

Teachers' gender awareness: Basis for a gender sensitivity professional development program design in Alilem District

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Abstract

Gender awareness among teachers plays an essential role in promoting inclusive and equitable educational environments. Teachers are expected to demonstrate sensitivity to gender issues and integrate gender-responsive practices within their professional responsibilities. This study examined the level of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development (GAD) concepts, policies, and tools in Alilem District. Specifically, it aimed to determine teachers' awareness of key GAD concepts and mandates, identify the least known GAD areas among teachers, and determine whether a significant difference exists between teachers who are GAD focal persons and those who are not. The study employed a descriptive research design using a structured survey questionnaire administered to teachers in the district. Statistical tools such as frequency counts, percentages, weighted means, and significance testing were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that teachers generally demonstrate awareness of basic gender concepts and policies; however, several technical aspects of GAD implementation remain less familiar to them. Results also indicated differences in gender awareness between GAD focal persons and non-focal teachers. Based on these findings, a Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design was proposed to enhance teachers' knowledge and competencies in implementing gender-responsive practices in schools. The study highlights the importance of continuous professional development in strengthening gender mainstreaming efforts in educational institutions.

Keywords: gender awareness, Gender and Development, GAD tools, gender mainstreaming, teacher professional development

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1. Introduction

Education plays a significant role in shaping individuals' understanding of social values, equality, and respect for diversity. Schools are expected to promote inclusive learning environments where both teachers and learners develop awareness of gender equality and social responsibility. Teachers serve as influential figures in shaping learners' perceptions of gender roles and relationships, making gender awareness an essential component of professional competence in education. International organizations emphasize the role of education in advancing gender equality. UNESCO (2019) highlighted that education contributes to the development of gender awareness and promotes equitable opportunities for all individuals regardless of gender. Schools that integrate gender-responsive practices create learning environments that support fairness, respect, and inclusion. Teachers therefore play a critical role in ensuring that gender sensitivity is reflected in classroom interactions, instructional materials, and school policies.

In the Philippines, gender equality initiatives are supported by national laws and policies that promote Gender and Development (GAD) in government institutions. Republic Act No. 9710, also known as the Magna Carta of Women, mandates government agencies to integrate gender perspectives into their programs and services. The Department of Education also implements gender-responsive policies to ensure that educational institutions promote gender equality and prevent discrimination. Despite the presence of gender policies and programs, the level of gender awareness among teachers may vary depending on their exposure to training and involvement in gender-related activities. Some teachers may have limited familiarity with Gender and Development concepts and tools used in planning and evaluating gender-responsive programs. This variation in awareness may affect the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives within schools.

The Department of Education designates Gender and Development focal persons in schools to assist in implementing gender-related programs and activities. However, not all teachers receive the same level of training and exposure to gender-related initiatives. As a result, differences in gender awareness may exist between teachers who serve as GAD focal persons and those who are not directly involved in gender programs. Assessing teachers' gender awareness is important in identifying areas that require improvement and developing appropriate professional development interventions. Understanding teachers' familiarity with Gender and Development concepts, policies, and tools can help institutions design programs that strengthen gender sensitivity and support gender-responsive education. This study determined the level of teachers' gender awareness in Alilem District and identified areas that require enhancement. The findings served as the basis for the development of a Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design aimed at improving teachers' knowledge and competencies related to Gender and Development. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of teachers' awareness in GAD concepts, GAD policies and mandates, and application of GAD tools?
- What are the least known GAD concepts, policies, and tools among teachers?
- Is there a significant difference in GAD awareness between teachers who are GAD focal persons and those who are not?
- What strategy can be prepared to enhance the gender sensitivity of teachers in Alilem District?
- What is the level of validity of the proposed Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design?

2. Methodology

This study was conducted in public elementary schools in Alilem District, Ilocos Sur, Philippines during the school year 2025–2026. The district consists of several schools where teachers are responsible for implementing Gender and Development (GAD) programs and activities in accordance with national and Department of Education policies.

Research Design - The study employed a descriptive research design to determine the level of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development concepts, policies, and tools. Descriptive research focuses on describing the characteristics of a population or phenomenon without manipulating variables. This design allowed the researcher to examine teachers' gender awareness and identify areas that require improvement in relation to Gender and Development implementation.

Population and Sample - The respondents of the study consisted of teachers from public elementary schools in Alilem District. Both teachers who serve as Gender and Development focal persons and those who are not designated as GAD focal teachers were included in the study. The inclusion of both groups enabled the researcher to determine whether significant differences exist in their level of awareness of Gender and Development concepts, policies, and tools. Teachers were selected because they play a crucial role in implementing gender-responsive educational practices and promoting gender sensitivity within the school environment.

Data Gathering Tool - A structured survey questionnaire was used to gather the data needed for the study. The questionnaire measured teachers' level of awareness in three major areas of Gender and Development:

- Gender and Development concepts
- Gender and Development policies and mandates
- Application of Gender and Development tools

The instrument consisted of statements related to gender awareness and gender mainstreaming practices. Respondents indicated their level of awareness using a Likert-scale format, which allowed the researcher to determine the level of awareness for each category. The questionnaire also helped identify the least known Gender and Development areas among teachers, which served as the basis for the development of the Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design.

Data Analysis - The data gathered from the questionnaires were organized, tabulated, and analyzed to determine teachers' level of gender awareness. The responses were summarized to identify patterns in teachers' familiarity with Gender and Development concepts, policies, and tools. The level of teachers' awareness was interpreted using a four-point Likert scale. A mean score ranging from 3.26 to 4.00 was interpreted as Very Familiar, 2.51 to 3.25 as Familiar, 1.76 to 2.50 as Somewhat Familiar, and 1.00 to 1.75 as Unfamiliar. These descriptive ratings were used to interpret the computed weighted means of the respondents' answers. The analysis also focused on identifying differences in gender awareness between teachers who serve as Gender and Development focal persons and those who are not. A level of significance of 0.05 was used in testing the hypothesis. If the computed p-value was less than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant difference between the compared groups. If the p-value was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted, indicating that no significant difference exists between the groups.

Statistical Tools - Several statistical techniques were used to analyze the collected data. Frequency and Percentage were used to describe the distribution of responses and summarize the profile of the respondents. Weighted Mean was used to determine the level of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development concepts, policies, and tools. The results of the statistical analysis were used to identify teachers' gender awareness and determine the areas that require improvement. These findings served as the basis for proposing a Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design for Alilem District. To determine whether there is a significant

difference in GAD awareness between teachers who are GAD focal persons and those who are not, the Mann–Whitney U Test was used. This non-parametric statistical test is appropriate for comparing two independent groups when the data are ordinal or do not meet the assumptions required for parametric tests.

Analysis of the Data - The data gathered from the survey questionnaires were organized, tallied, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the distribution of the respondents according to selected characteristics. The weighted mean was used to determine the level of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development (GAD) concepts, policies, and tools. The computed weighted means were interpreted using the following.

3. Results

Level of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development (GAD) concepts, policies and mandates and tools in Alilem District

Level of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development (GAD) concepts. Table 1 results show an overall mean of 2.33 for non-focal teachers and 2.37 for focal teachers, interpreted as Somewhat Familiar. The highest familiarity was observed in Sex and Gender, with mean values of 2.70 for non-focal teachers and 2.71 for focal teachers. Meanwhile, the lowest familiarity was recorded in GAD Planning and Budgeting, with mean values of 1.81 for non-focal teachers and 1.86 for focal teachers, which still falls within the Somewhat Familiar interpretation.

Table 1

Level of Teacher's Awareness of GAD Concepts

GAD Concepts	Non-Focal	DR	Focal	DR	Overall	DR
GAD Planning and Budgeting	1.81	SF	1.86	SF	1.83	SF
Gender Analysis	2.04	SF	2.07	SF	2.05	SF
Gender and Development	2.42	SF	2.43	SF	2.43	SF
Gender Discrimination	2.54	F	2.57	F	2.56	F
Gender Equality	2.44	SF	2.50	F	2.73	F
Gender Equity	2.51	F	2.57	F	2.54	F
Gender Mainstreaming	2.21	SF	2.21	SF	2.21	SF
Gender Perspective	2.21	SF	2.21	SF	2.21	SF
Gender Stereotypes	2.49	SF	2.57	F	2.53	F
Sex and Gender	2.70	F	2.71	F	2.71	F
Overall Mean	2.33	SF	2.37	SF	2.3	SF

Legend: 1.76 – 2.50 Somewhat Familiar (SF) 2.51 – 3.25 Familiar (F)

The findings indicate that teachers possess a moderate level of familiarity with Gender and Development concepts. Higher familiarity with topics such as Sex and Gender, Gender Discrimination, and Gender Equity suggests that these concepts are commonly encountered in educational discussions and professional development activities. In contrast, the lower familiarity with GAD Planning and Budgeting implies limited exposure to the technical aspects of Gender and Development implementation, particularly those related to planning and financial allocation within institutional programs. This pattern suggests that while teachers understand the fundamental principles of gender equality, additional training may be needed to strengthen their knowledge of the administrative and technical processes involved in GAD program implementation.

Level of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development policies and mandates in Alilem District. Table 2 results show an overall mean of 1.99 for non-focal teachers and 2.03 for focal teachers, interpreted as Somewhat Familiar. The highest familiarity was observed in RA 10354, with mean values of 2.30 for non-focal teachers and 2.36 for focal teachers. Meanwhile, the lowest familiarity was recorded in the Section on GAD in the General Appropriations Act, with mean values of 1.28 for non-focal teachers and 2.64 for focal teachers.

Level of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development tools used for gender analysis and program evaluation. The table 3 shows an overall mean of 1.99 for non-focal teachers and 1.96 for focal teachers, interpreted as Somewhat Familiar. The highest familiarity was observed in the Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines, with mean values of 2.11 for non-focal teachers and 2.04 for focal teachers. Meanwhile, the lowest

familiarity was recorded in the 24-hour Activity Profile, with mean values of 1.81 for non-focal teachers and 1.86 for focal teachers.

Table 2
Level of Teacher's Awareness of GAD Policies and Mandates

GAD Policies & Mandates	Non-Focal	DR	Focal	DR	Overall Mean	DR
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (UN CEDAW)	2.12	SF	2.14	SF	2.13	SF
Beijing Platform for Action	1.84	SF	1.93	SF	1.89	SF
Sustainable Development Goals	2.11	SF	2.14	SF	2.13	SF
Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development	1.98	SF	2.07	SF	2.03	SF
Section on GAD in GAA	1.28	SF	2.64	SF	1.96	SF
RA 7192	2.05	SF	2.07	SF	2.06	SF
RA 7877	2.16	SF	2.21	SF	2.19	SF
RA 8353 & 8505	2.23	SF	2.29	SF	2.26	SF
RA 9262	2.16	SF	2.21	SF	2.19	SF
RA 9710	2.28	SF	2.29	SF	2.29	SF
RA 10354	2.3	SF	2.36	SF	2.33	SF
RA 10364	2.07	SF	2.07	SF	2.07	SF
RA 10398	1.98	SF	2.07	SF	2.03	SF
PCW Memo Circular 2009-01	1.84	SF	1.93	SF	1.89	SF
Memo Circular 2011-01	1.96	SF	2	SF	1.98	SF
Joint Circular 2012-01	1.84	SF	1.86	SF	1.85	SF
Joint Memo Circular 2013-01	1.96	SF	2	SF	1.98	SF
Joint Memo Circular 2016-01 (Amendments)	1.98	SF	2.07	SF	2.03	SF
Joint Memo Circular 2016-01 (Regional GADC)	1.88	SF	1.89	SF	1.89	SF
COA Circular 2014-001	1.84	SF	1.93	SF	1.89	SF
CHED Memo Order 2015-01	1.98	SF	2.07	SF	2.03	SF
Overall Mean	1.99	SF	2.03	SF	2.01	SF

Legend: 1.76 - 2.50 - Somewhat Familiar (SF)

Table 3
Level of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development tools

GAD Tools	Non-Focal	DR	Focal	DR	Overall	DR
24-hour Activity Profile	1.81	SF	1.86	SF	1.84	SF
Gender Gap Analysis Tool	1.84	SF	1.97	SF	1.91	SF
HGDG	2.11	SF	2.04	SF	2.08	SF
GMEF	2.04	SF	2.08	SF	2.06	SF
Gerl ka Ba? Tool	1.98	SF	1.89	SF	1.94	SF
ILO Participatory Audit	2.07	SF	1.97	SF	2.02	SF
Overall Mean	1.99	SF	1.96	SF	1.98	SF

Legend: 1.76 - 2.50 - Somewhat Familiar (SF)

The findings show that teachers have moderate familiarity with Gender and Development tools. Higher awareness was observed in tools commonly referenced in gender program evaluation such as the Harmonized Gender and Development Guidelines and the Gender Mainstreaming Evaluation Framework. Lower familiarity with the 24-hour Activity Profile suggests that teachers have limited exposure to analytical tools used to assess gender roles and time distribution in gender analysis activities. These results indicate that while teachers recognize the existence of GAD tools, additional training may be necessary to strengthen their ability to apply these instruments in program planning and evaluation.

Summary of Teachers' Awareness

Summary of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development concepts, policies and mandates, and tools. Table 4 Results show an overall mean of 2.10 for non-focal teachers and 2.12 for focal teachers, interpreted as Somewhat Familiar. The highest awareness was observed in GAD Concepts, with mean values of 2.33 and 2.37, while the lowest awareness was observed in GAD Tools, with mean values of 1.99 and 1.96.

The results indicate that teachers are more familiar with general gender concepts compared with policies and technical tools used in program implementation. This suggests that awareness of gender equality principles exists among teachers, but knowledge related to policy interpretation and the application of analytical tools remains

limited. Strengthening teachers' competencies in these areas may support the effective implementation of gender-responsive programs in schools. Teachers may benefit from professional development programs that focus on the practical application of gender-responsive strategies in classroom instruction and school activities. For school administrators and district leaders, these findings highlight the importance of strengthening institutional support for Gender and Development training to ensure that teachers are equipped to promote gender equality and inclusive learning environments for students.

Table 4

Summary of teachers' awareness of Gender and Development concepts, policies and mandates, and tools.

Variable	Non-Focal	DR	Focal	DR	Overall	DR
GAD Concepts	2.33	SF	2.37	SF	2.35	SF
GAD Policies and Mandates	1.99	SF	2.03	SF	2.01	SF
GAD Tools	1.99	SF	1.96	SF	1.98	SF
Overall Mean	2.1	SF	2.12	SF	2.11	SF

Legend: 1.76 - 2.50 Somewhat Familiar (SF)

Difference in Awareness Between Focal and Non-Focal Teachers - Table 5 presents the Mann–Whitney U test comparing the awareness of focal and non-focal teachers in terms of Gender and Development concepts, policies and mandates, and tools.

Table 5

Difference in Awareness Between Focal and Non-Focal Teachers

Variables	U	P-Value
GAD Concept	401.50	0.62
GAD Policies and Mandates	310.00	0.04
GAD Tools	389.50	0.67
OVERALL	360	0.18

The results show that there is no significant difference between focal and non-focal teachers in terms of GAD concepts and GAD tools since the p-values are greater than the level of significance. However, a significant difference was observed in GAD policies and mandates with a p-value of 0.04. This indicates that focal teachers demonstrate higher familiarity with policy-related frameworks compared with non-focal teachers, likely because focal teachers are more directly involved in gender-related planning, documentation, and reporting activities in schools. Teachers may benefit from professional development programs that focus on the practical application of gender-responsive strategies in classroom instruction and school activities. For school administrators and district leaders, these findings highlight the importance of strengthening institutional support for Gender and Development training to ensure that teachers are equipped to promote gender equality and inclusive learning environments for students.

Development of Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design - The proposed Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design was developed based on the results of the teachers' awareness of Gender and Development concepts, policies and mandates, and tools. The results show that teachers demonstrated a somewhat familiar level of awareness across the three areas. Lower familiarity was observed in GAD Planning and Budgeting, Section on GAD in the General Appropriations Act, and selected GAD tools. These findings indicate that teachers need additional training on the technical aspects of Gender and Development implementation. Therefore, the proposed program focuses on strengthening teachers' knowledge of GAD policies, planning and budgeting processes, and the application of gender analysis tools in school programs.

Level of Validity of the Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design

Level of validity of the proposed Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design. Table 7 results show that the indicators obtained mean ratings ranging from 4.33 to 5.00, interpreted as Very Highly Valid. The highest ratings were observed in the alignment of the program with GAD policies and the organization of the program content. The lowest mean rating was 4.33 in the coverage of priority GAD areas, although it still falls within the Very Highly Valid interpretation.

Table 7

Level of validity of the proposed Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Rating
A. Relevance		
The learning objectives clearly address the identified gaps in teachers' GAD awareness.	4.66	Very Highly Valid
The content aligns with GAD policies (RA 9710, RA 9262, DepEd DO 32, SDG 5).	5.00	Very Highly Valid
The topics are relevant to the needs and roles Alilem District teachers.	4.66	Very Highly Valid
The program supports district and school GAD mainstreaming initiatives.	4.66	Very Highly Valid
B. Structure		
The content is well-organized and easy to follow.	5.00	Very Highly Valid
The program covers priority GAD areas (Sex vs Gender, GAA, HGDG, GMEF, Gender Analysis tools).	4.33	Very Highly Valid
Activities promote reflection, collaboration, and practice-based learning.	5.00	Very Highly Valid
Program outputs (lesson plan, action plan) match the program goals.	4.66	Very Highly Valid
C. Training Design and Delivery Suitability		
Time allocation per session is adequate.	5	Very Highly Valid
The design considers rural school context and teacher workload.	4.66	Very Highly Valid
The training encourages an inclusive and respectful learning environment.	5.00	Very Highly Valid
Overall	4.78	Very Highly Valid
Legend: 4.01-5.00	Very Highly Valid	

The findings indicate that the proposed Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program Design is highly acceptable and appropriate for implementation. The very highly valid ratings suggest that the program is relevant to the needs of teachers and aligned with Gender and Development policies. These results confirm that the proposed program may serve as a useful training framework for strengthening gender awareness and gender-responsive practices in schools.

4. Conclusion

The study found that teachers in Alilem District demonstrate a Somewhat Familiar level of awareness of Gender and Development concepts, policies and mandates, and GAD tools. This indicates that while teachers recognize the principles of gender equality, their understanding remains largely conceptual rather than operational. The least familiar areas were the technical components of GAD implementation, particularly GAD planning and budgeting, the Section on GAD in the General Appropriations Act, and gender analysis tools such as HGDG, GMEF, and the 24-Hour Activity Profile. The Mann–Whitney U test further revealed no significant difference in awareness between focal and non-focal teachers in terms of GAD concepts and tools, although focal teachers demonstrated higher familiarity with GAD policies and mandates due to their administrative responsibilities. Based on these findings, the development of a Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program is considered an appropriate intervention for strengthening teachers' gender awareness and improving gender-responsive practices in schools. Enhancing teachers' knowledge of Gender and Development policies and tools may contribute to more inclusive teaching practices, strengthen school-based gender mainstreaming initiatives, and support the development of equitable learning environments for students. Expert validation also confirmed that the proposed training program is very highly valid in terms of relevance, structure, and training design.

Recommendations - Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed. Schools in Alilem District may strengthen teachers' awareness of Gender and Development by integrating GAD topics in in-service training programs and Learning Action Cell sessions. Future professional development initiatives should provide hands-on training on GAD planning and budgeting, policy interpretation, and the use of gender analysis tools. Both focal and non-focal teachers may participate in the proposed Gender Sensitivity Professional Development Program to ensure broader capacity-building across the district. Finally, the validated program may be adopted by schools or the district and integrated into the School Improvement Plan, Annual Implementation Plan, and GAD Plan and Budget to support the continuous institutionalization of gender-responsive education practices.

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