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Gender and Development Mainstreaming towards the Seal of Excellence among Local Government Units and Secondary Schools in Region XII: Basis for Program Enhancement

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ABSTRACT

Gender and Development mainstreaming towards the Seal of Excellence significantly promotes inclusivity and equality. This study explores Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming in Local Government Units (LGUs) and secondary schools in Region XII. It examines awareness levels and the implementation of gender mainstreaming in achieving the Seal of Excellence, providing insights to enhance GAD programs and promote inclusivity and equality. The study reveals a high level of awareness and a high level of implementation of GAD mainstreaming. A strong commitment to the Seal of Excellence in GAD mainstreaming is evident as secondary schools and LGUs address gender issues, empowerment, and human rights through effective policy implementation. Despite this, respondents perceive inconsistencies in budget allocation for GAD programs, highlighting the need for enhanced resource allocation and consistent application. The ANOVA analysis reveals a statistically significant difference in GAD mainstreaming across indicators at the 0.05 level, emphasizing the need for standardized GAD mainstreaming. Strong correlations among policies, people, programs, and mechanisms highlight the need for an integrated approach to promoting gender equality. Insufficient planning, budgeting, and assessment remain key challenges. The study recommends targeted capacity-building programs to strengthen GAD awareness, continuous improvement of implementation, and regular monitoring to enhance the 5% budget allocation.

Keywords: *Gender and Development Mainstreaming, Seal of Excellence, Program Enhancement*

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, people have believed that the distinctions between men and women were determined by biological or divine decree, making these differences seem natural and unchangeable. This belief has shaped perceptions of gender-specific behaviors, abilities, and roles, such as the notion that men are rational while women are emotional. The Department of Education (DepEd) is committed to fostering a gender-inclusive environment for all learners and stakeholders. To address gender-related issues in schools, it has issued various memoranda and regulations, including DepEd Order No. 32, Series 2017, also known as the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy. Gender and Development mainstreaming plays a critical role in fostering inclusivity and equality within society, with educational institutions serving as key agents of change. In Region XII, gender and development mainstreaming—particularly in the pursuit of a Seal of Excellence among Local Government Units (LGUs) and secondary schools—is essential in shaping the future landscape of gender equality.

This study aims to explore the foundations and effectiveness of gender and development mainstreaming in LGUs and secondary schools in Region XII. It seeks to assess the current level of awareness regarding the benefits of gender mainstreaming and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies needed to achieve a Seal of Excellence. By examining these dynamics, the research hopes to provide valuable insights that can enhance Gender and Development programs, ultimately fostering a more equitable and empowering educational environment. Assessing gender and development initiatives within LGUs and secondary schools is crucial for guiding future improvements and ensuring a more inclusive approach in the region. The findings of this study will serve as a foundation for enhancing gender and development programs, promoting a more just and equitable society.

RELATED LITERATURE

The related literature highlights that the Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm acknowledges differing social roles between men and women, shaped by structural inequalities (Sassaman, 2024). Integrating gender equality into education and public policy is essential, with Philippine schools mandated to allocate 5% of their budgets to GAD initiatives (Tubil, 2018). On the other hand, effective GAD mainstreaming in LGUs requires financial commitment, policy enforcement, capacity-building, and monitoring (Björkdahl & Lejla, 2020), supported by gender campaigns and legislative reviews (Philippine Commission on Women, 2024). Pedagogical programs to raise GAD awareness among teachers are also crucial (Cagang, 2023). Gender-responsive

policies must be backed by clear strategies and political commitment (Stephenson, 2018), supported by inclusive standards (UNECE, 2022) and structural reforms (Busuttil, 2024).

Achieving gender equality and sustainable development requires interconnected approaches (Leach et al., 2016; Canton, 2021) and holistic strategies that benefit society broadly (Guthridge et al., 2022). Investments in staff training and strong policies significantly raise gender awareness (Albaladejo, 2016). Heightened awareness drives better tools and data for GAD actions (Caywood & Darmstadt, 2024), while effective mainstreaming depends on funding, law enforcement, and inclusive decision-making (Thuy et al., 2021). Inadequate knowledge limits transparency and accountability but training and structured initiatives enhance GAD program sustainability (DeCorby et al., 2018). Finally, gender-responsive budgeting ensures equitable fund allocation (Martinez, 2024)

METHODOLOGY

The study used a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design to assess GAD mainstreaming toward the Seal of Excellence in LGUs and secondary schools in Region XII. Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire and evaluation template, ensuring ethical standards and data validity through triangulation. The research was conducted in five diverse locations—Kidapawan, Koronadal, General Santos, Tacurong, and Sultan Kudarat—selected for their socio-cultural diversity. Participants included over 7,000 individuals from mega schools, comprising GAD focal persons, LGU staff, teachers, non-teaching staff, and student leaders, providing varied insights into GAD implementation across different contexts.

The study utilized a made survey questionnaire and an evaluation template to assess GAD mainstreaming and progress toward the Seal of Excellence. Based on the research problems, conceptual framework, and expert input, the questionnaire included three parts: respondent awareness, extent of GAD mainstreaming, and emerging implementation issues. A five-point Likert scale measured responses, and the evaluation template assessed GAD practices. The research process began with panel approval and expert validation of the survey questionnaire. Feedback was reviewed and integrated to enhance its quality. A pilot test was then conducted to ensure the tool's reliability and effectiveness.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

1. Local Government Units and Secondary Schools' Level of Awareness on Gender and Development Mainstreaming

Based on the results, local government units (LGUs) demonstrated a high level of awareness of gender and development (GAD) mainstreaming. The overall mean score of 4.12 (SD = 0.84) indicates a good level of awareness, though familiarity with specific aspects varies among respondents. These findings suggest that LGUs recognize the importance of integrating gender perspectives into their policies, programs, and initiatives. The consistently high scores across most indicators reflect significant efforts to institutionalize gender-responsive governance. Notably, policies, language inclusivity, and financial allocation are well recognized. However, the lower mean for GAD financial allocation, coupled with a relatively higher standard deviation, indicates inconsistencies in budget prioritization across different LGUs.

On the other hand, the level of awareness of secondary schools regarding gender and development mainstreaming reveals that secondary schools have a high level of awareness of gender and development (GAD) mainstreaming, as evidenced by an overall mean score of 3.83 (SD = 0.82). This score corresponds to a good level of awareness, with a fair level of familiarity among respondents. These findings suggest that schools recognize the importance of gender-responsive policies, the institutionalization of gender-related provisions, and the promotion of gender sensitivity in their programs. Although awareness levels are generally high, certain areas may require further strengthening—particularly in financial commitment, as indicated by the slightly lower mean score for GAD budget allocation. This suggests potential challenges in translating awareness into concrete actions due to financial constraints.

2. Gender and Development Mainstreaming

2.1 Policies

The level of gender and development mainstreaming in terms of policies achieved a section mean of 3.84 (SD = 0.86), with a verbal description of a high level of implementation, and an interpretation of commitment, enhancement, and institutionalization. This indicates that respondent schools and Local Government Units (LGUs) have consistently implemented gender mainstreaming through well-defined policies, following a structured approach to embed, strengthen, and institutionalize gender equality principles within their systems. These findings reflect a strong commitment to gender-responsive actions and a continuous drive to improve and institutionalize these efforts. By doing so, schools and LGUs aim to ensure long-term sustainability and create meaningful, lasting impacts across all levels of governance and education.

2.2 People

The extent of Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming in terms of people. The findings reveal a consistently high level of implementation, as indicated by a section mean of 3.92 (SD = 0.86), which reflects commitment, enhancement, and institutionalization. This suggests a strong dedication to integrating a gender perspective into policies. Such efforts lead to more effective and efficient resource allocation, improved policy making, and greater accountability in achieving gender-responsive outcomes. The data implies that GAD mainstreaming efforts in terms of people are well-established, as evidenced by the high level of implementation. This level of dedication suggests potential benefits, including better resource distribution, more inclusive and informed policy making, and heightened accountability in addressing gender issues.

2.3 Programs, Projects, and Activities

The extent of Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming in terms of programs, projects, and activities has achieved a high level of implementation, as evidenced by a section mean of 3.87 (SD = 0.87), interpreted as reflecting commitment, enhancement, and institutionalization. The findings suggest that many initiatives have been effectively carried out, likely resulting in positive impacts on gender equality. This consistency implies a widespread commitment across different sectors and institutions. However, the findings also suggest some variation in how GAD initiatives are applied across different programs, projects, and activities. While LGUs and schools generally adhere to the same overarching guidelines, they may adapt or modify specific elements to better align with their unique needs and operational styles.

2.4 Enabling Mechanisms

The extent of Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming in terms of enabling mechanisms has achieved a high level of implementation, as indicated by a section mean of 3.87 (SD = 0.91), interpreted as reflecting commitment, enhancement, and institutionalization. The mean score demonstrates a strong commitment to GAD mainstreaming, suggesting that effective mechanisms are likely in place. However, the standard deviation indicates some variation across sectors, meaning that while many areas exhibit high implementation levels, others may require additional support.

The overall mean on the extent of Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming in terms of policies, people, programs, projects, activities, and enabling mechanisms, based on the gathered data reveals a consistently high level of implementation of Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming across all key indicators, with an overall mean of 3.90 (SD = 0.81). This confirms that strong engagement is well integrated into all areas, effectively promoting gender equality among respondents.

3. Level of Gender and Development Practices Toward the Seal of Excellence

The data highlights that the overall level of Gender and Development (GAD) practices attained an impressive mean score of 4.04 (SD = 0.85), with a verbal description of "very satisfactory." This indicates that GAD practices are highly extensive and functioning effectively, with a strong focus on achieving the Seal of Excellence. These findings suggest that GAD initiatives are well-implemented and could serve as a model for similar programs, as they consistently meet high-impact goals. This level of performance may also encourage further institutional support, demonstrating a firm commitment to advancing gender development objectives.

The findings imply that local government units and schools in Region XII are performing very satisfactorily in promoting gender equality, demonstrating strong results in gender-responsive practices. While minor variations in ratings suggest slight differences in perceived effectiveness, the institutions exhibit a stable and solid commitment to gender equality goals.

4. Significant Difference in the Extent of Gender and Development Mainstreaming

The ANOVA results reveal significant differences in the extent of Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming across four key indicators—Policies, People, Programs/Projects/Activities, and Enabling Mechanisms—leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 1. These differences indicate inconsistent implementation and support of GAD initiatives among LGUs and secondary schools in Region XII. Key contributing factors include varying levels of institutional commitment, stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, and support structures. The findings highlight the need for standardized policy enforcement, strengthened capacity-building, equitable program distribution, and enhanced institutional mechanisms to ensure more consistent and effective gender mainstreaming.

5. Significant Relationship on the Extent of Gender and Development Mainstreaming

The study found significant relationships among key institutional indicators—policies, people, programs/projects/activities, and enabling mechanisms—at the 0.05 level, leading to the rejection of Research Hypothesis 2. High correlation values (e.g., $r = 0.876$ between Policies and People) indicate strong alignment among these elements. The findings suggest that effective gender mainstreaming depends on the close interconnection between institutional policies, active stakeholder involvement, and supportive systems. A cohesive and well-structured approach across these areas enhances the success of gender-responsive initiatives.

High positive correlations among institutional indicators (ranging from 0.836 to 0.880) indicate that improvements in one area positively influence others, emphasizing the importance of a cohesive approach. The strongest impacts are seen when policies, programs, and enabling mechanisms work in harmony, with active stakeholder engagement driving alignment and effectiveness. These findings highlight the need for a comprehensive strategy that integrates strong policies, empowered individuals, and supportive systems to create an environment conducive to successful gender mainstreaming.

6. Significant Relationship on the Extent of Gender and Development Mainstreaming and Level of Awareness

The Pearson correlation analysis shows a strong positive relationship between the extent of Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming and awareness levels across key indicators, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 3. All correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.05 level, with the highest correlation found between Policies and awareness ($r = 0.836$), followed by People ($r = 0.816$), Enabling Mechanisms ($r = 0.785$), and Programs/Projects/Activities ($r = 0.760$). These results suggest that as institutions enhance their GAD efforts—particularly through policies—they also see a significant rise in gender equality awareness. The findings highlight the importance of a comprehensive, integrated approach in promoting both effective GAD implementation and increased institutional awareness.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that gender-sensitive programs—such as gender-responsive teaching and community projects—positively influence gender equality awareness, emphasizing the need for well-structured GAD initiatives and institutional commitment. While mean scores indicate strong overall agreement on GAD efforts, variability in responses suggests differences in implementation. Despite this, perceptions of GAD mainstreaming remain generally positive. Institutions with comprehensive GAD strategies are more likely to enhance awareness and engagement, fostering broader support and participation. However, lower average scores in Policies and Enabling Mechanisms point to areas needing further improvement to strengthen overall GAD impact.

7. The Ranking of emerging issues and concerns in Implementing Gender and Development Mainstreaming.

The most critical concern is the lack of knowledge and skills in GAD planning and budgeting, followed by challenges with the HGDG Assessment, GAD integration into regular operations, provision of relevant means of verification, and meeting the 5% minimum GAD budget utilization. Failure to fully utilize the allocated GAD budget may reflect underlying challenges in planning, resource management, or implementation. Effective budget utilization is essential for sustaining GAD initiatives and promoting gender equality awareness.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that while there is high awareness and strong implementation of GAD mainstreaming among DepEd and LGUs, there is a need to enhance understanding of budget allocation, improve budget utilization, boost employee engagement, strengthen CODI functionality, and promote transparency. Overall, GAD practices are well-implemented and serve as a model for other initiatives aiming to advance gender development objectives.

The ANOVA analysis highlights significant differences that hinder gender equality, stressing the need for stronger institutional support, clear policies, and effective monitoring. Despite overall strong GAD performance, challenges persist in planning, budgeting, and coordination. Enhancing training and interdepartmental collaboration is crucial to improving implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that DepEd and LGUs sustain GAD awareness, enhance transparency in budget utilization, and improve CODI operations. Standardized GAD mainstreaming should be implemented to align with national frameworks and ensure fairness. Strong practices must be maintained, with targeted improvements in weaker areas like policies and enabling mechanisms. Regular evaluations and further research are needed to strengthen compliance with the 5% GAD budget requirement and support the attainment of the Seal of Excellence.

The Gender Unifying Measures for Better Affirmative Yields (GUMBAY) Program Enhancement Plan recommends strengthening Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming in LGUs and secondary schools in Region XII by enhancing awareness, enforcing budget compliance, and promoting inclusive participation. Key strategies include regular training, functional Committees on Decorum and Investigation (CODI), feedback and evaluation systems, peer learning, and recognition of best practices. The plan also emphasizes inter-agency collaboration, targeted capacity building, and efficient resource use to ensure sustainable and impactful GAD implementation aligned with the Seal of Excellence.

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