

Awareness of Pre-Service Teachers on Child Protection Policy (RA 7610) in a State College of the Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Child protection is a fundamental human rights concern and an essential component of safe and inclusive educational systems. Globally, violence against children remains pervasive despite international efforts to eliminate abuse, exploitation, and neglect. (The World Health Organization [WHO], 2020) estimates that nearly one billion children aged two (2) to seventeen (17) years have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual violence or neglect, highlighting the persistent vulnerability of children across diverse contexts (The World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). These realities underscore the need for effective legal frameworks and competent frontline implementers, particularly within schools where children spend a significant portion of their formative years. RA 7610 aligns with the country's commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals 4, which promotes inclusive, equitable, and safe learning environments (United Nations, 2019).

Recent reports stress that teachers are often the first adults to identify indicators of abuse, positioning them as critical actors in child protection systems (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2021). Consequently, the effectiveness of child protection policies largely depends on teachers' legal awareness, ethical sensitivity, and preparedness to respond appropriately to suspected abuse cases.

Despite strong international mandates, empirical evidence reveals persistent gaps in the implementation of child protection policies within teacher education. Studies conducted across both developed and developing countries indicate that pre-service teachers often demonstrate limited awareness of child protection laws and low confidence in reporting or intervening in abuse cases. Similarly, Stevens and Hall (2020) reported that pre-service teachers in Western contexts lacked practical exposure to child protection procedures, contributing to uncertainty and hesitation in real-world situations. These findings show an empirical gap between policy existence and actual legal awareness among pre-service teachers.

In Southeast Asia, child protection challenges are further compounded by sociocultural norms, resource constraints, and uneven policy enforcement. Regional assessments indicate that teacher preparedness to implement child protection laws remains inconsistent, particularly in rural and geographically isolated areas (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021). These conditions heighten the risk of underreporting and ineffective intervention, reinforcing the need for context-specific studies that examine awareness levels among future educators.

Child protection is anchored on Republic Act No. 7610, or the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act. The law provides comprehensive safeguards against abuse, neglect, cruelty, and exploitation and serves as the legal basis for protecting children in various settings, including schools. To operationalize child protection in schools, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, institutionalizing Child Protection Policies across educational institutions.

Despite the existence of these legal and policy frameworks, child abuse remains prevalent in the Philippines. The (Department of Social Welfare and Development [DSWD], 2023) reported over 7,000 documented child

abuse cases nationwide, a figure widely believed to underestimate the true incidence due to underreporting, especially in rural and marginalized communities. These data raise concerns regarding the effectiveness of policy implementation and the level of legal awareness among frontline duty-bearers, particularly teachers.

In the Philippine context consistently point to limited awareness of RA 7610 among pre-service teachers. Dela Fuente (2021) and Santiago et al. (2021) identified significant gaps in legal awareness among future educators, attributing these to the inconsistent inclusion of child protection topics in teacher education curricula. More recent research by Bueno et al. (2023) revealed that pre-service teachers demonstrated only moderate awareness of RA 7610, with limited awareness of reporting mechanisms and legal responsibilities. Tenorio (2024) further reported generally low awareness levels, with weak associations between awareness and profile variables such as gender, academic program, and seminar participation. While these studies provide valuable insights, they are largely concentrated in urban universities and teacher education institutions outside Northern Luzon, revealing a clear spatial research gap.

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Empirical studies in the Philippine context indicate limited awareness of RA 7610 among pre-service teachers. Dela Fuente (2021), Santiago and de la Cruz (2021), Bueno et al. (2023), and Tenorio (2024) consistently found gaps in legal awareness of reporting mechanisms, and preparedness to act in cases of child abuse. These studies, however, were conducted in urban universities and teacher education institutions outside Northern Luzon, leaving a spatial gap in literature.

At the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC)–Cervantes Campus, no empirical study has yet examined pre-service teachers' awareness of RA 7610. Preliminary curriculum reviews and informal observations show limited discussion of the law in professional education courses and minimal exposure to seminar-based or practicum-oriented training on child protection. This spatial research gap limits the development of context-specific interventions that could strengthen the legal awareness and preparedness of future educators in this rural setting.

Given these gaps, this study aimed to assess the level of awareness of pre-service teachers regarding the Child Protection Policy under RA 7610 at ISPSC–Cervantes Campus. The findings are intended to inform curriculum enhancement, policy integration, and targeted capacity-building initiatives, thereby supporting the preparation of future educators to effectively protect children and uphold their rights in diverse educational settings.

Framework of the Study

This study anchored on the following theories: the Social Conflict Theory, the Policy Implementation Theory, and the Human Rights. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive lens through which the awareness of Pre-Service Teachers on Republic Act No. 7610 (RA 7610) of ISPSC Cervantes Campus and its implications for effective child protection was examined.

Social Conflict Theory proposed by Marx and Engles (1848) views that guide the study by providing a framework to analyze potential disparities in awareness of RA 7610, particularly concerning marginalized groups of children. It posits that society is characterized by competition among groups, where dominant interests often shape policies and their implementation. This allowed the researchers to explore if the limited awareness among pre-service teachers, especially regarding provisions for Children of Indigenous Cultural Communities, Working Children, and Children in Situations of Armed Conflict, reflects broader structural inequalities. If awareness is indeed lower for these specific sections of the law, the theory shows that this may not merely be an individual oversight but a symptom of systemic neglect or a lack of equitable dissemination of legal awareness to those

who served these vulnerable populations. By highlighting these potential disparities, the study can advocate for more relevance educational interventions that challenge existing power imbalances and ensure that all future educators are equipped to protect the most vulnerable children, thereby making RA 7610 a more effective tool against exploitation by dominant forces.

Policy Implementation Theory developed by Pressman and Wildavsky (1984), emphasizes that the success of a policy hinges on the actions of frontline implementers. For this study, pre-service teachers are the "street-level bureaucrats" who, upon entering the profession, would be responsible for translating RA 7610 into concrete actions within schools. The theory guided the examination of how aware of the Nature of the Law, Programs on Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination, and the Remedial and Final Provisions impacts their readiness to implement the policy. By assessing awareness of these specific operational aspects, the study can identify critical gaps in legal instruction, training, or institutional support. If pre-service teachers lack comprehensive awareness in these areas, Policy Implementation Theory predicts that even a robust law like RA 7610 struggles to achieve its intended outcomes at the school level. The findings thus inform recommendations for curriculum and training improvements, aiming to bridge the gap between policy formulation and effective application by future educators.

Human Rights Theory articulated by Donnelly (2003), underpinned the ethical and moral imperative of the study, framing pre-service teachers' awareness of RA 7610 not just as a matter of legal compliance but as a fundamental duty to uphold universal, inalienable rights, especially for children. This theory is particularly relevant to provisions addressing severe violations like Child Prostitution and Sexual Abuse, Child Trafficking, Obscene Publications and Indecent Shows, and Other Acts of Abuse and Related Sanctions. By examining awareness in these crucial areas, the study highlights whether future educators recognize their role as moral duty-bearers responsible for protecting children's dignity, safety, and development. Human Rights Theory shows that lack of awareness in these critical areas could lead to missed opportunities for early intervention, findings in further rights violations. Therefore, emphasized the need for a comprehensive education that instills both legal literacy and a strong ethical responsibility in pre-service teachers, ensuring they are not only competent in applying the law but also deeply committed to safeguarding children's fundamental human rights.

Together, these theories create a unified framework where awareness is understood as socially influenced Social Conflict Theory, operationally necessary Policy Implementation Theory, and ethically grounded Human Rights Theory. This synthesis shows that effective child protection requires more than awareness of the law it demands equitable access to information, practical competence in implementation, and a deep commitment to human rights. Therefore, the study underscores the importance of developing pre-service teachers who are not only informed but also critically aware, skilled, and ethically driven to protect all children, especially the most vulnerable.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Republic Act No. 7610, otherwise known as the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act, serves as the legal foundation of this study. Enacted in 1992, the law establishes comprehensive measures to protect children from all forms of physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse, as well as exploitation and discrimination. It affirms the State's duty to provide special protection to children and to ensure their survival, development, participation, and protection in all settings home, school, workplace, and community.

This study conceptualizes awareness of RA 7610 as the primary variable and frames across thirteen (13) key dimensions derived from the major provisions of the law:

Republic Act 7610 focuses on protecting children from all forms of abuse and exploitation. It explains the nature of the law, which highlights the government's responsibility to care for and protect children. It includes programs on child abuse, exploitation, and discrimination to prevent harm and support victims. The law strictly prohibits acts such as child prostitution and other sexual abuse, child trafficking, and involvement in obscene publications and indecent shows. It also covers other acts of abuse, including physical, emotional, and psychological harm.

Establishments that allow or engage in these acts face sanctions. The law protects working children by ensuring their safety and proper development, and it respects the rights of children from indigenous cultural communities. It also provides protection for children affected by armed conflict. To ensure justice, the law includes remedial procedures for reporting and handling cases, as well as penal provisions that punish offenders. Lastly, the final provisions ensure that the law is properly implemented and followed.

To operationalize this framework, a sixty (60)-item test instrument was developed to assess awareness across these thirteen (13) dimensions. Each dimension represents a critical component of the law, and together they form a comprehensive measure of awareness of RA 7610. The study examines whether significant differences in awareness exist when respondents are grouped according to selected profile variables.

The framework assumes that awareness is multidimensional and that comprehensive knowledge of all thirteen (13) components is necessary for meaningful compliance and child protection advocacy. The findings are expected to inform the development of practical outputs such as orientation modules, awareness campaigns, or instructional supplements aimed at strengthening knowledge and understanding of child protection laws.

Table below the study uses an independent and dependent variable model. The independent variable is the profile of the respondents, which includes age, civil status, gender, and academic program. These factors may influence how much pre-service teachers aware about child protection. The dependent variable is the level of awareness on Republic Act No. 7610, which includes their awareness of the nature of the law, programs on child abuse and exploitation, issues such as child prostitution and trafficking, and the corresponding sanctions or penalties. The model means that differences in the respondents' profile may affect their level of awareness. Based on the findings, the study developed an Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) brochure to help improve pre-service teachers' awareness of RA 7610.

The study is guided by the Independent Variable - Dependent Variable Model

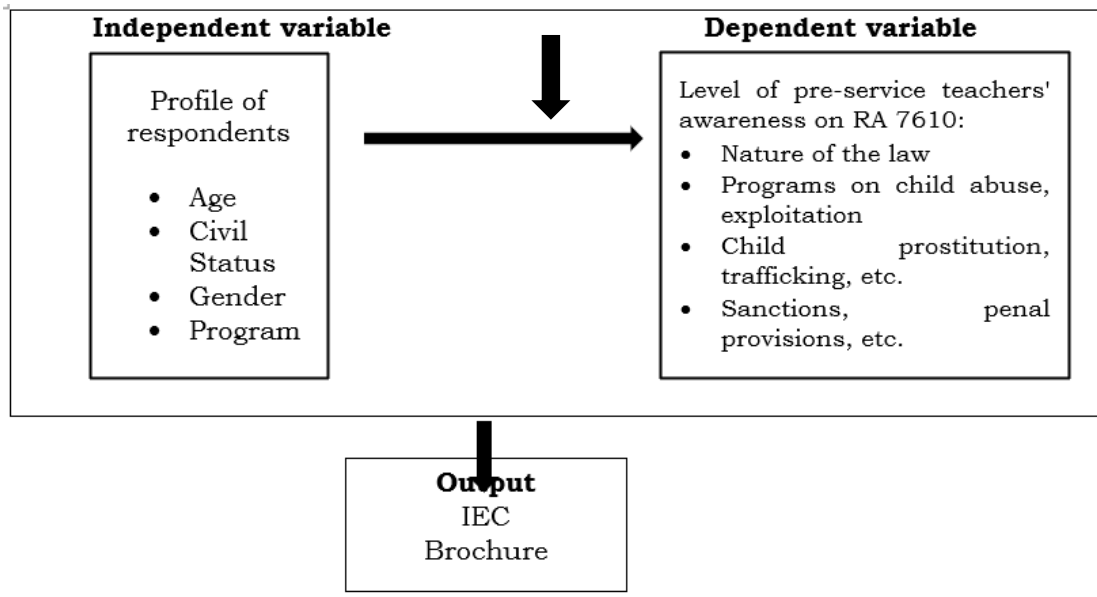


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section presents relevant studies and literature that justify the need to conduct this research. The review is organized under the following: Profile of the Pre-Serviceteachers and Level of awareness of Pre-service teachers in RA 7610 along; a. nature of the law; b. program on child abuse, exploitation and discrimination; c. child prostitution and other sexual abuse; d. child trafficking; e. obscene publications and indecent shows; f. other acts of abuse; g. sanctions for establishments; h. working children; i. children of indigenous cultural communities; j. children in situations of armed conflict; k. remedial procedures; l. common penal provisions; and, m. final

provisions. This requires pre-service teachers to not only possess legal literacy but also a deep awareness of how gender roles and identities influence children's experiences of abuse, discrimination, and exploitation in educational settings.

Profile of Pre-Service Teachers

Age. This refers to the length of time an individual has lived and is commonly used as a demographic variable in educational and social research. It is associated with differences in cognitive maturity, life experience, and exposure to institutional systems, which may influence how individuals understand policies and social responsibilities (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). As individuals grow older, they accumulate experiences that may shape their perception, judgment, and interpretation of professional obligations.

Research indicates that age may influence how individuals process information and evaluate institutional policies. In a descriptive-correlational study conducted in the Philippine educational context, Aguilar and Carbonell (2024) found a weak negative correlation between age and awareness of the Child Protection Policy, indicating that older respondents did not necessarily demonstrate higher awareness compared to younger ones. This finding shows that age alone may not strongly determine policy awareness.

Dela Fuente (2021) reported no significant differences in teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy when grouped according to demographic variables, including age. This further shows that awareness levels may not substantially vary across age groups.

A systematic review by Han-Awon (2025) on teacher awareness and school-based child protection initiatives in the Philippines also found that while age is frequently included in respondent profiles, its influence on awareness patterns was inconsistent and often less significant than factors such as professional development and policy implementation practices.

These studies show that although age may reflect differences in experience and exposure, it does not automatically result in higher or lower awareness of child protection measures such as Republic Act No. 7610. Nonetheless, age remains an important profile variable for analysis to determine whether differences exist among groups of respondents.

Civil Status. This refers to an individual's marital condition, such as single, married, separated, or widowed, and is considered an important socio-demographic attribute. According to Sandoval (2023), civil status affects a person's responsibilities, availability, and level of participation in social, professional, and community activities.

Lee and Park (2022) explain that civil status influences how individuals manage their priorities, particularly in balancing personal safety and family welfare. It also affects their level of engagement in educational and community programs.

Han (2021) highlights that civil status plays a role in shaping individuals' awareness and participation in initiatives related to child protection. This includes how they respond to and support programs aimed at safeguarding children's rights and welfare.

Recent studies mean that single individuals often experience greater autonomy and flexibility, which enables them to participate more actively in social and civic engagements (Lee & Park, 2022; DePaulo, 2019). This flexibility may enhance their involvement in school-based or barangay-based programs, including disaster preparedness, community service, and awareness campaigns.

Married individuals frequently prioritize family safety, household stability, and caregiving responsibilities, which can limit their availability for professional development or community participation (Brodowicz, 2024; Sandoval, 2023). While marriage provides emotional support and shared responsibility, it may also introduce time constraints and competing obligations. Supporting these observations, Han (2021) found that single respondents were more actively engaged in community and professional development initiatives, whereas married individuals often faced limitations due to family commitments.

The inclusion of civil status as a profile variable in examining pre-service teachers' awareness of RA 7610 and participation in related child protection programs, while highlighting that its influence is often indirect and mediated by other contextual and structural factors, such as institutional support, training opportunities, and curriculum exposure.

Gender. This refers to the socially constructed characteristics of males, females, and gender-diverse individuals. It includes the norms, behaviors, and roles associated with being male or female, as well as the relationships between these groups. As a social construct, gender varies across cultures and may change over time depending on social and institutional influences (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

Research indicates that males and females exhibit differences in certain personality traits. Traits are consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behaviors expressed across various situations (Weisberg et al., 2022). Studies show that females tend to rate higher in warmth, empathy, anxiety, and sensitivity to emotions, whereas males often report higher levels of assertiveness and openness to new ideas. These distinctions show that gender may influence how individuals interpret social issues, respond to concerns, and evaluate responsibilities within professional settings.

Cross-cultural findings further highlight gender differences in moral reasoning. Atari et al. (2020), in a large-scale study across 67 countries, found that females consistently scored higher than males in moral foundations related to care, fairness, and purity. Differences in loyalty and authority were less consistent across cultures. These findings show that gender may affect perspectives toward ethical concerns and social responsibilities.

Social perceptions of gender roles influence how individuals recognize inequality and institutional accountability. Gurieva et al. (2022) reported that individuals who strongly adhere to traditional gender role beliefs are less likely to perceive gender inequality in professional and societal contexts. This means that gender and related role beliefs may affect how individuals assess fairness, responsibility, and social issues within various environments.

Program. This refers to the specific academic program in which a pre-service teacher is enrolled significantly influences their exposure to and comprehension of RA 7610's provisions on child protection and gender sensitivity. Programs that include robust coursework in social sciences, sociology, psychology, education, and human rights are more likely to provide comprehensive discussions on gender as a social construct and its implications for child protection. For instance, a pre-service teacher in a Social Studies or Education program may receive more in-depth analyses of legal frameworks, social justice, and child welfare issues compared to peers in specialized science or mathematics programs. Such differences in curriculum emphasis directly impact the teacher's preparedness to identify, prevent, and respond to child protection concerns in educational settings (Tenorio, 2024).

Empirical studies demonstrate that program-specific interventions and training can significantly enhance awareness and readiness to implement RA 7610. Reyes and Santos (2021) found that a child protection awareness program effectively improved pre-service teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward RA 7610, resulting in increased readiness to uphold child protection laws. Similarly, Lopez and Cruz (2023) reported that participation in a relevance child protection program significantly boosted pre-service teachers' knowledge and confidence in identifying and addressing child abuse cases. Both studies emphasize the importance of structured, interactive, and program-integrated training in enhancing legal literacy, ethical responsibility, and professional competence in safeguarding children.

Recent literature further supports these findings. Han-Awon (2025) highlights that institutional and program-level support, including curriculum design and relevance child protection modules, plays a critical role in shaping pre-service teachers' awareness and ability to implement policies effectively. This evidence underscores the need to integrate child protection education systematically across all teacher education programs to ensure that graduates, regardless of academic specialization, are equipped to fulfill their legal and ethical responsibilities under RA 7610.

Level of Awareness on RA 7610

Awareness of child protection laws, particularly Republic Act No. 7610, is widely recognized as a critical indicator of teachers' preparedness to safeguard children's rights within educational settings. Awareness extends with the law's existence and includes awareness its provisions, reporting mechanisms, legal responsibilities, and ethical implications. Recent literature emphasizes that teachers' awareness is shaped not only by formal policy exposure but also by training quality, institutional support, and opportunities for applied learning. Studies in teacher education contexts indicate that legal literacy significantly influences educators' confidence and willingness to intervene in suspected cases of child abuse (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022).

Globally, teacher education reforms increasingly emphasize legal and rights-based competencies as integral to professional preparation. Research from high-performing education systems shows that integrating child protection laws into pre-service curricula enhances teachers' ability to identify abuse, comply with reporting obligations, and uphold child welfare standards. Comparative studies across (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) countries reveal that pre-service teachers who receive structured instruction on child protection demonstrate higher levels of legal awareness and ethical sensitivity than those who rely solely on general ethics or inclusive education courses (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021).

In Southeast Asia, awareness of child protection policies among teachers varies considerably due to differences in curriculum design, enforcement mechanisms, and sociocultural contexts. Regional assessments highlight that while child protection frameworks exist, legal awareness among pre-service teachers remains inconsistent, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas. Studies emphasize that limited exposure to policy-oriented training and case-based instruction contributes to gaps in teachers' understanding of child protection laws and their practical application (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021).

In the Philippine context, awareness of RA 7610 is closely linked to the quality and extent of its integration into teacher education programs. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers underscore the responsibility of educators to create safe, inclusive, and child-centered learning environments; however, these standards often implicitly reference child protection without providing explicit legal instruction on RA 7610 (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022). Empirical studies reveal that many pre-service teachers possess only moderate awareness of the law, with limited awareness of specific provisions related to reporting procedures, child abuse indicators, and legal accountability (Bueno et al., 2023).

Awareness levels also differ across individual and institutional contexts. Recent Philippine studies indicate that exposure to seminars, training programs, and practicum experiences is positively associated with higher awareness of RA 7610, while reliance on theoretical coursework alone yields lower levels of legal literacy. Tenorio (2024) found that awareness among pre-service teachers was generally low to moderate and only weakly associated with demographic variables such as gender and program of study, showing that institutional factors play a more significant role in shaping awareness than personal characteristics.

At the institutional level, particularly in state colleges located in rural provinces, empirical evidence remains limited. Preliminary assessments means that pre-service teachers in such contexts often have minimal engagement with child protection laws during their training, resulting in gaps in both awareness and confidence to act on suspected abuse cases. The lack of localized studies examining awareness of RA 7610 among pre-service teachers highlights a spatial gap in existing research, particularly in Northern Luzon institutions such as the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College–Cervantes Campus.

To conclude, the reviewed literature demonstrates that awareness of RA 7610 among pre-service teachers is multi-dimensional and influenced by curriculum integration, training exposure, institutional support, and contextual factors. Globally, structured legal instruction enhances awareness; nationally, inconsistencies in policy integration contribute to moderate awareness levels; and locally, limited empirical evidence constrains context-specific interventions. Understanding these factors is essential in assessing the level of awareness of RA

7610 and identifying areas where teacher education institutions can strengthen legal literacy, ethical preparedness, and child protection compliance among future educators.

Curriculum Emphasis and Program Design

Curriculum emphasis and program design play a crucial role in shaping pre-service teachers' awareness of child protection policies such as Republic Act No. 7610. Contemporary teacher education literature stresses that modern classrooms are increasingly diverse and legally complex, requiring future educators to possess not only pedagogical competence but also strong legal literacy. Awareness of child protection laws is therefore influenced by how explicitly these legal responsibilities are embedded in pre-service training programs, instructional content, and experiential learning opportunities.

At the global level, recent studies emphasize that teacher education curricula often prioritize instructional strategies and inclusive practices while giving limited attention to legal mandates related to child protection. Research indicates that when legal frameworks are treated as peripheral topics rather than core professional competencies, pre-service teachers tend to feel unprepared to respond to cases involving abuse, neglect, or exploitation. International evidence shows that programs integrating child protection laws into core courses and practicum experiences produce pre-service teachers with significantly higher awareness and confidence in fulfilling their legal duties (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Development [UNESCO], 2022).

In regional contexts, particularly in Southeast Asia, curriculum design challenges are more pronounced due to uneven policy implementation and resource limitations. Studies reveal that while teacher education institutions acknowledge the importance of child protection, the topic is frequently addressed in a fragmented or theoretical manner. Legal provisions such as child protection acts are often discussed briefly within broader courses on ethics or inclusive education, resulting in surface-level awareness rather than functional legal awareness. This curricular limitation restricts pre-service teachers' ability to translate policy knowledge into practical action within school settings (ASEAN Secretariat, 2021).

In the Philippines, Garcia et al. (2019) revealed that pre-service teachers who lack formal training on child protection laws, such as Republic Act No. 7610, tend to have lower awareness and uncertainty regarding reporting procedures and legal responsibilities.

Mendoza (2020) found that pre-service teachers who are exposed to structured training and educational modules on child protection demonstrate higher levels of awareness and preparedness in handling related cases.

Tan (2020) reported that integrating child protection topics into teacher education significantly improves students' awareness of legal accountability and proper reporting mechanisms.

Mergler et al. (2019) highlighted that practice-oriented approaches, such as service-learning and field-based experiences, are effective in strengthening pre-service teachers' legal awareness of child protection.

Carrington and Selva (2021) found that experiential learning strategies, including simulated case analysis and reflective practice, help future teachers develop better professional judgment in handling child protection issues.

Despite these recognized strategies, many state colleges particularly those located in rural provinces continue to rely heavily on theoretical instruction with limited emphasis on legal application. The absence of dedicated courses, modules, or simulations focusing specifically on RA 7610 contributes to gaps in pre-service teachers' awareness and confidence. Empirical evidence examining how curriculum emphasis affects awareness of RA 7610 in provincial state colleges remains scarce, revealing a significant empirical gap in the literature.

There is a notable spatial gap in research focusing on teacher education institutions in Northern Luzon, including the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College Cervantes Campus. Most existing studies are concentrated in urban universities or private institutions, leaving limited awareness of how curriculum design in rural state colleges influences pre-service teachers' awareness of child protection policies. Addressing this gap is essential to inform

curriculum enhancement efforts and ensure that future teachers, regardless of institutional context, are adequately prepared to uphold the mandates of RA 7610.

Rural vs. Urban Awareness

Awareness of child protection policies, including RA 7610, among pre-service teachers is influenced by the contextual environment of their training and future practice. Globally, studies indicate that urban and rural teacher education settings present distinct challenges in preparing educators for child protection roles. In the United States, research shows that urban schools, despite high student diversity, often face gaps in teacher training, limiting pre-service teachers' readiness to apply legal and ethical child protection frameworks (Howard, 2020). Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2020) emphasizes that context-responsive pedagogy is essential for addressing the complex legal, social, and cultural dynamics affecting marginalized students, demonstrating that teacher preparedness must account for environmental and systemic factors.

In Australia, rural and remote teachers face unique challenges related to professional development and exposure to diverse cultural realities. Hudson et al. (2020) reported that limited access to workshops, training, and mentoring constrains rural educators' awareness of legal obligations and practical child protection strategies. These findings illustrate how geographic and institutional constraints shape awareness, and they parallel the Philippine context, where both rural and urban teacher education programs encounter gaps in RA 7610 integration due to insufficient curriculum coverage, limited field-based training, and scarce experiential learning opportunities.

Within the Philippine context, empirical evidence demonstrates disparities in RA 7610 awareness between urban and rural pre-service teachers. Chavez and Mendez (2021) found that rural teachers generally recognized the importance of child protection; however, their awareness of specific legal provisions, reporting procedures, and institutional mechanisms under RA 7610 was limited. These gaps are particularly significant for institutions such as the Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College–Cervantes Campus, where many pre-service teachers originate from and return to rural communities. In these areas, educators may encounter socio-cultural barriers including normalized corporal punishment, weak reporting structures, and limited access to seminars or workshops on children's rights.

Bueno et al. (2023) emphasized that geographic context, particularly in rural areas, affects the level of legal awareness, requiring relevance interventions that integrate legal awareness, cultural awareness, and ethical responsibility.

Tenorio (2024) stressed that programs for pre-service teachers should include experiential learning, reflective practice, and community engagement to ensure they are prepared to recognize abuse, follow reporting procedures, and fulfill their legal duties.

Despite the recognition of these challenges, there remains a clear empirical and spatial research gap. Most studies on RA 7610 awareness are concentrated in urban universities or nationally recognized institutions, leaving rural state colleges underrepresented in the literature. There is limited systematic investigation of how rural pre-service teachers' knowledge, training experiences, and socio-cultural context influence their awareness and application of RA 7610, highlighting the need for localized studies focused on institutions like ISPSC–Cervantes Campus.

Addressing these gaps is critical for teacher education programs to develop context-sensitive curricula and training interventions. By embedding RA 7610 within frameworks of legal literacy, cultural awareness, and ethical responsibility, pre-service teachers regardless of whether they train in rural or urban settings can be equipped to serve as effective advocates for safe, inclusive, and legally compliant learning environments.

Statement of the Problem

This research study aimed to examine the level of awareness of pre-service teachers on child protection policy (RA 7610) in ISPSC Cervantes Campus. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the pre-service teachers in terms of the following:
 - a. age;
 - b. civil status;
 - c. gender; and,
 - d. program?
2. What is the level of awareness of pre-service teachers in RA 7610 along the following:
 - a. nature of the law;
 - b. program on child abuse, exploitation and discrimination;
 - c. child prostitution and other sexual abuse;
 - d. child trafficking;
 - e. obscene publications and indecent shows;
 - f. other acts of abuse;
 - g. sanctions for establishments;
 - h. working children;
 - i. children of indigenous cultural communities;
 - j. children in situations of armed conflict;
 - k. remedial procedures;
 - l. common penal provisions; and,
 - m. final provisions?
3. Is there a significant difference on the level of awareness of pre-service teachers on child protection policy (RA 7610) when grouped according to profile?
4. Is there a significant difference on the level of awareness considering the different categories?
5. What Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) can be developed based on the findings?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference on the level of awareness of pre-service teachers on child protection policy.
2. There is no significant difference on the level of awareness considering the different categories.

Importance of the Study

The findings of this study hold significant implications for various stakeholders involved in teacher education, child protection, and educational policy:

Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The study could support the DSWD's advocacy in promoting child welfare and preventing abuse. By emphasizing the role of educational institutions in protecting children, the findings can guide collaborative efforts between the DSWD and Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) to strengthen training programs, outreach initiatives, and community-based protection mechanisms. It also highlights the importance of aligning government efforts with grassroots educational practices.

Future Researchers. Future researchers could use this study as a foundation for exploring related themes such as child rights education, policy integration in teacher training, or institutional accountability. It also opens avenues for examining the influence of awareness on teaching behavior, reporting mechanisms, and educational outcomes for vulnerable children.

Pre-Service Teachers. This study is particularly valuable to pre-service teachers as it provides insight into their current level of awareness regarding child protection policies, especially Republic Act No. 7610. Understanding these policies is crucial to ensuring the safety and well-being of learners. The findings could help future educators recognize their legal and ethical responsibilities and prepare them to respond to real-life classroom situations with professionalism, empathy, and legal competence.

Researchers. This study could contribute to the growing body of literature on teacher preparedness and legal awareness in the context of child protection. As an exploratory investigation into a relatively under-examined area, it provides empirical data that can inform comparative studies, longitudinal evaluations of teacher education curricula, or assessments of policy implementation in educational settings.

Teachers and Teacher Educators. For in-service teachers and those involved in teacher education, the findings can serve as a diagnostic tool to identify gaps in teacher training programs, particularly concerning child protection content. It underscores the need for enhanced training, seminars, and continuing professional development focused on legal literacy and the protection of children's rights. Moreover, it reinforces the importance of fostering a child-safe and rights-based school environment.

Definition Of Terms

Age. This refers to the numerical age of the respondents at the time of data collection. For analysis, age is grouped into brackets (e.g., 18–20, 21–23, 24–26, 27–29, 30 years old and above) to examine whether awareness of RA 7610 significantly varies across age groups.

Children in Situations of Armed Conflict. This refers to minors who are forcibly recruited or incidentally involved in armed conflict. This term is used in the study in relation to respondents' awareness of RA 7610 provisions that mandate protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration for these children.

Children of Indigenous Cultural Communities. This refers to children who belong to indigenous groups, entitled under RA 7610 to special protection, culturally appropriate education, and preservation of their rights and identity. The study explores whether pre-service teachers are aware of these specific legal provisions.

Child Prostitution and Other Sexual Abuse. This refers to acts involving the use of a child in sexual activities for commercial gain or personal gratification. This includes coercion, manipulation, and exploitation, all of which are criminalized under RA 7610 and assessed in terms of respondent awareness.

Child Trafficking. This refers to the recruitment, transport, or harboring of children for exploitation, including forced labor or prostitution. In this study, it pertains to respondents' level of awareness regarding the legal implications and responsibilities of educators to detect and report such cases.

Civil Status. This refers to the respondent's legal relationship classification (e.g., single, married, separated, widowed). This variable is analyzed to determine whether civil status influences awareness of RA 7610.

Common Penal Provisions. This refers to the general penalties (e.g., imprisonment, fines) stipulated in RA 7610 for violators of its provisions. The study examines pre-service teachers' awareness of these consequences as part of legal literacy.

Final Provisions. This refers to the concluding sections of RA 7610 that deal with enforcement mechanisms, repealing clauses, and date of effectivity. In this study, it is used to assess how well pre-service teachers understand the law's legal scope and implementation framework.

Gender. This refers to the self-identified gender of respondents (e.g., male, female, or prefer not to say). The study investigates whether gender correlates with awareness levels of RA 7610 provisions.

Nature of the Law. This refers to the foundational principles, objectives, and intended scope of RA 7610 as a legal safeguard for children. This includes the respondents' general understanding of the law's purpose and relevance to the education sector.

Obscene Publications and Indecent Shows. This refers to visual, written, or performed content involving minors in sexually explicit acts, in violation of RA 7610. The study examines whether respondents can identify such content as abuse and understand their duty to report it.

Other Acts of Abuse. This refers to additional forms of maltreatment such as physical, emotional, or psychological abuse, including neglect, bullying, and harmful disciplinary practices. This term is used to assess awareness of the broader scope of abuse covered under RA 7610.

Pre-Service Teachers. This refers to students currently enrolled in a teacher education program to become licensed educators. They are the primary subjects of this study.

Program. This refers to the specific teacher education course or specialization the respondent is enrolled in, such as Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd), Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd), Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education (BTVTEd), or Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLEd). This is considered a variable in analyzing differences in awareness levels.

Program on Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination. This refers to institutional and government-led initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing child abuse. The study investigates whether respondents are aware of such programs, including those implemented by the Department of Education and DSWD.

Remedial Procedures. This refers to legally prescribed steps for protecting, rescuing, and rehabilitating child victims. This includes reporting protocols, emergency response, and support services. The term is assessed in relation to respondents' awareness of available legal interventions.

Sanctions for Establishments. This refers to penalties imposed on organizations or businesses found to be engaging in or tolerating child abuse or exploitation. In the study, it pertains to the respondents' knowledge of institutional accountability as outlined in RA 7610.

Working Children. This refers to minors engaged in labor, particularly hazardous or exploitative work that interferes with their education and well-being. The study examines awareness of the legal protections and alternative provisions available to these children under the law.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes in detail the steps taken to address the objectives of the study. This includes the research design, the sources of data, research instruments, the data gathering procedure, the statistical treatment of data, data categorization, as well as the ethical considerations.

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-comparative quantitative research design. Descriptive-comparative is considered a non-experimental method, often used when random assignment is not feasible or ethical. It involves the systematic collection of data to compare two or more groups on a specific outcome, in this case, the level of awareness of RA 7610 (Creswell, 2019). This type of design is particularly useful when the objective is to assess

associations or differences rather than establish cause-and-effect relationships. The study utilized Descriptive Comparative as the study endeavored to determine whether significant difference existed on the level of awareness of pre-service teachers on RA 7610 when their profiles are considered.

Locale and Population of the Study

The study was conducted at Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) Cervantes Campus. Selected pre-service teachers within Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) Cervantes Campus ensured a complete awareness of this group. For pre-service teachers, a stratified random sampling technique was employed, selecting random pre-service teachers from each different program ISPSC Cervantes Campus. This approach guarantees that data collection is proportionate and representative across all pre-service teachers within the specific program of teacher education.

The sample is distributed among the different programs of Teacher Education as follows:

Department	Population	Sample
Bachelor of Elementary Education	58	33
Bachelor of Secondary Education	98	56
Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education	61	35
Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education	89	51
Total	306	175

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire designed to directly address the research problems. The first part aimed to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of gender, age, academic program, and civil status.

The second part of the questionnaire focuses on assessing the level of awareness of the respondents regarding the provisions of Republic Act No. 7610, also known as the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act. The section consists of items that cover various components of the law, such as the nature of the law, child abuse and exploitation, child prostitution, child trafficking, obscene publications, working children, children of indigenous cultural communities, armed conflict, remedial procedures, and legal sanctions, among others. The questions structured to reflect the major sections of the law to ensure comprehensive coverage.

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, experts in education reviewed the questionnaire to confirm its relevance and alignment with the study's objectives (See Appendix A).

Data Gathering Procedure

To ensure systematic and ethical data collection, the researcher followed a step-by-step process. Initially, formal approval was sought from the Campus Director of Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) Cervantes Campus to seek permission to conduct the study.

Once permissions were approved, the Survey Questionnaire was distributed to the pre-service teachers of Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) Cervantes Campus. The researcher provided clear instructions and informed the respondents of the voluntary nature of their participation. A letter of informed consent and

confidentiality assurance accompanied the instrument, ensuring that responses remained anonymous and confidential (See Appendix A).

After administering all questionnaires, the researcher collected, organized, and encoded the data for statistical analysis.

Statistical Treatment

The data collected from the survey questionnaires analyzed using frequency counts and percentages to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of gender, age, academic program, and civil status. To determine the level of awareness of pre-service teachers regarding the Child Protection Policy (RA 7610), the weighted mean computed for each of the identified categories of the law, such as child abuse, child trafficking, and other forms of exploitation.

To test for significant differences in the level of awareness when grouped according to profile variables, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)/T-test was employed. The statistical technique assessed whether the respondents' demographic characteristics significantly influence their level of awareness of RA 7610.

Data Categorization

To facilitate accurate analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data gathered, a systematic data categorization scheme employed. The scheme applied to the scores, ratings, frequencies, and percentages derived from the survey questionnaire responses regarding the level of awareness of pre-service teachers on state college on protection policy (RA 7610) in Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC), Cervantes campus.

The level of awareness interpreted using 4-point Likert scale range:

Scale	Range	Interpretation
4	3.26-4.00	Highly Aware (HA)
3	2.50-3.24	Moderately Aware (MA)
2	1.75-2.49	Slightly Aware (SA)
1	1.00-1.74	Not Aware (NA)

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical considerations to safeguard the welfare and rights of all respondents involved in the study on the level of awareness of Pre-service teachers on Child Protection Policy (RA 7610) at Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College (ISPSC) Cervantes Campus, Cervantes Ilocos Sur. Central to these considerations is the principle of informed consent, where respondents provided comprehensive information regarding the purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits of the study before their voluntary participation. An informed consent form outlines these details clearly, emphasizing respondent's right to withdraw at any stage without consequences.

Confidentiality is rigorously maintained throughout the research process to protect respondents' identities. All personal data collected, including demographic information and responses to questionnaire items, are anonymized to ensure confidentiality. Access to identifiable information is restricted to authorized personnel only, ensuring that respondents' privacy is upheld. Moreover, the research design minimizes intrusion into respondents' personal lives, and sensitive information is handled with utmost discretion.

Respondents' voluntary involvements prioritized, ensuring they are free from coercion or undue influence. They are informed of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study without penalty. Measures are in

place to minimize any potential harm or discomfort, with careful consideration given to the design and implementation of data collection methods to mitigate risks.

Transparency and integrity underpinned the entire research process. The study obtained ethical approval from the appropriate institutional review board, affirming its adherence to ethical guidelines and standards. Findings reported accurately and honestly, without misrepresentation or bias, to contribute valuable insights into the utilized strategies and perceived effectiveness of strategies. By upholding these ethical principles, the research ensured the trustworthiness and reliability of its findings while respecting the dignity and rights of all respondents involved.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings, discussions, and analysis of data

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the profile of respondents in terms of age, gender, civil status, and program.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents

Age	f	Percentage
18-20	85	48.6
21-23	78	44.6
24-26	11	6.3
27-29	0	0
30 and above	1	0.6
Total	175	100
Civil Status		
Single	166	94.9
married	9	5.1
Total	175	100
Gender		
Male	30	17.1
Female	129	73.7
LGBTQ+	16	9.1
Total	175	100
Program		
BEED	33	18.9

BSEd	55	31.4
BTVTed	52	29.7
BTLEd	35	20.0
Total	175	100

Age. The table shows that the majority of the respondents are within the 18–20 years old age group with 85 or 48.6%. This means that most of the respondents are young pre-service teachers who are in the early stage of adulthood and are currently engaged in their teacher education programs. The distribution shows that the population is largely composed of individuals who are still in their formative years of professional preparation, where learning is more focused on academic exposure rather than long-term field experience.

In relation to the reviewed literature, age is often linked to maturity, experience, and awareness of social responsibilities (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). However, the findings of this study align with the findings of Aguilar and Carbonell (2024), which revealed a weak difference between age and awareness of child protection policies, indicating that being older does not necessarily mean having higher awareness. Likewise, Dela Fuente (2021) found no significant difference in awareness when respondents were grouped according to age. The systematic review by Han-Awon (2025) emphasized that age has an inconsistent influence on awareness, with factors such as training and policy exposure having a stronger impact. These corroborations support the present findings, shows that although the respondents are mostly young, their age does not limit their level of awareness of child protection policies such as Republic Act No. 7610. Awareness may already be developed at an early stage through academic instruction, seminars, and curriculum integration rather than relying solely on age or experience.

This implies that educational institutions, particularly teacher education programs, should continue strengthening awareness initiatives regardless of age group. Since most respondents are young, there is a strong opportunity to further enhance their awareness through continuous integration of child protection policies in the curriculum, seminars, and training programs. Schools may also implement reinforcement activities such as workshops, simulations, and case-based discussions to deepen awareness. Moreover, since age does not significantly affect awareness, equal emphasis should be given to all learners to ensure consistent and comprehensive awareness of child protection policies among future educators.

Civil Status. The table shows that the majority of the respondents are single, with a frequency of 166 or 94.9% of the total population. This means that most of the pre-service teachers are not yet married and are likely in a stage of life where they have fewer family responsibilities. The distribution shows that the respondents are primarily focused on their academic preparation and professional development, which may allow them greater participation in school-related activities and awareness programs such as those related to child protection policies like RA 7610.

As emphasized by Han (2021), Lee and Park (2022), and Sandoval (2023), plays an important role in shaping an individual’s responsibilities and level of engagement in social and professional activities. In this study, the high proportion of single respondents supports the idea that they may have greater autonomy and flexibility. According to DePaulo (2019) and Lee and Park (2022), single individuals tend to participate more actively in community and civic engagements due to fewer time constraints. This may explain why pre-service teachers, who are mostly single, can actively engage in awareness programs, trainings, and academic discussions related to child protection policies.

The small percentage of married respondents may experience limitations in participation due to family obligations. As noted by Sandoval (2023) and Brodowicz (2024), married individuals often prioritize household responsibilities and caregiving roles, which can reduce their availability for professional development and community involvement. Supporting this, Han (2021) found that married individuals may face constraints in engaging in extra activities compared to their single counterparts. However, despite these differences, the

influence of civil status on awareness is often indirect and may depend on other factors such as institutional support, curriculum integration, and access to training.

This implies that the institution, particularly the Teacher Education Department, should continue to provide inclusive and flexible learning opportunities that accommodate both single and married pre-service teachers. Programs and seminars on RA 7610 may be scheduled in a way that ensures accessibility for all, regardless of civil status. Additionally, integrating child protection policies into the curriculum will help ensure that all students, regardless of personal circumstances, achieve a high level of awareness. Support mechanisms such as flexible schedules or blended learning approaches may also be considered to encourage participation among those with family responsibilities.

Gender. The table shows that the majority of the respondents are female, with a frequency of 129 or 73.7% of the total population. This means that most of the pre-service teachers are female, indicating that the Teacher Education program is largely dominated by women. The presence of male and LGBTQ+ respondents, although smaller in number, also reflects diversity in gender representation within the study.

World Health Organization (2022), refers to socially constructed roles, behaviors, and norms that influence how individuals think, act, and interact in society. In this study, the higher proportion of female respondents may show a stronger inclination toward professions that involve care, guidance, and social responsibility, such as teaching. According to Weisberg et al. (2022), females tend to exhibit higher levels of empathy, emotional sensitivity, and warmth, which may influence how they perceive and respond to issues related to child protection and welfare.

Atari et al. (2020) found that females consistently score higher in moral foundations such as care, fairness, and sensitivity to harm. This shows that female pre-service teachers may be more responsive to child protection concerns and more attentive to policies like RA 7610. On the other hand, males, who are fewer in number, are often associated with traits such as assertiveness and openness to new ideas (Weisberg et al., 2022), which can also contribute positively to policy awareness and advocacy, particularly in leadership or enforcement roles. The inclusion of LGBTQ+ respondents highlights the importance of gender diversity in understanding social issues. As emphasized by Gurieva et al. (2022), perceptions of gender roles can influence how individuals recognize inequality and institutional responsibility. Gender-diverse individuals may offer unique perspectives on fairness, inclusion, and protection, which are essential in promoting child rights and addressing discrimination.

This implies that the Teacher Education Department should continue to promote gender-inclusive and gender-sensitive programs in raising awareness of RA 7610. Training and seminars may integrate perspectives that consider gender differences in awareness and responding to child protection issues. Additionally, encouraging equal participation among male, female, and LGBTQ+ pre-service teachers can help create a more inclusive and well-rounded approach to child protection advocacy. Gender-responsive teaching strategies and activities may also be implemented to ensure that all future educators are equipped to handle diverse classroom situations while upholding children's rights and welfare.

Program. The table shows that many of the respondents are enrolled in the BSEd program with a frequency of 55 or 31.4% of the total population. This means that most of the pre-service teachers come from secondary education and technical-vocational related programs, while fewer are from elementary education. The distribution shows that the respondents represent a diverse range of academic specializations, each with varying levels of exposure to child protection concepts and policies such as RA 7610.

Tenorio (2024), programs that incorporate subjects like social sciences, education, psychology, and human rights tend to provide more comprehensive discussions on child welfare and legal frameworks. In this study, students under BSEd and BEED may have stronger exposure to these topics due to the nature of their coursework, while those in BTVTEd and BTLEd may have more specialized or technical training with relatively less emphasis on social issues unless integrated into their curriculum. Supporting this, Reyes and Santos (2021) found that program-based child protection interventions significantly improve pre-service teachers' awareness and attitudes toward RA 7610. Similarly, Lopez and Cruz (2023) reported that participation in structured training programs enhances confidence and competence in identifying and responding to child abuse cases. These findings shows

that regardless of the program, relevance and well-designed training can effectively increase awareness and preparedness among future teachers.

Han Awon (2025) highlighted that institutional and program-level support, including curriculum design and the inclusion of child protection modules, greatly influence the ability of pre-service teachers aware and implement policies. This means that differences in awareness across programs are often shaped not just by specialization, but by how well child protection concepts are integrated into the curriculum.

This implies that the Teacher Education Department should ensure that RA 7610 and other child protection policies are consistently integrated across all academic programs, including BSEd, BTVTEd, BTLEd, and BEED. Curriculum enhancement may be implemented by embedding child protection topics in both professional and major subjects. Additionally, regular seminars, workshops, and training programs should be conducted for all students regardless of specialization to ensure equal levels of awareness and preparedness. Strengthening program-based interventions and providing hands-on training experiences will help produce competent and responsive future educators who can safeguard children in all educational settings.

Table 2a presents the Level of Awareness on the Nature of the Law

The data reveals an average weighted mean of 3.38, interpreted as High Awareness (HA), indicating that respondents possess a solid awareness of the fundamental purpose of the law. This includes its goal of protecting children from abuse, cruelty, and harm, as well as recognizing children’s rights and the need for special safeguards. Such awareness reflects awareness with the core principles that guide child protection, particularly the emphasis on the best interests of the child and the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach.

Table 2a. Level of Awareness on the Nature of the Law

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 aims to protect children from all forms of abuse	3.34	HA
2.	RA 7610 aims to protect children from all forms of cruelty	3.31	HA
3.	RA 7610 applies to children below 18 years old.	3.35	HA
4.	RA 7610 considers the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.	3.38	HA
5.	The law emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to child protection.	3.43	HA
6.	RA 7610 ensures that children are given special safeguards.	3.46	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.38	HA

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

From a theoretical standpoint, this finding is supported by (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which emphasizes that foundational legal awareness is crucial in shaping teachers’ readiness to uphold children’s rights and respond appropriately to abuse. In a similar vein, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) highlights that awareness of the guiding principles of child protection laws strengthens ethical sensitivity and professional responsibility among pre-service teachers. The consistently high ratings shows that respondents have developed a clear conceptual awareness of the purpose and intent of RA 7610, serving as a foundation for more advanced legal literacy. At the same time, this observation resonates with ASEAN Secretariat (2021) and Bueno et al. (2023), who noted that while general awareness may be high, deeper and more detailed awareness often requires structured and experiential learning opportunities.

In light of these perspectives, the findings imply that pre-service teachers are developing into ethically grounded future educators who recognize the aware of protecting children's rights. Rather than simply acknowledging the existence of the law, they demonstrate awareness of its core purpose and guiding principles, which can influence their professional judgment and decision-making. To further strengthen this foundation, teacher education institutions are encouraged to connect legal principles with practical applications through case-based discussions, ethical dilemma analysis, and contextualized teaching scenarios, ensuring that foundational awareness evolves into actionable competence.

Examining the indicators more closely, the statement "RA 7610 ensures that children are given special safeguards" obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.46, interpreted as High Awareness. This indicates that respondents strongly aware the law's emphasis on providing additional protection to children due to their vulnerability. It reflects an awareness that children require specific legal and social safeguards to ensure their safety, development, and well-being.

This observation is reinforced by (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which underscores that awareness of child-specific protections enhances teachers' capacity to create safe and supportive learning environments. Likewise, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) emphasizes that recognizing children's vulnerability is central to adopting a rights-based approach in education. These insights shows that respondents are aware of the protective intent of RA 7610 and its role in promoting child welfare.

Consequently, the findings imply that pre-service teachers are developing a strong child-centered perspective, which is essential for fostering inclusive and protective classroom environments. This awareness can translate into proactive behaviors in identifying and addressing risks faced by children. Institutions can further build on this by reinforcing child-centered pedagogies and emphasizing the practical implementation of safeguards in school contexts.

Conversely, the indicator "RA 7610 aims to protect children from all forms of cruelty" registered the lowest weighted mean of 3.31, although still interpreted as High Awareness. This shows that while respondents are generally aware of the law's protective scope, their awareness of specific concepts such as cruelty may not be as strongly emphasized as other principles like safeguards or integrated approaches. It points to a slight gap in the depth of conceptual awareness of key legal terms.

This pattern aligns with ASEAN Secretariat (2021), which observed that awareness of legal definitions tends to be less developed when instruction lacks sufficient detail or contextualization. Similarly, Tenorio (2024) found that the depth of pre-service teachers' awareness is influenced by the extent of their exposure to legal content, with limited emphasis on definitions resulting in minor gaps in comprehension.

Given this, the findings shows that teacher education programs should place greater emphasis on strengthening conceptual clarity, particularly regarding key legal terms and definitions within RA 7610. Providing concrete examples, case illustrations, and contextual discussions can help deepen awareness and ensure accurate interpretation and application of these concepts in practice.

In addition, indicators such as "The law emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to child protection" (3.43) and "RA 7610 considers the best interests of the child as a primary consideration" (3.38) also received high ratings. This reflects respondents' awareness of the law's holistic and rights-based framework, recognizing that child protection requires coordinated efforts across systems and stakeholders rather than isolated actions.

Consistent with this, (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) and (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) emphasize that a comprehensive and integrated approach enhances the effectiveness of child protection initiatives. However, the slightly lower ratings compared to other areas shows the need to further reinforce how these principles are applied in real-world settings.

This indicates that while pre-service teachers aware the guiding principles of RA 7610, there remains a need to strengthen their ability to translate these principles into practice. Teacher education institutions are therefore encouraged to adopt applied learning strategies such as simulations, collaborative activities, and field-based experiences to bridge the gap between theoretical awareness and practical implementation.

In conclusion, the findings confirm that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness of the nature and foundational principles of RA 7610, reflecting strong ethical and conceptual awareness of child protection. However, slight variations across indicators highlight the need to deepen conceptual clarity and enhance practical application. Accordingly, institutions should adopt a balanced approach that integrates foundational awareness with experiential learning, ensuring that future educators are not only aware of the law’s intent but are also capable of effectively implementing child protection policies in diverse educational contexts.

Table 2b. Level of Awareness on the Program on Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	The government implements programs for the prevention of child abuse.	3.45	HA
2.	The government implements programs for the prevention of discrimination.	3.49	HA
3.	These programs include community-based initiatives to raise awareness about child rights.	3.51	HA
4.	The programs also focus on providing support and rehabilitation services to child victims.	3.51	HA
5.	Schools are mandated to implement child protection policies.	3.46	HA
6.	These programs also aim to empower children with knowledge about their rights.	3.43	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.48	HA

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

The data reveal that the average weighted mean of 3.48, interpreted as Highly Aware (HA), indicates that respondents demonstrate a strong awareness of the role of government and institutions in implementing preventive, rehabilitative, and educational programs that promote child protection. This shows that they are not only familiar with the existence of these programs but also with their broader purposes, including community engagement, victim support, and child empowerment.

In support of this, the literature of the (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) emphasizes that awareness of child protection laws must extend to program implementation and support systems in order to effectively safeguard children. Likewise, the (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) explains that pre-service teachers who receive structured instruction on child protection programs tend to develop stronger awareness of intervention strategies and institutional responsibilities. Taken together, these findings reinforce the consistently high ratings, shows that respondents recognize the multi-layered nature of child protection, which includes prevention, rehabilitation, and education.

The findings imply that pre-service teachers are socially responsive future educators who understand that child protection goes beyond classroom-based responsibilities and involves coordinated institutional and community programs. Rather than viewing protection as an isolated function, they appear to become aware the importance of government intervention, community participation, and child empowerment. Consequently, teacher education institutions are encouraged to strengthen this awareness through experiential learning activities such as outreach participation, referral system simulations, and exposure to rehabilitation services, ensuring that awareness is translated into practice.

Focusing on specific indicators, the items “These programs include community-based initiatives to raise awareness about child rights” and “The programs also focus on providing support and rehabilitation services to child victims” both obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.51, interpreted as highly aware. This highlights that respondents strongly recognize the significance of both community involvement and victim-centered support in child protection efforts. More importantly, it reflects their awareness that effective child protection requires a balance between preventive education and responsive intervention.

This observation is reinforced by (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which underscores that community-based and rehabilitative approaches are essential components of effective child protection systems. In the same way, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) stresses that awareness of such approaches strengthens teachers’ capacity to collaborate with stakeholders and respond appropriately to cases of child abuse. Hence, the findings shows that respondents possess awareness of both proactive and reactive dimensions of child protection programs.

The findings imply that pre-service teachers already demonstrate a balanced awareness of prevention and intervention strategies, which is essential for addressing child protection concerns holistically. As such, this level of awareness may enable them to actively engage in awareness campaigns and support mechanisms within schools and communities. To further enhance this, teacher education programs may consider strengthening community immersion and service-learning experiences that expose students to actual child protection initiatives.

On the other hand, the indicator “These programs also aim to empower children with knowledge about their rights” obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.43, although still interpreted as High Awareness. This shows that while respondents are generally aware of empowerment initiatives, this aspect is comparatively less emphasized than prevention and rehabilitation components. As a finding, it indicates a minor gap in recognizing children as active participants in their own protection.

Similarly, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) notes that child empowerment is often less highlighted in awareness programs compared to protective and rehabilitative measures. In addition, Tenorio (2024) found that the depth of awareness is largely influenced by exposure, with empowerment-related concepts sometimes receiving limited emphasis in traditional instruction.

Given this, the findings imply that teacher education programs should place greater emphasis on child empowerment as a core element of child protection. Strengthening this dimension would enable future educators to better support children in understanding and asserting their rights. Accordingly, integrating rights-based education, participatory teaching strategies, and child-centered discussions may help address this gap and promote a more comprehensive understanding of child protection.

Meanwhile, the indicators “The government implements programs for the prevention of discrimination” (3.49) and “Schools are mandated to implement child protection policies” (3.46) also received high ratings, indicating awareness of both government and school-level responsibilities. This demonstrates that respondents recognize child protection as a shared responsibility among various institutions.

This perspective is aligned with (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) and (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) both of which emphasize that effective child protection systems require collaboration among government agencies, schools, and communities. However, the slight variation in the mean scores shows that although awareness is strong, further clarification is still needed regarding how these roles interact in actual practice.

In light of this, teacher education institutions are encouraged to adopt a systems-based approach in teaching RA 7610, emphasizing the interconnected roles of stakeholders in child protection. Moreover, providing opportunities for inter-agency engagement and practical exposure may further strengthen this awareness.

To conclude, the findings confirm that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness of government programs related to child protection under RA 7610. This reflects their strong recognition of preventive,

rehabilitative, and community-based efforts. Nevertheless, variations across indicators shows the need to further strengthen child empowerment and practical application of these programs. Hence, teacher education institutions should move beyond theoretical awareness and prioritize experiential and participatory learning approaches to better prepare future educators for comprehensive child protection work.

Table 2c. Level of Awareness on the Child prostitution and Other Sexual Abuse

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 strictly punishes child prostitution.	3.42	HA
2.	It considers any sexual act with a child as a form of sexual abuse.	3.45	HA
3.	The law also addresses online sexual exploitation.	3.43	HA
4.	Stricter penalties are imposed on perpetrators who are in a position of authority.	3.41	HA
5.	The law protects children from being used in pornography.	3.38	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.42	HA

Legend: Highly Aware- HA

The data reveal that the average weighted mean of 3.42, interpreted as Highly Aware (HA), indicates that respondents demonstrate a strong awareness of the law’s provisions concerning sexual exploitation. This includes awareness of the punishment of offenders, recognition of various forms of abuse, and protection of children from exploitation such as prostitution and pornography. More importantly, their responses show awareness with both traditional and emerging forms of abuse, including online sexual exploitation, which is increasingly relevant in today’s digital context.

Supporting this finding, the literature of the (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) emphasizes that awareness of specific forms of abuse especially sexual exploitation is essential in preparing teachers to identify and respond to high-risk situations. In the same manner, the (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) highlights that structured instruction on child protection laws strengthens teachers’ ability to recognize indicators of abuse and comply with reporting responsibilities. Collectively, these studies reinforce the consistently high ratings, shows that respondents have developed a focused awareness of sexual abuse-related provisions critical for safeguarding children in both physical and digital environments. Nevertheless, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) and Bueno et al. (2023) caution that although awareness may be evident, continuous training remains necessary to deepen awareness and ensure proper application in real situations.

From this perspective, the findings imply that pre-service teachers possess the capacity to identify and respond to sensitive child protection concerns, particularly those involving sexual abuse and exploitation. Rather than being confined to general awareness, their awareness extends to specific legal protections and risk factors, which may enhance their vigilance in real-life scenarios. As a finding, teacher education institutions are encouraged to strengthen this competence through case-based learning, digital safety education, and simulation activities that address both offline and online forms of abuse, thereby ensuring readiness in handling actual cases.

Looking closely at specific indicators, the item “It considers any sexual act with a child as a form of sexual abuse” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.45, interpreted as High Awareness. This shows that respondents clearly aware the legal definition of sexual abuse and recognize that any sexual act involving a child is strictly prohibited and punishable under the law. Consequently, it reflects strong conceptual clarity regarding what constitutes abuse.

This observation is supported by (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which stresses that clear awareness of abuse definitions is fundamental for accurate identification and reporting of cases. Likewise, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) explains that legal clarity enhances ethical awareness and reinforces professional responsibility among educators. Hence, the findings indicate that respondents are well-grounded in the essential legal concepts underlying child protection.

Such a findings implies that pre-service teachers already possess a strong conceptual foundation for identifying sexual abuse, which is crucial for early detection and timely intervention. With this level of awareness, cases of abuse are less likely to be misinterpreted or underreported. To build on this, institutions may further strengthen learning through real-life case analysis and guided decision-making activities that enhance practical judgment.

In contrast, the indicator “The law protects children from being used in pornography” obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.38, although still interpreted as High Awareness. This shows that while respondents are aware of protections against exploitation, this specific aspect receives relatively less emphasis compared to other provisions such as definitions of abuse and punitive measures.

Similarly, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) notes that certain forms of exploitation particularly those related to media and pornography are often less emphasized in conventional instruction. In addition, Tenorio (2024) found that awareness levels are influenced by exposure, with emerging or sensitive issues tending to receive less instructional focus.

Given this, the findings imply that teacher education programs need to strengthen coverage of all forms of sexual exploitation, including child pornography and online abuse. Doing so would better equip pre-service teachers to respond to evolving digital threats. Accordingly, integrating cyber safety education, media literacy, and discussions on legal implications of online exploitation may help address this gap.

Meanwhile, other indicators such as “RA 7610 strictly punishes child prostitution” (3.42), “The law also addresses online sexual exploitation” (3.43), and “Stricter penalties are imposed on perpetrators who are in a position of authority” (3.41) also received high ratings. These findings indicate awareness not only of punitive measures but also of contextual factors that aggravate offenses, particularly when abuse involves individuals in positions of trust.

This finding is aligned with (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) and (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) which emphasize that awareness both legal consequences and contextual risks strengthen educators’ capacity to respond appropriately to abuse cases. However, slight variations in the mean scores shows the need for continued reinforcement through applied and experiential learning approaches.

Considering this, although pre-service teachers demonstrate strong awareness of sexual abuse provisions under RA 7610, there is still a need to deepen awareness of emerging issues and ensure consistency across all indicators. Therefore, teacher education institutions are encouraged to adopt a comprehensive and responsive training approach that integrates legal literacy, ethical sensitivity, and practical application to fully prepare future educators in protecting children from all forms of sexual exploitation.

To conclude, the findings confirm a high level of awareness among pre-service teachers regarding child prostitution and sexual abuse provisions of RA 7610. This reflects strong legal awareness and ethical sensitivity. However, sustaining and enhancing this awareness requires continuous, context-based, and practice-oriented training to ensure that future educators are fully equipped to address both traditional and modern forms of child exploitation effectively.

Table 2d presents the Level of Awareness on the Child Trafficking

The data presented in the table show that the Average Weighted Mean (AWM) of 3.44, interpreted as Highly Aware (HA), reflects that pre-service teachers exhibit a strong level of awareness of the prohibition, definition,

penalties, and protection mechanisms associated with child trafficking. Overall, the consistently high rating across all indicators shows that awareness of trafficking-related provisions under RA 7610 is well established among the respondents, thereby enhancing their preparedness in safeguarding children.

Table 2d. Level of Awareness on the Child Trafficking

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 prohibits the trafficking of children for any purpose, including forced labor.	3.42	HA
2.	It defines child trafficking as the recruitment of a child for exploitation.	3.43	HA
3.	The law ensures that child trafficking victims are provided with protection services.	3.43	HA
4.	Hard penalties are imposed on individuals involved in child trafficking syndicates.	3.47	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.44	HA

Legend: HA-Highly Aware

A closer examination of the indicators reveals that the item “Hard penalties are imposed on individuals involved in child trafficking syndicates” obtained the highest mean of 3.47, interpreted as Highly Aware. This indicates that respondents clearly aware the seriousness of child trafficking offenses and the strict legal consequences imposed on perpetrators. In the same vein, the indicators “It defines child trafficking as the recruitment of a child for exploitation” and “The law ensures that child trafficking victims are provided with protection services” both with a mean of 3.43, also reflect a high level of awareness. Together, these findings shows that respondents are not only familiar with the legal definition of trafficking but also with the protective services afforded to victims.

This outcome is consistent with the findings of the (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022), which emphasizes that awareness of child protection laws is essential in strengthening teachers’ capacity to recognize and respond to exploitation and abuse. In addition, the (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) highlights that integrating legal frameworks into teacher education programs enhances both awareness and ethical responsibility among pre-service teachers. Accordingly, the consistently high ratings imply that respondents have been adequately exposed to relevant instruction and discussions on child trafficking and broader child protection policies.

From this perspective, it can be inferred that pre-service teachers possess a solid awareness of both the legal consequences and protective provisions related to child trafficking. This shows that teacher education programs are generally effective in promoting awareness of critical child protection issues, including exploitation and trafficking. As such, there is a need for institutions to sustain and further strengthen this awareness through continued curriculum integration and relevance training interventions.

Turning to another indicator, the item “RA 7610 prohibits the trafficking of children for any purpose, including forced labor” obtained a mean of 3.42, still interpreted as Highly Aware. While slightly lower than the highest-rated item, it nevertheless reflects a strong level of awareness regarding the breadth of prohibited acts under the law.

In relation to this, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) points out that awareness of child protection laws in Southeast Asia varies depending on the extent of exposure to policy-oriented training and institutional support. Likewise, Bueno et al. (2023) found that pre-service teachers tend to demonstrate only moderate awareness when opportunities for practical exposure are limited. In contrast, the relatively higher ratings in this study suggest that respondents may have benefited from seminars, coursework, or practicum experiences related to child protection.

Given this context, it may be inferred that while awareness is already high, there remains a need to further expand awareness of the broader application of child trafficking laws, particularly in relation to identifying real-life cases and responding appropriately. Consequently, teacher education institutions are encouraged to strengthen this area through case-based instruction, simulation activities, and training on reporting procedures to enhance practical competence.

To conclude, the findings confirm that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness of RA 7610 provisions on child trafficking, particularly in terms of definition, penalties, and victim protection mechanisms. To build on this foundation, sustained training, curriculum enhancement, and experiential learning opportunities are essential to further develop their capacity to effectively safeguard children and respond to trafficking-related concerns in both educational and community contexts.

Table 2e. Level of Awareness on Obscene Publications and Indecent Shows

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 prohibits the distribution of indecent shows involving children.	3.54	HA
2.	It also penalizes individuals who use children to create pornographic materials.	3.54	HA
3.	The law ensures that children are not exposed to harmful content that can affect their moral development.	3.53	HA
4.	It also addresses the use of children in live sex shows.	3.53	HA
5.	Schools and communities are encouraged to promote media literacy to protect children from harmful content.	3.51	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.53	HA

Legend: HA-Highly Aware

The data presented in the table show that the Average Weighted Mean (AWM) of 3.53, interpreted as Highly Aware (HA), reflects that pre-service teachers demonstrate a very strong level of awareness regarding the protection of children from exploitation through media, pornography, and indecent performances. Overall, the consistently high ratings across all indicators indicate that awareness of media-related child protection provisions is already well established among the respondents.

In terms of specific indicators, it is notable that the items “RA 7610 prohibits the distribution of indecent shows involving children” and “It also penalizes individuals who use children to create pornographic materials” both obtained the highest mean of 3.54, interpreted as Highly Aware. This shows that respondents clearly aware the strict legal prohibition against exploiting children in media content, as well as the corresponding penalties imposed on offenders. In addition, the indicators “The law ensures that children are not exposed to harmful content that can affect their moral development” and “It also addresses the use of children in live sex shows,” both with a mean of 3.53, further demonstrate strong awareness of the various forms of exploitation covered by the law.

These findings are consistent with the findings of the (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022), which stresses that awareness of child protection laws strengthens teachers’ capacity to safeguard children from multiple forms of abuse, including media-related exploitation. In the same direction, the (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) explains that integrating legal and rights-based education into teacher preparation programs enhances both ethical sensitivity and legal awareness among pre-service teachers. Hence, the consistently high ratings shows that respondents have been adequately exposed to relevant discussions and learning experiences concerning child protection in media contexts.

From this standpoint, it can be inferred that pre-service teachers possess a strong awareness of the risks associated with media and digital environments, as well as the importance of protecting children from harmful and exploitative content. This further implies that teacher education programs are effective in developing awareness of both traditional and emerging forms of child exploitation. As such, institutions are encouraged to maintain and strengthen this awareness through sustained curriculum integration and specialized training programs.

Shifting to another indicator, the item “Schools and communities are encouraged to promote media literacy to protect children from harmful content” obtained the lowest mean of 3.51, though still interpreted as Highly Aware. While this still indicates a high level of awareness, it shows a relatively lesser emphasis on preventive strategies such as media literacy and community engagement compared to legal prohibitions and punitive measures.

In relation to this, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) notes that awareness of child protection policies often varies depending on the extent of exposure to structured training and institutional initiatives. Likewise, Bueno et al. (2023) found that although general awareness tends to be high among pre-service teachers, awareness of preventive and applied strategies is often less developed when instruction is largely theoretical.

Given this context, the findings imply that while respondents are aware of media literacy as a protective measure, there is still a need to further strengthen their awareness of preventive approaches in child protection. Consequently, teacher education institutions should place greater emphasis on media literacy education, digital safety, and community-based preventive strategies to ensure that pre-service teachers can actively promote safe media practices among learners.

In conclusion, the study affirms that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness of RA 7610 provisions concerning child pornography, indecent shows, and media-related protection. To sustain and further enhance this awareness, continuous training, curriculum enrichment, and practice-oriented learning experiences are necessary to strengthen their ability to protect children from media-related risks and exploitation in both school and community settings.

Table 2f. Level of Awareness on Other Acts of Abuse

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 covers various other forms of abuse including physical.	3.53	HA
2.	It defines physical abuse as any act that inflicts physical harm.	3.55	HA
3.	The law considers emotional abuse as any act that impairs a child’s emotional development.	3.58	HA
4.	Psychological abuse include acts of intimidation that can harm a child’s self-esteem.	3.50	HA
5.	It also illegal to subject a child to cruel.	3.46	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.52	HA

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

The data reveal an average weighted mean of 3.52, which indicates that the respondents demonstrate a Highly Aware regarding RA 7610, particularly in relation to identifying various forms of child abuse such as physical, emotional, and psychological abuse. Overall, this shows that pre-service teachers possess a solid awareness of the law’s scope, including its definitions and fundamental concepts of child protection.

In support of this finding, the literature of the (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) emphasizes that legal awareness among teachers is a vital component of their preparedness to safeguard children. In the same direction, the (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) explains that structured exposure to child protection laws within teacher education programs enhances both legal literacy and ethical sensitivity. Likewise, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) highlights that although awareness levels vary across Southeast Asia, formal instruction significantly improves understanding of child protection policies. In the Philippine setting, this aligns with the findings of Bueno et al. (2023), which show that pre-service teachers generally demonstrate moderate to high awareness when exposed to relevant coursework and training.

Taken together, these studies shows that the respondents already possess a strong foundational awareness of child abuse concepts under RA 7610. As a finding, the focus of instruction should no longer be limited to basic awareness-building but should instead move toward strengthening application-oriented competencies. This includes developing skills in identifying real-life cases, aware proper reporting procedures, and recognizing legal accountability. Accordingly, teacher education institutions are encouraged to shift toward case-based learning, simulation activities, and practicum integration to better prepare students for actual child protection responsibilities.

Focusing on the indicators, it is noteworthy that the statement “The law considers emotional abuse as any act that impairs a child’s emotional development” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.58, interpreted as Highly Aware. This indicates that respondents have a particularly strong awareness of less visible forms of abuse, recognizing that harm extends beyond physical injury to include emotional and psychological dimensions. Consequently, this reflects an emerging sensitivity toward the holistic well-being of children.

This outcome is supported by (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which stresses that effective child protection awareness must encompass both visible and invisible forms of abuse. Similarly, the (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022) emphasizes the importance of teachers in identifying emotional and psychological harm to ensure safe and inclusive learning environments. In addition, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) notes that awareness of non-physical abuse remains a critical yet often underdeveloped area, making this finding a positive indication of growing teacher sensitivity.

The findings imply that pre-service teachers are gradually adopting a more child-centered perspective, where emotional safety is considered as important as physical protection. Consequently, future educators are more likely to foster supportive classroom environments and recognize early signs of emotional distress among learners. To further strengthen this competency, guided observation activities and reflective practices may be integrated into training to enhance responsiveness to learners’ emotional needs.

In contrast, the indicator “It is also illegal to subject a child to cruel acts” obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.46, although still interpreted as Highly Aware. While this still reflects a strong level of awareness, it shows that awareness of broader or less explicitly emphasized provisions, such as cruelty-related offenses, is comparatively less developed.

Tenorio (2024) observed that pre-service teachers tend to show stronger familiarity with commonly discussed forms of abuse, while exhibiting weaker awareness of broader legal provisions. Bueno et al. (2023) also noted that although theoretical awareness is present, comprehension of specific legal applications and nuanced provisions remains limited.

From this perspective, the findings imply that while awareness is generally high, it is not yet fully comprehensive or deeply internalized. Hence, teacher education programs should place greater emphasis on the full scope of RA 7610, particularly its less discussed provisions and legal interpretations. Integrating policy analysis exercises, case studies, and real-life scenario discussions may help bridge these gaps and promote deeper awareness.

In conclusion, the study confirms that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness of RA 7610, especially in identifying different forms of child abuse. However, this awareness remains largely conceptual

rather than fully procedural. Therefore, institutions such as Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College should strengthen the integration of child protection policies through practice-based approaches, enabling students to progress from theoretical awareness to becoming competent, proactive, and legally responsive educators capable of safeguarding children’s rights in real educational contexts.

Table 2g. Level of Awareness on Sanctions for Establishments

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 imposes sanctions on establishments that promote child prostitution.	3.50	HA
2.	These establishments may face suspension of operations.	3.52	HA
3.	Owners of these establishments may also be held criminally liable.	3.50	HA
4.	The law ensures that children are not exploited in commercial establishments.	3.50	HA
5.	Stricter monitoring of establishments that cater to children are implemented.	3.54	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.51	HA

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

The data reveal an average weighted mean of 3.51, indicating that the respondents demonstrate a highly aware of RA 7610’s regulatory and punitive provisions, particularly those concerning the accountability of establishments and their owners in cases of child exploitation. Overall, this shows that pre-service teachers understand not only the protective intent of the law but also its enforcement dimension, which imposes legal consequences on individuals and institutions that facilitate abuse.

In relation to this, the literature of the (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) stresses that teachers’ awareness of legal responsibilities, including sanctions and reporting duties, is essential in ensuring effective child protection. Correspondingly, the (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) explains that structured legal education strengthens educators’ awareness of accountability mechanisms, thereby increasing their responsiveness to violations of child protection laws. At the regional level, the ASEAN Secretariat (2021) observes that enforcement-related provisions, such as penalties for establishments, are often less emphasized in training; hence, the high level of awareness in this study may indicate effective exposure to policy-based instruction. In the Philippine context, this finding is consistent with Bueno et al. (2023), who reported that pre-service teachers with policy-oriented training tend to demonstrate stronger awareness of legal accountability under RA 7610.

Taken together, these perspectives shows that the respondents are not only aware of child protection laws but also aware on how these laws are enforced in practice. Consequently, this positions them as potential advocates of legal compliance and child safety within their future professional roles. Rather than limiting instruction to general awareness, this highlights the need for institutions to strengthen applied legal literacy, particularly in identifying violations in real settings and understanding proper referral and reporting procedures. In doing so, pre-service teachers can transition from being passive recipients of knowledge to active protectors of children’s rights.

The indicators, “Stricter monitoring of establishments that cater to children are implemented” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.54, interpreted as Highly Aware. This indicates that respondents have a particularly strong awareness of preventive mechanisms under the law, especially the role of monitoring and regulation in

stopping exploitation before it occurs. As such, it reflects recognition that child protection involves not only responding to abuse but also preventing it.

These findings imply is supported by (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which emphasizes that effective child protection awareness includes knowledge of both preventive and corrective strategies. In a similar vein, the (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022) highlights the importance of safeguarding mechanisms that ensure safe learning environments through institutional vigilance. Moreover, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) underscores that awareness of monitoring systems is a key component in strengthening child protection frameworks across the region.

Extending from this, the findings imply that pre-service teachers are beginning to develop a preventive orientation in their awareness of child protection. This means they are more likely to support initiatives that promote monitoring, early detection, and safeguarding measures in schools and communities. Accordingly, this awareness may be further strengthened through community immersion activities and field-based observations that allow direct exposure to child protection systems in practice.

Shifting to the remaining indicators, the statements “RA 7610 imposes sanctions on establishments that promote child prostitution”, “Owners of these establishments may also be held criminally liable” and “The law ensures that children are not exploited in commercial establishments” all obtained slightly lower but still high weighted means of 3.50. While these findings still reflect strong awareness, they show that respondents’ awareness of specific legal consequences and institutional liability is comparatively less pronounced than their awareness of monitoring mechanisms.

In a related study, Tenorio (2024) found that pre-service teachers often demonstrate uneven levels of awareness, with stronger familiarity in general legal concepts and weaker understanding of detailed legal provisions. Similarly, Bueno et al. (2023) noted that awareness of sanctions and legal procedures tends to remain limited when instruction is more theoretical than experiential.

From this perspective, it can be inferred that while awareness is high, it is still largely conceptual rather than fully procedural. Hence, teacher education programs should place greater emphasis on case-based learning, legal scenario analysis, and applied discussions of enforcement processes. Strengthening these areas would help ensure that future educators not only aware of the law but are also capable of responding appropriately to real-world violations.

To conclude, the findings confirm that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness of RA 7610 provisions on child prostitution and sanctions on establishments, reflecting a solid understanding of both preventive and punitive dimensions of child protection. However, to fully develop this awareness into practical competence, institutions such as Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College should enhance applied legal education through training seminars, experiential learning, and practicum-based exposure. In doing so, awareness can be transformed into action-oriented competence, enabling future educators to effectively uphold an advocate for child protection in real-world settings.

Table 2h. Level of Awareness on Working Children

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 regulates the employment of children to protect them from hazardous working conditions.	3.58	HA
2.	It sets the minimum age for employment of work that are permissible for children.	3.52	HA
3.	The law ensures that working children are provided with safe and healthy working conditions.	3.54	HA

4.	It also prohibits the employment of children in hazardous industries.	3.55	HA
5.	Working children are entitled to receive fair compensation and benefits.	3.62	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.56	HA

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

The data reveal an average weighted mean of 3.56, indicating that the respondents demonstrate a highly aware of RA 7610’s provisions on child labor, particularly in relation to safeguarding children from hazardous working conditions, ensuring fair treatment, and upholding their overall welfare. Collectively, this shows that pre-service teachers possess a solid awareness of the rights of working children and the legal limitations imposed on employers, reflecting a generally rights-based perspective on child protection.

In connection with this, the study of the (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) emphasizes that teachers’ awareness of child protection laws, including labor-related provisions, is essential in strengthening their capacity to safeguard children’s rights. In the same direction, the (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) explains that integrating legal and rights-based competencies into teacher education enhances both awareness and ethical responsibility among future educators. Regionally, the ASEAN Secretariat (2021) notes that awareness of child labor protections varies across contexts, although structured training significantly improves comprehension. In the Philippine setting, this aligns with Bueno et al. (2023), who found that pre-service teachers exposed to policy-based instruction tend to demonstrate higher awareness of children’s legal rights, including those related to employment.

Taken together, these perspectives shows that the respondents already possess a rights-oriented awareness of child labor issues, positioning them as potential advocates for child welfare and protection. Considering this, it becomes evident that teacher education should move beyond general awareness-building and instead focus on strengthening applied competencies. These include identifying exploitative labor practices, awareness reporting procedures, and linking affected children to appropriate support services. In doing so, pre-service teachers may gradually transition from passive recipients of information to active defenders of children’s rights within both school and community settings.

Turning to the indicators, it is noteworthy that the statement “Working children are entitled to receive fair compensation and benefits” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.62, interpreted as Highly Aware. This indicates that respondents have a particularly strong awareness of the rights and entitlements of working children, recognizing that even in situations where child work is permitted, dignity, fairness, and protection must still be ensured. As such, this reflects an awareness that child protection extends beyond preventing abuse to promoting just and humane conditions for children.

This finding is reinforced by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which stresses that awareness of children’s rights, including fair treatment in labor contexts, is fundamental in promoting child welfare. Similarly, the (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022) underscores the importance of ensuring safe and inclusive environments that respect children’s rights in all settings. In addition, the ASEAN Secretariat (2021) highlights that recognition of children’s entitlements is a core element of comprehensive child protection awareness.

Building on this, the findings imply that pre-service teachers are gradually developing a child-rights-centered perspective, where fairness and justice are valued alongside protection from harm. Consequently, they are more likely to advocate for ethical treatment of children in work-related contexts and uphold their dignity in practice. To further strengthen this orientation, case analysis and community-based engagement activities may be integrated into training to enhance responsiveness to real-life child labor situations.

The indicator “It sets the minimum age for employment of work that are permissible for children” obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.52, although still interpreted as Highly Aware. While this still reflects a strong level of awareness, it shows a relatively weaker grasp of specific technical provisions such as age requirements and classifications of permissible work.

In a similar vein, Tenorio (2024) observed that pre-service teachers often demonstrate uneven awareness, with stronger awareness of general principles and weaker familiarity with detailed legal provisions. Likewise, Bueno et al. (2023) noted that awareness of technical aspects of child protection laws, including procedural and regulatory details, tends to be less developed when instruction is largely theoretical.

The findings imply that while awareness is high, it remains partly conceptual rather than fully detailed or procedural. Hence, teacher education programs should place greater emphasis on specific provisions of RA 7610, particularly minimum age requirements, classifications of permissible work, and related legal safeguards. Incorporating structured case-based tasks and applied policy exercises may further strengthen the ability of pre-service teachers to interpret and apply these provisions in real-world contexts.

To conclude, the study confirms that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness of RA 7610 provisions on child labor and employment, reflecting a strong foundation in both protective and rights-based dimensions. However, to fully translate this awareness into practice, institutions such as Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College should strengthen applied legal education through experiential learning, policy analysis, and field-based exposure. Through these approaches, awareness can be developed into competence and advocacy, enabling future educators to effectively protect children from exploitation and uphold their rights in diverse contexts.

Table 2i presents the Level of Awareness on children on Indigenous Cultural Communities

The data reveals an average weighted mean of 3.55, indicating that

Table 2i. Level of Awareness on Children of Indigenous Cultural Communities

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 recognizes the needs of children from indigenous communities.	3.51	HA
2.	It ensures that these children are protected from discrimination.	3.57	HA
3.	The law also promotes the preservation of their cultural identity.	3.53	HA
4.	It guarantees access to education for these children.	3.56	HA
5.	Special measures are implemented to protect children from indigenous cultural communities from trafficking.	3.57	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.55	HA

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

respondents possess a high level of awareness of the law’s inclusive and rights-based approach. This shows that they can recognize the unique needs, rights, and vulnerabilities of children belonging to indigenous groups. Moreover, their responses reflect an awareness that child protection goes beyond general provisions and requires culturally responsive safeguards.

In connection with existing literature, this result supports the study of (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which emphasizes that teachers’ awareness of child protection must incorporate sensitivity to diverse cultural contexts and marginalized sectors. In the same vein,

(Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) highlights that embedding rights-based and inclusive education frameworks in teacher preparation strengthens both legal awareness and ethical responsibility. At the regional level, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) points out that awareness of protections for indigenous and vulnerable populations remains uneven across Southeast Asia, making the present high level of awareness a positive indication of effective exposure to policy. Likewise, in the Philippine setting, the findings of Bueno et al. (2023) affirm that structured instruction significantly enhances pre-service teachers' awareness of inclusive child protection policies.

Taken together, these findings shows that pre-service teachers are beginning to adopt an inclusive and culturally responsive perspective, positioning them as potential advocates for equity and social justice in education. Rather than focusing solely on basic awareness-building, institutions are encouraged to deepen contextual and applied learning. This includes promoting a better awareness of indigenous realities, addressing discrimination, and ensuring culturally appropriate interventions thereby shifting the role of future educators toward becoming inclusive practitioners.

Looking more closely at the specific indicators, the statements "It ensures that these children are protected from discrimination" and "Special measures are implemented to protect children from indigenous cultural communities from trafficking" both obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.57, interpreted as High Awareness. This indicates that respondents are particularly conscious of the heightened vulnerabilities of indigenous children, especially in relation to discrimination and exploitation. Such responses reflect a strong recognition that these groups require additional protection due to their socio-cultural context.

Consistent with this observation, (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) underscores the awareness of addressing discrimination and exploitation as central components of child protection. Similarly, (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022) emphasizes the promotion of inclusive and equitable education for all learners, particularly those from indigenous communities. In addition, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) highlights that responsive and relevance protection measures are essential in safeguarding vulnerable populations.

From this perspective, the findings imply that pre-service teachers are developing a heightened sense of social responsibility toward marginalized learners, particularly those at risk of discrimination and trafficking. This growing awareness increases the likelihood that they will foster inclusive classroom environments and actively advocate for child protection. Strengthening this further through community immersion, indigenous education programs, and culturally responsive pedagogy can enhance their ability to address real-world challenges effectively.

On the other hand, the indicator "RA 7610 recognizes the needs of children from indigenous communities" registered the lowest weighted mean of 3.51, although it still falls within the High Awareness category. This shows that while respondents aware the general intent of the law, their awareness of the specific needs and lived realities of indigenous children may not be as deeply grounded.

In support of this, Tenorio (2024) found that pre-service teachers often demonstrate uneven awareness showing stronger awareness with general principles but less depth in culturally specific provisions. Similarly, Bueno et al. (2023) observed that while awareness is present, a more nuanced understanding of marginalized groups requires experiential and context-based learning.

This indicates that although awareness levels are high, they remain partly theoretical rather than fully contextualized. Consequently, teacher education programs should place greater emphasis on localized and experiential learning opportunities. These may include engagement with indigenous communities, integration of indigenous awareness systems, and sustained discussions on cultural sensitivity to ensure that awareness is translated into meaningful and culturally appropriate practice.

In conclusion, the findings affirm that pre-service teachers possess a strong awareness of RA 7610 provisions concerning indigenous children, reflecting a solid foundation in inclusive and rights-based child protection. However, there is a need to move beyond awareness toward application. Institutions such as Ilocos Sur

Polytechnic State College are therefore encouraged to strengthen the integration of inclusive education, cultural sensitivity training, and field-based experiences. Through these efforts, awareness can be transformed into equity-driven practice, ensuring that future educators are well-equipped to protect and empower children from indigenous and marginalized communities.

Table 2j. Level of Awareness on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 provides special protection to children who are affected by armed conflicts.	3.54	HA
2.	It ensures that these children are protected from violence into armed groups.	3.54	HA
3.	The law also guarantees access to healthcare to support for these children.	3.54	HA
4.	The government works with international organizations to provide assistance.	3.54	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.54	HA

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

The data reveals an average weighted mean of 3.54, indicating that respondents demonstrate a high level of awareness of the law’s protective mechanisms for children in highly vulnerable and crisis situations. This shows that they recognize that child protection extends beyond normal conditions and must also address circumstances involving violence, displacement, and deprivation of basic services where children face heightened risks.

This finding supports the study of (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which emphasizes that teachers’ legal awareness should encompass child protection in emergency and conflict situations due to their significant impact on children’s well-being and development. In a similar context, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) highlights that integrating rights-based and crisis-responsive competencies in teacher education enhances preparedness in addressing diverse forms of child vulnerability. At the regional level, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) notes that awareness of child protection in conflict settings remains inconsistent due to limited training opportunities, making the present high level of awareness a strong indication of effective policy integration. In the Philippine context, this aligns with the findings of Bueno et al. (2023), which show that structured instruction improves awareness of specialized provisions of RA 7610.

Collectively, these insights shows that pre-service teachers are beginning to develop a protective and humanitarian perspective, positioning them as potential responders to children in crisis situations. Rather than limiting preparation to general awareness, teacher education institutions are encouraged to strengthen applied competencies such as trauma-informed teaching, proper referral systems, and coordination with child protection agencies. This progression supports the transformation of future educators into frontline support providers capable of responding effectively to children affected by emergencies and conflict.

A closer examination of the indicators shows that all statements obtained the same weighted mean of 3.54, reflecting a consistent level of awareness across all aspects related to children in situations of armed conflict. This uniformity indicates that respondents possess a balanced awareness of key provisions, including protection from recruitment into armed groups, access to healthcare, and the roles of government and international organizations in delivering assistance. It further shows that respondents perceive these components as equally essential in ensuring child welfare.

In line with this observation, (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) underscores that comprehensive awareness involves not only recognizing protective measures but also awareness institutional responsibilities during crises. Likewise, (Department of Education [DepEd], 2023)

emphasizes the role of educators in maintaining safe and supportive learning environments even under difficult conditions. Additionally, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) highlights the importance of coordinated efforts among governments and organizations in safeguarding vulnerable children.

From this standpoint, the findings imply that pre-service teachers possess a holistic understanding of child protection in conflict contexts, acknowledging the interconnected roles of protection services, healthcare, and institutional support. This awareness increases the likelihood that they will appreciate the complexity of child protection beyond classroom settings and recognize the value of multi-sectoral collaboration. Strengthening this foundation through simulation exercises, emergency preparedness training, and interdisciplinary learning can further enhance their readiness.

At the same time, the uniformity of responses suggests that awareness, although high, may remain generalized rather than deeply differentiated across specific provisions. This observation is consistent with Tenorio (2024), who found that pre-service teachers often demonstrate broad awareness but limited depth in legal and procedural aspects. Similarly, Bueno et al. (2023) noted that while awareness exists, detailed awareness of implementation and real-world application tends to be limited.

This indicates that current awareness may still be more conceptual than operational. As such, teacher education programs should prioritize practical application by incorporating case studies on conflict-affected children, strengthening coordination with social services, and enhancing familiarity with legal procedures for protection and intervention. These strategies will help ensure that awareness is translated into effective action and informed decision-making.

To conclude, the findings confirm that pre-service teachers possess a high and consistent level of awareness of RA 7610 provisions concerning children affected by armed conflict, reflecting a solid grounding in humanitarian and protective principles. However, there remains a need to further develop this awareness into context-specific and action-oriented competence. Institutions such as Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College are therefore encouraged to intensify the integration of crisis-responsive education, experiential learning, and inter-agency collaboration training. Through these efforts, awareness can be transformed into practical preparedness, ensuring that future educators are fully equipped to protect and support children in situations of conflict and crisis.

Table 2k. Level of Awareness on Remedial Procedures

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 outlines the procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse to the appropriate authorities.	3.50	HA
2.	It also specifies the responsibilities of various government agencies in handling these cases.	3.51	HA
3.	The law ensures that child victims are provided with protection.	3.39	HA
4.	It also guarantees the right of child victims to participate in legal proceedings.	3.45	HA
5.	RA 7610 promotes restorative justice approaches to address child abuse cases.	3.50	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.47	HA

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

The data reveals an average weighted mean of 3.47, indicating that respondents possess a high level of awareness of the procedural aspects of the law. This shows that they are aware of the child protection not only in terms of

identifying abuse, but also in following proper reporting mechanisms, recognizing agency responsibilities, and upholding the rights of child victims within legal and institutional processes.

This finding is consistent with (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which underscores that awareness of reporting procedures and legal responsibilities strengthens teachers' confidence in responding to child abuse. In a similar perspective, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) highlights that structured instruction on legal frameworks enhances educators' ability to comply with reporting obligations and maintain child protection standards. Regionally, ASEAN Secretariat (2021) observed that procedural awareness is often limited due to insufficient exposure to policy-based training, making the current high level of awareness a positive indication of effective educational preparation. In the Philippine context, Bueno et al. (2023) further support this by demonstrating that awareness of reporting systems and legal accountability improves through structured learning experiences.

These findings imply indicate that pre-service teachers are developing a procedural and responsibility-oriented mindset, positioning them as potential frontlines in reporting and responding to child abuse cases. Moving forward, teacher education institutions should go beyond theoretical instruction by strengthening applied legal competencies such as actual reporting protocols, documentation processes, and coordination with relevant agencies. This development is essential in transforming future educators into competent and responsive practitioners.

Focusing on specific indicators, the statement "It also specifies the responsibilities of various government agencies in handling these cases" obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.51, interpreted as High Awareness. This demonstrates that respondents are particularly aware about the institutional framework of child protection, recognizing that multiple agencies must work collaboratively in addressing abuse cases. Such awareness reflects an understanding of a system-based approach to safeguarding children.

In support of this, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) emphasizes the importance of inter-agency collaboration in effectively addressing child protection concerns. Likewise, (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022) highlights the shared responsibility of schools and government institutions in ensuring child safety. ASEAN Secretariat (2021) further notes that awareness of institutional roles contributes significantly to the effectiveness of child protection systems.

From this standpoint, the findings shows that pre-service teachers are beginning to appreciate collaborative child protection mechanisms, making them more likely to engage with appropriate authorities when addressing abuse cases. Enhancing this awareness through inter-agency simulations and case management exercises can further strengthen their readiness for real-world application.

In contrast, the indicator "The law ensures that child victims are provided with protection" registered the lowest weighted mean of 3.39, although still within the High Awareness category. This indicates that while respondents are generally aware with procedural elements, their awareness of specific protections and support systems for victims may not be as strongly emphasized.

This pattern aligns with Tenorio (2024), who found that pre-service teachers tend to exhibit uneven awareness demonstrating stronger awareness with general procedures but less depth in victim-centered provisions. Similarly, Bueno et al. (2023) observed that while awareness of reporting exists, awareness of victim support services and legal protections requires further enhancement.

These findings imply that awareness, although high, remains more procedural than victim centered. Consequently, teacher education programs should place greater emphasis on child-sensitive approaches, including awareness victim rights, providing psychological support, and facilitating participation in legal processes. Integrating trauma-informed practices and real-case analyses can help bridge this gap.

Meanwhile, the indicators "RA 7610 outlines the procedures for reporting suspected cases of child abuse to the appropriate authorities" and "RA 7610 promotes restorative justice approaches to address child abuse cases" both yielded a weighted mean of 3.50. This shows that respondents possess a balanced awareness of both formal

legal procedures and alternative, rehabilitative approaches to justice. It reflects an emerging awareness that child protection involves not only enforcement but also recovery and support for affected children.

Consistent with this, (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) highlights that effective child protection frameworks integrate both legal intervention and restorative approaches that prioritize the child’s well-being. Similarly, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) points to global trends advocating for child-centered justice systems that balance accountability with rehabilitation.

Taken together, these findings indicate that pre-service teachers are developing a more holistic perspective on child protection one that combines procedural compliance with compassionate and restorative practices. This perspective can be further strengthened through practical training in restorative justice, mediation, and child-friendly legal processes.

In summary, the study confirms that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness of RA 7610’s remedial procedures and legal processes, reflecting a solid foundation in reporting mechanisms and institutional responsibilities. Nevertheless, there is a need to advance this awareness toward action-oriented and child-centered competence. Institutions such as Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College are therefore encouraged to intensify practical legal training, case-based learning, and inter-agency collaboration activities. Through these efforts, awareness can be translated into effective practice, ensuring that future educators are well-prepared to report, respond to, and support children in situations of abuse.

Table 21. Level of Awareness on Common Penal Provision

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 imposes penalties, including imprisonment for those found guilty of violating its provisions.	3.50	HA
2.	Penalties are more severe for perpetrators who are in a position of authority over the child.	3.52	HA
3.	The law also impose penalties on individuals who fail to report suspected cases of child abuse.	3.54	HA
4.	It ensures that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.	3.59	HA
5.	RA 7610 also provides for the forfeiture of assets derived from child exploitation activities.	3.57	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.54	HA

Legend: HA- High Aware

The data reveals an average weighted mean of 3.54, interpreted as High Awareness (HA), indicating that respondents possess a strong awareness of the legal consequences associated with violations of child protection laws. This includes awareness of penalties such as imprisonment, increased sanctions for authority figures, accountability mechanisms, and asset forfeiture. Such findings shows that pre-service teachers are not only aware with the existence of RA 7610 but also demonstrate substantial awareness of its punitive and regulatory provisions, which are essential in reinforcing compliance and safeguarding children’s rights.

Placed in the context of related studies, this finding is supported by (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which emphasizes that legal literacy among teachers enhances their readiness to respond to child protection concerns, particularly when they awareness both their duties and the consequences of non-compliance. In a similar direction, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and

Development [OECD], 2021) highlights that structured exposure to legal frameworks in teacher education strengthens awareness of accountability and reporting obligations. The consistently high rating across indicators means the strong influence of formal instruction and institutional exposure, indicating that respondents have developed a solid conceptual grasp of enforcement mechanisms. Notably, this contrasts with the findings of Bueno et al. (2023) and Tenorio (2024), which reported only moderate levels of awareness in other contexts, implying that the respondents in this study may have benefited from more comprehensive curricular integration or training opportunities related to RA 7610.

This implies that the high level of awareness regarding sanctions and penalties reflects a shift from passive knowledge to informed professional consciousness. Pre-service teachers are not merely aware of child abuse in abstract terms but also recognize the legal repercussions associated with violations. This awareness can function as a deterrent against negligence and misconduct, reinforcing ethical and professional accountability. In this regard, teacher education institutions are encouraged to sustain and further enhance this level of awareness by incorporating case-based learning, legal simulations, and reporting protocol exercises that translate theoretical awareness into practical competence.

Examining individual indicators more closely, the statement “It ensures that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.59, indicating High Awareness. This shows that respondents strongly recognize accountability as a central principle of RA 7610, reflecting an awareness that justice and child protection are closely interconnected. It demonstrates that pre-service teachers view the law not only as punitive but also as a mechanism for upholding children’s rights and welfare.

Corroborating this, (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) underscores that awareness of accountability mechanisms strengthens teachers’ ethical commitment to child protection. Likewise, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) notes that when educators clearly aware the consequences faced by perpetrators, they are more likely to take appropriate action in reporting and preventing abuse. This aligns with the (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022) which emphasize the educator’s role in maintaining safe and protective learning environments.

These findings mean that pre-service teachers are developing a justice-oriented perspective, which can positively influence their future professional conduct. Such awareness increases the likelihood that they will uphold ethical standards and respond decisively to suspected abuse cases. Institutions can build on this strength by reinforcing ethical decision-making frameworks and integrating real-life scenarios that require the application of accountability principles.

On the other hand, the indicator “RA 7610 imposes penalties, including imprisonment for those found guilty of violating its provisions” registered the lowest weighted mean of 3.50, although it still falls within the High Awareness category. This indicates that while respondents are generally aware of the existence of penalties, their awareness of specific legal provisions may be less detailed compared to broader concepts such as accountability and severity of sanctions.

This observation is consistent with ASEAN Secretariat (2021), which reported that awareness of child protection laws in Southeast Asia often lacks depth, particularly in procedural and legal specifics. Similarly, Bueno et al. (2023) found that pre-service teachers tend to demonstrate general awareness but limited detailed awareness of legal provisions, especially regarding implementation and reporting processes. These findings show that while awareness is strong, there remains a need to deepen legal comprehension beyond surface-level awareness.

In light of this, the findings indicate that teacher education programs should move beyond general awareness and emphasize detailed legal literacy, particularly in awareness of specific provisions and their application. Strategies such as involving legal experts, providing annotated versions of the law, and engaging students in mock case analyses can help strengthen this dimension and bridge existing gaps.

To conclude, the study confirms that pre-service teachers exhibit a high level of awareness regarding the sanctions and penalties of RA 7610, reflecting a strong sense of legal consciousness and accountability in child protection. However, variations across indicators highlight the need for deeper and more applied awareness of

specific legal provisions. Consequently, educational institutions are encouraged to transition from awareness-based instruction to competence-based training, ensuring that future educators are not only aware about the law but also capable of effectively implementing it in real-world contexts.

Table 2m. Level of Awareness on Final Provisions

	Indicators	WM	I
1.	RA 7610 includes provisions for the implementation and enforcement of the law.	3.57	HA
2.	It mandates the creation of local councils for the protection of children.	3.56	HA
3.	The law also calls for the establishment of child protection committees in schools and communities.	3.63	HA
4.	It ensures that adequate resources are allocated for child protection programs.	3.61	HA
5.	RA 7610 promotes collaborations among government agencies in protecting children.	3.57	HA
	Average Weighted Mean	3.59	HA

Legend: HA-Highly Aware

The data reveals that the average weighted mean of 3.59, interpreted as High Awareness (HA). This indicates that respondents possess a strong awareness of how the law is operationalized through institutional structures, resource allocation, and inter-agency collaboration. Their awareness extends beyond theoretical awareness of child protection and reflects familiarity with the systems and mechanisms designed to ensure that the law is effectively implemented in real-world contexts.

This finding aligns with the literature of (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which emphasizes that teachers’ awareness becomes more meaningful when it includes not only legal provisions but also implementation frameworks and reporting systems. Similarly, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) highlights that structured integration of child protection policies in teacher education enhances not only legal aware but also institutional awareness, enabling future educators to navigate systems of support and enforcement. The consistently high rating across indicators shows that respondents have been exposed to both policy content and its practical applications, which strengthens their readiness to participate in child protection efforts. This contrasts with the findings of ASEAN Secretariat (2021) and Bueno et al., (2023), which noted gaps in implementation awareness due to limited training exposure, indicating that the respondents in this study may have benefited from more comprehensive institutional or curricular support.

This implies that the high level of awareness on implementation and enforcement transforms pre-service teachers into system-aware practitioners who aware that child protection is a shared responsibility across institutions. Rather than viewing the law as an abstract mandate, they recognize the importance of coordinated action, resource allocation, and organizational structures in safeguarding children. Therefore, teacher education institutions should sustain this strength by incorporating experiential learning such as simulations of referral systems, collaboration exercises with local agencies, and practicum-based exposure to child protection committees. This ensures that awareness is translated into functional competence in real-life scenarios.

The indicator “The law also calls for the establishment of child protection committees in schools and communities” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.63, described as High Awareness. This indicates that respondents strongly recognize the role of school- and community-based structures in implementing child

protection policies. It reflects an awareness that safeguarding children is not solely an individual responsibility but is institutionalized through organized bodies that monitor, prevent, and respond to cases of abuse.

This finding is supported by (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which underscores that awareness of institutional mechanisms, such as child protection committees, enhances teachers’ confidence in reporting and intervention. Furthermore, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) emphasizes that when pre-service teachers are familiar with school-based protection structures, they are more likely to actively engage in collaborative safeguarding practices. This also aligns with the (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022) which promotes the establishment of child protection committees as part of creating safe and inclusive learning environments.

The findings imply that pre-service teachers are well-oriented toward collaborative and system-based approaches to child protection. This awareness fosters a sense of shared accountability and encourages future educators to actively participate in institutional mechanisms rather than acting in isolation. Institutions can further strengthen this by providing hands-on exposure to the functions and processes of child protection committees, ensuring that students can effectively contribute once they enter the teaching profession.

On the other hand, the indicator “It mandates the creation of local councils for the protection of children” obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.56, although still interpreted as High Awareness. This shows that while respondents are generally aware of local governance structures, their aware may be slightly less emphasized compared to school-based mechanisms. It reflects a minor gap in awareness regarding the broader community and government-level frameworks involved in child protection.

This finding supports the observations of ASEAN Secretariat (2021), which notes that awareness of multi-level governance structures in child protection is often less developed, particularly among pre-service teachers who have limited exposure to community-based policy implementation. Similarly, Tenorio (2024) found that institutional exposure plays a significant role in shaping awareness, means that limited engagement with local councils may contribute to slightly lower familiarity in this area.

The findings imply that teacher education programs should strengthen awareness of community-based and inter-agency coordination mechanisms, particularly the role of local councils in child protection. By doing so, future educators will be better equipped to connect school-based interventions with broader community resources and support systems. Integrating community immersion programs, partnerships with local government units, and discussions on inter-agency collaboration can help bridge this gap.

To conclude, the study confirms that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of awareness regarding the implementation and enforcement mechanisms of RA 7610, reflecting strong institutional and system-level awareness of child protection. However, slight variations among indicators shows the need to further deepen awareness of community-based structures and multi-level governance. Therefore, teacher education institutions should move beyond theoretical instruction and adopt an integrated, systems-oriented approach that prepares future educators to actively engage in coordinated child protection efforts across schools, communities, and government agencies.

Table 2n. Overall Level of Pre-Service Teachers on RA 7610 along the following

	Indicators	AWM	I
A.	Nature of the Law	3.38	HA
B.	Program on child abuse, exploitation and discrimination	3.48	HA
C.	Child prostitution and other sexual abuse	3.42	HA
D.	Child Trafficking	3.44	HA

E.	Obscene publications and indecent shows	3.53	HA
F.	Other acts of abuse	3.52	HA
G.	Sanctions for establishments	3.52	HA
H.	Working children	3.56	HA
I.	Children of indigenous cultural communities	3.55	HA
J.	Children in situations of armed conflict	3.54	HA
K.	Remedial procedures	3.47	HA
L.	Common penal provisions	3.54	HA
M.	Final provisions	3.59	HA
	Overall Weighted Mean	3.50	HA

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

The data reveals an overall weighted mean of 3.50, interpreted as High Awareness (HA), indicating that respondents possess a comprehensive awareness of the different components of the law. This includes its nature, various forms of child abuse and exploitation, protection mechanisms, and legal provisions. Such findings shows that respondents are not only aware with the existence of RA 7610 but also demonstrate a substantial grasp of its scope and application across diverse child protection contexts.

Anchored in existing study, this finding is consistent with (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which emphasizes that awareness of child protection laws becomes meaningful when teachers aware of both general principles and specific provisions. In parallel, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) highlights that the structured integration of child protection laws into teacher education enhances comprehensive legal awareness, equipping future educators with the ability to identify, respond to, and prevent different forms of abuse. The consistently high rating across indicators shows that respondents have developed multi-dimensional legal literacy, encompassing awareness of vulnerable groups, legal procedures, and protective mechanisms. This stands in contrast to the findings of ASEAN Secretariat (2021) and Bueno et al. (2023), which reported only moderate awareness due to limited exposure, implying that respondents in this study may have benefited from stronger curriculum integration or institutional support.

This implies that the high level of awareness reflects the development of well-informed pre-service teachers who can recognize child protection concerns across multiple contexts. Rather than demonstrating fragmented awareness, they exhibit a more holistic awareness of RA 7610, which is essential for effective identification, reporting, and intervention. To sustain this strength, teacher education institutions are encouraged to reinforce integrative and applied learning approaches such as case analysis, situational judgment activities, and field-based exposure, ensuring that awareness is translated into practical competence and ethical responsiveness.

Turning to the specific indicators, “Final provisions” obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.59, interpreted as High Awareness. This indicates that respondents are highly aware of the overarching and concluding aspects of the law, including its general applicability, enforcement, and legal coverage. It reflects their recognition of RA 7610 as a comprehensive legal framework governing child protection.

This observation is supported by (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) which notes that awareness of the full scope of legal frameworks strengthens teachers’ confidence in applying the law. Similarly, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) emphasizes that a comprehensive awareness of legal structures enhances both ethical sensitivity and compliance.

These perspectives shows that respondents are not only aware about specific provisions but also aware how the law operates as an integrated system.

The findings imply that pre-service teachers possess a strong macro-level of RA 7610, enabling them to appreciate its purpose and structure. This type of awareness can support their ability to interpret and apply legal provisions in varied situations. Institutions may further strengthen this by linking general provisions with real-life applications, allowing students to connect theoretical frameworks with actual child protection scenarios.

In contrast, the indicator “Nature of the Law” registered the lowest weighted mean of 3.38, although still within the High Awareness category. This shows that while respondents are generally aware of the law, their foundational awareness of its core principles and definitions may not be as strongly emphasized as other areas. It points to a slight gap in grasping the fundamental concepts that underpin the law.

This pattern aligns with ASEAN Secretariat (2021), which observed that foundational legal awareness is often less developed when instruction focuses more heavily on applied or issue-based content rather than core principles. Likewise, Tenorio (2024) found that awareness among pre-service teachers is shaped by the nature of their exposure, with limited emphasis on theoretical grounding leading to gaps in foundational awareness.

These findings mean the need for teacher education programs to strengthen foundational instruction on the nature and principles of RA 7610. Reinforcing this base will allow students to better contextualize specific provisions and apply them more effectively. Approaches such as concept mapping, foundational lectures, and guided discussions on legal definitions can help address this gap.

Beyond these points, other indicators such as “Working children” (3.56), “Children of indigenous cultural communities” (3.55), and “Children in situations of armed conflict” (3.54) also received high ratings, reflecting strong awareness of vulnerable and marginalized groups. This indicates that respondents are sensitive to the diverse contexts in which child protection issues arise, demonstrating awareness of the social and cultural dimensions of abuse and exploitation.

In support of this, (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022) highlights that awareness of vulnerable populations enhances teachers’ ability to create inclusive and protective learning environments. Similarly, (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021) emphasizes the importance of equity-focused legal literacy in teacher preparation. However, these findings also shows that while contextual awareness is strong, procedural and programmatic aspects may still require further strengthening.

This implies that although pre-service teachers are awareness about various forms and contexts of child protection, there remains a need to deepen their awareness of intervention processes and program implementation. Teacher education institutions are therefore encouraged to emphasize procedural awareness, including reporting mechanisms, referral systems, and intervention strategies, to ensure that awareness translates into effective action.

In conclusion, the study confirms that pre-service teachers demonstrate a high and comprehensive level of awareness of RA 7610, covering its major provisions and applications. However, variations across indicators highlight the need for a more balanced approach that strengthens both foundational awareness and procedural competence. Accordingly, institutions should adopt a holistic and competency-based framework that integrates legal theory, practical application, and contextual sensitivity, ensuring that future educators are fully prepared to uphold child protection policies and advocate for children’s rights in diverse educational settings.

Table 3. Significant Difference on the Level of Awareness of Pre-Service Teachers on Child Protection Policy (RA 7610) when Grouped According to Profile.

Profile	Mean	DE	P-value	Interpretation
Age			0.617	Not Significant

18-20	3.51	HA		
21-23	3.50	HA		
24-26	3.46	HA		
30 and up	3.71	HA		
Gender			0.221	Not Significant
Male	3.55	HA		
Female	3.50	HA		
LGBTQ+	3.45	HA		
Academic Program			0.025	Significant
BEED	3.47	HA		
BSEd	3.45	HA		
BTVTEd	3.55	HA		
BTLEd	3.54	HA		
Civil Status			0.564	Not Significant
Single	3.50	HA		
Married	3.46	HA		

Legend: HA- High Aware

Age. The computed p-value of 0.617 indicates no statistically significant difference in awareness levels when grouped according to age. This means that regardless of age bracket, pre-service teachers exhibit relatively similar levels of awareness of child protection policies, shows that age does not significantly differences their awareness of RA 7610.

Research indicates that while age may be assumed to influence policy awareness, empirical findings often show otherwise. Aguilar and Carbonell (2024), in a descriptive-comparative study conducted in the Philippine educational context, found a weak negative differences between age and awareness of the Child Protection Policy, implying that older respondents did not necessarily demonstrate higher awareness than younger ones. Similarly, Dela Fuente (2021) reported no significant differences in teachers' awareness of child protection policies when grouped according to age, reinforcing the idea that awareness is relatively consistent across age groups. Furthermore, a systematic review by Han-Awon (2025) on teacher awareness and school-based child protection initiatives in the Philippines emphasized that age is often a weak predictor of awareness compared to factors such as training, exposure to seminars, and institutional implementation practices.

These findings collectively shows that although age may reflect differences in experience and exposure, it does not automatically result in higher or lower awareness of child protection policies such as Republic Act No. 7610. The current study supports this pattern, as all age groups demonstrated High Awareness (HA) with no significant differences. Hence, while age remains an important demographic variable in profiling respondents, it may not be a determining factor in the level of awareness of child protection laws among pre-service teachers.

Gender. The computed p-value of 0.221 indicates no statistically significant difference in awareness levels among the three groups. This means that awareness of the Child Protection Policy (RA 7610) is consistently high and comparable across genders, shows that awareness about child protection is widely disseminated regardless of gender identity.

This finding can be aware in relation to the concept of gender as a socially constructed set of roles, behaviors, and expectations that vary across cultures and over time (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022). Although gender may influence how individuals perceive and respond to social issues, the findings shows that awareness of child protection policies transcends these differences, indicating that pre-service teachers, regardless of gender, are similarly informed about their responsibilities in safeguarding children.

Supporting this, Weisberg et al. (2022) noted that while males and females may differ in personality traits such as empathy, sensitivity, and assertiveness, these differences do not necessarily findings in significant difference in professional awareness. Similarly, Atari et al. (2020) found that females tend to score higher in moral foundations related to care and fairness, which are closely linked to child protection. However, the lack of significant difference in this study shows that both male and female respondents, as well as LGBTQ+ individuals, demonstrate a shared awareness of ethical responsibilities toward children.

Furthermore, Gurieva et al. (2022) emphasized that gender role beliefs can influence how individuals perceive social issues such as inequality and institutional accountability. Despite this, the findings indicate that respondents, regardless of gender, have developed a relatively uniform awareness of child protection policies, possibly due to standardized teacher education, shared academic experiences, and exposure to similar institutional training.

These findings imply that gender does not significantly difference the level of awareness of RA 7610 among pre-service teachers. This highlights the effectiveness of current educational efforts in promoting inclusive and equitable awareness of child protection. However, continuous gender-sensitive training and inclusive programs are still recommended to ensure that awareness is not only maintained but also translated into responsive and proactive practices in real-life teaching situations.

Program. The computed p-value of 0.025 indicates a statistically significant difference in awareness levels among the different academic programs. This shows that academic specialization plays a meaningful role in shaping pre-service teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy (RA 7610).

This finding supports the idea that the specific academic program influences the extent of exposure to and awareness of child protection concepts. As noted by Tenorio (2024), programs that integrate coursework in social sciences, education, psychology, and human rights tend to provide more comprehensive discussions on child protection and gender sensitivity. Thus, variations in curriculum content and emphasis across programs may explain why some groups, such as BTVTed and BTLEd students, demonstrate slightly higher awareness compared to others.

Empirical studies further reinforce this finding. Reyes and Santos (2021) found that structured child protection awareness programs significant difference of pre-service teachers' awareness toward RA 7610, enhancing their readiness to apply the law in practice. Similarly, Lopez and Cruz (2023) reported that participation in relevant training programs increased students' competence and confidence in identifying and addressing child abuse cases. These studies highlight that program-based interventions and training opportunities contribute significantly to differences in awareness levels. Moreover, Han Awon (2025) emphasized that institutional and program-level support, including curriculum design and the integration of child protection modules, plays a crucial role in developing pre-service teachers' awareness and capability to implement policies effectively. Programs that actively embed these topics within their curriculum are more likely to produce graduates who are well-equipped to uphold child protection standards.

In conclusion, these findings indicate that while awareness of RA 7610 is generally high across all academic programs, the significant difference shows that some programs provide more extensive or effective exposure to child protection education. Therefore, it is recommended that all teacher education programs strengthen and

standardize the integration of child protection policies into their curricula to ensure that all pre-service teachers, regardless of specialization, develop a consistent and comprehensive awareness of their legal and ethical responsibilities.

Civil Status. The computed p-value of 0.564 shows no statistically significant difference between the two groups. This shows that awareness of the Child Protection Policy (RA 7610) remains consistently high regardless of respondents' marital status, implying that civil status does not substantially influence their level of awareness.

This outcome may be explained by the nature of civil status as a socio-demographic factor that shapes responsibilities and engagement but does not directly determine awareness acquisition. As emphasized by Sandoval (2023), civil status affects an individual's availability and participation in social and professional activities. While such factors may influence exposure to certain experiences, they do not necessarily findings in differences in awareness, particularly in structured academic settings where information is uniformly delivered.

Supporting this, Lee and Park (2022) noted that single individuals often have greater flexibility and autonomy, allowing them to participate more actively in educational and community initiatives. In contrast, married individuals tend to prioritize family responsibilities and household obligations, which may limit their engagement in additional activities (Brodowicz, 2024; Sandoval, 2023). Similarly, Han (2021) found that single individuals are generally more involved in professional development and community programs, whereas married individuals may experience constraints due to competing responsibilities. However, despite these differences in participation and engagement, the present findings shows that both groups maintain comparable levels of awareness.

Furthermore, the findings imply that awareness of RA 7610 is largely influenced by institutional and educational factors rather than personal circumstances such as civil status. As pre-service teachers are exposed to similar curricula, training, and academic requirements, their awareness of child protection policies tends to be consistent across groups. This supports the idea that civil status plays an indirect role, with its effects mediated by access to training, curriculum integration, and institutional support.

To conclude, the findings highlight that while civil status may shape an individual's level of participation and engagement in related activities, it does not significantly difference the awareness of child protection laws. This underscores the effectiveness of teacher education programs in ensuring that all pre-service teachers, regardless of marital condition, acquire a uniform and adequate awareness of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children.

Table 4. Significant difference on the Level of Awareness considering the different categories

	Categories	AWM	DE	P-value
A.	Nature of the law	3.38	HA	0.025
B.	Program on child abuse, exploitation and discrimination	3.48	HA	
C.	Child prostitution and other sexual abuse	3.42	HA	
D.	Child trafficking	3.44	HA	
E.	Obscene publications and indecent shows	3.53	HA	
F.	Other acts of abuse	3.52	HA	
G.	Sanctions for establishments	3.51	HA	
H.	Working children	3.56	HA	

I.	Children of indigenous cultural communities	3.55	HA	
J.	Children in situations of armed conflict	3.54	HA	
K.	Remedial procedures	3.47	HA	
L.	Common penal provisions	3.54	HA	
M.	Final provisions	3.59	HA	

Legend: HA- Highly Aware

The analysis revealed that the overall level of awareness of Republic Act No. 7610 among pre-service teachers was generally highly aware across all categories, as reflected in the Average Weighted Means ranging from 3.38 to 3.59. However, the test of difference showed statistically significant findings ($p = 0.025$), indicating that awareness varies across certain profile variables. This means that while respondents collectively demonstrate strong awareness with the provisions of RA 7610, differences exist depending on their demographic or academic characteristics.

In terms of specific categories, all provisions including child abuse, child trafficking, working children, children in armed conflict, and final provisions were interpreted as Highly Aware. The highest means was recorded in Final Provisions (3.59), while the Nature of the Law obtained the lowest mean (3.38), though still within the Highly Aware range. These findings indicate that pre-service teachers possess substantial awareness of both general and specific components of the law, reflecting exposure to child protection concepts within their academic preparation.

The significant difference across profile variables means that awareness is not entirely uniform among all groups. This finding aligns with studies emphasizing that gender and academic program influence legal literacy and ethical sensitivity (Garcia & Torres, 2023; Tenorio, 2024). Research indicates that female pre-service teachers often demonstrate high awareness of child protection policies compared to male counterparts, while programs with stronger integration of social sciences and child protection modules tend to produce higher levels of legal understanding. Conversely, literature shows that age and civil status are generally weak predictors of awareness (Aguilar & Carbonell, 2024; Han, 2021), shows that institutional exposure and curriculum emphasis play a more decisive role than personal demographic characteristics.

The findings are also consistent with international and regional literature emphasizing the importance of structured curriculum integration. Studies by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], (2022) and the Organization Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], (2021) demonstrate that pre-service teachers who receive formal and practice-based instruction on child protection laws exhibit higher levels of awareness and confidence in implementing legal mandates. In the Philippine context, awareness levels are often moderate when legal instruction is limited or theoretical (Bueno et al., 2023; Tenorio, 2024). Therefore, the present finding of high awareness shows that the institution may have effectively incorporated child protection principles into its teacher education programs.

The presence of statistically significant differences implies the need for strengthened and standardized child protection education across all demographic and academic groups. Programs with comparatively lower awareness may benefit from enhanced integration of RA 7610 through simulations, and gender-responsive training. Ensuring uniform exposure to legal responsibilities will help minimize awareness gaps and promote equitable professional preparedness.

To conclude, awareness level is commendable, strengthening curriculum alignment, institutional support, and experiential learning opportunities will further enhance pre-service teachers' readiness to uphold their legal and ethical obligations. By ensuring consistent and comprehensive instruction on RA 7610, teacher education institutions can cultivate future educators and are fully prepared to protect children's rights in diverse educational settings.

Table 5. Post-hoc Result

(I) Indicators	(J) Indicators	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Nature of the law	1. RA 7610 aims to protect children from all form of abuse.	-.09714	.05159	.806
	2. RA 7610 aims to protect children from all forms of cruelty.	-.15010	.05159	.156
	3. RA 7610 applies to children below 18 years old.	-.14438	.05159	.203
	4. RA 7610 considers the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all actions concerning children.	-.12952	.05159	.368
	5. The law emphasizes the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to child protection.	-.06095	.05159	.994
	6. RA 7610 ensures that children are given special safeguards.	-.18324	.05159	.023*
Child prostitution and other sexual abuse	1. RA 7610 strictly punishes child prostitution.	.03810	.05159	1.000
	2. It considers any sexual act with a child as a form of sexual abuse.	-.12571	.05159	.418
	3. The law also addresses online sexual exploitation.	-.05257	.05159	.999
	4. Stricter penalties are imposed on perpetrators who are in a position of authority.	-.12571	.05159	.418
	5. The law protects children from being used in pornography.	-.17143	.05159	.049*
Working Children	1. RA 7610 regulates the employment of children to protect them from hazardous working conditions.	.18324	.05159	.023*
	2. It sets the minimum age for employment of work that are permissible for children.	.08610	.05159	.907
	3. The law ensures that working children are provided with safe and healthy working conditions.	.14514	.05159	.197
	4. It also prohibits the employment of children in hazardous industries.	.12229	.05159	.466
	5. Working children are entitled to receive fair compensation and benefits.	.03314	.05159	1.000
Final provisions	1. RA 7610 includes provisions for the implementation and enforcement of the law.	.20952	.05159	.003*

2. It mandates the creation of local councils for the protection of children.	.11238	.05159	.607
3. The law also calls for the establishment of child protection committees in schools and communities.	.17143	.05159	.049*
4. It ensures that adequate resources are allocated for child protection programs.	.14857	.05159	.168
5. RA 7610 promotes collaborations among government agencies in protecting children.	.04571	.05159	1.000

The post hoc analysis revealed limited significant differences in the level of awareness of pre-service teachers on various provisions of child protection policies under Republic Act No. 7610 when grouped according to variables. Specifically, significant differences were found in a few areas such as Nature of the Law, Child Prostitution and Other Sexual Abuse, Working Children, and Final Provisions.

In the Nature of the Law, significant differences were observed between Nature of the Law and Working Children (mean difference = -0.18324, $p = 0.023$) and Nature of the Law and Final Provisions (mean difference = -0.20952, $p = 0.003$). Similarly, in child prostitution and other sexual abuse, a significant difference was noted between child prostitution and other sexual abuse and Final Provisions (mean difference = -0.17143, $p = 0.049$). These findings were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, with confidence intervals that do not include zero, confirming the validity of the observed differences.

These findings indicate that while differences exist in selected areas of child protection awareness, they are not widespread across all domains, means that variations in awareness are minimal and isolated. This implies that certain groups may have slightly higher or lower exposure or awareness of specific provisions of RA 7610, possibly due to differences in training experiences, access to information, or engagement in seminars and practicum activities.

On the other hand, many of the domains including Programs on Child Abuse, Child Trafficking, Obscene Publications, Other Acts of Abuse, Sanctions for Establishments, Children of Indigenous Communities, Children in Armed Conflict, Remedial Procedures, and Common Penal Provisions showed no significant differences, as all p -values were greater than 0.05. These findings accept the null hypothesis, indicating that the level of awareness among pre-service teachers is generally consistent regardless of grouping variables.

This consistency means that awareness of child protection policies is uniformly developed among respondents, regardless of their profile. It implies that pre-service teachers share a common level of awareness of RA 7610 provisions, which may be attributed to similar academic exposure, shared curriculum content, and institutional training practices.

Overall, the findings indicate that while minor variations exist in specific provisions, the general pattern reflects uniform awareness of child protection policies among pre-service teachers. This highlights the effectiveness of existing educational practices in promoting legal literacy, while also pointing to the need for enhanced focus on specific areas where differences were observed. Strengthening curriculum integration, expanding training opportunities, and providing more practical applications of child protection laws can further improve awareness and ensure that all future educators are fully equipped to safeguard children’s rights.

Proposed Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) Strategies Developed Based on the Findings

A brochure was developed as the primary Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) strategy to raise student awareness regarding RA 7610, also known as the Child Protection for Policy. This was designed to effectively disseminate crucial information about the law's salient provisions, covering the different forms of abuse recognized (physical, sexual, psychological, and economic), the nature of the law, and the corresponding filing and process of the law. The underlying goal was not merely to inform, but to actively educate the student

body, fostering a better awareness of Child Protection Policy and ultimately contributing to a campus culture that is more informed and vigilant against its occurrence. This approach is aligned with IEC principles by delivering essential information in a clear, educational format while encouraging proactive communication between students and the college's academic framework.

The brochure is anchored on the salient findings of the study, which indicate that pre-service teachers possess a high level of awareness of RA 7610 but require further support in its practical application. As such, the brochure focuses on simplifying key provisions of the law, emphasizing teachers' roles and responsibilities, and clearly presenting proper reporting procedures. By providing concise and accessible information, it aims to strengthen existing awareness and enable pre-service teachers to effectively apply child protection principles in real classroom situations.



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IN A TEACHING CONTEXT (RA 7610) | Mandated Responsibilities for Educators

Foster a Safe Community for Learning. Safety starts with awareness in our schools. As future educators (BEED & BTLED), understanding your role under RA 7610 is a paramount legal and moral duty.

IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING

Under RA 7610, your role as a future educator extends beyond the classroom. In a teaching context, this law means:

- Mandated Responsibility:** Teachers are legally responsible for protecting children from all forms of abuse, harm, and discrimination while under their care.
- Mandated Reporter Duties:** As future educators, understanding and fulfilling your duty to report suspected abuse to school authorities or the DSWD is paramount and required by law.
- Creating Safe Spaces:** You are tasked with fostering a safe community for learning and creating a secure environment where students feel safe to speak up.

CONTACTS

- PNP Women & Children Protection Center
- Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Hotline
- Child Protection Unit (at hospitals/clinics)

Physical Abuse
Physical injuries, neglect, or harm.

Sexual Abuse
Includes sexual exploitation and grooming.
*Child Prostitution as a form of sexual abuse.

Psychological Abuse
Inflicting emotional or mental distress.

Child Trafficking
Moving, recruiting, or harbouring children for exploitation.

BREAK THE SILENCE RA 7610

Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act

Common Penal Provisions

Art. II, Sec. 5 & 6: Child Prostitution and Other Sexual Abuse.
Art. IV, Sec. 7-9: Child Trafficking.
Art. V, Sec. 10: Other Acts of Child Abuse and Neglect.

Who is Liable?
People some who can be prosecuted, (parents, guarantors, educators, any person committing the act).

Ending child abuse is everyone's responsibility. As future educators, you are key protectors.

Esther S. Olino, the BEED Program

Sample brochure for BEED and BTLED student. This is not a complete legal guide. Consult legal resources and school administration for mandated reporter procedures.

What is RA 7610?

Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act (The official title)

It is a comprehensive Philippine law providing special protection to children from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination. As future educators, understanding this law is vital.

Nature of the Law

- Declares a zero-tolerance policy against child abuse.
- Provides specific protection for child prostitution and other sexual abuse.
- Criminalizes child trafficking and child neglect.
- mandates immediate reporting of child abuse by specific persons, including teachers.

BEED and BTLED Students: You are mandated protectors of your students. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.

Recognize the Signs and Offenses

Under RA 7610, offenses are clearly defined. Learn to spot the signs in the classroom.

Sexual Abuse
Including child prostitution and grooming. Look for: secretive behavior, new unexplained expensive gifts, withdrawn nature, physical discomfort.

Child Prostitution
Specific acts defined as child prostitution. Examples: Providing a child for sex, or encouraging child prostitution.
Spot indicators: sudden affluence without means, presence of certain adults.

Psychological Abuse/Neglect
Causing emotional harm or failure to provide basic needs. Look for: listlessness, unkempt appearance, extreme fear of failure, severe anxiety.

Child Trafficking
Recruiting or moving children for exploitation. Indicators: unexpected change in legal guardianship, child with non-family member, lack of documents.

Educator's Reporting & Response

Your Role in Response

You are not helpless. You are a vital link.

- 1. Seek Immediate Safety:** Ensure the child is out of immediate danger within the school setting. Call local law enforcement if needed.
- 2. Ensure Proper Documentation:** Log observations, dates, and times of incident disclosures or observed signs. (This replaces Secure Protection Order to be more teacher-focused).
- 3. Gather Information:** Listen actively without leading or interrogating the child. Secure any physical evidence if available.
- 4. Report the Incident:** Immediately report to your school principal/authority. RA 7610 mandates this. Failure to report is penalizable. (This replaces File Complaint to be more teacher-mandate-focused).
- 5. Take Note:** Filing a case under RA 7610 is a formal process. Reporting initiates protection. Confidentiality is key. (Original pattern kept but content adapted).

Mandated reporting is your duty. Contact: PNP Women & Children Protection, DSWD Hotline, or school administration.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The assessment reflects a broad representation of pre-service teachers, providing a reliable overview of their awareness of child protection laws regardless of personal background.
2. Teacher education programs play an important role in shaping future educators' awareness of child protection, as exposure to legal and ethical responsibilities helps prepare them to safeguard children in educational settings.
3. Awareness of child protection laws is not uniform, indicating that some areas require deeper awareness and reinforcement within teacher education curricula.
4. Awareness of the Child Protection Policy is generally shared among pre-service teachers regardless of age, gender, civil status, or academic program, means that it is influenced more by institutional learning experiences than by personal characteristics.
5. There is a need for structured educational initiatives to strengthen awareness of child protection laws, and the development of IEC materials can serve as an effective tool in enhancing awareness and promoting advocacy for child protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of the study, several actionable recommendations may be undertaken to strengthen college students' awareness of Republic Act 7610.

1. The ISPSC Cervantes Campus Administration may continue to ensure inclusive participation of pre-service teachers in awareness programs related to child protection policies regardless of age, gender, civil status, or academic program. This will help maintain a comprehensive awareness of RA 7610 among future educators across all demographic groups.
2. The Teacher Education Department may strengthen the integration of RA 7610 and other child protection policies in the curriculum by incorporating lectures, discussions, and learning modules that thoroughly explain the different provisions of the law. This will help improve the level of awareness of pre-service teachers regarding the nature and scope of child protection policies.
3. The faculty members and program coordinators may organize seminars, workshops, and training sessions focusing on specific provisions of RA 7610 such as child trafficking, child abuse, working children, and remedial procedures. These activities may enhance the legal literacy and preparedness of pre-service teachers in addressing child protection issues in real educational settings.
4. The ISPSC administration, in collaboration with relevant agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) may conduct orientation programs and awareness campaigns that emphasize the responsibilities of teachers in recognizing, preventing, and reporting child abuse cases.
5. The Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) material on RA 7610 may be distributed to the Teacher Education Department that summarizes the important provisions of the law and serve as reference guide for pre-service teachers to strengthen their awareness and advocacy for child protection.

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