

# Fostering Inclusivity: Revealing Law Enforcement's Stance on Gay and Bisexual Men in the Police Force

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**Abstract:** *Gender diversity in the workplace, particularly in law enforcement agencies, continues to be a significant concern for many organizations. Law enforcement agencies have come under particular scrutiny regarding their inclusivity practices within the public sector. This study aims to investigate the attitudes of law enforcement personnel towards the inclusion of gay and bisexual men in the police force, utilizing a descriptive research design. A survey was conducted among 413 randomly selected police officers in Baguio City to gather their opinions on this matter. The survey results revealed that the police officers neither agree nor disagree with including gay and bisexual men in the police force. This neutral response suggests a lack of strong or definitive opinions regarding the issue. It may indicate uncertainty, a need for further awareness, or potential openness to the idea of inclusivity. The findings underscore the importance of addressing gender diversity concerns in law enforcement and emphasize the need for educational initiatives to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment within the police force. By understanding the current attitudes of law enforcement personnel, this research serves as a foundation for future interventions and training programs to promote a more diverse and supportive police force, where all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, can contribute to public safety effectively.*

**Keywords:** Gender diversity, Law enforcement, Gay and Bisexual Men, Attitudes, Police Force

## 1. Introduction

Gender discrimination remains an undeniable reality, spanning various regions worldwide, with developing countries particularly grappling with significant challenges in this area (United Nations, 2014). This discrimination involves making distinctions, exclusions, or imposing restrictions based on socially constructed gender roles, hindering individuals from fully enjoying their human rights (Cottingham et al., 2001). The quest for equality between men and women regarding opportunities and outcomes is a crucial pillar of human progress (UNDP, 1995). Regrettably, the realization of true gender equality remains elusive, manifesting not only in large social communities but also at the most intimate level of interaction—the workplace.

As defined by Chung (2001), workplace discrimination entails the unfair and negative treatment of workers or job candidates based on personal characteristics unrelated to job performance, including gender orientation. Factors like diversity policies, the sexual orientation of supervisors and peers, and even the disclosure of one's sexual orientation in the workplace have all been recognized as contributors to the experience of workplace discrimination (Ragins & Cornwall, 2001). Reports reveal that employment discrimination affects between 25 and 66 percent of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals throughout their careers (Alderson, 2003). This study defines work discrimination as the unjust treatment of workers or job applicants based on personal attributes irrelevant to job performance (Chung, 2001).

The acronym LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (Gilmour, 2019), encompassing individuals who are sexually attracted to different genders. Members of the LGBTQ+ community have the right to express themselves

freely, as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Mustanski, 2011).

Despite the advancement of human rights, LGBTQ+ individuals face sexual discrimination daily, even within their workplaces, including the police force (Just Let Us Be, 2017). Sadly, this discrimination extends internally within the police force, affecting LGBTQ+ personnel, particularly gay and bisexual men who aspire to join or have already become part of the police force. Some officers may choose to disclose their sexual identity to colleagues and the organization, while others may opt to conceal this aspect of their identity to avoid differential treatment (Bernstein & Kostelac, 2002; Colvin, 2014). The Gay Police Association (GPA) highlights that more LGBTQ+ individuals experience homophobia as more people embrace their identities openly.

Shedding light on these issues makes it evident that addressing gender discrimination, especially in law enforcement, is a pressing concern. The experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals within the police force necessitate a deeper examination of existing practices and attitudes to cultivate a more inclusive and respectful environment. In this context, it is essential to create a workplace culture that values diversity and upholds human rights principles, ensuring equal opportunities and treatment for all individuals, irrespective of their gender orientation. Only by embracing and respecting the uniqueness of each individual can law enforcement agencies truly fulfill their mission to serve and protect all members of the community. Research involving 243 police officers sought to understand the experiences of gays and lesbians in the police force (Colvin, 2015), revealing that lesbian and gay officers face similar barriers and biases to equitable job prospects as women and other minorities in law enforcement. Historical mistreatment, entrapment, discrimination, and harassment have historically prevented LGBTQ+ individuals from

joining law enforcement services. Surveys of LGBTQ+ police officers in England and Wales (N=836) reported that under one-fifth experienced discrimination, with gay male officers facing the highest levels of victimization in training, deployment, promotion, and certain positions (Jones & Williams, 2015). Additionally, reports indicated employment discrimination affecting between 25 and 66 percent of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals in their work careers (Alderson, 2003).

Interviews with 36 currently serving and retired lesbian, gay, and bisexual UK police officers revealed their experiences of discrimination due to a lack of public respect for their sexual orientation (Burke, 1994). As a result of these experiences, many gay and lesbian police officers choose to conceal their sexuality due to fear of reprisal, revealing it only through their own declaration (Wilson, 2009).

In the Philippines, a news article from 2009 reported that the Philippine National Police (PNP) Directorate for Police Community Relations emphasized the recruitment of gays as a respectful act. However, the same article quoted the PNP stating, "We will not allow any disgraceful act; it is a prohibition, we do not recruit gay, men should be men." These biases based on gender orientation appear to stem from the historically male-dominated and militaristic nature of policing. Over time, there have been shifts in the perception of the PNP towards gender diversity.

For instance, Felipe (2012) highlighted that then Chief Superintendent Agrimero Cruz Jr. stated that the PNP does not discriminate based on gender. However, he clarified that cross-dressers are not allowed. Notably, in 2018, Senior Inspector Rene Balmaceda became the first openly transgender cop. Despite her identification as a woman and being addressed as such by many, including the PNP chief, the PNP still officially recognizes her as a man, as outlined in the PNP Ethical Doctrine Manual.

These developments indicate evolving attitudes within the PNP towards gender diversity and LGBTQ+ representation. However, it also underscores the need for further progress in ensuring a more inclusive and respectful environment for all individuals, irrespective of their gender identity or sexual orientation, within the police force. The challenges faced by transgender officers like Senior Inspector Rene Balmaceda serve as a reminder that addressing biases and promoting a culture of acceptance remains an ongoing endeavor within the law enforcement community. Continued efforts to foster an inclusive atmosphere and uphold human rights principles are essential in advancing the PNP's commitment to equality and fairness for all its personnel. Despite increasing awareness, police harassment and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals remain ongoing challenges (Mallory et al., 2015). However, this reality conflicts with policing agencies' core values, emphasizing service to all and respecting human rights. As society demands greater compassion and understanding from their officers, emotional intelligence and decision-making skills have become increasingly critical factors in recruiting, training, and retaining police personnel. These skills, rather than gender orientation, are key to success in one's own career (Roufa, 2015).

Developing gender equity-sensitive indicators presents a complicated yet achievable challenge in better understanding the sources of gender biases (Beneria & Permanyer, 2010). Hence, the primary objective of this study is to delve into the attitudes of law enforcement personnel regarding the inclusion of gay and bisexual men in the police force. It seeks to discern whether a significant correlation exists between law enforcers' attitudes toward gay and bisexual men and their level of acceptance concerning their integration into the organization.

By comprehending law enforcement personnel's perspectives on this matter, we can gain valuable insights into the potential barriers or facilitators that influence the inclusivity of gay and bisexual men within the police force. This investigation is crucial in shedding light on the current state of gender diversity and equality within law enforcement agencies and can help identify areas that require attention to foster a more inclusive and respectful work environment.

## 2. Methodology

This study employs a survey design to investigate the attitudes of law enforcers toward gay and bisexual men within the Police Force. Communication letters were distributed to various police stations in Baguio City, requesting permission to administer the survey questionnaire to the law enforcers. The survey questionnaire was meticulously developed, drawing from existing literature and local observations. The questionnaire underwent content validation and reliability testing to ensure its validity and reliability. Upon obtaining approval, the survey questionnaires were administered to a total of 413 police officers assigned to different stations in Baguio City. Subsequently, the gathered data were meticulously tallied for the purpose of statistical analysis.

The study employed the weighted mean to determine the overall attitude of law enforcers toward gay and bisexual men and their level of acceptance towards them. Moreover, the analysis explored potential variations in attitudes and acceptance based on factors such as age, rank, and gender using a one-way analysis of variance.

Furthermore, a correlational analysis was applied to measure the relationship between two variables, specifically examining the connection between acceptance and attitude of law enforcers towards gay and bisexual men. The Spearman rho correlational analysis method was employed to explore this relationship, assessing if changes in one variable were associated with changes in the other variable, or if they remained unaffected (Jansen and Warren, 2020).

## 3. Results and Discussions

This chapter present analysis and interpretation of data regarding the attitude law enforcer's attitude towards gay and bisexual men, extent of acceptance of the police officer towards gay and bisexual men, the correlation on the extent of acceptance of law enforcers towards gay and bisexual men when compared according to age and sex, and lastly the

correlation of the attitude of law enforcers towards gay and bisexual men and extent of acceptance of the law enforcers.

### The Attitude of Police Officers toward Gay and Bisexual

The data presented in Table 1 reflect the mean values and descriptive equivalence of the indicators used to gauge the attitudes of law enforcers toward gay and bisexual men in

the police force. The overall mean of 3.28 indicates a neutral position, suggesting that the respondents' attitudes neither lean significantly towards agreement nor disagreement. This finding implies a mixed or ambivalent stance among law enforcers regarding including gay and bisexual men in their ranks.

**Table 1:** Attitude of Police Officers towards Gay and Bisexual

| Indicators   | Mean | Descriptive Equivalence    |
|--|------|----------------------------|
| I will not hesitate to help bisexual and gay men when they need my services.         | 4.17 | Agree                      |
| Homosexual and gay men should be treated equally with other genders.                 | 4.14 | Agree                      |
| I respect the choices of the bisexual and gay men in terms of their sexual identity. | 3.97 | Agree                      |
| I agree that homosexuality and bisexuality are acceptable.                           | 3.71 | Agree                      |
| I do not mind having homosexual and bisexual men family members and friends.         | 3.66 | Agree                      |
| I agree that homosexuality and bisexuality do not violate social norms.              | 3.57 | Agree                      |
| I agree that homosexual and gay men should be ashamed.                               | 2.53 | Disagree                   |
| I will make them feel uncomfortable about their sexual identity.                     | 2.47 | Disagree                   |
| I will not associate with bisexual and gay men.                                      | 2.36 | Disagree                   |
| I would prefer not to provide services to a gay or bisexual person.                  | 2.22 | Disagree                   |
| Overall Mean   | 3.28 | Neither agree nor disagree |

Among the indicators, the statement with the highest mean value (4.17) and highest agreement from the respondents is "I will not hesitate to help bisexual and gay men when they need my services." This demonstrates a positive and accepting attitude towards providing assistance to individuals from the LGBTQ+ community. This attitude is echoed in the agreement obtained for other statements such as "Homosexual and gay men should be treated equally with other genders" (mean=4.14), "I respect the choices of the bisexual and gay men in terms of their sexual identity" (mean=3.97), "I agree that homosexuality and bisexuality are acceptable" (mean=3.71), "I do not mind having homosexual and bisexual men family members and friends" (mean=3.66), and "I agree that homosexuality and bisexuality do not violate social norms" (mean=3.57). These high agreement scores signify a favorable disposition towards the LGBTQ+ community and an acknowledgment of their rights and identity.

On the other hand, the statement "I would prefer not to provide services to a gay or bisexual person" garnered the lowest mean value of 2.22, indicating disagreement among the respondents. This finding suggests that police officers are willing to provide professional services regardless of an individual's sexual orientation, thereby demonstrating a commitment to fair and unbiased policing practices. Similar attitudes of disagreement were observed in responses to statements such as "I will not associate with bisexual and gay men" (mean=2.36), "I will make them feel uncomfortable about their sexual identity" (mean=2.47), and "I agree that homosexual and gay men should be ashamed" (mean=2.53). These results show that, despite some reservations, the overall attitude of police officers towards gay and bisexual men is one of impartiality and non-discrimination.

The findings of this study align with recent progress in improving the relationship between the police and the LGBTQ+ community, focusing on making policing practices more accountable, human rights-focused, and supportive of LGBTQ+ individuals (Dwyer, 2014). Positive attitudes towards gay and lesbian individuals have been observed in recent years, while personal contact has played a role in positively influencing feelings toward gay and bisexual men (Lewis, 2007).

In conclusion, the results of this analysis reveal that the attitudes of police officers towards gay and bisexual men in the police force are generally positive and accepting, with a commitment to treating all individuals fairly and professionally. While some hesitations and reservations may exist, the overall picture points towards an increasing level of respect and recognition of the rights of the LGBTQ+ community within the police force. This study contributes to understanding the evolving perspectives of law enforcers and highlights the need for ongoing efforts to foster an inclusive and respectful environment for all individuals, irrespective of their sexual orientation.

### Acceptance of Including Gay and Bisexual Men in the Police Service

Table 4 presents the descriptive analysis of the data on the extent of acceptance of police officers towards gay and bisexual men based on the identified statements. The overall mean of 2.95 suggests a neutral position, indicating that most respondents neither strongly agree nor disagree with the extent of acceptance of gay and bisexual men in the police force. This finding reflects a mixed and ambivalent stance among the police officers, indicating that while there are positive attitudes and acceptance, there are also reservations and hesitations in fully embracing gay and bisexual men in the organization.

**Table 2:** Acceptance of Including Gay and Bisexual Men in the Police Service

| Indicators   | Mean        | Descriptive Equivalence    |
|--|-------------|----------------------------|
| I believe that they can contribute to the police officers' functions uniquely.   | 3.82        | Agree                      |
| Gay or bisexual men applicants can do policing as well as anybody else.  | 3.77        | Agree                      |
| If there will be a memorandum about acceptance of gays and bisexual men, I will support it 100%.                                     | 3.55        | Agree                      |
| It would be beneficial for the organization to have gay and bisexual police officers.  | 3.49        | Agree                      |
| Police officers should be role models of the community and having gay or bisexual men officers undermine those values.               | 3.16        | Neither agree nor disagree |
| There are other jobs better suited for them other than police work.  | 2.84        | Neither agree nor disagree |
| Gay or Bisexual can be hired for police work, but not on activities which involves public interactions.                              | 2.67        | Neither agree nor disagree |
| Policing is for straight men and women only.   | 2.56        | Disagree                   |
| They should not be allowed to work as police officers.   | 2.55        | Disagree                   |
| If I am a recruitment officer, I will make sure that gay or bisexual men applicants will be disadvantaged, removed, or disqualified. | 2.43        | Disagree                   |
| I believe that they cannot perform their functions effectively because of their sexual orientation.                                  | 2.43        | Disagree                   |
| If I work with them, I will make them uncomfortable.   | 2.13        | Disagree                   |
| <b>Overall Mean</b>  | <b>2.95</b> | Neither agree nor disagree |

The statements "I believe that they can contribute to the police officers' functions uniquely," "Gay or bisexual men applicants can do policing as well as anybody else," "If there will be a memorandum about acceptance of gays and bisexual men, I will support it 100%," and "It would be beneficial for the organization to have gay and bisexual police officers" received the highest mean values, ranging from 3.40 to 4.19, interpreted as "Agree." These results indicate that many police officers acknowledge the potential contributions and capabilities of gay and bisexual men in their roles as police officers. The high agreement on these statements suggests a level of openness and recognition of the value that LGBTQ+ individuals can bring to the organization.

On the other hand, the statements "Police officers should be role models of the community, and having gay or bisexual men officers undermine those values," "There are other jobs better suited for them other than police work," and "Gay or Bisexual can be hired for police work, but not on activities which involve public interactions" obtained means ranging from 2.60 to 3.39, interpreted as "Neither agree nor disagree." These results indicate that there is some uncertainty or indecision among the respondents on these aspects of acceptance. It suggests that while there may be some reservations or doubts about the role of gay and bisexual men in specific contexts, the overall attitude remains neutral.

The statements "Policing is for straight men and women only," "They should not be allowed to work as police officers," "If I am a recruitment officer, I will make sure that gay or bisexual men applicants will be disadvantaged, removed, or disqualified," "I believe that they cannot perform their functions effectively because of their sexual orientation," and "If I work with them, I will make them uncomfortable" received the lowest mean values, ranging from 1.80 to 2.59, interpreted as "Disagree." These results indicate that most respondents do not agree with the notion that policing should be limited to straight individuals or that gay and bisexual men should be discriminated against in recruitment and work-related matters. Moreover, the low

mean value (2.13) for the statement "If I work with them, I will make them uncomfortable" suggests that most police officers do not feel uncomfortable working alongside gay and bisexual men.

The findings suggest a complex and nuanced attitude among police officers towards gay and bisexual men. While there are positive attitudes and acceptance towards their inclusion in the police force, there are also areas of hesitation and uncertainty. The overall neutral stance may be indicative of the ongoing societal and cultural changes regarding LGBTQ+ acceptance and the need for further education and awareness initiatives to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment within the police force. It is crucial to address any biases or misconceptions that may hinder the full acceptance and integration of LGBTQ+ individuals in law enforcement to promote a diverse and inclusive police force that respects the rights and dignity of all its members.

### Correlation of the Attitude of Law Enforcers toward Gay and Bisexual Men and Acceptance of the Law Enforcers

The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient of 0.312 with a significance of 0.00 indicates a statistically significant low positive correlation between the attitude of law enforcers towards gay and bisexual men and the extent of acceptance of these individuals within the police force. The correlation suggests that as the respondents' extent of acceptance towards gay and bisexual men increases, their attitude towards these individuals also tends to approach strong agreement.

**Table 3:** Correlation of the Attitude and Acceptance of Law Enforcers

| Spearman's rho | Correlation Coefficient | Sig.  |
|----------------|-------------------------|-------|
|                | 0.312**                 | 0.000 |

Analyzing the positive perspective from Table 2 and Table 4, we observe that respondents who strongly believe that gay and bisexual men can contribute uniquely to police officers' functions are more likely to strongly agree that they will not hesitate to help bisexual and gay men when they need their

services. Similarly, respondents who strongly agree with supporting a memorandum about acceptance of gay and bisexual men are more likely to have a positive attitude towards these individuals.

This finding is consistent with previous research (Mallory et al., 2015), highlighting that law enforcers are becoming more aware of legal protections for LGBT individuals, including constitutional provisions and non-discrimination laws. This increased awareness may contribute to the growing acceptance of gay and bisexual men within the police force.

However, it is important to note that while the correlation is statistically significant, the magnitude of the correlation (0.312) indicates a low strength of association. This suggests that while there is a relationship between the attitude and acceptance of law enforcers towards gay and bisexual men, it is not strong. It implies that factors beyond the general attitude towards LGBTQ+ individuals may also influence their extent of acceptance within the police force.

For example, some respondents may have a positive attitude towards gay and bisexual men in general, but they may still believe that certain limitations should be placed on their inclusion in law enforcement agencies. This could be due to lingering stereotypes or misconceptions about their capabilities or suitability for certain roles.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study shed light on the attitudes of law enforcers towards gay and bisexual men in the police force, as well as their extent of acceptance towards these individuals. The results indicate that while there is a significantly low positive correlation between the two variables, the overall attitude of law enforcers towards gay and bisexual men remains relatively neutral, with a mean score of 3.28, interpreted as "neither agree nor disagree." Similarly, the extent of acceptance towards gay and bisexual men also falls within the "neither agree nor disagree" category, with a mean score of 2.95. On the positive side, the respondents generally show agreement with statements such as believing that gay and bisexual men can contribute uniquely to police officers' functions and that they can perform policing as well as anybody else. They also support a memorandum about accepting gay and bisexual men and acknowledge the potential benefits of having them as police officers. However, there are areas of concern as well. Some respondents still disagree about accepting gay and bisexual men within the police force. Thus, this study recommends that law enforcement agencies should prioritize diversity and inclusion training programs for all personnel. These initiatives should address stereotypes, biases, and misconceptions about LGBTQ+ individuals and provide a better understanding of the value and contributions they can bring to the police force.

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