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## UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INTERSEX INDIVIDUALS AND ADVOCATING FOR POLICY ARTICULATION

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### Abstract

This study focused on the experiences of intersex individuals in the Philippines, gathered through interviews, particularly with the members of Intersex Philippines. The findings revealed that intersex individuals often face human rights violations, such as clinical interventions, harassment, abuse, violence, stigmatization, and discrimination in various aspects of life, including healthcare, justice, and public spaces. The study emphasizes the need for awareness, acceptance, and debunking of misconceptions surrounding intersex individuals. It highlights that intersex refers to individuals whose sex characteristics fall between male and female, and various factors like anatomy, genetics, and hormones can determine it. The research methodology employed qualitative study to capture the lived experiences of intersex individuals.

The study results show that the participants varied in age, assigned sex at birth, civil status, educational attainment, and organizational involvement. While there were differences among the intersex individuals, they shared a common goal of acceptance and recognition in society. The intersex community calls for awareness at a national level, proper medical care, education, and government recognition. They face challenges in various areas of life, such as restrooms, schools, sports, work, and legal documentation. The study concludes that intersex individuals encounter human rights violations, and their rights should be upheld and protected.

Based on the findings, the study offers several recommendations. These include addressing intersex concerns appropriately, implementing government directives for the intersex community, ensuring accurate birth certificates and legal gender recognition, advocating for marriage equality, improving access to healthcare for intersex individuals, designating specialized doctors for intersex cases, providing inclusive medical facilities, promoting education and career opportunities, and establishing a dedicated office for intersex affairs in sports. These recommendations aim to support the rights and well-being of the intersex community and contribute to the advancement of human rights overall.

**Keywords:** Intersex, assigned sex, socio-cultural, discrimination, policy, sex characteristics

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### Introduction

The understanding and recognition of intersexuality have gained significant attention in recent years, as it challenges the binary framework of male and female identities. Intersex individuals possess sex variations that do not conform to the traditional notions of biological sex and gender. This study seeks to shed light on the experiences of intersex individuals in the Philippines, drawing qualitative data from interviews conducted with members of Intersex Philippines, a support group dedicated to advocating for intersex rights.

Intersex individuals face a multitude of human rights violations, including invasive clinical interventions, harassment, abuse, violence, stigmatization, and discrimination based on their sex and gender. These violations occur across various sectors, including healthcare, justice, and public spaces, highlighting the urgent need for awareness, acceptance, and love from society. Misinformation and misconceptions surrounding intersexuality can have lasting impacts on their physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being, exacerbating internal and external discrimination (Ison, C.A., 2023).

The term "intersex" is the appropriate designation for individuals whose sex falls between the male and female categories. It encompasses a wide range of sex differences, which can be determined by factors such as anatomy, karyotypes, genes, genitals, and gonads. While some intersex traits may be evident at birth, others may only become apparent during puberty or in adulthood. It is worth noting that some intersex individuals may go through their lives without ever realizing or identifying themselves as intersex, highlighting the diversity within the intersex community (Ison, C.A., 2023).

Globally, activists have replaced the outdated term "hermaphrodite" with "intersex" to reflect the varied nature of intersexuality and to challenge prevailing societal norms. Intersex Human Rights Australia played a crucial role in creating the intersex pride flag, symbolizing the wholeness and completeness of intersex individuals. The flag, represented by the colors yellow and crimson, is freely available for use by intersex individuals and organizations worldwide. The recognition of intersex identities has also made progress on legal documents, such as birth certificates and passports, with individuals being granted gender markers that acknowledge their intersex status (Carpenter, M. 2013; Levin, S. 2017; Bauman, J. 2018; Lambda Legal, 2015).

Intersex Philippines, founded in 2017, serves as a vital support group for intersex Filipinos, with over 70 members across different age groups. The organization aims to raise awareness, provide assistance, and advocate for the rights of intersex individuals. Through meetings, forums, and virtual conferences, Intersex Philippines has been instrumental in empowering its members and promoting intersex rights within the local and international contexts. The organization's growth and development reflect the increasing importance of addressing intersex-related issues in the Philippines (Ison, C.A., 2023).

This study is driven by the goal of promoting intersex awareness, challenging misconceptions, and advocating for the rights and dignity of intersex individuals. By delving into the lived experiences of intersex Filipinos, this research aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of intersexuality and foster a society that embraces diversity and upholds the rights of all individuals, regardless of their sex variations. It is through comprehensive research and informed dialogue that we can work toward a future where intersex individuals are fully accepted, respected, and supported in all aspects of life.

Furthermore, This study aimed to address the following research questions, seeking to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of intersex individuals:

1. How do the participants describe themselves in terms of the following aspects;
  1. Age
  2. Assigned Sex at Birth
  3. Civil Status
  4. Highest Educational Attainment
  5. Socio-economic Status
  6. Designation within an Organization
  7. Length of Time as a Member of the Organization?
2. How do the intersex respondents assess their socio-cultural experiences as members of the intersex community? This question explores the social and cultural dimensions of their identity, relationships, and interactions within the intersex community.
3. How do the intersex respondents assess the existing government policies in work, school, and sports settings? This question aims to examine the perspectives of intersex individuals regarding the policies and regulations governing their participation in various domains of society.
4. What solutions and recommendations can be proposed by intersex respondents to improve government policies and laws? This question focuses on gathering insights and suggestions from intersex individuals to enhance existing policies and legislation to protect better and support their rights and well-being.
5. Based on the study's findings, what awareness campaigns or initiatives can be proposed to enhance policy articulation? This question aims to identify effective strategies and approaches to raise awareness and promote understanding among policymakers, the general public, and relevant stakeholders regarding intersex issues, to influence policy development and implementation.

By exploring these research questions, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the experiences, challenges, and perspectives of intersex individuals, and to provide valuable insights for policy advocacy and awareness campaigns.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study utilized a phenomenological research method, a qualitative approach aimed at delving deep into a specific phenomenon and uncovering the universal essence of participants' lived experiences. In this study, the focus was on investigating the experiences of intersex individuals.

Qualitative phenomenological studies seek to illustrate the stories and choices of individuals and the knowledge they have gained through their experiences. This research method falls within the broader category of qualitative studies, alongside those that explore society, culture, language, and communication.

The population of this study consisted of the executive board members of Intersex Philippines. The data collection was conducted using Zoom, a virtual platform for meetings and interviews, due to the geographical dispersion of the participants. The executive board members were selected as they hold significant positions within the organization and can provide valuable insights into the experiences of intersex individuals. The sample size included five participants, all of whom were assigned female at birth. These participants were representative of the larger intersex population in the Philippines, which is estimated to be around 1.7 percent.

Non-probability purposive sampling was employed to select participants for this study. This sampling technique is essential in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to deliberately select individuals who possess the relevant knowledge and experiences that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. By choosing representative participants, the researcher aimed to achieve a level of generalizability and ensure that the findings accurately reflect the experiences of the larger intersex population.

The respondents in this study were individuals who were part of Intersex Philippines, an organization with its own jurisdiction and composed of intersex Filipinos. The five intersex Filipinos who were elected as executive board members and appointed to specific roles within the organization constituted the subjects of this study. They included Chairperson Jeff Cagandahan, Vice-Chair Myla Escultura, Secretary Julie Anne Alday, Public Information Officer for Internal and External Andy Andres, and Ricalyn Cinco.

By engaging with these executive board members, who play integral roles in the intersex community and possess valuable insights, this study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of intersex individuals in the Philippines.

### **Results and Discussions**

The following problems with analysis and presentation are as follows;

Problem 1: How do the participants describe themselves?

The researcher asked the participants' profiles in terms of their age, assigned sex at birth, civil status, highest educational attainment, status, designation in an organization, and length of time in the organization. Their responses are as follows;

Profile of intersex individuals

Jeff: "I am Jeff, between forty-one to fifty years group of age, and when I was born the assigned sex to me at birth is female, raised as a female. When I was growing older, I decided to file a petition to the Supreme Court of the Philippines to change my name and sex marker to male. I am married, completed undergrad and I have a business. I was elected as a chair, and five years and above in an organization".

Alym: “I am Alym, between forty-one to fifty years of age and when I was born the assigned sex to me at birth is female. I am single, completed undergrad, and I am working. I was elected as a vice chair, and five years and above in an organization”.

Julianna: “I am Julianna, between thirty-one to forty years of age and when I was born the assigned sex to me at birth is female. I am a single, completed undergrad, and I am working. I was elected as an executive board member, appointed as secretary, and three to four years in an organization”.

Andy: “I am Andy, between thirty-one to forty years group of age and when I was born the assigned sex to me at birth is female. I underwent surgery to fix myself to become a complete man even though I would never have a child. I am single but in a long-term relationship, completed high school level, and I am working. I was elected as an executive board member, appointed as public information officer, and five and above years in an organization”.

Mana Iday: “I am Mana Iday, between thirty-one to forty years group of age and when I was born the assigned sex to me at birth is female. I am single, completed high school level, and I am working. I was elected as an executive board member, appointed as public information officer, and five and above years in an organization”.

After laying out the profiles of each participant individually, the researcher combined all the participants with each question that required an answer and here it is laid out.

### **Age**

Three participants were within the age bracket of thirty-one to forty. They are Julianna, Andy and Mana Iday; and two of them in the age group of forty-one to fifty years old are Jeff and Alym. Regardless of their age bracket, their common problem in the course of their intervals is their intersex situation. Then again, when it comes to the old system, the problems of the old intersex need to be solved for the new generation of intersex; the whole lot that the previous intersex experience will no longer be skilled with the aid of the new intersex individuals. The alternative trouble for all the age brackets given in this study is the various procedures that can be required to adjust the person to the legalities of society and tradition from beginning to maturity. So, the above-referred elements affect their residing popularity.

### **Assigned Sex Marker at Birth**

Five female participants were assigned sex markers at birth and they are Jeff, Alym, Julianna, Andy, and Mana Iday. Regardless of assigned intercourse at the start, their commonplace problem with their intercourse marker was the problem of their delivery certificates and documents touching on their bodily appearance and their favored pronoun, and because of the luxurious and long system, not all but some intersex only had been able to exchange their marker and name. Therefore, the above-mentioned elements affect the popularity of the dwelling. A few intersex-assigned females at birth are feminine but their body, either internal or external, lacks some female traits and without male traits, some are feminine but with male traits and some are masculine but with female traits.

### **Civil Status**

Four participants who are single are Alym, Julianna, Andy, and Mana Iday and one of them got married to Jeff. No matter of their civil repute, their unusual trouble is the problem with their beginning certificate and documents which can be against the law of the Philippines, which says that the legal husband and wife are simplest man and woman, and equal-intercourse marriage isn't always allowed. However, the fact is that intersex is among men and women because it is able to be both gentle and lady and have to be married to a male or female and able to choose instead, but slowly underneath the modern-day regulation only a few intersex people are capable of getting married and not all because of lot of circumstances. So, the elements referred to above affect their living reputation.

### **Highest Educational Attainment**

Three participants completed undergrad Jeff, Aym, and Julianna; and two high school level Andy and Mana Iday. Regardless of maximum academic attainment, their commonplace problem became the hassle of the coverage in their faculty institution. Their rules and guidelines have become a way for intersex individuals to be bullied and discriminated against, so others no longer hold to study and just a few resist the dream of graduating. So, the factors cited above have an effect on their dwelling popularity.

### **Status**

Five participants are working or have a business. They are Jeff, Aym, Julianna, Andy and Mana Iday. Regardless of reputation, their common problem became the coverage of their work pace and the requirements, related to clinical requirements with a physical exam that the marker can no longer hit the body. That is why others are not bodily healthy, and that is why others are doing business to make money. And the others whose processes are affected by the rules and guidelines in the workplace usually, and it additionally turns into the basis of discrimination. That's why there are other intersex human beings who have no job or profession presently despite their talents and abilities. So, the elements stated above affect their residing popularity.

### **Designation in the Organization**

Five participants are members of the executive board of Intersex Philippines. They are Jeff, Aym, Julianna, Andy, and Mana Iday. Irrespective of designation, as a part of the organization's officials, they have tasks, duties, and responsibilities as chairman, vice president, appointed secretary, treasurer, auditor, and internal and external public information. Five of the participants out of seven officers of the organization underwent the interview, and their usual problem was the hassle of the location in the workplace of their company outside of the organization that the intersex individuals expected their capabilities and abilities to be, which violated their human rights. So, the elements noted above affect their residing status.

### **Length of time in the Organization**

Four participants who are five years or above are Jeff, Aym, Andy, and Mana Iday; The other member who is Julianna, is three to four years in an organization, from which the agency became established as a formal organization from an informal group and now registered as a nonprofit organization. Irrespective of the years within the company, from informal or unofficial contributors to official members who have become the core members of Intersex Philippines until they became officers in an organization as the executive board members, all through their time isn't affected in their lifestyle, in contrast to outdoor the company while the employees end up older and the opportunity is given there to people who can be younger, fresh graduates, and more flexible. Because of this, the ones who've been at work are ignored and the new ones are extra favored for the improvement of their company alternatively. Old workers to discriminated used to have more power than the rookies, who are more oppressed.

### **Problem 2. Assessment of intersex members to their socio-cultural experience.**

The researcher asked the participants about the different issues regarding their socio-cultural experiences. The following themes were extracted based on the specific questions;

Question 2.1: As a member of society, how do you perceive yourself on Issues and challenges by intersex individuals to their social-cultural experiences?

This is evident in the answers of the five participants when asked about their issues towards society, their responses are as follows;

#### **Socio-cultural experience of intersex individuals**

For Jeff, he is still a simple person, and when his sex marker was not fixed yet, he experienced a bit of discrimination, mainly because his physical appearance did not match the name and sex marker on his legal documents since he was a child. Moreover, when the researcher made a follow-up question about his realization of being intersex, his answers

were as follows; he knew his situation was different, but he did not know before that it was called intersex. Furthermore, because the researcher wanted to find out when he found out he was intersex, he turned it into a normal act, flow, and socializing together with his fellows; the perception was that he was a lesbian because they did not know the term intersex as long as he knew he was not a lesbian. (Whatever an individual experiences, even if he thinks he is the only one who is different from everyone else, it should not change even if other people's perception is different; it should not change what a person's character is, the one who has a body knows who he is, that is what he should do. He believed.)

For Alym, as intersex, they're like a minority because the government cannot provide the specific needs of intersex. (Because of people's perception, as an intersex that is small in number is not a priority of the government. Even if a community is small, it should still be given attention because it is still included in society.)

For Julianna, she catches her awareness. More so, when the researcher made a follow-up question about her understanding of being intersex, her answers were as follows; when some intersex showed up on the television a story related to her condition that seemed to be similar to her. So, she searched, had curiosity, and had questions, she asked for answers all the way through herself because her family cannot answer them, and when she found out she was intersex it was hard to accept because there would be consequences. She already has proof and evidence from the doctor and what the doctors say before she can explain it to them. (Spontaneously search for the answer when there is a question, if there is a question about yourself, try to find it to know yourself better and when it happens, you will be a role model and can also help others.)

For Andy, he found out that he was intersex when he went to the doctor for a check-up because he did not know what he really was and that's when he found out that if his stomach had hurt he would not have known that he was intersex, and based on the laboratories' findings and his doctors' explanations, they told him that at first, it was not intersex; it was just called hermaphrodite then they said he can contact Sir Jeff so he can answer what his questions are and that's when he sought from Sir Jeff, it's called intersex, he did not accept it right away because he seemed to have a lot of questions like "Why?" He experienced a lot of pain in his heart when the doctor said that because he had the mindset that if he does not have children, he will not have a family. What he needs is he wants to have children but it's not possible; he cannot; It took a long time. (Accept yourself for what it is and what is given by the above, even if there is a lot of disagreement with others, even if you know that others are different, don't change, there are many problems and trials, and this story is different from others, or this is unique and special.)

Mana Iday, it is known that she is weird since she was a child. She knew that the previous term was hermaphrodite and later on she found out about intersex when she met someone who was also intersex. That's how it was explained to her. Furthermore, because the researcher wanted to find out the acceptance while determining that she was intersex; she accepted, enlightened, and had clarity in her condition; the situation had a clear explanation and self-understanding as well. (Have self-knowledge, what and who you are to understand the situation before others understand, start with yourself first.)

**Question 2.2. As a member of the intersex community, how do you experience your relationships in terms of family, a common-law partner, casual friends, neighborhoods, school institutions, the workplace, medical doctors, religious organizations, and fellow intersex?**

The researcher asked the participants about their relationship experience, and their responses are as follows;

#### **Relationship experience of intersex individuals**

For Jeff, as for the family, he did not talk about his intersex back then. As for his wife, the important thing to him is that she accepts him as an intersex person before they get married; he told her that they would never have children. As for his friends, there is no hindrance; he believes the relationship as a friend is still carried by your personality, not because you are intersex. As for neighbors, he has not changed anything, though sometimes when he walks, he hears something like "that's the one who had surgery" because they thought he had surgery, so his name changed or he became a man like that, but he understands their perceptions. As for religion, his church records have been updated; they are very open when it comes to intersex. As for fellow intersex individuals, he became an instrument to get to know the organization, for intersex individuals to get to know themselves, and for intersex individuals to have a connection in the Philippines. He was an instrument in starting the organization, Intersex Philippines.



For Alym, the family is open because they have known him ever since. With a relationship partner, he used to hide his situation but now openly says that when he has a potential partner before jumping into a relationship, he tells his condition as intersex so that they won't be surprised. In the community, just like the mainstream people, he is the same and there is no difference. To his fellow human beings, he has an ideology in life. He does not have to offer information to those who do not want to know; if they ask, he tells. But if they are not asking for it, he should say nothing, unless there are some circumstances he has to defend or answer what other people say and guess because he is in that community.

For Julianna, she needs to find out for herself first who she is or what she is. Her family and friends accepted her. She accepted herself first to accept others then.

For Andy, in terms of family, they have no knowledge about intersex; what they know is that only girls and boys are born but when there was something a little different about him, they called him a tomboy; they used to say, "That's two sexes; that's a lesbian." So, when he grew up, his perception was that he is lesbian but when he had ideas about intersex, as he also explained to them until he had surgery although he cannot say that he is hundred percent a man, there is no more "It looks like a man, but it's a woman" scenario. It's the same with his friends; it's not that easy to explain to them that he is in this situation, he is like this; now, if they do not accept, they cannot change anything. In terms of relationships, he is a little bit lucky because the girls he has dated have accepted him, although he has many shortcomings; he cannot have a child. He accepted it because he is really in love. (Misinterpretation will happen when there is no self-knowledge and the first thing to understand is the family as a guide and example. Even if there are many hindrances it will not hinder the true personality, the important thing is that whether there is acceptance or not, don't expect.)

For Mana Iday, in her experience as an intersex person, she can talk about two things, especially when with other people. First, when she does not know that person, but that person knows her. Second, their immediate thought is whether she has two sexes, even if she admits that she is not offended by those scenarios because they sincerely believe that she has that gender but she also understands that even if she is offended, she understands the reason why they are not, she knows that they know about such things if they are really intersex so at the end of the day, when that is the case, she approaches them more and explains it properly. When it comes to her acquaintances, they accepted her regardless of her situation. In the family, it's the same; they accepted her and it's just that when people bully and tease her, those people surrounding her defended her. At school, she gets bullied but she resists and does not let anyone bully her because she is more of a bully than them when she experiences something like that. (The family is not knowledgeable about the situation and they are not aware of it what is important about the downtimes is that they are there, blood relatives who are still willing to be patient because they are concerned and have a favor, even so do not allow them to be stoned by negativity to fight and defend oneself because not in all circumstances will one simply remain silent, so as to be able to fight for the Right and community to be a comforter and defender of others.)

The researcher made a follow-up question about their experienced discrimination, bullying, harassment, abuse, and so on and their answers are as follows;

### **Intersex individuals experienced discrimination, bullying, harassment, abuse, and human rights violations**

For Jeff, when he was in elementary and high school because it became more masculine when the uniform was over and the skirt was still on, he experienced discrimination when using the restroom because they did not understand that he was intersex. They thought he was a boy at that time. The sex marker is still not being fixed, and of course, the restroom he used is still female, challenging to urinate, and it can give the problem in the urinary tract of the owner, can give the owner an embarrassing and disgusting feeling till he needs to find some comfort room for him. When it comes to looking for a job, he submits a resume, but he is hesitant because it has a female marker and a feminine name, so it's a bit difficult for him to find a job. Having a bit of a hard time. He first applied as a teacher, but he did not continue, because at that time teachers wore skirts, and he did not want to wear skirts anymore. He tried to apply for factories, but the problem is that he failed the interview and physical exam. (Personality is still what determines who a person is and how to get along, personality is not a problem because no one is perfect, but a person's attitude and character should start at home and family. If there is a problem, talk about it and don't let it go or keep it a secret because the family should be the first to support you, don't think about what others say, the important thing is who and what you are for yourself and why you were created like this, the above has a reason and purpose, you will only know all this when you overcome it. All the tests are given, and the reason can be answered by oneself when all of

them are overcome, love is still more important than who you are and when you are accepted you deserve to be with them in life.)

For Alym, when he was in his younger years, he experienced being stripped because he was different. His human rights were violated because of the insensitivity of others like foul actions and foul thoughts. He has strange genitalia, which strips him to shock, and then pulls down his shorts. There were adults who, when they meet him, will touch him in front as if it were a form of greeting, the connotation of the communities in which he was raised as a girl seemed to be that those bullies looked at him as a lesbian. He was abused in the connotations of he is a woman, he registered as a woman, he was attacked as a female as a crucial part of his curriculum, he was bullied and discriminated against because he wants a female partner who does not belong to those surroundings for girls' groups. (Don't be afraid to face everything, and don't let yourself be limited or limit yourself because many things can be done and can be changed, in the relationship you have to be accurate and come true; everything that will bring you down is just around you and don't get carried away, be judgmental the world but in order to respect them they will be respected and if they don't want to respect, it is their fault and there is no shortage. The only thing they do is to answer what their questions are and there is no need to tell stories or prove themselves and whether they believe it or not is up to them. Even if they have many interpretations, the important thing is that the proper interpretation is still up to him.)

For Julianna; she is actually a product of discrimination and bullying. She did not finish her education and did not continue being a nurse because she was afraid of the amount of bullying, he experienced from people. She wishes, she had not been afraid and had stood up because maybe now she would have been a professional nurse at the same time that fear built her up and that discrimination proved that no one could bring her down; instead, it made her stronger, by being in such situation. (Accept yourself before others accept because the first to believe in yourself is the one who has a body and holds it, don't be afraid if you experience self-downs because the negative ones are always there and will not stop breaking someone. If you have a question, you will always find an answer and if you have a problem, you will always find a solution.)

For Andy, it was hard and painful; for those who want to have children but do not, it's hard to accept; he cried a lot, he was depressed; he was thinking that he wanted to disappear; his life was meaningless he was so down, and then he was taken to a psychiatrist because it was necessary to say "If they cannot have children, can adopt, there are many ways; there is plan a, plan b, and so on". At first, because of counseling it was gradually accepted, especially in the part of being intersex there is a part that it is hard to accept but because of the support it was gradually accepted, and now he accepts it and there is no doubt because he just thought that God has a purpose and if it was given, then the storms passed and he accepted that even if do not have children at least he still has a family. (Counseling is needed for those who are going through depression; the family can help who can first understand the situation, partner in life, and the support of friends so that those who suffer from great sadness know that they are not alone.)

The problem in the restroom, especially since there is no third-gender restroom, he has been scandalized, he was hiding from being a lesbian. He went into the female restroom and was violated because they knocked on his door. The guard and the other staff thought that he is a man who dared to enter the female restroom, but he did not know how to explain himself because if it was really based on his appearance, they would look like a man, so he just thought that he would just adjust for them so he just went to the male restroom when there were no questions asked.

Problem with the birth certificate because his sex marker was female, and his name was Marisa. He was always denied when applying for a job because they thought he was lying, and even when he explained to them, they still had no knowledge about intersex. They did not believe him, but lately, there has been more awareness about intersex. The last trial about his being intersex before he could go abroad was the medical record. According to the last one he notarized back then, it was quite a long process because there were many more questions and contacts even those who were in the previous medical records, so it was fine.

For Mana Iday, the people around her already know her life; they have known him since she was a child, and it is no longer known to them that her condition is that she no longer belongs in the community in their area because she is just being made to walk. Those giving birth tell stories of when she was a child, people already knew her situation. (Even though the environment, viewpoints, and beliefs are different, the journey is still the same, even though the origins are different, and the problems and trials come in different ways, even though there are different variations, the intersex community is the same.)



**Question 2.3. How do you experience health issues in biological, social, and psychological terms?**

The researcher asked the participants about their experience with health issues, and their responses are as follows;  
Experience in health issues of intersex individuals

For Jeff, in terms of biology, there is an issue because people do not know that there are intersex people, that there are those who are born between men and women, this is where the social issue comes in because their treatment is sometimes different due to their perception, especially in an intersex relationship that only two people belong together, which is not true. Just like that, they created conjectures; they were not taught, so we do not have correct information about this. All the conjectures that even if it's just an example of an intersex variation, it generalizes that there are always two sexes together in one body. Biology teaches only men and women, and the term intersex is missing. The clinical field says that they need to undergo medical interventions to normalize the carrier because there are abnormalities in the body and when the parents heard it, they will do everything to keep their child safe and they will find a way and agree to the benefits of their beloved child that they know even without the consent of the body and the body may be suffered from the output. Then it will be hidden even from the child. Talking about it—that's where the psychological issue comes in. Like Jeff, he thought that because it was not discussed in their family, maybe there was something wrong with him and that's why he was hiding it. The family is not that supportive; they do not properly explain it, because the information given by the doctor is lacking. (There are many difficulties when it comes to human things especially the world's perception regarding gender, it is only male and female as taught in biology many do not know that there is intersex between male and female, or when it is said between male and female in one body is immediately called a hermaphrodite whose acceptance is imitated by the animal and plant, so when they socialize, the perceptions are different. The thoughts and sayings are offensive, and many are negative. Due to ignorance, they do not talk about it and even those who have a body don't know anything about it, until it leads to depression. It's good if the person who has a body has a strong mind which will not be defeated by emotions, but by acceptance and being inspired to be the way to be yourself and help others.)

For Alym, biologically he cannot carry a child. He will never be a biological mother or father. Psychologically, there is also an impact; there is an expectation that something should be the same in the mainstream of gender, men, and women, so that life is not too complicated that there is no need to explain, there is no need to ask questions, and there is not much confusion, and at the end of the day, it's still time to sink in the reality that intersex is their life and that he should have dealt with this thing in his life. Depression is always there, especially in the down times, this is constant in humans. Intersex is much harder than binary and nonbinary which will really affect the thoughts, the decisions, and the things that play in the brain because there are restrictions, and one cannot do a lot because of not a mainstream person like male and female. (Most of the time, in order not to explain, he just accepts what others say, sometimes he just tells himself that he is like this because that's what others say and to avoid explaining, because even he himself cannot explain what he is or who he is, even if he knows that he is not what they say is like this and like that. If straight women and men are going through something, it is more difficult on the part of the LGBTQAP+ community because the things they are going through have increased and it is more and more difficult to be intersex because it is not just mind and heart as well as biological is affected by the situation and many more.)

For Julianna, physically, there are good and bad advantages to her. The good is that she will not have a monthly period and she does not feel the dysmenorrhea that others feel, but the bad thing is that she cannot have a family that really comes from her, but she realized she can still live for her parents and family. Mentally, she went through depression. She is a product of discrimination and bullying. She did not finish her education to continue being a nurse because she was afraid of the bullying she had experienced from people. She reached the point in which she was very sad, did not want to go out, did not want to communicate with others, was afraid to face many people, and was afraid to speak, even though she had questions in her mind, she did not want to ask because she felt it was wrong because of her condition. She could not accept it before; it was a brutal struggle for her. She told her partner that she could not have children because of this reason. "He loves her, but if he has children with someone else, they will adopt it." It's easy to say, but it's hard for her. Because of the situation, she ended up broken-hearted. She was depressed but that fear built her up and that discrimination made her stronger and gave her courage. (A lot of suffering she experienced, from thoughts, emotions, and body outside and inside. It's like a body that is disabled even if the treatment for oneself is not because it is in a body, how to handle oneself to live a normal and orderly life.)

For Andy, he had an emotional struggle with being intersex in society because he experienced discrimination; that struck him a bit. He experienced bullying from co-workers and friends. He always cries until he is fine, and he thought

that those experiences were fine because that's where he feels he was stable no matter what the bully was. He did not cry anymore because he was immune to bullying. What hurts is that society does not accept intersex like him. (There are many options in life on how various tests and problems can be solved, everything depends on the body but it can be reduced if society is supportive, what can be given and can't be given or expectations must be accepted that not everything that wants to happen comes true. The disappointment comes but does not give up because all difficulties can be overcome as long as you accept what is there.)

For Mana Iday, the health issue is the hormones. It's hard for her to lose weight no matter what she does, and the process is slow. She does not know if it has anything to do with being intersex, but she has a strong hunch that it has something to do with it because the hormones of an intersex are not really normal anymore which is called hormonal imbalance. (Biological problem is the first problem from birth, followed by the psychological problem that comes from the self and then the society that affects the person, the expectations or new discoveries that are not used to the mind of the body and the society.)

### **Problem 3. Assessment of intersex members' compliance with government policies in work, school, and sports settings.**

The researcher asked the participants about the different issues of their compliance with government policies in work, school, and sports settings. The following themes were extracted based on the specific questions; Issues and challenges by intersex individuals to their compliance with government policies in work, school, and sports settings

#### **Question 3.1: How do you affect the policy of the government at work or how the policy affects you at work?**

This is evident in the answers of the five participants when asked about their issues with institutions. Their responses are as follows;

##### **Experience of intersex individuals in the work**

For Jeff, based on his experience, it will affect the job application if the paper in the legal documents and the physical do not match, rather than being accepted for work.

For Aym, when only looking at the mainstream of men and women and the LGBTQAP+ community is only accepted and can join different fields while Intersex, but cannot be due to many restrictions. At work discrimination happens to him as if he does not totally adhere to being a woman then when they say that he is a homosexual because she can sometimes dress like a woman but it's still not possible like when he wears a swimming suit, he has a testicle and it seems surprising to see that and questionable as he is also discriminated against it.

For Julianna, she experienced working in the private sector as a waitress, cashier, etc., but it did not affect her and she did not affect the work policy.

For Andy, he can do the job that the male and female can do and whatever the job is; it does not underestimate his ability because gender has nothing to do with how strong he is. There must be no limit and no discrimination because it is one of the things that damage emotions for him.

For Mana Iday, she sees something that is possible to affect her in a good way because she heard news that was passed in the chamber that women have a menstrual day. This is well in her favor because even if she does not have a menstrual period, she was legally a female as stated in birth certificate, so she can use it.

#### **Question 3.2 How do you affect the policy of the government in school or how will it affect you?**

The researcher asked the participants about their experiences in school. Their answers are as follows;

##### **Experience of intersex individuals in the school**

For Jeff, in school, like being assigned female at birth then the physical appearance is masculine and required to wear a skirt. Nowadays it's pretty good, at least there are policies that DEPED is making so that if someone want to wear whatever they want, whatever haircut they want, because back then have no choice; only girls and boys either wear skirts or pants, and that's the reason why they get bullied sometimes even the authorities are the reason for bullying sometimes, the classmates because when a woman has no breasts or goes to the restroom, even the teacher or professor do not believe the students when they call in real name then did not match to physical appearance, things that have such a big impact on intersex people because feel like being bullied, he always get bullied no matter where they go— have a big impact on every intersex.

For Alym, in school restrictions such as segregation policy for girls and boys, uniform policy, activities and others. For Julianna, in school, that's when she got discouraged till she came to the point would not study because she got bullied. That's when she had negative thinking that made her demotivated. She did not want to face people because of too much shame. They found-out that she does not have menstrual period, and her breasts did not grow. She was always the topic in school. In the canteen, every time she pass by, she is thinking to know who will try to invite her because she heard a lot of rudeness regarding her.

For Andy, at school, he experienced bullying because of the situation.

For Mana Iday, the school policy did not affect her and vice versa either.

**Question 3.3 Have you experienced yourself being affected by the policy of the government in sports, even vice versa?**

The researcher asked the participants about their experience in sports. Their answers are as follows;

**Experience of intersex individuals in the sports settings**

For Jeff, when it came to sports, he also experienced the same thing: even though he wanted to run because he likes to play track and field, he refused because of what happened to other famous athletes, who was banned from sports due to the issue of their male hormones. In sports, they need to take hormones to maintain the female hormones that the sports authority stated to be able to join and play.

For Alym, in sports, he experienced this when he was in his younger years in elementary school. He joined track and field and was disqualified because he was too fast for the women's category and it's really questionable. When he went to college, he did not continue to play women's basketball.

For Julianna, the only sports she likes are track and field and badminton, but she was always excluded from competing because of her different conditions aside from being intersex.

For Andy, as for sports, he used to encounter people when he was running in track and field in high school and he was pushing heavy objects then thought that seem strange and he was stronger than female category because female competitors were defeated by him. He thought it was unfair because he was already brusque for the fairness. He adjusted by himself for he already knows his strength than the other women.

For Mana Iday, when it comes to sports, maybe they will be a little doubtful if she is a bit of masculinity and there will be a right suspicion that she might be a transwoman if she joins sports.

(There are intersex people who have problems in terms of work, school, sports settings of the government, whether public or private and besides this there are many more. In different fields and sectors, if others do not experience the experiences of others, there are some of us who are experiencing what others have gone through.)

**Problem 4. Recommendations of intersex respondents in the policy and laws of the government.**

The researcher asked the participants about their recommendations towards policy and laws of the government. The following themes were extracted based on the specific questions;

### Intersex individual recommendations

This is evident on the answers of the five participants when asked about their recommendations. Their responses are as follows;

#### **Question 4.1 What are your suggestions and recommendations about policy and law in government, the public, medical care, education, work, and sports that can help intersex communities?**

The researcher asked the participants with their suggestions and recommendations about policy and law in government towards different sector. Their answers are as follows;

Simple administrative process to change name and sex marker, smooth access to medical fitness care, education, career or profession and sports

For Jeff, when changing the name and sex marker of intersex individuals is easy, it means that they will not go through the judicial process and that the intersex people will not have to spend money because we have Judicial Prudence, the case that is decided of the Supreme Court. The process should be made easier with a simple administrative procedure or through the civil registrar where the intersex person submits proof of his/her medical exam and doctor's certificates. Laboratory tests can also be done. The results, once submitted, will be easier to be approved so it won't be difficult because the truth is the hardships that intersex individuals are going through and because of that the process of changing will cost money. Even with a large amount, not everyone can afford it.

When it comes to medical care, be accessible to medicine, health care will be included in universal health care, laboratories, ultrasounds, and karyotyping for intersex people will be included. Health is the proper protocol for handling intersex individuals who go for a check-up. There needs to be a protocol so that the privacy and confidentiality of an intersex person are not violated, and when it comes to health, hopefully such issues can be addressed. Another possible suggestion in health is to have sensitization training for the doctors, nurses, and others in the medical field on how to address those who are doing check-ups so that privacy is not violated.

In education, allow what the children want when it comes to the uniform and what haircut they want, because at the end of the day, what will be graded is the knowledge of the children. The uniform, skirting, and jumping are not related to what they learned. The child's knowledge is still assessed, not their physical appearance.

At work, what is assessed are the skills and knowledge, not the physical appearance. If it doesn't match, that means it's a failure. But what if the person is really good? If the person is really very skilled, it is unfortunate if we base our decision on whether they are good, not just because their physical, document, and medical profiles do not match.

In sports, if you don't train, you'll lose, but if you train, you'll win. Sometimes, like with Filipino athletes, people only see the winning but don't see the time and daily practice. What people see is the winner, but what they don't see is the hard training and practice every day, that's not the case.

Correctly addressing intersex concerns and having a central authority directive and application for the intersex network For Alym, let them when the time comes, decide for them so that they can have bodily autonomy. When they reach the right age, if they see something wrong with their body or if they want to change something in their body, let them be, but for children, don't do it.

The government should also be successful in having directives and programs for the intersex community as well, as if there is anything done specifically for the LGBT community, there is also a general one for the LGBT community with "I" then plus (+), and there is It's also really specific for the intersex community, because not all of them have the same needs, as if they're just tailored for intersex people, and apart from the very different and very complex life of an intersex individual because there are so many of them, unlike that contained in LGBTQA+, which is really different compared to intersex, tailored answers, and what are the needs of the intersex community in the Philippines. At least one specific medical facility for the intersex

For Julianna, calling for the authorities to have the right centers for the intersex community, free hospital treatment, and chiefly, clinical centers which might be simply focused on the intersex individual due to the fact it's far tough to

be intersex, especially in case you are not able to get remedy. While you are bad, it is tough to be intersex if there is no scientific facility because they misconceive or misunderstand being intersex; they assume that after an intersex right away has genitals, they at once have a conjecture, and they immediately decide that they have to have surgery due to the fact that is what is needed, however an intersex man or woman would not really need that. For instance, the facility can be placed in Manila, and it is the most effective remedy. At the least there is a focus on intersex people. Medical and birth certificate

For Andy, specific doctor or hospital that really focuses on intersex, because not all doctors or in the field of treatment have doctors or deny that it is like that, they will understand. Someone will focus on the intersex community and study all the variations of intersex so that if anyone will have check-up on the intersex, they won't have many questions, and hopefully not anymore, when getting check-up they know right away and how to solve it so that the conversation doesn't take too long, but they can't be blamed for stopping them when it comes to intersex; it's just superficial. It will not be difficult for those who go for check-ups to have medical assistance.

With the birth certificate, because others don't have the financial ability, focus on the birth certificate. This is the most important because in the Philippines the cost is too high. Private attorney costs a lot, it's a bit bloody and expensive. Even if we will ask legal assistance from PAO, they should not prolong the agony to process it.

Legal gender recognition, clinical, sports activities and equal marriage rights permit

For Mana Iday, to have a policy that will really help the intersex community in legal gender recognition because many intersex people have problems with legal documents that they have not seen changed to match their current situation, that such methods of care will be especially helpful. That the birth certificate will have an easy process that is not expensive if the intersex individual can provide enough medical documents that prove that he is really intersex.

In the medical field, let each hospital designate doctors who will handle intersex cases so that there is someone that can be called. As of now, there is no doctor who can be called who handles intersex cases, so intersex individuals have a hard time finding the right doctor to come to them.

In sports, where intersex individuals are discriminated because gender is based solely on appearance. That understanding would be widespread because gender is not only based on appearance but should also be properly informed with respect for the dignity of an intersex individual.

Let legal gender recognition be the way, as long as the intersex individual is approved that he or she is a biological male or female. There were those born with their sex marker marked as male or female, but later in their lives after puberty, they change appearance. Those who look like men and those who look like women but don't match with their birth certificates are usually mistaken for those who have transitioned, like having surgery, so it needs to be done properly; it must be proven that they are intersex, and there must be a quick process for changing the sex marker. For those with such a condition, marriage will no longer be an issue if the documents can be fixed and it can be proven to the government under the law that they are biologically male and female.

(Main problems of the intersex community at present that need to be solved with the help of the government to expand, increase, and revise the human rights laws, policies, rules and regulations that include intersex rights such as the following: correctly addressing intersex, have a central authority directive and application for the intersex, simple administrative process to change name and sex marker, birth certificate, legal gender recognition, equal marriage rights permit, smooth access to medical fitness care, medical practitioners and health professionals for intersex community, medical facility, in education, in work, career or profession, in sports, and more.)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shed light on various aspects of the lived experiences of intersex individuals. The findings highlight the discrimination, harassment, and human rights violations that have significantly impacted their lives, including their physical, intellectual, and emotional well-being. The participants' profiles revealed a diverse range of experiences in terms of age, assigned sex at birth, civil status, educational attainment, and organizational roles.

The study also uncovered both similarities and differences within the intersex community. While each individual's experience is unique, they share common goals and dreams, such as societal acceptance, recognition of their rights, and equal treatment. It is crucial for society and culture to embrace and acknowledge the existence of intersex individuals, allowing them to lead fulfilling lives alongside everyone else.

The voices of intersex individuals call for greater awareness and understanding at the national level, emphasizing that the world is not solely comprised of two genders. They advocate for dignity, proper treatment, education, healthcare, and government recognition. Lack of awareness and knowledge within society hinders acceptance and perpetuates misunderstandings about intersex variations. Education and awareness campaigns are essential to promote accurate understanding and dispel misconceptions.

This study also highlighted several challenges faced by intersex individuals. External issues include problems related to restrooms, schools, sports, work, and legal documents that do not accurately represent their identities. Internally, intersex individuals face physical, psychological, and emotional challenges resulting from societal discrimination, abuse, and human rights violations.

Efforts should be made to address these challenges. Legal and administrative processes should be simplified to allow intersex individuals to change their names and sex markers on legal documents easily. Policies and laws must be enacted to protect their rights, ensuring equal treatment regardless of physical appearance. Education and awareness initiatives must be expanded to foster understanding and inclusivity in society.

Finally, this study serves as a stepping stone toward the expansion of intersex rights and the broader realization of human rights. The experiences shared by intersex individuals, backed by evidence and proof, provide a foundation for advocacy and policy development. It is a call to action for the government, society, and the world to recognize and respect intersex individuals, promoting their equal rights and establishing laws to protect their well-being.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge about intersex individuals, amplifying their voices and advocating for their rights and dignity.

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