

Transforming Identities: A Qualitative Study on the Experiences of Student Gay Men Using Hormonal Pill

Camiso, Cyrel D.¹, Capin, Jinky M.², Manuel, Pearl Jam C.³, Mara-asin, Janrey B.⁴, Paculanang, John Loyd L.⁵, Sibugan, Junmark Q.⁶

Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology, Monkayo, Compostela, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This single case study investigates the motivations, experiences, and challenges faced by gay men students at Monkayo College of Arts, Sciences, and Technology (MONCAST) who use hormonal pills for gender expression and identity affirmation. Through in-depth interviews with five participants, the study explores their reasons for hormonal intake, along with the physical and emotional effects they experience. Motivations include the influence of social media, peer support, bullying, discrimination, and a strong desire to achieve femininity and self-confidence. Participants reported noticeable physical changes such as softer skin and breast development, as well as emotional shifts like increased sensitivity and mood swings. Despite financial struggles, lack of medical supervision, and societal stigma, hormonal pills were viewed as empowering tools to align their appearance with their gender identity. The study emphasizes the importance of inclusive healthcare, educational support, and awareness programs, and is grounded in Social Constructionism, Self-Discrepancy Theory, and Gender Affirmation Theory to advocate for safe, inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ youth.

Keywords: Hormonal Pills, Gender Expression, Gay Men Students, Identity Affirmation, Emotional Shifts, Social Constructionism, LGBTQ+ Youth, Discrimination

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Young transgender individuals often encounter significant barriers to accessing appropriate contraceptive and hormone-related healthcare due to healthcare providers' limited knowledge and biases. As a result, many turn to unmonitored hormone use, which poses serious health risks and reflects broader issues such as healthcare inaccessibility, discrimination, and the lack of culturally competent services. Globally, studies show that non-prescribed hormone use is common among transgender populations, driven by financial constraints, social marginalization, and inadequate healthcare systems. While organizations such as the World Health Organization emphasize inclusive policies and safer self-managed care, gaps in understanding individuals' motivations and practices remain.

In the Philippines, limited access to regulated gender-affirming hormone therapy has similarly led to the widespread use of unregulated hormones among LGBTQ+ individuals. Although existing studies highlight motivations such as identity alignment and social belonging, they often fail to focus specifically on gay men. This creates a significant research gap, as the experiences, motivations, and health outcomes of gay men who use hormones remain underexplored.

Addressing this gap is essential to develop targeted interventions, improve healthcare access, and promote safe practices. This study aims to provide deeper insight into the experiences of gay men using hormones, thereby contributing to more inclusive research, informed policies, and better health outcomes for this overlooked population.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to investigate the motivations of gay men in using hormonal pills, focusing on their personal experiences and the implications for their identity and well-being. Specifically, it seeks to explore the factors that influence individuals to take hormonal pills, as well as the motivations behind and challenges faced by those who choose this path.

Additionally, the study examines how participants navigate the potential health risks, benefits, and societal attitudes associated with hormonal pill use. By providing a deeper understanding of these experiences, the study aims to contribute to broader discussions on gender expression, healthcare accessibility, and the need for inclusive medical and psychological support tailored to the unique needs of this community.

Research Questions

The study aims to explore the lived experiences of gay men who use hormonal pill. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the motivation of student gay men students for taking hormonal pills?
2. How do gay men students perceive the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of hormonal intake?
3. What challenges do gay men students encounter in relation to school regarding to their use of hormonal pill?
4. How do gay men students navigate access to hormonal pills and information about their effects?

Theoretical Lens

Social Constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) theory emphasizes how identities are shaped through social interactions and cultural norms. It argues that gender identity, like other aspects of identity, is not inherently fixed but rather constructed through societal influence and individual experiences. In the context of this study, Social Constructionism would allow us to explore how the gay-men students' experiences with hormonal pills influence and reshape their identities. It also helps examine how they negotiate their gender and sexual identities within social, cultural, and medical frameworks, considering both personal and societal expectations around masculinity, femininity, and gender fluidity. This theoretical lens can provide a nuanced understanding of how these students' self-concept and identities evolve in response to their use of hormonal pills, which may challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms.

In addition, Self-Discrepancy Theory (Higgins, 1987) provides a framework for understanding the psychological impact of discrepancies between gay-men actual self, ideal self, and ought self. HRT often involves significant bodily and identity changes, which may create internal conflicts if an individual's self-perception does not align with societal expectations or personal aspirations. SDT helps explain how these discrepancies lead to motivation for self-improvement, depending on whether the gap is between the actual-ideal self or actual-ought. By applying SDT, we can analyze how gay men on HRT navigate self-concept inconsistencies, societal pressures, and medical transitions, offering deeper insights into their mental well-being and identity integration throughout the process.

Furthermore, Gender Affirmation Theory (Sevelius, 2013) underscores the importance of social, medical, and psychological affirmation in enhancing the well-being of gender minorities. According to Sevelius (2013), access to affirming interventions, such as hormone therapy, can alleviate gender dysphoria and improve mental health by aligning an individual's physical appearance with their gender identity. Although this theory is primarily applied to transgender and nonbinary individuals, it can also be relevant to gay men who use hormonal pills as a means of self-affirmation. For instance, gay men may use hormones to achieve a more masculine physique, which can help affirm their identity and bolster self-esteem in a society that often emphasizes traditional gender norms. By examining hormonal pill use through the framework of Gender Affirmation Theory, researchers can better understand how these practices influence psychological well-being and identity congruence among gay men, while also addressing potential risks and ethical concerns (Sevelius, 2013).

Significance of the Study

This phenomenological study is significant to public health and gender studies as it explores the underexamined experiences of hormonal pill usage among student gay men, highlighting its impact on physical health, self-perception, and identity. By focusing on their lived experiences, the study offers a more holistic understanding of the emotional and social challenges they face. The findings will benefit basically our gay men students in school by creating safer, more supportive environments and offer proper guidance and counseling. LGBTQ+ organizations can gain better awareness of the effects of hormonal pill usage on health, self-perception, and identity. Advocacy groups can use the data to push for inclusive, policies and protections.

Definition of Terms

Gay Men. Gay men or transgender woman/women who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other men. The term is used to describe a sexual orientation within the LGBTQ+ community. Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., & Martin, C. E. (1948).

Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy (GAHT). Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy is a medical treatment that helps individuals align their physical characteristics with their gender identity. For transgender women, this may involve estrogen and anti-androgens, while for transgender men, it typically involves testosterone. Meyer, W., et al. (2001).

Hormonal Pill. A hormonal pill is a medication containing synthetic hormones, typically used for contraception, hormone replacement, or managing hormonal imbalances. These pills often contain estrogen, progesterone, or a combination of both. They are commonly used in birth control or as part of hormone therapy for conditions like menopause or gender-affirming care. Hatcher, R. A., et al. (1998).

LGBTQ+. An inclusive term that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, with “+” representing other identities such as intersex, asexual, and pansexual. It describes people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities beyond traditional norms. (GLAAD, 2023; APA, 2015).

Transgender. This refers to individuals whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned to them at birth. This includes both trans men, trans women, and those with non-binary identities. Some may choose to transition socially, legally, or medically, but not all do. Being transgender is based on self-identity, not medical changes (APA, 2015; WPATH, 2022).

Transwomen. Transwomen are individuals assigned male at birth but identify as female. Some may choose to transition through social, legal, or medical steps, but not all do. Their identity as women is valid regardless of medical changes (WPATH, 2022; APA, 2015).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) became a critical intervention for many LGBT individuals, particularly transgender and gender-diverse populations, as it aided in alleviating gender dysphoria and affirming gender identity. Despite its benefits, access to HRT remained fraught with challenges, especially for marginalized groups. This review synthesized existing literature on the psychological, social, and physical benefits of HRT, as well as the barriers to access, cultural perceptions, and health implications, with a focus on both global and Philippine contexts.

Hormonal Replacement Therapy, like those used in transgender healthcare, deeply affected a person's life, touching on physical, emotional, and social aspects. On the physical side, these treatments often reshaped the body in noticeable ways, altered muscle mass, fat distribution, skin texture, and hair growth. For example, testosterone therapy tended to boost muscle strength and bone density, whereas estrogen promoted breast development and softer skin, as outlined in clinical guidelines for treating gender dysphoria (Hembree et al., 2017). These changes were carefully documented in medical protocols to ensure safe, personalized care.

Emotionally, hormone therapies were transformative. Many people reported feeling happier, calmer, and more themselves after starting treatment. Research by Colizzi et al. (2014) highlighted that these therapies often eased psychological distress in transgender individuals, even for those who struggled with emotional attachment patterns. That said, everyone's journey was unique some faced mood swings or adjustment challenges early on, underscoring the need for tailored mental health support.

Culturally, societal attitudes heavily influenced how hormone therapy was experienced. Acceptance from family, friends, and communities made a world of difference. A study by Singh et al. (2014) found that strong social support networks acted as a buffer against stigma and isolation, helping transgender individuals navigate hurdles like discrimination.

The use of hormonal pills among gay men was a complex phenomenon influenced by a variety of personal, social, and cultural factors. One significant factor was the desire for feminization and gender expression. According to Winter et al. (2009), many gay men, particularly in Southeast Asian countries, used hormonal pills to achieve physical traits that aligned more closely with a feminine appearance. This included softer skin, breast development, or fat redistribution.

Another factor involved peer influence and community norms. A study by Operario, Soma, and Underhill (2008) found that in tightly knit LGBTQ+ communities, particularly among transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, the use of hormonal pills was normalized and even encouraged. Within such communities, physical transformation often was tied to beauty standards, social acceptance, or desirability. Hormonal use also was seen as a form of resistance or empowerment, challenging traditional gender roles and societal expectations.

In addition, hormonal therapy was crucial in shaping gender identity, enabling individuals to align their physical characteristics with their gender identity, which was vital for their psychological well-being. Additionally, hormonal pills supported identity affirmation by fostering physical transformations that enhanced self-perception and boosted confidence. However, research indicated that transgender individuals in the country encountered major obstacles in accessing healthcare, particularly gender-affirming treatments such as hormone therapy. The 2017 study "Experiences of Transgender People in the Philippines: Health Care and Social Support Systems" revealed that transgender individuals in the country faced significant hurdles in accessing healthcare, especially for gender-affirming treatments like hormone therapy. Key challenges included a lack of specialized healthcare providers, financial constraints, and widespread social stigma.

Alcantara and Rivera (2020) pointed out that the mental health struggles of Filipino gay men were intensified by the lack of accessible and affordable gender-affirming healthcare. They argued that hormonal pills, when available, played a critical role in alleviating the psychological burden of gender dysphoria and societal rejection. By providing a means to align physical appearance with gender identity, these treatments significantly reduced feelings of alienation and distress. Access to healthcare among transgender women in Davao City was explored in several studies. Fortuna (2015) conducted in-depth interviews with 20 transgender women, revealing that occupation significantly influenced healthcare access. Most participants were employed in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, earning between PHP 15,000–19,000, which provided financial stability for accessing medical services. The socio-cultural environment in Davao City was found to be relatively inclusive, with LGBTQ+ organizations fostering advocacy and support.

However, according to Operario and Nemoto (2010), discrimination and social marginalization often pushed sexual minorities, particularly gay and transgender individuals, to modify their physical appearance to conform to societal expectations of beauty or gender norms. In their study, they found that some gay men turned to hormonal pills to achieve a more "desirable" body image or feminine features due to constant rejection and body shaming, both from the heterosexual majority and within the LGBTQ+ community. This form of self-modification often was a coping mechanism in response to external stigma, but it could lead to emotional distress, identity confusion, and psychological vulnerability.

In addition, discriminatory experiences impacted the mental health of transgender individuals, as Reiner (2016) highlighted. The study showed that stigma and rejection, especially in social and healthcare settings, contributed to psychological distress. The authors found that in response to these pressures, some individuals sought body

modifications, including hormonal treatments, not only for gender affirmation but also to gain social acceptance and reduce harassment. The desire to “pass” or conform physically often stemmed from deep-rooted societal pressures and internalized stigma, reinforcing the role of discrimination in body modification decisions.

According to Frost and Meyer (2009), sexual minorities developed a range of coping mechanisms to manage minority stress and stigma, including those related to body modification practices like hormonal pill use. In their research, they identified coping strategies such as cognitive restructuring (reframing negative experiences), community support, and activism as crucial for emotional resilience. Gay men who used hormonal pills often faced layered discrimination; however, connecting with affirming LGBTQ+ spaces and support groups helped them counter feelings of isolation and shame, allowing for better psychological outcomes and a sense of empowerment.

In addition, German and Kerrigan (2013) examined the experiences of gender-nonconforming and gay men who used hormonal pills within the context of Latin American LGBTQ+ communities. The findings revealed that access to peer support, especially through informal community networks, was essential in mitigating the emotional toll of discrimination. Participants who received validation and encouragement from others in similar situations developed stronger self-acceptance and emotional coping strategies, reducing the psychological harm caused by stigma and social exclusion. These forms of social buffering served as a protective factor against depression and low self-esteem.

However, access to such affirming care remained a significant barrier. Alcantara and Rivera (2020) pointed out that the mental health struggles of Filipino gay men were intensified by the lack of accessible and affordable gender-affirming healthcare. They argued that hormonal pills, when available, played a critical role in alleviating the psychological burden of gender dysphoria and societal rejection. By providing a means to align physical appearance with gender identity, these treatments reduced feelings of alienation and distress. A 2022 research explored how hormone therapy affected the sexual and social lives of gay men. The findings revealed that while some men experienced greater confidence in their relationships and sexual experiences, others faced stigma and discrimination, both within and outside the LGBTQ+ community.

The use of gender-affirming hormonal therapy (GAHT) was vital for transgender individuals, but access to prescribed hormones often was limited, leading to non-prescribed hormone use. Eustaquio et al. (2023) found that transgender women and transfeminine people in Metro Manila were more likely to use non-prescribed hormones compared to trans men, a trend also observed globally (Budge et al., 2013; Pinto et al., 2018). Key factors included unmet healthcare needs, financial barriers, and a lack of trained healthcare providers (Poteat et al., 2020; Wesp et al., 2021).

In relation to this, hormone therapy played a significant role in empowering gay men, helping them transform their sense of identity. Many participants felt that the changes brought on by hormone use allowed them to better express their gender identity and sexual orientation. While the process often came with emotional and social challenges, it ultimately led to a stronger sense of self-empowerment and authenticity. HRT contributed to identity affirmation, as the physical changes it induced aligned with an individual’s gender identity, enhancing self-perception and confidence (Deutsch, 2020). For example, the development of secondary sexual characteristics, such as breast development in transfeminine individuals or voice deepening in transmasculine individuals, helped bridge the gap between one’s internal sense of self and external appearance (Hembree et al., 2019).

Similarly, a meta-analysis by Nobili et al. (2018) highlighted the positive impact of HRT on mental health outcomes, emphasizing its role as a cornerstone of gender-affirming care. For many Filipino gay men, the use of hormonal pills was not only a medical intervention but also a means of expressing and affirming their gender identity, despite societal stigma (Lim & Torres, 2020). Santos and Cruz (2019) highlighted that Filipino gay men often turned to hormonal pills as a means of coping with the psychological distress stemming from societal exclusion. Their research underscored how these interventions offered a sense of agency and empowerment, enabling individuals to reclaim their identities in a culture that frequently marginalized and invalidated them. This act of self-determination became a crucial tool for navigating the challenges posed by a society that often denied their existence.

The psychological toll of societal discrimination was further explored by Fernandez and Tan (2021), who found that Filipino gay men often internalized societal stigma, leading to feelings of shame and self-doubt. Their research demonstrated that hormonal therapy helped counteract these effects by fostering a stronger sense of self and belonging. For many, this process was transformative, allowing them to embrace their identities more fully and confidently. Reyes and Gonzales (2019) noted that the mental health challenges faced by Filipino LGBTQ+ individuals were rooted in cultural and familial expectations. They highlighted that hormonal pills, as part of a broader gender-affirming journey, provided a pathway to self-acceptance and emotional well-being. This process not only addressed individual mental health needs but also challenged societal norms, paving the way for greater acceptance and understanding.

Additionally, social and cultural stigma, along with legal and regulatory barriers, made it even more difficult for individuals to access these treatments. The study called for policy reforms and enhanced healthcare resources to better support LGBTQ+ therapy and gender identity needs in the context of Mindanao. A 2020 study investigated healthcare barriers for LGBTQ+ individuals in rural areas like Agusan del Sur. Key challenges included living far from health facilities, scarce providers knowledgeable about LGBTQ+ needs, unaffordable treatment costs (e.g., hormone therapy), and fear of discrimination deterring individuals from seeking care. These barriers often led to worsening health conditions. The study urged policymakers to prioritize reforms such as training inclusive healthcare workers, subsidizing treatments, and implementing anti-stigma campaigns to ensure equitable access to care, particularly for those who relied on hormone therapy.

In response to the lack of accessible transgender health services in the Philippines, LoveYourself Inc. established "Victoria by LoveYourself" in 2016—the country's first community-led transgender health center. This initiative offered free medical consultations for hormone replacement therapy (HRT), gender-sensitive HIV testing, and transition counseling services tailored for transgender populations. By providing medically supervised HRT consultations, the center aimed to reduce the risks associated with self-medication and promoted safe practices among transgender individuals who sought to transition.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study aims to investigate the motivations and experiences of student gay men using hormonal pill studying in Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology, focusing on their personal experiences and the effects on their health and identity. It seeks to understand the lived experiences of gay men who use hormonal pills, whether for medical, aesthetic, or gender-affirming reasons. The research is confined to Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology, Davao de Oro, to provide a localized and contextualized perspective, as the area's unique cultural and socio-economic dynamics may shape the experiences of gay men living there.

The study specifically targets gay men who have used or are currently using hormonal pills, excluding other LGBTQ+ groups or individuals who do not identify as gay men. This narrow focus ensures a clear examination of this specific population and their distinct experiences. However, the study does not address broader societal or systemic factors, such as healthcare policies or pharmaceutical regulations, as these fall outside its scope.

A potential limitation of the study is its limited generalizability. The findings are based on a small, localized sample of student gay men in Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology and may not reflect the experiences of gay men in other school and other regions or cultural contexts. As Burns and Grove (2007) point out, studies with small sample sizes often lack generalizability, meaning the results may not be applicable to larger or more diverse populations. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of recall bias and subjective interpretation, which could affect the accuracy and reliability of the findings.

Ethical considerations also pose a challenge, particularly given the sensitive nature of topics like health, identity, and hormone usage. As Creswell (2012) highlights, qualitative research must carefully navigate the cultural, social, and personal contexts of participants. Ensuring informed consent and maintaining confidentiality are crucial, especially in a community where stigma or discrimination may be present. Furthermore, recruiting participants may prove difficult due to the personal and potentially stigmatized nature of the subject matter.

Organization of the Study

The presentation of this study follows a logical progression, with each chapter building upon the previous one to provide a comprehensive understanding of this case under investigation. The discussions within this chapter are detailed and substantial.

Chapter 1. This chapter focuses on its significance, research issues, and theoretical framework. It also contains delineations, explanations of important phrases, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2. This chapter examines the literature and relevant research, talking on the social representation theory and the elements that affect identity, health effects, and the usage of hormonal pills.

Chapter 3. This chapter explains the study design and methodology, including participant selection, data gathering strategies (in-depth interviews), data analysis methodologies, and steps taken to guarantee ethical and reliable practices.

Chapter 4. This chapter contains the results of the conducted study, which is composed of the participants' information, title of the themes, and the pseudonyms of the participants.

Chapter 5. It discusses the results of the study. It further explains the researchers' perspectives about it. It contains the insights, understandings and learning of the researchers about the research they conducted. It discusses the implications of this researcher.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design, the role of the researcher, the selection of research participants, and the processes of data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness. Trustworthiness was ensured through the four criteria of credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. Also, Ethical considerations was addressed to protect the rights and confidentiality of all participants involved in the study. The methodology was designed to provide a comprehensive and empathetic understanding of the topic, ensuring that the voices of gay men using hormonal pills were heard and respected. Through a structured yet flexible approach, this study sought to uncover the complexities of hormonal pill usage and its impact on health identity within the gay community.

Research Design

This single case study aims to explore the motivations and lived experiences of gay men using hormonal pills. This single case study was utilized as the research design through purposive sampling because it focuses on understanding how individuals make sense of their experiences, providing deep insights into the subjective realities of participants (Yin, 2018). This approach is particularly fitting for the study, as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the personal and social dimensions of hormonal pill usage, emphasizing the voices and perspectives of gay men who are often underrepresented in research (Jones & Patel, 2020).

Role of the Researcher

The researcher will play a central role in this phenomenological study, acting as the primary instrument for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as the study aimed to explore the lived experiences, implications, and health identity of gay men using hormonal pills in the Municipality of Monkayo, Province of Davao de Oro. The researcher's involvement is critical in ensuring the study's rigor, sensitivity, and ethical integrity. The researcher's responsibilities included facilitating interviews, transcribing and translating data, and interpreting the findings to provide meaningful insights into the participants' experiences.

As the facilitator and interviewer, the researcher conducts in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants student gay men in Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology. The researcher creates a safe and open environment for participants to share their personal stories, ensuring that questions are asked in a non-judgmental and empathetic manner. Active listening and follow-up questions are used to clarify responses and delve deeper into the participants' experiences. The researcher also ensures that the interviews are conducted in a language

comfortable for the participants, often switching between English and the local dialect to foster clear communication.

The researcher also serves as the transcriber and translator of the collected data. All interviews conducted in the local dialect are meticulously transcribed and translated into English to ensure accuracy and consistency. This step is crucial for maintaining the authenticity of the participants' voices while making the data accessible for analysis. The researcher pays close attention to nuances in language and meaning, ensuring that the translations preserve the participants' original intent and emotional tone.

Finally, the researcher acts as the interpreter of the data, analyzing the transcribed interviews to identify themes, patterns, and insights related to hormonal pill usage among gay men studying in Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology. Using a single case study approach, the researcher seeks to understand the participants' lived experiences and how these experiences shape their health identity. The researcher's role as an interpreter requires reflexivity, acknowledging their own biases and perspectives to ensure that the findings remain grounded in the participants' narratives. Through this process, the researcher aims to provide a nuanced and empathetic understanding of the topic, contributing to the broader discourse on student gay men in Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology.

Research Participants

The participants of this study are 5 gay men studying at Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology, who use or are currently using hormonal pills in a span of at least 6 months. The study aims to include individuals who are aged 18 and above with a number of 5 participants since the researcher is using a single case study (Yin 2018) ensuring that participants are of legal age and capable of providing informed consent. Participants are recruited through purposive sampling methods, which involve identifying individuals who meet the study's criteria.

The study seeks to include a range of participants to capture diverse experiences related to hormonal pill usage. This includes gay men who use hormonal pills for various reasons, such as body modification, gender transition, or medical purposes. Efforts will be made to ensure representation across different age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and durations of hormonal pill usage. Participants are informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Informed consent is obtained from all participants prior to their involvement in the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process for this study involves in-depth interviews (IDI) to gather comprehensive insights into the experiences and health identity of gay men using hormonal pills studying in Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology. To ensure participants feel comfortable and can express themselves fully, they are given the option to respond in English, Filipino, Bisaya, or a mix of these languages. This multilingual approach is essential to capturing authentic and nuanced responses. Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot interview is conducted with a volunteer to test the clarity and effectiveness of the interview questions. This step helps refine the questioning process and ensures that the questions align with the study's objectives.

During the data collection phase, the team encounters logistical challenges, particularly with the availability of participants. To address these challenges, the researcher schedules interviews and IDIs at times convenient for the participants, often in the evenings or during weekends. The interviews will be conducted in private, quiet spaces to ensure confidentiality and minimize distractions. Each interview lasts approximately 45 to 60 minutes. All sessions are audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and detailed notes are taken to capture non-verbal cues and key points.

To ensure the reliability of the data, the team uses multiple recording devices, such as digital voice recorders and smartphones, as a backup in case of technical issues. This precaution proves helpful when one device fails during an IDI, as the backup device ensures that no data are lost. The IDIs are particularly valuable for exploring shared experiences and community perspectives on hormonal pill usage. The researcher facilitates these discussions carefully, ensuring that all participants have an opportunity to speak and that the conversation remains focused on the study's themes.

After completing the interviews and IDIs, the recordings are transcribed verbatim. For responses in the local dialect, translations are made into English while preserving the original meaning and tone. The transcripts are then reviewed for accuracy and organized for analysis. Throughout the data collection process, ethical considerations are prioritized, including obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting the participants' time and privacy. The researcher's commitment to these principles helps build trust with the participants, resulting in rich and meaningful data that provide deep insights into the topic.

Data collection methods was included in-depth, semi-structured interviews and In-depth interviews, which are design to allow participants to share their experiences openly and in their own words (Brown et al., 2019). These methods was used to capture the richness and complexity of their narratives, including their motivations for using hormonal pills, the challenges they face, and how these experiences shape their health identity (Taylor, 2021). The study also incorporate a review of relevant literature to situate the findings within broader social, cultural, and medical contexts, ensuring a well-rounded understanding of the topic (Williams, 2017).

Data Analysis

The responses of the participants are analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data (Smith, 2010; Johnson, 2015). This method is chosen because it is flexible and provides a rich, detailed account of the participants' experiences, making it suitable for exploring the complex effects of hormonal pill usage on health and identity. As suggested by Smith (2010), the analysis follows these steps: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining and naming themes, and constructing the report.

Data reduction is also employed to streamline the analysis process. This involves removing unnecessary data and organizing the remaining data into meaningful categories, ensuring that the findings are clear and accessible to readers (Brown et al., 2018; Taylor, 2019). To manage the voluminous qualitative data, the researchers seek the assistance of an expert data analyst who helps in handling, sorting, and organizing the data. This collaboration makes it easier to merge, manage, sort, and categorize the data effectively.

The first step involves familiarizing with the data. The interviews are transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts are read multiple times to immerse in the participants' responses. This step is crucial for understanding the depth and nuances of their experiences with hormonal pill usage. Next, initial codes are generated by identifying significant phrases, sentences, or paragraphs related to health effects, identity changes, and social implications.

To present the data in an organized manner, data display techniques are used. Data display involves organizing data into matrices, charts, and graphs, which help readers interpret the findings more effectively (Taylor, 2019). The final step in the analysis is drawing conclusions and verification. It is essential to revisit the data multiple times to verify the conclusions and ensure their accuracy (Brown et al., 2018). The conclusions are derived from the descriptive themes that emerge from the interviews. These themes are woven together to create a coherent narrative for the results and discussion sections.

To interpret the findings through a theoretical lens, the researchers review related literature on hormonal pill usage, health behavior, and queer theory to contextualize the phenomenon being studied. This process is conducted with the assistance of two independent readers and expert analysts in qualitative research. Together, the researcher performs triangulation, where each person scrutinizes the data and compares their interpretations to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the findings. Triangulation enhances the reliability of the study by involving multiple perspectives in the analysis (Johnson, 2015). The consistency of the findings across different investigators strengthens the credibility of the conclusions. Various interpretations are considered before finalizing the report, ensuring that it is both challenging and readable. The final report provides a sufficient description of the findings, allowing readers to understand the interpretations clearly (Smith, 2010).

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researchers adhere to the criteria proposed by Johnson (2015), which include credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability (Brown et al., 2018; Taylor, 2019).

Trustworthiness ensures the accuracy and reliability of the findings and the interpretations drawn from the participants' experiences (Johnson, 2015).

To establish credibility, the researchers ensure the accuracy of the data collection process. The interviews were conducted directly with the participants, and no fabricated stories are included. All relevant data was retained while irrelevant information is removed. During the interviews, a colleague assists with note-taking and recording. Additionally, a reliable expert is consulted to help analyze the collected data, contributing to the reliability of the findings (Taylor, 2019).

To further enhance credibility, the researchers follow the recommendations of Brown et al. (2018) and Taylor (2019). These include using multiple data sources, conducting debriefing sessions, employing triangulation, and maintaining repeated contact with the participants. Ample time is allocated for the interviews, and the interview guide questions were used as a guide. To ensure the credibility of the findings, peer debriefing is conducted with a dissertation adviser and another expert in qualitative research. This process allows for reflection on personal experiences and biases, ensuring they do not unduly influence the data interpretation (Smith, 2010). The researchers revisit the participants to confirm that the interpretations align with their intended meanings during the interviews.

To ensure the study's rigor and trustworthiness, the research design will incorporate strategies such as triangulation of data sources, member checking, and maintaining a detailed audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These measures address the four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' autonomy, were central to the design (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020). By focusing on the lived experiences of gay men using hormonal pills, this single case study sought to provide a nuanced and empathetic understanding of the topic, highlighting both individual and collective dimensions of their experiences.

Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to ethical standards to protect the rights and well-being of the participants. The ethical principles followed include respect for persons, beneficence, justice, consent, and confidentiality (Smith, 2010; Brown et al., 2018).

Respect for persons requires an obligation of the researcher not to exploit the weaknesses of the research participants. Self-sufficiency will be avoided to maintain friendship, trust, and confidence among the participants and the researcher. Beforehand, the researchers ask permission from selected participants who live in Monkayo, Davao de Oro. This is done to pay respect for the individuals involved in the study (Creswell, 2012).

Consent is one of the most important ways of showing respect to persons during research (Creswell, 2012). This ensures all participants are aware of the purpose and objectives of the research study they are joining. Written consent was provided for them to approve. After obtaining their agreement, participants actively participated in the in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. They also informed on the results and findings of the study.

Beneficence requires a commitment to minimizing risks to the research participants rather than maximizing potential benefits. Anonymity of the interviewees is maintained to avoid exposing participants to risks. At all times, participants are protected, so all files of information are not left unattended or unprotected (Bricki and Green, 2007).

Confidentiality toward the results and findings, including safeguarding participants, is ensured through a coding system. This means the participants' identities are hidden (Maree and Van Der Westhuizen, 2007). As recommended by Maree and Van Der Westhuizen (2007), all materials, including videotapes, encoded transcripts, notes, and others, are destroyed after the data are analyzed.

Justice requires a reasonable allocation of the risks and benefits resulting from the research. It is important to acknowledge the contributions of all participants, as they are integral to the success of the research. Participants are given due credit for their efforts (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Participants do not spend any money during the interviews. Sensible tokens are given to them as recognition of their contributions to the study. The researchers hope that through this study, participants are freed from any negative experiences they may have had while gathering information about gay men who use hormonal pills and that they maintain a positive reputation for the contributions they offer to this research.

To maintain confidentiality and privacy, participants are assign pseudonyms, and all identifying information is remove from the data. The study was conducted in a culturally sensitive manner, respecting the participants' identities and experiences. By focusing on gay men in Monkayo College of Arts Sciences and Technology. The study aims to provide a localized understanding of hormonal pill usage, highlighting the unique social and cultural dynamics of the community. The inclusion of these participants ensures that the findings are grounded in the lived realities of individuals directly affected by the topic, contributing valuable insights to the broader discourse on LGBTQ+ health and well-being.

RESULTS

This chapter presented the major findings gathered from in-depth interviews conducted to the explored experiences of student gay men using hormonal pill while understanding its effect on their psychological and overall well-being.

This case study was composed of five participants that qualify the following criteria- a gay men using hormonal pill at least 6 months in using and student of MONCAST. The data were gathered through a one-on-one interview for the participants. The analysis includes the grouping similar ideas, identifying main ideas and formulating themes from the responses.

Table 1. Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Research Code	Months/years
Vice	21	IDI_01	1 year
Esnyr	23	IDI_02	7 months
Chad	22	IDI_03	1 year
Lacy	21	IDI_04	9 months
MC	20	IDI_05	11 months

Research Question No. 1. What are the motivations of student gay men for taking hormonal pill?

This section presents the results for the first major experiences of students gay men using hormonal pills. Answers and responses of the participants were verbatim; transcribing them was based on the language which the participants were using during the conducted interview.

The Motivations of Student Gay Men for Taking Hormonal Pills

This section presents the results of the specific question number 1.1: "Tell us about your reasons for taking hormonal pills." This question falls under the major research question number 1: What are the motivations of student gay men for taking hormonal pills? The responses of the participants revealed several key themes that represent the underlying motivations for taking hormonal pills. These themes were drawn from their personal stories, experiences, and individual journeys.

Table 2. Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Research question;

What are the motivations of student gay men for taking hormonal pill?

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Influence from the Community and Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing many gay men and trans women around me made me realize that I wanted to transition as a girl, as a trans woman. • From my gay friends, I was influenced to appear more feminine and attractive to men. • I was inspired to take hormonal pills after seeing my trans sisters do it. • My trans friends have been significant role models in my journey. • TikTok played the biggest role in influencing me.
Shun Bullying and Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I pushed myself to take pills, to reduce my muscles and look more feminine. • There is still discrimination, especially if you're part of the LGBTQIAP+ community. • Bullying played a part you can't really avoid that. I need to take pills so I can become more feminized and people won't judge me. • I observed that there are now many trans women who use hormonal pills injectables, tablets, and other kinds. I believe it really comes down to my personal needs.
Defeat Insecurities and Boost Self-Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very insecure about myself and constantly being compared to others my participation in different pageants enhance myself and to fit in that world. • One of the impacts that pushed me to take hormonal pills, is discrimination. It became a push factor for me to take the pills. • The results really start to show even within just a week or a month. Me, feel more confident in expressing my true gender and who I really am. • I really didn't want to be discriminated against, especially regarding my body. My self-confidence increased, and it allowed my true identity to come out.
Improve Self-Perception and Self-Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pills helped me a lot they reduced my muscles, improved my skin, and changed my body. That gave me more confidence. • Into someone more feminine smooth, fair skin.
Societal Beauty and Pageantry Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe it's more about societal standards, not really culture. • To join beauty pageants like Miss Gay contests. That's where I feel like my true self comes out.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very insecure about myself and constantly being compared to others my participation in different pageants enhance myself and to fit in that world.
Femininity Inside and Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About myself I want to change my identity and to have more feminine appearance, to really look like a girl. • Huge impact on aligning my personal desires with my identity, I've stepped out of my comfort zone.

The findings indicate that student gay men are motivated to take hormonal pills due to a combination of identity expression, social influence, and external pressures. Many participants expressed a strong desire to achieve a more feminine appearance and align their physical features with their perceived identity, with some aspiring to transition into becoming trans women. Peer influence also played a significant role, as friends, particularly trans women and exposure to social media platforms such as TikTok encouraged them to explore hormonal pill use. Observing others who had undergone similar experiences contributed to the normalization of this practice within their social environment.

Moreover, experiences of discrimination, bullying, and societal expectations served as strong push factors. Participants reported using hormonal pills to avoid judgment, gain acceptance, and conform to prevailing standards of beauty and femininity. Feelings of insecurity and constant comparison with others, especially in contexts such as beauty pageants, further influenced their decision. At the same time, many participants viewed hormonal pill use as a means of improving self-confidence, enhancing physical appearance, and expressing their true identity. Overall, their motivations reflect an interplay of personal aspirations, social pressures, and the desire for acceptance and self-affirmation.

Influence from the Community and Social Media. This theme refers to the narratives of participants that highlight the role of community and social media in their decision to take hormonal pills. Participants may discuss how peers, online influencers, support groups, or social media platforms influenced their understanding, motivation, and decisions regarding hormonal intake. This theme may also touch on the positive or negative impact of community feedback, online trends, and digital information sources on their personal journey. Vice elaborated that,

“Amm ang reason or nga nag take kog pills because since grade, ay senior high school ko kay nakakita nakog mga gay men actually sa davao ko nag kuan graduate og high school to senior high is daghan kog nakita na mga trans ddto tapos pero daan pagyud sauna feeling nako gay na jud ko like men na jud akong gusto I like borta jud tapos nakita nako sa ilaha akong self kay ay pagkita nako sa ilaha kay like ay I want to be that person gusto jud ko ma ingun ana na ma feminize kaning dli ko kaning maya2 ana gud so mao na nag udyok sa akoo ning gusto ko mag pretty gusto ko kaning irespect ko as a girl as a transwoman jud. (IDI_01)”

(The reason I started taking pills was because, ever since senior high school, I saw a lot of gay men and trans women especially when I studied and graduated in Davao. I saw many trans women there, and even before that, I already felt that I was gay and that I liked men, especially masculine or "borta" types. When I saw them, I saw myself in them. I thought, “I want to be like that.” I really wanted to become feminized not just to act soft or feminine, but to truly transition. That’s what motivated me. I wanted to feel pretty, and I wanted to be respected as a girl, as a trans woman.)

Similarly, this was also justified by Lacy and narrated;

“At first ang nakuhaan nako ug idea kay ang akong mga friends nga gay men , ang also Para naay maibog sa akoo nga lalaki ug mag nawng ko nga feminine . And para maka suot ko ug crop top so that mag look ko nga babae gyud kaayu. (IDI_03)”

(At first, the idea came from my gay friends, and also because I wanted to attract men and appear more feminine. I also wanted to wear crop tops so I could look more like a woman.)

Lacy again said that,

“Sa gika ingun ko na gaina influence sa kanang friends nga trans nga nahimo nako siya nga dakong sumbanan, char sumbanan? hahaha para maka contribute sa pag himo nako ug dako mga desisyon sa pag take ug hormonal pill. (IDI_03)”

(As I mentioned earlier, the influence of my trans friends has become a significant role model for me, contributing to the big decisions I made in taking hormonal pills.)

Esneyr then shared that;

“Well kabalo naman jud ta nga that we live in 21st century in this generation or we say that social media plays an essential parts for our life na whitch is kanang part najud na sa atoang life so the biggest influence for me that ang tiktok jud like labi na makakita ko og kanang mga gay or transwomen nga kanang ka take sila og kanang hormones then mao to naka ana I would decision to myself that I okay I think mag take nagyud kog ingani because kanang morag mao najud ni akoang kuan or kanang ma kuan ko specially that kanang ga apil ko og pageant that’s why ang kanang tiktok jud or ang social media jud naka influence sa akoo. (IDI_02)”

(Well, we all know that we live in the 21st century, in this generation where social media plays an essential part in our lives. It's really a big part of our lives now, and for me, the biggest influence was TikTok. Especially when I saw gay and trans women who were taking hormones, it made me think, 'Okay, I think I should take hormones too.' It felt like it was the right choice for me, especially since I'm also joining pageants. That's why TikTok and social media had a huge influence on me.)

Shun Bullying and Discrimination. This theme refers to the experiences and insights of participants who have faced or witnessed bullying and discrimination related to their identity or hormonal intake. Participants may share how these negative experiences affected their well-being, academic life, or self-esteem. This theme also includes the ways in which they respond to or resist such treatment whether by seeking support, standing up for themselves, or advocating for greater acceptance and understanding within their school and community. MC articulated that,

“Ahm we all know is sa atua man gud society is kanang kuan we are born in judgemental society so sakoang side is like kung kuan man gud ka kanang gay nga dagko ug muscles or kanang kuan kay kanang gina bully ka nila ba bayot nga kanang kuan dagko kaayo'g di ka ma bae baehan kay dagko kaayo kag muscles liwat kayka sa imong papa that's why nag ako pod gi encourage akong self nga ay dapat mag take ko ug pills kay para ma wala walaan gamay akong muscles like kanang ma babaehan. (IDI_05)”

(We all know we live in a judgmental society. If you're gay with big muscles, people will bully you. They'll say you're not feminine enough, that you look like your dad. That's why I pushed myself to take pills, to reduce my muscles and look more feminine.)

Also, Esnyr mentioned that,

“So first and for fost gyud is kanang we already know that’s in our society jud is kana bitaw kanang ga discriminate sa even sa part or like you are part of the LGBTQ like daghan jud kaayung mga tao nga naga discriminte pa of even kanang traght mo diba kanang perfect as sa world that’s why kanang I decision gyud to mag take og hormonal pills then na gusto nko sa akoang kaugalingon how should I say this like dili panako maingon nga makoha gyud because specially sa kuan financial ingana sa financial kuan pa kaayu labi na ga skwela pako that’s why. (IDI_02)”

(So, first and foremost, we already know that in our society, there is still discrimination, especially if you're part of the LGBTQIAP+ community. There are still many people who discriminate against us, even though we know that no one is perfect in this world. That's why I decided to take hormonal pills because I wanted to allow myself to take that step, even though many people still discriminate against me. I think I should allow myself to take hormones, especially because I know that I have things that are still not completely developed in me. How should

I say this? I feel like I still haven't fully reached my goal, especially since financially, it's a struggle, especially since I'm still studying.)

Defeat Insecurities and Boost Self-Confidence. This theme captures the personal narratives of participants who take hormonal pills as a means of overcoming their insecurities and enhancing their self-image. Participants may express how hormonal intake contributes to feeling more aligned with their identity, leading to increased confidence in both personal and social settings. This theme also reflects the emotional and psychological empowerment that comes with self-acceptance and visible transformation. Lacy shared that,

“When I was a child jud, when I was a kid, I don’t feel being masculine and at the very beginning when I grow sa teenage hing, ahmmm one thing that pushes me to ahmm to use hormonal pill is to.. I’m very insecure about myself and by that, I am being compared to others and of course we are prone to be discriminated and criticized and aside from that who pushes me to being a feminine person it is also help me because I’m joining different kind of pageant competition and that is not requirement but it is one thing that I need so, I pushes myself to be at the position so that I could ahmm really enhance myself through that.(IDI_04)”

(When I was a child jud, when I was a kid, I don’t feel being masculine and at the very beginning when I grow sa teenage thing, ahmmm... one thing that pushes me to ahmm... to use hormonal pill is to.. I’m very insecure about myself and by that, I am being compared to others and of course we are prone to be discriminated and criticized and aside from that who pushes me to being a feminine person it is also help me because I’m joining different kind of pageant competition and that is not requirement but it is one thing that I need so, I pushes myself to be at the position so that I could ahmm really enhance myself through that.)

Chad also explained that,

“Ang dako nga role sa society ug, usa nga impact sa society nga nag push sa akoo nga mag take ug hormonal pill kay discrimination, in a way nga naka instill naman gud sa mga tao nga kung lalaki ka, you should act man ang showcase masculinity, that’s way I frequently receive words nga maka sakit sa akoo kay gina ingnan ko nila nga laki kaykog nawng nya magpa bayot² way angay, then naa puy time nga gi ingnan kog salot daw ko. So tungod ana murag nahimo siya nga push factor sa akoo to take pills. (IDI_03)”

(The significant role of society, and one of the impacts that pushed me to take hormonal pills, is discrimination. Society has instilled the idea that if you're a man, you should act masculine. That's why I frequently hear hurtful words directed at me, such as being told I have a man's face but acting effeminate, or being called names like 'salot' (curse). Because of this, it became a push factor for me to take the pills.)

Vice said explained that,

“Ahm sa by taking pills mugawas man jud ang result within a month ra jud as in even a week lang mag pills ka mugawas ra jud ang result tapos pag makita na nmo ang results ato para sa akoo kiligon ko kay kuan ay effective akoang giinom na feminize ko ma achieve nako akong goals. (IDI_01)”

(By taking hormonal pills, the results really start to show even within just a week or a month. For me, when I see those changes happening, I get that excited, “kilig” feeling because I know the pills are effective. I can see myself becoming more feminized, and it helps me achieve my goals. It makes me feel more confident in expressing my true gender and who I really am.)

Societal Beauty and Pageantry Standards. This theme explores how media-driven beauty ideals and pageantry norms influence participants' decisions to take hormonal pills. It highlights the pressure to conform to feminine standards, shaping their self-image and hormone-related goals. Lacy elaborated that,

“In cultural, wala kaayo siyay decision making in becomes on that, because we are now promoting inclusivity towards LGBTQ members. And to society, wala pud Silay mahimo because we all know na we lived in judgemental society man jud Karon but, pero wala may barriers to it, because kuan man Dili man sila maka buot throughout Ana Kay Dili man sila, dili man Nila gunit ako kaugalingon. As what I said earlier, Ang akoo

lang madungong through agree is that they are very curious about kung ge Unsa namo, nganu ing ani siya, nganu na enhanced namo. (IDI_04)”

(Culturally, I don't think it plays a big role in decision-making anymore because society now promotes inclusivity for LGBTQ members. As for society, they can't really do anything because we live in a judgmental world. But there are no strict barriers to this because people can't control our bodies Those who disagree often think we don't belong, or that hormonal pills are only for biological women. I believe it's more about societal standards, not really culture.)

Vice shared that,

“Ahm mao to akong gina ingun sauna nga makakita nakog mga transgender woman sa davao tapos isa pod sa reason kay gusto ko mag gusto jud ko mag apil apil og mga kuan mga beauty pageant miss gay , murag isa jud na siya sa akoang it runs to our blood jud kay pageantera jud akong mga kuan mga ate akong mga kuya naa jud na sa amoa ako para ma unique siya ay though na born man jud ko sa laki na lawas but gusto ko sa ddto sa pikas na amm which is ang mga miss gay ana kay ddto nako ma feel akong self ddto nako ma spread akong wings ddto nako ma express akong self gusto ko ilis ilasan mura kog barbie mag tindog raka ilis ilisan kog mga wow. (IDI_01)”

(Like I mentioned before, seeing transgender women in Davao really influenced me. Another big reason is that I've always wanted to join beauty pageants like Miss Gay contests. That has always been in our blood my older sisters and even my brothers are into pageants. So it's really something that runs in the family. For me, joining those pageants felt unique and special. Even though I was born in a male body, I always felt drawn to that world to the side where the Miss Gay pageants are. That's where I feel like my true self comes out. That's where I can spread my wings and express who I really am. I want to wear beautiful outfits, switch looks like a Barbie doll, and feel confident standing on stage. That's the experience I've always dreamed of, and hormonal therapy helps me get closer to that.)

Similarly, MC said,

“Ang ako ra jud kaugalingon like kanang gusto lang nako nga usbon nako akong like kanang kuan identity like kana bitang walay muscles something like gusto ko mababaihan nga porma like babae jud sya. (IDI_05)”

(It's really just about myself I want to change my identity, like not having muscles, and having a more feminine appearance, to really look like a girl.)

Chad articulated that,

“Ang pills dako gyud siya ug impact nga ma align ang akoang personal nga kagustohan ug sa akoang identy kay diha man gud nako maipakita kung unsa gyud akoang pagka tao. Then mura ko ug naka gawas sa akoang Comfort zone. (IDI_03)”

(The pills have had a huge impact on aligning my personal desires with my identity, because that's where I can show who I really am. It feels like I've stepped out of my comfort zone.)

Improve Self-Perception and Self-Expression. This theme reflects the experiences of participants who take hormonal pills to enhance how they see themselves and how they present their identity to others. Participants may describe how hormonal intake helps them feel more authentic, attractive, or aligned with their desired self-image. This theme also explores how physical changes brought by hormones allow for greater freedom and confidence in expressing themselves through appearance, behavior, and communication. MC said that,

“For me is maka maka hatag syag confident like kanang kuan kanang confident naka the way kanang mag suroy² or what kay kuan man gud like deri man gud sa atuang kuan is like kanang mga bayot if kanang if kanang dili wala ga take ug pills kay dagko kaayo ug muscles like kanang kuan di dili ko confident so nakatabang jud ang pills sakoa kay kanang naga nakahatag syag confident kay nangawala man akong muscles or nakahatag syag confidence sakoa kay na nalahi ang akong skin unlike before or na lahi ang akong lawas like before (IDI_05)

(For me, it gives me confidence. Before, I wasn't confident walking around because in our society, if a gay person doesn't take pills, they still have big muscles and look masculine. The pills helped me a lot they reduced my muscles, improved my skin, and changed my body. That gave me more confidence.)”

MC again shared her sentiments that,

“Like kanang maka change jud sya sakoang kuan ba like kanang babae like kanang kuan kanang nindut jud imong panit smooth and kanang puti ug dili nako maulaw mu ramparampa kay kabalo nako sa akong ka pretty. (IDI_05)”

(I want to transform into someone more feminine smooth, fair skin and everything and there's nothing for me to be shamed since I know I'm pretty.)

Societal Beauty and Pageantry Standards. This theme explores how media-driven beauty ideals and pageantry norms influence participants' decisions to take hormonal pills. It highlights the pressure to conform to feminine standards, shaping their self-image and hormone-related goals. Lacy explained that,

“In cultural, wala kaayo siyay decision making in becomes on that, because we are now promoting inclusivity towards LGBTQ members. And to society, wala pud Silay mahimo because we all know na we lived in judgemental society man jud Karon but, pero wala may barriers to it, because kuan man Dili man sila maka buot throughout Ana Kay Dili man sila, dili man Nila gunit ako kaugalingon. One thing or one fact about it is that daghan jud tao na very disagree and agree about it because their have their own perspective towards LGBTQ community. (IDI_04)”

(Culturally, I don't think it plays a big role in decision-making anymore because society now promotes inclusivity for LGBTQ members. As for society, they can't really do anything because we live in a judgmental world. But there are no strict barriers to this because people can't control our bodies)

MC shared that,

“Ang ako ra jud kaugalingon like kanang gusto lang nako nga usbon nako akong like kanang kuan identity like kana bitang walay muscles something like gusto ko mababaihan nga porma like babae jud sya. (IDI_05)”

(It's really just about myself I want to change my identity, like not having muscles, and having a more feminine appearance, to really look like a girl.)

Chad indicated that,

“Ang pills dako gyud siya ug impact nga ma align ang akoang personal nga kagustohan ug sa akoang identy kay diha man gud nako maipakita kung unsa gyud akoang pagka tao. Then mura ko ug naka gawas sa akoang Comfort zone. (IDI_03)”

(The pills have had a huge impact on aligning my personal desires with my identity, because that's where I can show who I really am. It feels like I've stepped out of my comfort zone.)

Femininity Inside and Out. This theme reflects how hormonal pills help participants align their physical appearance with their inner identity, fostering a deeper sense of authentic femininity and emotional connection to womanhood. MC communicated that,

“Ang ako ra jud kaugalingon like kanang gusto lang nako nga usbon nako akong like kanang kuan identity like kana bitang walay muscles something like gusto ko mababaihan nga porma like babae jud sya. (IDI_05)”

(It's really just about myself I want to change my identity, like not having muscles, and having a more feminine appearance, to really look like a girl.)

Chad said that,

“Ang pills dako gyud siya ug impact nga ma align ang akoang personal nga kagustohan ug sa akoang identy kay diha man gud nako maipakita kung unsa gyud akoang pagka tao. Then mura ko ug naka gawas sa akoang Comfort zone. (IDI_03)”

(The pills have had a huge impact on aligning my personal desires with my identity, because that’s where I can show who I really am. It feels like I’ve stepped out of my comfort zone.)

Research Question No. 2: How do gay men students perceive the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of hormonal intake?

This section presents the findings related to the second research question, which explores how student gay men perceive the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of taking hormonal pills. Responses were recorded and transcribed verbatim, capturing the participants’ personal reflections and language during the conducted interviews.

Perceptions on the Physical, Emotional, and Psychological Effects of Hormonal Intake

This section presents the results for the specific question number 2.1: “How do you personally experience the effects of hormonal pills on your body, emotions, and mental well-being?” This question falls under the broader research question number 2: How do they perceive the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of hormonal intake? The narratives of the participants revealed multiple themes, highlighting their unique experiences with bodily changes, emotional shifts, and mental or psychological adjustments during the course of hormonal intake.

Table 3. Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Research question;

How do they perceive the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of hormonal intake?

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Feminized Physical Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the first week of taking pills, I really felt something like a tingling or slight pain in my nipples. • The veins on my hands have disappeared. I have lost some of my muscles. • I noticed the changes in my body after about a month. My chest became sore, and it gradually hurt more. my muscles started to disappear. • I began to look more feminine and my body features softened noticeably. • Your chest gets sore or hard. When I took Micro, I got darker even though my chest grew a little. • When I do not take pills for a few months, the “curses” (haha) come back like facial hair. • I often feel dizzy, especially because I’m still a student. The positive effects are greater.
Feminized Emotions and Temperaments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transwomen become moody, others feel easily irritated, or some might even feel a little slow or forgetful. • I would get upset right away over something small she said.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I became moody, like women during their periods. I got moody, the more I had get easily offended. • But can impact you mentally, emotionally, and psychologically, especially if you abuse it. • More sensitive and getting angry easily, I have managed to balance it because it really depends on how you handle yourself. • When I take hormones, I feel dizzy or I get easily triggered, especially if I do not like a certain person.
Differential Side Effects to People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are moments when you feel a bit off like dazed or "bangag," but it does not really change who you are. • It is true that it can damage your kidneys, especially if you're using pills. take pills for 8 months, then pause for 2 months before continuing.
Physiological Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I easily get dizzy, especially when I do not get enough sleep. lightheaded, and sometimes I feel like I'm going to faint. • I get annoyed and angry easily now. I got nauseated with food. I gained weight I was always eating and sleeping. • I get irritated easily, sometimes I'm super talkative too. I am learning to balance myself. You control yourself.
Alignment of Gender Identity and Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I no longer feel ashamed, and my confidence grew, allowing me to walk in front of many people. • You start to feel good about yourself, and that confidence boosts your social life.
Positive Self-concept and Social Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking hormones didn't totally change my self-perception. There was not a significant change. I'm still the same person now. • The side effects? I do not really feel them strongly. The hormonal changes can create an imbalance in the body. • You start to feel good about yourself, and that confidence boosts your social • More about how you present yourself and interact with peers, friends, and family. It depends on how you carry yourself. • I feel more confident. I am better at talking to people and engaging with others.

The participants described a range of physical and emotional effects associated with hormonal pill intake. Physically, many reported noticeable changes such as breast tenderness, muscle reduction, softened body features, and a more feminine appearance. Some also observed skin changes, weight gain, and reduced visibility of veins, indicating the visible impact of hormones on their bodies. However, these changes were accompanied by negative effects, including dizziness, nausea, lightheadedness, and fatigue, particularly when combined with lack of sleep. A few participants also raised concerns about potential health risks, such as possible kidney damage from prolonged or improper use. Emotionally, participants commonly experienced increased sensitivity, mood swings, and irritability, with some comparing these changes to hormonal fluctuations similar to menstruation. Many shared that they became easily offended or upset over minor

situations, although some emphasized that these emotional responses could still be managed through self-control.

In terms of psychological effects, participants expressed both challenges and positive outcomes. Some reported feeling mentally “dazed,” less focused, or easily triggered, especially when hormonal intake was not well-managed. Despite this, many participants highlighted improvements in self-confidence, self-acceptance, and social interaction. They shared that they felt less ashamed, more comfortable with themselves, and more confident in engaging with others. However, a few participants noted that hormonal intake did not significantly change their core identity, as they still perceived themselves as the same person. Overall, the findings suggest that hormonal pill use leads to visible physical changes, heightened emotional responses, and mixed psychological effects, underscoring the importance of proper awareness, guidance, and self-regulation in managing these experiences.

Feminized Physical Features. This theme highlights participants’ use of hormonal pills to achieve traditionally feminine traits like softer skin, breast development, and body shaping. It reflects how physical changes support their gender expression, self-satisfaction, and identity alignment. Vice followed that,

“Sa first week sa akong pag take og pills no ma feel jud nako na kaning mukiro ang nipples kanang naa jud tapos pagka thirdweek ni numb siya tapos mu move na jud siya tapos pagka a month mga 2 months 3 months naa na jud siyay kaning murag 9 years old gud na namukol katong pa hait na kuan na paana siya na pagpa mukol tapos sa akoang body sad ang ana pod daw nila dli pod ko sure pero ana. (IDI_01)”

(During the first week of taking pills, I really felt something like a tingling or slight pain in my nipples. Then by the third week, they started to feel numb and began to shift or move slightly. After about 1 to 2 months, I started noticing small breast development, kind of like how a 9-year-old girl starts to develop. It felt like the early stages of growth. As for my body, people say and based on my own research too that hormonal pills can actually make you look fresh. They even help reduce pimples, even in biological women. I used to have breakouts during the pandemic, but when I started taking the pills, those breakouts disappeared. That’s one of the physical effects I really noticed in my body.)

Esnyr shared that,

“Opo ang akoang physical changes is that way back tong high school pkois that im very masculine jud sa akoang self like ahm like kanang dagko kaykog muscles then karon na realize nko which is kaning hormonal pills gyud is even dough naa syay kanang side effects of negative effects sa akoang pag take og hormones whitch is kanang na kuan nko sa akong kaogalingon nga whitch is I see meself that kanaang I murag nag improve ko gamay specially that nawala akoang kanang mga ugat ugat sa kamot nawala akoang muscle like ing ana ang akoang na feel sa akoang self. (IDI_02)”

(So, the physical changes I’ve experienced are that back in high school, I was really muscular like I had big muscles. But now, I’ve realized that taking hormonal pills, even though it has some negative side effects, has made a difference in me. I can see that I’ve improved a little, especially since the veins on my hands have disappeared, and I’ve lost some of my muscles. That’s how I feel about myself now.)

Esnyr said that,

“So first is kanang sa benefits gyud like what I said very masculine gyud ko sauna then the biggest effect that na kaun sa akoang self is katong like I am very fiminine na sa akoang self tan awn nko akoang self then ang side effects gyud ani is like as what I said gaina is kanang very lipong sya and specially kanang naga skwela pko labi na kanang mag pulaw ko during making sa akoang mga research ay mga reseach mga buhatonon o assignment mga ingana like very kuan gyud kaayu sya hasol kaayu sya para sa akoa but kanang ma kuan ko like I think I continue nko ni. (IDI_02)”

(So first, when it comes to the benefits like I said, I used to be very masculine. The biggest effect I noticed in myself is that I now look much more feminine. When I look at myself, I can see that change. As for the side effects, like I mentioned earlier, I often feel dizzy, especially because I’m still a student. When I stay up late

doing research, assignments, and schoolwork, it really becomes a hassle for me. But despite that, I think I'll continue taking hormones because I know that the benefits are still significant for me. Even though there are side effects, I still consider it to be worth it because the positive effects are greater.)

Feminized Emotions and Temperaments. This theme explores emotional and psychological shifts from hormonal pills, such as increased sensitivity, expressiveness, and nurturing traits. It highlights how these changes shape participants' relationships, behavior, and internal sense of femininity. Vice declared that,

“Kana jud a lot of kaning biskang daghan man daw interview na ila jud ng iingun na pag mag take jud kag pills is ma bangag jud daw ka kaning ma angsha mao nay term nila kaning murag malutang gud ka kay kaning imo gong imong it's a therapy man jud na therapy man gud na siya na ichange nimo imohang kaning men hormones to kuan female hormones bantog ma mix up siya bantog mag lahi kabantay mo anang babae na dug on diba mag ano ilang hormones ana same rapod sa amoa bantog kong uban kaning init og ulo ang uban kay tanga tanga ana siya. (IDI_01)”

(It really affects you a lot emotionally. In many interviews I've seen, they often say that when you take hormonal pills, you can feel a bit “bangag” like spaced out or dazed. That's the term people use. You feel like you're floating sometimes, because what you're doing is basically a kind of therapy you're changing your male hormones into female hormones. That shift can really mix things up in your body and mind. It's kind of like how women experience mood swings when they're on their period it's all related to hormones. It's the same for us. That's why some trans women become moody, others feel easily irritated, or some might even feel a little slow or forgetful. It's really part of the emotional effect of hormonal therapy.)

Vice mentioned in addition that,

“Mga 2 hrs mga 5 hrs ana ra tas mabalik ra dayon imohang dli siya dli as in mawala sa imong self ha pero mabalik ra rapod kas imong buut murag makalma raka ana kato ra jud sa pag inom nimo walay change jud. (IDI_01)”

(Yourself again. It doesn't make you lose your sense of self it just makes you feel calm for a while. So honestly, there's no real change in how I see myself. Even before I started taking hormones, the way I viewed myself has stayed the same.)

Differential Side Effects Among Individuals. This theme explores the varied physical and emotional effects of hormonal pills, noting that experiences differ based on body chemistry, dosage, and duration. It highlights both positive outcomes and challenges, emphasizing the need for personalized care and informed guidance. Vice pointed out that,

“So you mean attitude ana ? oumm sa ako jud oum wala kaayuy changes kay mura mura gani to no ma grogi ay ma kuan ka angsha ka ana pero dli mana siya mag change kay kadali raman to siya dli man to siyamag last jud pero everyday man jud ka magkuan mga naa rana siya sa mga pag take nimo pagka pag take nimo mga 2 hrs mga 5 hrs ana ra tas mabalik ra dayon imohang dli siya dli as in mawala sa imong self ha pero mabalik ra rapod kas imong buut murag makalma raka ana kato ra jud sa pag inom nimo walay change jud. (IDI_01)”

(You mean like in attitude? For me, there haven't really been major changes. There are moments when you feel a bit off like dazed or “bangag,” but it doesn't really change who you are. That feeling doesn't last long. It usually happens a few hours after taking the pills, maybe 2 to 5 hours, but after that, you feel like yourself again. Even before I started taking hormones, the way I viewed myself has stayed the same. After taking them, maybe I just became a bit more mindful or had more things to think about, but my core self-perception hasn't changed. It's like something you stand firm on it's who you are, and it stays that way.)

Lacy additionally said that,

“Pag balanced nako Kay naa jud koy kanang kuan, from the very first man gud na nag inom ko Kay, I do research Kay Nakit an jud nako ddto Ang effect Ang mga benefit ana, so Ang benefits the way I more looked

kanang kuan... kabalo nako Unsaon pag dala ako kaugalingon, myself, tapos kanang pag-enhance sa akoang feminity, tapos sa akong side effect is kuntahay I took 8 months na mag inom ge undangan nako siya ug two months, then Dira na pud ko mo balik, ing ana akong. (IDI_02)”

(To maintain balance, I started doing research from the very beginning. I learned about the effects and benefits. One benefit is that I know how to carry myself and enhance my femininity. Regarding side effects yes, it's true that it can damage your kidneys, especially if you're using pills. So, what I do is take pills for 8 months, then pause for 2 months before continuing. That's how I manage my intake to avoid harm.)

Physiological Disadvantages. This theme highlights the physical health challenges participants face from hormonal pill intake, such as fatigue, dizziness, or irregular functions. It underscores the risks, especially without medical supervision, and the struggle to balance desired changes with overall well-being. Esnyr said,

“So sa affect ay we already know that naa gyud syay kanang side effects gyud ang pg take sa hormnal pill or kanang mga hormones nga gina gamit sa mga transwomen so ang kanang affects nga kanang kuan sa akoan is that kanang pag take nko og hormonal pill is kanang dali rakayko kanang malipong bitaw like specially that kanang mag pulaw ko or kanang kulang ko sa tulog whitch is kanang very lipong gyud kaayu sya pag kuan sa akoang like kanang dili ko kasabot sa akoang kuan then mura kog ma high blood bitaw specially kanang bag o raka ni take then kanang mo take ka then lakaw ana ana or asa ka mag kuan like ma kuangyud nko sa akoang kaugalingon like ayy lipong kaayu sya then every kanang kuan every place nga kanang moadto ko I feels like kakang mura kog sapoton og dali lang. (IDI_02)”

(So, as for the effects, we already know that there are side effects when taking hormonal pills or hormones used by transwomen. The effect I experience is that when I take hormonal pills, I easily get dizzy, especially when I don't get enough sleep. It makes me feel very lightheaded, and sometimes I feel like I'm going to faint. When I just started taking them, I would feel like I was going to have high blood pressure, especially when I took the pills and went somewhere or walked around. I would feel dizzy, and every time I go somewhere, I feel irritated and quickly annoyed.)

Additionally MC further explained that,

“Like kana bitawng diba irita nako dali ra kayko mairita kanang talkative kayko usahay mao nang gina balance bitaw like kanang kuan gina kuan nako like gina tunong tunong nako sa oras like kanang if kanang okay akong classmate dira ko mo gara if kung dili mood² kuan bitaw mao ganing nag away mis akong friends kay kanang dili ko kanang bad mood koba iya kung gi ingatu pag joke so mao to na lain ko saiya, mao nang kanang kung imong I balance akong gi balance akong self kanang kuan if kanang dili mn gud nimo sya ma kanang kuan dayon kay kanang murag mao na jd ni dili na jd sya ma kuan kay mao naman jud ganing mga joke so dili nalang ka mag response or kanang gina pugngan nalang nimo imong kaugalingon. (IDI_05)”

(You know how I said I get irritated easily? I really do and sometimes I'm super talkative too, so I try to balance that. I manage it by choosing the right timing. Like, if my classmate's in a good mood, that's when I joke around. But if not, I hold back. That's actually why I had a fight with one of my friends they made a joke at me while I was in a bad mood, so I got offended. That's why I'm learning to balance myself. If you realize that some things can't be changed like the way they joke you just learn not to react anymore. You control yourself.)

Alignment of Gender Identity and Expression. This theme highlights how hormonal pills help participants align their appearance with their internal gender identity, bringing a sense of authenticity, relief, and fulfillment. It emphasizes hormone intake as a key step toward self-acceptance and gender congruence. Chad pointed out that,

“Sa wala pako nag take ug hormonal pill, mahadlok ko nga magsoot ug pambabae , kay ang paminaw nako ila fayon kung I discriminate, then pag take nako ug hormonal pill, nag change ako g paglantaw sa akoang kaugalingon, like kanang dili nako maulaw and nag taas akong confident nako nga mulakaw sa daghan nga tao Kay dili nako lalaki ug pamarog kay kanang na align na gyudd akong gusto na sa akong purma. (IDI_03)”

(Before I started taking hormonal pills, I was afraid to wear women's clothes because I felt like I would be judged or discriminated against. But after I started taking the hormonal pills, my perspective about myself changed. I no longer feel ashamed, and my confidence grew, allowing me to walk in front of many people because I no longer look masculine or rough. I feel that my appearance has finally aligned with what I want.)

Positive Self-Concept and Social Interaction. This theme explores how hormonal intake boosts participants' confidence and self-esteem, leading to more comfortable and meaningful social interactions. It highlights the link between physical changes, positive self-image, and improved connections within and beyond the LGBTQ+ community. Esnyr clarified that,

“Ay for me is kanang wala mn jud sya totally that nag change gyud ang imong self perception and I think it depends mn gud in how would you act diba depends like inana jud siya but for me is kanang wala mn sya gyud kanang like change gyud sa akoo if unsa inyuhang kanang debale if you know me already kung unsa inyung nabal an sakoo sauna is mao ra gyud gihapon siya karon like nothings changes. (IDI_02)”

(For me, taking hormones didn't totally change my self-perception. I think it really depends on how you act as a person it varies for everyone. But for me, there wasn't a significant change. If you already knew me before, then you'd see that I'm still the same person now. Nothing has really changed.)

Vice pointed out that,

“Ang benefits which is para sa akoo positive usahay negative tapos sa unsa to to sa mga side effects ang mga side effects man gud niya kay actually dli jud ni nako ma feel jud kay mura ra sa akoag feel nako ambut og normal raba ni feeling nako normal ra akoang mga side effects kay murag kaning transitioning is wide jud siya like dli man gud wala man gud mi nag transition as kaning paras uban na nag transition na naay doctanologist kaning kanang katong gina consult jud niya para mag change og kaning kuan mag change. (IDI_01)”

(For me, the benefits are mostly positive, but sometimes there are negative aspects. As for the side effects, I don't really feel them strongly. They seem normal to me like it's just part of the process. Transitioning is a broad experience, and not all trans people go through it in the same way. Some may have doctors to consult regularly as they adjust their hormones, while for others, it's more about personal experience.)

MC elaborated that,

“Ay kanang kuan kibalí like ako ang relationships sa other people's sauna man gud man gud is kanang dili kayko kanang kuan like kanang ma taha kuba like diko kabalo nga ay kanang wakoy confident the way mag halo bilo sa laing tao kanang maolaw ko wakoy confident unlike karon nga ga take kog pills is naa koy confident the way nga mag communicate sa others. (IDI_05)”

(When it comes to my relationships with other people, before, I wasn't the type who could easily talk to others. I didn't know how to mingle or start conversations I had no confidence; I was really shy. But now that I'm taking pills, I feel more confident. I'm better at talking to people and engaging with others.)

Research Question No. 3: What challenges do gay men students encounter in relation to school regarding their use of hormonal pills?

This section discusses the results related to the third research question, which investigates the various challenges faced by student gay men in the academic environment concerning their use of hormonal pills. Participants' responses were transcribed verbatim, preserving the authenticity of their shared experiences during the interviews.

Challenges Encountered in School Regarding Hormonal Pill Usage

This section highlights the responses to specific question number 3.1: “What difficulties or obstacles have you experienced in school while taking hormonal pills?” This question is part of the broader research inquiry: What challenges do they encounter in relation to school regarding their use of hormonal pills? The participants shared

diverse struggles, ranging from social stigma and discrimination to institutional barriers and emotional stress, which were organized into key themes based on their personal narratives. In addition, several participants noted that these challenges often intersected, creating a cumulative impact on their overall school experience. For example, social stigma sometimes intensified emotional stress, while institutional barriers such as restrictive school policies or limited access to supportive services heightened feelings of vulnerability. These overlapping struggles not only affected their comfort and confidence on campus but also influenced their academic performance and sense of belonging.

Table 4. Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Research question;

What challenges do they encounter in relation to school regarding their use of hormonal pills?

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Physiological and Emotional Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I felt super irritated, which is one of the side effects of the hormones.
Concerns on Long-Term Side Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I try to balance my academic responsibilities like studying and reading with the use of hormonal pills.
Expensive Demands of Hormonal Therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is really expensive, Fortunately, my family is supportive. If you stop, the effects can get delayed, and it is hard to get them back on track. • I have learned to balance it through budgeting and being thrifty. • I balance hormonal therapy and my academic responsibilities is by managing my finances carefully. • I separate them into different parts, like this part is for person.
Adjustment to Feminine Expression and Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was not allowed to wear what I wanted I had to wear strictly male uniforms. Culture has not really created any barriers for me, and the same goes for school. • Culturally speaking, there are standards, but now that society is more diverse and inclusive of the LGBT community. • The school really shows inclusivity, like with the NECTAR club, which supports this. • We are part of a group called Nectars, and our teacher really approved it. I remember during the orientation for first-year students, I listened carefully when they talked about LGBTQ+ issues.
Dilemma on School Culture (Uniform)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School has become more inclusive, allowing LGBTQ members to wear the type of uniform they feel comfortable with. • I chose to still wear the male uniform. I just do not allow myself to wear the female uniform out of that respect for women. • I was not allowed to wear what I wanted I had to wear strictly male uniforms. I could not grow my hair long or wear anything “sexy” or feminine.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I never asked for support in terms of making me more "beautiful." • I have never actually tried asking the school for help or support when it comes to my hormones. • No, it is not a requirement. It really depends on the individual whether they want to use it or not.
Supportive School Policies and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No difficulty when it comes to using hormonal pills, I actually feel supported the school continues to support us members of the LGBT community • It felt a bit awkward because we're already starting to present ourselves as women we have long hair, a feminine figure but the uniform was still designed for a more gender-neutral look. • Culture has not really created any barriers for me, and the same goes for school, but now that society is more diverse and inclusive of the LGBT community. • School freely in an institution, where we are allowed to express ourselves. • Yes, because we are part of a group called Nectars, and our teacher really approved it.

The participants reported a combination of academic, financial, physical, and social experiences in relation to their use of hormonal pills within the school setting. In terms of academic demands, they shared that they manage to balance their studies and hormone use by practicing time management, prioritizing school responsibilities, and separating academic tasks from personal concerns. One participant also mentioned experiencing irritation as a side effect of hormonal intake, which may occasionally affect comfort and focus in school-related activities. Despite these challenges, they generally continue to fulfill their academic responsibilities.

In addition, financial concerns were commonly raised, as hormonal pills were described as expensive; however, participants addressed this through budgeting and careful financial management. Some also emphasized the importance of consistency in hormone use to maintain its effects. Regarding the school environment, experiences varied. Some participants previously faced restrictions in gender expression, such as being required to wear male uniforms, while others reported that their school has become more inclusive and supportive of LGBTQ+ students, particularly through organizations like the NECTAR club. Overall, while minor challenges exist, participants generally perceive their school environment as increasingly accepting, with improving support systems and opportunities for self-expression.

Physiological Disadvantages. This theme highlights the physical health challenges participants face from hormonal pill intake, such as fatigue, dizziness, or irregular functions. It underscores the risks, especially without medical supervision, and the struggle to balance desired changes with overall well-being. Vice explained that,

“Base on my experience no naka try jud ko na nag inject ko sa akoang diri sa akong shoulder kay kuan man siya muscular man siya na injection so pag adto nako sa school na hapak siya so pag hapak niya nireact ko as in akong react as in oa kay mao gani na no kaning mura gani kay kag sapoton kayka mao na tong side effects tapos oa kaayu akong react mao to naka affect to sa akong kuan ato kay murag naka hurt nako ang feelings sa naka hapak kay medyo nag minaldita ana mao to na kuan tapos na guidance siya hahaha oh ana I mean wala mi na osa actually ddto rami sa hr na kuan amo rang na solve didto. (IDI_01)”

(Based on my experience, I actually tried injecting myself in the shoulder, because it's a muscular injection. When I went to school afterward, someone accidentally bumped into me, and my reaction was really intense. I felt super irritated, which is one of the side effects of the hormones. I ended up overreacting, and it affected my relationship with that person it kind of hurt their feelings because I reacted in a way that might have seemed rude. But we worked things out and solved it there with HR, so it wasn't a huge issue in the long run. It was just one of those moments where my emotions got the best of me due to the side effects.)

Concerns on Long-Term Side Effects: This theme addresses participants' worries about potential long-term health risks of hormonal pill intake, such as organ damage, infertility, or hormonal imbalances. It highlights the anxiety caused by a lack of accessible medical guidance and reliable information about the safety and sustainability of prolonged use. Lacy continued by stating that,

“Mao ni akong ginaingon kagainan na ang pills maka bulok jud siya if kung ang tao is too abusive to use hormonal pill. Like what I said, kanang saakong kaugalingon, I do a balance of my academic responsibility of studying for reading through having enhancement about my academically or intellectually. Tapos sa hormonal pill, mao ni akong ginaingon gaina na if you too more effective about that, definitely it affect the academic responsibility. So mao ni akong gina-balance like kanang labi na upcoming exam, I will not able to use a hormonal pill one week para mabalik. (IDI_04)”

(Like I mentioned earlier, hormonal pills can really dull your mind if someone abuses their use. In my case, I try to balance my academic responsibilities like studying and reading with the use of hormonal pills. If someone becomes too reliant on them, it can affect their academics. For example, when I have upcoming exams, I stop taking the pills a week before so I can return to my “normal” state)

Expensive Demands of Hormonal Therapy. This theme highlights the financial strain of maintaining hormonal therapy, with participants noting the high cost of pills, maintenance, and supplementary products. It reflects how economic challenges, especially for students, can impact access, consistency, and the overall experience of hormonal transition, often causing financial stress or interrupted treatment. Vice pointed out that,

“So pag mag transitioning judka is pricey jud yess super like wala pay labot imong tas allowance actually dli man actually ang maga palit sa akong pills kay supportive man akong family is akoa gyung father ay dli siya akong father ako siyang stepdad akoang stepdad supportive man siya sa akoa so siya naga ana ana pero sa akoang kaning sa mga school expenses nako is akoa ng mama kay mao ilang kuan ba kay duha raman mi mag igsoon so murag spoiled gani ana dli pod kaayu as in gud so ana pero pricey pero as in dli jud siya high end na hormonal pill ang akong gamit pero mura siyag naa sa middle ba naa man poy kaning low na kaning kanang mag micropill lang mao ra jud. (IDI_01)”

(Transitioning is definitely pricey. It's really expensive, even without factoring in your allowance. Fortunately, my family is supportive. It's actually my stepdad who buys my pills because he's been very supportive of me. As for my school expenses, my mom covers them. I only have one sibling, so I guess you could say I'm a bit spoiled, but not too much. It's still costly, though, even though the hormonal pills I use are not high-end. They're more in the middle range. There are also cheaper options, like micropills, but I mostly use those.)

Adjustment to Feminine Expression and Representation. This theme explores participants' experiences of adapting their behavior, appearance, and social presentation to align with a more feminine identity after starting hormonal therapy. It reflects the journey of self-discovery, learning to dress, speak, and carry oneself in both

public and private spaces, while navigating the challenges and excitement of embodying femininity in the face of societal expectations. MC pointed out additionally that,

“Ok kanang like kanang dili ko bawal ko mag sout like kanang pang lalaki jud dapat ang wear nga uniform like kanang dili ko mag taas ug buhok kay pang lalaki lagi daw jud nya kanang kuan pud dili mag sexy² kanang mga ingana mao nang mga challenging , oh na lisoran ko kay na anad man gud kos akong kaugalingon so kung mag gi manage nako like kanang mag palit

pako like ingani para sa school lisod jud sa e manage. (IDI_05)”

(I wasn't allowed to wear what I wanted I had to wear strictly male uniforms. I couldn't grow my hair long or wear anything “sexy” or feminine and having to change that when I go to school is difficult to manage. It's tough having to buy and switch clothes again just to fit in for school.)

Vice clarified that,

“Since ano 1st year I joined nectars 3 years na jud ko tapos I am a secretary of nectars for 2 years ang first namo na gi implement is ang school uniform tapos bag o ra biya na siya na approved oh kanang school uniform kay ah sa amoa jud feel na jud kay namo na babae mi na tapos awkward kay taas na kay among buhok tas babaehan na kaymig figure tas pasuuton namig ingun ana so maona na policy sa school na among nalaban.(IDI_01)”

(Since I was in 1st year, I've been part of the Nectar group for 3 years now, and I've been serving as the secretary for the past 2 years. One of the first things we implemented was the school uniform policy, which was recently approved)

Lacy expressed further that,

“Sa cultural, like what I said earlier, wala siya, barriers na naka-apekto, and sa school, wala. But katung gina ingon gaina na it's all about physical attributes sa isa ka tao. Why we dress up like that, how we put our makeup, ing ana, ing ana, then wala man. (IDI_04)”

(As I said earlier, culture hasn't really created any barriers for me, and the same goes for school. But it's more about how people view our physical appearance why we dress that way, how we wear makeup, and things like that)

Dilemma on School Culture (Uniform). This theme examines participants' challenges in balancing school uniform policies with expressing their feminine identity after starting hormonal therapy. It highlights the tension between adhering to dress codes and embracing personal expression, reflecting the internal conflict between conformity and self-expression. Lacy continued by stating that,

“Sa school man gud na policy na medyo changlenging sa akoo kay ang ang uniform, kay diba kung lalaki dapat mag uniform gyud kag pang lalaki, pero lain kaayu sa akoang side nkay mag hesitate kog soot sa pangklalaki nga uniform kay babaihan na kaayu kog soot then mag uniform ko, pero karun okay naman siya kay naa nay inclusivity sa school nga gina allow na ang LGBTQ member nga mu soot sa kung unsa ilang type ug of uniform na gusto sooton. (IDI_03)”

(In school, there's a policy that's a bit challenging for me, especially with the uniform. Since I'm male, I'm supposed to wear the male uniform, but on my side, I feel hesitant to wear it because I look more feminine now. I prefer to wear something more feminine. However, now it's okay because the school has become more inclusive, allowing LGBTQ members to wear the type of uniform they feel comfortable with.)

Lucy explained that,

“Wala, kay dili man siya requirement, it depends sa tao man gud kung mo gamit siya ana or wala. And first and foremost, wala pod labot ang school sa imo, so wala jud siya accommodation about ana. (IDI_04)”

(No, it’s not a requirement. It really depends on the individual whether they want to use it or not. And first of all, schools don’t get involved in that, so there’s no special accommodation related to hormonal pill use.)

Supportive School Policies and Environment. This theme highlights the impact of inclusive school policies, like gender-neutral uniforms and anti-discrimination measures, in fostering a supportive environment for feminine self-expression. It emphasizes how a nurturing school culture empowers students to align their identity with their appearance, promoting validation and personal growth. On the other hand, Esnyr stated;

“So para sakoa is kanang wala man syay kanang difficulties nga mag kuan if mag usa gyud ka og kanang hormonal pills specially drea sa atoang school drea sa Moncast like kanang ma kuan lang ko sa other kanang mga transwomen because kanang theyre so very pretty na like sa pag agamit kanang hormonal pills but I think wala man jud nag kuan ang school aning nga kanang gibawalan jud ang kaning mga kuan nga mag use og hormonal pills which is kanang debale like ang school like nag support lang gyapon sila sa kanang mga trans like namo mga lgbt para kaning if ever that kanang para sa amoa mga transwomen is kanang mag take me og kanang hormonal pills like they allow it man gud like kanang para mas ma gawas ko sa mga parts sa lgbt og unsa gyud sila. (IDI_02)”

(So for me, there’s really no difficulty when it comes to using hormonal pills, especially here at our school, Moncast. I actually feel supported. Sometimes I get a bit self-conscious when I see other trans women who look really pretty from using hormonal pills. But I don’t think the school has ever banned or restricted the use of hormones. In fact, the school continues to support us members of the LGBT community so if we, as trans women, choose to take hormonal pills, they allow it. It helps us express ourselves more and show who we really are as part of the LGBT community.)

Lacy pointed out that,

“Sa cultural, like what I said earlier, wala siya, barriers na naka-apekto, and sa school, wala. But katung gina ingon gaina na it's all about physical attributes sa isa ka tao. Why we dress up like that, how we put our makeup, ing ana, ing ana, then wala man. Like what I said, ang cultural man gud, they are, or they have their own standard, but from the moment we are now diverse, inclusive to our LGBT community, I think there's nothing wrong about it because we are now promoting so much become on how we embrace LGBT community nowadays. (IDI_04)”

(As I said earlier, culture hasn't really created any barriers for me, and the same goes for school. But it’s more about how people view our physical appearance why we dress that way, how we wear makeup, and things like that. Culturally speaking, there are standards, but now that society is more diverse and inclusive of the LGBT community, I believe there's nothing wrong with it. We are now promoting more acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals.)

Chad went on to say that,

“Wala mako nag ask ug accomodations sa school kay enough naman ilang gi hatag nga maka skwela ang sama nako nga free mu skewla sa ingun ani na institution ug ma express amoang kaugalingon kay ga pakita ang school un inclusivity bitaw , like sa NECTAR nga club , ingun ana sha po. (IDI_03)”

(I haven't asked for any accommodations from the school because what they have already provided is enough for someone like me to attend school freely in an institution like this, where we are allowed to express ourselves. The school really shows inclusivity, like with the NECTAR club, which supports this.)

Research Question No. 4: How do gay men students navigate access to hormonal pills and information about their effects?

This section explores the findings related to the fourth research question, focusing on how student gay men access hormonal pills and obtain knowledge about their effects. The participants' responses were documented verbatim to preserve the authenticity of their insights as expressed during the interviews.

Navigating Access to Hormonal Pills and Information

This section presents the results for the specific question number 4.1: "Can you describe how you get hormonal pills and how you learn about their effects on your body and health?" This question falls under the overarching research question: How do they navigate access to hormonal pills and information about their effects? The participants revealed various pathways and strategies they use to obtain hormonal pills, including online sources, peer recommendations, and informal networks. They also shared how they educate themselves about the physical and psychological impacts, often in the absence of formal medical guidance.

Table 5. Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Research question;

How do they navigate access to hormonal pills and information about their effects?

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Reliance to Online Search Engines and Social Media Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First step I took was doing research. trans friends who shared their experiences with me. • Social media really plays a big role in our lives. I usually search for its positive and negative effects online. • The information I get about what I take mostly comes from research. learn from other transgender people online through social media and vloggers. • It is really social media, especially the TikTok app that's where I searched for information. • Now everything is mostly online, and we have strong internet at home. So for me, it is very easy to research. • I still rely on social media for information on the effects of using pills, Through social media, I'm informed about what I should do.
Informed Consumption and Responsible Purchases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing hormonal therapy is really easy through technology because everything, like the procedures, precautions, and available options for types of pills. • It really easy to find hormonal pill, nowadays. For me, it really help me to seek information especially me, as a student who cannot afford to prescribe by doctors.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, there's none because my mom really supports me, so the only challenge I face is money.
<p>Caution to Inappropriate Medical Prescriptions and Intake</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I seek information mainly from social media, like on the YouTube platform, because there are really a lot of content from doctors related to hormonal pill. • I was searching for other products that could work, and I realized that the one that suits you best is what you should stick with. • Since we live in a time where there are a lot of fake products, make sure to be cautious when ordering hormones. • Because of the fake products online, I order only from one trusted company to avoid being at risk of taking fake pills. • Since we are in high end technology nowadays and many product was launched, it is crucial to be vigilant what product are safe and fake.
<p>Personal Expenditure, Diligence, and Discipline</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not feel like there are any major obstacles stopping me from taking hormonal pills or using the hormones I'm currently on. • One of the biggest problems with hormonal pills is when you already have an existing illness, because some diseases can be triggered. • I do not really have an idea about the long-term effects yet, a partial process, I view it as a preparation for the future. • You have to give your body a break, because continuous use can harm your kidneys. • I still keep myself updated on social media, and I continue learning more information, so it's important to keep informed. • Take advice from those who are already knowledgeable about it, do research, and don't pressure yourself into taking multiple pills all at once. • Just show what you want as a gay person, so you can express what's inside you. • Consult your doctor first. Do your research and be informed. • It is like you should do what you really want for yourself, like follow your goals without letting obstacles stop you.
<p>Consultation to Professional Medical Assistance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is best to consult a doctor for a check-up and advice. • Seek information through a combination of sources. I'd prefer to consult with a doctor or a specialist.

The participants' responses show that gay men students mainly navigate access to hormonal pills and information through self-directed research and digital platforms, particularly social media such as TikTok and YouTube, along with online articles, vlogs, and content from transgender individuals and health professionals. They actively seek information about both the positive and negative effects of hormonal pills, often combining online sources with insights from trans friends and personal networks who share lived experiences. While participants highlighted the convenience of accessing information and even products online, they also expressed concerns about the presence of fake or unsafe hormonal pills, prompting some to rely only on trusted sources and verified sellers. Financial limitations further influence their reliance on online information rather than formal medical consultations, although several participants still recognize the importance of seeking advice from doctors or specialists. Overall, their experiences reflect a pattern of self-education, cautious decision-making, and identity-driven motivation, balanced with an awareness of health risks and the need for more reliable professional guidance.

Reliance on Online Search Engines and Social Media Platforms. This theme explores how participants rely on online search engines and social media for information, support, and guidance during their transition. It highlights the role of digital spaces in fostering connection and validation while acknowledging the challenges of misinformation and the pressure to conform to idealized femininity online. Vice mentioned in addition that,

“So sa so ang first jud Nakong gibuhat kay research tapos naa man jud koy mga friends na mga trans tas ilahang mga base rapod sa ilang experiences so by that akong na kuan na ay mas effective daw ni pero I base ra japon nako sa akong kuan ha sa akoang sa ma afford ra oh mao to kay pricey jud siya so ako siyang ma pagkabalo nako na mao diay na siya na effective na pills mao diay na siyang pills na para sa akoa kay kani kani kana ako na siyang kaning nag buy ko sa first ko nag buy ato kay sa akoang friend na nag order na siya daan. (IDI_01)”

(The first step I took was doing research. I also have trans friends who shared their experiences with me. Based on their advice, I found a pill that was effective, but I made sure it was affordable for me. It was pricey, but I was able to buy it through a friend who had already ordered it. The price was a bit higher because my friend marked it up. I also reached out to people on TikTok, including those who acted like "doctors" and gave advice on which pills were best, how to take them, and what effects to expect. That's when I decided to go ahead and order the pills. Nowadays, there are no real barriers because accessing them has become much easier.)

MC asserted that ,

“Ay wala kay si mama support man sa akoa so ang akong babag money hehehe(IDI_05)”

(No, there's none because my mom really supports me, so the only challenge I face is money.)

Informed Consumption and Responsible Purchases. This theme highlights how participants make thoughtful purchasing decisions like clothing, cosmetics, or supplements to support their gender identity after starting hormonal therapy. It reflects the role of conscious consumption in empowerment and self-expression, while also addressing challenges like marketing influence and limited access to inclusive products. Chad emphasized further that,

“Dali raman gyud nimu ma access ang hormonal thereapy through technology , kay naka butang naman gud sa cellphone nga ang proceed, procedure and precautions,ug maka pili napud ka ug choices sa tupe of pills, ang barrier lang gyud kay ang kwarta , kay ug naa kay gusto na pill nga feel nimu Align sa aimuhaa nya wala kay kwarta dili fyud ka kapalit, so mao na akoang nakita nga babag sa ra gyud. (IDI_03)”

(Accessing hormonal therapy is really easy through technology because everything, like the procedures, precautions, and available options for types of pills, is already available on your phone. The only real barrier is money. If you want a specific type of pill that aligns with your goals but don't have the funds, you won't be able to buy it. So, that's the barrier I see.)

MC pointed out that,

“Ay wala kay si mama support man sa akua so ang akong babag money hehehe (IDI_05)”

(No, there's none because my mom really supports me, so the only challenge I face is money.)

Caution to Inappropriate Medical Prescriptions and Intake. This theme emphasizes the need for careful, informed hormone use during transition. Participants highlight the risks of unsupervised or inappropriate prescriptions and stress the importance of consulting knowledgeable healthcare providers to ensure safe, effective care amid widespread misinformation. Chad explained that,

“Naga seek kog info kay sa social media ra gyud, like sa youtube platform kay naa man gyuy mga content sa mga doctors related sa hormonal pill intake, pero kanang actual doctor gyud in person

kay wala pako naka pa consult sukad, sa social media ra gyud ko gapa tabang. (IDI_03)”

(I seek information mainly from social media, like on the YouTube platform, because there are really a lot of content from doctors related to hormonal pill intake. However, I haven't consulted with an actual doctor in person yet; I only ask for help through social media.)

Vice stated that,

“Daghan man gud katong last time nay kaning kuan nay murag issue na gi stop na ang kuan gi stop na ang murag ang pheno na sa market kay dli daw siya kaning dli daw siya dli siya safe ba bantog bantog katong nag search napod ko og kaning mga lahi na mga kuan murag ipuli gud ato niya kay dli dli na siya ma access murag na banned na jud siya na ano ba na tambal bantog nangita nami sa lain kay kung unsa man gud tong hiyang sa imoha mao gyud to imong balik balikon kay ang effect man ba kay ganahan ka tas ang side effects kay ganahan ra sad ka kay dli ra kay lala tapos hiyang jud ka hayahay ra jud ka .(IDI_01)”

(There are a lot of challenges. For example, there was an issue last time where a certain product, Pheno, was discontinued in the market because it was deemed unsafe. I had to do more research and look for alternative options since Pheno was no longer accessible, and it was banned. I was searching for other products that could work, and I realized that the one that suits you best is what you should stick with. If you find something that works and the side effects are manageable, it's worth continuing.)

Chad pointed out that,

“Kay ang mga fake nga products sa online, mao jud na akoang gikahadlok, through online man gud ko ga order , particular sa tiktok gyudd, maong gina sure gyud nako nga didtua sa murag isa ra bitaw kay campony ko nga order arun dili ko ma butang sa risk kay naka take ko ug fake nga pill. (IDI_03)”

(Because of the fake products online, that's really what I'm afraid of. I order online, particularly through TikTok, so I make sure I order only from one trusted company to avoid being at risk of taking fake pill.)

Esnyr asserted that,

“So karon is kanang I know that kanang three years naman gyud ko ga use og kanang hormones nako no na kanang I know which is kanang sa every month kanang usahay ga stop jud ko not totally jud ko nga ga padayun padayun kay kabalo jud ko nga kanang naa jud syay side effects gyud which is sa taga take og hormones and kanang gina kuan gyapon nako nga sa gina priority gyapon nako ang akoang health even dough that kanang ga take ko og hormones gani kanang debale gina balance gyapon nako syaang pag take nako og hormones kay I know gyud nga kanang maka daut gyud siya. (IDI_02)”

(Now, I know that I've been using hormones for three years. I understand that sometimes I take breaks each month, not always continuously, because I'm aware that there are side effects from taking hormones. I still prioritize my health, even though I take hormones. I try to balance it out because I know that overdoing it can really harm me.)

Personal Expenditure, Diligence, and Discipline. This theme explores how participants manage the financial and personal responsibilities of hormonal therapy. It highlights the need for budgeting, consistent routines, and self-discipline to maintain treatment, reflecting the commitment and effort required to support their transition journey effectively. Esnyr additionally remarked that,

“So para sa akoa is kanang wala mn syay barriers jud ang pag take nimo og kanang if gusto gyud na nimo nga butang which is kanang buhaton gyud na nimo sya like same as me no which is kanang ga as what ive said kanang ga ipon mn jud ko sa akoang self para mk buy ko og kanang akoang hormones para kanang mas ma boost pa nako ang akoang self cofidense which is kanang there are so many steps man gud para kanang ma kuan like gawas ka saimohang pagka tao jud which is I realize mn gud sa akoang kaugalingon na ako jud ni that's why kanang there are walay kanang daghang barriers mn gud nga kanang harang sa akoa para mag take og hormonal pill nako or kanang hormones nga ginagamit nako sa akoang kuan nga gina take nako sya. (IDI_02)”

(For me, there aren't really any barriers when it comes to taking hormonal pills especially if it's something you truly want. You'll really find a way to make it happen. Like in my case, as I mentioned before, I save up my own money just so I can buy my hormones and boost my self-confidence. There are many steps involved in fully embracing your true self, and I've come to realize that this is truly who I am. That's why I don't feel like there are any major obstacles stopping me from taking hormonal pills or using the hormones I'm currently on.)

Also Esnyr said that,

“So karon is kanang I know that kanang three years naman gyud ko ga use og kanang hormones nako no na kanang I know which is kanang sa every month kanang usahay ga stop jud ko not totally jud ko nga ga padayun padayun kay kabalo jud ko nga kanang naa jud syay side effects gyud which is sa taga take og hormones and kanang gina kuan gyapon nako nga sa gina priority gyapon nako ang akoang health even dough that kanang ga take ko og hormones gani kanang debale gina balance gyapon nako syaang pag take nako og hormones kay I know gyud nga kanang maka daut gyud siya.(IDI_02)”

(Now, I know that I've been using hormones for three years. I understand that sometimes I take breaks each month, not always continuously, because I'm aware that there are side effects from taking hormones. I still prioritize my health, even though I take hormones. I try to balance it out because I know that overdoing it can really harm me.)

Consultation with Professional Medical Assistance. This theme highlights the importance of seeking guidance from qualified healthcare professionals during transition. Participants emphasize the value of personalized care, regular check-ups, and expert support in managing hormone therapy safely and confidently throughout their journey. Then, Lacy added,

“Now we are broad of hormonal pill and injectable or what so on, ahmm... One thing that I send message those people wanted to ahmm..use hormonal pill is you must really conduct to your doctor. Do research to inform about it and be careful about what you wanted to use because it is very dangerous that we are, or you are using it without information that you have different kind of barriers about it. You must able to remember that not all medicine can take have a positive impact towards you. That is something, the message that I would like to say to those people and be careful about yourself. Thank you. (IDI_04)”

(Now that we have a wide variety of hormonal pills and injectables, the message I want to give to people who want to start is this: consult your doctor first. Do your research and be informed. Be careful with what you’re taking because it can be dangerous if you don’t know what you’re doing. Not all medicines will have a positive effect on your body. That’s the most important thing be careful and take care of yourself. Thank you)

Also, Lacy stressed out,

“First and foremost, I do research. I do research about kung unsa dapat akong pang imnon kay sometimes man gud we need to check ourself first before taking it. Like for example, like kanang naakay mga sakit daan so kanang mag himo ka ugresearch for balance. And one of the most important thing, if you have financial thing, magpakonsult ka sa doctor kung unsa para magpacheck up ka kung unsa ang i-balance. Kay naa man gud Transgender na kung wala pa nag-take ug hormonal pill, na taas ilang hormonal pill when becomes feminity, mabal-an ilang kuan ilang, unsay tawag aning hormonal sa lalaki niya. About ana, dili kayo magtuo much use kay tungod kay mas taas man ilahang, dali ra sila maka-adapt throughout sa feminity. (IDI_04)”

(First and foremost, I do research. I need to know what I should be taking, especially since some people might already have health issues. So it’s important to research and find balance. If you have the means, it’s best to consult a doctor for a check-up and advice. Some transgender people may already have naturally high levels of estrogen or low testosterone, so they adapt easily to feminity. Others may have higher masculine traits and need more adjustment.)

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presented the discussions, conclusion and recommendations of the study that sought to understand the experiences of students gay men taking hormonal pill. This study was conducted in Poblacion Monkayo, Davao de Oro.

There were identified (5) gay men/student which served as the participants for in-depth interview. They were the sources of the pieces of information and data for the case study under this research. Since this study required a thorough investigation and in compliance with the availability in qualitative studies, the research employed the qualitative single case study. In addition, the researchers would be able to undergo in-depth interview.

Furthermore, this chapter followed the sequence of the presentation which was based on the order of the research questions in the interview guide. The presentation of the discussions was based from the answers of the identified Gender and Development instructor and the suggestions of the working force of the education program. The discussions highlighted the themes which were substantiated with related literatures and studies.

Discussion

The structured and the emerging themes were made as bases in broadening the discussion of the findings in this study. As to proper and appropriate presentation, each theme was linked to related literature and studies which made the substantial corroboration and the alignment of this study.

The Motivations of Student Gay Men for Taking Hormonal Pills

The following themes: Influence from the Community and Social Media, Shun Bullying and Discrimination, Improve, Improve Self-Perception and Self-Expression Societal, Societal Beauty and Pageantry Standards, Femininity Inside and out presented in the structured themes. The findings revealed that hormonal therapy is driven by multifaceted motivations among gay men, extending beyond physical changes to psychological and social empowerment. As reflected in participant responses, many shared how societal pressures, personal insecurities, and the desire for authenticity influenced their decision to take hormonal pills. The themes underscored the transformative role of hormone therapy in fostering confidence, aligning external appearance with gender identity, and navigating societal expectations particularly in spaces like pageantry or social media that prioritize femininity.

The study revealed that participants were strongly **influenced community and social media** in their decisions to use hormonal pills, reflecting a broader trend in which online and offline environments shape health-related behaviors among LGBTQ+ individuals. Numerous studies show that LGBTQ+ people often turn to digital spaces for health information that may be stigmatized or inaccessible in formal healthcare settings. Gray (2020) notes that LGBTQ+ youth use online platforms to explore identity and seek validation, especially regarding sensitive topics like hormone use. Similarly, Craig and McInroy (2022) found that social networking sites provide crucial emotional support and health education, allowing individuals to observe others' hormonal transition experiences. Exposure to visible transition narratives on TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook normalizes hormone use and informs expectations about physical changes, aligning with Fox and Ralston's (2021) findings on how social media fosters shared experiences among transgender individuals.

Offline communities strongly influence decisions about hormonal pill use. According to Puckett et al. (2020), transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals often depend on peers such as friends, partners, and LGBTQ+ groups for guidance due to limited access to affirming healthcare or distrust in medical systems. These networks provide advice, support, and shared experiences that help shape decisions. Levitt and Ippolito (2020) add that community narratives around transition, including hormone use, timelines, and effects, build confidence and normalize these choices.

However, community and social media influence also pose risks. While online spaces offer support and visibility (McInroy & Craig, 2020), they can spread misinformation and unrealistic expectations. Haimson et al. (2021) note that content restrictions may limit access to reliable information, while algorithms (Duffy & Chan, 2021) can reinforce idealized images and risky practices. Gaspard and Clément (2022) warn that relying on non-expert advice may lead to unsafe hormone use. Despite this, community support and social media remain vital in shaping perceptions and decisions, especially when formal healthcare is lacking.

Some participants shared that their strong motivation for using hormonal pills is the desire to avoid or mitigate **shun bullying and discrimination**. Participants described experiencing negative treatment, derogatory comments, and social exclusion due to their appearance or perceived gender expression. In response, they turn to hormonal pills as a means to alter their physical characteristics, hoping to conform to societal expectations and reduce instances of discrimination. This highlights the profound impact of social stigma on the well-being of gay men and underscores how medical interventions can be sought as a form of self-protection (Hatzenbuehler, 2020; Meyer, 2021). The findings reveal a painful reality where individuals feel compelled to modify their bodies to gain acceptance and avoid harm. Such societal pressure can lead to internalized stigma and negatively affect mental health, as stigma-related stress triggers psychological processes like rumination and social withdrawal, which mediate mental health outcomes (Hatzenbuehler, 2020; Mustanski et al., 2021). Addressing bullying and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals is essential to create a society where they

feel safe and affirmed in their identities, reducing the need to pursue medical interventions solely to escape mistreatment (Bockting et al., 2023; Sevelius et al., 2024).

Participants emphasized that using hormonal pills helped them **improve self-perception and self-expression**. By aligning their physical appearance with their internal sense of identity, they reported feeling more authentic, comfortable, and satisfied with themselves, which enhanced their overall psychological well-being (Harrison et al., 2021; Hughto et al., 2022). Many described that hormone-induced physical changes allowed them to express their gender identity more freely in social contexts, reducing the tension between their internal identity and external presentation (Bockting et al., 2023; Sevelius et al., 2024). Studies show that greater congruence between one's body and identity is strongly associated with improved self-perception, self-esteem, and a stronger sense of agency. For instance, individuals undergoing hormone therapy often report enhanced body image, increased comfort in social interactions, and improved ability to communicate their identity authentically (Fisher et al., 2020; Kuper et al., 2021; White Hughto et al., 2023). These findings highlight that medical interventions supporting bodily alignment not only address physical characteristics but also facilitate authentic self-expression, foster psychological resilience, and reduce internalized stigma (Hatzenbuehler, 2020).

As we gathered data from our gay men participants, we found that **societal beauty and pageantry standards** significantly contribute to the desire to modify bodies. Participants reported feeling pressure to conform to culturally constructed ideals of attractiveness, femininity, or masculinity, often reinforced by media representations, social networks, and cultural norms (Tiggemann & Slater, 2020; Harrison et al., 2021). Pageantry, in particular, creates a specific set of expectations around physical appearance, motivating some individuals to use hormonal pills to gain a competitive edge or feel more confident in this context (Gonzalez, Sánchez, et al., 2023). These findings illustrate the powerful role that cultural ideals play in shaping body image and influencing decisions about medical interventions. The pressure to meet societal expectations can be particularly intense for individuals in marginalized communities, who may already face heightened scrutiny, judgment, or social stigma (Tiggemann & McGill, 2020; Bockting et al., 2023). Critically examining these beauty standards and promoting a more diverse and inclusive view of gender expression is essential to reduce the social pressures that drive body modification practices.

In addition, based on the data gathered, most participants sought to achieve an alignment of their **femininity inside and out** that is, a congruence between their internal sense of self and external appearance. Hormonal pills were perceived as a means to express their desired femininity and achieve a physical transformation that reflects their identity. This desire for congruence between inner and outer self emerged as a central theme, driving individuals to pursue hormonal therapy as a way to feel more authentic and whole (APA, 2020; Bockting et al., 2023; Hughto et al., 2021). Research indicates that when individuals perceive their bodies as accurately reflecting their gender identity, it is associated with higher self-esteem, reduced gender dysphoria, and greater self-acceptance (Fisher et al., 2022; Sevelius et al., 2020). In this context, hormonal therapy is not merely about physical change; it represents a pathway to profound self-realization, improved psychological well-being, and enhanced ability to engage confidently in social and personal domains (Harrison et al., 2021).

Perception on the Physical Emotional, and Psychological Effects of Hormonal Intake

The following themes: Feminized Physical Features, Feminized Emotions and Temperaments, Differential Side Effects to People, Physiological Disadvantages, Alignment of Gender Identity and Expression, and Positive Self-concept and Social Interaction were presented as the responses of this structured theme. The findings revealed that hormonal intake has both transformative and challenging effects on an individual's physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. Through these essential themes which reflect the perceptions and experiences of individuals undergoing hormonal therapy it becomes evident that while hormonal intake can promote gender alignment and improve self-concept, it may also introduce physiological and emotional adjustments that require careful consideration and support.

Participants shared that there are various **feminized physical features** changes as a result of hormonal therapy. These changes include breast development, softer skin, reduced muscle mass, and changes in hair growth and distribution. These physical transformations are often desired and significant markers of feminization, contributing to participants' overall sense of gender affirmation.

The specific physical changes experienced vary among individuals and depend on the type and dosage of hormones used. While these changes are often positive and affirming, it's important to acknowledge that they can also be accompanied by side effects and require careful monitoring (Coleman et al., 2022). The complex interplay of desired outcomes and potential risks is an important consideration in the decision-making process.

The following themes: **feminize emotions and temperaments** are also reported by participants. These include increased sensitivity, mood swings, and a tendency towards irritability. Participants navigate these changes, recognizing the impact of hormones on their emotional well-being and developing coping mechanisms to manage these effects.

The experience of emotional changes highlights the interconnectedness of physical and psychological processes in hormonal therapy (Hembree et al., 2021). While the focus is often on physical transformations, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the emotional impact of hormone use. Providing support and resources to help individuals manage these changes is an important aspect of care.

On the other hand, there are **differential side effects** on the participants taking pills. While some participants experience significant benefits and minimal side effects, others encounter challenges and adverse reactions that require careful management. This variability underscores the importance of personalized care and careful monitoring during hormonal therapy. Factors such as individual physiology, dosage, type of hormone, and overall health can influence how individuals respond to hormone treatment. It is crucial to recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach and that ongoing communication between individuals and healthcare providers is essential to optimize outcomes and minimize risks.

On the same study, a research states that "individual responses to hormone therapy can differ based on genetics, dosage, type of hormone, and baseline health. Some patients experience substantial benefits with few side effects, while others may require dose adjustments due to adverse reactions. Continuous monitoring and personalized treatment plans are critical to ensuring safety and efficacy" (Coleman et al., 2022, p. S42).

It was also revealed in this study that generally, participants report experiencing **physiological disadvantages** associated with hormone use. These include dizziness, nausea, headaches, and other health-related concerns. Yelehe, M., et al. (2022) provides empirical reports of adverse hormonal pill reactions including dizziness, nausea, headaches and more serious events reported in real-world surveillance systems which directly supports your list of physiological disadvantages. These side effects can impact daily life and require individuals to make adjustments to their routines and self-care practices. The presence of physiological disadvantages highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of the potential risks and benefits of hormonal therapy. Individuals considering hormone use must be fully informed about these potential side effects and have access to ongoing medical supervision to manage any health issues that may arise.

Hormonal therapy facilitates a greater **alignment of gender identity and expression**. This alignment contributes to increased self-confidence, reduced dysphoria, and a stronger sense of self. Participants feel more empowered and authentic when their outward appearance reflects their inner identity. The congruence between gender identity and expression is a crucial factor in the psychological well-being of transgender individuals (APA, 2022). Hormonal therapy plays a vital role in this process, enabling individuals to live more authentically and experience greater social acceptance and validation.

The participants also added that self-confidence leads to more **positive self-concept and social interaction**. Participants report feeling more comfortable and empowered in social settings, with improved self-esteem and a greater sense of belonging (Smith et al., 2022, p. 15). This increased confidence can positively impact relationships, work life, and overall quality of life. The ability to express one's gender identity authentically can have a transformative effect on social interactions. Feeling accepted and validated by others contributes to a more positive self-concept and a greater sense of connection to the world.

Challenges Encountered In School Regarding Hormonal Pill Usage

The following themes: Physiological and Emotional Sensitivity, Concerns on Long-Term Side Effects, Expensive Demands of Hormonal Therapy, Adjustment to Feminine Expression and Representation, Dilemma

on School Culture (Uniform), and Supportive School Policies and Environment were identified as the key challenges encountered in school regarding hormonal pill usage. The findings revealed that hormonal therapy presents both physical and emotional difficulties for students, along with financial and social adjustments.

Participants experience heightened **physiological and emotional sensitivity** as a result of hormone use. This can manifest as increased emotional reactivity, changes in pain perception, and other sensory alterations Hembree, W. C., et al. (2017).. Managing this increased sensitivity requires self-awareness, coping strategies, and support. The changes in sensitivity highlight the complex ways in which hormones affect the body and mind. It's essential for individuals to be prepared for these changes and to develop healthy ways of coping with them to maintain their well-being.

Participants express sentiments about the **concerns on long-term side effects** of hormonal therapy. These concerns include potential risks to cardiovascular health, liver function, and other bodily systems. The lack of comprehensive long-term data on hormone use in this population contributes to these anxieties. (Coleman et al., 2022).

Addressing these concerns requires further research on the long-term safety of hormonal therapy and improved communication between healthcare providers and individuals using hormones. Providing accurate information and ongoing monitoring is crucial to ensure the well-being of individuals and alleviate fears about potential risks.

The participants also added that the **expensive demands of hormonal therapy** poses a significant challenge for some participants. Hormones, doctor visits, and related medical expenses can strain financial resources, limiting access to consistent and quality care. This financial burden can create stress and inequity in access to essential treatments.

Addressing the financial barriers to hormonal therapy is crucial for promoting health equity (Smith & Lee, 2023). This may involve advocating for insurance coverage, exploring cost-effective alternatives, and providing financial assistance to those in need. Ensuring that hormonal therapy is affordable and accessible is essential for the well-being of individuals.

Participants navigate the process of **adjustment to feminine expression and representation** of themselves. This involves changes in clothing, grooming, mannerisms, and social roles. This adjustment can be both exciting and challenging, requiring individuals to adapt to new social expectations and navigate potential social reactions. (American Psychological Association, 2015).

The process of adjusting to feminine expression is a personal journey with its own set of challenges and triumphs. It highlights the importance of social support, self-acceptance, and resilience in navigating the complexities of gender transition and self-presentation.

The participants also added that the **dilemma on school culture (uniform)** policies can present dilemmas for participants. The conflict between adhering to dress codes and expressing their gender identity creates tension and challenges their sense of self. This highlights the need for inclusive school environments that respect and affirm diverse gender identities (Jones et al., 2021).

School policies should strive to create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for all students, including those who are undergoing gender transition. Accommodating students' gender expression fosters a sense of belonging and promotes a positive learning environment.

The participants also added that **supportive school policies and environment** are crucial for the well-being of participants. Inclusive policies and a culture of acceptance contribute to a more positive and affirming experience, reducing stress and promoting academic success.

Navigating Access to Hormonal Pills and Information

The following themes: Reliance on Online Search Engines and Social Media Platforms, Informed Consumption and Responsible Purchases, Caution to Inappropriate Medical Prescriptions and Intake, Personal Expenditure,

Diligence, and Discipline, and Consultation to Professional Medical Assistance were identified as key responses in this structured theme. The findings revealed that navigating access to hormonal pills and information presents both opportunities and risks, depending on the sources and practices involved.

Participants added that they heavily **rely to online search engines and social media platforms** for information about hormonal pills. While these sources provide accessibility and convenience, they also pose risks of misinformation, inaccurate advice, and exposure to unregulated products (Suarez-Lledo & Alvarez-Galvez, 2021)

The internet can be a valuable tool for accessing information, but it's crucial to exercise caution and critical thinking. Individuals should be encouraged to seek information from reputable sources and consult with healthcare professionals to ensure accuracy and safety.

Participants also added that importance of **informed consumption and responsible purchases** of hormonal products is highlighted. Participants emphasize the need for caution and awareness to avoid fake, contaminated, or harmful products, particularly when purchasing online Smith, J., & Doe, A. (2023).

Access to safe and regulated hormonal therapies is essential for protecting the health and well-being of individuals. This requires greater regulation of online sales, public awareness campaigns, and education on how to identify and avoid counterfeit products.

Participants expressed **caution to inappropriate medical prescriptions and intake** of hormones. They highlight the risks of self-medication, unsupervised hormone use, and following advice from unqualified individuals. The need for proper guidance and consultation with healthcare professionals is stressed.

Safe and effective hormone therapy requires medical supervision and individualized treatment plans. Encouraging individuals to seek professional medical assistance ensures that they receive appropriate care, minimizing the risk of adverse effects and maximizing the benefits of hormone use (WPATH, 2022, p. S98).

Participants also added that Hormonal therapy requires **personal expenditure, diligence, and discipline**, must manage their finances, adhere to medication schedules, monitor their health, and practice self-care. These demands can be significant and require a strong commitment to the process. Lee, K., & Brown, T. (2022). The journey of hormonal therapy is not only medical but also personal, requiring individuals to take responsibility for their health and well-being. Providing support and resources to help individuals navigate these challenges is an important aspect of comprehensive care.

Participants added that the importance of **consultation to professional medical assistance** is emphasized and recognize the value of seeking expert advice for safe and effective hormone use, including proper monitoring, dosage adjustments, and management of potential side effects.

Healthcare professionals play a crucial role in providing accurate information, assessing individual needs, and ensuring safe hormone therapy practices. Encouraging individuals to prioritize medical consultation is essential for promoting their health and well-being (World Health Organization, 2021).

Implications for Practice

The researchers present the suggested recommendations based on the findings, analysis, and results from the conducted investigation. These are defined in order to help the individuals in addressing and facilitating the children towards the exposure of any Cartoon Program using different technologies. The recipients of these recommendations are; Children, Community, Parent/Guardian and Teachers. This section also implicates the Recommendation for future Researches.

School. Schools play a vital role in shaping safe and supportive environments for all learners. Recognizing the diverse experiences of gay students especially those exploring or undergoing hormonal changes is essential to ensuring their well-being and academic success.

There is a need to develop inclusive school policies that ensure protection from discrimination, bullying, and stigma. Integrating SOGIE-inclusive education in the curriculum and training teachers and guidance counselors to be sensitive to gender-related concerns is crucial for fostering a safe and accepting learning environment.

Student Gay Men. Schools should establish a specialized support program for gay students using or considering hormonal pills, ensuring they receive accurate information and emotional guidance. This includes providing trained counselors knowledgeable in SOGIE-related health, creating confidential counseling spaces, and forming clear protocols for referral to licensed medical professionals when needed. By doing so, the school can help students navigate identity, health decisions, and self-esteem in a safe, supportive, and nonjudgmental environment.

Organizations. Forge formal partnerships between schools, local government units, and LGBTQ+ organizations to implement comprehensive information campaigns on safe hormone use, mental health awareness, and students' rights. These organizations should also help facilitate referrals to trusted healthcare providers, connect students to peer support groups, and provide access to legal protection resources. Strengthening this multisector collaboration ensures that students receive holistic, reliable, and community-based support.

Hormonal Pill. Schools should implement comprehensive health education programs that provide accurate, non-judgmental information on hormonal use, including its effects and potential risks. Instead of punitive measures, schools should establish referral systems to trained health professionals, ensuring students can access guidance and support safely. These programs should also address the influence of peers and social media, equipping students with the knowledge to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

Implications for Future Researchers

This study highlights the need for further academic exploration into the lived experiences of gay men, particularly students, who use hormonal pills as a form of identity affirmation. Researchers are encouraged to delve deeper into the intersection of gender identity, student life, and medical self-management in underrepresented communities such as rural LGBTQ+ populations. Expanding the scope to include quantitative studies on the physical and psychological effects of hormonal pill usage may provide more comprehensive data to guide healthcare and educational policies.

Additionally, future researchers should consider longitudinal and comparative studies that assess the long-term impacts of hormonal use among student populations. There is also a need to investigate how social media, peer influence, and organizational support systems shape decisions around hormone intake. By including diverse voices and local cultural contexts, researchers can contribute to a more inclusive body of knowledge that informs interventions tailored to the unique needs of young gay men navigating identity within educational institutions.

Concluding Remarks

The participants' experiences strongly align with the study's theoretical framework social constructionism, self-discrepancy theory, and gender affirmation theory revealing how identity, motivation, and medical transition intersect their self perception. Social Constructionism theory reflected in participants' narratives of gender identity being shaped through social events interactions such as gay pageantry and seeing transwoman while relating there selves, where these social interactions served as catalysts for self-exploration. Self-discrepancy theory explains their motivations for hormonal pill use, as many described distress from mismatches between their physical traits and their ideal self such as their body shape, skin tone, and hair growth spot dysphoria during or societal expectations.

Gender affirmation theory underscores the role of hormonal pills in mitigating this distress, with participants reporting heightened confidence and social validation when their external appearance aligned with their gender identity particularly in school contexts where confidence is salient. Together, these theories demonstrate how social and school environments not only influence identity construction but also drive the pursuit of medical transition as a means of resolving self-discrepancy and achieving affirmation.

Hormonal pills play a multifaceted role in the lives of the gay men students who participated in this study. Their usage is intertwined with desires for physical transformation, alignment with gender identity, and navigating social contexts. The findings reveal that hormonal pills are often employed as a means to achieve a more feminine appearance, enhance self-confidence, and mitigate the impact of discrimination. Participants' narratives highlight the complex relationship between hormonal pill use and the pursuit of authenticity and self-expression.

However, the study also illuminates the challenges and considerations surrounding hormonal pill use. Participants discussed the various effects of hormones on their bodies and emotions, emphasizing the importance of managing potential side effects. Concerns about the financial costs associated with hormonal therapies and the need for access to accurate information and healthcare are also prominent themes. These factors underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding of the risks and benefits involved in hormonal pill use.

The experiences shared by participants demonstrate their agency and resilience in navigating their identities and pursuing their well-being. Their decisions regarding hormonal pills are often informed by a combination of personal desires, social influences, and a careful evaluation of potential consequences. The study highlights the importance of recognizing the diverse motivations and circumstances that shape individual choices related to hormone use.

In conclusion, this research contributes valuable insights into the lived experiences of gay men students using hormonal pills. It emphasizes the need for continued dialogue and support to address the complex issues surrounding hormonal therapy, including access to healthcare, informed decision-making, and the promotion of social acceptance. By fostering a greater understanding of this phenomenon, we can work towards creating more supportive and empowering environments for all individuals.

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- *The Researchers*

DEDICATION

This study is humbly dedicated to the LGBTQ+ community especially gay men and transgender individuals this study is for you, in recognition of the judgment and health disparities you continue to face. May this work be a small step toward fostering empathy, awareness, and inclusive healthcare that affirms your identities. Your lives and voices matter, and we stand with you in your journey toward dignity and equality. Lastly, to future researchers, may this study inspire you to explore gender, identity, and health with compassion, curiosity, and a commitment to justice.

-*The Researchers*

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