Lived Experiences of Barangay Council of Women Members on Gender and Development Initiatives Implementation

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ABSTRACT

This study employed a qualitative approach specifically phenomenology to explore and understand the lived experiences of Barangay Council of Women members on Gender and Development initiatives implementation. In-depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were conducted to gather the qualitative data. Through thematic analysis, the lived experiences of the participants were described according to the following themes: socio-cultural barriers, information dissemination gaps, budgetary implementation constraints, constrained local autonomy, women's expanding capacities, knowledge sharing opportunities, and community-centered interventions. In addition, the following themes were generated as regards coping mechanisms of the participants, including adaptive engagement strategies, strategic resource management, participatory program evaluation, and resilient leadership commitment. Moreover, the following themes were extracted from the insights shared by the participants to the academe and the community: Gender and Development is a knowledge-driven empowerment, inclusive Gender and Development leadership practice, Gender and Development promotes confidence through enterprise, Gender and Development advances intergenerational gender awareness, and Gender and Development implementation requires collaborative institutional support.

Keywords: Sociology, Barangay Council of Women Members, Gender and Development, initiatives, implementation, phenomenology, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Gender and Development works to mainstream gender equality which guide development decisions and reinforces women to do their role in generating development, rather than merely passive beneficiaries. It is viewed as a development approach and a process that promotes participation, empowerment, equity, sustainability, free from violence that respect human rights, and help the people to make their own choices and achieve their potential (Philippine Guarantee Corporation, n.d.). Gender and Development initiatives were ensured pursuant to the provisions of the Republic Act 9710 (Magna Carta of Women), which directed government offices including Local Government Units to implement and formulate a Gender and Development Code appropriate to the unique needs and issues of women in their locality (Philippine Commission on Women, 2009). However, the implementation of Gender and Development particularly in regional level was unsuccessful (Hanani et al., 2025). It is also evident in the study of Mendoza et al. (2020) that despite the progress brought by Gender and Development initiatives in city governments and barangay level, the implementation continues to face significant challenges which include the underrepresentation of women in barangay governance.

Similar studies have been identified internationally, such as the study of Maduka (2024) in Nigeria which revealed that the outcomes of the implementation of Gender and Development have been ineffective and far from what is expected, as women still suffer limited opportunities for development, and the policy fails to deal with the root structures that underpin gender inequality and disempowerment. Likewise, a study of Guragain and

Pokharel (2024) in Nepal emphasized the persistent challenges including the gaps in the implementation of Gender and Development, patriarchal norms, and economic disparities which hinder the promotion of empowerment and equality. Besides, in East Africa, Ampaire et al. (2019) elaborated in their study that lack of coherence in the implementation of Gender and Development initiatives particularly in gender mainstreaming was observed and the allocations in addressing issues on gender remained low and inconsistent.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, a study of Sagcal and Ramos (2024) cited that barangays have adopted Gender and Development, but the initiatives often do not incorporate a clear gender-sensitive approach which limit their ability to meet the various needs of both men and women. In addition, a study of Perigo and Mangila (2020) highlighted that Gender and Development initiatives were already established but the effectivity of the implementation was hindered with a challenge that include the shortcomings of the authorities to apply bottomup approach particularly in the formulation of policy and execution. Not only that, a study of Rañon (2024) mentioned that there were corruption practices and abuse of resources involved on the implementation that weaken the process of Gender and Development initiatives and frameworks.

Notably, in Davao Region, a study of Aloba et al. (2024) asserted that the effective implementation of Gender and Development was constrained with a lack of adequate trainings and resources despite evident efforts to resolve gender inequalities. Also, a study of Palaniappan et al. (2017) noted that significant barriers of gender issues such as traditional gender stereotypes, marginalization of women, and inequalities between men and women continue to limit the implementation of Gender and Development initiatives particularly in gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, research showed that the implementation of Gender and Development remained limited in scope as Catubigan et al. (2023) confirmed that there are still women who have limited understanding on the concept and essential provisions of women empowerment especially on their rights stated in the Republic Act 9710 (Magna Carta of Women).

From the readings I accessed, numerous existing studies were identified such as the study of Moyani et al. (2023) which employed a quantitative research design and focused on the assessment of GAD focal persons in terms of their knowledge, commitment, and extent compliance on Gender and Development. Added on, a study of Karim et al. (2016) utilized a qualitative approach and investigated on gendered design and practice of a development initiative. Also, a study of Sotes et al. (2024) applied a qualitative design and explored about gender equality barriers among maritime students. It was evident that prior studies have not examined the lived experiences of the Barangay Council of Women members particularly on the challenges they faced, how they coped with the struggles they experienced in the implementation of Gender and Development initiatives, as well as the significant impacts these initiatives brought to their lives.

Correspondingly, this study provided a huge contribution in improving and strengthening programs and initiatives that aim to achieve women empowerment. Through the examined experiences of Barangay Council of Women members on Gender and Development initiatives implementation, the study also provided valuable information to help attain the 5th Sustainable Development Goal which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In addition, the results of the study informed the authorities for community-based interventions, supports, and policy enhancements to ensure that the implementation of GAD initiatives are successful in promoting women empowerment and equality. It further amplified that barangay-level organizations play an important role in societal norm-shaping, access to resources, and in providing inclusive environment for women.

The findings of the study were disseminated to various local authorities in the province of Davao de Oro,Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and organizations through symposiums and seminars, as I firmly believed they could help in educating the community regarding the awareness of Gender and Development initiatives and in ensuring meaningful dialogue among stakeholders and implementers. In line with this, the findings of the study were shared during the assembly of women in collaboration with the Municipal Women Development Council. To ensure its greater significance, this research study was presented in the international research conferences to reach a wider academic audience to contribute to global discussions on gender equality and women empowerment. Further, to highlight its potential impact on gender-related research, this study was published in a peer-reviewed journal for wider dissemination, reinforcing its contribution in the field.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of the Barangay Council of Women in the implementation of Gender and Development initiatives?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of the Barangay Council of Women in the implementation of Gender and Development initiatives?
3. What insights can be shared to the academe and the community regarding the implementation of Gender and Development initiatives?

Theoretical Lens

This study was seen through the lens of the theory of Women Empowerment Framework (Longwe, 1995). The framework has five levels mainly the welfare, access, conscientization, participation, and control. The first level is welfare which refers to the enhancement in socio-economic conditions that include better nutrition, improved housing, or increased income. Besides, the second level focuses on the enhancement of the status of women by having access to resources particularly land, labor, public services, and benefits. In addition, conscientization as the third level involves the ability of women in recognizing that traditional roles between men and women are not fixed and equality in gender is achievable. The succeeding level is participation where women believe that they could also involve in making decisions and taking part in all programs and policyrelated activities. The final level is control where women achieved equal power and authority in decision-making and managing resources.

The levels under the framework guided the study on the exploration of the lived experiences of Barangay Council of Women members on GAD initiatives implementation by focusing on the third, fourth, and fifth levels: conscientization, mobilization, and control. Conscientization was used to examine how GAD initiatives influenced the perspectives of the BCOW members that challenges particularly inequalities in the community can actually be addressed. Conversely, participation level guided the study by exploring how GAD initiatives transformed the lives of women to move beyond silence, express their views, and assert their perspectives. Lastly, control was employed to assess how GAD initiatives enabled women to recognize their power and capability to make final decisions.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative type of research which is appropriate for exploring complex human experiences and social processes. According to Busetto et al. (2020), qualitative research is research into the nature of things and it is useful for answering questions about why some phenomena take place (or do not occur), evaluating complex, multi-faceted interventions, and determining how those interventions might be improved by learning more about context and lived experience.

Additionally, this study utilized a phenomenological approach. As what Adeniran and Tayo-Ladega (2024) elaborated, qualitative phenomenological research design aims to unravel the nature of reality through uncovering of shared or common lived experiences, adding the researcher's perspective in regard to the phenomenon as the event unfolds. This, in essence, allows the researcher to attain a new understanding of an event.

Phenomenological studies in the field of women's leadership and community involvement have helped to uncover complexities in the lived experiences of women. For instance, Johnson (2020) explored the experiences of women participating in leadership development programs, demonstrating how such programs transform women's leadership journeys. Another study by Boujaber-Diederichs (2023) which used a phenomenological lens to explore challenges and supports experienced by grassroots women leaders when engaging in community leadership roles. Such findings identified phenomenology as important method in unraveling the depth and richness behind the experiences of women within the contexts of leadership and development.

From a methodological perspective, phenomenology focuses on how people or groups experience a particular phenomenon. In this context, the method significantly contributed in gathering a broad range of perspectives from the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of the Barangay Council of Women members on

the implementation of Gender and Development initiatives. Hence, the approach mentioned above was well-suited to achieving the purpose of this study, as it helped in identifying patterns, meanings, and shared understandings that could lead to future practice and policy.

RESULTS

The Lived Experiences of the Barangay Council of Women Members in the Implementation of GAD Initiatives

Presented in Table 1 are the experiences of the members of the Barangay Council of Women in Gender and Development initiatives implementation. The following are the essential themes generated from the various statements of the participants in this study: socio-cultural barriers, information dissemination gaps, budgetary implementation constraints, constrained local autonomy, women's expanding capacities, knowledge sharing opportunities, and community-centered interventions.

Table 1 Lived Experiences of the Barangay Council of Women Members in the Implementation of Gender and Development Initiatives

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Socio-Cultural Barriers	Women cite domestic responsibilities, childcare, and work as reasons for not attending the training.
	Some women are discouraged by lack of incentives (no allowance, no capital for livelihood projects).
	Some women lack interest, feel embarrassed, or believe activities won't change their situation.
	Some men resist their wives' participation in activities.
	Indigenous People (IP) women often excluded due to lack of information or feelings of marginalization.
Information Dissemination Gaps	Ineffective information flow from purok leaders to members causes missed opportunities.
	Some women hesitate to ask questions about the activities.
	Some women claim they were not informed about activities.
Budgetary Implementation Constraints	Limited funds hinder the full implementation of livelihood and training projects.
	Pandemic-related reductions in the National Tax Allotment (NTA) affected GAD allocations
	Women leaders need to stretch resources, contribute personally, or rely on external trainers.
Constrained Local Autonomy	BCW has little authority to propose local ordinances—policy suggestions often depend on municipal/provincial approval.
	Mostly adapt national laws and policies (e.g., RA 9262, Magna Carta for Women).
	Political alignments (e.g., barangay vs. municipal leadership) sometimes affect support for women's programs.
Women's Expanding Capacities	Balancing multiple responsibilities-family, work, studies, barangay service- GAD implementation.
	Leadership positions (e.g., purok president, BCOW officer) give them a platform to empower other women.
	The position gives them the opportunity to go beyond being a housewife and actively contribute to the community.

Knowledge Sharing Opportunities	Attended regular seminars and trainings (e.g., Magna Carta of Women, Gender Sensitivity, R.A. 9262, SOGIE, livelihood, TESDA skills).
	Women cascade their learnings to puroklevel members.
	Topics on livelihood skills (e.g., handicrafts, food processing, massage, candle-making, basket weaving) are prioritize in the training for women.
Community-Centered Interventions	BCW leaders assist in counseling and referrals to Municipal Social Welfare and Development.
	They help in the IEC campaigns and coordinate with the police.
	Women find the issues with teenage pregnancy, child labor, and youth delinquency as a community concern.

Coping Mechanisms of the Barangay Council of Women Members in the Implementation of GAD Initiatives

Shown in Table 2 are the coping strategies of the Barangay Council of Women members in implementing Gender and Development initiatives. The following are the essential themes extracted from the narratives of the participants such as *adaptive engagement strategies, strategic resource management, participatory program evaluation,* and *resilient leadership commitment.*

Table 2 Coping Mechanisms of Barangay Council of Women Members in the implementation of Gender and Development Initiatives

Essential Theme	**Core Ideas**
Adaptive Engagement Strategies	Personally visiting homes, one-on-one talks, or using purok leaders to encourage women to join.
	Inserting GAD topics in meetings, schools, or seminars to stress importance.
	Giving women specific tasks (snacks, chairs, assisting speakers) so they feel involved and valued.
	Small tokens (groceries, rice, lemons) are used to attract participation.
Strategic Resource Management	Carefully prioritizing essential programs
	Seeking support from LGU, MSWD, TESDA, DOLE, DTI, PNP, NGOs, private companies (e.g., mining firms), and even individual donors.
	Rotating participants across puroks to stretch limited budgets.
	Unimplemented activities get carried over to the next Annual Investment Plan
	Coordination with LGU & agencies for trainers and resource persons.
Participatory Program Evaluation	Yearly accomplishment reports, assemblies, and feedbacking sessions to assess program success.
	Checking if skills/livelihood trainings were applied (e.g., massage, ice cream, business).
	Replacing failed or impractical trainings (e.g., dishwashing) with more relevant ones.
	Incorporating suggestions of members, purok leaders, or participants for better implementation.
Resilient Leadership Commitment	Believed that "every problem has a solution"
	Leaders stress patience, time management and not giving up despite challenges.
	Leaders see GAD implementation as both a duty and advocacy, driven by passion and love for their work.

Insights Shared by the Barangay Council of Women Members to the Academe and Community regarding the Implementation of GAD Initiatives

Demonstrated in Table 3 are the insights shared by the Barangay Council of Women members in implementing Gender and Development initiatives. The following are the essential themes drawn from the participants in this study: Gender and Development is a knowledge-driven empowerment, inclusive Gender and Development Leadership practice, Gender and Development promotes confidence through enterprise, Gender and Development advances intergenerational gender awareness, and Gender and Development implementation requires collaborative institutional support.

Table 3 Insights Shared by the Barangay Council of Women Members to the Academe and Community regarding the Implementation of Gender and Development Initiatives

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
GAD is a knowledge-driven empowerment	GAD builds self-confidence, courage, and leadership skills among women.
	Women became more knowledgeable about their rights
	GAD opened their awareness that both men and women can share responsibilities at home and in leadership.
Inclusive GAD leadership practice	Leadership is viewed as a service-oriented role, not one of superiority.
	Good leaders should set an example and serve as role models for other women.
	Leaders act as voices for the voiceless, advocating for those who cannot speak out.
	Leadership also strengthened unity and inclusivity among women of different backgrounds.
GAD promotes confidence through enterprise	Livelihood programs (gardening, handicrafts, candle-making, soap-making, pig-raising, food processing, massage, etc.) provided practical income opportunities.
	Economic empowerment boosted women's self-confidence and decision-making role in the family.
	Skills gained from livelihood training were shared with family members, multiplying the benefits.
	Some women were able to sustain small businesses from what they learned.
GAD advances intergenerational gender awareness	GAD knowledge and values were shared at home, improving relationships within families.
	Children were taught early respect for equality, helping to break gender stereotypes at a young age.
	Husbands became more supportive and cooperative, especially in allowing wives to join activities.
	Many women emphasized that youth should be included in GAD trainings for stronger intergenerational awareness.
GAD implementation requires collaborative institutional support	Strong financial, technical, and moral support from LGUs, barangay officials, and partner agencies is essential.
	Consistent trainings, seminars, and campaigns are needed to deepen women's understanding of GAD.
	Effective information dissemination ensures more women can participate.

	Partnerships with TESDA, DOLE, DTI, MSWD, PNP, NGOs, and private companies help supplement limited resources.
	Leaders stressed the importance of unity and cooperation to sustain GAD activities.

DISCUSSION

The Lived Experiences of the Barangay Council of Women Members in the Implementation of GAD Initiatives This study delved with the experiences of the Barangay Council of Women members in Gender and Development initiatives implementation. The following are the essential themes generated from the various statements of the participants in this study: socio-cultural barriers, information dissemination gaps, budgetary implementation constraints, constrained local autonomy, women's expanding capacities, knowledge sharing opportunities, and community-centered interventions.

Socio-Cultural Barriers. The result of the study revealed that the BCOW members struggled in encouraging women in the communities to participate due to social and cultural norms that include domestic responsibilities, patriarchal resistance, and cultural identity. The participants highlighted that these barriers continue to shape the behavior and confidence of women in participating. This implies that there is a limited participation of women which hinders the inclusive and effective implementation of the BCOW members in gender-responsive activities, programs, and livelihood trainings, reducing the overall impact of GAD initiatives towards the attainment of empowerment and equality at the grassroot level. This finding affirms the study of Manalu et al. (2022) which revealed that due to cultural norms, the participation of women was affected and disparities still remain as the challenge of the government in implementing community-based management programs since there are still women who are often marginalized in access and management. The finding also aligns with the study of Charway and Strandbu (2024) which found that the lack of women participation was also affected by some cultural norms which continue to restrict their engagement in community activities making the gender-inclusive policies weak.

In addition, this finding agrees to the study of Hussain and Hussain (2018) which showed that even if development processes and programs mobilize Women's Community Organizations, the impact is still limited because of the socio-cultural norms that limit active participation of women. According to Gyan et al. (2021) women particularly in rural societies experienced significant challenges in introducing community development processes because of the limited participation of women and decision-making brought by patriarchal values that excluded them from taking an active role and empowerment. Moreover, Bazaanah and Ngcobo (2024) emphasized how the persistence of cultural factor limit the rights of movements of women in attaining gender equality and empowerment and how it impacts the collective participation of women against gender-based violence.

Information Dissemination Gaps. The finding of the study showed that the BCOW members experienced challenges in ensuring effective dissemination of information towards women in the community. The participants revealed that there is a weak communication processes between purok leaders and women members, resulting in unequal access to GAD initiatives opportunities. This indicates that communication barriers restrict the efforts of BCOW members in mobilizing women participation and in sustaining their engagement in GAD activities, empowerment programs, and livelihood trainings. This result is in accordance with the study of Limbong et al. (2025) which asserted that efforts of gender mainstreaming introduced by women-led organization have started, however they are still limited due to barriers in communication, as the information only works well within the circle of bureaucracy and does not get delivered to the rest of society where it is most required to encourage participation of women. The result also supports the study of Syamsidar et al. (2025) which emphasized that despite the effort of women to encourage other women in the community to actively participate and contribute to development planning, their participation is still limited due to limited information access which hinder their maximum participation in decision-making processes.

Also, the result expands the study of Maranditya et al. (2025) which stated that despite using thorough communication measures that includes intrapersonal techniques, public engagement, online media, and the

8convergence model, the implementation of gender-based stunting prevention acceleration program still has gaps in participation. Likewise, Dwipayanti et al. (2025) indicated that women's empowerment programs face barriers because the awareness of women on the implementation is limited. Thus, Asanwana and Ulo (2025) highlighted the importance of the increased spread of policies and the active participation of women in organizations designed to effectively achieve the true empowerment.

Budgetary Implementation Constraints. The finding of the study identified that the BCOW members encountered with limited funds and inadequate resources. The participants underscore that budget constraints affect the implementation of GAD initiatives. This signifies that BCOW members could only implement limited number of gender-responsive programs, activities, and livelihood trainings, resulting in reduced opportunities for participation and engagement of women, and limit the effective execution of GAD initiatives in the community. This finding confirms the study of Brosas et al. (2025) which demonstrated that some programs related to Gender and Development initiatives which focused on gender-based violence and promoting equality were not extended to all barangays because of the continuing challenge in resource allocation. The finding also concludes the study of Purnama et al. (2024) which showed that the integration of gender really fosters progress toward development goals through greater engagement of women however, policy makers and experts experienced struggles in designing gender mainstreaming due to limited resources.

Similarly, the finding concurs the study Chaudhuri and Morash (2019) which illustrated that empowerment schemes for women tend to remain limited or not sustained because of their reliance on external support and the declining financial priority given to gender equality initiatives. Correspondingly, Devkota et al. (2022) stated that due to the inadequacy of financial resources, implementation of gender mainstreaming at the local level still fails to produce meaningful change. Hence, as Adem and Mohammed (2020) highlighted, effective gender mainstreaming involves the satisfaction of primary conditions, such as the availability and mobilization of adequate resources.

Constrained Local Autonomy. The finding of the study revealed that the BCOW members also faces notable challenges particularly in their ability to make independent decisions. The participants revealed that they operate with limited-decision making power due to structured and centralized policies. This means that their limited authority constraints its ability to initiate gender-responsive policies, programs, and trainings, or adapt GAD initiatives to local needs which in turn discourages women from participating and becoming actively involved. This finding is parallel to the result of the study authored by Chaney (2015) which showed that political leaders have involved civil society in the policy making process towards gender mainstreaming, but collaborative process was not achieved, as the process is more likely to take a top-down and expert-led bureaucratic approach.

A similar result found in the study of Das et al. (2021) which reported that centralized power relations and tokenistic decision-making within local government organizations delay the actual participation of women and undermine gender sensitivity and accountability. The finding also corresponds to the study of Ertugal and Bagdadi (2024) which revealed that the engagement of political party ideology and individual views of mayors creates the chances of gender mainstreaming however, inter-governmental disputes hamper the transformative processes. While Reeta (2024) highlighted the relevance of decentralization as an agent of change that increases participation and decision-making of women in community projects, Shrestha et al. (2025) on the other hand, asserted that the absence of institutional adaptation impedes the process of successful implementation of genderinclusive policies.

Women's Expanding Capacities. The findings of the study indicated that in implementing Gender and Development initiatives, the capacities of women are expanding through their involvement in leadership position that gives them the opportunity to lead and participate meaningfully beyond traditional household responsibilities. This implies that the BCOW members experience work-life balance challenges while empowering other women in the community, and actively contributing and encouraging them to engage in the implementation of GAD initiatives. This finding confirms the study of Lumintao & Baulete (2025) which found that women leaders particularly in politics manages work-life balance through maintaining personal commitment, effective time management, and ensuring the well-being of their family while holding on to a firm

sense of purpose. In addition, this supports the analysis of Wang (2018) which revealed that despite facing difficulties in balancing family and work lives, women plan their way out of these multiple roles to gain freedom, fulfilment, and play a significant role in the society.

This finding also concurs the study of Boateng (2025) which showed that the position and civic participation of assemblywomen inspired and empowered other women so that they could also actively provide to their own necessities. Aside from that, Fevre et al. (2024) provided strong evidence which stated that women faced barrier which include the pressures of family responsibilities where they experienced having great difficulty in giving sufficient time to their families despite trying to balance the demands of work and home. Meanwhile, Mabasa and Maluka (2025) pointed out that as the work is evolving, it brought many challenges to women leadership where they must juggle their professional responsibilities with their personal lives.

Knowledge Sharing Opportunities. The result of the study showed that in the implementation of GAD initiatives, the BCOW members equipped themselves with the necessary knowledge and skills by attending in various trainings and seminars and shared what they learned to the women in the community. This indicates that while they enhanced the awareness of women in the community through capacity building initiatives, they are also challenged in prioritizing GAD activities, trainings, and programs that would ensure that women gain essential knowledge and practical skills to enhance their empowerment and participation in community development. This result validates the study of Varsha et al. (2019) which showed that what contributes to the empowerment of women are the various capacity-building initiatives that include technology-based livelihood support. The finding also affirms the study of Siddiqui and Pande (2025) which demonstrated that training programs which include jute bag making, embroidery, poultry, fisheries, pickle production, stitching, handicrafts, cloth bag making, and others definitely enable women specifically in rural areas to be self-reliant, increase their self-confidence which socially and economically empower them.

This result echoes the findings of Pandit (2025) which showed that, vocational trainings really help women improve their technical skills, enhance confidence, strengthen decision-making, and uplift their social status in families and communities. Additionally, Garbuja and Pasa (2016) elaborated the crucial role of technical and vocational education and training which serve as important drivers towards social and economic development and women empowerment at the community level. Apart from that, Caban (2022) highly emphasized the significance of comprehensive understanding of R.A 9262 which is necessary to protect women and children. The same author mentioned the need for training on the rights of women, seminars on child protection, and livelihood programs where the implementation should be initiated by DSWD, PNP, DOH, and State Universities and colleges.

Community-Centered Interventions. The result of the study reflected that the BCOW members are taking active roles in addressing community concerns and this demonstrates a solid basis for community-centered interventions. This reveals that the BCOW members also faces difficulties brought by social issues in the community which needs to be addressed through the integration of GAD initiatives. This result supports the evidence of Hernández-Flórez and Klimenko (2023) which discovered that there is a need to respond to women's needs by not ignoring social justice and gender equity because criminality is based on structural inequality, social roles, stereotypes, and gender violence. The result reflects the conclusion of Talib-Bauda et al. (2025) which reported that GAD principles would help in addressing social gender issues like violence, inequality, and stereotypes with the focus on the contribution of GAD programs to resolving large-scale community social issues.

This observation is in line with Moyani et al. (2023) which emphasized that in order to solve social issues related to gender, a call for properly informed and committed application of gender and development programs is vital and the success of GAD programs relies on the information, dedication, and adherence of local authorities. Goetz (2014) stated that the collective action of women is needed to eliminate social issues that involve gender inequalities such as sexual violence, female infanticide, child marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual violence, and denial of equal access to health care, education, property, employment and remuneration. Moreover, Daher et al. (2021) added that the integration of gender-specific community programs empower

women to challenge social issues such as gender stereotypes and develop empowerment through collective action and shared experience.

Coping Mechanisms of the Barangay Council of Women Members in the Implementation of GAD Initiatives

This study provided an in-depth exploration on the coping strategies of the Barangay Council of Women members in implementing Gender and Development initiatives. The following are the essential themes emerged from the different mechanisms, approaches, and perspectives of the participants in this study: *adaptive engagement strategies, strategic resource management, participatory program evaluation*, and *resilient leadership commitment.*

Adaptive Engagement Strategies. The result of the study indicated that the BCOW members come up with adaptive engagement strategies to cope with the limited engagement of women in community activities. This implies the resourcefulness and adaptability of BCOW members in raising awareness among women in the community regarding the implementation of GAD activities, empowerment programs, and livelihood trainings. This finding affirms the study of Yulianti et al. (2025) which demonstrated that adaptive communication that involves face-to-face persuasion and informal meetings were important in building participation and trust of women. The same evidence found in the study of Belaid et al. (2024) which reported that adaptive engagement strategies which encompass home visitation program played an important part in gender equity.

The finding is also consistent with the study of Yanti and Amaliah (2024) which showed that adaptive engagement strategies like using communication styles appropriate in local settings including participatory and collaborative ones effectively engage communities. According to Harun et al. (2023), adaptive engagement approaches that involve dialogue improve the motivation of women to participate actively in village development planning. Similarly, Boucher (2015) also explained the significance of providing a small financial incentive which greatly improves the response rates and participation of women.

Strategic Resource Management. The evidence of the study found that the BCOW members captures the essence of strategic resource management to ensure the continuity and sustainability of GAD initiatives. This demonstrates that the BCOW members exercise careful planning, coordination, and prioritization to effectively carry out the implementation of GAD activities, empowerment programs, and livelihood trainings. This result supports to the study of Howes and Preston (2024) which showed that success of gender-responsive policing programs rely on strategic coordination and partnerships, which promote collaboration among stakeholders. Additionally, the finding confirms the study of Mulema et al. (2022) which revealed that working in coordination with influential stakeholders who have the capacity and commitment to work on gender issues results in more effective and sustainable results.

This finding concurs with the study of Vélez et al. (2020) which found that successful gender mainstreaming requires an appropriately planned and transformational strategy that is developed and executed in collaboration with national women's organizations, civil society, and in support of relevant external institutions. Nevertheless, Mangubhai et al. (2022) presented that the effectiveness of strategic partnerships largely rests on the ability and willingness of stakeholders to work together in pursuing gender equality. Likewise, Odero et al. (2025) asserted that gender integration can be effective based on the strategic framing of gender issues and active leadership of key actors.

Participatory Program Evaluation. The findings of the study determined that to ensure successful implementation of GAD initiatives, the BCOW members emphasized the impact of participatory program evaluation. This indicates that the BCOW members adopt a collaborative and responsive approach to navigate the challenges in the implementation of GAD activities, empowerment programs, and livelihood trainings. This finding confirms the study of Mbuvi and Gekara (2019) which identified the impact of monitoring and evaluation planning and stakeholder participation as the critical factors that improve the performance of gender mainstreaming activities. This finding resonates with the conclusion of Mollard et al. (2015) which underscored

the effectivity of regular monitoring and evaluation over the project cycle in gender mainstreaming to determine gaps and opportunities.

This finding also echoes the study of Barker et al. (2023) which reported about the possibility of responsive feedback leading to timely intervention of changing conditions of the implementation which led to strategic changes in the program that helped improve the community engagement and support of the project. In the same way, Segone (2019) demonstrated that evaluation on gender-responsive activities is crucial to consider interventions that would affect gender and power relations and determine structural causes of inequality and discrimination. In addition to this, West et al. (2019) recommended the importance to conduct community interest meetings in which prospective participants may ask questions, get acquainted with fellow individuals, and decide if the activity is appropriate for their interests.

Resilient Leadership Commitment. Despite the challenges experienced during the implementation of GAD initiatives, the BCOW members strongly reflected about commitment on resilient leadership. This signifies that the BCOW members demonstrates emotional strength and a deep sense of responsibility in implementing GAD activities, empowerment programs, and livelihood trainings successfully. This finding agrees to the study of Ngubane et al. (2025) which showed that when facing with personal and systemic challenges, women leaders are illustrative of resilience and persistence. Similarly, the result concurs with the study of Pillay-Naidoo and Nel (2022) showed that resilient leadership in women facilitates persistent advocacy and effective program execution.

This finding also echoes the study of Lwamba et al. (2022) which revealed that women's resilience enhances through institutional and programmatic support combined with leadership development which facilitates genderoutcome results. Likewise, Duchek et al. (2022) asserted that the resilience of women leaders occurs in distinctive stages based on the personal, career, and contextual resources that help them to endure and guide them to overcome gendered obstacles. Bridges et al. (2021) also added that resilience is part of what enables women to thrive and maintain long-term in their careers.

Insights Shared by the Barangay Council of Women Members to the Academe and Community regarding the Implementation of GAD Initiatives

This study carried out a broad-based analysis on the insights shared by the Barangay Council of Women members in implementing Gender and Development initiatives. The following are the essential themes identified from the participants in this study: *Gender and Development is a knowledge-driven empowerment, inclusive Gender and Development Leadership practice, Gender and Development promotes confidence through enterprise, Gender and Development advances intergenerational gender awareness*, and *Gender and Development implementation requires collaborative institutional support.*

Gender and Development is a Knowledge-Driven Empowerment. The result of the study determined that GAD initiatives contribute a huge impact on the lives of many particularly women in the community. This reflects how BCOW members were empowered with GAD initiatives and how they harnessed their empowerment to strengthen and uplift others. This finding agrees to the study of Yadav and Ojha (2024) which states that gender and development initiative particularly gender sensitization, empowered women, combat discrimination structures, and enhanced gender equality. This finding is in accordance with the study of Silor (2024) which showed that upon the end of the training of gender responsive program, participants showed a dramatic increase in confidence in their own leadership skills. The same author mentioned that responsibility and other important traits were enhanced through the program.

In contrary, the result disconfirms the study of Indriyany et al. (2020) which revealed that despite the implementation of gender-based development, there are women who are still subject to gender-based stereotypes which continue to hinder their empowerment. In addition, Gil (2021) also observed that even with the efforts of the school to put in place Gender and Development programs, gender discrimination and stereotyping still exist which contribute to the difficulty of achieving empowerment. That is why Firdaus et al. (2024) emphasized that Gender and Development initiatives like gender mainstreaming should aim to safeguard the protection of women

by ensuring that their rights to growth, development, and active participation in accordance with human dignity are guaranteed, while protecting them from economic and sexual exploitation.

The theory of Women Empowerment Framework proposed by Longwe (1995) guided the study in contextualizing the finding through the levels of conscientization, mobilization, and control. Conscientization level was reflected particularly on how GAD initiatives empowered the BCOW members, helping them realize their potential to contribute in addressing various issues and needs of the women in the community. The participation level was evident focusing on how these empowered BCOW members engaged in decision-making specifically in contributing ideas and suggestions to effectively strengthen the implementation of GAD-related activities, trainings, and livelihood programs. Finally, the control level was also demonstrated through the impact of empowerment brought by GAD initiatives which influenced the perspectives of women in understating their rights, power, and authority in making decisions.

Inclusive Gender and Development Leadership Practice. The finding of the study highlighted that the BCOW members wanted to emphasize how inclusive leadership practice help them to successfully introduce GAD initiatives. This highlights how GAD initiatives brought positive impact to leadership styles of BCOW members in fostering collaborative leadership among women with differences in background, status, and experiences. This is consistent with the study conducted by Kuteesa et al. (2024) which found that collaborative leadership fosters a culture of inclusivity and flexibility alongside accelerating more innovation. The result also supports the finding of the study conducted by Perry et al. (2020) which revealed that collaborative leaders are typically those leaders that promote supportive environment where people feel more well-being and where equity exist.

This result also aligns with the study of Alang et al. (2022) which reflected that collaborative leadership played a significant role in acknowledging and respecting the unique identity of people with different background by giving them a strong voice in their work, valuing their contributions, and respecting their cultural differences. Along with this, Smith (2025) implied that collaborative leadership is needed to drive gender equality in organizations, particularly in creating environments that offer women equal opportunities. Similarly, Rami et al. (2017) pointed out that community leaders serve as drivers of transformation in the community particularly in social, economic, and cultural, influence the mindset of people specifically in rural areas.

Gender and Development Promotes Confidence Through Enterprise. The outcome of the study emphasized that the BCOW members are empowered with GAD initiatives as they build confidence through enterprise. This signifies that GAD initiatives empowered the BCOW members economically to become self-sustaining and influential actors in community development. This result is in line with the evidence of Abukari et al. (2022) which showed that undertaking training and income-generating activities related to Gender-based Initiatives enhanced women's ability to participate in productive livelihoods, raising their economic independence and selfconfidence. The finding reflects with the study of Jeeva et al. (2019) which emphasized that through livelihood interventions in gender mainstreaming, women in the communities were empowered with basic knowledge and leadership, allowing them to engage in sustainable income-generating activities.

This study reinforces the conclusion of Patil (2023) which showed that this development in entrepreneurship can enable a woman to earn not only an income for her family but also achieve freedom of choice, build selfconfidence and self-efficacy, educate her children, and transform her own life. Khatiwada et al. (2018) reported that Gender and Development initiatives particularly gender mainstreaming is significant because it stimulates inclusive economic growth where men and women shifted their livelihood activities away from just subsistence to generating incomes. Further, Mushumba and Mulyungi (2020) agreed to the statement by highlighting that GAD initiatives have improved livelihood of women considerably.

Gender and Development Advances Intergenerational Gender Awareness. The result of the study identified that the BCOW members highlighted the importance of how GAD initiatives raise intergenerational awareness. This conveys that the BCOW members have internalized and applied GAD principles to influence positive change at home and in the community. This finding aligns with the study of Azzahra et al. (2024) which highlighted the impact of Gender and Development that help parents in educating gender equality to raise consciousness of children particularly on their rights and defied classical gender stereotypes. This observation echoes the work of

Rahma et al. (2020) which demonstrated that an initiative particularly gender awareness education shapes and reinforces the thinking, attitudes, and action of families towards the promotion of justice, equality, and equitable relationships between men and women.

This supports the conclusion drawn by the study of Moura and Goncalves (2023) which illustrated that by means of education, gender-sensitive programs seek to provide people with the knowledge and ability to challenge and overcome the gender stereotypes and their negative implications. Encouragement of gender equality at a young age will help instill values of respect, compassion, and justice in the younger generation. As a complement to this, Gazta (2022) expressed that by means of Gender and Development intervention initiatives, children's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors can be influenced to promote and attain gender equity. Emfimo et al. (2024) also noted that incorporating the values of gender education, long-standing prejudices are dismantled that clears the path for the future where discriminatory behaviors do not exist.

Gender and Development implementation requires collaborative institutional support. The result of the study stressed that the BCOW members highlighted the need for collaborative institutional support in implementing GAD initiatives. This means that collective effort among various organizations played a significant role which enhances the capacity of BCOW members to successfully implement GAD initiatives. This finding is in line with the research conducted by Brion and Reginaldo (2021) which indicated that with clearly defined policies and strong organizational support, a number of programs were effectively implemented to promote and safeguard the rights and well-being of women. This evidence relates to the finding of the study of Steccolini (2019) which presented those additional efforts are needed for it to be totally institutionalized. The commitment of practitioners and policymakers are vital.

In contrary, the finding of the study of Hidayahtulloh and Hutami (2019) highlighted that there is limited partnership among government, civil society, and private sector, but progress in adopting gender mainstreaming policies can still be seen. Meanwhile, Albaladejo (2016) stated that one of the barriers that hinder the successful implementation of Gender and Development is the limited collaboration of institutions on Gender and Development-related activities. Thus, Abnory et al. (2024) elaborated that improvement of collaborative support is a critical strategy in the establishment of resilient gender-sensitive systems that support the active participation of women in different sectors.

CONCLUSION

This study explored and understand the lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of Barangay Council of Women members in implementing Gender and Development initiatives. The findings revealed that despite successful implementation, challenges continue to limit the effectivity of Gender and Development activities, trainings, and livelihood programs introduced at the barangay level. Through adaptive strategies and approaches, the BCOW members were able to sustain the implementation to help women become aware of their rights, achieve equality, and develop empowerment.

The findings of the study also highlighted the importance of resilience in times of struggles and hardships, which motivated the BCOW members in performing their duties and responsibilities. Behind challenges, these women still found fulfillment in serving the community. The finding showed that women persevere and do not easily give up.

Ultimately, the study contributed in-depth understanding how Gender and Development initiatives brought significant change to the lives of many, particularly, the women in the community. It is evident that these initiatives empower women in so many ways, thus, the study emphasized the need for collaborative support from various institutions, organizations, and government agencies. Further, the study concluded that the attainment of women empowerment and gender equality becomes more feasible when GAD initiatives are adequately supported and maintained.

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