

Navigating in a Right-Handed Society: An Exploration of Social Experiences and Identity Formation of Left-Handed Individuals

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ABSTRACT

Left-handed individuals experience the world differently, constantly adapting to environments designed for the right-handed majority. Through in-depth narratives and thematic exploration, the study explores the experiences of left-handed individuals, revealing how they adapt to a right-handed society while shaping their sense of identity. The study highlights how left-handed individuals navigate a society primarily designed for right-handed people through adaptation, social interactions, and identity negotiation. Despite facing social stigma, stereotypes, and systemic challenges in education and the workplace, many develop resilience and find support through advocacy groups and communities. Identity formation is a dynamic process shaped by cultural influences, family acceptance, and personal agency, emphasizing the need for greater societal awareness, advocacy, and inclusivity to accommodate and empower left-handed individuals

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Left-handedness is a natural variation in human biology, where individuals primarily use their left hand for tasks such as writing, eating, and handling objects. Despite being a common trait, left-handed individuals often adapt to a world primarily designed for right-handed people (Corballis & Beale, 2020). Everyday tools, educational materials, and even social customs are structured with right-handedness as the norm, requiring left-handed individuals to develop unique strategies for integration. This constant adaptation influences their daily experiences and sense of identity as they navigate societal expectations that often favor the majority (Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020). Understanding how left-handed individuals adjust and define themselves within these structures offers valuable insight into their personal and social development.

Globally, left-handed individuals make up approximately 10% of the population, making them a clear minority compared to 90% of right-handed individuals (De Kovel et al., 2019). This disparity is reflected in the design of everyday objects (Gatta, 2023), workplace tools (Prasad et al., 2018), and educational materials (Qo'ldoshev et al., 2024), which are overwhelmingly created with right-handed users in mind. Beyond physical adaptations, left-handed individuals may also experience social challenges, as right-handedness is often perceived as the norm in cultural traditions, etiquette, and professional interactions (Fritsche & Lindell, 2019). This right-handed dominance can create barriers in education and employment, reinforcing a subtle but persistent form of exclusion. As a minority group, left-handed individuals must continually navigate these systemic challenges, shaping their experiences and self-perception in a society structured around right-handed convenience (Cornel, 2019; Agegnehu & Gebre, 2024).

While research on handedness has explored neurological and genetic factors, there remains a gap in the literature regarding left-handed individuals' social experiences and identity formation. Most studies focus on the cognitive and motor aspects of handedness (McManus, 2019; Marcori & Okazaki, 2020; Jones et al., 2021; Kraus, 2023), leaving the lived experiences of left-handed individuals largely unexplored. What societal norms, cultural expectations, and daily challenges influence their sense of self have not been widely examined. Without this perspective, there is limited understanding of how left-handed individuals develop resilience, adapt to their environments, and construct their identity in response to social interactions. Addressing this gap is essential in recognizing the complexities of left-handed identity and fostering a more inclusive perspective on human diversity (Taja-on & Vergara, 2025; Vergara & Taja-on, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

This study explores left-handed individuals' social realities and how they shape their sense of self. By examining how left-handed individuals navigate a predominantly right-handed society, the study aims to uncover the challenges, adaptations, and identity shifts throughout their lives. Specifically, the study sought to answer:

1. What are the experiences of the left-handed individuals in a right-handed society?
2. How are the identities of the left-handed individuals formed in a right-handed society?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Left-Handedness Identity in a Right-Handed Society

The development of a left-handed identity evolves across a person's lifespan and is influenced by social interactions (Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020), cultural expectations (Milenković et al., 2019), and personal experiences (Al Lawati et al., 2019). From an early age, left-handed individuals become aware of their differences through daily activities (De Kovel et al., 2019), such as writing or using tools (Prasad et al., 2018; Stetter et al., 2023), which are often designed for right-handed users. This awareness fosters social comparison, where individuals measure their experiences against the dominant right-handed majority, shaping their self-concept and sense of belonging (Westmoreland, 2023). The presence or absence of support from family, peers, and institutions further influences how left-handed individuals perceive themselves – some may develop confidence in their uniqueness (Khalfe, 2023). In contrast, others may feel pressured to conform. Over time, these experiences contribute to a more defined self-identity, where being left-handed becomes either a challenge to navigate or an aspect of personal empowerment (Prasad et al., 2018).

Social Construction of Handedness

Throughout history, left-handedness has been shaped by cultural beliefs and societal perceptions, often carrying negative connotations rooted in superstition and symbolism (Milenković et al., 2019; Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020). Many cultures have historically associated the left hand with misfortune, impurity, or even deviance, reinforcing stigma that has persisted across generations (Vandendaele, 2019; Nwufu et al., 2024). In some societies, left-handed individuals were forced to switch hands for writing and daily tasks, reflecting a broader societal preference for right-handedness (Marcori et al., 2019). These historical biases continue to influence modern attitudes, where left-handed individuals may still encounter subtle forms of discrimination or exclusion in educational, professional, and social settings (Fritsche & Lindell, 2019; McManus, 2019; van der Meer, 2024). While contemporary perspectives have shifted toward greater acceptance, remnants of past prejudices remain embedded in certain traditions, reinforcing that handedness is more than a biological trait – it is also a socially constructed identity (Prieur et al., 2019).

Societal norms and expectations play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of handedness, often reinforcing right-handedness as the standard. This preference is evident in the design of tools, writing systems, and even simple gestures like handshakes, which are typically oriented toward right-handed users (Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020; Hamaoui, 2022). Language further contributes to these perceptions, as terms associated with the right hand often carry positive meanings, such as "*rightness*" or "*dexterity*." At the same time, left-handedness is linked to words like "*sinister*" or "*awkward*" (Cornel, 2019; Marcori & Okazaki, 2020). These linguistic biases subtly influence how handedness is understood, reinforcing societal norms that favor right-handed individuals. As a result, left-handed individuals may internalize these messages, shaping their self-perception and interactions with the world (Ocklenburg et al., 2021; Kraus, 2023; Westmoreland, 2023).

Social Experiences of Left-Handed Individuals

Left-handed individuals face daily challenges in a world primarily designed for right-handed users, requiring them to adapt to tools, environments, and social expectations that do not accommodate their natural preferences (Prasad et al., 2018; Qo'ldoshev, 2021; Qo'ldoshev et al., 2024). Everyday objects such as scissors, desks, kitchen utensils, and even musical instruments are often built with right-handed users in mind, forcing left-handed individuals to adjust their techniques or seek specialized alternatives (De Kovel et al., 2019; Stetter et al., 2023). Writing can be particularly challenging in educational settings due to the orientation of desks and the tendency for ink smudging, which can affect comfort and academic performance (Al Lawati et al., 2019). These adaptations extend beyond physical tools, as left-handed individuals must also navigate social environments where their handedness may be perceived as unusual or inconvenient. Over time, many develop strategies to blend into right-handed norms by modifying their behaviors or learning to use their non-dominant hand for specific tasks (Prasad et al., 2018; Kraus, 2023).

Beyond practical challenges, left-handed individuals may experience subtle discrimination, prejudice, or exclusion in social interactions (Constant & Mellet, 2018; Ocklenburg, 2024). Historical biases associating left-handedness with negativity influence societal attitudes, sometimes leading to stereotyping or unintentional marginalization. Social rituals such as handshakes, dining etiquette, and religious practices often favor right-handedness, making left-handed individuals more aware of their differences (Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020; Hamaoui, 2022; van der Meer, 2024). These experiences can shape self-perception and influence social confidence, particularly when conformity is expected (Westmoreland, 2023). However, many left-handed individuals develop resilience and a strong sense of adaptability, using their experiences to foster independence and creativity. While societal awareness of handedness has improved, the continued presence of right-handed dominance in design and culture highlights the need for greater inclusivity and understanding (Thomas et al., 2019; Ocklenburg et al., 2021; Taja-on & Vergara, 2025).

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in Social Identity Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, and Minority Group Theory, which provide a foundation for understanding the experiences of left-handed individuals in a predominantly right-handed society. Social Identity Theory (Guan & So, 2022) explores how individuals form their sense of self based on group membership, highlighting how left-handed individuals may develop a unique identity in contrast to the dominant right-handed majority. Symbolic Interactionism (Charmaz et al., 2019) further deepens this perspective by examining how social interactions shape the meaning of left-handedness, influencing self-perception and societal attitudes. Minority Group Theory (Wirth, 2023) contextualizes these experiences by framing left-handed individuals as a social minority, emphasizing the structural and cultural challenges they face. Through these theories, the study explores how left-handed individuals see themselves, navigate societal expectations, and adapt to environments not designed for them (Hambrick et al., 2018).

By integrating these three perspectives, the study ensures a comprehensive understanding of the lived realities of left-handed individuals. Social Identity Theory provides insight into belonging and differentiation's psychological and emotional aspects. At the same time, Symbolic Interactionism focuses on the daily social interactions that reinforce or challenge left-handed identity. Minority Group Theory, in turn, addresses systemic inequalities and the ways left-handed individuals may experience marginalization or seek empowerment. These theories do not function in isolation but rather complement each other, offering a multidimensional lens through which left-handed individuals' social experiences and identity formation can be examined. Their interplay allows the study to bridge personal experiences with broader societal structures, making it relevant to academic discussions and the general public seeking to understand the nuances of left-handed identity.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a phenomenological research design (Larsen & Adu, 2021) to explore the lived experiences of left-handed individuals, focusing on their social interactions and identity formation in a predominantly right-handed society. This approach was chosen as it allows for a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives, emphasizing their narratives and meanings attached to their experiences. The research was conducted in Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, providing a localized context that reflects cultural influences and everyday experiences unique to the area.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study utilized Chain Referral Sampling (Raifman et al., 2022) to identify participants, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to access individuals with specific characteristics. This method was particularly effective, as left-handed individuals represent a minority group and may not always be easily identified through conventional sampling techniques. Initial participants were identified based on the study's criteria, and they then referred other left-handed individuals who fit the study's parameters.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Participants of the Study

Participant	Age	Sex	Laterality	Employment Status
LH-1	33	Female	Left-Handed	Employed
LH-2	22	Male	Left-Handed	Student
LH-3	27	Male	Ambidextrous	Student
LH-4	23	Male	Left-Handed	Student
LH-5	67	Male	Left-Handed	Retired

The demographic profile in Table 1 provides an overview of the participants' characteristics, offering insights into their backgrounds. The data highlights key aspects such as age, sex, laterality, and employment status, which help contextualize the varying perspectives of left-handed individuals. These demographic variables play a role in understanding how handedness intersects with different life stages and social roles.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data was collected through a researcher-developed interview questionnaire, which was validated by three experts—registered psychometricians and guidance counselors—to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability. Before the interviews, participants were informed about the study's objectives, and their informed consent was obtained to uphold ethical research standards. The interviews were conducted privately to allow participants to express their thoughts freely, ensuring a comfortable and non-judgmental environment. All personal information was anonymized to maintain data privacy and confidentiality, and participation was voluntary. The researcher ensured that each interview session was sensitive, allowing participants to share their experiences without pressure or external influence.

During the interviews, audio recordings were made with participants' consent, ensuring accuracy in capturing their responses. These recordings were later transcribed for in-depth analysis, maintaining the authenticity of their narratives. Throughout the data-gathering process, the researcher remained objective, allowing participants to guide the conversation while ensuring that key themes were explored, following a structured yet flexible interview approach. Ethical considerations were strictly followed, ensuring that the study upheld all individuals' rights, privacy, and autonomy.

Treatment of Data

The study employed Narrative Analysis and Thematic Analysis to examine the collected data, ensuring a structured yet comprehensive interpretation of participants' experiences. Narrative analysis (Oppermann & Spences, 2022) was used to explore individual stories, identifying patterns in how left-handed individuals construct their identities and adapt to societal norms. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2024) allowed for identifying recurring themes and categorizing key aspects. These methods complemented each other by capturing the personal depth of individual experiences and the broader social patterns that emerged.

RESULT

Figure 1 illustrates a thematic chart that categorizes the lived experiences of left-handed individuals navigating a predominantly right-handed society. The chart is structured into four main themes: (1) *Societal Perceptions and Cultural Influences*, addressing stigma, cultural norms, and superstitions; (2) *Personal Identity and Social Belonging*, exploring self-perception, marginalization, and advocacy; (3) *Institutional and Structural Challenges*, highlighting difficulties in education, workplaces, and access to left-handed tools; and (4) *Daily Social Experiences and Interactions*, focusing on social interactions shaped by handedness. These themes provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the social realities faced by left-handed individuals.

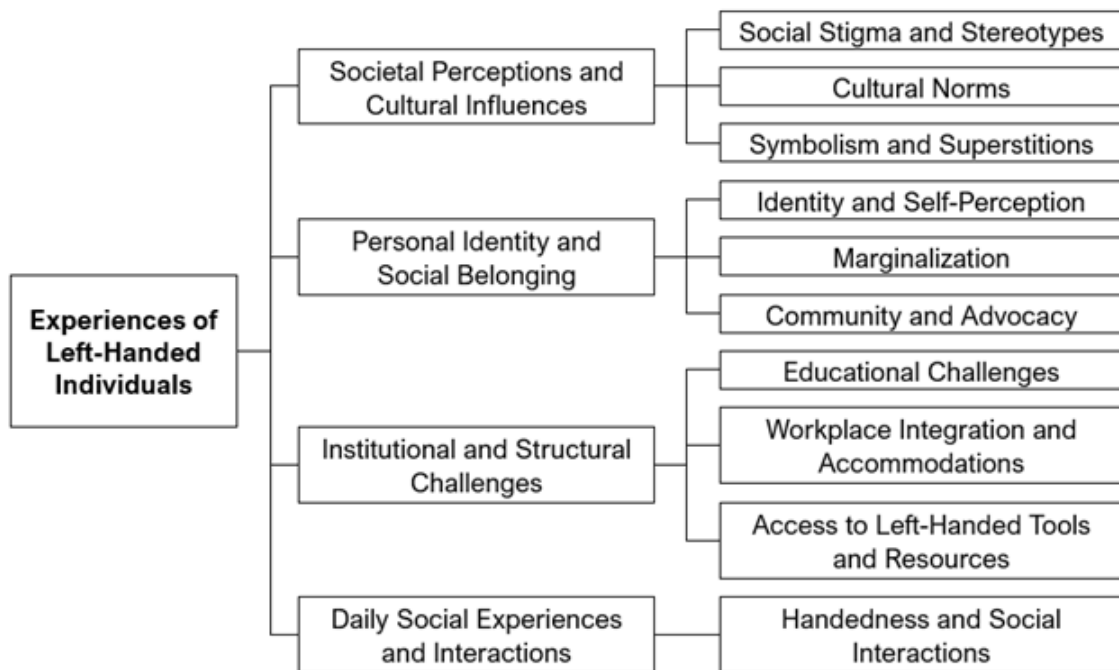


Figure 1. Thematic Chart on the Experiences of the Left-Handed Individuals in a Right-Handed Society

As shown in Figure 1, the findings reveal that left-handed individuals navigate a society designed mainly for right-handed people through a complex interplay of adaptation, social interactions, and identity negotiation. Many participants reported encountering social stigma and stereotypes, often shaped by cultural norms and historical superstitions that label left-handedness as unusual or inconvenient. These perceptions influence how left-handed individuals see themselves and how others treat them. Additionally, challenges in education and the workplace highlight systemic barriers, as left-handed individuals must adjust to tools, writing systems, and workspaces primarily designed for right-handed users. Despite these difficulties, left-handed advocacy groups and communities provide a sense of belonging, helping individuals navigate their experiences and push for greater inclusivity.

Figure 2 illustrates the thematic structure of identity formation among left-handed individuals in a right-handed society. The chart is divided into three key areas: (1) *Personal Identity Development*, examining self-perception and social comparison; (2) *Adaptation and Resilience*, addressing how left-handed individuals navigate societal expectations; and (3) *Social Belonging and Empowerment*, which includes cultural and familial influences, experiences of marginalization, and the role of community in shaping identity. This framework highlights the dynamic process of identity construction influenced by both external social factors and internal coping mechanisms.

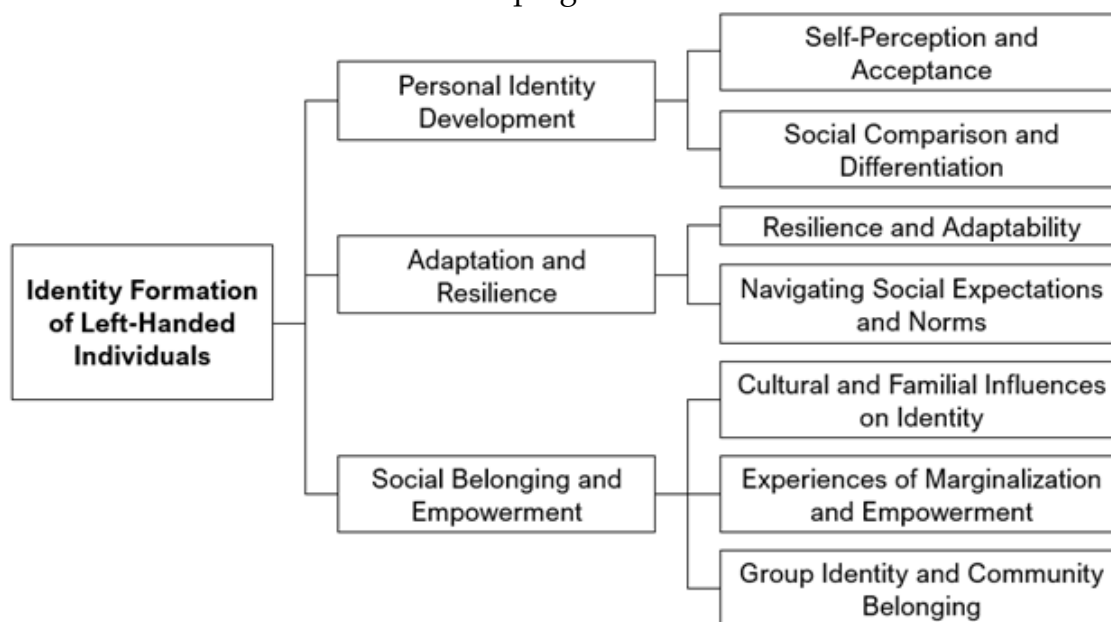


Figure 2. Thematic Chart on the Identity Formation of the Left-Handed Individuals in a Right-Handed Society

The process of identity formation among left-handed individuals is further detailed in Figure 2, which outlines the factors that shape their self-perception and social identity. Many left-handed individuals develop resilience and adaptability as they adjust to societal norms that favor right-handedness. Over time, they learn to navigate social expectations by conforming to right-handed practices or embracing their left-handed identity despite societal pressures. Family and cultural background influence also plays a significant role, with some individuals experiencing support and acceptance while others face discouragement or pressure to use their right hand. Additionally, community and shared experiences help foster a sense of empowerment, allowing left-handed individuals to redefine their identity and acknowledge their handedness challenges and strengths. The results suggest that identity formation is a dynamic process shaped by external influences and personal agency, reinforcing the need for greater social awareness and accommodation.

DISCUSSION

Understanding left-handed individuals' experiences and identity formation requires examining how they navigate a world designed for the right-handed majority. Their daily interactions, challenges, and adaptations shape their sense of self and their societal place. By exploring these lived experiences, the discussion provides insight into the broader social, cultural, and structural factors influencing their journey. This exploration not only highlights their struggles but also how they assert their identity and seek inclusivity in different environments.

Experiences of Left-Handed Individuals in a Right-Handed Society

Left-handed individuals navigate a world where social norms, cultural expectations, and structural designs are predominantly aligned with right-handedness. Their experiences are shaped by interactions that range from subtle inconveniences to systemic barriers, influencing how they perceive themselves and engage with society. Exploring these experiences provides valuable insight into the challenges they encounter, how they adapt, and the broader implications of societal structures prioritizing right-handed individuals.

Societal Perceptions and Cultural Influences

Left-handed individuals frequently encounter societal perceptions that shape their daily experiences and self-identity. Many participants shared that social stigma and stereotypes continue to influence how left-handedness is perceived, often reinforcing that it is an anomaly rather than a natural variation (Cornel, 2019; Westmoreland, 2023; Ocklenburg, 2024). Cultural norms play a significant role in this perception, as many traditions favor the right hand for tasks such as eating, writing, and greeting others. In some cases, left-handed individuals recalled being encouraged – or even forced – to use their right hand in childhood, reinforcing the idea that left-handedness must be corrected.

Additionally, symbolism and superstitions contribute to these societal attitudes, with historical associations linking the left hand to negativity, clumsiness, or bad luck (McManus, 2019; Milenković et al., 2019). These deeply ingrained beliefs affect how left-handed individuals are treated in social interactions, influencing their confidence and sense of belonging in various environments. Despite changing attitudes in modern society, the influence of societal perceptions and cultural norms remains evident in how left-handed individuals navigate their social world. Many participants expressed that they became more aware of their handedness through interactions with right-handed peers, shaping their self-perception based on external feedback (Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020; Qo'ldoshev, 2021; Nwifo et al., 2024).

Their experiences reflect how social identity is often constructed about dominant cultural norms, where left-handedness is viewed as an exception rather than an equal variation. These interactions reinforce feelings of being part of a minority group, as left-handed individuals must continually adjust to environments and expectations that do not accommodate their needs. However, some participants found empowerment in embracing their handedness, using it as a source of uniqueness and resilience (Kraus, 2023). These findings highlight how cultural beliefs, social interactions, and structural norms shape left-handed

individuals' lived realities, influencing their challenges and their ability to redefine their identity within a right-handed society.

Personal Identity and Social Belonging

Left-handed individuals often develop a distinct sense of self due to their experiences in a predominantly right-handed world. Many participants shared that their identity and self-perception were shaped by early interactions, particularly in school and family settings, where they became aware of their differences. While some embraced their left-handedness as a unique trait, others internalized frustration or self-consciousness due to the societal preference for right-handed norms (Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020; Kraus, 2023; Westmoreland, 2023). These experiences were closely tied to marginalization, as participants recalled moments of exclusion, whether through difficulty using right-handed tools, struggling with handwriting, or facing subtle discouragement from teachers and peers (Cornel, 2019).

Over time, this sense of being different influenced how they navigated their social environments, with some choosing to conform while others actively resisted societal expectations. The way left-handed individuals define themselves is primarily shaped by these interactions, reinforcing that identity is constructed through social feedback and adaptation. Despite these challenges, many left-handed individuals find strength in shared experiences and collective support. Community and advocacy play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging, as participants who connected with other left-handed individuals expressed greater confidence in their identity (De Kovel et al., 2019; Milenković et al., 2019; Taja-on & Vergara, 2025).

Support groups, online communities, and even casual interactions with fellow left-handed people provided a space for mutual understanding and validation. Through these connections, participants affirmed their identity and found ways to advocate for greater inclusivity, whether in education, workplace settings, or product design. These findings highlight that external validation and social relationships deeply influence personal identity and social belonging (Prieur et al., 2019; Khalfe, 2023). While left-handed individuals may experience marginalization, their resilience and sense of community help them redefine their experiences, transforming challenges into opportunities for empowerment and self-acceptance.

Institutional and Structural Challenges

Left-handed individuals frequently encounter structural barriers that affect their educational and professional experiences. Many participants recalled educational challenges that began in early schooling, where desks, writing materials, and instructional methods were primarily designed for right-handed students (Qo'ldoshev, 2021; Qo'ldoshev et al., 2024). Writing, in particular, posed difficulties, as left-handed students struggled with ink smudging and discomfort due to the orientation of their desks. Some participants mentioned instances where teachers attempted to correct their handedness, reinforcing the perception that right-handedness was the norm.

These early experiences often shaped their confidence and adaptability, influencing how they navigated future learning environments. Similar struggles continued in professional settings, where workplace integration and accommodations remained challenging (Prasad et al., 2018; Al Lawati et al., 2019). Office layouts, tools, and even machinery were predominantly designed for right-handed employees, requiring left-handed individuals to modify their techniques or request accommodations. While some workplaces were receptive, others failed to acknowledge these needs, reinforcing a sense of exclusion in professional spaces.

Beyond education and work, access to left-handed tools and resources emerged as a critical issue influencing daily functionality and overall well-being (Ocklenburg et al., 2021; Gatta, 2023). Many participants expressed frustration with the limited availability of left-handed products, often forcing them to adjust to right-handed alternatives. Simple tasks such as using scissors, operating kitchen appliances, or even playing musical instruments became unnecessarily tricky due to the lack of inclusive design. This lack of accessibility reinforced the notion that left-handed individuals exist as a minority group in a world structured around right-handed convenience.

Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated resilience by developing creative adaptations or seeking specialized products, though often at a higher cost or with limited availability. These findings highlight how institutional and structural challenges shape the experiences of left-handed individuals, influencing their sense of identity and belonging (McManus, 2019; Ocklenburg, 2024). The necessity for ongoing adaptation and advocacy underscores the need for greater awareness and structural changes to create genuinely inclusive environments for all individuals, regardless of handedness.

Daily Social Experiences and Interactions

Left-handed individuals often encounter social situations where their handedness becomes a noticeable factor, shaping their interactions and self-perception. Many participants shared experiences of handedness and social interactions affecting their daily lives, from simple gestures like handshakes and dining etiquette to more structured activities such as sports and group work (Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020; Qo'ldoshev, 2021). Social norms generally favor right-handed individuals, making left-handed people more conscious of their differences when navigating shared spaces. Some participants described moments of discomfort or exclusion, such as struggling with seating arrangements in restaurants or classrooms, where right-handed designs caused inconvenience.

Others recalled instances where their handedness was met with curiosity, jokes, or even misconceptions, reinforcing their awareness of being in the minority (De Kovel et al., 2019; Ocklenburg, 2024). These repeated social encounters influence how left-handed individuals perceive themselves, as they must constantly adjust to environments not designed for them. Despite these challenges, many participants found ways to adapt, developing strategies to blend in or assert their left-handed identity confidently. These findings emphasize how daily social experiences and interactions shape left-handed

individuals' challenges and resilience, highlighting the importance of social awareness and inclusive practices in everyday life (Agegnehu & Gebre, 2024).

Identity Formation of Left-Handed Individuals in a Right-Handed Society

Personal experiences and the social environment shape identity, so it is essential to explore how left-handed individuals develop their sense of self. Their journey involves negotiating societal expectations, overcoming challenges, and finding spaces where they feel understood. Understanding this identity formation gives a deeper appreciation of how left-handed individuals define themselves within a right-handed world.

Personal Identity Development

The way left-handed individuals perceive themselves is shaped by their interactions with a world that favors right-handedness. Many participants described their journey toward self-perception and acceptance as a process influenced by early experiences in education, family expectations, and social interactions (Prieur et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2019; Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020). Some initially viewed their left-handedness as a disadvantage due to societal norms that subtly reinforce right-handedness as the standard. Others, however, embraced it as a defining trait that set them apart, leading to a sense of uniqueness and pride.

The acceptance process was often tied to external validation—those who received encouragement and support from family, peers, or left-handed communities were more likely to develop confidence in their identity (Prasad et al., 2018; Agegnehu & Gebre, 2024). In contrast, individuals who faced discouragement or pressure to conform reported feeling inadequate or frustrated (Kraus, 2023; Qo'ldoshev et al., 2024). These experiences highlight that identity is internally constructed and shaped by how society perceives and responds to differences. A key factor in identity development is social comparison and differentiation, as left-handed individuals constantly measure their experiences against those of the right-handed majority (Vandendaele, 2019; Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020). Many participants recalled moments when they became acutely aware of their handedness, particularly when facing challenges that right-handed individuals did not encounter.

This awareness often led to feelings of being different, reinforcing their position as a minority. However, comparison also played a role in strengthening their identity—some participants used these differences as motivation to develop adaptability, resilience, and a sense of pride in their uniqueness. Others sought communities of fellow left-handed individuals, finding solidarity and validation in shared experiences (De Kovel et al., 2019). These findings reveal that personal identity development is not a linear process but one shaped by personal experiences and social interactions. The journey toward self-acceptance and identity formation is deeply influenced by how left-handed individuals position themselves within a society that primarily operates under right-handed norms, emphasizing the importance of recognition, inclusion, and representation.

Adaptation and Resilience

Left-handed individuals develop resilience and adaptability as they navigate a world predominantly structured for right-handed people. Many participants described learning to adjust from a young age, whether by modifying how they write, using tools, or completing everyday tasks (Khalife, 2023; Agegnehu & Gebre, 2024; Qo'ldoshev et al., 2024). This adaptation process was often not a choice but a necessity, as the environments they engaged with were rarely designed to accommodate their needs. Over time, these repeated adjustments fostered a sense of resilience as participants developed problem-solving strategies and alternative techniques to function efficiently in right-handed spaces (Constant & Mellet, 2018; Marcori et al., 2019; Stetter et al., 2023).

However, this adaptability was about physical adjustments and managing the social and psychological impact of constantly being different. While some participants internalized feelings of frustration, others viewed their adaptability as a strength, allowing them to navigate challenges with confidence and creativity. Beyond practical adaptation, left-handed individuals also learn to navigate social expectations and norms, often reinforcing right-handedness as the standard (Thomas et al., 2019; Hamaoui, 2022). Many participants recalled experiences where they had to conform in social settings, such as shaking hands with their right hand or adjusting their posture in shared workspaces.

These subtle but frequent expectations reinforced their awareness of being in the minority, shaping how they presented themselves in different environments (Cornel, 2019). Some individuals chose to conform to these norms to avoid drawing attention to their handedness, while others actively resisted, asserting their identity despite societal expectations (Fritsche & Lindell, 2019; Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020). These varied responses highlight how adaptation is about physical adjustments and the social negotiation of identity. Balancing personal authenticity with societal norms demonstrates the complexity of resilience, showing that left-handed individuals are not just adjusting to a right-handed world but actively shaping their identity.

Social Belonging and Empowerment

The process of identity formation among left-handed individuals is strongly influenced by cultural and familial perspectives, shaping how they understand and accept their handedness. Many participants recalled early experiences where family members either encouraged or discouraged their natural preference for using their left hand (Milenković et al., 2019; Kraus, 2023; Agegnehu & Gebre, 2024). In some cases, left-handed individuals were pressured to conform to right-handed norms, reinforcing that their handedness was an inconvenience or something to be corrected (Ocklenburg, 2024). Cultural beliefs further contributed to this perception, as some traditions associate the left hand with negativity or inferiority.

However, participants who grew up in environments that accepted and supported their left-handedness developed a stronger sense of confidence and self-acceptance (Fritsche & Lindell, 2019). These experiences highlight how social influences, particularly within families and cultural settings, play a critical role in shaping identity, either fostering a sense of empowerment or creating barriers to self-expression. Beyond family and cultural expectations, experiences of

marginalization and empowerment also shape how left-handed individuals perceive their place in society (Cornel, 2019; Westmoreland, 2023). Many participants shared stories of being excluded or overlooked due to their handedness, particularly in educational or professional settings where right-handed norms dominated. These experiences reinforced their awareness of being part of a minority group, often leading to feelings of isolation or frustration.

However, finding a group identity and community belonging was crucial in counteracting these challenges (McManus, 2019; Papadatou-Pastou et al., 2020; Khalfe, 2023). Some participants expressed that connecting with other left-handed individuals—whether through personal relationships or online communities—helped them feel understood and validated. These connections provided emotional support and a shared sense of identity, allowing them to redefine their experiences from marginalization to empowerment. This shift underscores the importance of social belonging, showing that while left-handed individuals may face exclusion in specific spaces, they also can create and find communities that affirm their identity and celebrate their uniqueness.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The findings provide new insights into how societal norms and structures shape left-handed individuals' daily experiences and identity formation. Beyond the well-documented challenges in education and workplace integration, the study highlights the psychosocial impact of being a left-handed minority, revealing how social interactions continuously reinforce or challenge their self-perception. Additionally, the research uncovers the role of community and advocacy in fostering resilience, emphasizing that left-handed individuals actively seek and create spaces where they feel understood and supported. The results also illustrate that adaptation is not merely about adjusting to physical structures but extends to social and cultural negotiation, where left-handed individuals must navigate expectations in formal and casual settings. This deeper perspective contributes to a broader conversation on inclusivity, recognizing that handedness is not just a biological trait but an experience deeply intertwined with identity, belonging, and social acceptance.

The findings offer insights into how left-handed individuals construct their identity through personal reflection, adaptation, and social connection. Rather than simply adjusting to right-handed norms, they actively redefine their sense of self by embracing their uniqueness and building resilience through lived experiences. The study highlights that adaptation is not just about physical adjustments but also psychological strength, as individuals learn to navigate societal expectations while maintaining authenticity. Additionally, community and shared identity emerge as a critical factor in fostering empowerment, demonstrating that left-handed individuals seek and create spaces where they feel validated. These perspectives contribute to a deeper understanding of how identity is shaped by both individual agency and social belonging, emphasizing the need for a more inclusive and accepting society.

The study underscores the significance of recognizing and addressing the unique experiences of left-handed individuals in a society predominantly structured for right-handedness. Their journey is not solely defined by adaptation but by the continuous negotiation of identity, resilience, and belonging within social and cultural frameworks. By shedding light on these lived realities, the study emphasizes the need for inclusivity, challenging traditional norms that often marginalize left-handed individuals. Fostering awareness, acceptance, and structural accommodations can contribute to a more equitable society where differences are acknowledged and valued. Moving forward, embracing diversity in handedness is not just about accessibility – it is about affirming identity, fostering empowerment, and ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their handedness, can fully participate in and contribute to their communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, greater public awareness and advocacy are needed to challenge the social stigma and stereotypes associated with left-handedness. Families and communities could foster acceptance and support, ensuring left-handed individuals feel valued rather than pressured to conform to right-handed norms. Additionally, policymakers and product designers could consider integrating left-handed tools and technologies, creating an environment that promotes inclusivity and equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of handedness.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted in Bukidnon, Philippines which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural and social contexts. The experiences of left-handed individuals in this region may differ from those in more urbanized or culturally diverse settings where social perceptions and structural accommodations could vary. Additionally, the study involved only five participants, which, while sufficient for an in-depth qualitative exploration, may not capture the full range of experiences of left-handed individuals in different life stages, professions, or social environments.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research can expand on these findings by conducting studies in different geographical locations to explore how cultural and societal factors influence the experiences of left-handed individuals. A larger sample size across various age groups, professions, and educational backgrounds could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how left-handedness impacts identity and social interactions. Additionally, longitudinal studies may offer insight into how left-handed individuals adapt over time, particularly in response to evolving societal norms and technological advancements. Further research can also explore policy and institutional changes promoting inclusivity, ensuring left-handed individuals have better access to tools, resources, and support systems.

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