

**A glimpse into the lives of LGBTIQ+ teachers: A Life in Secret**

María Fernanda Ortiz Villamizar y Zarith Rosío Gómez Ríos

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Director

Everth Edicson Campos Fontecha

Magister en Educación

Universidad Industrial de Santander

Facultad de Ciencias Humanas

Escuela de Idiomas

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## Resumen

**Título:** Un vistazo a la vida de los docentes LGBTIQ+: Una vida en secreto\*

**Autor:** Maria Fernanda Ortiz Villamizar y Zarith Rosío Gómez Ríos\*\*

**Palabras Clave:** Comunidad LGBTIQ+, entorno educativo, docentes, discriminación, microagresiones.

**Descripción:** La comunidad LGBTIQ+ ha logrado avances significativos en la obtención de derechos, respaldada por las nuevas generaciones. A pesar de las leyes y sentencias que protegen a esta comunidad y a los estudiantes en el ámbito académico en Colombia, hay una falta de investigaciones centradas específicamente en docentes pertenecientes a la comunidad LGBTIQ+. Este estudio tiene como objetivo explorar las experiencias y percepciones de este grupo en Bucaramanga. Aportando datos cuantitativos a través de encuestas y cualitativos mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas, se busca visibilizar las voces de este grupo y fomentar un ambiente escolar más seguro y acogedor para todos. Los resultados muestran la presencia de discriminación a través de microagresiones, pero también se evidencian experiencias positivas por el cambio que se ha dado en las nuevas generaciones. Este estudio demuestra que es fundamental que se continúe investigando y abordando estos temas desde diferentes puntos de vista y desde la crítica, para crear un entorno más inclusivo y equitativo en la educación. Además, se identificó la importancia de implementar políticas inclusivas en el ámbito educativo para promover un ambiente seguro y respetuoso para todos los docentes. Estos hallazgos pueden contribuir a la creación de programas de capacitación y sensibilización para mejorar la diversidad y la equidad en las instituciones educativas.

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\*Trabajo de Grado

\*\* Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Escuela de Idiomas. Director Everth Edicson Campos Fontecha

**Abstract**

**Title:** A glimpse into the lives of LGBTIQ+ teachers: A Life in Secret

**Author:** Maria Fernanda Ortiz Villamizar and Zarith Rosío Gómez Ríos

**Keywords:** LGBTIQ+ community, educational environment, teachers, discrimination, microaggressions.

**Description:** The progress achieved by the LGBTIQ+ community in securing rights, bolstered by the support of newer generations, is noteworthy. Despite the existence of laws and legal safeguards protecting both this community and students within the academic landscape of Colombia, there remains a noticeable dearth of research specifically centered on educators who identify with the LGBTIQ+ community. This study aims to explore the experiences and perceptions of this group in Bucaramanga. Through the collection of quantitative data via surveys and qualitative insights obtained from semi-structured interviews, the idea is to amplify the voices of this community and advocate for the creation of a school environment that is not only safer but also more inclusive for everyone involved. The results show the presence of discrimination through microaggressions, but also reveal positive experiences due to the changes that have occurred in the new generations. This study demonstrates the fundamental need to continue researching and addressing these issues from different perspectives and critically, to create a more inclusive and equitable environment in education. Additionally, the importance of implementing inclusive policies in the educational setting to promote a safe and respectful environment for all teachers was identified. These findings can contribute to the development of training and awareness programs to enhance diversity and equity in educational institutions.

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\*Bachelor Thesis

\*\*Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Escuela de Idiomas. Director Everth Edicson Campos Fontecha

## **A glimpse into the lives of LGBTIQ+ teachers: A Life in Secret**

### **Introduction**

Modern society is currently experiencing the uprising of minorities, such as the LGBTQ+ community, which has historically been marginalized. Through recent years, the LGBTQ+ movement has been promoting pride; it has taken the lead with a significant commemoration and celebration, Pride Day, which takes place on June 28th and has grown to include celebrations all throughout June. Despite what could appear to be freedom, discrimination cases are, nevertheless, common. In Colombia in 2022, there were 5,501 reported incidents affecting members of the LGBTI community that resulted in discrimination, violent circumstances, or even death. 145 people were killed, more than 1.000 reported discrimination and/or harassment, and more than 3,000 declared receiving threats for being part of the community (Caribe Afirmativo, 2023). While the LGBTQ+ community has made significant progress towards gaining equal rights and recognition, the discrimination and violence they face in modern society remain major issues that must be addressed.

Homophobia affects different kinds of people regardless of age, nationality, or profession; for instance, teachers. Gray (2013) states that such professionals are usually under heteronormativity and gender regulation drives discourses. European studies, such as Lee's (2019), have documented the fear-inducing and homophobic environment experienced by LGBT+ educators in their everyday school lives. In contrast, there are few studies that mainly address the experience of being a teacher and a member of the Colombian LGBTQ+ community, specifically in Bucaramanga. Both on the national scale (Colombia) and in the local (Bucaramanga) there is very limited data regarding the current research study; lack of data might

be a limitation for the study; nonetheless, the research seeks to shed light on how teachers in their workplace experience while being openly queer.

### **1. Research question**

This study's core question is: "What are the experiences and perceptions of the Bucaramanga LGBTQ+ teachers living both as LGBTQ+ community members and as educators?"

### **2. Justification**

Generation Z has been at the forefront of raising awareness and fighting against discrimination issues. "They [Gen Z] are using their voices and social media influence to bring attention to important issues such as climate change, gun control, and equality" (United Way of the National Capital Area, 2023). It's also critical to recognize that AFTER the pandemic, society has endured the consequence of serious mental health damage "Aside from the obvious physical impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, health professionals have told CNBC that many people are struggling with the immense emotional and societal changes it has brought" (Ellyatt, H., 2022), while discrimination-related issues represent a major threat to people's mental health, it is crucial to address them while also taking into consideration how fragile this component is at the moment; the younger generation is aware of this.

The social context—environmental factors that regularly influence a person's behavior, ideas, and emotions (Planchuelo et. al., 2022). —is an important topic in the situation being investigated for this study. When the ideals of Generation Z, the awakening of the freedom movements, and the challenges facing our society are combined, it is understandable that the

rationale behind this issue of understanding others' problematic situations is of tremendous interest to people as academics and as part of the current world.

The discrimination and violence faced by the LGBTQ+ community is a serious issue that needs to be addressed, and this holds true for trainee teachers at the UIS English Teaching program as well. Throughout the path of the program, it has become clear that a significant percentage of trainee teachers have experienced discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. From a more personal perspective, researchers have heard experiences from close classmates who are afraid of developing themselves in the teaching field. Their major concern is being discriminated against by their students, students' parents, workmates, and even employers because of their sexual orientation. Considering that 70% of the respondents of a survey conducted on the Colombian LGBTQ+ community affirmed being bullied at least once before turning 18 (Choi, et., al., 2020), the cause of our teaching degree peers' fears becomes more valid. Moreover, this survey shows that 25% of the respondents were fired or denied a job at least once in their lifetime because of their sexual orientation and gender identity (Choi, et., al., 2020), which is added to the concerns of these professionals in training. Out of these cases and our colleagues' experiences, it entailed the necessity to properly investigate these events to determine whether discrimination affected other trainees when they graduated from university and started their work life.

Furthermore, while numerous studies have been conducted regarding instances of discrimination in the classroom, they have primarily focused on the students, leaving a significant gap in understanding the teachers' experiences. For instance, a study called "The Impact of Personal Values, Gender Stereotypes, and School Climate on Homophobic Bullying: Multilevel Analysis" sought to determine whether adolescents' involvement in homophobic

bullying behavior was related to individual victim-blaming attitudes and personal values, focusing on classroom bullying between classmates (Bacchini et al., 2021). Other studies are focused on teachers' lack of understanding in how to deal with 'difficult nowadays topics' and have decided to focus on generating teacher preparation programs to face the challenges of speaking about these "difficult concepts" as homosexuality, diversity and more.

“Researchers note that many pre-service teachers are not prepared to address classroom concerns regarding homophobia, heterosexism, and cisnormativity, fail to identify biases in curricular materials, and resist ideas related to the intersectionality of race, class, ethnicity, gender, ability, and sexuality” (Mitton et. al., 2021).

There are other types of available research around homophobia in the classroom, such as those that focus on the teacher acting as the discriminating actor and have the students act as the interventionists against homophobic and discriminatory behaviors. “This paper is concerned with how teachers manage homophobia at school ... how they deal with homophobia directed at students, and instances when teachers become the recipients of homophobia themselves” (Allen, 2020). There are numerous studies addressing, looking into, and aiding in the reduction of homophobia and discrimination in the classroom. Not only are these studies pertinent in terms of supporting the understanding of the discrimination problem and some other necessary contextualization, but also represent the lack of information on teachers facing discrimination themselves, which highlights the need for this study.

### **3. Objectives**

The general objective of this research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of the LGBTIQ+ teachers in Bucaramanga both as members of the community and as educators. In addition, the specific objectives are to identify specific role expectations from subject areas, to assess LGBTIQ+ teachers' experience in their workplace, to explore LGBTIQ+ teachers' experience regarding students and parent's perceptions and to identify LGBTIQ+ teachers' life experiences of discrimination because of being part of the community.

### **5. Theoretical Framework**

#### **5.1 Background**

##### ***5.1.1. LGBTIQ+ community context***

The research focuses on the LGBTIQ+ community, encompassing various sexual orientations and gender identities. Therefore, the authors consider it of paramount importance to clarify some features of the LGBTIQ+ community, such as the acronym. It starts with "L" for lesbian, indicating a woman who experiences emotional, physical, sexual, and romantic attraction to other women (Legal, 2018). "Gay" refers to homosexual men who are attracted to other men (Legal, 2018). "B" stands for bisexual, representing individuals attracted to more than one gender or sex (Legal, 2018). The following initials are from terms related to gender identity, starting with "T" for transgender and transsexual individuals (Bardi et al., 2005). "Transgender" describes those whose internal sense of gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth (Legal, 2018). On the other hand, "transsexual" refers to individuals who undergo sex

reassignment to align their physical sex with their identified gender (Aznar, 2017). In recent years, the acronym has expanded to include "I" for intersex and "Q" for queer. Intersex refers to individuals born with biological sex characteristics that do not conform to typical male or female norms (LGBTQ Center, 2017). Originally used as an insult, the term "queer" has gained a critical and political connotation, challenging traditional understandings of gender and sexuality (Adetunji, 2023).

### ***5.1.2. International studies***

Numerous international studies have examined the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ teachers and their impact on well-being, emphasizing the importance of supporting their rights in educational settings. Research conducted in England revealed that teachers who worked before the repeal of legislation prohibiting the promotion of homosexuality in schools were less likely to be open about their sexuality, perceived their sexuality as incompatible with their employment, and faced higher levels of discrimination and harassment (Stones, 2019).

Similarly, studies conducted in Canada and the United States, such as Beagan et al., highlighted the adverse effects of microaggressions, aggression, and discriminatory behaviors on the well-being of LGBTIQ+ educators. LGBTIQ+ academics in Canada encountered microaggressions and assumptions about their sexual orientation, while in the United States, LGBTIQ+ educators reported feeling unsafe, experiencing discrimination, harassment, and lack of support compared to their heterosexual counterparts (Beagan et al., 2020; Wright, 2010). These challenges led to feelings of isolation and stress among educators.

Such studies collectively underscore the significant challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ teachers, including societal expectations and inadequate support within educational institutions.

Stressors such as internalized homophobia and unfavorable policies negatively impact job satisfaction, well-being, and mental health (Samuel & Jonathan, 2019). Gay and lesbian pre-service elementary teachers also struggle with isolation, pressure to conform to heteronormative norms, and concerns about discrimination (DeLeon & Brunner, 2013). Inclusive and supportive environments are necessary in the teaching profession.

The identified stressors have adverse effects on the mental and physical health of LGBTIQ+ teachers, leading to conditions such as depression, anxiety, and physical ailments. Limited representation and a fear of disclosure contribute to their sense of isolation. However, some teachers exhibit resilience by seeking support from allies, fostering communities, and coming out to colleagues, students, and parents (DeLeon & Brunner, 2013). Creating inclusive and supportive environments within educational institutions is crucial for the well-being of teachers and fostering a conducive learning atmosphere for all students.

### ***5.1.3. Latin-American studies***

A study conducted in Mexico evaluated the perception of LGBTIQ+ university teachers as influential figures in integrating gender and sexual diversity viewpoints into university lessons (Morales et al., 2023). The study also aimed to examine the challenges faced by instructors in the heteronormative institutionalized context of the university. The majority of participants reported facing ignorance, prejudice, homophobia, and transphobia within the workplace (Morales et al., 2023). Additionally, the study mentioned a significant debate surrounding the conflict between professionalism and pride among LGBTIQ+ teachers. Another relevant study conducted at Azuay University in Ecuador aims to understand and address the discriminatory experiences faced by the LGBTIQ+ community, which violate their rights and create barriers to their

personal fulfillment and equal participation (Espinoza & Méndez., 2022) and this research project ultimately served as a response to the growing demand for the experiences of LGBTIQ+ basic education teachers to be shared in order to highlight issues that have been attempted to be minimized and concealed by those in positions of authority who adhere to heteronormative logic. The need for a similar study in Bucaramanga, Colombia, was sparked by this study in particular, but all of these studies served as motivation for the current research.

In Colombia, studies focusing on the LGBTIQ+ population often prioritize employment inclusion in general rather than specifically examining this population as teachers. One study, conducted by Cárdenas-Cabrera et al. (2017), revealed that the LGBTIQ+ community in Colombia encounters frequent aggression and discrimination based on their sexual orientation or diverse gender identities. This discrimination significantly impacts their employment opportunities, leading to hostile workplace environments where homophobic jokes and ridicule are common (Castro, 2019). These studies underline the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals, including obstacles to career advancement, job terminations due to public displays of their identities, and discriminatory hiring practices (Castro, 2019). They shed light on the difficulties experienced by the LGBTIQ+ community within Colombia's predominantly heteronormative culture. The authors stress the necessity for further research, especially within the context of being an LGBTIQ+ individual employed as a teacher in this environment.

## **5.2 Theoretical background**

### ***5.2.1. LGBTQ+ conceptualization***

One relevant framework that merits exploration within this field of study is the queer theory. According to Judith Butler (2011), queer theory is a critical framework that refutes the

idea of fixed and stable gender and sexual identities. It argues that these identities are constructed through discourse and that they can be disrupted and destabilized. This theory encompasses key concepts such as gender performativity, which Judith Butler (2011) also emphasizes as the understanding that gender is not a natural or essential quality but rather a performance that is constantly being enacted. Queer theory also includes the concept of "queerness," as it is used to refer to anything that challenges or subverts heteronormativity (Ahmed, 2020; Sedgwick, 2008) which is the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and that all other sexualities are deviant (Warner, 2000). By incorporating the tenets of queer theory, particularly in relation to gender performativity and challenging heteronormative assumptions, this research can gain valuable insights into the fluidity and deconstruction of gender and sexual identities.

Additionally, Jack Halberstam emphasizes that queer theory is not about identity but about the ways in which identity is constructed and regulated (Halberstam, 2020). Contrary to the binary classification of people as exclusively male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, queer theory accepts that identities and desires exist on a spectrum (Butler, 2011; Halberstam, 2020). In order to promote inclusivity and acceptance for all sexual orientations and gender identities, it seeks to dismantle the power dynamics and social hierarchies that marginalize non-heteronormative individuals. Queer theory's analytical framework provides a powerful tool for opposing heteronormativity and creating new conceptions of gender and sexuality, ultimately advancing social change.

This section delves into diverse gender and sexual orientation topics, emphasizing the crucial distinctions between transgender and transsexual identities. Shedding light on these concepts is vital for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding gender and sexual diversity. On the first hand, it is crucial to understand sexual orientation, including

heterosexual, gay, bisexual, and other categories, is a multifaceted component of human identity. It involves more than the gender of those to whom one is romantically or sexually attracted; it's an intricate interplay of multiple factors that contribute to its complexity. Research, including studies published by the American Psychological Association in 2012, highlights that sexual orientation is not solely determined by the gender of those to whom one is attracted. It is influenced by a range of factors, such as biological, social, and environmental elements, contributing to the formation of an individual's sexual orientation.

In the mid-1960s, the term 'gender identity' was coined to depict the enduring internal sense of belonging to a specific gender category, be it male or female (Money, 1994). However, over time, gender identity has evolved to encompass individuals who do not exclusively identify as either male or female. According to Lev (2004), gender identity refers to an individual's internal understanding and perception of their gender, which may exist independently of their assigned sex at birth. The term "biological sex" or "sex assigned at birth" refers to the categorization of males or females given to newborns by doctors based on their genitalia and documented on their birth certificates. (Clarke, 2022). Rather than biological sex, the notion of "sex assigned at birth" is what academics and activists use the most these days.

Furthermore, it is extremely pertinent to look into concepts like transsexual and transgender given the discussion around gender identity and sex assigned at birth. First, years ago the term "transsexual" was reserved for people who had undergone genital reassignment surgery. Currently, though, the term "transsexual" refers to any individual whose gender identity is not in line with the sex they were assigned at birth and who, as a result, either lives as a member of the sex they were assigned at birth or is actively working toward doing so (e.g., Serano, 2007; Coleman et al., 2012). And, unlike the term transsexual, which is more specifically

defined, transgender has mostly been used as an umbrella term (Lev, 2004) to refer to those who reject gender norms and expectations in society. In understanding the nuances of gender and sexual diversity, the evolving perspectives on gender identity, the significance of sexual orientation, and the expanding definitions of terms like 'transsexual' and 'transgender' collectively underscore the need for an inclusive and comprehensive approach to honor the multifaceted nature of human identity.

### ***5.2.2 Heteronormativity***

Homosexuality has historically existed across cultures, but scientific and medical discourses in the 19th century pathologized non-heterosexual orientations (Foucault, 1976). This pathologization reinforces a discourse that punishes non-heterosexual individuals while elevating heterosexuality as the norm (Katz, 2007). Heteronormativity, as described by Ingraham (2006), establishes heterosexuality as the norm within institutions, promoting it as the accepted and natural form of sexuality (Kitzinger, 2005). Heterosexism, discrimination by heterosexual individuals against LGBTQ+ people, is closely related to homophobia (Kitzinger, 1987). Challenging heterosexism is crucial for fostering inclusivity and acceptance.

Heteronormativity encompasses socio-legal, cultural, organizational, and interpersonal practices that stem from presumed assumptions about sex and gender (Blasius, 2000; Grace, 1999; Lancaster, 2003; Phelan, 2001; as cited in Kitzinger, 2005). It reinforces beliefs in the binary nature of sex, the perception of opposite-sex attraction as normal, and the organization of social institutions around different-sex relationships (Kitzinger, 2005). De Oliveira et al. (2013) found that LGBTIQ+ individuals in Portugal reported reducing displays of affection to avoid making heterosexual people uncomfortable.

Heteronormativity is perpetuated through seemingly innocuous actions and language, with thematic and rhetorical similarities to subtle racism (Clarke, 2018). Clarke (2018) gathered data showing that heteronormativity is perpetuated through seemingly innocuous actions and language: this includes denying prejudice, reversing accusations of prejudice, and highlighting external constraints on gay equality (Burrige, 2004; Clarke, 2005; Gough, 2002; Jowett, 2017; Korobov, 2004; O'Hara & Meyer, 2003; Peel, 2001; Praat & Tuffin, 1996; Speer & Potter, 2000; Summers, 2007; Teal & Conover-Williams, 2016). These attitudes and practices reinforce the idea of heterosexuality as the norm, contributing to discrimination and marginalization of LGBTQ+ individuals.

### ***5.2.3 Microaggressions and minority stress theory***

Discrimination takes various forms, ranging from small actions to larger ones, affecting both physical and psychological well-being. Derald and Lisa (2020) distinguish between microaggressions and macroaggressions. Microaggressions occur in interpersonal contexts and stem from individuals' beliefs and attitudes, albeit unintentionally. They have a negative impact on marginalized groups and can be countered by neutralizing bigotry among individuals. Examples of microaggressions include sexualizing remarks, isolation, comments on appearance or mannerisms, misgendering, and exclusionary language. Macroaggressions, on the other hand, are systemic and affect entire groups due to institutional and societal practices that deny equal access and opportunity. Brazil has the highest number of reported cases of violence against LGBTIQ+ individuals, highlighting the need to combat harmful stereotypes and attitudes and Colombia experiences the highest level of integrity violations, with physical aggression being frequent (Gutiérrez-Díaz et al., 2021). To challenge these macroaggressions society is in need of changing existing policies and practices.

The Cambridge Dictionary (n.d. a) defines minorities as small groups differing from the majority population in terms of race, religion, language, or political beliefs, and who may be treated unfairly by others. Stress is defined as great worry caused by difficult situations or an overwhelming feeling due to excessive work or problems (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d. b). Minority stress theory posits that socially stigmatized sexual minority populations face excessive social stress, leading to health disparities (Frost & Meyer, 2023). This stress arises from both individual experiences and systemic discrimination. Minority stress is distinct from general stress experienced by anyone, as it is rooted in stigma and prejudice. For instance, losing a job can be a general stressor or a minority stressor, depending on whether it resulted from prejudice against sexual and gender minority individuals or economic downturns affecting all regardless of identity (Frost & Meyer, 2023). Recognizing this distinction is crucial, as minority stress has unique and long-lasting effects on mental and physical health (Meyer, 2003, p. 1). Addressing and combating the underlying stigma and prejudice are essential in mitigating minority stress.

### **5.3. Legal references**

The LGBTIQ community has had to face several legal processes in order to regain their rights due to the prejudice and violence that they have endured throughout history (Vargas, 2013). It is a community that has fought to shift from social systems of complete rejection to systems with established public policies (Gutiérrez-Díaz et al., 2021). In light of this, it is necessary to specify the legislative framework in which the community now exists in order to examine how laws are affecting previous discriminating environments.

Initially, it is essential to mention the existence of Law 1752 from 2015 in Colombia, whose purpose is to penalize acts of discrimination for reasons of race, ethnicity, religion,

nationality, political or philosophical ideology, *sex or sexual orientation*, disability, and other reasons of discrimination. Additionally, in Law 1752 there are different articles that address topics such as harassment, and that also define what constitutes an act of discrimination, which is described as any action that prevents, obstructs, or limits a person from exercising their rights to the fullest extent possible because of that person's race, nationality, *sex or sexual orientation*, disability, or another basis for discrimination.

There are several legal sentences throughout Colombia's history that have continuously sought to grant the same rights to the LGBTIQ+ community. Legal sentences as a result of citizens' actions in tutela, when the Colombian populace battled against discriminatory circumstances such as being expelled from school for being a member of the LGBTIQ+ community or being denied the possibility to study for the same previously mentioned reason. In general, Colombia's actual constitution, nowadays, states that homosexuality cannot be viewed as a disease or pathological abnormality that needs to be treated or combated, but rather as a legitimate sexual orientation that is an integral part of a person's identity.

Moving on to a setting more focused on education, Law 1620 was established in 2013, which creates the “Sistema Nacional para la Convivencia Escolar” (the national system for school coexistence). It promotes, as well, the training for the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights and the prevention and mitigation of school violence. Law 1620 of 2013 is regulated under decree 1965 and is basically trying to protect the educational environment from violence and bullying. This research highlights the importance of the law in terms of prevention and mitigation since institutions have been assigned to fostering a safer environment in schools that encourages conversations about respect, empathy, societal inequalities, and even concerns relating to the LGBTIQ+ population with the intention of preventing bullying inside the school.

## **6. Methodology**

### **6.1. Type of research**

Given that this study combines quantitative and qualitative research, it is carried out as a mixed study. According to Tashakkori and Creswell (2007:4), mixed methods research is any study where the researcher uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods to gather data, analyze it, integrate the results, and draw conclusions. The quantitative research component involves collecting numerical data through surveys to analyze patterns and relationships. On the other hand, the qualitative research component focuses on gathering in-depth insights and understanding through interviews to explore participants' experiences and perspectives. This mixed approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the research topic by combining statistical analysis with rich narratives and contextual information.

### **6.2. Population and sampling**

This research conducted in Bucaramanga involved a total of 41 LGBTIQ+ teachers (21 identifying as gay, 10 as bisexual, 6 as lesbians, 2 identifying as other, 1 pansexual, and 1 asexual) who answered the questionnaire; along with 7 interviewees selected from the survey's participants. The total number of the population for this research was not clear since it is difficult to know how many teachers are members of the LGBTQ+ community: in Bucaramanga, there is no study reflecting such statistics. In order to collect data for the survey, the study made an effort to contact as many people as possible in this situation using the snowball method. The researchers using the snowball method usually start with a small number of initial contacts (seeds), who fit the research criteria and are invited to become participants in the research (Parker, et., al., 2019). This approach helps expand the sample size and increase the chances of

gathering diverse perspectives and experiences. However, although ensuring confidentiality and anonymity was crucial in order to create a safe space for participants to share their stories without fear of repercussions or further discrimination, representation of some specific groups was not present.

### **6.3. Hypothesis and variables**

This study's main hypothesis was that Bucaramanga teachers who identify as LGBTQ+ people and who are also employed as educators have encountered discrimination and had negative experiences. Taking this into account, the two main variables in this study are the participant's experiences and the fact that they are LGBTQ+ people who work as educators.

### **6.4. Data collection instruments**

First, a Google Forms survey was used for the quantitative part, as previously mentioned. It aimed to gather broad data regarding the experiences of LGBTQ+ people working as teachers in Bucaramanga. The existence, frequency, and character of discriminatory incidents were covered in the survey, as well as how these occurrences had affected respondents' personal and professional lives.

In addition, semi-structured interviews of particular cases identified by the survey gave a more in-depth understanding of the problem. Additionally, qualitative research allowed for the exploration of complex and nuanced factors that may not be captured by quantitative data alone.

### **6.5. Resources and analysis techniques**

Online survey tools or web-based survey tools have proliferated as popular data collection tools in today's networked environment, taking into account the world's increasingly

automated strategies (Vasanth & Harinarayana, 2016). These tools offer numerous advantages such as ease of use, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to reach a large and diverse audience. They allow researchers to gather data quickly and efficiently, analyze it in real time, and make informed decisions based on the results obtained. Specifically, Google Forms and its automatically generated statistics are very useful.

“Google Forms is a cloud-based data management tool used for designing and developing web-based questionnaires. This tool is provided by Google Inc<sup>10</sup>, and is freely available on the web to anyone to use and create web-based questionnaires. The anywhere-anytime-access and other advantages (unlimited surveys, 100% free) have made Google Forms a popular product in online survey research” (Vasanth & Harinarayana, 2016).

Google Forms was chosen as the tool to create the sole survey that will serve as the beginning of the data collection for this study, taking into account its positive attributes. These sources will provide a comprehensive and efficient way to collect and analyze data.

Additionally, Excel is a powerful tool for organizing and manipulating data. As explained in the article from Vidhya blog in 2021 (edited in 2023):

“Excel is a powerful tool for data analysis that enables users to manipulate, analyze, and visualize large amounts of data quickly and easily. With its built-in features such as pivot tables, data tables, and various statistical functions. Excel is widely used in many industries, from finance and accounting to marketing and sales” (Agarwal, 2021).

The tools selected to gather and arrange the quantitative data gleaned from the survey will be Excel and Google Forms.

Although there are many different qualitative data collection techniques, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and observations are the most frequently used ones (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). Semi-structured interviews were used, which are frequently accompanied by an interview guide that contains questions aimed at achieving the study's goal (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). After gathering the information, transcription and coding of the data obtained were done. The act of categorizing interview data (i.e., participant quotes) by topics, similarities, and differences is known as coding (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021) and finally, coding also helps to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings by providing a systematic and transparent approach to data analysis.

## **7. Results and analysis**

The results are divided into two main parts. The initial part reveals findings from the quantitative tool -the questionnaires- exhibiting graphics that illustrate the percentages within each examined theme. The subsequent part presents outcomes from the qualitative tool: the interviews, which spotlights key themes and excerpts from participants' opinions in their responses. In addition, interpretations are provided along with the results, considering participants' responses, experiences, and opinions on the subject.

### **7.1. Quantitative results**

There were fifty-six participants in total, 15 of them identified as heterosexual. However, since the survey ended as soon as they clicked the "heterosexual" box, their responses were not gathered. This means that forty-one LGBTIQ+ teachers answered the survey. The data collected from these forty-one respondents will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and needs of LGBTIQ+ educators in Bucaramanga's educational

system. The survey is divided into six sections. The first section confirms that the participant agrees to the use of their data, that they are a member of the LGBTIQ+ community, and that they teach in Bucaramanga. The second section aims to gather general information such as teaching areas, years of experience, etc. The following sections focus on collecting data related to their experiences with bosses or directives, coworkers, students, and parents or tutors.

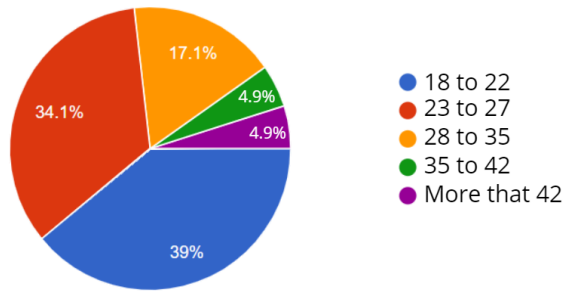
### ***7.1.1. General Information***

To effectively analyze responses from the survey open to Bucaramanga's LGBTIQ+ community teachers, we required detailed demographic information. This included identifying participants' ages, sexual orientations, gender identities, and specific teaching areas. Collecting this data was essential for in-depth analysis, allowing us to identify trends and patterns within the responses.

Firstly, the majority of respondents are within the younger age (Figure 1), with 39% falling in the “18 to 22” range and 34.1% in the “23 to 27” range. A smaller percentage falls within the older options, indicating a diverse range of age representation within the surveyed population. The two following questions gathered information about the participants’ sex and gender identity. In the question about assigned sex at birth, as shown in Figure 2, it is important to clarify that participants were not required to provide a mandatory answer in the categories "female" or "male," as some may not have felt comfortable nor represented with any of the options. Consequently, only forty participants responded to this question: 57.5% chose the option "male," 42.5% chose "female," and one participant chose not to provide an answer.

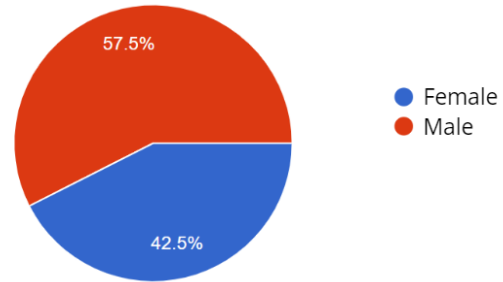
**Figure 1**

*General information: participants' ages*



**Figure 2**

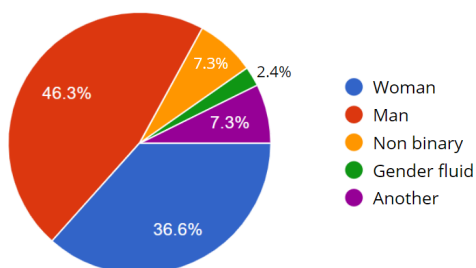
*General information: participants' biological sexes*



Regarding gender identity, participants were asked to select between options woman, man, non-binary, fluid gender, and another. As seen in Figure 3, nineteen (46.3%) of the participants chose "man," and fifteen (36.6%) chose "woman": being the vast majority. Only seven participants selected alternative gender identities, with three (7.3%) choosing "non-binary," another three (7.3%) selecting "other," and one (2.4%) indicating "gender fluid." It is noteworthy that the sample size for the final three options was comparatively small, indicating that additional research might be required to obtain a more thorough understanding of gender identities in this population. Figure 4 displays the following findings: a significant portion (90%) of the participants identified as gay, followed by lesbian (14.6%) and bisexual (24.4%). Only two participants (4.9%) chose the "other" option, while only one participant (2.4%) chose "pansexual" and another participant (2.4%) chose "asexual. This indicates a notable prevalence of male homosexual individuals in this research.

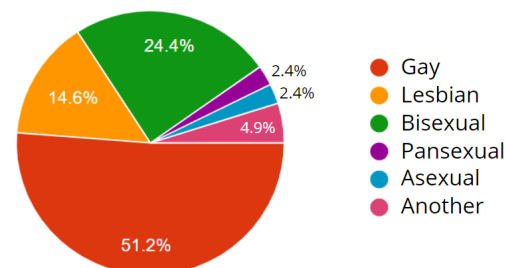
**Figure 3** *General information*

*Participants' gender identities.*



**Figure 4** *General information*

*Participants' sexual orientation.*



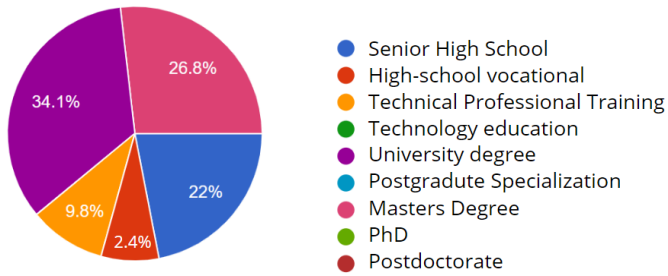
It is also relevant to state that additional personal data such as the participants' civil status, and parental status were also collected through the survey. 22% of the participants reported being married, and 78% said they were single. Not a single person indicated that they were parents.

Additionally, Figure 5 provided insights into the educational backgrounds of the participants, essential for understanding participants' professionalism, expertise, and qualifications, which may affect how the study's findings are interpreted. Out of the participants, eleven (26.7%) chose to have completed their master's degree, while fourteen (34.1%) said they had completed their bachelor's degree. Nine (22%) participants chose a senior high school degree, only four (9.8%) individuals said that they had completed technical professional training, while three (7.3%) picked high school vocational. The master's degree was the highest degree the participants indicated they had completed in the survey.

An additional relevant piece of information to assess professionalism is the number of years of teaching experience. It can also assist researchers in comprehending the ways in which one's educational experience might shape perspectives and ideas regarding particular subjects. The results in Figure 6 show a diverse range of teaching experience among the participants, with a slight majority having from one to three years of experience. Twenty-one (51.2%) indicated that they had been teachers for one to three years; eight participants (19.5%) indicated that they had been teachers for four to ten years; eight more participants (19.5%) indicated that they had been teachers for less than a year; and four participants (9.8%) indicated that they had been teachers for more than ten years. The study included a mix of experienced and novice teachers, as evidenced by the inclusion of participants who had been teachers for more than ten years or for less than a year.

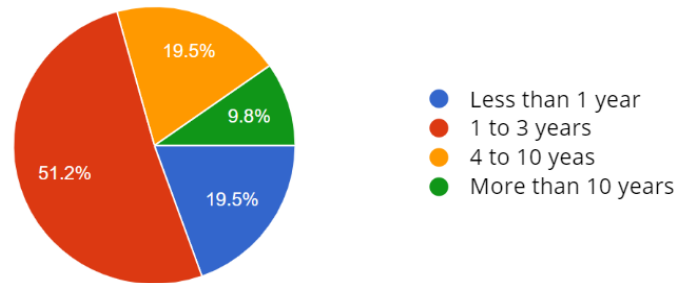
**Figure 5** *General information*

*Participants' education level*



**Figure 6** *General information*

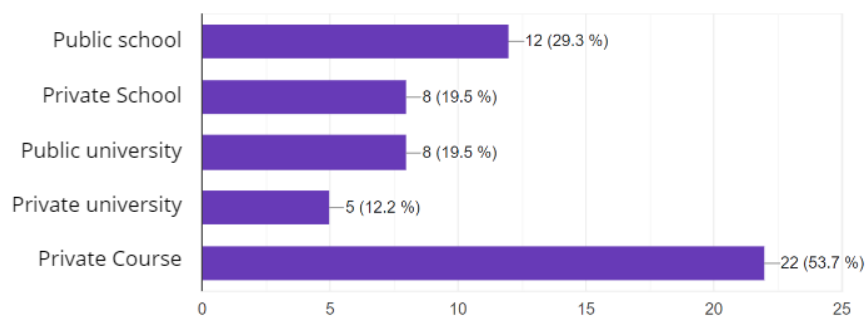
*Participants' years of experience*



One of the factors in the research is the profession of the participants, which makes details of the workplace relevant data to collect. Figure 7 shows how participants were able to select more than one answer from the following options for this question: public school, private school, private university, and private course. Of the participants, twenty-seven chose only one answer, while fourteen chose more than one, this could be an indication of the stability of the teaching profession. The private course option with twenty-two people was the most chosen option (53.7%), followed by the public school with twelve participants (29.3%). Private university was the less chosen option with only five participants (12.2%). Furthermore, another survey question revealed that thirty-four participants (82.9%) also provide tutoring or personalized education. This indicates that most of them have also provided instruction in a more individualized and private setting where personal questions may be raised more easily.

**Figure 7**

*General information: participants' current workplace institution*

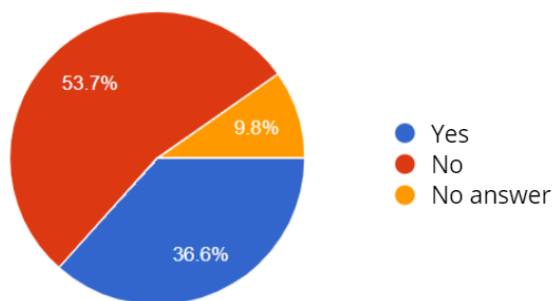


In addition, the results about the subject or fields of knowledge in charge of the participants showed that the high majority of participants, with a total of thirty-three (80.5%), were in charge of teaching foreign languages, followed by spanish and literature with three participants (7.3%), social sciences and humanities with two (4.9%), and finally basic sciences, art education, and others with only one participant each (2.4%). The possibilities for this question covered a wide range of topics and domains of expertise, including technology and computers, ethics and religion, and more. Still, only the ones listed above were chosen.

Understanding the work environment of the participants was also crucial for the study. This is the reason the survey collected data about the use of LGBTQ+ inclusion resources and the training provided by their institutions. Thirty-six participants (87.8) admitted they have never attended LGBTQ+ inclusivity training offered by their institutions and twenty-six (63.4%) stated that they have never used LGBTQ+ inclusion resources.

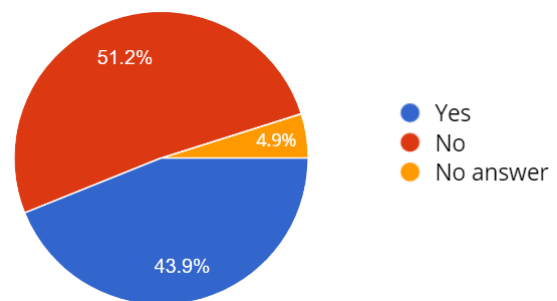
**Figure 8**

*Are you comfortable being openly LGBTIQ+ at work?*



**Figure 9**

*Have you experienced instances of discrimination for being part of the LGBTIQ+ community?*



In the first section's final questions, participants' comfort levels with openly identifying as LGBTIQ+ at work and their experiences with discrimination were investigated. In Figure 8,

over half of the respondents (22 individuals, totaling 53.7%) expressed discomfort, while fifteen participants (36.6%) reported feeling comfortable, and four (9.8%) chose not to answer. Regarding experiences of discrimination, in Figure 9, twenty-one participants (51.2%) stated they hadn't faced discrimination, while eighteen (43.9%) reported experiencing it, and two (4.9%) did not provide an answer.

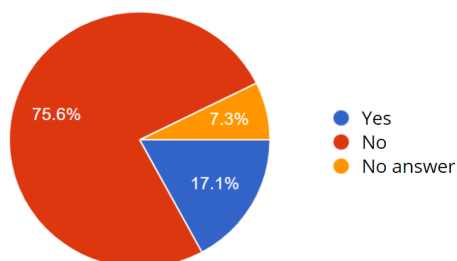
The subsequent sections focused on different populations: managers/bosses and/or potential bosses, coworkers, students, and parents or tutors. They seek to understand whether the participants have experienced discrimination or rejection by these specific groups or not, as well as its frequency.

### ***7.1.2 Situations of discrimination by managers/bosses and/or potential bosses.***

The first question was made to confirm if the participants had felt discriminated against by this specific population. Figure 10 indicates that thirty-one participants (75.6%) said they had never experienced discrimination or rejection; in contrast, seven respondents (17.1%) said they had, and three respondents (7.3%) chose to pick the no-answer option. It's important to keep in mind that although just a small portion of respondents said they have dealt with these types of circumstances, responses evidence such practices are still prevalent. Among those who encountered such scenarios, 12.2% faced it once in their lifetime, while 9.8% encountered it multiple times.

**Figure 10**

*Have you ever felt in a situation of discrimination or rejection by your boss?*



In the following question, participants selected the specific situations they have experienced with managers/bosses and/or potential bosses. Participants were given multiple options and could choose more than one. The options are listed below in order of most chosen to least chosen.

- 24 (58.5%) participants - None of the above.
- 15 (36.6%) participants - They have asked you not to talk about issues related to the LGTBIQ+ community at work.
- 14 (34.1%) participants - They have asked you not to make public the fact of being part of the LGTBIQ+ community at work.
- 10 (24.4%) participants - They have questioned your professionalism for being part of the LGTBIQ+ community.
- 3 (7.3%) participants: You have been denied a job opportunity for being part of the LGTBIQ+ community.
- 1 (2.4%) - They have asked you to deny being part of the LGTBIQ+ community.

Following these themes, the next question focused on gathering information about possible solutions given by the educational institutions by asking whether participants had discussions or support from their workplace administrators to address possible aggressions due to their LGTBIQ+ identity, and none of them answered positively.

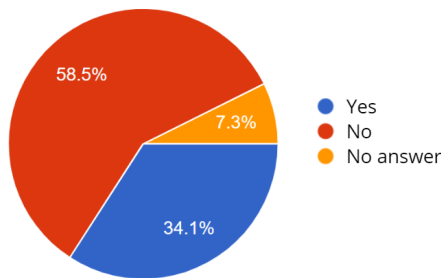
### ***7.1.3. Situations of discrimination by co-workers.***

In this section's first question, whose results can be seen in Figure 11, fourteen participants (34.1%) answered positively about feeling discriminated against by their coworkers,

but twenty-four participants (58.5%) stated that they had not experienced discrimination from this specific population and three participants (7.3%) decided to select the no-answer option. Although few participants reported feeling discriminated against, this is a higher number than in the previous category. In addition, Figure 12 illustrates that among those who experienced these kinds of situations with coworkers, 22% had done it more than once, 12.2% had only encountered it once, and one participant (2.4%) claimed to have faced similar circumstances more than once.

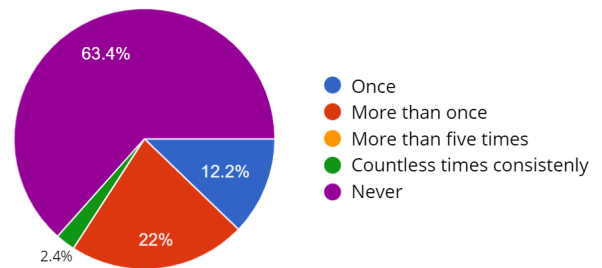
**Figure 11**

*Have you ever felt in a situation of discrimination or rejection by a colleague at work?*



**Figure 12**

*How many instances have you experienced situations of discrimination or rejection from a colleague at work?*



In the next question, participants had to select the specific situations they have experienced with co-workers. Participants were given multiple options and could choose more than one; the options are listed below in order of most chosen to least chosen.

- 26 (63.4%) participants - None of the above.
- 9 (22%) participants - A co-worker has expressed that they feel discomfort with your presence.

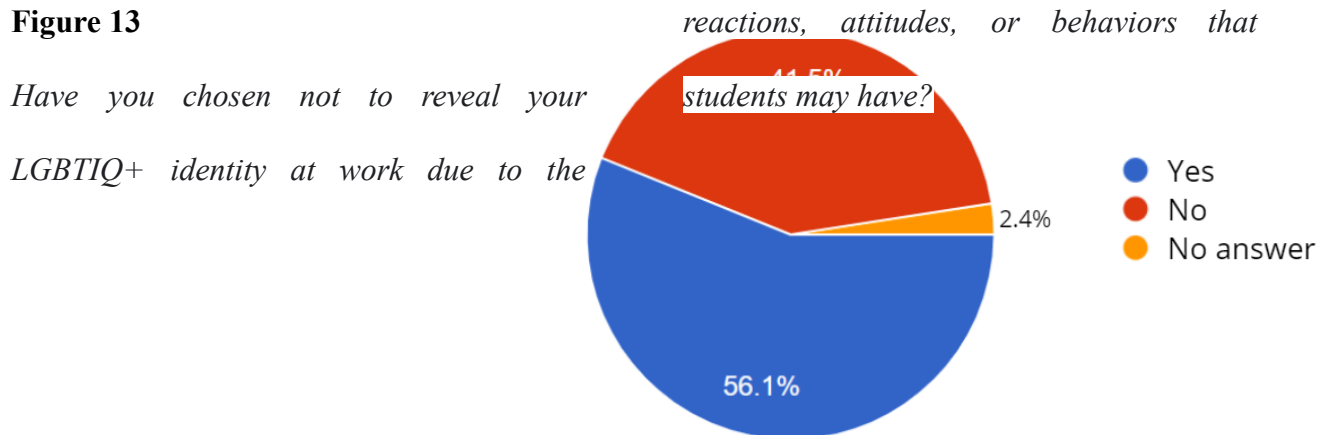
- 7 (17.1%) - A co-worker has expressed that you should keep silent about being part of the LGTBIQ+ community.
- 5 (12.2%) - A co-worker has excluded you from the workplace for being part of the LGTBIQ+ community.
- 1 (2.4%) - You have received online harassment from a peer due to your LGBTIQ+ identity.

**7.1.4. Situations of discrimination by students.**

Similar to the preceding two sections, the negative response prevails in the first question. Twenty-eight individuals (68.3%) denied having faced student discrimination, nine (22%) replied "yes" when asked if they had experienced such types of situations with this population and four (9.8%) chose the no-answer option.

The second question objective is to identify whether the participant has chosen not to disclose their LGBTIQ+ identity at work because of potential student reactions, attitudes, or behaviors (Figure 13). Twenty-three individuals (56.1%) answered that they do hide their LGBTIQ+ identity in order to avoid difficult conversations and inconveniences with students. Seventeen (41.5%) participants stated that they had not kept their LGBTIQ+ identities hidden because of the previously described reason, while one (2.4%) participant selected the no-answer option.

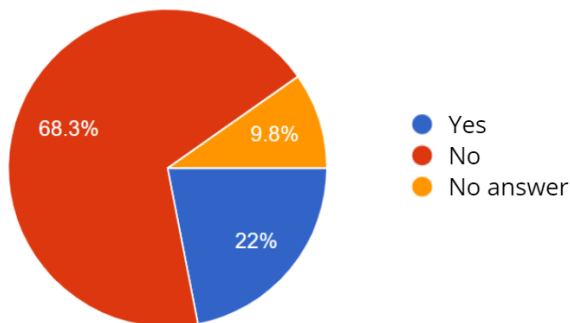
**Figure 13**



The next two questions gathered information on whether the participants have received positive attitudes and acceptance or negative attitudes, mockery, harassment, or discriminatory behavior. Figure 14 shows that twenty-three participants (56.1%) received a positive response, while only eight participants (19.5%) indicated that they did not receive a positive response, which does not necessarily imply that they received a negative one. Figure 15 shows that only five participants (12.2%) received a direct negative response from the students and twenty-seven participants (65.9%) actively denied having received negative attitudes, mockery, harassment, or discriminatory behavior from students. These two figures complete each other's results.

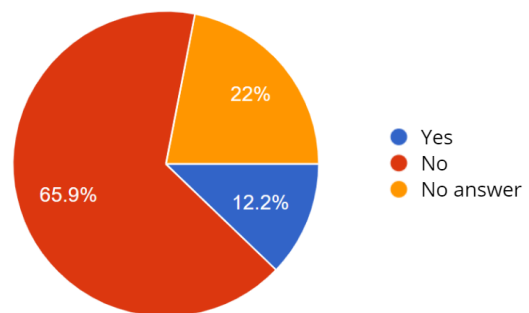
**Figure 14**

*Have you observed positive attitudes and acceptance from students regarding your LGBTIQ+ identity as a teacher?*



**Figure 15**

*Have you experienced any negative attitudes, mockery, harassment, or discriminatory behaviors from students due to your LGBTIQ+ identity as a teacher?*



In the next question, as in the previous sections, participants had to select the specific situations they had experienced with students. Participants were given multiple options and could choose more than one; the options are listed here in order of most chosen to least chosen. In this section, there were given four situations but only three were selected by the participants.

- 29 (70.7%) participants - None of the above.
- 8 (19.5%) participants - You have noticed a change in students' behavior towards you after they became aware of or suspected your LGBTIQ+ identity.
- 4 (9.8%) participants - You have faced derogatory or discriminatory comments from students based on your gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Option not selected - You have received threats or intimidating behavior from students due to your gender identity or sexual orientation.

Participants were also asked if they have experienced online abuse from students because of their LGBTIQ+ identity. No one replied "yes" to this question, although five (12.2%) chose not to answer.

#### ***7.1.5. Situations of discrimination by parents or legal guardians.***

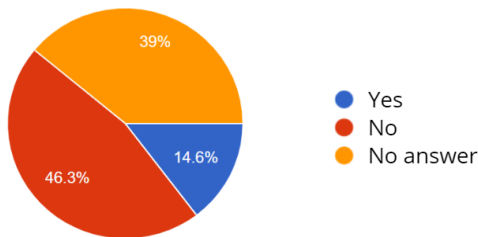
Participants were first asked if they had chosen not to disclose their LGBTIQ+ identity at work because of the reactions, attitudes, or behaviors of the student's parents or guardians. Twenty-five (61%) participants stated they had hidden it, ten (24.4%) participants selected they hadn't and six (14.6%) decided not to answer.

The following two questions sought information on whether participants had received positive attitudes and acceptance from students' parents or guardians, or negative attitudes, mockery, harassment, or discriminatory behavior. The objective of the question was to discover whether the participants have felt rejected or without support from parents due to their LGBTIQ+ identity. Nineteen (46.3%) participants answered "No", eleven (26.8%) participants answered "Yes" while another eleven (26.8%) selected "No-answer". In Figure 16, participants' results show that the majority of them (19 or 46.3%) stated that they hadn't received positive responses,

sixteen (39%) decided not to answer, and just six (14.6%) confirmed to have received positive responses. In comparison to Figure 17, twenty-two (53.7%) participants stated they had not received negative or discriminatory behavior but eleven (26.8%) confirmed that they had received it. Eight (19.5%) decided not to answer. This outcome suggests that, for the most part, parents or guardians are neutral about the situation. However, it is important to note that some participants did not feel represented by any of the given options as they decided to select the "no-answer" option.

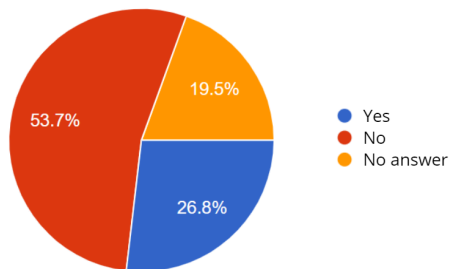
**Figure 16**

*Has there been positive support from parents or guardians regarding your LGBTQ+ identity as a teacher?*



**Figure 17**

*Have you experienced negative attitudes, harassment, or discriminatory behaviors from parents or guardians due to your LGBTQ+ identity as a teacher?*



As previously mentioned, participants had to select the specific situations they had experienced with parents or guardians. Participants were given multiple options and could choose more than one; the options are listed here in order of most chosen to least chosen.

- 32 (78%) - None of the above.
- 3 (7.3%) - You have had conversations or meetings with parents or guardians to address concerns related to your LGBTIQ+ identity as a teacher.
- 3 (7.3%) - Parents have questioned your ability as a teacher due to your gender identity or sexual orientation.
- 2 (4.9%) - You have faced situations where parents have ignored or minimized your LGBTIQ+ identity.
- 1 (2.4%) - Parents have put pressure on you to hide your LGBTIQ+ identity in the school environment.

In addition, participants were also asked if they have experienced online abuse from parents or legal guardians because of their LGBTIQ+ identity. One (2.4%) participant answered "Yes" to this question. Finally, the last question on the survey aims to gather insights into participants' opinions regarding the need for specific measures to address aggression towards LGBTIQ+ teachers by parents or guardians. By including this question, the survey seeks to understand the level of support for creating a safer and more inclusive environment for LGBTIQ+ educators. Thirty-seven participants (90.2%) answered "yes", and this question received the most affirmative replies. Three individuals (7.3%) chose not to respond, and just one (2.4%) said "No" to the notion of having clearer regulations or procedures to combat aggressiveness by parents or guardians.

At the end of the survey, there was another open box labeled final comments, where participants left messages about the survey or the research project in general. Participants expressed their appreciation for being included in the research and shared their thoughts on the importance of addressing this topic.

## **7.2. Quantitative analysis**

The population was considered difficult to reach because no direct searchable locations existed: there was no record of any forum for teachers who identify as LGBTIQ+, information-sharing groups, or organizations that addressed this issue. Consequently, the population was not restricted at the beginning of the study based on age, type of work institution, or any other factor.

The only two requirements were to work as a teacher and to do it in Bucaramanga, Colombia. This is why gathering general information from the participants was crucial. The nature of the survey itself and the method it was distributed have resulted in a younger demographic of participants. Given that the survey is virtual and spread via emails and social media, older people who lack in-depth knowledge of technology may find it challenging. By understanding the age range of our participants, researchers can ensure that the findings are representative of the younger generation within the Bucaramanga LGBTIQ+ community. Also, the vast majority of participants identified as men or women regarding gender identity, meaning that those who identified as non-binary, gender fluid, or genderqueer were not encountered or reached. Furthermore, since gay people make up over 50% of the participants, there is a sizable sample of the gay population in terms of sexual orientation. This information allows to tailor the analysis and provides a clearer perspective of the survey sample.

Concerning the kind of educational organization, there may be no big difference in the number of participants employed by private and public institutions, and many of them probably work in both at the same time. It makes it possible to examine how the two educational environments differed later on in the study with the interviews of some participants. In addition, since the beginning of the study, it was clear that the subjects or fields of knowledge in charge of the participants were among the significant factors due to stereotypes. Nearly all of the participants were responsible for teaching foreign languages, this reinforces the perception of English teachers as LGBTIQ+ community members. However, it is also possible that this is a product of the environment in which the survey was shared and this also closes the idea of having samples of different school subjects since no other subject got more than 2 participants.

As seen in other studies, such as the ones made in Mexico (Morales et al., 2023), LGBTIQ+ teachers were questioned about their professionalism. It was relevant to know the educational level and years of experience of our participants. Even though the majority of participants were young, nearly 30% of them had more than four years of experience teaching, 30% had higher qualifications than a university degree, and over 30% had completed their university degree. This indicates that a significant number of them possess extensive experience and expertise in the teaching field. However, despite their numerous studies and evaluations during the hiring process, 24.4% of the participants reported that their professionalism has been questioned.

One of the most significant pieces of information gathered is that half of the participants are uncomfortable being openly identified as LGBTIQ+, and as a consequence, nearly the same proportion of participants have not directly encountered discrimination because of being part of the LGBTIQ+ community. This indicates that participants avoid putting

themselves in awkward circumstances where they may encounter discrimination by not being openly LGBTIQ+ at work and this is further investigated in-depth using semi-structured interviews in this study.

There are significant findings in the sections focused on a certain population (bosses, co-workers, parents, and students). First, it is evident from looking at these results, that most participants have experienced discrimination or rejection from colleagues. Facial expressions, exclusion, and harmful passive-aggressive comments are examples of microaggressions that are part of the discrimination from this group. In addition, it is noteworthy that 61% choose not to reveal their LGBTIQ+ identity at work as a result of possible parent or guardian reactions, attitudes, or behaviors. This indicates that parents' reactions are one of the teacher's main concerns despite the fact that the majority of participants experienced neutral behaviors on their part. Finally, it is evident that teachers are least concerned about students and have had positive responses from them about belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community. This may be related to legislation like Law 1620, as well as the growing understanding and acceptance of various gender identities and sexual orientations among younger generations.

The central discovery of the analysis is the substantial influence of microaggressions on contemporary discrimination. Some participants initially claimed they had never encountered discrimination, yet when prompted to identify specific instances, these individuals acknowledged experiencing one or more examples. Moreover, as previously noted, the majority of participants' responses suggest an ongoing apprehension of encountering discrimination and the consequent fear of job loss, both contributing to detrimental stress (Frost & Meyer, 2023). The findings highlight not only the prevalence of subtle yet impactful behaviors but also emphasize the critical

need for proactive measures to address and mitigate the effects of microaggressions in modern society.

The primary objectives of this quantitative section were to provide a starting point and to establish the overall characteristics of the participants. In order to better understand the perspectives of the participants, researchers can choose which specific topics to cover in the semi-structured interviews with the help of the information provided by this section. Finally, by identifying any patterns or trends, the quantitative data can indicate the most crucial topics for future studies.

Despite the valuable insights gained, the study's limitations underscore the need for more inclusive methodologies to capture a broader spectrum of voices within the LGBTIQ+ teaching community. Future research endeavors should strive to engage a more diverse pool of participants across age groups, gender identities, and educational disciplines. The lack of direct representation from the transgender community in this study serves as a compelling call to ensure their active participation in investigations into the challenges and experiences of the LGBTIQ+ teaching community. By doing so, a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ educators can be obtained, facilitating more targeted interventions and support mechanisms to foster inclusive and affirming educational environments.

### **7.3. Qualitative results**

During the qualitative phase, there were seven semi-structured interviews, each consisting of 10 to 15 questions. Most interviews were carried out online via Zoom, except for one that was conducted in person at the participant's request. Participants were selected for these

interviews based on their survey responses and their willingness to participate. The primary goal in the interviews was to extract detailed ideas and viewpoints from the participants, exploring various aspects of their experiences, thoughts, and perspectives. These interviews provided essential qualitative data that complemented the quantitative data gathered from the survey.

**Q1: How do you identify yourself in terms of sexual orientation or gender identity?**

The first question confirmed that all the interviewees, 17% of the total participants of the survey, identified as women or men in terms of gender identity. It implies that there was no representation of individuals who as transgender, non-binary, gender fluid, or others. In the realm of sexual orientation, four individuals identify as homosexual, the most prevalent demographic represented in the quantitative component. Additionally, two individuals identify as lesbian, while one individual identifies as pansexual

**Q2: Are you openly part of the LGTBIQ+ community? (Yes, no, and why)**

Among the participants, one expressed that they do not openly identify as a member of the LGTBIQ+ community, three participants stated they do so. The rest of the participants indicated a more nuanced position, revealing that they are selectively open about their identity, being open with certain individuals but not with others.

**Extract**

Participant 1: "I'm not open because I don't have it on social media; many people in my family don't know. I'm married to a man, but our marriage is open on my part. But all my friends know it, and even some students have known it. So, yes and no. My parents don't know."

**Extract**

Participant 7: "I am open about it with the people close to me, but I don't feel the need to constantly state that in public or with other people; I don't feel it is necessary."

**Q3: How do you think being part of the LGBTIQ+ community influences your teaching and your relationship with your students?**

The majority of respondents mentioned the importance of providing a safe area in the classroom for students to discuss their concerns about these topics, as well as establishing firm norms about respect for others, which helps create a safe environment. Only one responder gave a different answer, claiming that none of those issues should be discussed in the classroom. Additionally, five out of the seven participants revealed that being part of the LGBTIQ+ community contributes significantly to their ability to be more empathetic towards students. They emphasized that their own experiences aid in understanding and assisting students dealing with similar situations. Specifically, they expressed that their involvement in the community helps them provide valuable guidance, support, and advice to help students navigate through their challenges.

**Extract**

Participant 2: "Well, I believe that my sexual identity—my sexual orientation—has nothing to do with it. I mean, my interpersonal relationships with the students are absolutely normal. Just as if I were heterosexual, I don't see any change."

**Extract**

Participant 6: “I think is more related to empathy, mainly, in conditions where some students are as well. We don’t tolerate certain traditional or normalized attitudes towards females and queer people. We don’t tolerate comments or attitudes. And try, as much as possible, to slightly try to touch topics about diversity.”

**Q 3.1: Have you had positive experiences being a role model for LGBTQ+ students in your school community?**

Only two interviewees said they had no positive interactions. The other participants shared their positive experiences not only in this question but throughout the whole interview, noting that they often work to provide an adequate and secure learning atmosphere in the classroom, which helps kids feel comfortable and understood.

**Extract**

Participant 1: “I have been a refuge for many students who have come out of the closet at home or have doubts about their sexual orientation and like, “Uh, who do I turn to?” And the truth is, I feel very lucky to be there for them, because it means trust.”

**Q4: How do you handle situations where students or their parents have prejudices or misinformation about LGBTQ+ issues?**

Two participants highlighted that students often make hurtful comments and jokes directed towards their classmates or in general. They expressed their proactive approach in addressing these situations by discussing respect with their students and clarifying any uncertainties. One participant frequently refers to the legislation, particularly mentioning law 1620, and consistently follows the standard protocol involving students and parents when

handling such matters. Another individual also emphasized adherence to protocol but did not specifically reference the law. In contrast, two participants mentioned that they have never encountered circumstances of this nature. It's important to note that while acknowledging student-related issues, the participants stressed that concerns involving parents tend to be more complex and challenging.

### **Extract**

Participant 4: ““Definitely yes, I have been teaching for years and, as I previously stated, I have always felt discrimination, and it is constant discrimination. One learns to live with that. Because let's say, for example, some parents may inquire, "Oh, but why such a teacher and what gender identity and that?" There will always be some comments.”

**Q5: Have you had any challenging or negative experiences related to your sexual orientation or gender identity in your teaching career? How did you handle it?**

In this question, participants recount various events such as losing a job, being continuously questioned in disrespectful ways, being barred from teaching certain topics because the topics were inappropriate for them, and so on. Only one individual claimed to have never had a difficult experience. A few interviewees discussed religion in the context of Colombia and institutions not just during this particular question, but in others as well.

### **Extract**

Participant 7: “It was not because of the students, but probably the principal, they didn't give me the opportunity to express myself. At the end of the year, they just told me “You are not going to continue working with us”. But I know it was because of my sexual orientation.”

**Q6: Can you share specific examples of what your experience is like compared to teachers who are not part of the LGBTIQ+ community?**

Again, the majority of those interviewed provided different stories about how they came across these differences. One of them mentioned how they were participating in a transversality lesson at school and were asked to step back since the topics were equality and rights. Another stated how a procedure was open to a heterosexual teacher as a result of bad management of a case involving two girls who were thought to be close friends. In addition, one participant discussed how heterosexual instructors may communicate about their partners without hiding.

**Extract**

Participant 6: “A teacher who doesn’t belong to this community- they are free to talk about the gifts they want to give to their partners. About their marriage, or about what they are doing at night. Like, casual conversations that enclose their partners.”

**Q7: How do you perceive the evolution of acceptance and inclusion of sexual and gender diversity in the educational environment?**

All of the participants said that society had progressed in its acceptance of the LGBTIQ+ population. Some stated that discrimination was far greater years ago, but mentioned that students today are better educated, and new generations are contributing to the change. However, two individuals indicated that old religious concepts are still prevalent in schools and are something that needs to be changed.

**Extract**

Participant 5: ““In the future, I see it as complex in the sense that this is still Colombia and there are still thoughts deeply rooted in the church and there has not been that separation where one thing has nothing to do with the other.”

**Q8: What do you think is the reason why teachers who are part of the LGBTIQ+ community decide not to openly reveal their sexual orientation, even if they have not directly experienced a case of discrimination?**

All of the participants mentioned fear when answering to this question; fear of losing their jobs, fear of being questioned about their professionalism, and fear of being criticized. One participant also mentioned the term protection. Some claim that this is the result of years of harsher acts of discrimination.

**Extract**

Participant 1: “The fear lies in losing one's job, specifically, in having retaliation and problems with the coordinators and with the parents, that's it, in those schools you are totally expendable, the parents rule.”

**Extract**

Participant 2: “I believe there is one word that sums up everything: Fear.”

**Q9: What do you think are the necessary solutions?**

Three points were raised in response to this question: the need for education, the need to eradicate stereotypes, and the necessity of ongoing group effort within the educational system.

**Extract:**

Participant 3: “And I feel that what is needed is for students to be more aware that there are homosexual teachers. They think about a homosexual person and they associate it with working doing manicures, dyeing hair, cutting hair, jobs that are fine, but normally we are not associated with something more professional.”

**Q 9.1: Have you worked collaboratively with other teachers to promote the inclusion of sexual and gender diversity in your school? What strategies have been effective in this regard?**

In response to this question, some teachers discussed how they had assisted in adding students' preferred names to lists or how they had developed programs to hold workshops with students and various settings where they could discuss diversity, self-image, and even feminism. Three of them stated to never have promoted any project or idea.

#### **Extract**

Participant 7: “I have included in the curriculum lesson planning- I have designed and worked on some classroom projects developing those topics.”

**Q 9.2: What advice can you offer to other teachers who are considering being more open about their LGBTIQ+ identity in the educational setting?**

These responses were quite diverse. Some mentioned that solutions to this topic concerned examining the context to determine whether or not being open was possible, as well as attempting to normalize it as much as possible. Others emphasize the need of always being honest, lawful, and transparent when students inquire.

#### 7.4. Qualitative analysis

Several elements were examined concerning the experiences of the participants. One crucial aspect investigated was the impact of different groups—bosses, coworkers, students, and parents—on the lives of teachers identifying as LGTBIQ+. Based on the responses provided, while all these groups might exhibit discriminatory behaviors, it appears that parents exert the most significant pressure on the participants. The participants' feedback suggests a dichotomy: on one hand, students (specifically, those from Generation Z), who belong to a younger demographic and are immersed in the globalized world of the internet, seem to have grown more cognizant of these issues. They have actively engaged in and supported the fight for the rights of the community (United Way of the National Capital Area, 2023). This trend indicates a more accepting and inclusive attitude toward their LGBTIQ+ teachers. It underscores a notable shift in the way younger generations perceive these topics, largely influenced by the contemporary landscape.

On the other hand, teachers express considerable concerns about parents who -according to participants- predominantly adhere to traditional and religious ideologies. A study in Ecuador (Espinoza & Méndez, 2022) revealed that parents typically disapprove of teachers expressing their LGBTIQ+ identity during teaching. The current research findings in Colombia align with this pattern. While the quantitative findings indicate a slightly more neutral parental attitude, the interviews reveal that it is the parents who covertly and subtly put pressure on the teachers. This pressure leads to the concealment of actions to avoid conflicts within the academic community (Espinoza & Méndez, 2022). Comments in the quantitative survey also reflect the prevailing fear among participants —fear primarily driven by the potential risk of job loss for being openly LGBTIQ+ educators. Frost and Meyer (2023) assert that the fear of job loss

induces stress, significantly affecting mental well-being and job satisfaction. These findings underscore that parental disapproval places substantial pressure on openly LGBTIQ+ educators, affecting both their job security and overall well-being.

Unfounded questioning of professionalism is an aspect that has also been referenced in the Latin American research conducted in Mexico and Ecuador. Espinoza and Méndez (2022) state that teachers are figures who must maintain their impeccable image because they are a reference for behavior and lifestyle. Bucaramanga's LGBTIQ+ teachers follow this ideal as they are also constantly striving to project a positive image of themselves as educators. Furthermore, LGBTIQ+ educators constantly worry that their professional competence might come under scrutiny due to their gender identity or sexual orientation, prompting the necessity to develop exemplary profiles.

Moreover, the experiences shared by participants shed light on the constant concerns faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals in professional settings. For instance, one participant, a woman, recounted an incident where her girlfriend sent her flowers at work, leading her to claim she was married to a man due to the assumptions made by her coworkers. This anecdote vividly illustrates the prevalent heteronormativity within society. Clarke (2018) underlines how seemingly trivial incidents, like the one described, reinforce and perpetuate heteronormative behaviors. Other participants similarly expressed discomfort in discussing their personal lives, feeling constrained by societal reactions, particularly when mentioning their partners. These instances vividly demonstrate the palpable impact of the strong hetero-normalization within their professional spheres (Gray, 2013). Situations as mentioned before exemplify that individuals -due to presumptions or expectations from their colleagues- feel compelled to misrepresent their personal relationships, particularly in a professional setting

It is noteworthy that the word "empathy" frequently emerges in nearly every interview when participants are asked about how their teaching differs from that of other teachers, even when the interviewees are coping with constant stress. Many of them emphasized their commitment to creating a safe space for students within the classroom. Only one participant referred to legal provisions such as Law 1620 to justify their instructional methods. It's interesting to note that laws protecting the LGBTI+ group appear to exist, but they are not applied to the real circumstances, as Espinoza and Mendez (2022) highlighted. The fact that none of the participants brought up using Law 1752—which forbids discrimination—as a protection for themselves or for others suggests that this lack of utilization is related to ignorance.

## **8. Conclusions**

The broad quantitative and qualitative examination of LGBTIQ+ teachers' experiences in Bucaramanga, Colombia, revealed remarkable findings regarding how this population experiences their occupation in the local Bucaramanga context.. This research illuminates the complex interplay between identity and prejudice, as well as their impact on individuals' professional lives inside the educational system. The research has highlighted the variety of issues and viewpoints that members of this group face in the field of education.

One significant finding is the study's confirmation of its proposed theory. It is clear that participants have faced prejudice and unpleasant experiences as a result of their dual identities as teachers and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. However, it is also true that pleasant experiences are intertwined with their stories. This interaction reflects the complexities of their career paths.

The study's key finding is that discrimination against LGBTIQ+ teachers has evolved from the potential of overt prejudice and violent actions to more subtle yet insidious microaggressions. Furthermore, the study sheds light on the difficulties encountered during data collecting, which were characterized by a lack of preceding research, outreach limits, and technological literacy limitations. As a result, the LGBTIQ+ teaching community is largely composed of younger and smaller demographic groupings in the research. The findings highlight participants' genuine worries about discrimination, notably the frequency of microaggressions, which often leads people to conceal their actual identities in order to avoid potential bias.

A more comprehensive insight was obtained from the qualitative interviews. Many participants struggled with the issue of whether to openly reveal their LGBTIQ+ identification because of worries of discrimination, job security, and social biases, even though the majority stated a desire to establish safe places for conversations and support inside the classroom. Many participants shared positive experiences when it came to providing guidance and support to students, which means that LGBTIQ+ teachers are helping the educational environment in becoming a space where students do not feel fear about being themselves. The questioning of their professionalism has been a frequent subject, with their gender identity or sexual orientation sometimes restricting work chances. This promotes a cycle that starts with fear and ends with microaggressions. These conditions require people to choose whether to continue sharing this knowledge or keep silent, all while increasing fears that others will have similar experiences.

Qualitative interviews provided further insights into the difficult considerations LGBTIQ+ instructors face when deciding whether to openly reveal their identities. Their work life has been clouded by concerns about discrimination, job security, and social prejudices. Despite these limitations, there is a common desire to provide safe spaces for discourse and

assistance in the classroom. Many participants had positive experiences in offering advice and support to students, which has contributed to the establishment of educational settings in which students may be their real selves.

In summary, the study's findings emphasize the need to adopt proactive measures to address microaggressions and create a safe work environment for teachers. Overall, the study provides a springboard and a solid foundation for future research that may go deeper and aid in establishing and promoting inclusive and affirming learning settings for teachers who identify as LGBTIQ+ in Bucaramanga, Colombia.

### **9. Primary sources**

This study's primary source is semi-structured interviews; the questions' format is available in the annexes section.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A. Survey questions.

**UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE INDUSTRIAL  
ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS  
TRABAJO DE GRADO 2  
María Fernanda Ortiz Villamizar  
Zarith Rosío Gómez Ríos**

### A Glimpse into the Lives of LGBTIQ+ Teachers

#### Preguntas encuesta - Google forms

1. ¿Usted ejerce actualmente la docencia en la ciudad de Bucaramanga?
2. ¿Cuál es su orientación sexual?
3. ¿Cuál es su edad? (Escriba la cantidad en números)
4. ¿Cuál sexo biológico le fue asignado al nacer?
5. ¿Cómo se identifica en términos de género?
6. ¿Cuál es su estado civil actual?
7. ¿Es padre/madre o tutor/a?
8. ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de educación que ha completado?
9. ¿Cuántos años de experiencia tiene como docente? (Escriba la cantidad en números)
10. ¿En qué tipo de escuela o institución educativa trabaja actualmente?
11. ¿A qué área pertenecen las asignaturas a su cargo?
12. ¿Da tutorías o clases personalizadas?
13. ¿Ha recibido capacitación relacionada con la inclusión LGBTQ+ en el sector educativo?
14. ¿Ha utilizado recursos relacionados con la inclusión LGBTQ+ en el sector educativo?
15. ¿Se siente cómodo/a siendo abiertamente LGBTIQ+ en su lugar de trabajo?

16. ¿Ha experimentado situaciones de discriminación por ser parte de la comunidad LGBTIQ+?
17. ¿En algún momento se ha sentido en una situación de discriminación/rechazo por parte de su jefe?
18. ¿Al rededor de cuantas veces experimentó situaciones de discriminación/rechazo por parte de su jefe?
19. ¿Qué situaciones de las siguientes mencionadas ha vivido? Seleccione todas las que apliquen.
20. ¿Ha tenido charlas o apoyo por parte de los administradores de la escuela para abordar agresiones en el lugar de trabajo debido a su identidad LGTBIQ+?
21. ¿Existe algún otro tipo de situación parecida a las mencionadas anteriormente?
22. ¿En algún momento se ha sentido en una situación de discriminación/rechazo por parte de algún compañero/a (e) de trabajo?
23. ¿Al rededor de cuantas veces experimentó situaciones de discriminación/rechazo por parte de algún compañero/a (e) de trabajo?
24. ¿Qué situaciones de las siguientes mencionadas ha vivido?
25. ¿Existe algún otro tipo de situación parecida a las mencionadas anteriormente?
26. ¿Se ha sentido rechazado/a o sin apoyo por parte de los estudiantes debido a su identidad LGBTIQ+?
27. ¿Ha elegido no revelar su identidad LGBTIQ+ en el trabajo debido a las reacciones, actitudes o comportamientos que puedan tener los estudiantes?
28. ¿Ha observado actitudes positivas y aceptación de los estudiantes con respecto a su identidad LGBTIQ+ como profesor?
29. ¿Ha experimentado alguna actitud negativa, burla, acoso o comportamientos discriminatorios por parte de los estudiantes debido a su identidad LGBTQ+ como profesor?
30. ¿Qué situaciones de las siguientes mencionadas ha vivido?

31. ¿Has recibido acoso en línea por parte de los estudiantes relacionado con tu identidad LGBTIQ+?
32. ¿Existen otro tipo de experiencias negativas que hayas tenido con estudiantes debido a tu identidad LGBTIQ+ como docente?
33. ¿Ha elegido no revelar su identidad LGBTIQ+ en el trabajo debido a las reacciones, actitudes o comportamientos que puedan tener los padres o tutores de los estudiantes?
34. ¿Se ha sentido rechazado/a o sin apoyo por parte de los padres de familia debido a tu identidad LGBTIQ+?
35. ¿Ha experimentado apoyo positivo de los padres o tutores respecto a su identidad LGBTQ+ como docente?
36. ¿Ha experimentado alguna actitud negativa, acoso o comportamientos discriminatorios por parte de padres o tutores debido a su identidad LGBTQ+ como docente?
37. ¿Qué situaciones de las siguientes mencionadas ha vivido?
38. ¿Has recibido acoso en línea por parte de los padres de familia relacionado con tu identidad LGBTIQ+?
39. ¿Cree que debería haber políticas o pautas más claras para abordar las agresiones de los padres o tutores hacia los maestros LGBTIQ+?
40. ¿Existen otro tipo de experiencias negativas que hayas tenido con padres o tutores debido a tu identidad LGBTIQ+ como docente?
41. Por favor, siéntase libre de compartir cualquier pensamiento, comentario o sugerencia adicional que considere importante.

#### **Appendix B. Interview questions**

**UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE INDUSTRIAL  
ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS  
TRABAJO DE GRADO 2  
María Fernanda Ortiz Villamizar  
Zarith Rosío Gómez Ríos  
A Glimpse into the Lives of LGBTIQ+ Teachers**

**Entrevista**

1. ¿Cómo te identificas en términos de orientación sexual o identidad de género?
2. ¿Es usted abiertamente parte de la comunidad LGTBIQ+? (Sí, no, y por qué)
3. ¿Cómo cree que su identidad influye en su enseñanza y en la relación con sus estudiantes?
  - ¿Has tenido experiencias positivas al ser un modelo a seguir para estudiantes LGBTQ+ en tu escuela o comunidad?
4. ¿Cómo maneja situaciones en las que los estudiantes o sus padres tienen prejuicios o desinformación sobre temas LGBTQ+?
5. ¿Has tenido algún encuentro desafiante o negativo relacionado con tu orientación sexual o identidad de género en tu carrera como docente? ¿Cómo lo manejaste?
6. ¿Puedes compartir ejemplos específicos de cómo es su experiencia en comparación con docentes que no hacen parte de la comunidad?
7. ¿Cómo percibes la evolución de la aceptación y la inclusión de la diversidad sexual y de género en el entorno educativo?
8. ¿A qué cree usted que se deba el hecho de que los docentes que hacen parte de la comunidad decidan no revelar abiertamente su orientación sexual, incluso si no han vivido directamente un caso de discriminación?
9. ¿Cuáles crees que son las soluciones necesarias?
  - ¿Has trabajado en colaboración con otros docentes para promover la inclusión de la diversidad sexual y de género en tu escuela? ¿Qué estrategias han sido efectivas en este sentido?
  - ¿Qué consejos puedes ofrecer a otros docentes que están considerando ser más abiertos acerca de su identidad LGBTQ+ en el entorno educativo?

**Appendix C. Informed consent**

Universidad Industrial de Santander  
Facultad de Ciencias Humanas  
Proyecto de Trabajo de grado – Escuela de Idiomas

Yo \_\_\_\_\_, con la cedula de ciudadanía número \_\_\_\_\_ expedida en \_\_\_\_\_ declaro que he sido informado e invitado a participar en una investigación denominada “**A glimpse into the lives of LGBTIQ+ teachers**”, este es un proyecto de investigación creado por dos estudiantes de la Universidad Industrial de Santander como parte de su proyecto de grado.

Entiendo que este estudio busca *explorar las experiencias y percepciones de los docentes LGBTIQ+ en Bucaramanga tanto como miembros de la comunidad como educadores* y sé que mi participación se llevará a cabo de manera virtual por medio de la plataforma ZOOM y el día \_\_\_ del mes \_\_\_ del año 2023. Sé que mi participación consistirá en una entrevista semiestructurada. Me han explicado que la información registrada será confidencial, y que los nombres de los participantes serán asociados a un número de serie, esto significa que las respuestas no podrán ser conocidas por otras personas ni tampoco ser identificadas en la fase de publicación de resultados.

Estoy en conocimiento de que no habrá retribución por la participación en este estudio, sé que el resultado de la investigación no será entregado a mí a menos que sea solicitado y sé que se hará un registro de grabación de voz de todas las respuestas que dé en esta entrevista.

Asimismo, sé que puedo negar la participación o retirarme en cualquier etapa de la investigación, sin expresión de causa ni consecuencias negativas para mí.

Sí. Acepto voluntariamente participar en este estudio y he recibido una copia del presente documento.

Firma participante:

Fecha:

**Si tiene alguna pregunta durante cualquier etapa del estudio puede comunicarse con:**

**Director: Everth Campos Correo: [evecamfo@correo.uis.edu.co](mailto:evecamfo@correo.uis.edu.co)**