

AJARN Pride: Lived Experiences of Professional Filipino Migrant Gay Men Teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of professional migrant Filipino gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand. It examined their personal and professional challenges, cultural adaptation, workplace support systems, experiences of discrimination and social acceptance, and the factors influencing their decision to remain in Thailand. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through semi structured interviews with seven migrant Filipino gay men teachers employed in public schools, private schools, and universities in Chiang Mai. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common patterns and meanings across participants' experiences. The findings revealed challenges related to language barriers, limited career advancement opportunities, financial concerns, cultural adjustment, and unequal treatment associated with nationality. Despite these challenges, participants generally perceived Thailand as an accepting environment for LGBTQ+ individuals, which enabled greater freedom of identity expression and improved emotional well being. Support systems were primarily informal and consisted of friends, family members, and romantic partners rather than institutional programs. Professional stability, financial adequacy, social acceptance, lifestyle satisfaction, and emotional relationships were identified as key factors influencing participants' decision to remain in Chiang Mai. The study was limited to seven participants from Chiang Mai, which may restrict the transferability of the findings to other contexts. Future research may examine the experiences of migrant LGBTQ+ educators in other regions of Thailand or compare their experiences across different countries. The findings highlight the need for inclusive policies, equitable employment opportunities, and stronger institutional support systems for migrant LGBTQ+ educators. This study contributes to the limited literature on migrant Filipino gay men teachers in Thailand and provides valuable insights into the intersection of sexuality, nationality, and professional identity within the context of international migration and education.

Keywords: Gay men Educators, Filipino migrant teachers, Gay men teacher challenges, Lived experience, Chiang Mai teachers

INTRODUCTION

In classrooms across the world, teachers create spaces for learning that shape the future of the next generation. For gay men teachers, their role often extends beyond academic instruction, as their visibility and representation contribute to more inclusive and supportive learning environments for students (Mercier, 2021). In many societies, including Thailand, these educators move beyond the formal curriculum as their identities and authenticity challenge dominant norms and disrupt long-standing stereotypes (Lo Bianco, 2016). The presence of LGBTQ+ educators in schools helps challenge heteronormative assumptions and promote inclusive educational spaces (Staley, 2021).

In Thailand, gay men are generally more visible and socially accepted, particularly in urban centers and tourist destinations (Statham, 2021). Thai culture has long exhibited tolerance toward non-heteronormative practices (Dounghummes, 2022), allowing many gay men to experience a sense of freedom and belonging in cities such as Bangkok and Pattaya. However, this acceptance remains uneven, as discrimination and stigma persist, especially in rural and provincial areas (Srikummoon, 2022). Thailand is often regarded as one of the most LGBTQIA+-friendly countries in Southeast Asia (Compas, 2023), largely due to its relatively open social climate and progressive legal developments, including discussions of same-sex marriage legislation. This environment has encouraged many LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly professionals, to migrate and establish long-term residence in the country (Hickey, 2018).

Gay men teachers have become increasingly visible within Thai schools (Digo, 2024). Thailand's global reputation as a welcoming country for LGBTQ individuals has drawn many Filipino gay men teachers seeking both professional opportunities and social acceptance. Many LGBTQIA+ professionals have similarly viewed Thailand as a relatively inclusive environment. The pedagogical skills, creativity, and classroom engagement of gay men teachers have been widely recognized, contributing to their effectiveness in educational settings.

Although Thailand does not offer the highest salaries for educators, many Filipino gay men teachers choose to remain due to the country's inclusive social environment and improved quality of life compared to their home country (Madanguit, 2021). Migration decisions among gay men are shaped by broader forces such as globalization, labor mobility, and transnational opportunities (Carrillo, 2018; Karimi, 2020). Compared to the Philippines, where social acceptance has progressed slowly despite democratic structures, Thailand has emerged as a preferred destination for LGBTQIA+ professionals seeking safety, dignity, and professional fulfillment (Min, 2023).

Thailand's educational environment has increasingly emphasized multicultural and inclusive teaching practices, particularly in schools serving culturally diverse learners (Wu, 2023). Teachers are often valued for their skills and dedication rather than judged solely by their identities. However, systemic challenges in the Philippine education system, such as rigid ranking processes within the Department of Education, continue to drive many qualified teachers to seek opportunities abroad. As noted by Ulla and Pernia (2021), the lack of equality, job security, and safe spaces remains a significant migration factor among LGBTQIA+ individuals. Despite these challenges, Filipino teachers are globally recognized for their professionalism, resilience, and English proficiency. Overseas Filipino Workers are often described as "modern-day heroes" for their significant contributions and personal sacrifices (Eugenio, 2023).

For many gay men teachers living in Thailand, quality of life is defined by freedom, acceptance, and institutional support. The role of school administrators is critical, as supportive leadership and inclusive institutional practices shape safe environments for LGBTQ+ individuals (Ullman, 2026). Acceptance from school heads, colleagues, students, and stakeholders influences whether LGBTQ+ educators feel empowered or marginalized (Staley, 2021). Due to fears of discrimination, many Filipino gay men teachers choose work contexts where they can express their identities authentically (Wright & Villaflor, 2019). Social media also plays a role in shaping migration decisions, as media exposure linked to democratic development and economic opportunities influences attitudes toward homosexuality and social minorities (Flores, 2021).

Timoteo and Lincod (2026) explored similar themes of migration, identity expression, and workplace experiences in their study of migrant Filipino transgender teachers in Thailand. Their findings highlighted challenges involving cultural adaptation, discrimination, emotional well-being, and institutional support among LGBTQ+ migrant educators. However, limited attention has been given to

the distinct experiences of Filipino gay men teachers, particularly regarding professional identity, masculinity, and sexuality within educational settings. Grounded in these gaps, this study explores the lived experiences of Filipino gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, using interpretive phenomenological perspectives discussed by Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio (2019).

This research also carries personal significance for the researcher, who has lived and taught in Thailand for more than five years while holding a teaching license earned in the Philippines but not practicing the profession locally. The study examines whether such sacrifices are justified when weighed against acceptance, well-being, and professional satisfaction abroad. Ultimately, this research aims to challenge misinterpretations and present Thailand not only as a tourist destination but as a place where gay professionals can pursue meaningful careers with dignity and reduced discrimination. By amplifying the voices of migrant Filipino gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, this study contributes to discussions on inclusive educational environments for LGBTQIA+ professionals and highlights how professional fulfillment, personal well-being, and authentic self-expression emerge within Thailand's educational landscape.

Statement of the Problem

This research sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the migrant Filipino gay men teachers in Thailand concerning:
 - a. age;
 - b. gender identity;
 - c. sexual orientation;
 - d. educational level;
 - e. subject specialization;
 - f. number of years of teaching experience;
 - g. job position;
 - h. type of school;
 - i. length of stay in Thailand; and
 - j. monthly income?
2. What personal and professional challenges do professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers experience within Thailand's educational system?
3. How do professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers describe their cultural adaptation and personal experiences while living and working in Chiang Mai, Thailand?
4. How do support systems within the workplace influence the well-being and job satisfaction of professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers?
5. What underlying reasons and influences shape the decision of professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers to remain in Chiang Mai, Thailand?
6. What recommendations can be proposed to educational institutions and policymakers to promote inclusivity and support for professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Thailand?

Scope and Delimitations

This study used in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. Interviews were conducted online through Zoom or Google Meet for accessibility and recorded with consent. Participants responded in English or Filipino. Prior studies often focused on Bangkok in discussions of queer education, migration, and Filipino teachers, leaving limited attention to experiences outside the capital, especially in Chiang Mai.

Chiang Mai is the second-largest city in Thailand and is known for its cultural heritage, mountainous setting, and diverse urban identity (Phetsuriya & Heath, 2021). It attracts individuals

seeking a quieter urban lifestyle (Fossheim, 2024). Many Filipino gay men teachers choose to stay in Chiang Mai for long-term work and personal reasons. This setting offers a relevant site for examining how they manage professional roles, identity, and cultural adjustment.

The study involved Filipino gay men teachers with professional teaching licenses in the Philippines, at least 5 years of teaching experience, and who were currently residing in Chiang Mai. Data collection ran from April 1, 2026, to May 15, 2026. The process included purposive and snowball sampling, informed consent, semi-structured interviews, transcription, and data organization. The period allowed detailed accounts of lived experiences, adaptation, challenges, and support systems among migrant Filipino gay men teachers in Chiang Mai.

Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature synthesized studies on Filipino gay men teachers who are migrants in Chiang Mai, focusing on identity, migration, and professional experiences. It examined LGBTQ+ educators' visibility, workplace challenges such as stereotypes and discrimination, and varying levels of acceptance in educational settings. It also discussed how sexuality and professional identity intersect within international teaching contexts and how migration shapes career pathways and lived realities. In addition, it highlighted the role of belongingness, support systems, and community formation in influencing well-being, professional growth, and decisions to remain in Thailand. Together, these studies provided a framework for understanding the lived experiences and coping strategies of migrant Filipino gay men teachers.

Understanding the Lives and Identities of Gay Men

Research shows that gay men's identity develops through interactions between personal experience and the social environment, including family, peers, and workplace settings, which shape self-understanding and well-being (Jaspal, 2022). Identity also shifts over time depending on discrimination, social expectations, and changing cultural attitudes toward sexuality. Minority stress theory explains mental health outcomes among gay men, where stigma, rejection, and concealment increase risks of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress, while social support and positive identity reduce these effects (Meyer; Frost, 2023). Cultural context further shapes experience, as sexuality intersects with religion, ethnicity, and social norms, influencing identity and belonging, with studies showing added pressure from masculinity expectations and family conformity in minority groups. Digital spaces also affect gay men's lives by offering connection and identity exploration while also exposing users to discrimination, social comparison, and community-based stress, which influences mental health and identity management (Cassidy, 2018; Pachankis et al.).

Filipino Teachers in Global Migration

Migration of Filipino teachers continues due to economic pressure, limited local opportunities, and strong demand for English educators abroad. Many leave the Philippines for higher salaries, job stability, career growth, and better living conditions, with Filipino teachers valued globally for English proficiency and adaptability, though adjustment challenges often occur during relocation.

Studies show migrant Filipino teachers face cultural adjustment issues, language barriers, homesickness, workplace discrimination, and unequal treatment in salary and benefits compared with native English-speaking teachers, affecting well-being and job satisfaction (Garcia, 2025). Despite this, many adapt through resilience and social support. At the same time, migration improves intercultural competence, teaching skills, and professional confidence, with added benefits such as broader experience and possible long-term career pathways, including residency opportunities.

Global demand for Filipino teachers remains strong due to their English skills, flexibility, and classroom management abilities. However, issues persist in visa processes, job security, and wage inequality, with some receiving lower pay and fewer benefits than Western counterparts despite similar workloads (Bagapuro & Delos Santos, 2021). Migration also creates emotional strain linked to family separation, with research showing that distance from family contributes to loneliness and stress, while family reunification improves well-being, belonging, and settlement outcomes (Parreñas, Ager & Strang, 2008).

Migration decisions result from push factors such as low pay and limited opportunities for advancement in the Philippines, and pull factors such as higher income and better career prospects abroad (Peralta et al., 2024). Many teachers pursue overseas work for financial security and family support (Bense, 2016), showing migration as a process shaped by economic need, professional goals, and social adaptation.

LGBTQ+ Educators: Identity, Visibility, and Professional Experiences

Research on LGBTQ+ educators focuses on identity, visibility, workplace experience, and institutional support in education. Studies show LGBTQ+ teachers face tension between personal identity and professional expectations, while inclusive frameworks such as queer literacy promote safe and affirming school environments that strengthen teacher well-being and engagement (Miller, 2018). Institutional policies play a central role in shaping experiences, where inclusive leadership and anti-discrimination measures improve satisfaction, relationships, and protection, while lack of support increases stress and uncertainty (Antonelli et al., 2022).

Research across Western contexts shows that inclusive policies, anti-bullying programs, and LGBTQ+ curricula reduce discrimination and encourage openness, although microaggressions and concealment of identity still occur due to fear of judgment and professional risk (Kosciw et al., 2020; Bishop and Phillips, 2019). In more conservative settings, LGBTQ+ educators face stronger discrimination, workplace isolation, and pressure to conform to heteronormative norms influenced by cultural and religious expectations, affecting confidence and emotional well-being (Bower-Phipps, 2020).

Studies also highlight the positive impact of openly LGBTQ+ educators in schools, where visibility supports student identity development, improves safety, and promotes inclusion for both LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ students (Brett, 2024). However, openness often brings increased scrutiny, identity concealment, and professional risk, including marginalization in higher education and limited recognition of LGBTQ+ scholarship (Wright and Gaskin, 2026; Schimanski and Alperin, 2020).

Overall, LGBTQ+ educator presence influences school culture, improving inclusion, collaboration, and student outcomes, especially for LGBTQ+ youth, while weak institutional support reduces well-being, job satisfaction, and retention, leading some educators to leave the profession (Glazzard and Thomas, 2023).

Gay Men in the Teaching Profession: Stereotypes, Barriers, and Acceptance

Research on gay men in teaching examines how stereotypes, heteronormativity, and institutional culture shape professional experiences. Gay male teachers often face pressure to manage identity in workplaces shaped by traditional ideas of masculinity and professionalism, especially in early education settings where gender expectations are stronger (Connell, 2018). Many also experience silence, exclusion, and identity concealment in schools where conservative values dominate, affecting well-being and workplace relationships (Ferfolja, 2019).

Studies show masculinity stereotypes influence perceptions of competence, leadership, and suitability for teaching roles, leading to exclusion from leadership pathways and professional networks (Connell, 2018; Travers and Richardson, 2019). Despite legal protections, subtle discrimination

continues through microaggressions, exclusion, and unequal treatment, which contribute to stress and identity concealment as a coping strategy (Dyar et al., 2018). Acceptance in some contexts exists but often depends on conformity to heteronormative expectations, especially in conservative school environments (Llewellyn and Reynolds, 2021).

Research also shows that openly gay teachers face both opportunities and risks. In supportive schools, inclusive policies and leadership improve safety, job satisfaction, and student outcomes, while openly gay educators often serve as role models for inclusion (Russell et al., 2020; Glazzard and Thomas, 2023). However, workplace inclusion remains uneven, with many educators continuing to experience isolation and limited representation, particularly in less supportive or rural settings.

Support networks among LGBTQIA+++ teachers help reduce stress and strengthen resilience through shared experience and guidance, though access remains limited in many contexts (Ellis, 2018). Overall, research shows that gay male teachers continue to navigate stereotypes, exclusion, and institutional barriers, while contributing to more inclusive school environments when supported by strong policies, leadership, and representation (Connell, 2018; Glazzard and Thomas, 2023).

Thailand's LGBTQIA+++ Landscape: Rights, Culture, and Work Policies

Thailand shows high public visibility and social tolerance toward LGBTQIA+++ people, supported by media representation, tourism, and urban culture, yet legal and institutional equality remains limited (Brett, 2024; Newman, 2021). Many LGBTQIA+++ individuals still face gaps in legal recognition related to relationships, inheritance, healthcare decisions, and gender identity documentation, showing a divide between social acceptance and formal rights (Newman, 2021; Weissberg, 2017).

Research shows LGBTQIA+++ professionals in Thailand experience mixed workplace conditions. Visibility is strong in sectors like entertainment and tourism, yet leadership roles and formal institutions still reflect heteronormative expectations and underrepresentation of LGBTQIA+++ individuals (Newman et al., 2021). Workplace experiences often involve subtle bias, exclusion, and pressure to conform, leading many to conceal identity for job security and professional stability (Newman, 2021). Education and government sectors report stronger microaggressions and stricter gender norms, while institutional culture and leadership strongly influence inclusion (Glazzard and Thomas, 2023).

In education, some schools have introduced anti bullying policies and diversity programs, especially in urban and international settings, but implementation remains inconsistent and limited (Newman, 2021). Migrant LGBTQIA+++ teachers often expect more inclusive environments but still face pressure to adjust identity expression based on local norms, leading to cautious self-presentation at work (Ulla and Pernia, 2023; Newman, 2021). Many institutions lack clear protection systems, leaving teachers dependent on personal coping strategies rather than formal support (Newman, 2021).

Some progressive schools show improved inclusion through leadership support and diversity policies, resulting in safer environments and greater identity freedom (Jackson, 2017). Overall, Thailand reflects a dual context where social tolerance and visibility coexist with legal gaps, workplace inequality, and uneven institutional support, particularly affecting LGBTQIA+++ migrant educators.

Educational Inclusivity and LGBTQIA+++ Teachers

Inclusive education research shows stronger diversity, equity, and inclusion practices improve emotional well-being, job satisfaction, and workplace safety for LGBTQIA+++ teachers. Schools with clear anti-discrimination policies, anti-bullying measures, and inclusive programs report

lower harassment levels and stronger institutional belonging among LGBTQIA+++ staff (Kosciw et al., 2020; Mizzi, 2022). Policy clarity also builds institutional trust and reduces uncertainty about protection and professional security (Meyer et al., 2019).

Studies show uneven implementation of inclusive education across regions. Schools in conservative communities often apply diversity policies inconsistently, leaving LGBTQIA+++ educators exposed to discrimination, while stronger national legal frameworks support more effective inclusion practices (Wright, 2026; Yadav et al., 2023). In contrast, countries with weaker protections show higher levels of workplace exclusion, harassment, and identity concealment (Bekker, 2023; Amoor, 2019). Within countries, urban schools tend to provide stronger support than rural settings due to greater diversity and advocacy presence .

Support systems play a key role in reducing isolation and stress among LGBTQIA+++ teachers. Advocacy groups, professional organizations, and workplace allies strengthen emotional well-being, confidence, and inclusion, while programs such as diversity training improve belonging and workplace relationships (Kaihoi et al., 2022). Digital communities also provide support in isolated environments where formal networks are limited (Lucero, 2017). Overall, research shows that inclusive policies, strong institutional commitment, and active support systems significantly improve LGBTQIA+++ teachers' experiences, while weak or inconsistent implementation continues to limit equality in many educational settings (Kosciw et al., 2020; Yadav et al., 2023).

Intersectionality in Migration: Being Both Filipino and LGBTQIA+++

Research shows Filipino LGBTQIA+++ migrants experience overlapping discrimination shaped by nationality, ethnicity, sexual identity, and migrant status, explained through intersectionality (Crenshaw). These combined identities influence workplace experiences, belonging, and social integration in host countries, where Filipino workers are often valued for English skills and adaptability but still face stigma linked to sexuality and migration status.

Studies show LGBTQIA+++ Filipino migrants frequently experience layered discrimination, including racial bias, immigration-related exclusion, and sexuality-based prejudice in professional settings (Gottvall et al., 2023). Many educators conceal or downplay identity in conservative workplaces or communities to avoid stigma and professional risk. Even in more accepting contexts, microaggressions and exclusion linked to ethnicity and migrant status remain present. LGBTQIA+++ identity also intensifies cultural adjustment challenges and professional adaptation in foreign education systems, requiring ongoing identity negotiation between cultural belonging and authenticity (Lewis, 2022).

Research highlights identity conflict within migrant and home-based communities, where conservative cultural expectations can pressure LGBTQIA+++ individuals to conform to heteronormative norms, increasing emotional strain and identity concealment (Jaspal et al., 2022). This creates "double invisibility," where Filipino LGBTQIA+++ migrants feel marginalized both in ethnic communities and LGBTQIA+++ spaces due to race, nationality, and immigration status (Gottvall et al., 2023).

Despite these challenges, studies show strong resilience through community building, peer networks, and advocacy involvement. Migrant LGBTQIA+++ groups provide emotional support, identity affirmation, and practical assistance for work and migration challenges (Lewis, 2022). Participation in advocacy and social networks strengthens well-being and promotes inclusion and visibility in host societies. Overall, research shows Filipino LGBTQIA+++ migrant teachers navigate complex intersectional barriers while developing strong coping strategies through community support and advocacy.

Sense of Belonging and Community Among LGBTQAI+++ Filipino Migrant Teachers

Research shows belonging and community play a central role in the experiences of LGBTQAI+++ Filipino migrant teachers, as they navigate both ethnic and sexual identities in foreign environments. Many develop strong social and professional networks through Filipino groups, LGBTQAI+++ organizations, religious communities, and online spaces, which provide emotional support, identity affirmation, and practical assistance for workplace and migration challenges.

Community support becomes especially important in settings with limited legal or institutional protection. LGBTQAI+++ migrant networks function as safe spaces for sharing experiences, coping strategies, and emotional support, helping reduce isolation and strengthen cultural continuity while adjusting to host countries (Gottvall et al., 2023). Filipino migrant teachers also maintain cultural identity through shared activities such as religious events, cultural celebrations, and community gatherings, which reinforce belonging and connection to home culture (Calang and Sunanta, 2026).

In cities with large Filipino populations, community organizations and advocacy groups provide counseling, legal guidance, workshops, and social support, strengthening resilience and professional adjustment (Lewis, 2022; Gottvall et al., 2023). Research shows that stronger social connection improves mental health, job satisfaction, and workplace engagement, while reducing stress and isolation among migrant educators (Turner Thielking and Prochazka, 2022). Overall, belongingness within Filipino and LGBTQAI+++ communities enhances emotional well-being, resilience, and professional stability among migrant teachers working abroad.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Migration Theory, Queer Theory, Intersectionality Theory, Minority Stress Theory, and Resilience Theory to explain the lived experiences of Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand. These frameworks help examine migration decisions, identity negotiation, workplace experiences, cultural adaptation, discrimination, and coping strategies in both personal and professional contexts.

Migration Theory explains movement driven by push factors such as low salaries and limited opportunities in the Philippines and pull factors such as better pay and career prospects in Thailand. Queer Theory explores how sexuality and gender are shaped by social norms, helping explain how participants manage identity expression, visibility, and concealment in heteronormative workplace settings (Jones et al., 2023).

Intersectionality Theory shows how overlapping identities such as nationality, sexuality, and migrant status combine to shape experiences of discrimination and opportunity (Bowleg, 2021). Minority Stress Theory explains how stigma, exclusion, and discrimination create ongoing psychological stress affecting well-being and professional life (Pachankis and Bränström, 2019). Resilience Theory focuses on how participants adapt through coping strategies, support networks, and community building despite challenges (Ungar, 2021).

Together, these theories form a framework linking migration factors, intersectional identity, workplace experiences, social and cultural context, coping mechanisms, and overall well-being, providing a comprehensive understanding of how Filipino migrant gay men teachers navigate life and work in Thailand.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, this study proposed a conceptual model that linked the core variables shaping the lived experiences of Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Chiang Mai.

1. **Migration Factors:** These include the push and pull factors that drive Filipino gay men to seek teaching opportunities in Thailand, such as better professional opportunities or personal freedom.
2. **Intersectionality:** The intersections of sexual orientation, national identity, and migrant status are central to understanding the unique challenges and experiences of these teachers.
3. **Workplace Experiences:** This variable looks at the professional environments of Thai schools, examining how inclusivity policies (or the lack thereof) shape the professional experiences of gay men teachers.
4. **Social and Cultural Context:** This explores how Thai cultural attitudes toward LGBTQIA+++ individuals and Filipino migrants influence both societal and professional acceptance.
5. **Resilience and Coping Mechanisms:** This variable focuses on how these teachers cope with challenges, drawing on personal resilience and community support networks.
6. **Impact on Identity and Well-Being:** The final component examines how the migration experience and professional challenges affect the teachers' sense of identity and overall well-being, informed by minority stress theory and resilience theory.

Conceptual Framework

This study examined the lived experiences of Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, focusing on the intersection of migration, LGBTQIA+++ identity, and teaching within the Thai educational system. It highlighted how participants balanced personal identity, professional roles, and cultural adaptation while working abroad, showing how migration involves both career opportunities and social challenges. Demographic and professional factors such as age, education, teaching experience, and salary were considered in understanding differences in workplace adjustment and social integration (Asis and Battistella, 2019).

A qualitative phenomenological design guided the study to capture participants' meanings and perspectives on identity, discrimination, belonging, and resilience (Neubauer et al., 2019). Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to safely discuss sensitive experiences such as identity expression and coping strategies, which is supported as effective in LGBTQIA+++ research (Pachankis and Bränström, 2019). Colaizzi's method and thematic analysis were used to identify patterns across narratives, supported by NVivo for systematic coding (Wirihana et al., 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2021; Jackson and Bazeley, 2019).

The study's framework included migration, identity negotiation, workplace conditions, social support, resilience, and well-being outcomes, showing how these factors shape both professional and personal experiences in Thailand. It aimed to provide insights for policymakers and school leaders to improve inclusion, equality, and support systems for LGBTQIA+++ migrant teachers.

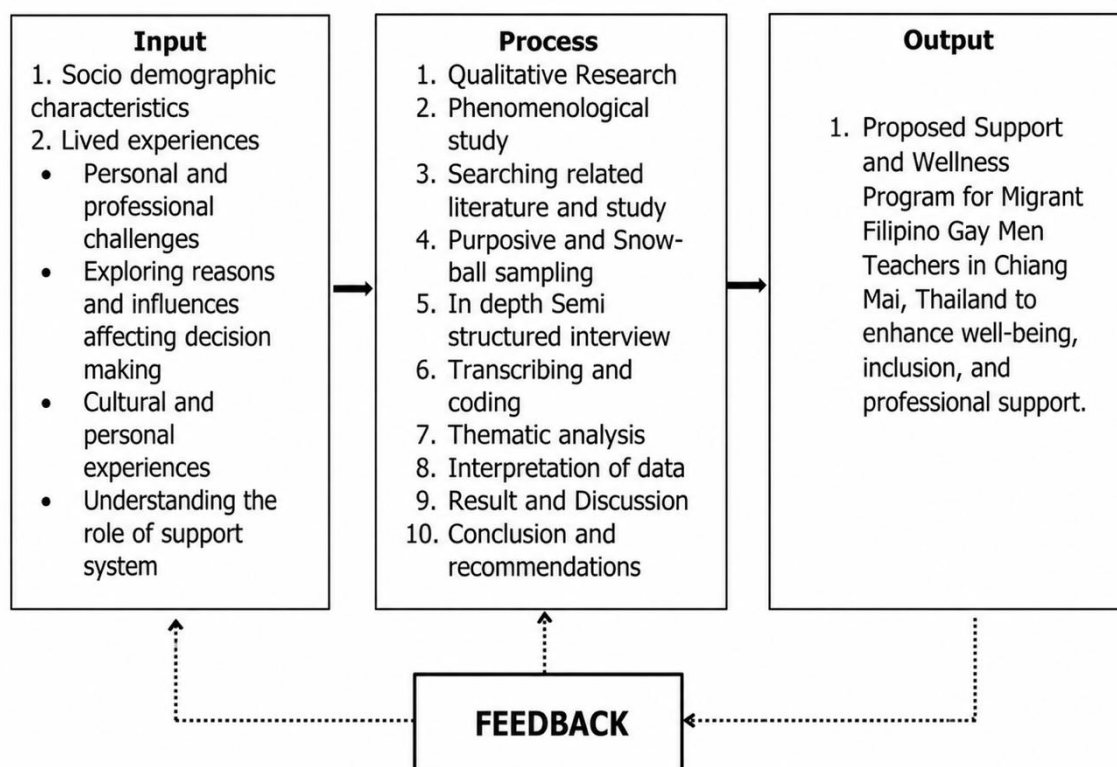


Figure 1: Paradigm of the Study

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlined the methodology employed in the study, encompassing the research design, participants of the study, sampling design, instrumentation and validation, data gathering procedures, and data analysis methods. The methodology was carefully designed to ensure the collection of rich, reliable, and valid qualitative data that effectively addressed the research questions and objectives. By using a well-structured qualitative approach, the study aimed to provide an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Research Design

The research adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach to uncover the lived experiences of the participants. Phenomenology was considered appropriate for the study because it aimed to capture the subjective and personal experiences of individuals within a particular context (Van Manen, 2016). Through this approach, the study explored how professional Filipino gay men teachers in Chiang Mai perceived and made sense of their professional and personal lives, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of their experiences.

In-depth semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection. This approach allowed participants to express their narratives freely while enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions that explored emerging themes in greater depth. The interviews covered topics such as professional challenges, experiences of discrimination or support, the impact of sexual orientation on careers, and adaptation to living and working in Thailand.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data following the six-step process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). This process involved familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. By

applying thematic analysis, the research identified patterns in the participants' experiences that reflected broader social, cultural, and institutional dynamics.

Research Steps

The study employed a snowball sampling method to identify and recruit participants. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen because of its effectiveness in reaching specific and hard-to-access populations, particularly professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Since openly gay Filipino teachers were not widely represented in formal databases or professional networks, snowball sampling allowed the researcher to utilize personal and professional connections to identify qualified participants.

In this approach, the initial participants were identified through the researcher's existing contacts within the Filipino teaching community in Chiang Mai. These individuals met the study's inclusion criteria of being licensed professional teachers, openly identifying as gay men, and living and working in Chiang Mai for at least three years. They were invited to participate in the study. After agreeing to participate, the initial participants were encouraged to refer other potential participants who met the same criteria. This process was repeated, with each participant providing additional referrals, which gradually expanded the sample size.

The snowball sampling method was particularly useful in this context because it relied on trust and rapport within the community. Migrant Filipino teachers, especially those identifying as gay men, might have been hesitant to participate in research because of concerns regarding privacy, discrimination, or stigma. By relying on personal referrals, the method helped ensure that potential participants were approached through trusted connections, which increased the likelihood of participation.

This approach also provided flexibility in identifying participants who might not have been reached through traditional recruitment methods. Given the sensitivity of the topic and the cultural realities associated with being both a migrant and a gay professional in Thailand, snowball sampling proved to be an effective method for developing a reliable and relevant participant pool for the study.

Since the study employed a phenomenological research design, the focus was placed on depth rather than quantity. A sample size of seven to ten participants was considered sufficient to capture rich lived experiences while allowing for in-depth analysis. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The data gathering process followed a series of phases designed to ensure comprehensive and ethical collection of qualitative data from the participants.

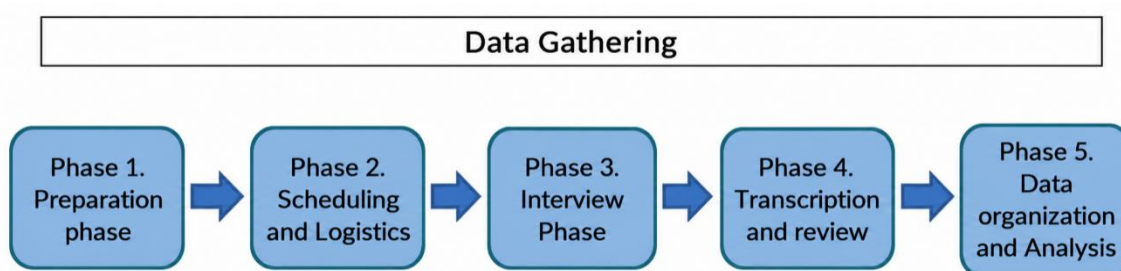


Figure 2. Data Gathering

Phase 1. Preparation Phase: During the first phase, the researcher established initial contact with potential participants through personal and professional networks using the snowball sampling method. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the ethical

considerations of the research, including confidentiality and voluntary participation. Once participants expressed their willingness to participate, they were asked to sign an informed consent form to formally acknowledge their agreement to participate in the study.

Phase 2. Scheduling and Logistics Phase: The second phase involved coordinating with participants to schedule interview sessions. Given the varying availability of the participants, interviews were arranged at mutually convenient times and were conducted through video calls based on the participants' preferences and logistical considerations.

Phase 3. Interview Phase: During the third phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes, which provided sufficient time to explore themes related to the participants' experiences. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. During the interviews, open-ended questions allowed participants to share their personal narratives, while follow-up questions were used to obtain deeper insights when necessary.

Phase 4. Transcription and Review Phase: After each interview, the recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure that all responses were accurately documented. The transcripts were then returned to the participants for member checking, which allowed them to review and verify the accuracy of their responses. This process also provided participants with the opportunity to clarify or expand on their statements when necessary.

Phase 5. Data Organization and Analysis Phase: In this phase, the validated transcripts were organized and prepared for analysis using qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo. The software assisted in categorizing the data according to emerging themes guided by the research questions and objectives. The final stage involved applying Colaizzi's method for thematic analysis. The researcher systematically coded the data by identifying key themes and patterns emerging from the participants' narratives. The themes were then connected to understand the broader context of the participants' experiences. This method ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the data and allowed for an in-depth exploration of the challenges, support systems, and coping strategies of Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Thailand.

Data Analysis Methods

The data gathered from the in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis within a phenomenological framework.

First, all recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the participants' responses. Second, the researcher carefully reviewed and proofread the transcripts to ensure consistency and accuracy with the collected data. Third, significant statements relevant to the lived experiences of the participants were identified and highlighted. Fourth, the significant statements were grouped into meaningful units or codes. Fifth, the codes were categorized into broader themes that reflected the essence of the participants' experiences. Finally, these themes were interpreted and described to capture the core meanings of the lived experiences of professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Data analysis continued until the themes were fully developed and no new information emerged. To strengthen credibility and trustworthiness, member checking was conducted, and peer review of the emerging themes was sought.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

The study used semi-structured interviews as the main data collection tool to gather detailed accounts of Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand. This approach allowed

participants to freely describe their lived experiences while keeping discussions aligned with the research focus on identity, migration, and teaching experiences. The interview guide was developed from related literature on LGBTQIA+++ educators, migration, and workplace challenges in international contexts.

To strengthen validity and reduce researcher bias, expert validation was conducted with specialists in qualitative research, LGBTQIA+++ education, and Filipino migration studies. Their feedback improved clarity, cultural sensitivity, and alignment with research objectives. A pilot interview with one eligible participant not included in the main sample tested the guide's flow and clarity, leading to minor revisions. These steps ensured the final instrument supported clear, unbiased, and in-depth data collection.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study was limited to seven professional Filipino gay men teachers currently residing and working in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling based on specific inclusion criteria, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other migrant teachers, LGBTQ+ educators, or Filipino professionals working in different regions of Thailand or other countries. As a qualitative phenomenological study, the findings were based on participants' personal narratives and subjective experiences, which may vary according to individual circumstances, backgrounds, and perceptions. The study was also confined to a specific period of data collection and focused only on participants who were willing to openly discuss their experiences. Therefore, the findings should not be generalized to all migrant Filipino gay men teachers.

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Prior to data collection, participants were informed of the purpose, procedures, and significance of the research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews were conducted. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. To protect privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms or participant codes were used in place of real names, and all interview recordings, transcripts, and research data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. Special consideration was given to the sensitive nature of discussions involving sexual orientation, migration experiences, and workplace challenges. The researcher ensured that participants were treated with respect, dignity, and sensitivity throughout the research process, while maintaining objectivity, honesty, and integrity in the collection, analysis, and reporting of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored the lived experiences of seven migrant Filipino gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, focusing on migration, gender identity, professional practice, cultural adaptation, and support systems. The findings revealed that participants experienced relative social acceptance and freedom of identity in Thailand while also facing challenges related to nationality, career growth, financial security, and long-term stability. Despite these limitations, the participants demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and professionalism as they balanced their Filipino identity, personal lives, and teaching careers within a foreign environment. The discussion of the findings was presented according to each research question.

SOP 1: What are the demographic profiles of the participants?

The study involved seven migrant Filipino gay men teachers working in different educational institutions in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The participants ranged in age from 30 to 41 years old and held Bachelor's degrees in Education or related fields, with one holding a degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management with teaching certification. All participants had substantial teaching experience, ranging

from 6 to 15 years, and had lived and worked in Thailand for 5 to 10 years. Their teaching roles varied across public schools, private schools, and universities, covering subjects such as English, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Health, Biology, and General English.

The group included openly gay men as well as one participant who described himself as more reserved in expressing his identity. Despite differences in age, experience, and institutional placement, they shared the common experience of being migrant educators navigating both professional demands and cultural adaptation in Thailand. Their varied backgrounds provided rich perspectives on the challenges, adjustments, and professional trajectories of Filipino gay men teachers working abroad.

SOP 2: What personal and professional challenges do professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers experience within Thailand's educational system?

This study explored the lived experiences of migrant Filipino gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, focusing on workplace conditions, financial stability, cultural adaptation, social support, and experiences of discrimination. The narratives of Kimmy, Kylie, Carmela, Moe, Marco, Jayson, and Adrian highlighted shared realities of working as migrant educators within Thailand's education system, shaped by both professional demands and personal identity.

Workplace experiences were marked by language and communication barriers, limited career advancement, minimal salary growth, and restricted access to training and professional development. These challenges reduced motivation and created feelings of stagnation among participants. Financial concerns also emerged, including inconsistent pay, short term contracts, limited benefits, unequal salaries compared to native English speaking teachers, and long term insecurity related to savings, insurance, and retirement planning. These conditions led participants to rely on strict budgeting and financial planning to manage both personal and family needs.

Cultural adaptation and social integration required continuous adjustment to Thai norms, communication styles, and workplace expectations. Participants experienced homesickness and difficulty forming deeper local relationships while maintaining strong connections to Filipino identity through language, food, and values. Support systems were mainly informal, relying on friends, family, partners, and colleagues, with limited institutional support available. While participants generally experienced acceptance of LGBTQIA+ identity in Chiang Mai, they still faced subtle nationality based bias in pay and career advancement, leading to varied strategies of identity expression depending on context.

SOP 3: How do professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers describe their cultural adaptation and personal experiences while living and working in Chiang Mai?

The professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers described their cultural adaptation in Chiang Mai as an ongoing process of adjustment, learning, and personal growth. Participants adapted to Thai culture by becoming more calm, patient, respectful, and flexible in their communication, behavior, and teaching practices while embracing the relaxed “*sabai sabai*” lifestyle. At the same time, they maintained their Filipino identity through language, food, values, friendships, and regular communication with family members in the Philippines. Most participants described Chiang Mai as a peaceful, comfortable, and accepting environment, particularly for LGBTQIA+++ individuals, where they felt more confident and freer to express their identity as gay men. However, despite experiencing acceptance and personal growth, many participants still struggled with homesickness, emotional disconnection, isolation, and difficulty building deeper relationships with local people, reflecting the emotional complexities of living and working abroad as migrant teachers.

SOP 4: How do support systems within the workplace influence the well-being and job satisfaction of professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers?

The support systems within the workplace greatly influence the well-being and job satisfaction of professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers. Participants shared that emotional and practical support from close friends, colleagues, partners, and family members helped them manage stress, adjust to life abroad, and maintain emotional stability. Positive workplace relationships and acceptance of their identity also contributed to their confidence, comfort, and sense of belonging. However, many participants noted the lack of strong institutional support, professional development opportunities, and organized programs specifically for migrant LGBTQIA+++ teachers. Despite these limitations, informal support systems and personal coping strategies played an important role in helping them remain motivated, resilient, and satisfied in their teaching profession while living in Chiang Mai.

SOP 5: What underlying reasons and influences shape the decision of professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers to remain in Chiang Mai, Thailand?

The professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers remain in Chiang Mai because of a combination of professional stability, financial adequacy, social acceptance, lifestyle satisfaction, and personal relationships. Participants appreciated the manageable workload, balanced work environment, and sufficient income that allowed them to maintain a comfortable lifestyle. Many also valued the freedom to openly express their sexual identity in a generally accepting society, which contributed to their sense of safety, belonging, and emotional well-being. In addition, the relaxed lifestyle and peaceful environment in Chiang Mai positively influenced their quality of life. Support from partners, family members, friends, and Filipino communities also played an important role in helping them adjust and remain emotionally stable while living abroad. Despite concerns about limited career growth and long-term security, many participants chose to stay because of the comfort, stability, and personal fulfillment they experienced in Thailand.

SOP 6: What recommendations can be proposed to educational institutions and policymakers to promote inclusivity and support for professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Thailand?

Professional Filipino migrant gay men teachers in Thailand experience various challenges related to workplace conditions, career growth, cultural adaptation, financial security, and support systems. Although participants generally described Thailand as an accepting environment for LGBTQIA+++ individuals, the findings also revealed concerns regarding nationality-based inequality, limited institutional support, lack of professional development opportunities, and emotional challenges associated with migration. Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed for the Ministry of Education of Thailand, educational institutions, and policymakers to strengthen inclusivity, equality, and support for migrant teachers.

SUMMARY

The study examined the lived experiences of migrant Filipino gay men teachers in Chiang Mai and revealed a set of interrelated challenges affecting their professional stability, wellbeing, and social integration. Participants described constrained career mobility marked by limited promotion pathways, repetitive teaching assignments, and restricted access to structured training and development programs. These conditions reduced motivation and slowed long term professional growth. Communication barriers linked to language differences and cultural

expectations frequently disrupted classroom interaction and workplace coordination, leading to misunderstandings and reduced efficiency in teaching practice.

Economic concerns formed another major dimension of their experience. Although daily income generally covered basic needs, participants expressed uncertainty regarding long term financial security. Salary structures remained unequal, benefits were limited, and access to stable healthcare and retirement protection was inconsistent. These financial conditions created ongoing anxiety about future stability and professional sustainability in the host country.

Cultural adjustment involved continuous negotiation between adaptation and emotional strain. Participants learned to adjust to Thai workplace norms and social practices, yet many continued to experience homesickness and emotional separation from family networks in the Philippines. Building deeper social connections within the local environment remained difficult despite daily interaction with colleagues and students. Experiences of social acceptance toward LGBTQIA+ identity were described as generally positive in the workplace, although subtle forms of discrimination persisted, particularly in relation to nationality-based treatment, pay inequity, and limited advancement opportunities.

Support structures were mainly informal and personal, relying heavily on friends, partners, family ties, and peer relationships. Institutional mechanisms designed to support migrant educators and LGBTQIA+ professionals were limited or absent, contributing to emotional strain and occasional isolation. These combined conditions highlight a gap between inclusive social perceptions and actual structural support within educational institutions.

Findings point toward the need for targeted institutional reforms, including structured professional development pathways, accessible language and intercultural training, equitable compensation systems, clear anti-discrimination policies, and formalized mental health and peer support programs for migrant educators.

CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the lived experiences of professional migrant Filipino gay men teachers in Chiang Mai, Thailand, revealing how migration, professional identity, sexuality, and cultural adaptation intersect in their daily lives. Although participants differed in age, educational background, teaching experience, and workplace settings, they shared common experiences as migrant educators navigating the opportunities and challenges of living and working abroad.

The findings showed that participants faced a range of professional and personal challenges, including language barriers, cultural adjustment, limited career advancement opportunities, financial concerns, homesickness, and emotional isolation. While Thailand was generally viewed as socially accepting of LGBTQIA+++ individuals, participants still encountered subtle forms of inequality related to nationality, particularly in salary levels, workplace recognition, and professional advancement. These experiences reflected the ongoing negotiation between professional responsibilities, identity expression, and social integration.

Cultural adaptation emerged as a continuous process of learning and adjustment. Participants embraced aspects of Thai culture, including the relaxed “sabai sabai” lifestyle, while maintaining strong connections to their Filipino identity through language, traditions, values, and relationships with family and friends. Despite finding Chiang Mai peaceful and welcoming, many continued to experience homesickness and difficulty developing deeper local social connections. Informal support systems, particularly friends, partners, family members, and colleagues, played a crucial role in helping them

manage stress and build resilience, although institutional support for migrant LGBTQIA+++ educators remained limited.

The decision to remain in Chiang Mai was influenced by professional stability, financial adequacy, social acceptance, personal relationships, and overall quality of life. Participants appreciated the balanced work environment, manageable workload, and greater freedom to express their identities, which fostered a sense of comfort and belonging. Overall, the study highlights both the opportunities and challenges faced by migrant Filipino gay men teachers and underscores the need for stronger workplace inclusivity, equitable treatment regardless of nationality, accessible support services, and professional development programs that promote the long term well-being and success of migrant LGBTQIA+++ educators in Thailand.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, educational institutions and policymakers in Thailand should strengthen programs and policies that support the professional growth, well-being, and inclusion of migrant Filipino gay men teachers. Schools should regularly assess the needs and experiences of migrant educators and provide orientation programs, mentoring initiatives, and career guidance services to support workplace adjustment and long-term professional development.

Educational institutions should establish equitable career advancement opportunities, accessible professional development programs, and leadership training to enhance professional growth and workplace collaboration. Schools should also promote fair compensation, stable employment contracts, healthcare benefits, and other forms of employment security to improve the financial stability and long-term well-being of migrant teachers.

To strengthen cultural adaptation and social integration, schools should provide cultural orientation programs, intercultural communication training, and community-building activities that encourage meaningful interactions between local and foreign educators. Mental health services, counseling programs, wellness initiatives, and peer support networks should also be made accessible to address homesickness, stress, emotional isolation, and other challenges associated with migration. Partnerships with Filipino communities and LGBTQIA+++ organizations may further enhance social and emotional support.

Schools and policymakers should strengthen anti-discrimination policies and promote inclusive workplace cultures that ensure equal treatment regardless of nationality, race, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Regular monitoring and evaluation of support programs should be implemented to gather feedback from migrant teachers and improve institutional responsiveness. Collaboration among educational institutions, government agencies, Filipino organizations, LGBTQIA+++ advocacy groups, and local communities is essential in developing sustainable support systems. Future research should include larger and more diverse groups of migrant LGBTQIA+++ educators across different regions and educational settings to deepen understanding of their experiences and support needs.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were utilized solely to assist in improving the grammar, sentence structure, clarity, and organization of this study. No AI tools were used in the collection, generation, analysis, interpretation, or presentation of research data. All research activities, findings, conclusions, and recommendations were developed by the researcher. The researcher assumes full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and academic content of this study.

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