

Social Media Platforms Usage and Homophobia Among Grade 12 Students of a Philippine Private High School

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Abstract: Limited knowledge has been formally laid down in Gender Development. Likewise, Social Media (SM) has been challenging existing norms by promoting bold moves toward eradicating homophobia, a school of thought involving prejudice and remarks toward perceived “immorality.” Cognizant of the fact that schools must be gender-sensitive and are created for all, this study was undertaken. This quantitative study examined the relationship between homophobia and social media platform usage among Grade 12 students of a private school in Pasacao, Camarines Sur. The findings showed a seemingly non-homophobic attitude toward homosexuality based on the positive and negative statements. Meanwhile, social media platform usage was low among the respondents. A statistically significant but weak relationship was found between homophobia and social media platform usage ($r = 0.206$, $p = 0.0447$). This indicates that although an association exists, its strength is limited and other factors may also be relevant. The study also found a significant difference between the two variables. These findings may serve as a basis for schools and curriculum developers in strengthening programs that promote a gender-sensitive, inclusive, and respectful learning environment.

Keywords: Homophobia, Social Media Usage, Gender Studies, Philippine Private School, LGBTQ.

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INTRODUCTION

Homophobic prejudice remains a concern in educational settings because LGBTQ students may experience verbal, physical, relational, and cyber forms of bullying. Santos and De Jesus (2020), for example, identified verbal or written bullying as the most prevalent form experienced by LGBTQ students, including persistent teasing, threats, intimidation, and name-calling. In the school context, homophobic bullying can affect students' sense of safety and their participation in education. The Human Rights Watch (2017) reported that LGBTQ students in the Philippines have experienced bullying, discrimination, limited education concerning LGBTQ issues, and, in some cases, physical or sexual assault. These conditions indicate that schools remain an important setting for examining attitudes toward homosexuality among students.

Social media provides another context in which attitudes toward homosexuality may be developed, reinforced, or challenged. Social media platforms enable users to communicate, follow public figures, join pages and groups, and encounter information from different sources. As cited in Trifiro & Gerson (2019) distinguish active social media use through activities such as liking, commenting, messaging, and direct interaction with other users. Social media algorithms also determine the content displayed to users based on patterns of engagement and individual preferences (Newberry et al., 2022). Influencers and social media pages may therefore expose students to different perspectives and normative positions. Bareth, (2023) noted that influencers can shape normative perspectives and practices among their followers, while Kim & Kim (2023) identified factors such as language similarity, interest similarity, interaction frequency, and self-disclosure as digital attributes associated with influencer–follower relationships.

The relevance of this issue is particularly evident in the Philippines, where social media use is widespread. Data reported by Kemp, (2023) recorded 84.45 million social media users in the Philippines, including substantial numbers of users on Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and other platforms. At the same time, studies conducted in Philippine educational settings have documented mixed attitudes toward homosexuality. Cinene et al., (2020) found that students could express relatively accepting attitudes in some contexts while maintaining negative views toward same-sex relationships and public displays of affection. In addition, Peña et al., (2022) examined the implementation of the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy and found differences in policy knowledge and compliance between public and private schools. These findings indicate that attitudes toward homosexuality and the implementation of gender-responsive policies remain relevant issues within Philippine schools.

Although previous studies have examined social media use, attitudes toward homosexuality, and gender-related prejudice separately, limited empirical evidence directly addresses the relationship between social media usage and homophobia among senior high school students in the Philippine context. Existing studies have largely focused on general patterns of social media use, the experiences of LGBTQ students, or attitudes toward homosexuality without specifically examining social media usage as a factor associated with homophobic attitudes among Grade 12 learners. This constitutes a knowledge gap. There is also a population and contextual gap, as limited evidence is available concerning students in a private senior high school in Pasacao, Camarines Sur. Furthermore, the specific dimensions of

social media usage examined in this study following influencers and following pages or group pages provide a more focused approach to examining students' social media exposure.

Therefore, this study examines the level of homophobia and social media usage among Grade 12 Senior High School learners in a private school in Pasacao, Camarines Sur, and determines whether a significant relationship exists between the two variables. Specifically, the study examines homophobia through positive and negative statements and social media usage through following influencers and following pages or group pages. The findings are intended to provide evidence from the selected school context that may serve as a basis for understanding students' attitudes toward homosexuality and for developing appropriate educational interventions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design using a survey method. The descriptive analysis was used to describe the level of homophobia and social media usage among the respondents, while correlational analysis was used to determine the relationship between the two variables. The study was conducted among 112 Grade 12 learners from one private school in Pasacao, Camarines Sur, Philippines, representing the following strands: General Academic Strand (GAS), Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM), and Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS).

The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula with a 0.05 margin of error. The population consisted of 154 Grade 12 learners distributed across five sections: Section A (10 learners), Section B (10 learners), Section C (45 learners), Section D (44 learners), and Section E (45 learners). Based on the computed sample size, 112 learners were selected: 7 respondents from Section A, 7 from Section B, 33 from Section C, 32 from Section D, and 33 from Section E. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure that learners from the identified sections were proportionally represented in the sample. Participation was voluntary, and the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights as participants.

Data were collected using a researcher-administered pen-and-paper questionnaire consisting of three sections: (a) an informed consent form containing information about the study, participants' rights, and participation conditions; (b) Likert-scale statements measuring homophobia and social media usage; and (c) a notice of participation. The homophobia section consisted of positive and negative statements, while the social media usage section included statements concerning following influencers and following pages or group pages.

Before the questionnaire was administered to the respondents, the instrument was subjected to testing to assess whether the items were appropriate for measuring the intended variables. The questionnaire items were reviewed and evaluated for clarity, relevance, and suitability to the target respondents. The testing process was conducted before the actual data collection, and revisions were made to items that required clarification. This procedure was undertaken to ensure that the questionnaire could be understood consistently by the Grade 12 learners and that the items corresponded to the variables being measured.

Descriptive statistics, particularly the mean, median, and mode, were used to describe the responses concerning homophobia and social media usage. For the inferential analysis, a nonparametric statistical method was used to examine the relationship between homophobia

and social media usage. The use of a nonparametric method was appropriate because the primary data were obtained from Likert-scale responses, which are ordinal in nature, and the analysis did not require the assumption of normally distributed interval-level data. The nonparametric analysis was therefore used to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between the two variables based on the observed responses.

The interpretation of the findings was limited to the 112 Grade 12 learners who participated in the study and to the private school where the research was conducted. Therefore, the findings were not intended to represent all Grade 12 learners, all private schools in Pasacao, or students throughout the Philippines. The results were interpreted within the specific educational context and characteristics of the respondents included in the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Level of Homophobia

Table 1 presents the comparative means of different strata in answering the positive and negative statements in identifying the level of homophobia. Means of 1.83, 2.51, 2.43, 2.11, and 2.47 were recorded for the positive statements. Meanwhile, for the negative, values recorded are 3.46, 1.66, 2.78, 2.49, 2.65.

Table 1. Comparative Mean on the Positive and Negative Statements

Groups	Positive	Negative
Section A	1.83	3.46
Section B	2.51	1.66
Section C	2.43	2.78
Section D	2.11	2.49
Section E	2.47	2.65
General Mean	2.27	2.61
Total Mean	2.44	

Legend: 4.50 - 5.00 Very High Homophobia (VHHPB); 3.50 - 4.49 High Homophobia (HHPB); 2.50 - 3.49 Low Homophobia (LHPB); 1.50 - 2.49 Seemingly Non-Homophobia (SHPB); 1.0 - 1.49 Almost Non-Homophobia (AHPB)

In positive statements, a mean of 2.27 is established indicating that there is seemingly non-homophobia. In negative statements, the 2.61 mean value indicates that there is a low homophobia. Getting the mean of these two, comes up with 2.44 which conveys that there is seemingly non-homophobia among the respondents.

The relatively low overall mean of 2.44 indicates that strong homophobic responses were not predominant among the respondents in the selected school. Socially, this finding suggests that the respondents generally demonstrated relatively low levels of negative attitudes toward homosexuality based on the measurement used in this study. However, the low result should not be interpreted as an indication that homophobia is completely absent from the

school environment. The specific reasons for the relatively low level cannot be established from the present data because the study did not directly examine the factors that may contribute to students' attitudes toward homosexuality.

The Level of Social Media Platforms Usage

As shown in Table 2, mean for following influencers include 3.06, 2.69, 2.83, 2.59, and 2.79, which combines up to a general mean of 2.79. This indicates that, in terms of following influencers, a low social media usage is ascertained.

Table 2. Comparative Mean on Following Influencers and Following Pages and Group Pages

Groups	Following Influencers	Following Pages and Group Pages
Section A	3.06	3.14
Section B	2.69	2.94
Section C	2.83	3.15
Section D	2.59	3.10
Section E	2.79	2.91
General Mean	2.79	3.05
Total Mean	2.92	

Based on the following table, mean values of 3.14, 2.94, 3.15, 3.10, and 2.91 were recorded covering up a general mean of 3.05, which indicates that this component equates to a low social media usage. In constituting the level of social media platforms usage, these two means were average and have concurred 2.91 as its total mean. This means that the overall level of social media platforms usage is low.

The low level of social media platforms usage indicates that the respondents had relatively limited engagement with the specific activities measured in this study, particularly following influencers and following pages or group pages. Socially, this suggests that these forms of social media engagement were not highly prevalent among the respondents. However, this result should not be interpreted as indicating that the respondents had low social media use in general, because the instrument measured specific social media activities rather than overall frequency or duration of social media use.

The Difference between the Level of Homophobia and the Level of Social Media Platforms Usage

The extent of statistical difference between two ordinal variables (level of homophobia and level of social media usage) was determined using Wilcoxon signed-rank test done through the use of Microsoft Excel. This statistical tool is the alternative one for Paired T-test, in which the latter is for parametric samples and hence, the former for nonparametric ones. In the case of this study, some variables were not taken into consideration, thereby making it a nonparametric one although sample size was observed. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was appropriate because the scores were obtained from Likert-scale responses and were treated as ordinal data. The test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between

the paired scores of homophobia and social media platforms usage.

Table 3. Difference between level of homophobia and level of social media usage

	Median	W value	W-critical value	Interpretation
Level of Homophobia	2.55			
Level of Social Media Platforms Usage	2.90	49	434	Significant Difference
Difference	0.35			

*Alpha values is 0.05 (95% confidence interval)

As shown in Table 3, the median among the respondents in the level of homophobia is 2.55, and for the level of social media platforms usage is 2.90. The difference between the two median scores was 0.35. The W-value was 49, while the W-critical value was 434. Since the W-value was lower than the W-critical value, the null hypothesis was rejected based on the decision rule applied in this study. Therefore, there was a statistically significant difference between the level of homophobia and the level of social media platforms usage among the respondents.

The significant difference should not be interpreted as evidence that social media usage caused or affected homophobia because the Wilcoxon signed-rank test examines differences between paired scores and does not establish a causal relationship.

The Relationship of the Level of Homophobia and the Level of Social Media Platforms Usage

Spearman Rho correlation was used in determining the relationship of the above two variables since it is nonparametric and involved nominal and ordinal variables. Spearman's rank-order correlation was used because the variables were measured using Likert-scale responses and were treated as ordinal data. The test was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between homophobia and social media platforms usage.

The p-value was determined by calculations done in Microsoft Excel while the r-value was calculated through the help of a statistical package named Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Table 4. Relationship between level of homophobia and level of social media usage

		Homophobia	Remarks
Social Media Platforms Usage	p-value	0.0447	Significant Relationship
	r-value	0.206	

**Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 4 revealed that as the p-value 0.0447 is less than the alpha 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative one is accepted. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between the level of social media usage (as the independent variable) and the level of homophobia (as the dependent variable).

However, it is important to note that the r-value 0.206 equates that this significant relationship is weak. This means there is a correlation for the outcome variable but there are

other determinants. The positive coefficient indicates that higher scores on the measured social media usage were associated with higher homophobia scores among the respondents. However, the weak correlation indicates that the association between the two variables was limited in strength. Therefore, social media usage should not be interpreted as the sole factor associated with homophobia. Other factors may also be related to students' attitudes toward homosexuality, but these factors were not examined in the present study. Because the study used a correlational design, the significant relationship indicates an association between the variables and does not establish a causal relationship. The findings are limited to the Grade 12 learners who participated in the study and should not be generalized to students from other schools or to students in the Philippines as a whole.

Discussion

The Level of Homophobia

The logic of getting the means of positive and negative statements is to ensure that on both sides, the measurement of the phenomenon is credible and can withstand both dimensions. The positive statements are those sentences that reaffirm prejudice and biases that constitute homophobia, while the negative statements are sentences that challenge or reject homophobic attitudes. The result of seemingly non-homophobia is reflected in the total mean of 2.44, which falls within the seemingly non-homophobia category.

The relatively low level of homophobia suggests that strong negative attitudes toward homosexuality were not predominant among the respondents. This finding may indicate that, within the school context examined, the respondents generally expressed relatively low levels of homophobic attitudes. However, the result should be interpreted cautiously because the study did not measure the specific factors that may explain the low level of homophobia. Therefore, the finding does not establish that homophobia is absent from the school environment.

The results support the findings of De Jesus et al., (2026), which revealed a high level of acceptance toward same-sex relationships. The similarity between the findings suggests that relatively accepting attitudes toward same-sex relationships may also be reflected in the present respondents. However, the findings should be understood as a similarity in observed patterns rather than evidence that the same factors explain the results in both studies.

The Level of Social Media Platforms Usage

This finding negates the study of Olipas, (2022) that identified the large extent of social media use of Information Technology students in terms of entertainment and socialization. This is rooted to the variance of the demographic profiles and geographic profiles which primarily explains that the research locale is located in a rural area having a difficult access to such.

The difference may be related to differences in the characteristics of the respondents and research contexts. The present study focused on Grade 12 learners from one private school, while the study by Olipas, (2022) involved Information Technology students. Differences in age, educational level, social environment, and patterns of social media engagement may contribute to the different findings. Although the research locale may also be relevant, the present study did not directly measure internet accessibility or geographic conditions. Therefore, the rural location should not be presented as a confirmed explanation for the lower level of social media usage.

The low level of social media platforms usage indicates that the respondents had relatively limited engagement with the specific activities measured in this study, particularly following influencers and following pages or group pages. Socially, this suggests that these forms of social media engagement were not highly prevalent among the respondents. However, this finding should not be interpreted as indicating low social media use in general because the instrument measured specific social media activities rather than overall social media use.

The Difference between the Level of Homophobia and the Level of Social Media Platforms Usage

The significant difference reaffirms that there is really a possibility of a relationship between the two variables and if proven, such a relationship is naturally attributed to each other and not by chance nor by manipulation.

However, the significant difference should not be interpreted as evidence that one variable causes or determines the other. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test only indicates a statistically significant difference between the paired scores. The relationship between the two variables is more appropriately examined through the Spearman correlation analysis presented in the subsequent section.

The findings can be considered alongside the study of Chan, (2023), which examined LGBTQ individuals' use of social media and reported associations with lower internalized stigma, increased connectedness, and social routines. However, differences in participants and research contexts should be considered when comparing the findings. Therefore, the present finding provides contextual evidence concerning the measured variables among the respondents in the selected school rather than establishing a general pattern across different populations..

The Relationship of the Level of Homophobia and the Level of Social Media Platforms Usage

The finding is consistent with the study of Jiang & Yang (2022) which reported a significant relationship between social media use and attitudes toward homosexuality among Chinese nationals. The present study also found a statistically significant relationship between social media platforms usage and homophobia, with a p-value of 0.0447.

However, it is important to note that the r-value of 0.206 indicates that the relationship is weak. Although the relationship is statistically significant, its strength is limited. Therefore, social media platforms usage should not be interpreted as a strong determinant of homophobia. Other factors may also be relevant to students' attitudes toward homosexuality, including religion, family, and the social or school environment. However, these factors were not directly measured in the present study and should therefore be considered as possible factors for future research rather than established explanations for the current findings.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were derived: (1) There is a seemingly non-homophobia level of homophobia in terms of the negative and positive statements. (2) The level of social media platforms usage of the respondents, in terms of following influencers, and following pages and group pages, is low. (3) There is a significant difference between the level of homophobia and the level of social media platforms usage of learners, and (4) There is a significant weak relationship between the level of homophobia and the level of social media platforms usage of

learners.

The contribution of this study lies in providing empirical evidence regarding the relationship between homophobia and social media platforms usage among Grade 12 learners in the selected school. Although the relationship was statistically significant, its weak strength indicates that social media platforms usage alone does not adequately explain variations in homophobia. Practically, schools may use these findings to strengthen an inclusive and respectful learning environment through educational activities that promote respect for diversity, responsible social media use, digital citizenship, and critical evaluation of online content. Teachers and school counselors may also facilitate constructive discussions regarding discriminatory or prejudicial content encountered on social media.

It is recommended that future researchers may ponder on what constitutes homophobia and what are the contextual parameters in knowing symptoms of prejudice. Since the study correlated the level of homophobia and level of social media platforms usage, an option to study the other media such as mass media, traditional media, and hypermedia is recommended. It can also be better if there are inquirers that opted to focus on one type of social media platform which this study failed to do so. Maturity variable has been determined as the reason why the researchers opted to use this as a parameter in determining respondents. However, the phenomenon would be more likely to be constituted when other inquirers would set certain attributes as to choose the level of respondents in follow-up studies. Development of algorithm-based detection tools in constituting the level of social media platforms usage, in terms of following influencers and following pages and group pages, is necessary to precisely and accurately measure the level since manipulation of respondents can happen in survey tools.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

ETHICS STATEMENT

This article is an original work, has not been previously published, and is not currently under review by another journal. The manuscript is free from plagiarism and has been approved by all authors for submission to this journal.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

No generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing of this manuscript.

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