The Phenomenology of Disclosure among Filipino Male Gays

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Abstract Disclosing one's homosexuality in a heterosexual-dominated community will always be a continuous decision Filipino gay men need to deal with. The choice may not be as easy due to the perceived and actual stigma, judgment, or misconceptions on knowledge of being gay may arise that could hinder their disclosure phase. This research is aimed at exploring the lived experiences of Filipino gay men in the coming-out phase. This phenomenological study interviewed 12 self-identified gays who disclosed their homosexuality to at least one of his/her immediate environments – friends and family members. The recruitment process is through snowball sampling. Findings of the study show that in disclosing their gay identities there is a connection between their positive and negative experiences, disclosure dilemmas, and their reason to finally come out of the closet. The phase is considered a continuous process of choosing and self-expressing one's homosexuality. Lastly, this study emphasized the interconnections of the different aspects of individuality that led to the development of their chosen identity.

Keywords: *choice, disclosure, dilemmas, expression, tolerance*

Introduction

Disclosing one's sexuality is a dilemma among the lesbian, gay, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community. Being a Filipino gay man may or may not be an easily recognizable trait that reveals itself towards others through social interactions. Amongst gay men and women, it is a choice whether they live openly as gay or hide it while letting others create assumptions that he or she is heterosexual. Such confusion may lead to different disclosure dilemmas before they finally come out of their closet.

The concept of disclosure has been related to being honest about one's gender orientation with another significant person to achieve an open, mature and positive relationship. Research on disclosure provides information on reasons for non-disclosure: (1) anticipation of negative emotional reactions; (2) anticipation of negative changes in relationships; 3) belief that others held stigmatizing attitudes toward homosexuality; 4) prior experience with negative reactions to disclosure; 5) wanting to maintain others' perceptions of him; 6) fear that those told would disclose to additional people; and 7) fear of rejection due to culture or religion (Schrimshaw, Downing, & Cohn, 2018).

Theories of disclosure provide information on risk levels and knowledge of known and unknown self-dimensions. The Communication Privacy Management theory is one of the self-disclosure theories based on a systematic research designed to develop an evidence-based understanding of the way people regulate revealing and concealing (Petronio & Durham, 2015). The theory views "disclosure" as the process of revealing private information yet always in relation to concealing private information (Petronio, 2016). In support of CPM, it has been found out that the riskier the information being disclosed, the more likely it would be controlled and private. To add to disclosure

theories, the Johari Window illustrates the interaction between what is known/unknown to oneself and others. Composed of four panes or quadrants (Masaviru, 2016), the process of enlarging its quadrants is called self-disclosure. As observed, it is a give-and-take process and a form of interaction where an individual shares something about themselves, it will be reciprocated by disclosing their hidden quadrant. Thus, it was hypothesized that the extent of disclosed information about their homosexuality would be one of the contributing factors in their disclosure dilemmas. Determining whether to disclose one's homosexuality in a particular setting, gays have always been weighing their potential benefit and cost based on the reaction of other individuals.

Family relationships, perception, and belief toward homosexuality have played a vital role in an individual's coming out process (Alpaslan, Johnston, & Goliath, 2009; Cramer & Roach, 1988; Enck, Preston, & Thornton, 1984). The studies indicate that most parents, at first, reacted negatively to the sexual disclosure such as feelings of shock, disappointment, embarrassment, fear, guilt, sadness, hurt, and loss. Nonetheless, over time, acceptance was given to them known as feelings of relief. On the other hand, using a different lens, sibling reaction can also make or break a gay's and lesbian's identity after the disclosure. Hilton and Szymasnki (2011) attested that siblings became closer, sensitive, empathetic, and supportive to one another after the disclosure but not in all cases. The "coming out" became an avenue for the easier establishment of communication and connection not just between parent and child but also with his or her siblings. Thus, the disclosure of sexual orientation to their family may be a distinctive, important developmental stage in their "coming out" as a gay individual.

Disclosing their homosexuality towards their family is not easy as it always seemed, this is one reason why most gays would reveal their sexuality first to their heterosexual

friends. Baiocco, Laghi, Di Pomponio, and Nigito (2012) have attested that closeness and gender mattered when it comes to revealing their homosexuality. Female friends were frequently some of the first people to be told, one reason was the feeling of closeness and likeness toward this gender. It is noteworthy that even though their sexuality was still being stigmatized, most gays were successful in building quality relationships and supportive social networks ironically giving them more reason to live openly with their friends rather than with their family. In the field of education, gay teachers were expected to disclose their sexuality to colleagues than to principals/school heads, while, gay or lesbian parents had to disclose their sexual orientations in the same setting (Bliss & Harris, 1998). Responses like this were due to the fear of losing one's job, exposure to others, and fear of discrimination towards their children.

In reviewing various factors, most studies pointed out the self-perception of gays in the concept of "coming-out." Kus (1985) mentioned acceptance of own gayness as a positive feature of oneself that can be the essence of the "coming out process." Homosexual individuals can confidently reveal themselves without being ashamed or forced to conform to society. Therefore, self-disclosure is one of the stages an individual needs to pass through in their whole process of coming out. This stage is significant since it serves as a transition when a heterosexual individual begins to categorize himself as homosexual.

In the Philippine psychology context, being gay or *bakla* originated way before the Spanish regime (Garcia, 2013). History has proven that the "third sex" existed even before these terms were used as a description for homosexuals. Despite this, their sexual orientation remains taboo, but tolerable, in the Philippine culture. These observations were supported and at the same time contradicted by news articles (Bagas, 2013; Espina-Varona, 2015; France-Presse, 2014;

Mosbergen, 2015). Their articles have emphasized that there was a sense of tolerance towards homosexuals in the country. However, tolerance is not synonymous with acceptance, for discrimination is still prevalent. There have been numerous studies that focused on the difficulties experienced by the LGBT community. Experiences of threat and violence, having a peer attempt suicide, and depression were significantly proven to be associated with suicide ideation and attempt (Manalastas, 2013 & 2016). Statistically, Manalastas' nationally representative data pointed out that there was an existing significant number of lesbian and gay at risk for suicide behaviors compared to heterosexual peers. These results can be considered as the first evidence that in the Philippines, lesbian and gay communities were experiencing crucial inequalities that may harm their overall well-being. Hence, self-disclosing their sexual orientation will never be an easy task given the fact that they were residing in a Christian country dominated by tolerance rather than acceptance.
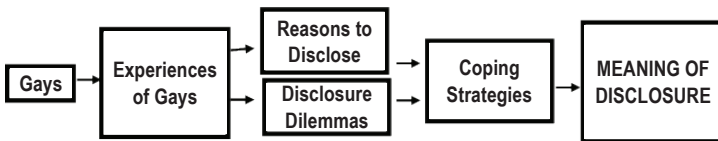
Mainstreaming LGBT issues is still in an on-going stage according to Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) (Manalastas & Torre, 2016). This study answers the large gap and scarcity of local related literature about the "coming out" process specifically about disclosure dilemmas. In connection, the interest of this study is to gain a better understanding of the nature of disclosure of sexual orientation of gays by examining the link between the disclosure dilemmas with the different aspects of their life. Their experiences both before and after they were able to live openly in their chosen gender are the main focus of the study. Disclosing one's sexuality was not easy because one's environment was dominated by heterosexist beliefs. Thus, deeper understanding and in-depth analysis are what this study intends to present.

Methodology

The study is a phenomenological research focused on exploring gay's disclosure and the dilemmas in their process of coming out. The design aims to describe the different circumstances that led the particpants to disclose their sexuality. Limited to experiences shared by the participants before and after they come out of their closet to themselves, family, friends, and society or environment; this study highlights reasons in disclosing one's sexuality/gender orientation, coping mechanisms used, and meanings made on these experiences that changes their view about the phase of disclosure. The following diagram shows the initial framework of the study:

Figure 1.

Initial Framework on the Phase of Disclosure of Gays and its Dilemma

The study gathered 12 self-identified gays who reported their disclosure phase in either or all the four aspects of identity: self, family, friends, and environment. Through purposive sampling, they were classified into four categorizations which are based on whom they disclosed their homosexuality. The researcher gathered two to three participants per category which also came from diverse statuses and phases of their groups. Half of the participants were in the professional fields while others were still studying. Some used to live in rural areas but all of them resided in Manila. Their ages also varied from 19 years old to 30 years old. Almost all the Filipino gays interviewed were

described as physically portraying a heterosexual image, the interviewees wore male clothes.

To ensure that ethical standards were observed, the participants were interviewed and codes were used as identifiers; the study was discussed and full disclosure of the risks and benefits were enumerated. Also, participants completed their informed consent form, and were given privacy and anonymity. Aliases in the narratives were provided by the participants themselves. Consequently, the participants were not subjected to harm in any way, likewise they were given a chance to withdraw upon knowing the real purpose of the study. If the participant refused to answer a specific question, they were not forced but they were still given a chance to continue the interview as long as they permitted it. It also presented a criterion for selection of the participants, data collection tools, and methodology which are free from biases. The researcher ensured that the selection process was consistent and fair to all participants. Research interview questions were validated, and analysis of the results was under the supervision of experts.

Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

The data collection instruments that were used were the Profile Sheet for the categorization of the participants, the Research Questionnaire Form that served as a guide for questions, and the researcher's journal for noting the verbal and non-verbal behaviors throughout the interview session. Upon the approval of the panel on the topic and validation of the interview questions, recruitment was done through snowball sampling. Upon consenting, the interviews were held in neutral places where the participant comfortably answered the interview questions. Transcripts were gathered and explored by examining the essence and meaning of the stories shared by the participants. Through this, there

was a tentative establishment between categories. Data collection was continually and progressively focused on gathering information until it reached the targeted number of participants. In addition, this study followed a systematic and comprehensive approach in constructing the data with the use of thematic analysis. Qualitative analysis software applications were used in analyzing the results to generate themes regarding the disclosure phase of gays. Overall, this study aims to promote and disseminate information on the disclosure phase of gays on their process of coming out.

Results and Findings

After analyzing the transcripts, each of the objectives presented has its own emerging themes that explained gay's disclosure phase which included its accompanying disclosure dilemmas, reasons, and interpreted meaning regarding this transition in their life.

Research Purpose No 1: Explore the experiences of Filipino male gays on their disclosure phase in the process of coming out.

In the exploration of interview stories of Filipino male gays, it was categorized into positive and negative experiences of disclosure (see Table 1). Each major theme was described in relation to the shared experiences of the participants.

In this study, positive experiences of Filipino gays equated to experiences of acceptance from themselves and other people they get to interact with, personally or virtually. Such positivity affected their homosexual identity development in different ways of viewing their experience before and after disclosure. In other words, one cannot accept the self unless acknowledging one's difference toward other people. On the contrary, being persecuted for being gay

Table 1.

Positive and Negative Experiences of Gays in their Disclosure Phase

Themes	Subthemes	Descriptions	Sample
POSITIVE EXPERIENCES	Acceptance of Oneself	This refers to the gays' awareness in their attraction toward same sex and acknowledgment of their own homosexuality.	"The feeling that you appreciate someone aside from girl. It's like the same treatment I had with my guy best friend. Amazing, knowing that it's possible."
	Acceptance of Other People	This reflects on the acceptance received by the gays from their family, friends and community.	"A lot of people including my relatives and branches of the family know about my sexuality, and there's no issue at all. They embrace me for who I am".
	Acceptance Mediated by Social Media	This pertains to the positive recognition on gays through their disclosure in social media.	"I posted my live video on Facebook and shared it to different Facebook pages and suddenly someone commented saying "You're so pretty" You're so beautiful" Those are simple words of encouragement that makes me happy because, there are few people like them that exist."
NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES	Shifting of Personality	This describes to the way gays change their behavior and actions to hide their homosexuality	"When I got home I automatically switch from soft guy to a masculine guy same goes when I left the house and go to school also to a different house."

Discrimination	This concerns the concept of othering or internalized homophobia within the gay community and discrimination of heterosexuals	"Even in our school there's a homophobia. They are saying "baklang kanal""
Abusive Environment	This pertains to the verbal, physical and sexual abuse experienced by gays before and after their disclosure as a homosexual.	"While growing up and when they noticed that I am acting up like gay or soft guy, they were scolding me and beating me so hard."
Society's Prejudice Belief	This reflects on the negative view of society in homosexuality.	"My father's colleagues were shocked when they found out that my father has a gay son given the fact that he's working in a construction site and all of the guys there are masculine. Maybe because of the expectation and we're used to the tradition that if you're a man you should act up like a real man."

was also an everyday struggle for them. It is noteworthy to emphasize that acceptance of their sexuality is integral in defining their identities. Acceptance is tantamount to validation of one's chosen gender orientation.

As observed, changing one's personality, being discriminated, and stigmatized, and abused by other people were the byproduct of non-acceptance of both society and one's homosexuality. These were the internalized negative circumstances that they often experienced. These experiences defined the process of coming out among the Filipino gays who were interviewed, their definition of negative experiences related to their disclosure had been affected by people's judgment on their being gays. Social approval was important to them as a positive experience – to build on their self-validation, and it is also relevant to their identities when people negatively react to their disclosure (an invalidation of their identity-decision).

Research Purpose No 2: Describe the disclosure dilemmas experienced by Filipino male gays

Disclosure phase occurs differently with gays as they undergo their coming out process. But their disclosure dilemmas remained the same throughout the development of their homosexuality (see Table 2).

For gays who are in a confused state, the confusion served as the turning point of their coming out process where they need to overcome different dilemmas within themselves. It included trying to prove to oneself that they can still be heterosexuals, limiting their emotions towards same-sex individuals, preventing homosexual tendencies because of fear, and rationalizing their gender by being bisexuals. While dilemmas in their families seemed to be rooted in the denial

Table 2.

Disclosure Dilemmas of Gays

Aspects of Individual	Themes	Descriptions	Sample Responses
SELF	Fighting One's Homosexuality	Dilemma of changing their own perspective with regards their homosexuality	"They made it to a point that I'm gay yet I still believe I can fight my gayness"
	Limiting Homosexual Tendencies	Gays limit themselves to be attracted to their same-sex and homosexual behaviors.	"I tried to change my thinking that I'm not a gay. Like I really tried so hard and fighting it. But I yield and said to myself that "this is me, I just need to face the truth and challenges."
	Perceived Fears	Includes the fear of ruining one's image, fear of being judged and fear of betrayal after they come out as a gay.	"I was really keeping things just for myself. I don't want to share. I'm afraid how they might perceive me not just my sexual orientation but in many other aspects as well."
	Identity Confusion	A confusion of their sexuality being either a homosexual male or bisexual.	"I'm confused on what would be my sexual preferences, If I'm gay, bisexual or whatsoever"
FAMILY	Concept of Hiya in the Context of Family	Describes the fear of gays for their family to be shunned by the society due to expectations of being a heterosexual male, feeling of lack of accomplishment and ruining their image.	"I'm shy in Church. And I don't want to give disgrace to my parents and my Grandfather who used to be a Pastor in our church."

Discontinuity of Family Generation	Arises due to the pressure of their family and themselves to have their own family for the sake of continuing their generation.	"Above all, I'm scared to my family that maybe they won't agree. Because I know that they really wanted me to have my own family."
Gender Stereotypes in the Family	Refers to the views of their family that being gay is a joke and a deficiency.	"I have cousins that were gays. And they don't want to show it. Given the fact that most of the gays are so soft or feminine. And sometimes my mother comments on gays and it hurts me."
Perceiving Home as Closet	Pertains to the negative metaphor used by the gays towards their home.	"I was thinking of our house as my closet since I cannot show that I am gay in our house."
FRIENDS Development of Negative Perception	Includes the fear of change in perception and difference in one's belief within their circle of friends once they come out as a gay.	"When I'm meeting up with my high school friends, I'm having a hard time to disclose my sexuality because of the fact that they know me as a straight guy and they know that I used to like girls."
ENVIRONMENT Discrimination in the Community	Includes the homophobic beliefs, underestimation on the value of gays, perceiving gays as the sole cause of HIV and experiencing sexual orientation prejudice.	"We are afraid to disclose our sexuality in community because we are called plague in society. They are thinking that we just only want sex because we are gays."

Stereotypes in Educational Setting	Prejudgment of educators on their young gay students, social disapproval of homosexuality in the traditional view of education and identity comparison experienced by gays inside their school.	"Grade 3 is my turning point and I'm afraid that my teacher might found out. But when I was Grade 5, they were threatening me that they will tell to my father that I'm a gay."
Filipino Culture of Tolerance	The cause of this dilemma are the difficulty of gays in identifying themselves as part of the Filipino community and its conservative religion beliefs.	"Here in the Philippines acceptance of homosexuality is subjective. For example the other churches support homosexuality but not homosexual marriage."

of their son's homosexuality by keeping on giving their gayness a negative reinforcement through discrimination because of *hiya*, stereotypic beliefs, and fear of discontinuity of family. As observed, gays also experienced the dilemma in disclosing their homosexuality towards their friends because of the fear of developing a negative impression from them and being isolated. In addition, the study emphasized that the environment per se does not have anything to do with the challenges and difficulties experienced by gays in their disclosure phase. However, the norm in it that gave the society's standards, inculcate traditions and beliefs, and viewed homosexuality as different were the factors affecting their decision to live openly as a gay.

The dilemma include inner struggles centered on fear and uncertainty. The disclosure was affected by how the Filipino gay men understood the social implications of being identified as gay. Although most admitted they were successful in coming into terms with their sexuality and how they received social support from people they care about, majority of the interviewees mentioned that it was a difficult process due to perceived societal expectations and reactions. These personal issues are translated to how their significant others value sexuality and individuality. The family values, e.g. how the family reacts to a relative who is gay, play an important role in the aspects that are given weight on the Filipino gay narratives. Among the Filipino gays interviewed, discrimination, stereotypes and familial values play significant roles in motivating/demotivating them to come out.

Research Purpose No 3: Examine the reasons on Filipino male gay's decision to disclose one's sexuality

Despite the fact that their chosen gender would give them challenges along the process, gays managed to find reasons to disclose their homosexuality.

Table 3.

Reasons for Disclosure of Gays

Aspects of Individual	Themes	Descriptions	Sample Responses
SELF	Attraction to Same-sex	Refers to the awareness of being attracted to same-sex individuals even at the very young age.	"Well, I ... I was young, I was only 17 when I finally found that, you know ... I'm in love with the same sex."
	Feelings of Negativity	Denotes the feelings of burden due to limiting one's homosexuality, feelings of being different from the norm, and feelings of loss of the self.	"I came to a point that the burden I'm carrying is getting heavier that at least I tell it to some of them so what I did, I personally messaged them and talked to them personally."
	A Need to Belong	Describes the feelings of gay to disclose their homosexuality to find real love and experience a serious same-sex relationship.	"I'm thinking to come out if I want to have a relationship. For me it will be easier for me to have a boyfriend if I disclose it to become legal and to be comfortable because its hard to hide something."
FAMILY	Commonality with LGBT Family Members	Refers to having other homosexual individuals in their family that motivated them to come out as gay.	"My father is a Sacristan and he grew up in the environment with his gay cousins so accepting me is not hard for him."

	Closeness with Parents	Describes the effect of closeness of gays with their parents that help them disclose their homosexuality.	"He never beat me up. He's the one pushing me to be who I want to be but I need to make sure that I will do my best with everything I do."
	Support from Other Relatives	Pertains to the support showed by their extended family as they go through their disclosure phase.	"My cousins know about it. They said "tell it to your parents, so that you can do whatever you want."
FRIENDS	Positive Characteristics of Friends	Includes the perceived unconditional acceptance, open-mindedness, respect and manly attitudes towards them by their friends both before and after they disclose their homosexuality	"My friends are one factor for my disclosure. I can see that they accept me for who I am so it's easy for them to convince me to disclose my sexuality to my parents. They said that they will be on my side even if my parents don't accept me for who I am."
	Commonality of Experiences with their Friends	Refers to the commonality they have with their female, male and gay friends which motivated them to slowly disclose their gayness.	"When I'm with my guy friend we're looking for clothes together. Sometimes, when I'm with my girl bestfriend and looking for clothes, she tends to say, "oh this is beautiful, but that guy is handsome". It's like we're tolerating each other."
ENVIRONMENT	Change in Education's Perception on Gays	Describes the supportiveness of the educators and integration of LGBT concept in their programs that made gays feel accepted in the school community.	"My teacher in High School encouraged me not disclose but be more open to myself."

| Normality of Homosexuality | Denotes the perceived notion that gays already exist in the society as normal with heterosexual individuals. | "It's 2018, 21st century, gay in family is not new" |
| Positive Portrayal of Gays in Media | Includes the positive portrayals of gays in television shows, social media, and books and magazines which made them realize that they are not that different with the norm. | "There was a segment in TV show "Showtime" called "Pogay" and they portray that there are different types of gay and you can still be manly at the same time gay." |

Self-disclosure is one of the stages gays in this study were able to pass through. It is marked with their transition from being a confused heterosexual male to a proud gay. Attraction to the same sex was seen as the reason behind their disclosure. Other than being attracted to the same sex, the Filipino gay participants also leaned more on the non-verbal behaviors of their sexuality - feminine acts, games, and interests ever since they were a kid which made them realize their difference towards other people. Filipino gay participants also tend to look for romantic relationships and have sexual relationships and take a secondary role in intimacy as they mature and become open about their sexuality. One vital factor that could either make or break someone's homosexuality was their family even though they were almost the last individuals they opened up to. The reasons behind disclosing their gender towards their family were shared experience with their other LGBT family members, level of closeness with parents, and support received from the extended family. On the other hand, friends' positivity about their sexuality was one of the reasons for them not to hide anymore in the mask of heterosexuality. Gays also tend to find commonality with their friends when it comes to experiences. Lastly, disclosing their homosexuality to the environment they live in was quite a challenge. However, it seemed that in the current status of the Philippines, some of the Filipino gay participants are able to disclose their gender due to the diminished conservatisms in the field of education by integrating gender topics in the curriculum, the notion of normalization of homosexuality, and positive portrayal of gays in media.

Research Purpose No 4: Identify the coping styles and strategies of Filipino male gays in their disclosure dilemmas

Disclosure was a transition considered to be unique among the Filipino gay participants yet often neglected because it requires courage due to its accompanying dilemmas. Hence, different coping styles and strategies were developed by them in order to overcome the difficulties (see Table 4).

In changing one's emotional response, individuals attempt to alter their emotions based on the experienced disclosure dilemmas. They seemed to select features of the negative situation they wanted to attend to. Afterward, they appraised a meaning in these chosen features and generated a positive emotional response. While changing one's cognitive interpretation meant that individuals reinterpret the meaning of their experiences that lead to more desirable emotions, it allowed them to cope with the changes that occurred after they disclosed their homosexuality to themselves and other people. Thus, the impacts of heterosexist attitudes towards them were limited. Conversely, the situation modification strategy was a type of coping mechanism of gays where they actively adjust the situation to alter the reactions. The Filipino gay respondents opted for gaining control over the situation and choose to reframe their negative thoughts when confronted with opportunities to disclose.

Table 4.

Coping Styles and Strategies of Gays in their Disclosure Phase

Themes	Descriptions	Sample Responses
Changing One's Emotional Response	Discusses how gays gain control over their emotional response towards negative experiences by choosing themselves over others, developing a self-reliant attitude, portraying self-respect and using apathetic responses.	"If you are not feeling inclusivity that you think of having with your immediate environment, make that inclusivity kindle inside of you. Self-love is not being selfish. Self-love is not doing things for others. It's for you"
Changing Cognitive Interpretation	Describes how gays reinterpret their negative situations due to their homosexuality by self-reflection and developing an achievement-oriented mindset.	"I would not give a damn, nor give them with care. People always judge you every now and then. There are criticisms. So why dwell on that? Just work with it. that's my mindset."
	Refers how gays adjust the negative situations due to their homosexuality in order to alter their reactions through social avoidance, enculturation and spiritual reconnection.	"I don't want to be friends with people who are so religious and implying that homosexuality is a mortal sin."

Research Purpose No 5: Determine how Filipino male gays understand and make meaning in their disclosure phase as part of their coming out process.

In the coming out process of gays, the disclosure phase is considered as one of the turning points of their life. Under this, two major themes emerged (see Table 5).

For gays, disclosure of one's homosexuality equates to discovering another part of themselves. A part of them that was considered new to other people but, for them, they were just being true to themselves. Statements of the participants also showed that choosing disclosure means acknowledging their time frame. Meaning, disclosure in either the early or later stage of their life was not a test of courage but rather setting their own pace. Most importantly, grasping the essence of their homosexuality facilitated the feelings of validation and freedom.

Expressing one's sexuality was never a problem for heterosexual individuals for it comes naturally based on their actions. However, for the gays, they needed to constantly make overt behaviors to prove their homosexuality. In the Filipino context, gay disclosure was a form of expression rather than a confession which is unique compared to other studies. Therefore, their gender was perceived through non-verbal behaviors. Ultimately, disclosure is defined as being a choice and a validation of one's self, a recognition that worth is not undermined when one accepts his reality as a gay person.

Table 5.

Meaning of Disclosure among Filipino Male gays

Themes	Descriptions	Sample Responses
Disclosure as a Choice	Denotes that being a gay means choosing their own way of discovering themselves, recognizing their difference, acknowledging their own phase of disclosure and having a resolution towards all their experiences before and after they open up as a gay.	"Disclosure to other people is a choice that you can take anytime even though you're dying, even tomorrow that's not a problem and even the day you died and you don't take the chance its not a problem because its your choice."
Disclosure as a Self-expression	Indicates that disclosure for Filipino male gays is a form of expression through non-verbal disclosure, perceived gender expression of other people and pursuing their own happiness.	"To be like this is to be happy… and I really feel happy of being like this. I don't need to hide under my Mother's skirt. (Filipino Idiom). But the good thing is it really helps me in expressing myself as really a full-blown gay."

Discussion of the Study

In this study, experiences of Filipino male gays in terms of their disclosure phase have their positive and negative sides. Positive experiences included acceptance of oneself, by other people and mediated by social media. Being accepted by other people was divided into family, friends, and community they lived in. Family acceptance may seem conditional, but it motivated them to be a better version of themselves. While comfortability, supportiveness, perceived approval, and awareness in the shift of the paradigm of their friends and community were also noted in their shared stories of positive experiences. A need to belong was prominent, at some point, but not masking themselves as heterosexuals. Thus, social acceptance of homosexuality had changed gays' self-acceptance over time (Elder, Morrow, & Brooks, 2015). Social media became an avenue for Filipino gays' indirect disclosure. Social media was assumed to be a good place to start their tentative process of coming out, for disclosure to be specific, because of the low level of risk (Craig & McInroy, 2014). On the other hand, negative experiences were the difficulty of shifting of personality, discrimination, abusive environment, and society's prejudiced belief about gays. Shifting of the personality included the behavioral changes when interacting with other people. Being differentiated by heterosexuals and the concept of "Othering" or internalized homophobia were the two forms of discrimination experienced by the participants. Gays also experienced being imperiled to either verbal, physical, sexual, or all forms of abuse. Following these findings, altering one's personality could be done by interchanging their attitudes and behaviors in different social contexts which can cause these negative experiences. Gays seemed to be moving from silence to voice and back again to silence but with varying degrees of intensity when it comes to presenting themselves as homosexuals (DeLeon & Brunner, 2012).

The present study also explored the disclosure dilemmas of gays in terms of their self, family, friends, and environment. Concerning self, the dilemmas arisen were fighting one's homosexuality, limiting homosexual tendencies, perceived fears such as fear of ruining one's image, judgment, and betrayal, and identity confusion. These same results confirmed the analysis of Cohen and Savin-Williams (2002) where recognitions of same-sex attractions, feelings and behaviors could be both terrifying and relieving. In the case of gays, they lean more on fear due to their misconceptions about the negative possibilities of admission. Their denial also created a sense of conflict within them which hindered this transition. When it comes to the perception of the family, the concept of *hiya,* discontinuity of family generation, gender stereotypes, and, metaphorically, perceiving home as closet were the difficulties they needed to overcome. As inferred, weak family relationships could trigger disclosure dilemmas. Waldner and Magruder (1999) attested this notion by explaining that it could also detract the decision of gays to be true with their sexual orientation. Also, the challenges they encountered in their disclosure to friends were changes in perception and differences of their beliefs in terms of sexual orientation. Lastly, the dilemmas they encountered in the environment they lived in were discrimination in the community, stereotypic beliefs in education, and the Filipino culture of tolerance. It consisted of the homophobic beliefs, underestimation of gays' value, considered as the sole cause of HIV, sexual orientation discrimination, prejudgment of educators, social disapproval and identity comparison, difficulty in identifying themselves with the community, and conservative religious belief of the Filipino culture. As argued by Corrigan and Mathews (2003), gays tend to hide their homosexuality because it was not needed in the situation, unrespectful for loved ones, lack of means to disclose, or might be used against them.

In terms of self, attraction to same-sex, feelings of negativity, and a need to belong by looking for same-sex relationships were the reasons for a gay to finally disclose his homosexuality to oneself. These findings matched the three aspects such as acknowledging, accepting, and disclosure of gayness discussed by Tamashiro (2015) which were essentially important in this transition. Consequently, the reasons for gays to disclose their chosen gender to their parents were a commonality with LGBT family members, closeness with their parents, and support perceived from other relatives. This substantial relationship between the family members was supported by the findings of Savin-Williams (1989). He reported that the satisfying parent-child relationship could affect their disclosure phase. When it comes to their friends, positive characteristics and commonality with their experiences were considered in their disclosure. These findings coincide with prior studies that closeness and gender of their friends mattered in revealing their chosen gender (Baiocco, Laghi, Di Pomponio, & Nigito, 2012; Ueno, Gayman, Wright, & Quantz, 2009). Whereas in the society's context, change in education's perception, normality of homosexuality, and positive portrayal of gays in media became their driving force to come out of the closet. This study proved the finding of Newman, Bogo, and Daley (2008) that a positive learning environment could be one of the reasons for gays to disclose their homosexuality. And due to the changing time, homosexuality seemed to be normalized but still tolerated. This means that the heterosexual community doesn't deny the existence of the LGBT community but still does not fully accept their homosexual behaviors. This might be due to changes in current cultural factors as explained by the study of Grov, Bimbi, Nanin, and Parson (2006). Another reason might be the easier access to information through media which influenced gays to have the courage to be true to themselves.

One of the purposes of this study also was to identify the coping styles and strategies of gays which were divided into changing one's emotional response, cognitive interpretation, and the situation itself. Choosing self over others, developing a self-reliant attitude, portraying self-respect and apathetic responses were the subthemes analyzed as gays changed their emotional response towards the stigmas and prejudices being experienced. Emotions played a vital part in how they view the phenomenon of disclosure, which was supported by the study of McDavitt, Iverson, Kubicek, Weiss, Wong, and Kipke (2008). The results of this study can be related to their concept of response modulation strategies wherein altering the qualities of emotion was done by venting and suppressing negative feelings with regards to the stigmatization felt by the gays. Consequently, reinterpreting their disclosure phase experiences included self-reflection which viewed homosexuality as a process, feeling of certainty and essence of their individuality. As stated by Baes and Vallesteros (1996), this kind of thinking was done to proudly present themselves to other people without hiding their homosexuality. Also, social avoidance, enculturation, and spiritual reconnection were the coping styles of gays to change their current situation in favor of their homosexuality. This represented the capability of gays to avoid personal impact by actively altering the situation which was related to situation modification strategies (McDavitt, Iverson, Kubicek, Weiss, Wong, & Kipke, 2008). Such strategies were typically done in events where stigmatization was unavoidable.

The investigation on the phenomenology of disclosure of gays has shown that gays view their disclosure phase as a choice and form of expression. It was considered as a choice for it was their decision to discover themselves as a homosexual, recognize their difference from other people, acknowledge their phase, and have a resolution with all their experiences. The findings agreed with the study of Farber

(2006), for it was a phenomenon that constantly occurs between the self and other individuals. The only way for them to disclose their homosexuality was to first discover their selves and have the purpose to be known. In connection, gays also comprehended that disclosure was also an expression. This idea of disclosure confirmed the conceptualized theory of communication privacy management by Sandra Petronio (Petronio, 2016). They tend to disclose their homosexuality yet with precautions and only selected information was shared. They expressed this phase through non-verbal actions, perceived gender expression of other people to them, and by pursuing their happiness as openly living gay.

Conclusions

This study explored the experiences of Filipino male gays in their coming out process specifically their disclosure phase. Thus, it unearthed the common meaning among gays in their disclosure phase in terms of the four domains of an individual known as self, family, friends, and environment. Each domain was interpreted using the lens of Filipino psychology.

Based on the results, positive experiences of gays included acceptance of oneself, acceptance of other people, and acceptance mediated by social media. While, negative experiences were subjected into four categorizations which are shifting of personality, discrimination, abusive environment, and society's prejudiced belief about gays. And, whether they chose to be a closeted gay or not, both these experiences could still be experienced as shared by the participants. Hence, gays' homosexual experiences have their positivity and negativity which will depend on how they will perceive it that will lead to the development of their homosexual identity.

In connection, disclosure dilemmas of gays were also emphasized and showed variation depending on whom

they were going to disclose their homosexuality. Gays may struggle in their disclosure within themselves due to the perceived notions of other people and their misconceptions of sexuality. Whereas weak family relationships and the Filipino culture of Hiya were considered major factors. Gay's disclosure dilemmas within their friends were the result of the diversity of their beliefs as an individual. Lastly, heterosexist standards, traditions and beliefs, and alienation perception which seemed normal toward homosexuality were difficulties faced by them in a heterosexual-dominated community.

This study also explored the reasons for the disclosure of gays of their homosexuality. It was noted that disclosing one's homosexuality to self was motivated by overcoming their negative emotions and struggles. Family's conditional acceptance, supportiveness, and inclusivity were also the reasons for disclosing it to their families. It was noted that the mother's unconditional love and father's non-verbal acceptance had an impact on the positive development of their sexual identity. Whereas friends' positive characteristics and perceived level of closeness and commonality were the essentials factors that will either motivate their disclosure phase or demoralize this transition. Media served as an avenue for advocating gender equality which was considered as the reason for the change in perception of education and observed normality of gays in society. Consequently, one of its purposes was to identify the coping styles and strategies of gays which were divided into alterations and improvement of their emotional response, cognitive stances, and situation modification in favor of their disclosure phase. In the case of gays, they just don't need it to overcome challenges in life but also to openly live in their chosen gender.

And most importantly, the study revealed that disclosure is both a choice and a form of self-expression. It was a choice for they believed that they have the authority to decide when to discover their homosexuality, recognize their

divergence, have their own pace of disclosure, and capability to synthesize their homosexual experiences. Uniquely, for Filipinos, disclosure was also a non-verbal expression of gayness.

Recommendations

Creation of counseling programs and guidelines should be considered in enhancing support systems for Filipino gays who are experiencing different disclosure dilemmas. It includes appropriate counseling services that will cater to the four aspects of a gay's identity development such as the self, family, friends, and society or environment. For the category of self, it must focus more on the strategies for the reinterpretation of gay's current situation. Initiating programs that will provide opportunities for open communication and authentic and nonjudgmental self-expression between Filipino gays and their family focused on acceptance are recommended. Counseling services that will emphasize the concept of gender diversity and uniqueness, whether they are homosexuals or heterosexuals, can also be helpful. A series of seminars about the struggles of gays in a heterosexist society wherein its target participants are heterosexuals can aid in developing a gender-responsive environment. Lastly, when it comes to counseling interventions, a community of support whether via digital platforms or a face to face meetings should be formed to encourage acceptance, validation and an atmosphere embracing one's sexuality.

There is also a need to further explore the relationship of social status, educational achievement, and romantic relationships with the disclosure phase of gays since each aspect showed a relationship with the other aspects. Further research on the Filipino culture of tolerance, macho culture, and religious beliefs of Filipinos regarding homosexuality, including the perceptions of a heterosexual community could

also give a new perspective to this study.

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