

Sectarian Schools' Culture, Cultural Diversity, Competency, and Openness toward Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between religious doctrine and LGBTQ inclusion in sectarian schools presents a complex dynamic that often reveals tensions between deeply-rooted religious beliefs and efforts to promote inclusivity. Hence, this study examined the association between school culture, cultural diversity, LGBTQ cultural competency, and openness to diversity in selected sectarian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region XI. This study employed a descriptive correlation research design and gathered data from 319 sectarian school administrators through total enumeration. Results revealed high levels across all four variables, with Pearson correlation indicating significant relationships among them. Thus, these findings underscore the importance of sectarian schools to develop inclusive practices and cultural competency in ways that remain faithful to their religious culture and identity. Specifically, promoting inclusive theological interpretations, strengthening cultural diversity initiatives, and implementing targeted competency and diversity training programs are recommended to cultivate greater acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQ individuals within sectarian institutions.

Keywords: sectarian school culture, cultural diversity, LGBTQ cultural competency, openness to diversity, Pearson r correlation analysis

INTRODUCTION

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) community created a massive buzz in our society over the years. Their rallies, protests, parades, advocacies, and other relevant activities have gained global attention, making them a central topic in global discourse. Hence, it can be observed that society is becoming more accepting of them. In fact, some prominent international organizations, such as the United Nations, emphasize the “leave no one behind” principle, as apparent in their 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Moreover, it is also evident that governments of various countries have created anti-discrimination laws for LGBTQ individuals. Apart from that, the business and educational sectors also ensured that LGBTQ individuals are protected and accepted through their inclusive policies and initiatives. Most importantly, churches and religious organizations, both Catholic and Evangelical, also condemn discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

However, despite the Church's acceptance and sympathy toward the LGBTQ community, its teachings continue to condemn homosexuality and same-sex relationships, viewing such acts as sinful, unbiblical, and immoral. Undeniably, these religious teachings have continued to influence society's outlook toward the LGBTQ community. Hence, despite the increasing social support for the LGBTQ community, there were still cases of bullying, harassment, inequality, and discrimination reported worldwide, particularly in schools [1], hospitals [2], and workplaces [3].

Relatively, sectarian schools, often regarded as extensions of the Church, uphold similar views to those of the Church with which they are associated. Thus, it could be inevitable for LGBTQ employees to face negative experiences in the sectarian institutions. For instance, in the United States, the LGBTQ faculty and staff in Diocesan Catholic University encountered issues such as discrimination, fear of being fired, and general lack of resources [4]. The less inclusive working environment was also felt by staff members in Christian college institutions in the United States [5]. In California, it was also reported that LGBTQ educators are continually fired from Catholic schools [6]. Also, LGBTQ employees in Southeast Asian countries, including China and Thailand, have reported experiences of workplace harassment, bullying, and discrimination related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) [7]. Moreover, a Catholic school in Iloilo, Philippines, received heavy criticism for its discriminatory and homophobic policy against homosexuality, which was stipulated in its employment contracts and official handbook [8]. These are some of the pieces of evidence that sectarian schools indeed hold conservative views and culture, which influenced their openness toward LGBTQ employees.

On the other hand, cultural diversity is essential nowadays, as it is associated with organizational success [9], [10]. Hence, today's organizations ensure that they have a culturally diverse workforce. In line with this, organizational leaders need to be culturally competent and responsive to effectively create and promote an inclusive environment for all employees, regardless of their culture, race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, etc. In this sense, cultural diversity and leaders' cultural competency would serve as springboards for an open and inclusive work environment for LGBTQ employees in sectarian institutions.

The Philippines is an extremely religious country, but is also recognized as one of the most LGBTQ-friendly nations in Asia, which the researcher finds perplexing since these two concepts are seemingly antithetical. In light of this observation, the researcher became interested in determining the extent of openness to diversity, particularly within sectarian HEIs, toward the LGBTQ workforce, considering that these institutions are known for their strict adherence to Christian values. Thus, it is within this context that this study was pursued in Region XI, which has twenty-five (25) private sectarian HEIs. Furthermore, the researcher observed that various studies have been conducted focusing on the lived experiences of LGBTQ individuals, particularly in the health sector and sectarian institutions. However, limited studies have explored the interrelationship of the school culture, cultural diversity, LGBTQ cultural competency, and openness to diversity in sectarian institutions; hence, this study aimed to fill this gap in the literature. Most importantly, the findings derived from this study may serve as a basis for sectarian institutions to develop clear and consistent workplace diversity policies, thereby addressing existing ambiguities in their organizational culture. In addition, this study would help sectarian schools achieve the United Nations' SDG 5 on Gender Equality, as well as the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) Gender and Development agenda.

Framework

This study is grounded in multiple theoretical frameworks that collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing openness to diversity in sectarian higher education institutions (HEIs). The first is Organizational Culture Theory by Schein [11], which posits that organizational culture operates on three interrelated levels: artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. Within sectarian institutions, Church-based beliefs, doctrines, and traditions shape these cultural layers, thereby guiding institutional practices, such as expected behaviors and norms among employees. Consequently, this culture may be linked with how LGBTQ inclusion is perceived and practiced within such contexts.

Sectarian HEIs often navigate a tension between religious doctrines and inclusive practices for LGBTQ individuals. This doctrinal tension reflects institutional dilemmas wherein competing values may lead to restrictive policies or selective inclusion. Comparative international evidence underscores the varied manifestations of this tension. In the United States, it was reported in [4] that a Catholic Diocesan University maintained policies grounded in Catholic teachings, limiting flexibility toward LGBTQ inclusion. In Canada and Australia, Callaghan and Leent [12] observed that Catholic schools often communicate the Church's stance on sexual diversity through curriculum and institutional rules, sometimes resulting in the dismissal of LGBTQ teachers for perceived doctrinal inconsistency. Similarly, in Indonesia, Kristiani and Mbali [13] revealed that Christian institutions enforce strict behavioral codes aligned with religious values. Meanwhile,

Eng and Yang [14] noted that many Asian universities remain unwelcoming due to conservative religious norms. Conversely, some sectarian institutions reinterpret doctrine to cultivate more inclusive environments. A comparative study in the Philippines by Arcelo et al. [15] found that De La Salle University demonstrates greater openness toward LGBTQ inclusion compared with the more conservative University of Santo Tomas. From a theoretical perspective, these findings affirm the relevance of Schein's Organizational Culture Theory [11], which posits that schools' artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions collectively shape the culture of LGBTQ inclusion within sectarian institutions.

Cox's Cultural diversity [16] is also considered in this study, which refers to the representation and inclusion of people with distinctly varied cultural group affiliations within a single social system. In the context of this study, a sectarian school is conceptualized as a culturally diverse organization, consisting of individuals or employees who differ in culture, views, behavior, norms, language, gender, age, and other characteristics. Given its diverse workforce, the concept of cultural diversity provides a framework for understanding the extent of openness toward LGBTQ individuals in sectarian schools.

To evaluate leaders' LGBTQ cultural competency, the Queer Leadership Model developed by Pryor [17] is also utilized. This model emphasizes leaders' intentional efforts to advance equity for the LGBTQ community through queer advocacy, queering leadership, and queer policy and practice. It also highlights how leaders' values, beliefs, and attitudes shape their role in promoting openness and inclusion. Accordingly, this study is anchored on this theory, as it recognizes the vital role of leaders' principles and outlook in cultivating an inclusive environment for LGBTQ individuals. Pagano [18] emphasized the critical role of leaders' response to the increasing tension between religion and sexual orientation in the workplace. Specifically, leaders whose religious backgrounds reject or have mixed views on same-sex marriage are more likely to oppose promoting inclusive environments, or are less inclined to integrate LGBTQ-related topics into their curriculum or practices [19].

Complementing the Queer Leadership Model [17] is the concept of Cultural Competence proposed by Martin and Vaughn [20], which emphasizes four key components: awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills, as essential in effectively managing diversity within organizations. This concept provides a framework for examining how leaders' knowledge, attitude, and skills contribute to shaping LGBTQ inclusion within sectarian schools. From a theoretical perspective, Queer Leadership Model [17] and Cultural Competence [20] emphasized the important role of leaders' values, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and skills in promoting and managing LGBTQ diversity.

This study also draws upon the Social Acceptance Theory as defined by Spacey [21], which posits that individuals from diverse cultures can experience positive social interactions and a strong sense of belonging within their communities, organizations, teams, and conversations. Applying this theory enables the researcher to assess the extent of openness to diversity and to understand the stance of sectarian schools toward LGBTQ diversity and inclusion.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine if there is a significant relationship between school culture, cultural diversity, LGBTQ cultural competency, and openness to LGBTQ diversity in sectarian HEIs in Region XI. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of culture among sectarian schools in terms of:
 - 1.1 Teachings;
 - 1.2 Mission; and
 - 1.3 Values?
2. What is the level of cultural diversity among sectarian schools in terms of:
 - 2.1 Supportive Leadership;
 - 2.2 Policies and Procedures; and
 - 2.3 Conflict Management?

3. What is the level of LGBTQ cultural competency in terms of:
 - 3.1 Leaders' Values;
 - 3.2 Leaders' Beliefs;
 - 3.3 Leaders' Attitudes;
 - 3.4 Leaders' Communication; and
 - 3.5 Leaders' Knowledge?
4. What is the level of openness to diversity among sectarian schools in terms of:
 - 4.1 LGBTQ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Culture;
 - 4.2 Career Development; and
 - 4.3 Diversity Training?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of openness to diversity and:
 - 5.1 Culture;
 - 5.2 Cultural Diversity; and
 - 5.3 LGBTQ Cultural Competency?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the level of openness to diversity and sectarian schools' culture, cultural diversity, and LGBTQ cultural competency.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive correlation research design. Descriptive correlation is a design that analyzes whether there is an association between two or more variables within a population or sample [22]. This study identified the levels of sectarian schools' culture, cultural diversity, leaders' LGBTQ cultural competency, and openness to diversity. It also established the relationship between the variables being studied.

Research Setting

This study was conducted in Region XI, also known as the Davao Region. The Davao region has five (5) provinces, namely Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental, and Davao Occidental; and one (1) highly urbanized city, Davao City. The region was chosen as it hosts twenty-five (25) CHED-recognized sectarian HEIs that reflect a wide range of religious affiliations and cultural diversity. Specifically, the sectarian HEIs in Davao Region provided a perfect setting for determining the clear stand and culture of sectarian schools toward the LGBTQ community, by assessing how school culture, cultural diversity, and leaders' LGBTQ cultural competency relate to openness toward LGBTQ individuals.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants of this study were the three hundred and nineteen (319) top and middle managers/leaders from the total of seventeen (17) CHED-recognized private sectarian HEIs in Region XI, during SY 2024-2025. Although the researcher initially sought to include all 25 sectarian HEIs in the Davao Region, eight (8) institutions declined participation due to various reasons, such as institutional priorities, stringent external research procedures, and ongoing reviews of research-related policies. A formal nonresponse analysis was not conducted due to the lack of comparable institutional data. Nonetheless, based on the researcher's contextual knowledge and publicly available information, the nonparticipating institutions appear to share similar characteristics with those included in the study. Specifically, they are private sectarian HEIs guided by Christian moral and ethical values and operating under similar CHED regulations within the same geographic and socio-cultural contexts. Hence, these shared characteristics indicate minimal institutional variation, thereby reducing the likelihood of systematic nonresponse bias.

Moreover, the CHED-recognized schools of theology or seminaries were excluded from this study. These institutions exclusively offer theological and ministerial programs, such as AB in Theology and AB in Christian Education. Hence, their institutional missions and organizational structures differ substantially from sectarian HEIs, which could introduce bias and limit the validity of comparisons regarding LGBTQ diversity and inclusion practices.

Specifically, the participants of this study were administrators from sectarian HEIs in the region, including the school presidents, vice presidents, deans, program heads or coordinators, directors, and office heads. These individuals were selected because this study explored factors or constructs that are best understood by those involved in institutional leadership, policy formulation, and decision-making. Hence, employees in line management, or those without managerial functions, as well as individuals who are not members of the school's administrative council, were excluded from the study as they are not typically engaged in policy-making. Accordingly, the sampling procedure employed a combination of purposive and census sampling, whereby all qualified school administrators within identified institutions were invited to participate. This approach ensured that the gathered data captured the perspectives of those directly responsible for shaping and implementing workplace diversity policies.

Research Instruments

The research instruments employed in this study comprised a combination of researcher-made and adapted survey questionnaires, organized into four sets. The first set of questionnaires is the Sectarian Schools' Culture Questionnaire, a self-constructed questionnaire patterned from different research and articles, namely Martin [23], Catholic Education-Diocese of Rockhampton [24], and Miller [25]. The questionnaire has 30 items that determine the level of sectarian schools' culture in terms of Teachings, Mission, and Values.

The second set of questionnaires, the Cultural Diversity Questionnaire, was modified and adapted from Larkey [26] and Enriquez [27]. The questionnaire has 30 items that assess the level of cultural diversity among sectarian schools in terms of Supportive Leadership, Policies and Procedures, and Conflict Management.

The third set of questionnaires, the LGBTQ Cultural Competency Questionnaire, was modified and adapted from Elder LGBT Interprofessional Collaborative Care Program [28], Mollura [29], and National Center for Cultural Competence [30]. The questionnaire has 35 items that measure the level of LGBTQ cultural competency in terms of Leaders' Values, Leaders' Beliefs, Leaders' Attitudes, Leaders' Communication, and Leaders' Knowledge.

The fourth set of questionnaires, the Openness to Diversity Questionnaire, was modified and adapted from the Society for Human Resource Management [31]. The questionnaire has 30 items that determine the level of sectarian schools' openness to diversity in terms of LGBTQ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Culture, Career Development, and Diversity Training.

Operational definitions of all key constructs used in this study are provided in Appendix A

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering followed the research protocol of Liceo de Cagayan University, School of Business, Management, and Accountancy–Graduate Studies. Ethical clearance was secured from the University Research Ethics Board, along with a recommendation letter from the Dean. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the presidents of the identified CHED-recognized private sectarian HEIs in Region XI. Required documents, such as the ethical clearance, recommendation, and informed consent forms, were also submitted to each study site. Upon approval, coordination was made with each institution's Research or Human Resource Office to distribute the survey questionnaires either directly to the participants or through designated facilitators.

Strict adherence to ethical research standards and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173) was observed. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through coded responses, secure file storage, and password-protected online forms. Names and signatures on consent forms were redacted, and no identifiable information

appeared in the final report. Participants were also fully informed of the study's purpose, risks, and benefits, as well as their right to withdraw at any time without consequence or compensation.

Given that one of the study sites was also the researcher's workplace, voluntary participation was emphasized to prevent potential conflicts of interest. Participants were assured that their participation in the study would not influence their employment in any way. Participants were given two weeks to complete the survey, which required 5–15 minutes per respondent. Following the retrieval of completed questionnaires, the data were tabulated and consolidated for analysis.

Statistical Treatment and Data Analysis

This study employed descriptive statistics such as the mean and standard deviation for problems 1-4, to assess the levels of sectarian schools' culture in terms of Teachings, Mission, and Values; cultural diversity in terms of Supportive Leadership, Policies and Procedures, and Conflict Management; LGBTQ cultural competency in terms of Leaders' Values, Beliefs, Attitudes, Communication, and Knowledge; and openness to diversity in terms of LGBTQ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Culture, Career Development, and Diversity Training.

For problem 5, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was utilized to correlate the openness to diversity and sectarian schools' culture, cultural diversity, and LGBTQ cultural competency. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation is a widely used statistical tool for measuring the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two quantifiable variables [32]. Through this tool, the study was also able to identify the relationship strength or effect size between openness to diversity and sectarian schools' culture, openness to diversity and cultural diversity, and openness to diversity and LGBTQ cultural competency.

Validity and Reliability

The four sets of questionnaires were subjected to validation by three experts for content validity and were pilot-tested for reliability. Specifically, the researcher asked three experts in the field of Research and Leadership to validate the content of the research instruments. Afterward, all the suggestions, comments, and corrections of the three validators were addressed and incorporated into the final survey questionnaires. Thereafter, permissions were obtained from each School President of the private sectarian HEIs in Region XII, specifically in General Santos City and Koronadal City, to conduct a pilot test of the validated survey questionnaires. A total of thirty-nine (39) school administrators had participated in the pilot test.

Furthermore, the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaires were tested using Cronbach's alpha. For the first independent variable, Sectarian Schools' Culture, the sub-variables Teachings (0.853), Mission (0.943), and Values (0.957) indicated high reliability. For the second independent variable, Cultural Diversity, the sub-variables Supportive Leadership (0.962), Policies and Procedures (0.911), and Conflict Management (0.943) also showed strong reliability. Moreover, for LGBTQ Cultural Competency, the sub-variables Leaders' Values (0.916), Beliefs (0.884), Attitudes (0.930), Communication (0.919), and Knowledge (0.883) all yielded reliable results. Lastly, for the dependent variable, Openness to Diversity, the sub-variables LGBTQ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Culture (0.969), Career Development (0.960), and Diversity Training (0.977) likewise proved reliable. In summation, the results of the reliability tests showed that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values were all higher than 0.70; thus, the survey instruments were comprehensible and appropriate to the intended participants of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. What is the level of culture among sectarian schools in terms of:

1.1 Teachings;

1.2 Mission; and

1.3 Values?

Table 1 Summary Of The Level Of Culture Among Sectarian Schools

Sub-constructs	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Teachings	3.85	0.701	Agree	High
Mission	4.62	0.495	Strongly Agree	Very High
Values	4.58	0.496	Strongly Agree	Very High
Overall Mean	4.35	0.459	Agree	High

This study examined the level of sectarian schools' culture, focusing on three subconstructs: Teachings, Mission, and Values. The findings revealed a High Level of sectarian schools' culture, with an overall mean score of 4.35 (SD=0.459), which reflects a strong consensus among respondents on the crucial role of Church-based teachings, mission, and values in molding the school culture. Among the three subconstructs, Mission obtained the highest mean (M=4.62, SD=0.495), emphasizing a very high agreement on the alignment of church-based mission in shaping sectarian schools' culture. This finding aligns with the work of Suoth et al. [33], who attested that Christian schools embedded the mission of the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa in their schools' culture. Moreover, Teachings obtained the lowest mean rating (M=3.85, SD=0.701), reflecting a varied level of interpretation and implementation of the Church's teachings among sectarian schools. This is supported by Striepe et al. [34], who emphasized that leaders in faith-based schools used their own values and perspectives to guide their practices. In its entirety, these findings are consistent with the theoretical framework of Organizational Culture [11], which underscores the importance of artifacts, espoused values, and underlying beliefs or assumptions in forming a culture. In the context of this study, the result of the high level of sectarian schools' culture confirmed that sectarian institutions fully embraced the doctrinal teachings, mission, and values of their associated Church as foundational components of their organizational culture.

2. What is the level of cultural diversity among sectarian schools in terms of:

2.1 Supportive Leadership;

2.2 Policies and Procedures; and

2.3 Conflict Management?

Table 2 Summary Of The Level Of Cultural Diversity Among Sectarian Schools

Sub-constructs	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Supportive Leadership	4.43	0.564	Agree	High
Policies and Procedures	4.25	0.557	Agree	High
Conflict Management	4.19	0.591	Agree	High
Overall Mean	4.29	0.511	Agree	High

Furthermore, the study also investigated the level of cultural diversity among sectarian schools across three key areas: Supportive Leadership, Policies and Procedures, and Conflict Management. The findings revealed an overall High Level of cultural diversity with a mean score of 4.29 (SD=0.511) across three areas. These findings indicate that sectarian schools positively embrace cultural diversity. The results align with the established framework of Cultural Diversity [16], which highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing cultural differences within the organization to promote diversity, equality, and inclusivity. In addition, among the three areas, Supportive Leadership scored highest (M=4.43, SD=0.564), while Conflict Management had the lowest mean (M=4.19, SD=0.591). This finding concurs with Chua et al. [35], who emphasized that supportive leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping and advancing strategies to effectively manage diversity. The slight variation in the responses, particularly in Conflict Management, suggests the need for sectarian schools to explore informal early dispute interventions to complement their formal systems in conflict management. Babatunde et al. [36] emphasized the importance of effective conflict management in embracing diversity and inclusion.

3. What is the level of LGBTQ cultural competency in terms of:

- 3.1 Leaders' Values;
- 3.2 Leaders' Beliefs;
- 3.3 Leaders' Attitudes;
- 3.4 Leaders' Communication; and
- 3.5 Leaders' Knowledge?

Table 3 Summary Of The Level Of Lgbtq Cultural Competency

Sub-constructs	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Values	4.41	0.514	Agree	High
Beliefs	4.24	0.552	Agree	High
Attitudes	4.27	0.614	Agree	High
Communication	3.83	0.739	Agree	High
Knowledge	4.19	0.599	Agree	High
Overall Mean	4.19	0.485	Agree	High

Meanwhile, in terms of the level of LGBTQ cultural competency as ascertained by five sub-concepts: Leaders' Values, Leaders' Beliefs, Leaders' Attitudes, Leaders' Communication, and Leaders' Knowledge, the findings indicate an overall High Level with a mean score of 4.19 (SD=0.485). Among the five sub-concepts, Leaders' Values obtained the highest mean score (M=4.41, SD=0.514), which reflects a strong commitment among sectarian school leaders to uphold values necessary for creating a culturally competent and inclusive work environment for LGBTQ individuals. This finding aligns with Briones [37], who emphasized the key role of values in shaping how people approach and interact with individuals from different cultures. Further, Leaders' Communication got the lowest mean (M=3.83, SD=0.739), which indicates inconsistencies in leaders' application of inclusive communication or gender-neutral language while interacting with LGBTQ individuals. Hence, this suggests a need for cultural competency training programs to equip leaders with cultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for navigating and managing cultural differences in sectarian institutions (i.e., LGBTQ culture). This is affirmed by Molinari et al. [38], who emphasized the importance of cultural competence to effectively communicate and build trusting relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Thus, this is a clear indication that leaders' inclusive communication skills and styles are key components to becoming culturally competent toward the LGBTQ community. Nonetheless, the findings are consistent with the established frameworks, namely Queer Leadership Model [17] and Cultural Competence [20], which emphasize the importance of leaders' values, beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and communication skills in promoting LGBTQ openness and inclusion in the organization.

4. What is the level of openness to diversity among sectarian schools in terms of:

- 4.1 LGBTQ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Culture;
- 4.2 Career Development; and
- 4.3 Diversity Training?

Table 4 Summary Of The Level Of Openness To Diversity Among Sectarian Schools

Sub-constructs	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
LGBTQ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Culture	4.06	0.697	Agree	High
Career Development	4.33	0.607	Agree	High
Diversity Training	3.87	0.804	Agree	High
Overall Mean	4.08	0.609	Agree	High

Moreover, the study assessed the level of sectarian schools' openness to diversity across three indicators: LGBTQ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Culture, Career Development, and Diversity Training. The results revealed that the overall mean score is 4.08 (SD=0.609), indicating a High Level of Openness. The result signifies the strong commitment of sectarian schools to include and accept LGBTQ people in the organization; hence, consistent with the theoretical framework of Social Acceptance Theory [21]. In addition, among the three indicators, Career Development has the highest mean ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.607$), which implies that sectarian schools are highly inclusive and supportive of LGBTQ employees' career or professional growth. This finding aligns with the work of De Oliveira [39], who underscored the critical role of transparent and equitable career development policies in cultivating LGBTQ inclusion in the workplace. Meanwhile, the Diversity Training obtained the lowest mean rating ($M=3.87$, $SD=0.804$), which indicates a need for sectarian schools to intensify their diversity training programs to sustain and improve these results. This finding is consistent with the study of Rodriguez [40], which emphasized the importance of diversity training to develop an open and inclusive workplace for LGBTQ individuals.

5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of openness to diversity and:

5.1 Culture;

5.2 Cultural Diversity; and

5.3 LGBTQ Cultural Competency?

As shown in Appendix B, Pearson R Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between openness to diversity and three key variables: sectarian schools' culture, cultural diversity, and LGBTQ cultural competency. The results further demonstrate that variables such as cultural diversity, supportive leadership, policies and procedures, conflict management, LGBTQ cultural competency, leaders' values, leaders' beliefs, leaders' attitudes, leaders' communication, and leaders' knowledge exhibit a large, positive, significant correlation with openness to diversity, with correlation coefficients ranging above 0.50 (e.g., $r=0.517-0.684$). This suggests that strengthening these areas could have a meaningful impact on cultivating openness to diversity within sectarian institutions. Furthermore, results showed that Sectarian Schools' Culture in terms of Teachings had no significant correlation, while Mission and Values ($r=0.288-0.394$) indicated a moderate to weak relationship with Openness to Diversity. This implies that alignment with religious culture alone does not necessarily shape the openness toward LGBTQ inclusion in sectarian schools. Nonetheless, the overall rejection of the null hypothesis confirms statistically significant relationships between the identified factors and openness to diversity. This emphasizes the need for sectarian HEIs to develop institutional policies and intentional strategies that promote inclusive practices, enhance cultural competency, and reconcile faith-based values with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts to cultivate openness, acceptance, and inclusion toward the LGBTQ community.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are put forward:

The school culture of sectarian institutions is highly aligned with the Church's teachings, mission, and values. Sectarian school leaders strongly agree on the significant role of the Church's teachings, mission, and values in shaping their school culture. This implies that any institutional policies, practices, and initiatives in sectarian schools are thoughtfully designed to align with the framework of existing religious principles.

Moreover, sectarian schools embrace a high level of cultural diversity in terms of supportive leadership, policies and procedures, and conflict management. This suggests that sectarian institutions actively promote diverse and inclusive environments through supportive leadership practices, institutional policies, and conflict resolution strategies that acknowledge, support, and respect diverse cultural backgrounds and identities.

Consequently, sectarian school leaders possess a high level of LGBTQ cultural competency across five attributes, such as values, beliefs, attitudes, communication, and knowledge. This implies that sectarian school

leaders are well-equipped to engage with LGBTQ individuals in a manner that is informed, respectful, and inclusive. Hence, this reflects both their professional competence and genuine commitment to upholding cultural and religious values that constitute sectarian school employees.

Furthermore, sectarian schools promote a high level of openness toward LGBTQ diversity as evident in the LGBTQ diversity, equity, and inclusion culture, career development, and diversity training. This implies that sectarian institutions are actively working to create more inclusive and affirming environments by integrating LGBTQ-supportive practices into their organizational culture, professional development initiatives, and diversity training initiatives, despite the deeply rooted religious beliefs. This implies that LGBTQ inclusion of sectarian schools in Region XI goes beyond mere tokenism and reflects a genuine commitment to achieving equality. This may be attributed to the schools' commitment toward achieving SDG 5 on Gender Equality, as well as their support for the CHED's Gender and Development agenda.

Moreover, significant relationships exist between Openness to Diversity and three key variables, namely Sectarian Schools' Culture, Cultural Diversity, and LGBTQ Cultural Competency. The strong, significant correlations between openness to diversity and cultural diversity, as well as openness to diversity and LGBTQ cultural competency, suggest that strengthening cultural diversity initiatives and enhancing LGBTQ cultural competency are key drivers in promoting openness to LGBTQ diversity within sectarian institutions. This implies that strengthening these areas will lead to a more open and inclusive environment for LGBTQ individuals. Furthermore, the weak yet significant correlation between sectarian schools' culture and openness to diversity highlights the meaningful implication of sectarian schools' core culture in shaping the institutions' openness toward the LGBTQ community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the strong association of cultural competency with openness to LGBTQ diversity, sectarian school administrators may institutionalize cultural competency and gender sensitivity training for all school personnel to enhance their cultural competency, thereby creating a more inclusive culture toward LGBTQ individuals. They may also strengthen their cultural diversity initiatives through embedding LGBTQ inclusion in policies and procedures to ensure that SDG 5 Gender Equality and CHED's GAD agenda will be fully realized. They may also adopt inclusive theological interpretation to align inclusion efforts with religious mission and values. In this way, a clear and well-defined organizational culture may be formed, which would address confusion among sectarian school employees.

In light of the findings that sectarian schools uphold practices that align with schools' core culture and religious identity, LGBTQ employees are encouraged to contribute to a spirit of unity, professionalism, and mutual respect by adhering to institutional policies and protocols. By doing so, LGBTQ employees can build positive relationships with their colleagues, become good role models for their students' holistic development, and promote a safe and respectful environment.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the critical role of gender diversity training and cultural competency in shaping LGBTQ inclusion in sectarian institutions. Thus, sectarian school employees may participate in gender diversity and cultural competency training programs to enhance their understanding and knowledge of LGBTQ concepts. They may also practice inclusive communication when conversing with LGBTQ individuals. In this way, sectarian school employees can contribute to the development of a more inclusive culture in sectarian schools.

Moreover, as this study relied primarily on self-assessment questionnaires, future studies may incorporate employee evaluations, document analysis, or classroom and meeting observations to validate reported practices. Future researchers may also conduct in-depth studies that collect qualitative data using longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to capture changes over time and provide richer contextual understanding of LGBTQ inclusion processes in sectarian institutions. They may also conduct quantitative studies focusing on other factors such as leadership structure, community influences, student voice, and faculty demographics to capture the complex dynamics that shape the sectarian schools' openness toward the LGBTQ community.

Finally, future researchers may also extend the sample to include personnel in the line management, as well as students, to capture multi-level perspectives and enhance triangulation.

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APPENDIX

A. Operational Definition of Constructs

Construct	Operational Definition	Sample Item	Source	Cronbach's Alpha	Scale/ Response Format
Sectarian Schools' Culture	The church-based teachings, mission, and values that guide the practices of sectarian schools. Specifically, the culture of sectarian schools aligns with the faith or belief system of their affiliated church.	<i>Teachings:</i> "Homosexuality and same sex relationships are unbiblical and immoral; thus, considered as sins." <i>Mission:</i> "Promulgate the faith and belief system of our associated Church." <i>Values:</i> "Witness to the students and respective communities the God's nurturing and all-inclusive love for every human person by reverence and respect."	Patterned from Martin [23], Catholic Education-Diocese of Rockhampton [24], Miller [25]	0.853, 0.943, and 0.957, respectively	5-point Likert Scale 5=Strongly Agree 4=Agree 3=Neutral 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree
Cultural Diversity	Sectarian schools' overall supportive leadership, policies, and procedures, and unbiased conflict management toward employees from diverse backgrounds, including different races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, religions, disability, and political views.	<i>Supportive Leadership:</i> "Commits to an inclusive and equal treatment of all staff members, and fights any discrimination in all of its forms." <i>Policies and Procedures:</i> "Imposes employees of different sexual orientations to conform to heterosexual practices (clothing, demeanor, etc.), as a precondition of being hired." <i>Conflict Management:</i> "Establishes accessible conflict resolution channels for all employees to voice concerns or seek assistance in times of conflict."	Adapted from Larkey [26]; Enriquez [27]	0.962, 0.911, and 0.943, respectively	5-point Likert Scale 5=Strongly Agree 4=Agree 3=Neutral 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree
LGBTQ Cultural Competency	Sectarian school leaders' awareness, knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity toward LGBTQ employees or colleagues. It is measured based on leaders' self-assessment of their values, beliefs, attitudes,	<i>Leaders' Values:</i> "I impose values that are consistent for all employees, regardless of their gender/sexual orientation." <i>Leaders' Beliefs:</i> "In general, I have a positive connotation of everyone's choice of sexual identity." <i>Leaders' Attitudes:</i> "I act in ways that demonstrate	Adapted from Elder LGBT Interprofessional Collaborative Care Program [28]; Mollura National Center for Cultural Competence [30]	0.916, 0.884, 0.930, 0.919, and 0.883, respectively	5-point Likert Scale 5=Strongly Agree 4=Agree 3=Neutral 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree

	communication style, and knowledge regarding LGBTQ individuals. In other words, the term reflects leaders' ability to interact with LGBTQ employees in a respectful, sensitive, and inclusive manner.	respect for the culture and beliefs of LGBTQ.” <i>Leaders' Communication:</i> “When working with LGBTQ employees, I use their name of choice or preferred gender pronoun.” <i>Leaders' Knowledge:</i> “I am aware that the purpose of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression (SOGIE) Equality Bill is to recognize the fundamental rights of every person regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.”			
Openness to Diversity	Sectarian schools' culture on LGBTQ diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as the provision of career development opportunities for LGBTQ employees, and diversity training programs to promote staff awareness.	<i>LGBTQ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Culture:</i> “Fosters a workplace that allows LGBTQ employees to be themselves at work without fear (e.g., long hair, cross-dressing, wearing of make-up, communication, behaviors, etc.).” <i>Career Development:</i> “Ensures that LGBTQ employees are given equal opportunity for higher positions.” <i>Diversity Training:</i> “Conducts diversity trainings that highlight the topic of intentional inclusion of LGBTQ individuals.”	Adapted from the Society for Human Resource Management [31]	0.969, 0.960, and 0.977, respectively	5-point Likert Scale 5=Strongly Agree 4=Agree 3=Neutral 2=Disagree 1=Strongly Disagree

Appendix

B. Pearson R Correlation Analysis Results

Variables	n	r	P-value	Interpretation
Teachings	319	.057	.309	Not Significant
Mission	319	.288	.000	Significant
Values	319	.394	.000	Significant
Sectarian Schools' Culture	319	.275	.000	Significant
Supportive Leadership	319	.517	.000	Significant
Policies and Procedures	319	.610	.000	Significant
Conflict Management	319	.542	.000	Significant

Cultural Diversity	319	.621	.000	Significant
Leaders' Values	319	.576	.000	Significant
Leaders' Beliefs	319	.580	.000	Significant
Leaders' Attitudes	319	.536	.000	Significant
Leaders' Communication	319	.520	.000	Significant
Leaders' Knowledge	319	.550	.000	Significant
LGBTQ Cultural Competency	319	.684	.000	Significant