

Promoting a VAW-Free College: A Quantitative Analysis of Gender and Development Awareness among College Students

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ABSTRACT

Gender and Development (GAD) awareness is a critical foundation in building Violence Against Women (VAW)-free academic environments. This study assessed the level of GAD awareness among 106 randomly selected college students from a local institution in Region XI, Philippines, using a descriptive quantitative design. An adapted survey measured awareness across four domains: gender roles, gender issues, GAD-related laws, and the integration of GAD into government programs and institutional policies. Results showed high awareness of social gender roles and rights, particularly those related to women's participation in civic life and education, but only moderate awareness of legal mandates and the operational roles of government agencies in implementing GAD frameworks. The findings highlight the need for more comprehensive GAD education that includes both conceptual and institutional components. The study supports the Social Cognitive Theory of Gender Development, which emphasizes the role of environmental exposure in shaping gender-related learning and behavior. This study offers insights for academic leaders and policymakers to promote inclusive, gender-sensitive, and VAW-free college environments.

Keywords: Gender and Development, VAW-free college, gender awareness, higher education, institutional policies

INTRODUCTION

Violence Against Women (VAW) continues to be a critical concern both globally and within the Philippine context, especially in higher education institutions where young adults are shaping their social and moral outlook. The Philippine government has made strides to address gender-based violence and inequality through institutional mechanisms like the Gender and Development (GAD) framework and the enactment of laws such as Republic Act 9262, the Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 (Amasol, 2024). Colleges and universities are vital in promoting gender sensitivity and empowering students with awareness of both rights and responsibilities related to gender equity. Awareness of GAD among students is generally present but tends to be stronger in areas involving social gender roles than in technical knowledge of laws or institutional programs (Sumadsad & Tuazon, 2016). The institutionalization of GAD programs remains inconsistent, often due to weak implementation and a lack of targeted educational efforts (Pangilinan, 2017). However, efforts like the Barangay VAW Desks demonstrate that structured interventions at the community level can be instrumental in responding to violence and promoting women's rights (Yalao, 2023). This study, therefore, aims to quantitatively assess the level of GAD awareness among college students as a foundational step in promoting a VAW-free educational environment through informed advocacy and institutional action.

Across the globe, research has consistently shown that increasing gender awareness among students is a key strategy in preventing violence against women (VAW) and fostering safer, more inclusive learning environments. For instance, programs designed to raise awareness of sexual harassment and promote gender equality have been found to significantly improve students' understanding of respectful relationships and reduce tolerance for violence in academic settings (Noh, 2023). Similarly, campus-based violence prevention

models grounded in gender inclusivity and intersectionality have been effective in transforming student attitudes and reducing instances of sexual and gender-based violence (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2020). In a comprehensive review, educational institutions that embed GAD in their curricula report better outcomes in preventing campus-based violence and promoting student engagement with gender equity issues (Newl, 2016).

In the Philippines, similar patterns exist. A study revealed that gender mainstreaming in the MSU-Iligan Institute of Technology was successful when GAD policies were embedded in teaching and research, though gaps remained in policy uniformity and training support (Simeon, 2017). Another study found that in the local barangays of Iligan City, while compliance with gender budget allocations was high, the actual implementation of programs was hindered by limited awareness of technical GAD mandates (Mendoza et al., 2020). Likewise, another study discovered varied implementation of GAD programs across State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in CALABARZON, with stronger student awareness in social aspects of gender but less familiarity with legal and administrative components (De Jesus, 2020). These findings stress the importance of not only introducing gender-sensitive content but also institutionalizing and evaluating these efforts to build a VAW-free academic environment effectively.

Greater awareness of Gender and Development (GAD) has been linked to improved student attitudes toward gender equality, enhanced social responsibility, and reduced tolerance for violence and discrimination. Studies have shown that when GAD concepts are meaningfully integrated into academic settings, they empower students to challenge stereotypes critically and actively participate in building inclusive spaces (Noh, 2023). However, despite these benefits, there remains a gap between GAD awareness at the conceptual level and actual behavioral change, mainly when institutional programs are inconsistently implemented or inadequately resourced (Gil Jr., 2021). Moreover, although faculty and administrators may express strong support for GAD initiatives, their practical knowledge and long-term commitment often vary widely, resulting in fragmented implementation and limited student impact (Albaladejo, 2016). Additionally, meaningful gender violence prevention requires not just awareness but sustained, intersectional engagement in teaching practices and institutional reform (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2020). These findings highlight the urgent need to not only assess student awareness but also to ensure its translation into long-term institutional strategies and behavioral change. This study addresses this gap by evaluating college students' GAD awareness as a vital step toward achieving a VAW-free educational environment.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to assess the level of Gender and Development (GAD) awareness among college students. Descriptive research is widely used to examine prevailing conditions and attitudes within a defined population, especially when aiming to understand levels of awareness, perceptions, or behaviors related to gender issues (Rahayu et al., 2023). This design was suitable for capturing students' understanding of gender roles, GAD policies, and institutional efforts to create a VAW-free environment.

The study population consisted of approximately 600 college students enrolled in a local college in Region XI, Philippines. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 106 participants, ensuring that each student had an equal chance of being included in the study. Random sampling enhances the generalizability of findings by minimizing sampling bias and ensuring representativeness (Vijan et al., 2015).

Data were collected using an adapted questionnaire from Sumadsad and Tuazon (2016) that measured awareness across four key domains: (1) gender roles, (2) gender issues, (3) national laws and mandates related to GAD, and (4) integration of GAD into government programs and institutional mechanisms. The instrument was modified from existing validated tools and aligned with prior frameworks used in related studies (Kulasekara & Pillai, 2018). It underwent expert validation and pilot testing, yielding Cronbach's alpha of .902, which indicates strong internal consistency and reliability.

Surveys were administered through Google Forms and printed copies, allowing respondents to select their preferred mode of participation. This hybrid approach ensured accessibility while controlling for response bias due to mode of delivery. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study. Participants provided informed consent, and all responses were treated with strict confidentiality in compliance with the Data

Privacy Act of 2012. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Additionally, data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to determine levels of awareness in each domain. SPSS facilitated accurate data analysis and categorization. Awareness levels were interpreted based on standardized descriptive rating scales to classify results as very low, low, moderate, high, or very high (Chinangure & Mutekwe, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics on the students' familiarity with various national laws and policies related to Gender and Development (GAD). The overall mean score is 3.36, interpreted as moderate awareness, indicating that students, on average, are moderately aware of GAD-related legal frameworks. The overall standard deviation (SD) of .712 suggests that there is a low to moderate variability in students' responses, meaning most students gave similar ratings with only slight differences in their levels of awareness.

Looking at specific laws, the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995 (RA 7877) and the Anti-Rape Law of 1997 (RA 8353) obtained the highest mean scores of 4.26 and 4.24, respectively, both categorized as very high awareness. Their SD values (.854 and .846) imply a moderately consistent level of awareness among students. Similarly, high awareness was recorded for the Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710) with a mean of 4.06 (SD = 1.09) and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 (RA 9208) with a mean of 4.02 (SD = .915). These high SD values indicate a more significant variability in students' responses; some students may be very aware while others are less informed.

Moderate awareness was observed in RA 7192 – Women in Development and Nation Building Act (mean = 2.90, SD = 1.00) and Section 14, Article II of the 1987 Constitution (mean = 2.89, SD = .949), with SD values again suggesting a moderate range in student familiarity. These results imply that while awareness is not exceptionally high, it is still present to some extent, though student knowledge varies.

Table 1. Level of Awareness of GAD National Mandates and Related Laws Among College Student

	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
GAD National Mandates & Related Laws	.712	3.36	Moderate
1. RA 7192 – Women in Development and Nation Building Act (An Act Promoting the Integration of Women as Full and Equal Partners of Men in Development and Nation Building and for Other Purposes)	1.00	2.90	Moderate
2. RA 9710 – The Magna Carta of Women (An Act Providing for the Magna Carta of Women)	1.09	4.06	High
3. RA 7877 – Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995 (An Act Declaring Sexual Harassment Unlawful in the Employment, Education or Training Environment and for Other Purposes)	.854	4.26	Very High
4. RA 9208 – Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 (An Act Instituting Policies to Eliminate Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Establishing the Necessary Institutional Mechanisms for the Protection and Support of Trafficked Persons, Providing Penalties for its Violations, and for Other Purposes)	.915	4.02	High
5. RA 8353 – Anti-Rape Law of 1997 (An Act Expanding the Definition of the Crime of Rape, Reclassifying the Same as a Crime against Persons, amending for the Purpose Act No. 3815, as amended, otherwise known as the Revised Penal Code, and for Other Purposes)	.846	4.24	Very High

6. Section 14, Article II of the 1987 Constitution (Recognizing the Role of Women in nation-building and shall ensure the Fundamental Equality before the Law of Women and Men)	.949	2.89	Moderate
7. Section 28 of the General Appropriations Act (GAA) (Directing Government Entities to formulate a GAD plan, the Cost of which shall not be less than Five Percent of their Yearly Budget, otherwise known as the GAD Budget)	1.19	2.28	Low
8. Executive Order (EO) 273 (Directing all Government Agencies and Local Levels to institutionalize (GAD) efforts in Government by incorporating GAD concerns in their Planning, Programming and Budgeting Process)	1.17	2.26	Low

In contrast, Section 28 of the General Appropriations Act (GAA) and Executive Order No. 273 had the lowest mean scores of 2.28 and 2.26, both interpreted as low awareness. Their respective SD values (1.19 and 1.17) are among the highest in the table, indicating a wide disparity in student responses. Some students may be aware, but many are not familiar at all with these technical GAD mandates related to government budgeting and planning.

In summary, students demonstrate very high awareness of protective laws addressing sexual harassment, rape, and trafficking, while they show low awareness of policies related to gender mainstreaming in institutional planning. The standard deviation values across the items reflect varying degrees of consistency in student awareness, with some laws showing more unified understanding and others revealing wide gaps in knowledge. This suggests the need for enhanced education efforts to improve and equalize awareness of all GAD-related laws, especially those tied to policy implementation and budget allocation.

The findings presented in Table 1 align closely with existing research on student awareness of Gender and Development (GAD)-related laws in the Philippines. Several studies support the observed trend of high awareness among students regarding protective legislation, such as the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act (RA 7877), the Anti-Rape Law (RA 8353), and the Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710). For instance, a study found that students and faculty in a higher education institution were notably aware of national mandates related to gender roles and laws protecting women, reinforcing the reported high mean scores for these specific acts (Sumadsad & Tuazon, 2016). Similarly, another study revealed substantial compliance with GAD mandates at the barangay level, often anchored in prevalent laws like RA 9710, suggesting these laws are widely disseminated and better known even at the grassroots level (Mendoza et al., 2020).

Further supporting this, the study by Cabillo-Jimenez (2021) concluded that teachers, particularly in social studies, demonstrated significant awareness of issues such as sexual harassment and gender stereotypes, indicating effective dissemination of protective gender laws within academic environments. In addition, Duclan (2018) documented substantial improvement in awareness levels of GAD-related information, especially laws protecting women's rights, following targeted seminar-workshops using cooperative learning approaches, underscoring the effectiveness of educational interventions. Likewise, Barairo et al. (2024) found that essential education personnel were familiar with various GAD initiatives, particularly those that are frequently highlighted in institutional training efforts.

In contrast, the low awareness observed for technical GAD mandates, such as Executive Order No. 273 and Section 28 of the General Appropriations Act, is also reflected in critical literature. For instance, Gil (2021) reported inconsistent and unsustained implementation of GAD mandates in private higher education institutions, where technical policies were less emphasized compared to more publicized gender protection laws. Pangilinan (2017) also observed that while GAD programs exist at the local government level, the institutionalization of technical frameworks and their integration into student learning remains limited, often due to a lack of clarity in implementation and monitoring mechanisms. Similarly, Sumanpan and Canencia (2013) noted poor implementation of EO 273 at the community level, attributed mainly to lack of awareness and minimal budget utilization for mandated GAD activities. Finally, Ranon (2024) highlighted that misuse

and lack of transparency in GAD budget utilization often stem from a weak understanding of budgeting policies like Section 28 of the GAA, which is consistent with the low awareness and high variability observed in the study.

Collectively, these sources validate the observed trend of awareness of high-profile protective GAD laws and low awareness of more technical, planning-related mandates. This gap highlights the urgent need for enhanced educational efforts and dissemination strategies that encompass not only gender protection but also the broader scope of gender mainstreaming in planning and budgeting processes.

Table 2. Level of Awareness on the Government Agencies Integrating GAD Plan into Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs) Among College Students

	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Government Agencies Integrating GAD Plan into Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs)	.896	2.40	Low
1. The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), previously the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), leads in setting the priority agenda for women's empowerment and gender equality.	.980	2.62	Moderate
2. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) ensures that GAD issues and concerns, gender equality, and women's empowerment are mainstreamed.	.957	2.44	Low
3. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) ensures that agencies submit their annual GAD Plan and Budget (GPB) and GAD Accomplishment Report (AR).	1.07	2.31	Low
4. The Commission on Audit (COA) conducts an annual audit on the use of the GAD budget	1.14	2.21	Low

Table 2 presents the level of student awareness regarding the roles of various government agencies in integrating Gender and Development (GAD) plans into programs, projects, and activities (PPAs). The overall findings indicate that student awareness is generally low, suggesting a significant gap in knowledge about how key institutions implement and oversee GAD initiatives at the policy and operational levels.

Among the four agencies listed, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) received the highest mean awareness score of 2.62, categorized as moderate awareness. This suggests that students are somewhat familiar with the PCW's role in setting the national priority agenda for women's empowerment and gender equality, possibly due to the agency's more public-facing advocacy work and involvement in education campaigns.

In contrast, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), and the Commission on Audit (COA) all received mean scores below 2.50, which fell under the low awareness category. Specifically, awareness of NEDA's role in mainstreaming gender equality into national development planning was rated at 2.44, DBM's role in requiring the submission of GAD Plans and Budgets (GPB) and Accomplishment Reports (AR) scored 2.31, and COA's auditing function on GAD budget usage had the lowest score at 2.21. These low scores highlight a concerning lack of familiarity with the structural and financial mechanisms that operationalize GAD in the government.

Moreover, the standard deviation (SD) values, which range from .896 to 1.14, suggest a moderate level of variability in student responses. This indicates that while most students consistently report low awareness, a subset of students may be more familiar with the issue, potentially due to specific academic exposure or extracurricular involvement in gender advocacy. Furthermore, the results emphasize the need for enhanced education and communication strategies targeting students to improve their understanding of the systemic and

institutional frameworks that support gender and development. Increasing awareness about these agencies and their roles is critical for fostering a more informed, participatory, and gender-responsive citizenry.

Multiple studies strongly support this finding, showing limited public and student knowledge about the technical functions of these agencies in GAD mainstreaming. For example, Sumadsad and Tuazon (2016) found that while students were moderately aware of GAD concepts and gender issues, their familiarity with the mechanisms of GAD implementation by government bodies remained limited. Similarly, Dimas et al. (2020) observed that students exhibited the lowest awareness levels compared to faculty and community stakeholders, particularly in understanding how institutions operationalize national GAD mandates.

Further supporting this, Mendoza et al. (2020) documented the uneven implementation and awareness of GAD budget policies at the barangay level, which reflects broader challenges in disseminating the roles of agencies like DBM and COA that oversee such mandates. Pangilinan (2017) also highlighted the lack of understanding among local government stakeholders about the structural responsibilities of agencies like NEDA in gender policy implementation, leading to the weak institutionalization of GAD at the grassroots level. Similarly, Villegas (2021) noted that many schools were still in the early stages of GAD integration, where awareness was focused on general gender sensitivity and laws rather than technical agency roles. Sumanpan and Canencia (2013) reinforced this trend by revealing poor implementation of GAD mandates like EO 273, largely due to low awareness and understanding among community members and students alike.

However, some studies challenge these findings by showing that awareness of GAD-related agency functions is not universally low and may be improving in specific contexts. For instance, Barairo et al. (2024) found that personnel in the Batangas City school division demonstrated a good grasp of GAD structures, including the strategic roles of agencies like PCW and DBM in program planning. Valencia (2017) also reported that the Philippine Normal University had long institutionalized gender mainstreaming, and students had developed familiarity with national policies and key agencies through coursework and administrative exposure. Likewise, Cabillo-Jimenez (2021) found that teachers in Manila had positive perceptions of GAD programs and understood the roles of oversight agencies, suggesting that increased training and administrative coordination can bridge awareness gaps. Additionally, Cubillas (2025) observed a strong correlation between awareness and effective GAD implementation in one school, implying that where GAD programs are actively promoted, awareness of related government structures can improve as well. Finally, while the data suggest widespread low student awareness of government agency roles in implementation, this is not universal. Where institutions invest in training, curriculum integration, and monitoring, awareness levels appear to rise, offering a path forward for more equitable and comprehensive GAD education.

Table 3. Level of Awareness on Gender Issues Among College Students

	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Awareness of Gender Issues	.875	3.64	High
1. Inadequate information on Gender Sensitivity and Unawareness of Gender and Development	.913	3.72	High
2. Unidentified gaps or differences between men and women	.947	3.75	High
3. Unequal status of men and women in national development and gender inequality.	.986	3.74	High
4. Unrecognized women's participation in development.	1.07	3.61	High
5. Lack of structured/strategic mechanisms to support the GAD program and policies of the government.	1.08	3.40	High

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics on college students' level of awareness regarding various gender issues. The overall mean scores across all five indicators fall within the "high" descriptive level, indicating that students generally exhibit a strong awareness of key gender-related concerns in the Philippine context. The standard deviation (SD) values, which range from .875 to 1.08, suggest a moderate degree of variability in

responses, indicating that while most students share similar levels of awareness, a few show significantly higher or lower understanding of specific issues.

Looking at specific indicators, the item “unidentified gaps or differences between men and women” recorded the highest mean score of 3.75 (SD = .947), signifying that students are highly conscious of the subtle but critical distinctions in gender roles and experiences. Closely following these were “unequal status of men and women in national development and gender inequality” with a mean of 3.74 (SD = .986), and “unidentified gaps or differences” with 3.72 (SD = .913), reflecting strong recognition of ongoing structural inequalities and information gaps.

High awareness was also evident in students’ recognition of “inadequate information on gender sensitivity and unawareness of GAD”, which had a mean of 3.64 (SD = .875), suggesting that students not only understand gender issues but also perceive shortcomings in how these are addressed in education and media. The indicator with the lowest mean, “lack of structured/strategic mechanisms to support the GAD program and policies of the government”, received a score of 3.40 (SD = 1.08). Although still categorized as high awareness, this item displayed the most significant variability, implying that students’ familiarity with institutional or policy-level mechanisms may differ widely.

In summary, students consistently demonstrate a high level of awareness regarding gender inequality, underrepresentation, and information gaps. However, there is relatively less uniformity in their understanding of institutional GAD strategies, indicating the need for educational interventions that highlight not just gender issues but also how the government and institutions structurally address these.

Several studies affirm this trend. Aguillon and Donato (2024) reported that criminology students in Cavite had high levels of gender equality acceptance and attributed this to strengthened educational and governmental interventions. Similarly, Sumadsad and Tuazon (2016) found that students in higher education institutions were aware of gender roles and national mandates, although with varying levels of awareness about implementation frameworks, supporting high awareness of gender inequality and role gaps (Sumadsad & Tuazon, 2016).

Bartilet and Estoque (2011) also documented strong gender sensitivity among students at the Technological Institute of the Philippines, highlighting their understanding of gender as a socially constructed role, reinforcing the findings on awareness of unequal status and informational gaps. Li (2022) emphasized the essential role of education in dismantling patriarchal norms, noting that higher education institutions carry the responsibility to shape gender-aware citizens. Additionally, Curaming and Curaming (2020) observed that even within educational materials, there was a growing recognition of gender disparity, and students were increasingly able to critique such representations, indicating a maturing gender consciousness.

However, some studies challenge the uniformity of this high awareness. Generale and Emilyn (2023) found that senior high school students in Cebu had moderate awareness of gender laws and a neutral attitude toward gender equality in classroom roles, suggesting that younger cohorts may not yet demonstrate the high critical engagement seen in college students. Additionally, Santiago (2000) showed that while women’s participation in the economy was improving, students often lacked awareness of how economic disparities between genders persist despite legal frameworks highlighting a blind spot in economic dimensions of gender issues. Lastly, Yap and Melchor (2015) emphasized that despite academic achievement, awareness of gender inequities in the labor force remains underdeveloped among graduates, challenging the assumption that education automatically produces complete gender literacy.

Table 4. Level of Awareness on Gender Roles Among College Students

	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Awareness of Gender Roles	.658	4.09	High
1. Production or economic activity usually dominated by men	1.01	3.60	High
2. Men are expected to do physical labor,	.909	3.97	High

engineering, and leadership as compared to women.			
3. The breadwinner is the man's primary role.	1.11	3.54	High
4. Domestic activities such as housekeeping and care of the sick and children are done mostly by women.	.881	4.12	High
5. Women are expected to do housework, teaching, and nursing.	.939	4.07	High
6. Mother/housewife is women's primary work.	.980	3.97	High
7. Women have the right to vote, run for election, and hold public office.	.886	4.47	Very High
8. Woman has an equal right to education as a man.	.758	4.54	Very High
9. Women have the right to participate in leisure, sports, and cultural activities.	.831	4.51	Very High

Table 4 provides insights into students' understanding of both traditional gender role expectations and women's rights in modern society. The overall mean score of 4.09, interpreted as high, suggests that students generally possess a strong awareness of gender roles. The overall standard deviation (SD) of .658 indicates low variability in responses, meaning most students consistently rated their awareness levels similarly across all items.

A closer look at the data reveals that the highest awareness levels, which are categorized as very high, are associated with women's rights. These include the belief that women have the right to vote, run for election, and hold public office (mean = 4.47, SD = .886), that women have an equal right to education as men (mean = 4.54, SD = .758), and that women have the right to participate in leisure, sports, and cultural activities (mean = 4.51, SD = .831). These high scores reflect the students' strong recognition of gender equality in civic participation, education, and personal development.

Meanwhile, awareness of more traditional gender roles was consistently rated as high, though with slightly lower mean scores and more significant variability. For example, students acknowledged that production or economic activity is usually dominated by men (mean = 3.60, SD = 1.01), that men are expected to take on roles involving physical labor, engineering, and leadership (mean = 3.97, SD = .909), and that the breadwinner is traditionally the man's primary role (mean = 3.54, SD = 1.11). These responses indicate awareness of prevailing gender stereotypes and societal expectations.

Awareness was also high for traditional roles assigned to women. Statements such as "Domestic activities such as housekeeping and caregiving are done mostly by women" (mean = 4.12, SD = .881), "Women are expected to do housework, teaching, and nursing" (mean = 4.07, SD = .939), and "Mother/housewife is women's primary work" (mean = 3.97, SD = .980) received high awareness ratings. These suggest that students recognize commonly held societal beliefs about women's roles, although these beliefs may not necessarily align with their personal views.

In summary, the data show that students are aware of both traditional gender roles and modern gender rights, with more substantial and consistent awareness observed in the area of women's rights. The relatively low standard deviations indicate a shared understanding among students, while slightly higher variability in traditional role items may reflect changing perceptions and increasing gender sensitivity. These results are consistent with recent research highlighting a growing gender consciousness among Filipino students and youth.

For instance, Laro (2022) emphasizes that gender rights education and leadership development programs in higher education significantly increase students' recognition of women's rights and gender equality, especially in areas like education and civic participation. Likewise, Bartilet and Estoque (2011) found that freshman students in Manila had a high understanding of gender sensitivity, including awareness of both modern and traditional gender roles. Similarly, Lualhati (2019) also reported that gender-sensitive pedagogical practices in Batangas schools contributed to students' deep understanding of both gender roles and women's rights, highlighting education as a powerful tool for challenging gender norms. Additionally, institutions promoting participatory decision-making and equitable leadership roles foster more gender-aware students, mirroring the high and consistent ratings in the current data (Gavino-Gumba, 2013).

On the other hand, a few studies challenge the notion of uniformly high gender role awareness. Yap and Melchor (2015) found that despite educational equality, women in the Philippines still face employment discrimination, indicating that awareness of formal rights does not always translate to understanding structural gender inequality in practice. Similarly, Beltran and Arboleda (2024) reported persistent gender gaps in enrollment in engineering programs, suggesting that traditional gender norms still influence academic choices despite high awareness of gender rights. Finally, Generale and Emilyn (2023) found that students in Cebu held neutral views about gender equality in classroom roles, highlighting a disconnect between legal rights awareness and perceptions of everyday gender equity.

Table 5. Level of Awareness in Gender and Development (GAD)

	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Gender and Development (GAD) Awareness	.650	3.37	Moderate
1. GAD National Mandates & Related Laws	.712	3.36	Moderate
2. Government Agencies Integrating GAD Plan into Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs)	.896	2.40	Moderate
3. Awareness of Gender Issues	.875	3.64	High
4. Awareness of Gender Roles	.658	4.09	High

Table 5 presents data on students' awareness of various aspects of GAD, including related laws, government initiatives, gender issues, and gender roles. The overall mean score is 3.37, which falls under the moderate descriptive level. This suggests that students have a fair level of understanding of GAD concepts, though there is still room for improvement. The overall standard deviation (SD) is .650, indicating a low to moderate variability in responses, which means most students share similar perceptions, though slight differences exist in specific areas.

When broken down by category, awareness of GAD national mandates and related laws received a mean score of 3.36 with an SD of .712, interpreted as moderate awareness. This implies that students are somewhat familiar with legal frameworks that promote gender equality, though not profoundly knowledgeable. Similarly, awareness of how government agencies integrate GAD plans into programs, projects, and activities (PPAs) was the lowest among the items, with a mean of 2.40 and the highest SD of .896, also categorized as moderate. This low mean and high variability suggest that many students are either unfamiliar or inconsistently informed about how GAD is operationalized in public programs and services.

In contrast, higher levels of awareness were found in more socially observable topics. Awareness of gender issues garnered a mean of 3.64 (SD = .875), while awareness of gender roles had the highest mean score of 4.09 (SD = .658). Both fall under the high descriptive level. These results suggest that students are more attuned to general gender-related concerns and the expectations society places on men and women, likely due to more frequent exposure to these discussions in both academic and social settings.

In summary, students demonstrate high awareness of gender roles and issues but only moderate awareness of the technical and institutional aspects of GAD, such as legal mandates and the integration of GAD into government programs. The variation in SD values also indicates that while some areas are commonly understood, others, particularly those tied to formal GAD planning, are less uniformly grasped, highlighting a need for more targeted education and information dissemination in these areas.

Several studies support this trend. For instance, Sumadsad and Tuazon (2016) found that students were generally aware of GAD concepts, particularly gender roles and social issues, but had only moderate familiarity with laws and government agency involvement. Dimas et al. (2020) echoed this, noting higher awareness of gender roles than of GAD mandates among students and highlighting the need for more structured awareness efforts at the institutional level. Lualhati (2019) emphasized that while schools are effective in promoting gender sensitivity in teaching and learning, a more profound understanding of GAD policy frameworks remains limited, again reinforcing the study's results that institutional aspects of GAD receive less student attention. Pangilinan (2017) provided further support, finding that the institutionalization of GAD in local government units is still in its early stages, with weak public awareness about how GAD is

implemented through formal government programs. Simeon (2017) also highlighted the gap between student awareness of gender equality concepts and their limited understanding of the GAD mechanisms integrated into the curriculum and governance.

However, some studies challenge the assumption that students consistently grasp GAD-related ideas at a functional level. Gil Jr. (2021) found that in many private higher education institutions, the implementation of GAD is unsystematic, often resulting in low awareness and inconsistent delivery of content, even when mandates exist. Vidania et al. (2019) also observed that students had only a moderate understanding of GAD laws and agencies, despite showing interest in gender issues, reflecting a disconnect between policy and practical knowledge. Finally, Aloba et al. (2024) found that many teachers and school stakeholders viewed GAD implementation as vague and poorly communicated, which could influence how students perceive and engage with institutional gender initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that while college students demonstrate high awareness of gender roles and social gender issues, their understanding of technical aspects of Gender and Development (GAD) such as legal mandates, agency responsibilities, and institutional mechanisms remains moderate to low. This disparity suggests that although students are increasingly conscious of gender inequalities and rights, there is still a significant gap when it comes to institutional and policy-level literacy. Such a gap poses a challenge to fully achieving the goals of GAD in higher education, particularly in fostering a Violence Against Women (VAW)-free college environment. Without a well-rounded awareness that includes both social and structural dimensions of gender equity, students may be limited in their ability to engage with and support GAD initiatives in practice critically. This outcome aligns with the Social Cognitive Theory of Gender Development and Differentiation (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), which posits that individuals develop gender-related knowledge through observation, social interaction, and reinforcement within their environment. Students are more exposed to social narratives on gender equality, which explains their intense awareness of rights and roles, whereas limited exposure to institutional and policy frameworks results in weaker understanding in those areas. This confirms the theory's emphasis on the contextual nature of learning and highlights the urgent need for educational institutions to strengthen the integration of both conceptual and structural GAD components in curricula. Enhancing this balance is essential for fostering informed student engagement and building a genuinely VAW-free and gender-responsive academic culture.

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Novelty

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive and domain-specific approach to assessing Gender and Development (GAD) awareness among college students, distinguishing themselves from prior research by not only examining social perceptions of gender roles but also systematically evaluating awareness of legal mandates, institutional mechanisms, and government agency functions related to GAD implementation. Unlike earlier studies that focused predominantly on general gender sensitivity or attitudes toward gender equality, this research offers a multi-dimensional analysis that reveals critical gaps in students' understanding of policy-level components essential for sustaining a VAW-free educational environment. By integrating legal, administrative, and societal aspects of GAD into a unified quantitative framework, the study provides a nuanced baseline for evaluating how thriving colleges are preparing students to actively participate in gender advocacy and institutional accountability. This makes a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge, offering actionable insights for higher education institutions seeking to align their gender education strategies with national frameworks and global standards for gender equity and violence prevention.

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