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Impact of Harassment and Violence on the Academic Performance and Learning Experiences of Transgender and LGBTQ Students in Non-Affirming Educational Environments

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of harassment and violence on the academic performance and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students in non-affirming educational environments. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher developed five (5) objectives of the study, five (5) research questions and five (5) hypotheses that guided the study. This study adopts a mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The target population for this study comprises transgender and LGBTQ students currently enrolled in secondary schools. For the quantitative survey component, a sample size of approximately 200 transgender and LGBTQ students was targeted while for the qualitative component, 20–30 participants were selected for in-depth interviews or focus groups. Quantitative data was collected through an anonymous online survey comprising standardized measures of harassment and violence exposure, academic performance indicators while the qualitative data was gathered via semi-structured interviews or focus groups. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analyses to examine relationships between harassment, academic performance, and psychosocial variables. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically. Based on the analysis, the findings of the study revealed that harassment and violence have negative impact on the academic performance and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students in non-affirming educational environments. Based on the findings, the study recommended that, government should implement strict anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies that explicitly protect students based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, school management should provide targeted academic support services and government should through the school management develop inclusive curricula and classroom practices that reflect diverse gender identities and sexual orientations.

Keywords: *Impact, Harassment, Violence, Academic Performance, Learning Experiences, Transgender*

INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of 21st-century education, the pursuit of equity and inclusion has emerged as a defining challenge and imperative. Among the most vulnerable and often overlooked populations within this landscape are transgender and LGBTQ students, whose educational journeys are frequently marred by harassment, violence, and systemic exclusion. Despite growing societal awareness and legislative advances aimed at protecting sexual and gender minorities, many educational environments remain stubbornly non-affirming spaces where prejudice and hostility persist, often invisibly, yet with devastating consequences. This study delves into the critical and urgent issue of how harassment and violence in these non-affirming educational settings profoundly shape the academic performance and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students.

Educational institutions are foundational spaces where young people cultivate identity, self-worth, and social belonging. For transgender and LGBTQ students, however, these spaces can become sites of alienation and trauma. Harassment ranges from verbal slurs and social exclusion to physical violence and systemic neglect, creating an environment fraught with fear and insecurity. The toll of such experiences extends beyond immediate safety concerns it infiltrates mental health, diminishes

motivation, and disrupts cognitive engagement, ultimately undermining academic achievement and long-term educational aspirations. Education is often heralded as the great equalizer a beacon of hope and opportunity where every young person, regardless of background, can unlock their potential and shape their future. Yet, for transgender and LGBTQ students, this ideal remains painfully elusive. Instead of safe havens of learning and growth, many schools become arenas of hostility, exclusion, and violence places where their very identities are met with suspicion, scorn, and systemic neglect. The educational journeys of these students are frequently marred by relentless harassment and physical and emotional violence, eroding not only their academic performance but also their sense of self-worth and belonging.

The stark reality is that transgender and LGBTQ students face disproportionate rates of victimization in schools worldwide. Verbal assaults, bullying, social exclusion, and physical violence are daily threats that shadow their footsteps through hallways and classrooms. These hostile encounters are not isolated incidents but chronic stressors that accumulate, creating a toxic environment that undermines mental health and academic engagement. The trauma inflicted by such sustained adversity is profound, often leading to anxiety, depression, absenteeism, and, tragically, higher dropout rates. This is not merely a problem of individual hardship; it is a systemic crisis that reflects deep-rooted societal prejudices and institutional failures.

Non-affirming educational environments exacerbate these challenges. Schools that lack inclusive policies, affirming curricula, and trained, empathetic staff send a clear message to transgender and LGBTQ students: you are invisible, you are unwelcome, and your identities are invalid. This institutional rejection compounds the pain of peer victimization, fostering an atmosphere of alienation and despair. The betrayal felt by students who turn to their schools for support, only to encounter neglect or hostility, cuts deeply. Such institutional betrayal erodes trust and safety, further distancing students from the educational opportunities they deserve.

This study delves into the complex and interwoven realities of harassment, violence, academic performance, and learning experiences among transgender and LGBTQ students in non-affirming educational settings. It seeks to illuminate the multifaceted impact of hostile school climates on these students' academic trajectories and psychosocial well-being, while also exploring the vital role of resilience and social support in navigating adversity. By centering the voices and experiences of transgender and LGBTQ youth, this research aims to challenge prevailing narratives of marginalization and invisibility, offering pathways toward affirming, equitable, and inclusive educational environments.

In doing so, this study contributes to a critical and urgent conversation about educational justice. It calls on educators, policymakers, families, and communities to confront the realities faced by transgender and LGBTQ students—not as abstract statistics, but as young people whose dreams, talents, and dignity demand recognition and protection. The promise of education as a transformative force can only be fulfilled when every student, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, is afforded safety, respect, and the opportunity to learn and grow authentically.

Harassment and Violence: The Unseen Wounds

Harassment and violence against transgender and LGBTQ students are pervasive, multifaceted, and deeply injurious. They range from the cruel whispers of verbal abuse and relentless bullying to the terrifying reality of physical assault and systemic exclusion. These acts are not isolated incidents but chronic, relentless assaults on identity and dignity that permeate the school environment like a toxic fog (Kosciw et al., 2020; Nadal et al., 2016). The psychological and emotional toll inflicted by such hostility is profound and often invisible, yet it shapes every aspect of a student's life. Imagine the crushing weight of walking into a classroom knowing that every glance, every whispered slur, every denied right chips away at your sense of self. The fear of being targeted for simply being who you are is a daily reality for many transgender and LGBTQ students. This is not just harassment; it is a profound violation of human dignity and a barrier to the basic right to education.

The trauma of these experiences extends beyond the immediate moments of abuse. It seeps into the very core of students' mental health, fostering anxiety, depression, and a pervasive sense of unsafety that can persist long after the harassment ends (Johns et al., 2019; Tracey, 2021). The classroom, which should be a sanctuary of learning and growth, transforms into a battleground where survival often takes

precedence over education. This relentless victimization directly correlates with absenteeism, diminished academic engagement, and increased dropout rates, robbing students of their potential and futures.

Academic Performance and Learning Experiences: Beyond the Numbers

Academic performance is often reduced to grades and attendance, but for transgender and LGBTQ students, it is inseparable from the quality of their learning experiences—psychological safety, motivation, and belonging. When students face daily harassment and violence, their capacity to engage meaningfully with learning is severely compromised (Tinto, 2017; Kosciw et al., 2020). The classroom becomes a place of anxiety rather than inquiry, of withdrawal rather than participation. The loss is profound and multifaceted. Students who are marginalized academically are not simply failing tests; they are being denied the opportunity to realize their potential, to dream, to build futures. The emotional toll of exclusion and invalidation manifests in absenteeism, disengagement, and ultimately, dropout (GLSEN, 2021; The 74 Million, 2022). The tragedy is not only individual but collective—a society impoverished by the unrealized talents of its youth.

Learning experiences encompass more than academic metrics; they include the emotional and psychological environment that shapes a student's ability to thrive. For transgender and LGBTQ students, hostile school climates erode the sense of belonging and safety essential for learning. When students feel unseen, invalidated, or threatened, their motivation and engagement plummet. This dynamic underscores the urgent need to consider the holistic educational experience, not just academic outputs.

Non-Affirming Educational Environments: The Architecture of Exclusion

Non-affirming educational environments are spaces where transgender and LGBTQ identities are erased, invalidated, or outright attacked. These are schools without inclusive policies, without curricula that reflect diverse identities, and without staff trained to support marginalized students. They are places where systemic exclusion is normalized, where the message is clear: you do not belong here. Such environments are not accidental; they reflect and reinforce broader societal prejudices and heteronormative assumptions (Cardinal, 2021). The absence of affirming structures is a form of violence in itself—a silent, institutionalized rejection that tells students they are invisible and unwelcome. This invisibility compounds the trauma of overt harassment, creating a suffocating atmosphere that stifles growth and belonging. The consequences of non-affirming environments extend beyond individual students; they shape school cultures that tolerate or even tacitly endorse discrimination. This systemic marginalization perpetuates cycles of exclusion and harm, making it difficult for transgender and LGBTQ students to find safe spaces to learn and grow.

Institutional Betrayal: When Schools Fail Their Students

Perhaps the most painful dimension is institutional betrayal—the profound sense of abandonment and harm when schools, institutions entrusted with the care and education of youth, fail to protect or even actively marginalize transgender and LGBTQ students (JED Foundation, 2021; Mauldin, 2023). This betrayal cuts deep, eroding trust in authority and safety. When policies are absent or discriminatory, when complaints of harassment are ignored, when staff are untrained or hostile, schools become agents of harm rather than protection. This betrayal exacerbates mental health struggles and drives students away from educational engagement, deepening cycles of exclusion and despair (Tracey, 2021). Institutional betrayal is not merely a failure of individual actors but a systemic issue embedded in policies, practices, and cultures that fail to prioritize the safety and dignity of transgender and LGBTQ students. Recognizing this betrayal is essential to understanding the depth of harm and the urgent need for structural reforms.

Resilience and Coping Strategies: The Power of Resistance

Yet, amid these harsh realities, transgender and LGBTQ students embody remarkable resilience. Coping strategies seeking social support, engaging in advocacy, embracing affirming identities serve as lifelines in hostile environments (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Singh, 2013). This resilience is not merely survival; it is an act of courageous resistance. The concept of positive intersectionality reveals how

students draw strength from multiple identities, forging sources of empowerment even in adversity (Bowleg, 2013; Ghabrial, 2016). For instance, LGBTQ students of color often navigate layered experiences of marginalization but also cultivate unique forms of resilience and community connection that buffer minority stress. However, resilience is not solely an individual burden it flourishes within supportive communities and affirming spaces. The presence of affirming adults, peers, and institutional supports can nurture this resilience, transforming adversity into growth and empowerment.

Role of School-Based Social Support Systems: The Lifeline of Affirmation

School-based social support systems including affirming educators, inclusive curricula, and peer networks are critical in buffering the harms of minority stress and fostering resilience (Russell et al., 2016; GLSEN, 2021). These supports reduce victimization, enhance psychological safety, and improve academic and psychosocial outcomes (Mereish & Poteat, 2015;). The presence of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), anti-bullying policies inclusive of gender identity, and trained, affirming staff has been shown to significantly improve school climate and student well-being. These supports create pockets of safety and validation that can counterbalance the broader hostile environment. Yet, the presence of social support does not erase the scars of harassment and systemic discrimination; it mitigates them. Even the most supportive peer group cannot fully shield students from the pervasive microaggressions and overt violence that characterize many educational environments. This underscores the urgent need for systemic reform alongside individual and community support.

Statement of the Problem

In the hallowed halls of education, where every student deserves safety, affirmation, and the opportunity to flourish, transgender and LGBTQ students too often find themselves cast into shadows of exclusion, hostility, and violence. Despite decades of progress toward equality, these young individuals remain disproportionately vulnerable to harassment, physical assault, and systemic discrimination—daily assaults that chip away at their dignity, mental health, and academic potential. The problem is not merely the presence of bullying or violence; it is the pervasive, chronic nature of these experiences within non-affirming educational environments that fail to protect, support, or even recognize their identities.

This hostile climate creates a toxic atmosphere where fear and invisibility replace curiosity and belonging. Transgender and LGBTQ students frequently navigate classrooms and corridors fraught with verbal abuse, social exclusion, and institutional neglect realities that leave deep psychological scars and disrupt their ability to engage meaningfully with learning. The consequences are profound: diminished academic performance, increased absenteeism, and alarming dropout rates that truncate promising futures and silence vibrant voices.

Yet, this crisis is often invisible to those outside these marginalized communities, masked by silence, stigma, and inadequate data. Schools, entrusted with nurturing the next generation, sometimes become sites of betrayal—where policies are absent or unenforced, where educators lack training or empathy, and where systemic heteronormativity marginalizes rather than embraces diversity. The failure to create affirming, inclusive environments not only undermines the well-being of transgender and LGBTQ students but also deprives society of their full potential.

This study seeks to confront this urgent problem by illuminating the multifaceted impact of harassment and violence on the academic performance and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students within non-affirming educational settings. It aims to give voice to those too often silenced and to uncover pathways toward resilience and systemic change. The stakes are nothing less than the right to education free from fear, the promise of belonging, and the possibility of thriving as one's authentic self

Aim and Objective of the Study:

This study aims to investigate the nature, extent, and impact of harassment and violence experienced by transgender and LGBTQ students in non-affirming educational environments, and how these negative experiences affect their academic performance and overall learning experiences

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To examine the nature and extent of harassment and violence experienced by transgender and LGBTQ students in non-affirming educational environments.
- 2) To investigate the impact of such harassment and violence on the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students.
- 3) To explore how hostile educational climates affect the learning experiences, including psychological well-being and school engagement, of transgender and LGBTQ students.
- 4) To identify the coping strategies and resilience mechanisms employed by transgender and LGBTQ students in response to non-affirming school environments.
- 5) To provide evidence-based recommendations for educational policies and practices that foster affirming, inclusive, and safe learning environments for transgender and LGBTQ students

Research Questions

- 1) To what extent do transgender and LGBTQ students experience harassment and violence in non-affirming educational environments?
- 2) To what extent does exposure to harassment and violence affect the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students?
- 3) To what extent do non-affirming school climates influence the psychological well-being and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students?
- 4) To what extent do transgender and LGBTQ students employ coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence?
- 5) To what extent can educational policies and practices be improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students?

Hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant difference in the levels of harassment and violence experienced by transgender and LGBTQ students compared to their cisgender and heterosexual peers in non-affirming educational environments.
- 2) Exposure to harassment and violence is not significantly associated with the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students.
- 3) Non-affirming school climates have no significant correlation with the psychological well-being and learning engagement of transgender and LGBTQ students.
- 4) Coping strategies employed by transgender and LGBTQ students do not significantly moderate the negative effects of harassment and violence on their academic and psychological outcomes.
- 5) The presence of school-based supports (such as inclusive policies, supportive educators, and gay-straight alliances) does not significantly reduce the impact of harassment and violence on the academic performance and well-being of transgender and LGBTQ students.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a mixed-method research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively investigate the impact of harassment and violence on the academic performance and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students in non-affirming educational environments. The quantitative component will assess the prevalence and extent of harassment and its correlation with academic outcomes, while the qualitative component will explore students' lived experiences, coping strategies, and perceptions of school climate in depth. This design allows for triangulation of data to enhance validity and provide a nuanced understanding of the phenomena. The target population for this study comprises transgender and LGBTQ students currently enrolled in secondary schools (middle and high schools) within the area. Based on demographic data, this population includes students aged approximately 13 to 19 years who identify as transgender or LGBTQ and attend schools characterized as non-affirming or lacking comprehensive supportive policies. Given the challenges in accessing a vulnerable and often hidden population, purposive and snowball sampling techniques was utilized to recruit participants who meet the inclusion criteria. This approach aligns with

ethical considerations and best practices in LGBTQ research to ensure participant safety and confidentiality. For the quantitative survey component, a sample size of approximately 200 transgender and LGBTQ students was targeted. This size is informed by power analysis to detect medium effect sizes with adequate statistical power and is consistent with sample sizes in similar studies (e.g., Kosciw et al., 2020; Day et al., 2018). For the qualitative component, 20–30 participants were selected for in-depth interviews or focus groups. This range is suitable for achieving data saturation and capturing diverse perspectives, including intersectional identities. Quantitative data was collected through an anonymous online survey comprising standardized measures of harassment and violence exposure, academic performance indicators (self-reported grades, attendance), and validated scales assessing psychological well-being and school climate (e.g., GLSEN School Climate Survey items). Qualitative data was gathered via semi-structured interviews or focus groups conducted virtually or in-person, depending on participant preference and safety considerations. Quantitative data were collected through an anonymous online survey comprising standardized measures of harassment and violence exposure, academic performance (self-reported indicators grades, attendance), and validated scales assessing psychological well-being and school climate (e.g., GLSEN School Climate Survey items). Qualitative data will be gathered via semi-structured interviews or focus groups conducted virtually or in-person, depending on participant preference and safety considerations. Ethical protocols will emphasize informed consent, confidentiality, and minimizing harm, including obtaining waivers for parental consent for minors where appropriate to protect participant autonomy and safety (Roffee & Waling, 2017; Day et al., 2019). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses to examine relationships between harassment, academic performance, and psychosocial variables. Qualitative data will be analyzed thematically using NVivo or similar software, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase approach to identify key themes related to experiences of harassment, coping strategies, and perceptions of school climate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Coding Qualitative Data

1. Presentation of data on the extent do transgender and LGBTQ students experience harassment and violence in non-affirming educational environments.

Interview Extract

Have you ever experienced or witnessed any form of harassment or violence related to your gender identity or sexual orientation in this school

Can you describe a specific incident that stands out to you

What kind of harassment do LGBTQ+ students commonly face here (e.g., verbal, physical, psychological)

Are there particular spaces or situations in the school where harassment seems more likely to happen (e.g., classrooms, hostels, restrooms, sports activities)

Codes

Yes, there is, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Yes, attempted rape in my SS 1

Male students trying to make advances over the female students

The male students always wait for the female students by the restroom side

Research Question 2: To what extent does exposure to harassment and violence affect the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent exposure to harassment and violence affect the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students

S/No	Questionnaire Items	Students = 200
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		Mean	SD	
1.	Victims of school-based harassment and violence are more likely to have lower levels of educational attainment	2.89	0.85	High Extent
2.	Harassment and violence are linked to higher rates of school dropout among LGBTQ students	2.86	0.83	High Extent
3.	The stress and fear associated with being a target can make it difficult for students to focus on their studies, hindering their ability to learn and perform well in class	2.78	0.83	High Extent
4.	Experiences of violence and discrimination can lead to significant mental health challenges which directly impede academic success	2.83	0.84	High Extent
5.	The stress and trauma from victimization can make it harder to succeed academically, despite some evidence suggesting that identity disclosure	2.86	0.84	High Extent
Grand Total		2.84	0.84	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 presents that items 1 to 5 have means of 2.89, 2.86, 2.78, 2.83, 2.86 for the students with standard deviations ranging from 0.85 to 0.84 which indicate “High Extent” on the extent exposure to harassment and violence affect the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students. Also, the grand means of 2.84 respectively, further confirming “High Extent” on the extent exposure to harassment and violence affect the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students. Thus, it is found that exposure to harassment and violence affect the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students to a high extent.

Research Question 3: To what extent do non-affirming school climates influence the psychological well-being and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent non-affirming school climates influence the psychological well-being and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students

Students = 200				
S/ No	Questionnaire Items	Mean \bar{x}	SD	
6.	negative environment leads to higher rates of school absenteeism and lower educational engagement and aspirations	2.86	0.84	High Extent
7.	Students are at a higher risk of being bullied and harassed	2.83	0.84	High Extent
8.	Students are more likely to miss school, with one study finding transgender students missed at least 3 days in the past 30 days more often	2.97	0.86	High Extent
9.	In non-affirming environments, their educational aspirations may be negatively impacted	2.94	0.86	High Extent
10.	Non-affirming climate can prevent all LGBTQ+ students	2.97	0.86	High Extent

from achieving their full potential

Grand Total

2.90

0.85

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The information in table 4 shows that items 6 to 10 have means of 2.86, 2.83, 2.97, 2.94, 2.97 for students with standard deviations ranging from 0.84 to 0.86 indicating “High Extent” on the extent non-affirming school climates influence the psychological well-being and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students. The grand means of 2.90 which is a confirmation “High Extent” on the extent non-affirming school climates influence the psychological well-being and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students. The above results imply that non-affirming school climates influence the psychological well-being and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students to a high extent.

Research Question 4: To what extent do transgender and LGBTQ students employ coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence?

Table 5: Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent transgender and LGBTQ students employ coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence

		Students = 200		
S/ No	Questionnaire Items	Mean \bar{x}	SD	
11.	Seeking and receiving support from friends, family, and community groups is a crucial coping mechanism	2.83	0.84	High Extent
12.	Many students use maladaptive strategies like denial, hiding, and substance abuse, which can lead to negative psychological distress despite their immediate utility	2.72	0.82	High Extent
13.	Transgender and LGBTQ students employ a range of coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence	2.75	0.83	High Extent
14.	Adapting cognitive-behavioral techniques to reframe thoughts in response to negative experiences	2.69	0.82	High Extent
15.	Some strategies, such as the focus on gender-incongruent characteristics or lack of self-acceptance, are linked to internalized transphobia	2.67	0.82	High Extent
Grand Total		2.73	0.83	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 presents that items 11 to 15 have means of 2.83, 2.73, 2.75, 2.69, 2.67 for students with standard deviations ranging from 0.84 to 0.82 which indicate “High Extent” on the extent transgender and LGBTQ students employ coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence. Also, the grand means for of 2.73 respectively, further confirming “High Extent” on the extent transgender and LGBTQ students employ coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence. However, it was found that transgender and LGBTQ students employ coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence to a high extent.

Research Question 5: To what extent can educational policies and practices be improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students?

Table 6: Mean and standard deviation analysis on the extent educational policies and practices be improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students

Students = 200				
S/ No	Questionnaire Items	Mean \bar{x}	SD	
16.	Educational policies and practices can be significantly improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students	2.89	0.85	High Extent
17	Integrate LGBTQ history, contributions, and issues into the curriculum across various subjects to normalize their presence and experiences	2.86	0.83	High Extent
18	Ensure sufficient funding for school-based initiatives like professional development for staff and the implementation of safe school strategies	2.78	0.83	High Extent
19	School personnel should work to establish and make clear local policies that protect LGBTQ students, intervening in discriminatory bullying	2.83	0.84	High Extent
20	Actively support the formation and activities of Gender and Sexuality Alliances by helping to identify	2.86	0.84	High Extent
Grand Total		2.84	0.84	

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 6 presents that items 15 to 20 have means of 2.89, 2.86, 2.78, 2.83, 2.86 for students with standard deviations ranging from 0.85 to 0.84 which indicate “High Extent” on the extent can educational policies and practices be improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students. Also, the grand means of 2.84 respectively, further confirming “High Extent” on the extent can educational policies and practices be improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students. So, it is found that educational policies and practices be improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students to a high extent.

Regression Analysis

To estimate the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, regression analysis was used. Tables 7, 8, and 9 show the results.

Table 4.6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.801	.735	.728	1.119

Source: Research Data (2025)

The adjusted R-squared accounts for the model's number of terms. Importantly, its value rises only when the new term improves model fit more than would be expected by chance alone. As a result of the findings in Table 7, the value of adjusted R square is 0.728(72.8), indicating that no significant difference in the levels of harassment and violence experienced by transgender and LGBTQ students compared to their cisgender and heterosexual peers in non-affirming educational environments.

Table 7: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	201.334	4	50.334	830.921	.001
	Residual	10.237	169	.061		
	Total	211.271	173			

Source: Research Data (2025)

The model was significant, with a level of significance of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, according to the results. Furthermore, at the 5% significance level, the statistical F calculated value was 830.921, which was greater than the statistical mean square value, indicating that the model was significant.

Table 8: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.711	.108		6.583	.000
	Exposure to harassment and violence	.834	.350	1.647	2.383	.000
	Exposure to harassment and violence	.660	.234	2.709	2.821	.000
	Coping strategies employed by transgender and LGBTQ students	.790	.227	4.375	3.480	.000

Source: Research Data (2025)

Table 8 shows that if exposure to harassment and violence, coping strategies employed by transgender and LGBTQ students are all held constant, academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students would be at 0.711. The results also show that increasing exposure to harassment and violence, coping strategies employed by transgender and LGBTQ students by one unit in each variable would affect the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students by a factor of 0.834, 0.660, 0.790 and 0.773 respectively.

Discussion of Findings

Presentation of data on the extent transgender and LGBTQ students experience harassment and violence in non-affirming educational environments.

The study revealed that academic performance is often reduced to grades and attendance, but for transgender and LGBTQ students, it is inseparable from the quality of their learning experiences

psychological safety, motivation, and belonging. This finding is in line with the view of Tinto (2017) who state that when students face daily harassment and violence, their capacity to engage meaningfully with learning is severely compromised. The classroom becomes a place of anxiety rather than inquiry, of withdrawal rather than participation. Tinto also observed that learning experiences encompass more than academic metrics; they include the emotional and psychological environment that shapes a student's ability to thrive. For transgender and LGBTQ students, hostile school climates erode the sense of belonging and safety essential for learning. When students feel unseen, invalidated, or threatened, their motivation and engagement plummet. This dynamic underscores the urgent need to consider the holistic educational experience, not just academic outputs.

The finding of the study on research question two: To what extent does exposure to harassment and violence affect the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students showed that exposure to harassment and violence affect the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students to a high extent. This finding was in line with Travers and Cooper (2016) who observed that Harassment and violence negatively impact the academic performance of transgender and LGBTQ students by leading to lower educational attainment, higher dropout rates, and difficulty concentrating. The stress and trauma from victimization can make it harder to succeed academically, despite some evidence suggesting that identity disclosure, while increasing victimization risk, is linked to better long-term outcomes.

The finding of the study on research question three: To what extent do non-affirming school climates influence the psychological well-being and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students revealed that non-affirming school climates influence the psychological well-being and learning experiences of transgender and LGBTQ students to a high extent. This finding was in line with Hsiao & Barak, (2014) who reviewed that non-affirming school climates significantly harm transgender and LGBTQ students' psychological well-being and learning by increasing the likelihood of bullying, harassment, and absenteeism, while diminishing feelings of safety, belonging, and connectedness. This negative environment leads to higher rates of school absenteeism and lower educational engagement and aspirations.

The finding of the study on research question four: To what extent do transgender and LGBTQ students employ coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence indicated that transgender and LGBTQ students employ coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence to a high extent. This finding was in line with Hsiao & Barak, (2014) who reviewed that Transgender and LGBTQ students employ a range of coping strategies to mitigate the effects of harassment and violence, which include both adaptive and maladaptive approaches, such as seeking social support and avoiding certain situations, but also engaging in isolation, concealment, and substance abuse. Strategies can be cognitive or behavioral, such as using cognitive restructuring, emotional regulation through music, or isolation to manage negative feelings. Many students use maladaptive strategies like denial, hiding, and substance abuse, which can lead to negative psychological distress despite their immediate utility.

The finding of the study in research question five: To what extent can educational policies and practices be improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students reveal that educational policies and practices be improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students to a high extent. This finding is in agreement with the writings of (Melissa 2013) who asserts that Educational policies and practices can be significantly improved to foster affirming and inclusive environments for transgender and LGBTQ students through a multi-faceted approach involving policy-makers, school personnel, and students/parents. Key improvements include creating inclusive policies, implementing inclusive curricula, providing professional development and training, intervening in discriminatory incidents, and supporting student-led initiatives like Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that transgender and LGBTQ students face disproportionate rates of victimization in schools worldwide. Verbal assaults, bullying, social exclusion, and physical violence are daily threats that shadow their footsteps through hallways and classrooms. These hostile encounters are not isolated incidents but chronic stressors that accumulate, creating a toxic environment that undermines mental health and academic engagement. The trauma inflicted by such sustained adversity is profound, often leading to anxiety, depression, absenteeism, and,

tragically, higher dropout rates. This is not merely a problem of individual hardship; it is a systemic crisis that reflects deep-rooted societal prejudices and institutional failures and that non-affirming educational environments exacerbate these challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were proffered based on the findings of this study.

1. It is recommended that government should implement strict anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies that explicitly protect students based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.
2. It is recommended that school management should provide targeted academic support services, such as tutoring, mentoring, and study groups, for affected students and create inclusive learning spaces, where students can express themselves freely without discrimination, thereby improving concentration and motivation.
3. It is recommended that government should through the school management develop inclusive curricula and classroom practices that reflect diverse gender identities and sexual orientations.
4. It is recommended that government should offer resilience-building workshops that teach emotional regulation, self-advocacy, and conflict resolution skills and Link students with external LGBTQ organizations and professional counseling services for additional psychosocial support.
5. It is recommended that government should review and reform existing educational policies to ensure they align with human rights and inclusion principles and integrate gender and sexuality education into teacher training programs to promote awareness and sensitivity.

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