

Stressors and Violence Among LGBTQ in Intimate Partner Relationships

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Abstract

This study explored the stressors and violence experienced by LGBTQ individuals in intimate partner relationships, particularly among LGBTQ criminology students of Sorsogon College of Criminology, Inc. It was anchored on the Minority Stress Model, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development, and the Input-Process-Output Model. A qualitative phenomenological research design was used to describe the lived experiences of the participants. Ten LGBTQ students who had experienced intimate partner violence and minority stressors were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Data were gathered through open-ended and unstructured interviews, observation, and expert validation, with interviews conducted in a safe and private setting and transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed using Colaizzi's process and selective coding. Findings revealed two major themes: forms of violence and minority stressors. The forms of violence included physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic or financial violence, which were marked by control, coercion, manipulation, boundary violations, and dependency. The minority stressors included hate crimes, discrimination, identity concealment, and internalized homophobia, which contributed to emotional distress, damaged self-worth, social isolation, fear of exposure, and strained relationships. The study concluded that stressors and violence in LGBTQ intimate relationships are interconnected and require stronger protection, inclusive support systems, awareness programs, counseling, legal assistance, safe spaces, and institutional interventions. The proposed seminar, "Unveiling the Struggles: Exploring Stressors and Violence in LGBTQ Intimate Relationships," aims to promote awareness and resilience. The study supports SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 10, and SDG 16 by addressing well-being, inclusive education, gender-related protection, reduced inequalities, and stronger justice-oriented institutions. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening public health, educational, social, institutional, community, and governance responses to LGBTQ intimate partner violence.

Keywords: Discrimination, Economic Violence, Identity Concealment, Intimate Partner Violence, LGBTQ, Psychological Violence, Sexual Violence, Social Support

1. Introduction

This study examines the stressors and violence experienced by LGBTQ individuals in intimate partner relationships, with particular attention to how minority stress, stigma, discrimination, identity concealment, internalized homophobia, and limited access to inclusive support systems shape vulnerability to intimate partner violence. While intimate partner violence has often been studied within heterosexual relationships, the reviewed literature shows that LGBTQ individuals also experience physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and financial abuse, including identity-specific forms of control. The study is situated in the context of LGBTQ criminology students of Sorsogon College of Criminology, Inc., where local experiences of underreporting, fear of exposure, family pressure, and limited LGBTQ-sensitive institutional responses justify the need for a focused inquiry.

LGBTQ individuals in intimate partner relationships experience stressors that may intensify relationship conflict and violence. Minority stress, stigma, discrimination, internalized homophobia or transphobia, fear of rejection, lack of family support, and limited culturally competent services can make survivors hesitant to seek help. Davis and Crain (2024) defined Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the LGBTQ community as violence or abuse between partners, with unique risk factors and underreporting issues. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015), IPV includes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, psychological aggression, and coercive acts committed by a current or former intimate partner. The LGBTQ community has historically experienced criminalization, exclusion, and violence. In Nazi Germany, pink triangles were used to identify male prisoners persecuted because of homosexuality (Mullen, 2024). LGBTQ uprisings such as the Cooper DO-NUTS Riot (History, 2024), Compton's Cafeteria Riot (Levin, 2019), and Stonewall Riot (History, 2017) became responses to continuing harassment and oppression. These historical and social realities show that LGBTQ intimate relationships must be understood within broader structures of stigma, marginalization, and resistance. For conceptual clarity, LGBTQIA+ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, or other orientations (Casey Foundation, 2023). Forms of Violence refer to physical, sexual, stalking, or psychological harm committed by a current or former partner (Schulze, 2023). Minority Stressors refer to additional stress experienced by

marginalized groups, including the LGBTQ community (French, 2024). Gender Identity refers to how a person understands and experiences their gender (Wamsley, 2021), while sexuality refers to one's sexual attraction to people of a particular gender (WebMD, 2022). An intimate relationship may involve closeness, romance, and sexual intimacy (Patra et al., 2018).

The literature confirms that intimate partner violence occurs in both heterosexual and LGBTQ relationships. IPV includes sexual or psychological harm, aggression, coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behavior (World Health Organization, 2023), and studies show that LGBTQ couples may experience similar or higher IPV rates than heterosexual couples (Kim and Schmuhl, 2021; Edwards et al., 2015; Goldberg and Meyer, 2013; Hellemans et al., 2015; Stiles-Shields and Carroll, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). LGBTQ IPV may involve physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, economic, and coercive abuse, with serious effects such as trauma, depression, anxiety, substance use, suicide risk, financial dependence, and reduced sexual agency (Bogat et al., 2023; Price et al., 2023; Kattari et al., 2022; Kimmes et al., 2019; Vadysinghe et al., 2018; Khurana & Loder, 2022; Dardis et al., 2016; Mims and Waddell, 2022; Porsch et al., 2022; Lejbowicz, 2022; Hackbart, 2022; Salter et al., 2021; La Riva et al., 2023; Yoshioka et al., 2022; Patra et al., 2018; NCADVP, 2015). In the Philippine context, IPV has been linked to self-defense, reactivity, control, contraceptive use, exposure to parental IPV, and low help-seeking behavior (Fehringer & Hindin, 2014; Tsai et al., 2016; Montes & Cruz, 2014; Puno et al., 2023; Co et al., 2019). Minority stress is also central to LGBTQ IPV because stigma, discrimination, hate crimes, internalized homophobia, and social rejection increase vulnerability to violence and abuse (Frost and Meyer, 2023; Messinger & Magnin, 2019; Flores et al., 2022; Badenes-Ribera et al., 2019; Reyes et al., 2023; Oliveira et al., 2023; Porsch et al., 2023; Reyes et al., 2022; Edwards et al., 2020). Several studies show that discrimination, internalized homophobia, outness, and identity concealment are closely linked to LGBTQ IPV. Minority stressors such as discrimination, family rejection, vicarious trauma, homophobia, stigma consciousness, and difficulty accessing LGBTQ-focused services increase vulnerability to IPV, intimate partner aggression, digital dating abuse, and sexual IPV perpetration (Ronzón-Tirado et al. 2021; Sarno et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2022; Parrott et al., 2023; Callan et al., 2021; Stephenson & Finneran, 2017; Longobardi & Ribera, 2017). Outness and family or peer support influence mental health and well-being, while identity concealment, often used as self-protection against prejudice, may cause psychological distress, complicate relationships, increase victimization, and discourage reporting (Freire et al., 2023; Tabaac et al., 2015; Beagan et al., 2022; Pachankis et al., 2020; Feinstein et al., 2020; Goh et al., 2019; Lo, 2022). Overall, the literature confirms that LGBTQ IPV may be equal to or higher than IPV in heterosexual relationships and may involve physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, and other forms of violence shaped by minority stress and discrimination (Kim and Schmuhl, 2021; Edwards et al., 2015; Goldberg and Meyer, 2013; Hellemans et al., 2015; Stiles-Shields and Carroll, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015; Vadysinghe et al., 2018; Dardis et al., 2017; Khurana and Lodger, 2022; La Riva et al., 2023; Yoshioka et al., 2022; Patra et al., 2018; Porsch et al., 2022; Mims and Waddell, 2021; Tsai et al., 2016; Montes and Cruz, 2014; Flores et al., 2022; Badenes et al., 2019; Reyes et al., 2022; Edwards et al., 2020).

Globally, LGBTQ IPV is linked to the broader struggle for equality, safety, and recognition, as minority stressors such as stigma, discrimination, social rejection, limited support, and internalized homophobia intensify violence among LGBTQIA+ couples (Oliveira et al., 2023; Porsch et al., 2023; Reyes et al., 2022; Edwards et al., 2020). In the Philippines, LGBTQ IPV remains underreported because of fear of exposure, humiliation, negative reactions, weak documentation mechanisms, and limited local research, emphasizing the need for standardized studies and interventions (OutRight Action International, 2018; Commission on Human Rights, 2019; Raj and Wagman, 2023). Existing legal and human rights frameworks, including Republic Act No. 9262, Republic Act 11313, Republic Act No. 10911, and SDG 10, support protection, equality, and reduced discrimination, but local realities in Sorsogon City show that stigma, family pressure, fear of being outed, distrust in legal institutions, and limited LGBTQ-inclusive services continue to justify the need to study LGBTQ criminology students in Sorsogon College of Criminology, Inc. (Cristobal & Padilla, 2020; LawPhil, n.d.; Dr. Sylvia E. Claudio, 2021; LawPhil, 2019; LawPhil, 2016; LawPhil, 2004; United Nations, 2023).

This study is anchored on three theories and one conceptual model. The theoretical paradigm includes Ilan H. Meyer, Ph.D. (2003) Minority Stress Model, Cited in McConnell, et.al. (2018); Abraham H. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), Cited in Bucchio, et.al. (2021); and Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development (1950), Cited in Orenstein & Lewis (2022). The main theoretical foundation is Ilan H. Meyer's Minority Stress Model (2003), as cited in McConnell et al. (2018). Minority Stress Theory (Ilan H. Meyer, 2003) explains how individuals who belong to stigmatized groups experience additional stress due to stigma, discrimination, and hostile social conditions. These stressors may lead to emotional fatigue, depression, and other negative health outcomes (McConnell et.al. 2018). This theory is relevant because LGBTQ criminology students may face bullying, harassment, and lack of peer acceptance, which can contribute to anxiety, depression, and alcohol consumption (Pinamang, 2023). The study is also supported by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Abraham Maslow, 1943). Maslow's framework explains that human behavior is motivated by physiological and psychological needs, including physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization, later expanded to include cognitive needs, aesthetic needs, and transcendence need (Bucchio et al., 2021). This theory is relevant because LGBTQ criminology students in intimate partner relationships may struggle with safety, belongingness, and love when IPV and minority stress affect their relationships. The third theory is Psychosocial Theory of Development

(Erik Erikson, 1950). Erikson's theory explains development through stages, including identity versus role confusion, where individuals explore roles, beliefs, and values to form a coherent sense of self (Orenstein & Lewis, 2022). This is relevant because LGBTQ individuals may encounter stressors while developing sexual and gender identities, which can contribute to emotional dependency, difficulty setting boundaries, psychological distress, and unhealthy relationship dynamics. The conceptual framework uses the Input-Process-Output Model. According to Robert et al. (2014), the IPO Model is useful because it outlines the steps needed to transform inputs into meaningful outputs. In this study, the inputs are the forms of violence and minority stressors experienced by LGBTQ criminology students. The process includes ethical considerations, interviews, familiarization with data, generation of initial codes, searching and reviewing themes, data analysis, and writing the thematic analysis. The output is a seminar titled "Unveiling the Struggles: Exploring Stressors and Violence in LGBTQ+ Intimate Relationships," intended to increase visibility and awareness of IPV in sexual minority communities.

The reviewed literature shows that many studies on LGBTQ IPV focus on prevalence comparisons between LGBTQ and heterosexual populations or on broad categories such as lesbians and gays. However, limited research addresses the specific experiences of LGBTQ criminology students in localized contexts. The gap is more evident in the Philippines, where available documentation on LGBT-related violence remains limited, underreporting persists, and few studies examine IPV in the LGBT community. This study addresses the gap by investigating the stressors and forms of violence experienced by LGBTQ criminology students in Sorsogon City. The focus on criminology students is significant because these individuals are future justice professionals who may later handle cases involving violence, discrimination, and victim protection. Studying their lived experiences provides a contextually grounded basis for awareness-building, policy development, institutional support, and intervention programs. The study specifically explores: the forms of violence experienced by the participants; the minority stressors they have encountered; and the intervention that may be proposed based on the findings. It assumes that the participants can recall experiences of violence and minority stressors and that the proposed intervention can be feasible, applicable, and beneficial for the LGBTQ community.

This study aligns with SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being because the literature connects IPV and minority stress with psychological distress, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, substance abuse, and suicide risks. By examining LGBTQ IPV and stressors, the study contributes to public health awareness and the development of support mechanisms for survivors. It aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education because the study is situated in an educational institution and focuses on criminology students. The proposed awareness seminar supports inclusive learning environments, student welfare, and the development of future justice professionals who can respond more sensitively to IPV cases involving sexual minorities. It aligns with SDG 5 – Gender Equality because the study addresses violence, discrimination, and unequal treatment connected with gender, sexuality, and intimate relationships. Although SDG 5 is commonly framed around women and girls, the study extends the discussion to the protection of LGBTQ individuals who also experience gender-based and identity-based harm. It aligns with SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities because the study directly addresses the marginalization, stigma, and social exclusion experienced by LGBTQ individuals. This is consistent with the United Nations' goal to reduce inequality within and among countries (United Nations, 2023). It aligns with SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions because the study emphasizes legal protection, documentation of violence, trust in justice institutions, inclusive law enforcement responses, and the need for stronger mechanisms to protect LGBTQ survivors from violence and discrimination.

The study contributes to public health sustainability by identifying how IPV, emotional manipulation, psychological abuse, sexual violence, and minority stress affect the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ individuals. Emotional Blackmail is a behavior used to achieve one's goals at the expense of another party (West, 2023). Gaslighting causes a person to question their sanity, memories, or perception of reality (Huizen, 2024). Guilt-Tripping refers to emotional manipulation that induces guilt (Marie, 2022). Understanding these experiences can guide counseling, psychosocial support, and trauma-informed services. The study contributes to educational sustainability by helping schools recognize that LGBTQ students may experience intimate partner violence and stressors that affect safety, belongingness, identity development, and student welfare. Awareness initiatives can reduce stigma, encourage help-seeking, and support inclusive student services. The study contributes to socio-economic sustainability by recognizing that financial violence and economic dependence can trap victims in abusive relationships. Addressing these issues can support empowerment, autonomy, and access to resources that help survivors leave cycles of control. The study contributes to policy and governance sustainability by highlighting the need for stronger documentation, legal protection, inclusive enforcement, and LGBTQ-sensitive support systems. It strengthens the call for institutions to respond to violence not only as a private relationship issue but also as a matter of rights, safety, justice, and community protection. Finally, the study contributes to community and institutional sustainability by promoting safe spaces where LGBTQ individuals can disclose experiences, access support, and express their identities without fear of harassment, discrimination, ridicule, or exposure. Through its proposed seminar intervention, the study supports awareness, resilience, and visibility regarding IPV in sexual minority communities.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative research design guided by a phenomenological methodology to explore and describe the stressors and experiences of violence among LGBTQ+ individuals in intimate relationships. This design was appropriate because it focused on lived experiences and allowed the researcher to understand how participants perceived and gave meaning to their experiences within their personal contexts. Wertz (2015) defines the phenomenological approach as a sort of qualitative study that guides certainty and sheds light on an investigation's subject through the researcher's own personal experiences. According to Creswell and Poth (2013), the fundamental goal of a phenomenology approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon. This study was also classified as qualitative research because it involved direct observation and interviews. Pathak et al. (2013) stated that this strategy takes into account deeper meanings, viewpoints, and motivations, rather than just surface-level information.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Sorsogon College of Criminology, Inc. The researcher coordinated with the school administration, the College of Criminal Justice Education Dean, the research adviser, the guidance counsellor, the head of student affairs, and the student council to locate consenting participants and facilitate the conduct of the study.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The participants of the study were LGBTQ students of Sorsogon College of Criminology, Inc. who had experienced stressors and intimate partner violence. A total of 10 participants joined the study, all of whom were identified and endorsed by the School Guidance Counselor. The participants were selected based on their ability to provide relevant accounts of their lived experiences in LGBTQ intimate partner relationships.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The researcher used purposive and snowball sampling to select the participants. According to Bisht (2024), purposive sampling, also known as judgmental expert sampling is an intentional and deliberate selection of participants to align with specific study objectives. Snowball sampling, on the other hand, allowed existing participants who met the study criteria to refer or recruit other qualified participants until sufficient data were gathered (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The selection criteria required that each participant must identify as part of the LGBTQ community, must be in or have been in an intimate partner relationship, must have experienced intimate partner violence and stressors, and must be a Bonafide student of Sorsogon College of Criminology, Inc. The number of participants was not predetermined to allow the researcher to accommodate varied data and maximize the scope of the study.

2.5 Research Instrument

The researcher used Interview Guide Questions to identify eligible participants and gather relevant data. The instrument consisted of unstructured interview questions designed to elicit significant information about the participants' experiences. The researcher also used observation and Open-Ended Interview Guide Questions during the interviews. The guide questions were derived from literature that identified layers of experiences and were translated into Bicol Dialect to promote better comprehension and encourage meaningful responses. With the participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to capture the depth of each participant's experience.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher requested permission from the College of Criminal Justice Education Dean and the research adviser. Since there was no existing ethics committee, the researcher also requested permission from the school administration of Sorsogon College of Criminology, Inc. The researcher then coordinated with the guidance counsellor, head of student affairs, and student council to locate consenting participants. After consent was obtained, the participants signed an informed consent form containing relevant information about the purpose and methodology of the study. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews in a safe and private setting. To obtain adequate and complete data, the researcher followed Seidman (2019) three step interview process, which involved establishing rapport, gathering information during the actual interview, and clarifying other facts. Triangulation was also used to analyze and validate the gathered data by interviewing authorities and experts who supported the researcher's interpretation.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

After data collection, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher organized the transcripts and became familiar with the data before analysis. The following seven steps proposed by Colaizzi (n.d.) were employed: the researcher repeatedly read the participant accounts, identified statements directly related to the phenomenon, formulated meanings, organized meanings into shared themes, developed a comprehensive description of the phenomenon, described the essential structure of the phenomenon, and asked participants whether the formulated statements accurately described their experiences (Morrow, et al. 2015). Selective coding was also used to identify the main theme and connect the other

categories to it. According to Chetty (2020), selective coding is the process of choosing one category to be the major category and assigning all other categories to that category. To strengthen credibility, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with follow-up questions to clarify and expand the participants' assertions.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical standards by obtaining informed consent from all participants. Although several participants were identified by the Guidance Councilor, only 10 participants agreed to join the study, while some withdrew because they feared that their identity might be disclosed despite assurances of confidentiality. The researcher ensured that all participants were fully informed about the nature and purpose of the study before agreeing to participate. The researcher also explained the possible risks of participation, protected the participants' well-being, and respected their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. All information disclosed by the participants was treated with the highest confidentiality in compliance to RA 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile and Context of the Participants

The participants were criminology students of Sorsogon College of Criminology, Inc. enrolled during Academic Year 2023–2024 and identified as members of the LGBTQ community. Their backgrounds reflected diverse family, relational, and identity-related circumstances. Some participants kept their identity and romantic relationships hidden from their families, some came from religious or traditional homes, some were already open to their families, and others had experiences of family estrangement, abusive households, or cohabitation with partners. In addition, two professional informants contributed expert insights: one registered psychologist specializing in trauma and mental health, and one licensed professional working in student welfare and psychosocial support.

These participant contexts helped clarify why stressors and violence in LGBTQ intimate relationships cannot be separated from family acceptance, religious norms, social visibility, emotional dependence, and access to support systems. The diversity of the participants' experiences showed that violence was not limited to isolated relationship conflicts but was shaped by broader social and psychological pressures affecting LGBTQ identity, belongingness, and safety.

3.2 Forms of Violence Experienced by the Participants

The first major theme focused on the forms of violence experienced by LGBTQ participants in intimate partner relationships. Five subthemes emerged: physical violence, emotional violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and economic violence. These forms of violence showed recurring patterns of control, coercion, manipulation, boundary violation, and dependency within the participants' relationships.

3.2.1 Physical Violence

The participants reported experiences of physical violence that included yelling, throwing objects, slapping, hair-pulling, scratching, choking, kicking, and hitting with objects. These acts commonly occurred during arguments, jealousy-driven confrontations, accusations of infidelity, or attempts to control the participant's actions. Some participants described physical aggression as repeated and exhausting, while others recalled that the abuser justified the violence as an expression of love, loss of control, or the victim's fault. The findings show that physical violence in LGBTQ intimate relationships functioned as a mechanism of dominance and control. The participants' accounts indicated that abuse was not accidental but part of a recurring cycle that undermined safety and autonomy. Physical violence in LGBTQ relationships, as supported by the studies of Lahti (2023) and Dollar (2017), is shaped by complex intersections of heteronormativity, social status, and gender-related elements that amplify abuse and constrain individual agency. Participants' visible discomfort, uneasiness, flinching, hyperawareness, and fidgety behavior during interviews also reflected the psychological toll of abuse, which aligns with Söderström et al. (2024), who note that such reactions often emerge when discussing sensitive topics or emotional trauma. These observations also resonate with findings by Niles et al. (2018) and Smith, indicating that exaggerated physiological startle responses, such as flinching and hypervigilance, reflect heightened stress levels and anxiety.

3.2.2 Emotional Violence

The participants experienced emotional violence through guilt-tripping, emotional blackmail, threats of self-harm, invalidation, humiliation, belittling, constant criticism, and withholding emotional security. Some participants were pressured to comply with their partner's wishes through statements that questioned their love or loyalty. Others were threatened with suicide if they attempted to leave the relationship. Several participants also described being dismissed as overly sensitive or dramatic when they expressed emotional distress. These findings indicate that emotional violence damaged the participants' confidence, self-worth, and emotional stability. Emotional blackmail created guilt and fear, threats of self-harm shifted responsibility onto the victim, and gaslighting weakened the participant's trust in their own perceptions. In their study, Woodyatt and Stephenson (2016) emphasize that emotional violence in LGBTQ intimate relationships often arises from jealousy and power imbalances, fueling controlling behaviors that escalate conflict. Bourne

et al. (2022) further validate emotional abuse as a recognized form of intimate partner violence (IPV) in LGBTQ contexts, noting that many victims struggle to articulate their experiences as abusive. Participants' nonverbal cues, such as crossing arms, playing with rings, and scratching their bodies, further reflected discomfort and anxiety, consistent with Fetterman et al. (2015) and Teja (2024), who interpret these behaviors as signs of defensiveness, discomfort, resistance, or inhibited social interaction.

3.2.3 Psychological Violence

The participants described psychological violence through manipulation, isolation, intimidation, derogatory language, guilt-tripping, ridicule, and mind games. Some were accused of wanting to leave their partners or find someone else when they spent time with friends. Others were isolated from family support, made to feel undeserving of love, or ridiculed when they tried to end the relationship. These behaviors made the participants doubt themselves, weakened their self-esteem, and increased dependence on the abusive partner. The findings show that psychological violence was used to erode identity, independence, and mental stability. It was especially damaging in LGBTQ relationships because it exploited identity-related vulnerabilities, self-acceptance struggles, and fear of rejection. According to Schneider (2018), psychological violence extends far beyond physical injuries and includes covert forms such as control, bullying, isolation, exploitation, and manipulation that may not leave visible signs but are equally damaging. Participants' nervous laughter, forced smiles, and tendency to minimize abuse reflected hidden distress and internalized discomfort. Weker (2016) explains that nervous laughter often signals anxiety or unease, while insincere smiles can suggest suppressed feelings. These findings reinforce the need to recognize invisible forms of abuse and provide culturally competent, trauma-informed support systems for LGBTQ victims.

3.2.4 Sexual Violence

The participants reported sexual violence involving coercive requests for sex, anger when consent was refused, emotional manipulation, threats connected to family secrecy, and non-consensual acts during sexual encounters. Some participants were pressured through statements that equated love with sexual compliance, while others were made to feel guilty for refusing sex. One account also described the use of a sex object without prior discussion or agreement, which violated the participant's sexual boundaries. The findings demonstrate that sexual violence in LGBTQ intimate relationships involved coercion, manipulation, and disregard for consent. These experiences showed that consent must apply not only to whether sexual activity occurs but also to what happens during sexual activity. The study by Anierobi et al. (2021) underscores that sexual relationships must be mutual and free from coercion, as intimidation undermines consent and constitutes a violation of human rights. Participants' avoidance of eye contact, weak vocal tone, and repetitive hand-picking behaviors reflected discomfort and anxiety, consistent with Wang et al. (2015), who note that gaze avoidance often signals social unease and diminished engagement in communication. These findings emphasize the importance of consent education, boundary-setting, and safe relationship programs for LGBTQ students.

3.2.5 Economic Violence

Several participants experienced economic violence through financial control, salary-taking, pressure to take loans, forced payment of shared expenses, guilt-tripping over money, and expectations to pay for the partner's needs or purchases. Some participants described working part-time or using allowances for school and personal needs but being pressured to surrender money or cover expenses without transparency. These situations created financial instability and dependency, making it harder for victims to establish independence or leave the relationship. The findings show that economic violence functioned as both financial exploitation and emotional control. It reduced the participants' autonomy, weakened their decision-making capacity, and trapped them in dependency. The study of Johnson et al. (2022) affirms that economic violence can severely impact a victim's life, foster economic dependence, and restrict their ability to leave abusive relationships, while also emphasizing the need to recognize economic abuse as a critical dimension of intimate partner violence with far-reaching consequences. Participants' visible anger, clenched fists, and self-blame during interviews further showed the emotional impact of economic abuse. Such nonverbal cues align with Saggese (2023), who explains that a clenched fist often signifies tension, aggression, or frustration and may indicate heightened emotional states or a need for control.

3.3 Minority Stressors Experienced by the Participants

The second major theme focused on minority stressors experienced by the participants. Four subthemes emerged: hate crimes, discrimination, identity concealment, and internalized homophobia. These stressors were connected to fear of being outed, social rejection, family disapproval, stigma, religious judgment, and pressure to hide or deny one's identity.

3.3.1 Hate Crimes

The participants described hate crime-related experiences involving threats of outing, humiliation based on sexual orientation, damage to reputation, public ridicule, and social sabotage. Some participants were threatened that their sexual orientation would be disclosed to homophobic parents. Others were accused of pretending to be lesbian or were blamed for making the relationship too visible. These experiences caused emotional distress, damaged identity, and weakened the participants' support systems. The findings indicate that hate crimes in LGBTQ intimate relationships may occur not only

as physical violence but also as psychological, emotional, and reputational harm. Threats of outing and humiliation weaponized stigma, fear, and family rejection to maintain control. Dating violence has been recognized as a significant method of committing hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals, marked by its premeditated nature, collective execution, and wide-reaching community repercussions (Katsuba, 2023). Family dynamics also intensified these experiences, as rejection and conflict around sexuality increased emotional strain. This aligns with findings that parent-child conflicts around sexuality are particularly fraught, since stigma surrounding mental health creates discomfort in discussing critical issues like depression and suicide, thereby hindering open communication and weakening parent-adolescent relationships (Cingel et al., 2021).

3.3.2 Discrimination

The participants experienced discrimination through gender role stereotyping, rejection by family members, housing discrimination, religious judgment, disapproving public looks, and statements that same-sex relationships were wrong or sinful. Some participants were asked who played the “male” role in the relationship, while others were denied housing or rejected by relatives because of their relationship. These experiences damaged self-esteem and self-confidence and contributed to emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. The findings show that discrimination operated across personal, familial, religious, housing, and social contexts. It did not occur only within intimate relationships but was intensified by wider social stigma. The study by McLean (2021) underscores how discrimination, prejudice, and violence against LGBTQ+ individuals contribute to mental health challenges across age groups, with cultural narratives reinforcing homophobia and transphobia. Participants’ flushed cheeks, visible distress, and accounts of unfair treatment reflected both psychological and physiological consequences. These observations align with Keeling and Raghallaigh (2024), who explained that flushed cheeks may manifest anxiety or psychological upset. Thus, discrimination intensified the participants’ vulnerability by combining external stigma with internal emotional strain.

3.3.3 Identity Concealment

The participants described identity concealment as hiding their sexuality, avoiding public affection, presenting their partners as friends, and suppressing relationship visibility to avoid harm, rejection, discrimination, or family conflict. Some participants concealed their relationships because of conservative family expectations, religious pressure, fear of being judged, and fear that being outed would lead to serious consequences. This concealment restricted authentic expression of affection, increased psychological stress, and created strain within relationships. The findings show that identity concealment operated as both a protective strategy and a source of emotional burden. While concealment helped participants avoid immediate harm, it also fostered loneliness, social isolation, insecurity, and emotional exhaustion. The research of Huang and Chan (2022) emphasized that sexual orientation concealment among sexual minority individuals can negatively affect well-being by fostering loneliness, which in turn compounds adverse psychological outcomes. Participants’ sad and defeated expressions, looking down, and slouching reflected the emotional toll of concealment and a perceived loss of hope for social acceptance. Ding (2024) further explains that failure to conform to societal expectations often leads to feelings of inadequacy and defeat, causing individuals to perceive themselves as falling short of societal ideals.

3.3.4 Internalized Homophobia

Most participants experienced internalized homophobia, shown through denial of sexual orientation, efforts to hide gender identity or sexuality, shame, defensiveness, anger, and avoidance of publicly acknowledging their relationships. These experiences were shaped by societal prejudice and negative beliefs about sexuality, leading to self-blame, discomfort, emotional suppression, and relationship strain. Li (2017) affirms that internalized homophobia creates challenges in intimate relationships and affects psychological, physiological, and social well-being. Participants’ nervousness, avoidance, and physical signs of discomfort also reflected the emotional impact of this stressor, consistent with Candini et al. (2021), who explain that sweating or increased skin conductance response may signal unease and the desire to maintain distance. These findings highlight the need for supportive, inclusive, and affirming spaces for LGBTQ individuals.

3.4 Proposed Intervention Based on the Findings

Based on the findings, the study proposed a seminar entitled “Unveiling the Struggles: Exploring Stressors and Violence in LGBTQ+ Intimate Relationships” with the theme “Breaking the Silence: Promoting Awareness and Resilience in LGBTQ Intimate Relationships.” The seminar was designed for LGBTQ college student members of Sorsogon College of Criminology, Inc. and aimed to foster understanding and awareness of the stressors and violence experienced by LGBTQ individuals in intimate relationships. It also aimed to explain the similarities and differences between LGBTQ and heterosexual intimate partner violence, analyze how IPV manifests in LGBTQ relationships, discuss stressors that affect relationship dynamics, and promote inclusive environments free from prejudice. The proposed seminar responded directly to the study’s findings by addressing the need for awareness, safe spaces, policy development, and individualized support for LGBTQ victims of intimate partner violence. In addition, two intervention programs were drafted: “Resilience Hub” and “Rainbow Refuge.” Resilience Hub aims to reduce minority stress among LGBTQ students by offering mental health assistance, empowerment within schools, and systemic reforms in educational settings. Rainbow Refuge aims to lessen the

occurrence of intimate partner violence among LGBTQ students by incorporating education, crisis intervention, safety planning, support services, advocacy, policy development, and continuous evaluation within the school setting. Together, these interventions aim to strengthen victim support, increase awareness, promote trauma-informed care, and develop safer and more inclusive institutional responses.

3.5 Overall Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the results showed that LGBTQ participants experienced multiple and overlapping forms of intimate partner violence. Physical violence involved direct bodily harm and intimidation; emotional violence involved manipulation, blackmail, invalidation, and threats; psychological violence involved isolation, ridicule, and mind games; sexual violence involved coercion and violations of consent; and economic violence involved financial control and dependency. These forms of violence commonly reflected the abuser's need for control and the victim's difficulty in leaving the relationship. The findings also showed that minority stressors intensified the participants' vulnerability to abuse. Hate crimes, discrimination, identity concealment, and internalized homophobia created emotional distress, social isolation, damaged self-worth, and fear of exposure. These stressors intersected with intimate partner violence, making abuse harder to recognize, report, and escape. The results therefore support the need for LGBTQ-sensitive education, mental health services, institutional policies, crisis support, safe spaces, and intervention programs that address both interpersonal violence and the broader social conditions that sustain it.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that LGBTQ individuals in intimate partner relationships experienced different and overlapping forms of violence, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and financial violence. These experiences were not isolated incidents but part of recurring patterns of control, manipulation, coercion, boundary violation, and dependency. Physical violence caused fear and trauma, while emotional and psychological violence weakened the participants' confidence, self-worth, and ability to recognize abuse. Sexual violence violated consent and personal boundaries, while financial violence increased economic dependence and made it more difficult for victims to leave abusive relationships. The findings also showed that minority stressors, such as hate crimes, discrimination, identity concealment, and internalized homophobia, worsened the participants' emotional distress and contributed to social isolation, damaged self-esteem, strained relationships, and denial of sexual orientation. Overall, the study emphasized that violence in LGBTQ intimate relationships is closely connected with broader social pressures, stigma, and lack of inclusive support systems; therefore, addressing the problem requires both victim-centered intervention and stronger institutional protection.

Based on the findings, the study recommended that educational institutions strengthen their mechanisms for protecting LGBTQ students who experience intimate partner violence. This may be done through coordination with local law enforcement, establishment of effective legal and institutional support systems, confidential reporting channels, peer-led support groups, and the training of personnel who can properly assist victims. The study also recommended accessible mental health counseling, legal assistance, and awareness campaigns focused on psychological abuse, consent, sexual boundaries, and respect in intimate relationships. Since financial violence was also identified, financial literacy programs, emergency aid, and possible job opportunities may help victims gain independence and reduce dependency on abusive partners. Furthermore, the study recommended stronger legal protections, safe spaces, equality policies, inclusive community practices, support networks, educational programs against stereotypes, and affirming mental health services. The proposed seminar, "Unveiling the Struggles: Exploring Stressors and Violence in LGBTQ Intimate Relationships," with the theme "Breaking the Silence: Promoting Awareness and Resilience in LGBTQ Intimate Relationships," may serve as an initial intervention to increase awareness, encourage help-seeking behavior, promote resilience, and deepen understanding of LGBTQ IPV, its stressors, manifestations, patterns, and relationship dynamics.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study complied with institutional ethical standards, with permission secured before data gathering. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and right to withdraw. All responses and personal information were kept confidential and anonymous due to the sensitive nature of LGBTQ identity and intimate partner violence experiences. The authors declare no conflict of interest, acknowledge all contributions, and retain responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, originality, and copyright ownership of the study.

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