

Gender-Neutral Bathrooms in Relation to Promoting Inclusivity: A QCU Students Perspective

Janessa Joy O. Arnado^{1*}, Renalyn P. Coralde², Aubrey Jane P. Dagdag³, Justine A. Lozano⁴,
Cindy Nicole C. Obar⁵, Raul Beni Barcelá⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5}Student, College of Education, Quezon City University, Manila, Philippines

⁶Lecturer, College of Education, Quezon City University, Manila, Philippines

Abstract—This quantitative study investigates the impact of gender-neutral bathrooms implementation in college settings, focusing on perceptions, experiences, and outcomes among students. This study was conducted in Quezon City University with a total of 50 participants from the students of different colleges. Results indicate strong support among respondents for the presence of gender-neutral bathrooms, with a majority agreeing on their contribution to a more inclusive campus environment. However, despite this support, social barriers such as social stigma and institutional resistance pose challenges to the widespread implementation of gender-neutral facilities. While students recognize the benefits of gender-neutral bathrooms for diverse gender identities and expressions, there remains a need for greater education and advocacy to address misconceptions and facilitate institutional change. Findings highlight the need for continued education and advocacy to eliminate misconception and facilitate inclusive policies.

Index Terms—Gender-neutral bathrooms, Inclusivity, Student perceptions.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the discussions surrounding gender-neutral bathrooms have gained significant attention as part of broader efforts to promote inclusivity and create safe and inclusive spaces for all individuals. All-gender bathrooms can be used by anyone. These bathrooms are commonly referred to as “gender-inclusive,” “gender-neutral,” “mixed-sex,” or “unisex.” In addition to benefiting the transgender community, these laws can also benefit others, including people with disabilities, older adults, and parents of small children (American Psychological Association, 2019). Understanding students’ perspectives is crucial in assessing the effectiveness of implementing gender-neutral bathrooms within educational institutions.

The concept of gender-neutral bathrooms challenges traditional notions of gender and aims to provide restroom facilities that are accessible and accommodating to individuals of all gender identities and expressions. Advocates argue that gender-neutral bathrooms not only accommodate transgender and non-binary individuals but also contribute to creating a more inclusive environment for everyone, irrespective of

gender. However, the implementation of gender-neutral bathrooms has sparked debates and controversies in various settings, including educational institutions, highlighting the need for nuanced discussions and empirical research to inform policy and decision-making. As of November 2023, the Map Movement Project reported even states that banned transgender people from using restrooms and facilities consistent with their gender identity in K-12 schools. One additional state, North Dakota, extended the ban to some government-owned buildings, and one more state, Florida, extended the ban to colleges and government buildings. Such laws have a documented negative impact on the mental health of transgender people (Horne et al., 2022).

As societal understandings of gender continue to evolve, traditional binary conceptions of male and female spaces are being challenged. Gender-neutral bathrooms offer a space that is inclusive of individuals who may not conform to traditional gender norms or who may feel uncomfortable in gender-segregated facilities. By providing gender-neutral options, institutions like QCU can demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusivity, signaling to students that their identities are respected and valued.

Despite the potential benefits of gender-neutral bathrooms, their implementation can sometimes be met with resistance or controversy. Understanding the perspectives of students at QCU is essential for informing policies and practices related to gender-neutral facilities on campus. In line with this, the researchers aim to determine the perspective of Quezon City University students in relation to gender-neutral bathrooms to promote inclusivity. Specifically, this research sought to know the following; (a) addressed the lack of gender-neutral bathrooms facilities, (b) social and institutional barriers, (c) perception and attitudes of students towards gender neutral bathrooms.

2. Methodology

This study was conducted at Quezon City University during the 2023-2024 academic year.

*Corresponding author: arnado.janessajoy.ortega@gmail.com

A map illustrating the location of Quezon City University.



Fig. 1.

The respondents were randomly selected from each college within Quezon City University. This study gathered a total of 50 students in all colleges. A random sampling method will be employed to ensure equal representation from each college. The participants are selected based on their willingness to participate in the study.

This study acquired a quantitative method to determine the perspective of QCU students in gender-neutral bathrooms in QCU. The researchers used a survey questionnaire to gather data or information for the students of Quezon City University. The instrument that the researchers used was divided into two parts; the demographic information, and gender-neutral bathrooms. This study will explore students' perceptions of gender-neutral bathrooms, including their understanding of the concept, attitudes towards implementation, and potential impact on campus culture and inclusivity.

Furthermore, the questions included in the instrument were structured in a quantitative likert format. The Likert scale is indicated in the table 1.

After acquiring all the formal permission that the researchers must acquire from the students of different colleges where the data will be collected. Just after, the researchers gather all the data from the answers of the respondents and interpret each of the data. Then, the researchers come up with the results and recommendations that fulfilled the objectives and research gap.

For ethical research considerations, before the study will be conducted, the respondents will receive a detailed briefing and key information about the purpose of the study. Through informed consent, the respondents shall willingly decide to take part in the study. In order to guarantee anonymity, secrecy, and the avoidance of potential harm, and handle with the utmost confidentiality by not disclosing the names and identity of the research participants in accordance with RA 10173, generally known as the Data Privacy Act.

The data collected from the surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, mean and interpretation. The quantitative data will be triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the gender-neutral bathrooms in relation to promoting inclusivity: a QCU students perspective.

3. Result and Discussion

Quantitative data were gathered in this research study, 50 students from 1st to 4th year in different colleges in Quezon City University answered the survey questionnaire.

A. Quantitative Data

Table 2
Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	34	68%
Male	13	26%
Non Binary	1	2%
Lesbian	1	2%
Gender Fluid	1	2%
Prefer Not To Say	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 3
Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Under 18	0	0%
18-24	49	98%
25 and up	1	2%
Missing	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 4
Academic course

Academic Course	Frequency	Percentage
BECed	17	34%
BSENTREP	18	36%
BSA	1	2%
BSIE	6	12%
BSIT	6	12%
BSECE	2	4%
Total	50	100%

In table 2 gender, the most respondents are female 34(68%), male 13(26%), non-binary 1(2%), lesbian 1(2%), gender fluid 1(2%), and prefer not to say 0(0%). In table 3 age, the most respondent of our research is 18-24 years old, 49(98%), 25 or above, 1(2%), and under 18 0(0%). In table 4 academic course, the majority course that answered in our survey is BSENTREP 18(36%), next is BECEd 17(34%), third is BSIE and BSIT 6(12%), BSECE 2(4%), last is BSA 1(2%). In table 5, the majority of respondents agreed that the presence of gender-neutral bathrooms contributes to a more inclusive campus environment (Question 1). This indicates a recognition among students that providing gender-neutral facilities is an important step towards accommodating diverse gender identities and ensuring that all members of the university community feel respected and valued. Secondly, respondents expressed agreement that all facilities on campus should be converted to gender-neutral bathrooms (Question 2). This suggests a strong desire among students for universal access to gender-neutral facilities, indicating a commitment to ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all individuals, regardless of gender identity. In question 3, the interpretation is strongly agreed with the mean

Table 1

Scale	Verbal Interpretation	Percentage
5	Strongly Agree	The student strongly agree to the situation given
4	Agree	The student agree to the situation given
3	Neutral	The student neither agree or disagree to the situation given
2	Disagree	The student disagree to the situation given
1	Strongly Disagree	The student strongly disagree to the situation given

Table 5
Gender-Neutral bathrooms

Questions	Mean	Interpretation
The presence of gender-neutral bathrooms contributes to a more inclusive campus Environment.	3.8	Agree
All restroom facilities on campus should be converted to gender-neutral bathrooms	3.48	Agree
Gender-neutral bathrooms promote respect for diverse gender identities.	4.52	Strongly Agree
Providing gender-neutral bathrooms is a responsibility of educational institutions to support diversity and inclusion.	3.8	Agree
Gender-neutral bathrooms are beneficial for individuals who may feel uncomfortable or unsafe in traditional gender-segregated facilities.	4.08	Agree
Gender-neutral bathrooms are accessible and accommodating for individuals with diverse gender expressions and identities.	4	Agree
Implementing gender-neutral bathrooms fosters a sense of belongings and acceptance among marginalized gender group.	1.04	Strongly Disagree
The availability of gender-neutral bathrooms positively impacts the mental well-being of students.	3.78	Agree
Gender-neutral bathrooms contribute to breaking down societal norms and stereotypes related to gender role:	3.26	Neutral
Composite Mean	3.66	

of 5.52, it indicates that they agreed to promote respect for different gender identities. Furthermore, respondents overwhelmingly agreed that providing gender-neutral bathrooms is a responsibility of educational institutions to support diversity and inclusion (Question 4). This highlights the perception among students that universities, including QCU, have a duty to create an environment that is welcoming and affirming of all gender identities. Additionally, respondents recognized the practical benefits of gender-neutral bathrooms, with the majority agreeing that they are beneficial for individuals who may feel uncomfortable or unsafe in traditional gender-segregated facilities (Question 5). This indicates an understanding among students of the importance of providing safe and inclusive spaces for all members of the university community. In question 6, almost all agreed on the mean of 4, because it indicates that gender-neutral bathrooms are accessible and accommodating for individuals with diverse gender expression and identities. Question 7, indicates that the participants strongly disagree with the statement that implementing gender-neutral bathrooms fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance among marginalized gender groups. Despite the overall positive attitudes towards gender-neutral bathrooms observed in the other questions, this discrepancy highlights a potential area of concern or misunderstanding among respondents. The disagreement with the statement suggests that there may be a lack of awareness or understanding among some students regarding the experiences and needs of marginalized gender groups. It is possible that some respondents do not fully grasp the extent to which gender-neutral bathrooms can provide a safe and affirming space for individuals who may face discrimination or marginalization based on their gender identity. In summary, while the majority of respondents express positive attitudes towards gender-neutral bathrooms and their role in promoting inclusivity, the disagreement with Question 7 indicates a potential gap in understanding that warrants further exploration and intervention. Question 8 indicates that the responders agree that the availability of gender-neutral bathrooms positively impacts the mental well-being of students. This agreement underscores the recognition among respondents of the significant role that gender-neutral bathrooms play in promoting the psychological well-being and mental health of students within the university setting. In question 9, most respondents agreed (mean = 3.9), indicating that they believe gender-neutral bathrooms help break down societal norms and stereotypes related to gender roles. Lastly in question 10, mostly of them choosing neutral in

the mean of 3.26, because its talk about gender neutral bathrooms should be standard feature in all public facilities, not just educational institutions. Overall, respondents displayed positive attitudes toward gender-neutral bathrooms. Most agreed that these facilities foster inclusivity, safety, and respect for diverse gender identities. However, the disagreement in Question 7 suggests a potential gap in understanding among students regarding the emotional and social significance of these facilities for marginalized gender groups.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the perspectives of QCU students regarding gender-neutral bathrooms and their role in promoting inclusivity. Findings reveal that most students support the provision of gender-neutral facilities in all university buildings, viewing them as essential in fostering respect, diversity, and equality within the campus community.

5. Recommendation

The recommendation for this research is to encourage more people to participate in the poll, this research can be enhanced even more. This approach would provide richer insights into the nuances of students' attitudes and the potential impact of gender-neutral bathrooms on campus culture and inclusivity. Additionally, Future research should include a larger and more diverse sample to capture broader student perspectives. Incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews or focus group discussions may provide deeper insights into attitudes and experiences related to gender-neutral bathrooms. Also, exploring the views of administrators and staff can offer a holistic understanding of institutional readiness and implementation challenges.

References

- [1] American Psychological Association. (2019). *Resolution on Support of Universal Design and Accessibility in Education, Training and Practice*.<https://www.apa.org/about/policy/universal-design-accessibility-education>
- [2] Bovens., L., & Marcoci., A. (2020) The gender-neutral bathroom: a new frame and some nudges.
- [3] Feeney, M., P., Green, A., E. & Dorison, S., H (2021). Impact of bathroom discrimination on mental health among transgender and nonbinary youth. vol. 68, no. 6, pp. 1142-1147.
- [4] Geels., A.C., Tismo., Y.G., Tabugon., A. Atencia., N. Suarez., K. Vallespin., M.R. (2023). Gender-Neutral Comfort Rooms: International Perceptions, Local Implementation, and Impacts in the Philippines.
- [5] Gillig, T., Shaikh, S., & Bighash L. (2023) Cues Signaling Gender Segregation and Gender Inclusion in Public Spaces Affect Adolescents' Binary Conceptualization of Gender and Attitudes Toward Transgender

- and Nonbinary People. *International Journal of Communication* 17, 24, 2022.
- [6] Harwood-Jones., M. Martin., K. Airton., L. (2021). Research and Recommendations on Gender-Inclusive Washrooms and Change Rooms. https://www.queensu.ca/hreo/sites/hreowww/files/uploaded_files/Washroom%20Report%20-%20Digital.pdf
- [7] Horne, S. G., McGinley, M., Yel, N., & Maroney, M. R. (2022). The stench of bathroom bills and anti-transgender legislation: Anxiety and depression among transgender, nonbinary, and cisgender LGBTQ people during a state referendum. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 69(1), 1–13.
- [8] Huff, M., Edwards, K. M., Mauer, V. A., Littleton, H., Lim, S., & Sall, K. E. (2023). Gender-neutral bathrooms on campus: A multicampus study of cisgender and transgender and gender diverse college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 71(5), 1046-1054.
- [9] Jacinta., F. Prathishtha., S. Zoe., W. Gina., T. Natash., P. Sharyn., B. Ashleigh., L. Donna., C. (2022). Gender-Neutral Toilets: A Qualitative Exploration of Inclusive School Environments for Sexuality and Gender Diverse Youth in Western Australia.
- [10] Lerner, J., E. Martin, J., & Grosky, S., G. (2021). More than an apple a day: Factors associated with avoidance of doctor visits among transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary people in the USA. vol. 18, pp. 409-426.
- [11] Lewkowicz., S. Gilliland., J. (2024). *A Feminist Critical Analysis of Public Toilets and Gender: A Systematic Review*.
- [12] Merle., H. Katie., E. Victoria., M. Heather., L. Stephanie., L. (2023). Gender-neutral bathrooms on campus: a multicampus study of Gender-neutral bathrooms on campus: a multicampus study of cisgender and transgender and gender diverse college students cisgender and transgender and gender diverse college students.
- [13] McGuire, J., K. & Anderson, Sloan., O. (2021). "I feel like God doesn't like me": Faith and Ambiguous Loss Among Transgender Youth. vol.70, no. 2, pp. 309-401.
- [14] Monheim, C. L., & Ratcliff, J. J. (2021). Perceived social norms and acceptance of transgender students in gendered restrooms. *Journal of LGBT Youth*.
- [15] Omerkajic., K. (2022). "Basement Boys" in the All-Gender Bathroom: Investigating Student-Inspired Trans-Activism and White Cisgenderist Barriers to Supporting Trans Students in School. vol. 124, pp. 220-243.
- [16] Renley, B. M., Burson, E., Simon, K. A., Caba, A. E., & Watson, R. J. (2022). Youth-specific sexual and gender minority state-level policies: Implications for pronoun, name, and bathroom/locker room use among gender minority youth. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 1-12.