
Between Social Discourse and Power Relation, and the Self-Expression: Perceptions on the Fluidity of the Identities of Gay-Male Science Teachers

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Abstract — Forcing the fluidity of identity is cruel. I explored the perceptions on how social discourses, power relations shape identity. Guided by descriptive qualitative design, I interviewed seven purposively selected gay-male science teachers, and analyzed the data via thematic approach. Consequently, I learned that social discourses (neutrality, professionalism, and heteronormativity) and institutional power relations between institutional mandates and gay-male preferences, shape gay-male science teacher fluid identity. Policy makers may actively implement inclusive policies that go beyond compliance to create empowering school environments where diverse identities are respected and supported. Multiple linear regression and exploratory factor analysis, along with qualitative approaches may be done to evaluate the implementation of revised policies, and identified viewpoints from administration and colleagues about the gay-male teacher circumstances.

Keywords: Social discourse, power relation, self-expression, fluidity of the identities, gay-male, science teachers

I. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I outlined the problem and its scope, discussed the significance of the study, presented the research questions, explained the theoretical framework and lens, and stated my assumptions.

The Problem and Its Scope

The suppression of identity has become a persistent concern in global educational and professional spaces, particularly among marginalized groups such as gay men. Within institutional environments, identity expression is often shaped and constrained by dominant social discourses, including expectations of neutrality, professionalism, and heteronormativity, which regulate how individuals present themselves in public and professional roles. Recent studies emphasize that identity expression is not entirely self-determined but is influenced by external norms and institutional frameworks that subtly limit authenticity and visibility (Wainipitapong, 2025). In educational settings, these discourses function as implicit standards of acceptable behavior, creating conditions where identity suppression becomes embedded in everyday professional practice (Pollachom, 2026).

In different national contexts, the suppression of identity among gay male educators reflects the interaction between sociocultural norms and institutional expectations. In the United States, research highlights how professional standards and institutional expectations shape identity expression among gay male teachers, often requiring alignment with dominant norms within school environments (Last, 2026). In Vietnam, identity expression is situated within cultural expectations that emphasize social harmony and conformity, influencing how gay male individuals navigate their identities in professional spaces (Lam-Nguyen, 2025). Similarly, in Thailand, studies show that educational institutions serve as spaces where heteronormative expectations and professional discourses regulate the visibility and expression of gay male identities (Pollachom, 2026). These contexts demonstrate that identity suppression is shaped by both social discourses and institutional structures across diverse settings.

In the Philippine context, the suppression of identity among gay male science teachers is likewise embedded within educational institutions, where professional expectations, cultural

values, and institutional policies intersect to shape identity expression. Despite increasing visibility of gay individuals in society, identity expression within schools remains situated within the boundaries of professionalism, neutrality, and social acceptability. Studies suggest that these conditions influence how teachers manage their identities, often leading to careful and context-dependent self-presentation in the classroom and school community (Wainipitapong, 2025). This reflects a broader condition in which identity is not freely expressed but is instead negotiated within institutional expectations and cultural norms.

The consequences of identity suppression are increasingly documented in recent literature, particularly in relation to well-being and professional engagement. Research indicates that limitations in identity expression are associated with psychological strain, reduced sense of belonging, and challenges in authentic self-presentation among gay individuals (Hatzenbuehler, 2024). In educational settings, such constraints may also influence teachers' engagement, confidence, and participation in the school community, highlighting the broader implications of suppressed identity on both personal and professional dimensions (Mousavi, 2025). These consequences underscore the importance of examining identity suppression within the framework of social discourses and power relations, as reflected in this study's focus on the fluid and negotiated identities of gay male science teachers. Hence, I conducted this study.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it examines how social discourses—such as professionalism, neutrality, and heteronormativity—and power relations—including institutional policies, administrative expectations, and supportive environments—shape the fluidity of identity among gay-male science teachers, highlighting that self-expression is context-dependent and continuously negotiated within professional spaces. The findings may guide educational leaders and policymakers in reviewing inclusive policies, support school administrators in fostering environments that allow subtle and strategic identity expression, and provide gay-male teachers with validation of their experiences, particularly in terms of selective disclosure and balancing authenticity with professionalism. Moreover, this study aims to promote a more inclusive educational environment by recognizing that identity expression is shaped by broader social and

institutional forces, and that supporting teachers requires understanding the fluid and negotiated nature of their self-expression.

Research Questions

In this study, I explored the weight of social discourses and power relations within the school environment to shape the identity construction of gay-male science teachers. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of gay-male science teachers on social discourses that shape their identity?
2. What are the perceptions of gay-male science teachers on the power relations in schools as perceived by gay-male science teachers that shape or reshape their identities?
3. What are the perceptions of gay-male science teachers on the fluidity of their identities?

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored in Queer Theory that emerged as a critical response to fixed and essentialist understandings of gender and sexuality, asserting that identities are socially constructed, fluid, and shaped by discourse and power relations. One of its fundamental concepts is the rejection of binary categories (e.g., male/female, heterosexual/homosexual), emphasizing instead the instability and performativity of identity. Judith Butler (1990) argued that gender is not an innate quality but is continuously produced through repeated social performances. Similarly, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) highlighted how dominant heteronormative structures regulate knowledge and reinforce power, particularly through the policing of sexual identities.

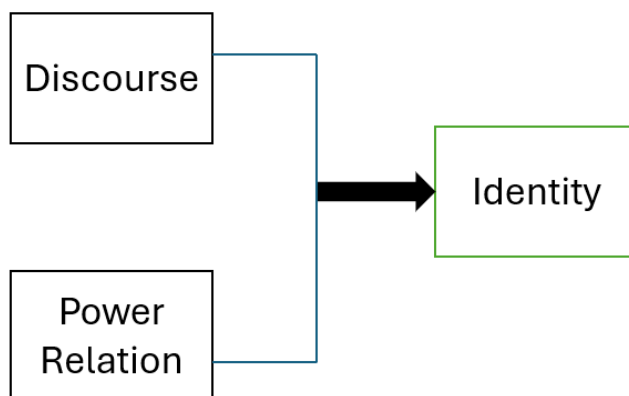
Conceptual Lens


FIGURE 1
PARADIGM OF THE STUDY ON QUEER THEORY

Assumptions

I assume that my interpretation of the gay-male science teachers' perceptions is aligned with the concepts presented in the theoretical framework, particularly in explaining how social discourses and power relations shape and influence identity within educational settings. I believe that the framework provides a relevant lens for understanding how identities are constructed and negotiated in relation to dominant norms, expectations, and institutional practices in schools. In this regard, I assume that the perceptions shared by the participants will reflect, support, or resonate with the theoretical propositions that highlight the dynamic relationship between discourse, power, and identity.

I also assume that while the theory serves as a guiding framework, there may be perceptions expressed by the participants that extend beyond or are not fully explained by existing theoretical assertions, especially within the specific context of science education and school environments. Furthermore, I assume that the themes discussed in the theory are not fixed but may be defined, refined, or reinterpreted through the perceptions of the participants, contributing to a more contextualized understanding of identity as fluid and continuously negotiated. In this way, I

recognize that participants' perceptions play a crucial role in expanding and grounding the theoretical concepts within real educational contexts.

II. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will outline the qualitative phenomenological approach that will guide the investigation of how gay-male science teachers experience and make meaning of their identities within a single senior high school in Davao City. The study aims to provide a deep understanding of identity negotiation and pedagogical practice within this specific educational setting. By focusing on one school, the research will capture rich, contextualized data that reflect the unique institutional culture and community influences. This approach will ensure rigor, ethical integrity, and meaningful insights relevant to both the local context and broader educational discussions (Creswell, 2013).

Research Design

In this study I used descriptive qualitative design. It is a qualitative approach that aims to systematically describe a phenomenon, experience, or event as it naturally occurs, focusing on participants' perspectives without extensive theoretical interpretation (Sandelowski, 2000; Doyle et al., 2020). It is commonly applied when researchers seek straightforward, rich descriptions of practices, behaviors, or perceptions—such as in healthcare, education, or social studies—especially when little is known about the topic or when detailed accounts are needed to inform policy or practice. I realized that its advantages include simplicity and flexibility in design, the ability to stay close to participants' actual words and meanings, and producing findings that are easily understandable and directly applicable to real-world contexts (Colorafi & Evans, 2016).

Research Locale

The study was conducted in one senior high school in Davao City, selected for its representation of the city's diverse educational landscape and openness to participating in the

research. I chose this locale due to its large and diverse student population in a public-school setting; this environment allows me to examine students' attitudes toward gay-male identities, the presence and effectiveness of inclusive policies, and the perceptions of learners toward gay-male science teachers, particularly in terms of acceptance, peer interaction, and challenges within a broader and more varied socio-cultural context.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

In this study, I purposefully gathered seven participants who openly identified as gay-male science teachers currently teaching in one of the public senior high schools in Davao City under the Department of Education (DepEd). All of them are professional teachers who have been actively teaching from 2018 to the present and have at least two or more years of teaching experience as regular employees. I began by reaching out to potential participants within my professional and academic networks, carefully identifying individuals whose backgrounds aligned with the focus of my study. As I connected with them, I took time to explain the purpose of the research and ensured that they met the criteria, particularly their teaching experience, active engagement in the profession, and willingness to openly share their perceptions. I vividly recall how each conversation unfolded, as participants gradually opened up and expressed their thoughts on how social discourses and power relations shaped their identities within the school setting. Their openness and willingness to articulate their perceptions allowed me to gather rich and meaningful insights that gave depth and direction to the study.

I employed purposive sampling to select these participants, as this non-probability sampling technique involves the deliberate selection of individuals based on specific characteristics relevant to the research purpose and is commonly used in qualitative and phenomenological studies to obtain in-depth understanding rather than statistical generalization (Palinkas et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016). This approach ensured that I included information-rich participants who could provide deep, relevant, and contextually meaningful insights into the perceptions of gay-male science teachers.

Data Gathering Technique

In this research, I used in-depth interviews. It is a qualitative data gathering technique where data collection was guided by a set of pre-determined but flexible questions, allowing me to follow an interview or discussion guide while also exploring new topics that emerged during the interaction. It was commonly applied in qualitative studies that sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings. In this approach, I used an interview guide to ensure that key topics were consistently covered across participants, while still allowing the conversation to adapt naturally based on emerging ideas, perceptions, or clarifications. Its advantages included providing a balance between structure and flexibility, enabling consistency across participants while still allowing rich, detailed, and unexpected insights to emerge, and improving the depth and authenticity of the data collected (Kallio et al., 2016; Busetto et al., 2020).

Data for this study will be primarily collected through semi-structured interviews using interview guide questions with corresponding probing questions. This material provide flexibility for participants to express their lived experiences in depth while allowing the researcher to explore key concepts grounded in Queer Theory. This approach aligns with the phenomenological design of the study, emphasizing participants' meanings and perspectives in understanding how gay-male teachers negotiate their identities and pedagogical practices within the heteronormative context of senior high school science education in Davao City.

Data Analysis Technique

I analyzed the data using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006) and Moustakas (1994). I began by repeatedly reading the transcripts to immerse myself in the data and identify significant statements about participants' experiences of negotiating their gay-male identity within their teaching roles. I then coded these statements and grouped the codes into preliminary themes such as identity disclosure, pedagogical adaptations, institutional challenges, and sources of resilience. To strengthen rigor, I conducted peer debriefing with colleagues experienced in qualitative research and carried out member checking by returning summaries to participants for validation. I iteratively refined the themes until I developed a coherent and trustworthy account of the phenomenon.

Trustworthiness

In my study, I made sure that the four elements of trustworthiness in qualitative research were followed which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used member checking, provided thick and detailed descriptions of the research context, maintained an audit trail and used reflexive journaling. Lastly, I asked permission from DepEd and sought approval from Society of Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics Committee of Holy Cross of Davao College (HCDC).

III. RESULTS

In this chapter, I presented the findings from my thematic analysis of the data I gathered, organizing the results based on the perceptions of my study participants, whose responses were particularly meaningful to me.

Perceptions on Social Discourses that Shape Identity

I was able to understand how participants interpret and make sense of expectations such as neutrality, professionalism, and societal norms within the school environment. Participants described the need to limit personal disclosure. One of them shared,

“Expectations that science teachers must be ‘neutral’ make me limit sharing anything personal, unless they are in my circle” (IDI-P1, page 2),

while another emphasized,

“I may choose to be neutral about personal experiences to align with professional expectations or to avoid potential controversy” (IDI-P3, page 2).

also, other participants revealed and stated...

“There are times I want to speak up, especially when students make jokes about gay-male people, but I choose to remain neutral to avoid conflict with parents or the administration.”

(IDI-P5, p.6)

Para nako, ang pagiging neutral kay dili kaayo ko maghisgot sa akong personal nga kinabuhi, labi na sa akong identity. Mas pilion nako nga magpokus sa lesson para walay issue ug malikayan ang dili pagsinabtanay sa classroom (For me, being neutral means, I don't talk much about my personal life, especially my identity. I choose to focus on the lesson to avoid issues and misunderstandings in the classroom.) (IDI-P2, p.3)

I interpreted these accounts as manifestations of neutrality not as true objectivity, but as a form of silencing that discourages the expression of identities perceived as potentially contentious. From their sharing I visualized the essence of neutrality from their end. It seems that it is simply means that neutrality, as expressed by the participants, is the intentional limiting of personal and identity-related disclosure in the classroom as a protective strategy to avoid controversy, prevent conflict with parents or administration, and maintain professional acceptance within the school environment. In short, I looked at neutrality as being no other option but to keep quiet, to choose silence over arguing about their personal feeling and experience. I see in this neutrality the humility of the gay-male science teachers to suppress pride, and rather to understand the social discourse. From our conversation, I captured the essence of neutrality – that it is an option not to contest the social discourse about who they are.

I also observed that professionalism, as constructed within the school context, extends beyond teaching competence and into the regulation of identity. One participant expressed,

“Sometimes, I have to limit my expression so my identity as a teacher is not questioned”
(IDI-P3, p. 6),

suggesting that professional legitimacy is closely tied to conformity with dominant norms.

Similarly, a participant expressed the need for caution due to social perceptions, stating,

Kinahanglan nga magbantay ko sa pag-express sa akong kaugalingon kay lahi ang perception sa students, parents, ug kauban nako sa trabaho (I need to be careful in expressing myself because students, parents, and my colleagues have different perceptions.) (IDI-P4, page 3),

Another participant emphasized that...

Sa akong tan-aw, ang pagiging professional kay dili lang sa pagtudlo ug tarong, pero apil pud ang pag-adjust sa imong sarili base sa unsay acceptable sa eskwelahan. Usahay, kinahanglan nako i-limit akong expression aron dili ma-question akong pagka-teacher. (For me, professionalism is not just about teaching well, but also about adjusting yourself based on what is acceptable in the school. (IDI-P4, p.3)

From these accounts, I humbly realized that professionalism among gay-male Science teachers extends beyond merely adhering to institutional roles and expectations; it embodies the essence of maintaining integrity, respect, and credibility while navigating one's identity within socially and culturally sensitive spaces. It reflects a delicate balancing act where gay-male teachers consciously regulate their self-expression to uphold professional standards, avoid conflict, and sustain acceptance within the school community. This form of professionalism, while protective, also reveals the subtle constraints that shape how they present themselves, suggesting that their professional practice is deeply influenced by prevailing social discourses and power structures within the educational environment.

Similarly, the influence of heteronormative assumptions emerged subtly yet powerfully in participants' experiences. These assumptions are reinforced through institutional rules on appearance and behavior, such as expectations regarding gender-appropriate dress codes, grooming standards, and conduct that align with traditional male and female expressions within the school environment. As one participant shared,

"There are rules about appearance and behavior that indirectly discourage us from expressing who we are" (IDI-P6, p.10).

Another participant stated,

“It feels like being male or female is the only thing considered normal... I tend to hold back from showing my true self” (IDI-P4, p. 7).

I argue that such narratives reveal how heteronormativity operates as an underlying discourse that normalizes certain identities while marginalizing others, thereby shaping both the visibility and invisibility of gay-male teachers in educational spaces.

Despite these constraints, I found that participants were not merely passive recipients of these discourses. Rather, they demonstrated agency in navigating and, at times, subtly resisting them. For instance, one participant shared,

“I express my identity indirectly through the examples I choose and the inclusive framing of content” (IDI-P3, page 2),

while another noted that

“Being open about my identity actually increases my comfort level and allows me to be more spontaneous and engaged” (IDI-P2, page 2).

I realized that these accounts were interpreted as manifestations of heteronormativity- that gender is only male and female and nothing else- not merely as a social norm, but as a subtle yet pervasive force that shapes how gay-male teachers express their identities within the school environment. Heteronormativity is a hidden culture but powerful. “Cultural Standards” on appearance and behavior reinforce the assumption that binary gender identities are what is only acceptable, leading teachers to regulate or withhold aspects of themselves to maintain professionalism and avoid judgment. This reveals how heteronormativity operates as both a constraining and normalizing structure within educational spaces. At the same time, the narratives show that when teachers are able to express their identities more openly, they experience greater comfort, authenticity, and engagement. Heteronormativity “kills the gay-male science teachers”.

As I reflected on their responses, I found that dominant expectations surrounding neutrality, professionalism, and heteronormativity function as powerful discursive forces that

shape how teachers construct, negotiate, and at times restrain their identities in the classroom. These discourses establish implicit boundaries of what is considered “acceptable,” compelling teachers to continuously align their self-expression with institutional norms. In exploring the narratives of my participants, I was enlightened that social discourses within the school environment do not merely influence but actively regulate the identity expression of gay-male science teachers, and as I examined the participants’ responses, I was deeply moved by how expectations of neutrality, professionalism, and heteronormativity influence the way they express themselves in the classroom. Their responses reveal not only the constraints they experience but also the ways they thoughtfully navigate these expectations in their daily practice. Through their voices, I came to understand how identity is carefully shaped within the boundaries of what is considered acceptable in the school environment. These narratives led me to further explore how such expectations are reinforced and sustained through power relations.

Perceptions on Power Relations in Schools

Institutional policies emerged as key mechanisms through which power is enacted and normalized. Participants referred to existing frameworks such as codes of professional conduct, child protection policies, gender and development (GAD) guidelines, anti-discrimination policies, and expectations of being “parent-friendly.” One participant explained,

“Rules on professional behavior and being parent-friendly make me more cautious in how I dress and speak” (IDI-P1, page 5),

indicating how institutional expectations extend into personal expression. I interpret this as evidence that policy-driven norms function not only as guidelines for behavior but also as regulatory tools that shape identity performance within the school context.

Similarly, administrative and collegial expectations reinforce these structures of control. As one participant shared,

“Expectations from colleagues and administrators... encourage me to present myself professionally... I am selective about sharing details of my personal life” (IDI-P3, page 5).

This selective disclosure reflects an awareness of how identity is evaluated within professional spaces. I argue that such expectations produce a form of self-regulation, where teachers internalize institutional norms and adjust their identities accordingly to maintain legitimacy and avoid scrutiny.

Power relations were also experienced through subtle interpersonal dynamics. One participant expressed,

“Sometimes it feels like my actions are being watched, as if mistakes are being anticipated” (IDI-P2, page 6),

while another noted the presence of conservative perspectives, stating,

“There are still some teachers... who strongly believe in strictly binary gender perspectives... I feel a difference in how they interact with me” (IDI-P2, page 6).

I interpreted these narratives as manifestations of surveillance and normative judgment, which position gay-male teachers in more vulnerable and scrutinized roles within the institution. These experiences suggest that power operates not only through formal authority but also through everyday interactions that reinforce dominant social norms.

However, I also found that power relations are not purely restrictive. Some participants described supportive environments that enabled more open identity expression. As one participant shared,

“My colleagues are open-minded and supportive when it comes to inclusive teaching practices” (IDI-P7, page 7).

This highlights that power can also function as an enabling force, particularly when institutional culture promotes inclusivity and acceptance. From the data, I noticed that power relations within the school are not fixed or singular but operate as dynamic, relational, and often invisible forces that shape and reshape the identities of gay-male science teachers. As I examined the participants’ accounts, I found that power is exercised both structurally—through institutional policies and administrative expectations—and interpersonally, through collegial interactions and subtle forms of social surveillance. These layers of power collectively influence how teachers regulate their behavior, present themselves, and navigate their professional identities.

Ultimately, I realized that power relations in schools do not simply shape the identities of gay-male science teachers—they actively produce and regulate them. Within these layered and often invisible systems of control and support, teachers are compelled to continuously negotiate who they are, balancing authenticity with institutional expectations. In this sense, identity formation emerges not as a fixed or purely personal construct, but as an ongoing, dynamic process deeply embedded within—and inseparable from—the broader structures of power that define the educational environment. As I reflected on these perceptions of power relations in schools, I realized that they do not only regulate identity but also shape how it is continuously negotiated in different contexts.

Perceptions on the Fluidity of Identity

Gay-male science teachers perceive the fluidity of their identity, revealing how they understand it as something continuously changing and shaped by context, interactions, and expectations. Participants described how they carefully manage the extent to which they reveal their identities in different contexts. One participant shared,

“I am careful with how much of my identity I reveal, especially during sensitive topics” (IDI-P1, page 1),

indicating that identity expression is selectively performed depending on the situation. I interpret this as a strategic form of self-presentation, where individuals assess their environment and adjust their level of openness accordingly.

Another participant expressed,

“I don’t express my identity in just one way. Sometimes I adjust depending on who I am with, especially if they are students, parents, or fellow teachers.” (IDI-P4, p.5)

At the same time, some participants emphasized the empowering aspects of openness.

One of them shared,

“My way of expressing myself depends on the situation. In class, I am more reserved, but with people I trust, I can be more open about who I am.” (IDI-P2, p.3)

Other participants made it clear in our conversation that,

Wala koy intention nga magtago, pero kinahanglan nga magbantay ko sa pag-express sa akong kaugalingon kay lahi ang perception sa mga students, parents, ug mga kauban nako sa trabaho. (I have no intention of hiding, but I need to be careful in expressing myself because students, parents, and my colleagues at work have different perceptions.).” (IDI-P5, p.7)

This suggests that identity expression, when supported by a safe and inclusive environment, can enhance both personal well-being and professional practice. I argue that this highlights the dual nature of identity fluidity—not only as a response to constraint but also as a space for authenticity and empowerment.

However, identity negotiation is not without tension. One participant emphasized,

“There is a tension between being authentic and adhering to professional expectations” (IDI-P4, page 3),

revealing the internal conflict that often accompanies identity management. I interpret this tension as a reflection of competing demands between personal authenticity and institutional conformity, which gay-male teachers must continuously reconcile in their professional lives.

Lastly, participants also viewed fluidity as a form of agency and adaptability. They shared that even without direct disclosure, they can still express their identities in subtle ways, such as through inclusive teaching practices and the examples they use in class.

One participant expressed:

“Even if I don’t openly talk about my identity, I still find ways to include diverse perspectives in my teaching.” (IDI-P5, p.5)

These conversations turned out to be a moment of realization. I realized that gay-male science teachers actively construct their identities through moment-to-moment negotiations, adapting their self-expression in ways that allow them to function effectively within complex educational environments. In simpler terms, gay-male teachers are constantly adjusting who they show themselves to be depending on where they are and who they are with—like shifting between different versions of themselves—to stay safe, be accepted, and still remain true to who they are. In reflecting on the participants’ narratives, I explored that gay-male science teachers perceive identity not as fixed or stable, but as fluid, context-dependent, and continuously negotiated. As I analyzed their responses, I found that identity expression shifts across situations, audiences, and institutional expectations, suggesting that identity is actively constructed rather than inherently given. This fluidity reflects both personal agency and the influence of external social and professional pressures.

Ultimately, I captured the entire idea of the fluidity of their identity as selective disclosure of who they are, context-dependent self-expression, shifting between reserved and open selves, strategic self-presentation, negotiation between authenticity and professionalism, and subtle and indirect expression of identity.

Summary Findings

In my study, I came to realize the following:

1. That social discourses such as neutrality, professionalism, and heteronormativity strongly shape how gay-male science teachers express their identities. I realized that these expectations often push them to limit personal disclosure, regulate their behavior, and conform to what is considered acceptable within the school environment.
2. That power relations in schools operate as dynamic and often invisible forces that shape the identities of gay-male science teachers through institutional policies, and administrative expectations. I realized that these forms of power encourage self-regulation, caution, and selective identity expression, yet at the same time, supportive environments can empower teachers to express themselves more openly.

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3. That the fluidity of gay-male science teacher identity is perceived as selective disclosure of identity, context-dependent of self-expression, shifting between reserved and open selves, strategic self-presentation, negotiation between authenticity and professionalism, and subtle and indirect expression of identity.

IV. DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I discussed my study by synthesizing the summary of findings, supporting them with related literature and contrasting studies, and reflecting on them in depth through thoughtful analysis.

Social discourses shape and regulate identity expression among gay-male science teachers

In examining the finding of my study, I observed that social discourses such as neutrality, professionalism, and heteronormativity strongly shape how gay-male science teachers express their identities. I realized that these expectations often push them to limit personal disclosure, regulate their behavior, and conform to what is considered acceptable within the school environment. My finding is aligned with the recent study of DePalma and Atkinson (2023) who asserted that discourses of professionalism and neutrality function as regulatory mechanisms that shape how gay-male teachers manage their identities, often leading to cautious self-presentation. Likewise, my finding supports Meyer and Keenan (2024), who found that heteronormative expectations within school cultures influence how teachers negotiate identity, prompting them to strategically manage disclosure while maintaining professional credibility. These studies support with my findings, showing that institutional and social expectations both constrain and guide identity expression.

In contrary, I opposed the study of Gray (2023), arguing that inclusive policies and supportive school environments enable gay-male teachers to express their identities more openly, reducing the need for self-censorship. This contrasts with what I found, where participants still experienced pressure to regulate their identities despite moments of agency. I believe this

difference may be influenced by variations in cultural context, institutional support, and the persistence of heteronormative norms in specific settings.

Power relations in schools both constrain and enable identity formation

Recalling the sharing of my study participants, I was enlightened that power relations in schools operate as dynamic and often invisible forces that shape the identities of gay-male science teachers through institutional policies, and administrative expectations. I realized that these forms of power encourage self-regulation, caution, and selective identity expression, yet at the same time, supportive environments can empower teachers to express themselves more openly. This realization corroborates with Meyer and Keenan (2023) who argued that institutional policies and administrative expectations regulate teacher identity, reinforcing conformity while also creating opportunities for advocacy when leadership is supportive. Likewise, such realization goes with Ullman and Smith (2024) who found that collegial relationships and inclusive school climates serve as protective factors that enable gay-male teachers to express their identities more openly. These studies support my findings by showing that power relations are not purely restrictive but can also foster agency and resistance.

However, my realization made me strong to argue Ferfolja (2023), who claimed that school-based power structures remain largely restrictive, with heteronormative norms and institutional silence limiting opportunities for identity expression. This differs from my finding, where participants experienced both constraint and empowerment. I think this variation may be due to differences in school climate, leadership support, and cultural context.

Gay-male science teachers perceive their identities as fluid and context-dependent

Moreover, I found that the fluidity of gay-male science teacher identity is perceived as selective disclosure of identity, context-dependent of self-expression, shifting between reserved and open selves, strategic self-presentation, negotiation between authenticity and professionalism, and subtle and indirect expression of identity. My discovery is consistent with the assertion of Carlile and Paechter (2023) reporting that gay-male teachers' identities are fluid and continuously

negotiated based on context, institutional pressures, and perceived safety. Similarly, my study affirms Jones and Taylor (2024) who emphasized that identity is actively constructed through everyday interactions, where teachers shift between visibility and concealment to manage authenticity and professional expectations. These findings align with my study, reinforcing the idea that identity is not static but continuously shaped by both internal reflections and external environments.

In contrary to my view, my finding questions Sullivan (2023) who argued that teacher identity tends to stabilize over time as educators develop consistent professional roles. This contradicts what I found, where participants continuously negotiated and adapted their identities across contexts. I believe this difference may be influenced by the unique experiences of gay-male teachers and the varying levels of inclusivity within school environments.

Implications for Practice

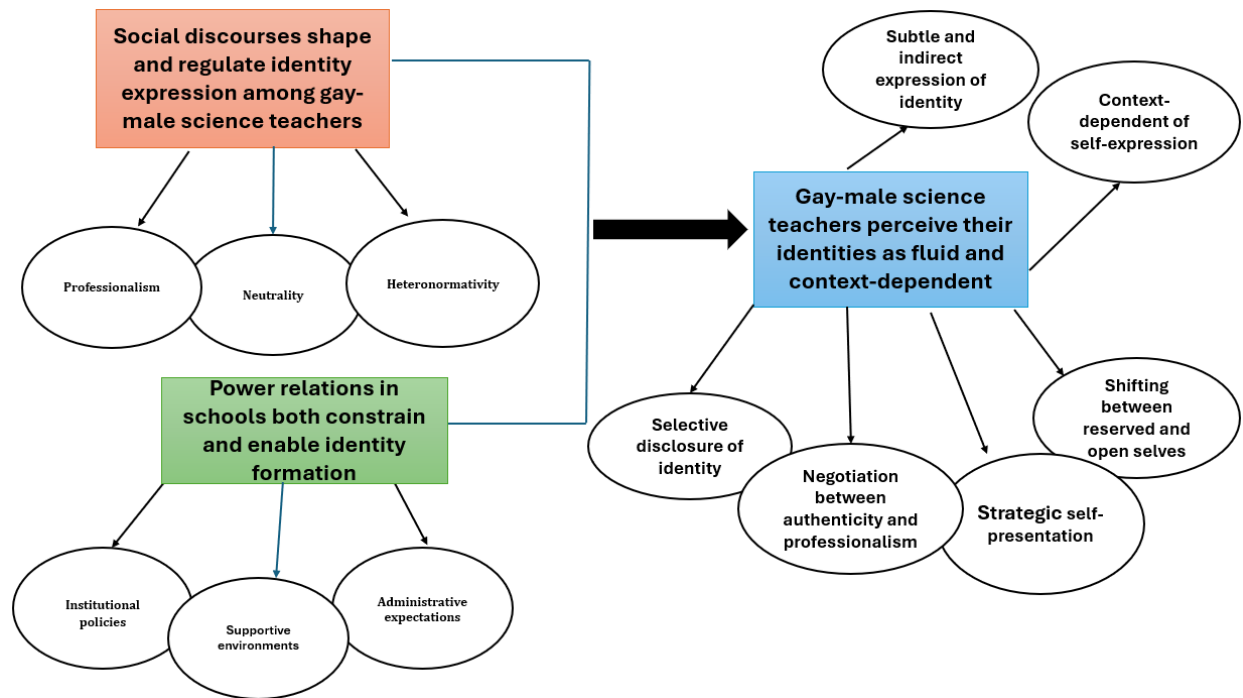
Policy makers must strengthen and consistently implement inclusive policies—such as gender and development (GAD) programs, anti-discrimination measures, and professional guidelines that explicitly protect diverse identities. By ensuring that policies move beyond compliance and are actively practiced within schools, they can transform power structures from being purely regulatory to enabling systems that empower teachers. This promotes a more balanced environment where identity expression is both respected and supported.

Future Direction of my Study

I see strong potential for pursuing multiple linear regression analysis to examine how social discourses and power relations predict the fluidity of identity among gay-male science teachers; and exploratory factor analysis to develop and validate survey instruments based on the emerging dimensions such as selective disclosure, strategic self-presentation, and negotiation between authenticity and professionalism. Furthermore, I believe that future qualitative research may deepen this understanding by exploring how these factors interact across different contexts,

capturing the evolving and context-dependent nature of identity among teachers in diverse educational settings.

Modified Paradigm



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