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## The Teaching Barbies of Physical Education in Public High Schools

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**Abstract.** Education is a process of welcoming truth and opportunity. It is the prudent, encouraged, and respectful learning undertaken in the belief that all should have the chance to share in life. Befittingly, there are no gender biases when it comes to being a teacher. However, this all depends on one's working environment. This study investigates the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of five teaching Barbies of physical education in a public high school identified using a purposive sampling technique. The inquiry is aided by a phenomenological research approach wherein the data were gathered using an in-depth interview. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis by Lichtman's 3-Cs: coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing. The findings showed participants' challenges, life as a teacher and adjustments as a teaching Barbie of physical education in the public high schools. These findings suggest a different perspective of being a teaching Barbie and a teacher teaching physical education that adheres to institutional standards of authentic education. Furthermore, understanding the teaching Barbie's situation needs to be addressed to attain the so-called "chance to share in life".

**Keywords.** Physical Education, Teaching Barbies, Self-Worth, Phenomenology, Philippines

### 1.0 Introduction

Physical Education has been a part of the teaching profession since long. The original backgrounds were recognized by individuals who taught in medicine but used therapeutic and instructive methods to aid people acquire and contribute frequently to physical activity. It is true that numerous contemporary professionals were removed to not so much teach physical activities, but physical educators still carry out activity instruction as their main purpose. A lot of physical education teachers teach in the K-12 curriculum and in colleges Basic Instructions Programs [1].

Education does not limit a learner to a specific goal of learning, but it actually opens up a multitude of areas that can give learners the diversity of instructions that leads to becoming educated. Occupational socialization is the learning of perspectives and practices essential to perceived and manageable capability within a context of occupation. These incorporate abilities through training, informal work norms, and peer-group values and relationships. In relation, gay physical education teachers are present in the teaching world. They have been a part of the institution for quite some time. These teaching Barbie's physical education have had hurdles to face in their jobs. It's not only the training that they have achieved that makes them adequate to

be the quality physical education teachers they ought to be, but they need to be aware of organizational transitions that will sufficiently put them in that standard [2].

Physical Education is one of the core subjects being taught in public high school [3] and is mandated by law in Article XIV Section 19 of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines. Being marginalized in the context of gender is quite daunting for physical education teachers especially in the start of their careers. One example is a study that was conducted by Saraç in 2012 [21] wherein male students have negative attitudes towards gay men than female students. Another example is the study conducted by Devís-Devís et al. in 2018, students legitimized sex/sexual orientation binarism and natural standards, irrefutably reflecting heteronormativity and, therefore, abjection toward trans persons. Others indicated challenges in accomplishing a genuine acknowledgment that would include, for example, a fittingly naming of sexual orientation personalities. They are referred to as “Barbies” in the gay lingo [4]. Some displayed their ability to regard, experience and acknowledge trans people. Moreover, the struggle of keeping up with the norm in the academe world is a battle cry for most Barbies of physical education in public schools. It starts with the preconception and questioning of relevance (i.e., why are you hired?) [5] of colleagues, from the interview part until it dawns to everyone that teaching Barbies are as competent as the rest of the workforce. With its boundaries, beliefs of recognition need to enhance empathetic imagination to foster the possibilities for recognition and dialog between coworkers [6].

Teaching in the public sector of Negros Occidental, created an observation with regards to teaching Barbies of physical education. Given the context, gender is not an outright criterion to be able to be considered as an educator or particularly as teaching Barbies of physical education. A lot of misconceptions arise due to lack of information and understanding. The occurrence of these teachers in the field is very much evident and that it created a desire to elucidative study their attitudes, beliefs and practices.

The interest of this study is mainly the phenomenon brought about by the number of teaching Barbies of physical education teaching the subject. How they normally appear in this particular subject area all depends on their resiliency, desire and adaptability. Hence, raising the question how they will be able to teach physical education being gay/Barbie and what is the meaning of them being a teaching Barbie of physical education.

Thus, this paper primarily aims to explore the lived experiences of teaching Barbies of physical education in public high school.

## **2.0 Method**

The nature of this study is quite sensitive. It is to the best interest of the researcher to be able to cull out the lived experiences of gay physical education teachers. Thus, employing a qualitative research design is best and the inquiry was aided by a phenomenological research approach. The objective of phenomenology is to depict the significance of this experience—both regarding what was experienced and how it was experienced [7].

Guided by the inclusion criteria the participants were selected based on their gender as of the time they started in the teaching profession. The participants were five gay physical education teachers in public high school that has openly admitted their gender/personality or being a Barbie. They are the best in their respective field and that they are well known for their individual general achievements in the academe world. And that they have answered the inquiry with utmost professionalism and finesse [8].

Led by the interview protocol, the participants were engaged on the importance of the study, the length of the interview, the interview method, material, discretion, agreement, and recording processes with the purpose of using the data for the result aspect of the inquiry. The

in-depth interview was done individually with the important aspect of questioning their attitudes, beliefs and practices relevant to teaching barbies of physical education in public high school. Consequently, this permit the interviewees a level of opportunity to disclose their contemplations and to feature regions exceptionally compelling and ability that they believed they had, just as to empower certain reactions to be addressed in more noteworthy profundity, and specifically to bring out and resolve obvious inconsistencies [9].

Data were gathered using an in-depth interview. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis by Lichtman's 3-Cs: coding, categorizing, and conceptualizing. This approach just plans to find and depict the developing effects or embodiment of the phenomenon as experienced by the participants.

Additionally, to expedite the phenomenological approach, the recursive textual data analysis was applied to figure out how the experience affects the participants who encountered the phenomenon ([10]. Its' essential position is that the most fundamental human facts are available just through internal subjectivity, and that the individual is indispensable to the environment [11].

Lastly, the participants were guaranteed of full secrecy. No data that uncovers their character has been delivered or distributed without their particular agreement to the divulgence and just when it is importantly vital. The materials that contained the raw data got from them have been properly put away and ensured so nobody can get to them. Finally, the data has been placed appropriately within a given period of time.

### **3.0 Results**

#### **Challenges of Teaching Barbies**

***Bullied from the beginning.*** Participants have had their fair share of experiences when they were growing up. Apart from the normal catfight with girlfriends and classmates, they also were exposed to bullying at an early age. Not only of having male dominancy in school as well as in their household in terms of bullying, but they also always end up crying like a girl and telling their mother or a very close girlfriend of their ordeal. They won't succumb in telling their father or their brother for they were too afraid of the repercussion. Difficulties doesn't stop there. It continues even until they become a physical education teacher. One becomes numb of this constant depiction of their gender that they just "pray" to be able to handle the situation. For that reason, participants do tend to stick to friends that understands them and accepts them. They do not stray away of starting an acquaintance to friends of friends for they are afraid of how they are being conceived. It was evident to what participants shared:

*I don't normally start engaging into a conversation to strangers for I don't want to be humiliated, one participant said.*

*I became aware of my gender/personality from the negative experiences I had in school and in my neighborhood another one added.*

*There's always a huge lump in my chest to being singled-out in a male dominated activity, like volleyball, another one said.*

This is usually the answer that participants kept on saying when they were asked about their experience.

***Discriminated at work.*** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of sex has been experienced by the participants. The reactions of how the gay physical education teacher managed to land the job was evident in the way they act like how they approach or how they talk with matching “raising of the eyebrows”. It takes a while for the colleagues to warm up in accepting the gay physical education teacher. Another is through knowing the department head and this makes it a bit awkward from the beginning, because of the “gossips” of how he ends up with the job circulates faster in the workplace. However, this doesn’t deter the interest of the gay physical education teacher to continue what he loves to do which is being a physical education teacher. He even said:

*Wala ko na lang ginasapak ang mga istorya sang mga indi nanamian sa akon (I just don't pay attention to the stories of those who don't like me).*

*I continue showing them that I am very much capable of doing the job and that I am professional enough in dealing with their actions.*

The constant ordeal that these gay physical education teachers face in their professions was never easy. Eventually, as time goes by colleagues starts to understand that it is beyond their gender that they should be accepted like most of the straight physical education teachers.

***Proving one’s self-worth.*** The learning of perspectives and practices important to perceived and economical skill inside a setting of work. These include skills acquired through training, informal work norms, and peer-group values and relationships. Gay physical education teachers open up about how they were treated in the workplace in the beginning of their career. The differences of each participants in terms of experience with their working environment varies. One has to prove himself that he is very capable like other colleagues who are straight (i.e., Girl/Boy).

*Regardless of being gay. I always show my colleagues that I can be one of the boys too. I play ball games with them or even chess and we always end up laughing so much and having a lot of fun, one said.*

*During in-service training, I become the in-charge of the opening activity such as the Zumba or the warm-up exercises. This made a venue for me to show my colleagues that I am a professional gay physical education teacher, another shared.*

### **Life as a Teaching Barbie**

***Surviving as gay.*** Status Quo is another factor that the participants shared. The way their social living conditions pushed them to pursue harder in attaining their calling. Some were able to go to school because of the scholarships they get from universities like being in the dance troupe, theater arts, or musical ensemble.

*I was lucky enough to be able to be given a scholarship because of my talent. And that gave me the motivation to teach in the public school the participant said.*

This paved the way for them to achieve their dream to finish college and land a job. Another matter also is that being in these scholarships lead them to become “gayer” (having to go with older gay people) as in having to go to the extent of using their physical body to be able

to generate some “income” (selling their body for sexual pleasure) in order to survive living. It really made an impact to this participant to have to experience this situation in order to reach his aspiration. Sharing this experience was a brave move and seeing him talking with utmost composure was a sign of success.

*It was awkward at first of course but then I always told myself that this is for a brighter future one said.*

It was a part of his life, but it was just a passing experience that he keeps and proving to himself that because of that it made him who he is today. A teacher in the public sector.

**Condition perceived as Barbies.** It is what makes heterosexuality seems clear, natural and privileged. It includes the supposition that everybody is "normally" hetero, and that heterosexuality is an ideal, better than homosexuality or indiscriminateness. Befittingly, this is where the participants were able to communicate further. The so-called heteronormativity in our culture is very much evident in terms of choosing your friends, your line of work, and your interests. In the line of work, they always looked up to their gay teachers specifically. They honestly shared that this is where their interest came from in teaching physical education. One participant said:

*I always looked up to my PE teacher when I was still in school. I love seeing him teach us different movements, actions, arts, music, and even discussing health. It was so funny when he discussed about sex education for the class went raucous. He did manage it well that the class became interested and listened all throughout the discussion. And this made me pursue even further in becoming a Physical Education teacher.*

The word interest kept on popping up in the interview. They have elaborated that in this interest sprung the desire of becoming a teacher. Their eagerness in teaching their best assets which is their talent, ability and capability made them chose their profession of becoming a physical education teacher. Lastly, the gay physical education teacher they had, become their mentor in pursuing their career in physical education.

**Molder of students.** This is the result of how the participants expressed their dwellings in becoming a physical education teacher beside the fact that they were barbies. The strong desire in making a way to shape and mold students and future generations through physical education is how they become fulfilled in their vocation. Additionally, being recognized by their students who already are professional like them made the epitome of their success a much sweeter one. This recognition was reflected by the response of the participants:

*I am so happy being visited by my students who expressed their gratitude that they became a Physical Education Teacher because of me is the most wonderful feeling I could imagine. These students are mostly gay one said.*

*They come to the school and share their time and even bring gifts to show how thankful they are is really fabulous, another participant said.*

*Showing support by my students in activities that I make even after they graduated is another accomplishment that I am very much happy to share in this interview. This just shows that I am an effective gay physical education teacher. One added.*

Being acknowledged has been a fulfillment to these gay physical education teachers in public schools.

### **Adjustments of a Teaching Barbie**

**Family life in general.** The in-depth interview had opened a venue to this topic before they became a teacher in the public school. It was tough and joyous at the same time for the participant to express their experience when it comes to family. Most of the participants had quite a few deep wounds that needs to be faced head-on during the interview.

*I was not accepted in the beginning because of the strict outlook of my family. I have to prove to them that I am a normal person and because of my goal in becoming a physical education teacher, I have shown my worth that I made it this far. Eventually they have accepted me, one participant shared.*

The toughness of the participants was remarkable in expressing their sentiments about this topic.

**Community's understanding.** During their time in elementary, apart from the casual teasing from classmates about their personality, they are being supported by their teachers in making them feel accepted in class. They sometimes become the "teacher's pet". Meaning they often are close to their female teachers that it gives them the advantage of not being teased anymore. Participants tend to feel secure in school if they are close to their female teachers. One explanation is this:

*My teacher in elementary use to make me as the in-charge in terms of cleaning and checking attendance of my classmates.*

*I feel cool when I am close to my female teacher because it gives me benefit not to get picked on by my male classmates. It really helps me a lot being close to my teacher.*

This just shows that how the participants were growing up to this kind of community especially in school they always find a refuge from their teachers. And they bring these experiences to their present setting.

**School adaptations.** We are in the time of the so-called "new normal". Due to the pandemic, gay physical education teachers also equipped themselves to be able to accommodate their teaching styles and strategies. They have articulated that because of the nature of the subject they were teaching, it was difficult at first in making sure that the competency in the curriculum is being met. The mode of delivering the lessons was challenging in the beginning for there are issues such as knowledge of how to deal with technology, connections to the internet, the constant fear of getting sick, how to reach out to students and make them interested to submit their performance tasks and so on.

The participants were able to share their ways on how to adapt to this "new normal". One participant was saying that because of this situation students were not able to really get to

know them personally for there is no face-to-face setting that is happening. They don't normally see the reactions of their students about their personalities in real time especially in the beginning of the class. Normal class situations give the participants the observation of how students react upon seeing them.

*One participant shared; pagsugod sang klase, ang mga students daw gaduha-duha mag react pagkita nila sa akon. Daw ginapamatyagan gid anay nila kung agi ako okon indi. (In the beginning of the class, the students are like second guessing upon seeing me. It seems that they are trying to really see if I am gay or not). Pero subong kay wala sang kilitanay, indi gid makita kung ano ang reaksyon sang kabataan (But now, because of the no face-to-face setting, I couldn't really tell the reactions of my students).*

*Sometimes there are students who are really franked in asking me straightforwardly if I am gay. And of course, I answered them what do you think? Then I start explaining that even if I am gay, I am your teacher you are my students and then I set the house rules of the class, another one said.*

*There are times that you can't avoid the side comments of the students upon knowing that I am gay. They are saying that "sadya ni ang klase kay agi si Sir" (the class will be fun for Sir is gay). Which I always correct them and tell them that it's not about me being gay that the class will be fun but because I am a person with humor and fun. This way my students starts to give respect to me, one participant said.*

The result of this exploratory inquiry is a step forward in knowing the real endeavor of the gay physical education teachers in public high school. Conscious of their efforts in addressing all the questions are very much a proof of their hard labor in contesting with societies unjust expectations. Like what is happening right now. They too have to undergo the stress like everyone else. They even shared that they need to put extra work especially the mode of teaching that the government have implemented which is the distance learning. It is very much a new normal as what it is right now, it is actually abnormal for things are done very differently, example is how students being taught physical education. There is no physicality in teaching physical education anymore. It's up to the students on how they managed to finish their performance tasks that will be submitted to the teachers. Meaning there's no more interaction, correction or improvement that will happen per se.

#### **4.0 Discussions**

In general, seeing a much larger population of gay physical education teachers in public high school has never been a limitation in the world of teaching. The way these teachers teach was anchored to how they learned the skills that is needed to be considered as a competent one. It even shows that the competence of teaching barbies of physical education is equal or even more that the straight ones. They become a leader in activities that displays a 100 percent success rate. The institution trusts them in making different programs especially artistic one. For instance, how they begin conceptualizing an event or performances is quite spectacular [12]. Mostly the outcome of these said undertakings cannot be denied being a flop or having bad reviews. They usually worked an extra mile in order to achieve a remarkable piece.

The teaching barbies of physical education may have had a fair share of not so good experiences in their field of work, but it doesn't stop them in continuing making a difference to their student's lives. Why, because the way how the students reciprocate their gratefulness to

these teachers is an evidence that they are brilliant in shaping them. The effect of their teaching to the students that they become their mentors is another accolade that cannot be denied. Carrying on with the legacy of teaching physical education is quite a dynamic element to students that continues to become one. And this greatly help for the students who will carry these experiences in their future lives [13]. On the other hand, the adjustments in making their way to achieve their goal of becoming a physical education teacher made them resilient to all the adversities that they have encountered in their lifetime. Having been influenced by their teachers is a kind of steppingstone and a ladder to triumph in this field of endeavor. It is not by chance nor choice that they become teaching barbies, but it is in their aspirations that creates a strong urge to show the world how they can make a difference in the lives of the people around them [14]. Continuing and pursuing what they strongly desire won't stop them of becoming a physical education teacher and it will not discourage them to further their lives professionally.

Real world environment plays a factor when it comes to how individual portrays oneself. The gap that has been realized from this exploratory inquiry is how teaching barbies in physical education became a common occurrence in this field of specialization. This then boils down to different experiences that suggests a bigger picture of the phenomenon. Implications that arise is how the gay physical education teachers deals with the conflicts they face in their everyday living [15]. Some may just brush the negative situations and make it their benchmark to continue with what they believe is an equal opportunity that they should enjoy like any other personalities in the field. They are never been a coward to life's hardships for they continue to move forward and the reality of how they impact in the lives of their students is their fulfillment in life [16].

Consequently, when gender is the focus of any discussion, the different reactions greatly vary. It depends which side of the world you are in that being gay is either a plus point or a minus fact. It is a fact that if you are from a very conservative environment, this is a very difficult topic to handle and if you are from a liberated area then it becomes easier to converse. It is even taboo in some cultures to even speak about it [17]. However, here in the Philippines, it is quite accepted that being a teaching barbie of physical education doesn't really matter. This is why the interest of doing this study sprung about because of their existence. Normality within the context of heteronormativity should be reviewed in order to cater the different gender that is present particularly in the field of teaching [18]. Evolution of life took million years and will take a billion more to be able to reach an acceptance of gender in every generation. This generation have seen a lot of changes with regards to the educational system. Gender is not a point of comparison to be able to see the competence of a teachers [19]. Regardless of how many they are in a particular specialization, as long as they have the same set or even higher set of skills, abilities, capabilities, knowledge and intelligence, they should be given the same considerations as everyone else. Opportunities is always for all. It will knock irrespective of your gender, race, color and religion [20]. Being a teaching barbie of physical education in public high school is an opportunity that they have accomplish for they are given a job that they love and aspire from the beginning of their professional life. The vision they were dreaming of having is now a reality for they are in the service and is making a name for themselves.

In summary, realities of teaching barbies of physical education in public high school are very much the same as any gender in the spectrum. They do have their shortcomings like everyone else. They have their successes like everyone else. They have their challenges like everyone else. They also have their opportunities like everyone else. So, for those who have been second guessing teaching barbies of physical education, it is high time to change your perspective and start embracing them like everyone else.

### 5.0. Conclusion

The outlooks and practices of educators asserts the occurrence of teaching barbies in physical education in public high school is not a coincidence or by chance. The lived experiences of these individuals that resulted in understanding their challenges, life as a teaching barbie and adjustments that gives them a “chance in life”. The way they lived their lives in accordance with the standards set by the institution gave the respect that they should have been given since day one of their existence.

Gender needs to be tackled regularly in order to give emphasis to how these individuals needed to be valued. The following suggestions are given: (a) educating the system of how these individuals should be addressed and should be given importance as human beings that has the same feelings as everyone does and they too can make a difference in this world; (b) working environment must be adaptable in situations that teaching barbies of physical education are in. For it is in the general law that equality should not be biased in terms of gender; (c) Judgment should not be given instantaneously but rather given appropriately. A quote from Sri Chimnroy: “Ignorance is an enemy, even to its owner. Knowledge is a friend, even to its hater. Ignorance hates knowledge because it is too pure. Knowledge fears ignorance because it is too sure”. It is prejudice and self-sufficiency that these participants been able to cope up with the worlds unforgiving nature. How they managed to surpass each and every obstacle in their way leads to their success and limitless opportunities in their field.

It was such an amazing in-depth interview conducted from the five participants. It was very nice to have had the opportunity to study this area for it really widens the perspective of anyone who will be able to read it. The hope that the teaching barbies in physical education will have the same level of respect like anyone does anywhere they are placed in their careers must be given freely and should not be difficult for them to attain. The increasing occurrence of them in their field should not be a basis of discrimination but should be the basis of percipience. It is such a comprehensive topic to delve in, nevertheless, knowing their lived experiences gives a wider viewpoint that indeed it’s not their being teaching barbies that gives them the acceptance in the society supposedly but it’s their holistic individuality that should be the basis of them being a physical education teacher that adheres to institutional standards of authentic education.

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