


Chapter 7


Queer Resilience in the Classroom: Institutional Expectations and Pedagogical Ethics Among LGBTQIA+ Educators

Ria Maria Sunesh

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0007-4001-772X>

Christ (Deemed to be) University, India

Shikha Bhagat

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8745-5558>

Christ (Deemed to be) University, India

ABSTRACT

LGBTQIA+ educators continue to negotiate educational environments shaped by normative professional expectations, institutional silence, and ethical ambiguity despite growing institutional commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion. While the majority of current research has focused on LGBTQIA+ students, the lived experiences of educators who hold difficult roles of vulnerability, authority, and care have received little attention. In order to close this gap, this chapter looks at how LGBTQIA+ educators deal with institutional pressures, identity expression, resilience, and pedagogical ethics. It also looks at how these processes affect classroom environments and how students are perceived. Qualitative interpretive responses are combined with quantitative survey data using a mixed-methods design. Results show that resilience is perceived as an expensive survival strategy rather than a means of empowerment, and that there is a meaningful but indirect relationship between educator well-being and student inclusion and belonging.

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Context of LGBTQIA+ Inclusion in Education

Educational institutions across the globe are increasingly recognized as critical sites for social transformation, identity formation, and ethical engagement (Kuhn, 2020; Dennis et al., 2019). Schools, colleges, and universities do not merely transmit knowledge; they actively shape norms, values, and understandings of belonging. Within this context, the inclusion—or exclusion—of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual, and other gender- and sexuality-diverse (LGBTQIA+) individuals has emerged as a central concern in contemporary educational discourse (Brant & Willox, 2023; Taylor, 2022). While much attention has been paid to LGBTQIA+ students, comparatively less focus has been placed on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ educators who navigate institutional expectations while simultaneously performing professional, pedagogical, and ethical roles (Perez, 2024; Diaz, 2022). Over the past two decades, policy reforms, diversity statements, and inclusive education frameworks have sought to address discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Bazarsky et al., 2022). However, these institutional commitments often coexist with deeply entrenched heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions that shape everyday practices within educational settings (Messina & Mascitti, 2025; Forcha, 2021). As a result, LGBTQIA+ educators frequently encounter subtle forms of marginalization, including microaggressions, silencing, identity regulation, and moral scrutiny (Keller, 2025; Jones, 2024). The role of educators is inherently ethical. Teachers are expected to create safe learning environments, model inclusive values, and support the holistic development of learners (Parra, 2025). For LGBTQIA+ educators, fulfilling these responsibilities often involves complex negotiations between personal authenticity and institutional conformity (Smith, 2021; Ruiz & Bleasdale, 2022).

Professional identity in education is shaped through a dynamic interplay of personal beliefs, institutional norms, disciplinary expectations, and social relationships (Medlin & Wilby, 2023). For LGBTQIA+ educators, professional identity formation is further complicated by the need to navigate stigmatized or politicized aspects of identity within workplaces that may implicitly or explicitly discourage open expression (Perez, 2024; Diaz, 2022).

Research suggests that educators who identify as LGBTQIA+ often engage in ongoing processes of self-monitoring, boundary-setting, and identity management to avoid professional risk (Moser et al., 2024; Coda & Moser, 2025). Even in ostensibly progressive environments, expectations of neutrality reinforce

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