencies than females. They, too, manifested a higher tendency to pass the GEC without remediation than females. The result is corroborative of the finding that boys are more college-ready, specifically in mathematics than girls in the Scholastic Assessment Test and the American College Test (Combs et al., 2010).

With respect to gender identity, the high college readiness of gender-queer and transgender respondents compared to women can be attributed to their tendency to be non-conformist. Since they generally think "out of the box," they become more critical and creative, which may be carried over in their academic undertakings. This assumption is consistent with the Queer theory which advocates for anti-normative thought (Fryer, 2010). Thus, gender-queer and transgender people who possess this thinking are more likely to challenge and reject the realities presented to them. This instance may perhaps be extended in the way they learn making them more college-ready.

As regards sexual orientation, lesbians have lower college readiness than the pansexual and asexual respondents. The finding negates the claim that lesbians have higher academic performance than other sexual minorities (Pearson et al., 2007). On the other hand, the high college readiness of the pansexual respondents may be attributed to their tendency to be liberal, gender-diverse, exploratory, and creative (Galupo et al., 2017) which may be translated into how they perform their academic tasks and prepare themselves for college. This finding may also be explained by the anti-binary position of

pansexual people who view their orientation as fluid, unstable, and indeterministic (Giesekeing, 2008).

It was also found that self-concept was inversely associated with college readiness which means that respondents with higher self-concept scores have lower college readiness test scores or vice versa. The finding could be explained by the fact that the academic self-concept obtained the lowest T-score among the six dimensions of self-concept. The LGBTQ⁺⁺ who perceived themselves to be poor in performing school activities tend to manifest college unreadiness. This finding affirms numerous studies showing that low academic self-concept is a significant factor in explaining students' poor performance in school (Manning et al., 2006). Besides, according to Fitts & Warren (1996), people with high Total Self-concept (TOT) scores generally view themselves as having many positive aspects that can be called upon to compensate for threats or injury to specific aspects of their self-image. Considering that LGBTQ⁺⁺ often experience discrimination and marginalization due to their sexual orientation and gender identities (OHCHR, 2011), it can be viewed that those who reported themselves to have high self-concept use it to compensate themselves from these unfavorable situations. Because they show high self-concept, they tend to be overly confident and complacent in the things they do in life, including mastering the entry competencies essential for them to be college-ready.

6. Conclusion

The LGBTQ⁺⁺ Filipino K-12 graduates showed positive self-concept, however, much is desired in enhancing their college readiness. Notably, their sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation explain the variations in their college readiness. Males showed higher college readiness than females, while those who identify themselves as gender-queer and transgender had higher college readiness than females. Interestingly, the pansexual and asexual respondents had higher college readiness than the lesbians. The test of relationship showed that self-concept was negatively associated with college readiness which could be attributed to their low academic self-concept.

7. Limitations and Future Studies

The study is limited to the respondents' self-disclosed identities or categorizations which means that some may not have been comfortable disclosing their identities in the survey instrument. However, this may have been mitigated by ensuring the anonymity of the respondents' identities and securing their responses' confidentiality. The respondents' self-concept was based on their disposition when they took the psychological test (TSCS-2), and it is applicable only during the conduct of the study. Moreover, the respondents came only from a state university in the northeastern part of the Philippines, and the findings hold true only in its locale. Studies should be conducted examining the factors influencing the LGBTQ⁺⁺'s academic self-concept as this may unravel the challenges that may influence their college readiness. Also, further studies delving on the academic performance, school adjustment, study habits, and personality traits of transgender, gender-queer, pansexual, and asexual students have to be conducted as they show higher college readiness than their counterparts.

8. Recommendations

It is recommended that the university officials need to provide counseling and related support services to their transgender, pansexual, asexual, and gender-queer students. The provision of such services is one way of improving their self-concept and achieving their full inclusion in the university. Additionally, these interventions must be centered on enhancing their low personal, social, and academic self-concepts. Significantly, transition interventions have to be designed and implemented to improve LGBTQ⁺⁺ students' college readiness as these are potential measures for their smooth and seamless transition from basic to college education.

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