

Awareness of the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313) on Gender-Based Sexual Harassment Among Grade 12 Students in Selected Public Schools of Lanao del Norte: Basis for a Proposed Action Plan

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Abstract: *This study aimed to determine the level of awareness of the provisions of Republic Act No. 11313, otherwise known as the Safe Spaces Act or "Bawal Bastos Law," on gender-based sexual harassment among Grade 12 students in three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte: Abuno National High School, Poona Piagapo National High School, and Pantar National High School. Given their status as graduating senior high school students on the threshold of adulthood and community engagement, understanding their knowledge of the law is essential. Using a descriptive quantitative research design, the study surveyed 90 Grade 12 students across different academic tracks to evaluate their awareness of gender-based sexual harassment in terms of its concept and scope, acts constituting such harassment in educational institutions, and gender-based online sexual harassment. Statistical analyses, including frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson's Chi-Square Test, were conducted to determine the level of awareness and to assess whether there is a significant relationship between respondents' profile and their awareness based on sex, age, and academic program. Findings indicate a generally moderate awareness of RA 11313 among respondents, with an overall weighted mean of 3.0385 (categorized as "Moderately Aware"). However, no significant relationship was found between any of the demographic variables and awareness levels, suggesting that current information dissemination efforts have reached students uniformly across all groups. Conversely, variations in awareness were observed across the three dimensions, with students showing higher awareness of specific prohibited acts such as sexual comments and jokes in school settings and unauthorized sharing of intimate images online, but lower awareness of transphobic and homophobic harassment and severe physical acts. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening and sustaining awareness campaigns in public high schools, ensuring that students are well-informed about all forms of gender-based harassment. The study highlights the need for a proposed action plan that integrates Safe Spaces Act education into the school curriculum, enhances institutional mechanisms, and engages the broader school community to foster safer and more gender-sensitive learning environments.*

Keywords: Safe Spaces Act, gender-based sexual harassment, awareness, public high school, Grade 12 students, Lanao del Norte, action plan

1. Introduction

Gender-based sexual harassment continues to be a serious concern in Philippine educational environments, affecting students' sense of safety, emotional well-being, and participation in school activities. Harassment may take multiple forms—including verbal remarks, unwanted physical contact, and online behaviors—that can create hostile institutional climates and undermine students' dignity (Republic Act No. 11313, 2019). These issues are particularly relevant to senior high school learners, especially Grade 12 students, who engage frequently in both face-to-face and digital interactions as they prepare for higher education or entry into the workforce.

To address this social problem, the Philippine government enacted Republic Act No. 11313, more commonly referred to as the Safe Spaces Act or "Bawal Bastos Law," which aims to prevent and penalize gender-based sexual harassment in streets, public spaces, workplaces, online platforms, and educational institutions (Official Gazette, 2019). Under the law, schools are mandated to establish mechanisms to prevent harassment, provide awareness campaigns, and create internal procedures for reporting and addressing complaints within educational settings (Republic Act No. 11313, 2019; Philippine Commission on Women, 2020).

The effectiveness of the Safe Spaces Act in schools largely depends on students' awareness of its provisions. Awareness involves recognizing the concept and scope of gender-based sexual harassment, identifying prohibited behaviors, and understanding relevant reporting channels and institutional responsibilities. Without adequate awareness, students may not recognize harassment when it occurs or know how to seek appropriate support, thus limiting the law's protective purpose (Republic Act No. 11313, 2019).

Many educational institutions in the Philippines have initiated awareness campaigns, seminars, and pledge events to reinforce understanding and foster safer learning environments, suggesting the importance of structured information dissemination and dialogue among students, teachers, and staff (SunStar Cebu, 2023). Despite these efforts, research suggests that students' awareness of RA 11313 can vary widely, and there is a need for localized assessment of awareness levels, particularly among senior high school students in public schools who are on the threshold of adulthood and community engagement (Ragusta, 2022).

In this context, the present study seeks to determine the level of awareness of RA 11313 (Safe Spaces Act) among Grade 12 students of three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte: Abuno National High School in Barangay Panul-Iran, Iligan City; Poona Piagapo National High School in Barangay Pened, Municipality of Poona Piagapo; and Pantar National High School in Pantar, Lanao del Norte. Specifically, it examines students' awareness in terms of the concept and scope of gender-based sexual harassment, acts constituting harassment in educational settings, and gender-based online sexual harassment. Finally, the study intends to propose an action plan based on the findings that can help strengthen school-based awareness initiatives, preventive mechanisms, and gender-sensitive programs across these public school settings.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to determine the level of awareness of the provisions of RA 11313 (Safe Spaces Act) on Gender-Based Sexual Harassment among Grade 12 students of three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte: Abuno National High School in Barangay Panul-Iran, Iligan City; Poona Piagapo National High School in Barangay Pened, Municipality of Poona Piagapo; and Pantar National High School in Pantar, Lanao del Norte. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. **What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:**
 - 1.1 Sex;
 - 1.2 Age;
 - 1.3 Academic program

2. **What is the level of awareness of the respondents on RA 11313 (Safe Space Act) in terms of:**
 - 2.1 concept and scope of gender-based sexual harassment;
 - 2.2 acts constituting gender-based sexual harassment in educational institutions;
 - 2.3 gender-based online sexual harassment

3. **Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of awareness on the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313)?**

4. **What proposed action plan may be developed based on the findings of the study?**

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 focuses on assessing the awareness of Grade 12 students in three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte—Abuno National High School, Poona Piagapo National High School, and Pantar National High School—regarding R.A. 11313. The framework is divided into three key components: Input, Process, and Output.

In the input section, the study considers the profile of students, specifically their sex, age, and academic program, as variables. It aims to determine their level of awareness regarding gender-based sexual harassment in educational and online settings, including specific dimensions such as the concept and scope of gender-based sexual harassment, acts constituting gender-based sexual harassment in educational institutions, and gender-based online sexual harassment. Additionally, the research seeks to analyze whether there is a significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of awareness on the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313).

The process section outlines the research methodology, beginning with the formulation of instruments such as a researcher-made structured survey questionnaire. These instruments undergo validation and reliability testing to ensure accuracy. The study then proceeds with data collection through the distribution of printed questionnaires to 90 selected Grade 12 students across the three school sites, followed by the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, weighted mean) and inferential statistics (Pearson's Chi-Square Test). This structured approach ensures that the findings are reliable and meaningful.

The output of the research consists of a proposed action plan aimed at enhancing students' awareness of R.A. 11313. By identifying gaps in understanding and evaluating the relationship between profile and awareness levels among students, the study can provide insights that contribute to better education and policy-making. The broken line connecting the input, process, and output and feedback describes a continuous process. This research is particularly relevant to Grade 12 students, as they are on the threshold of adulthood and community engagement, and must be well-informed about laws related to gender-based harassment and public safety. Through this study, educational institutions can develop more effective awareness programs, fostering a safer and more informed student community.

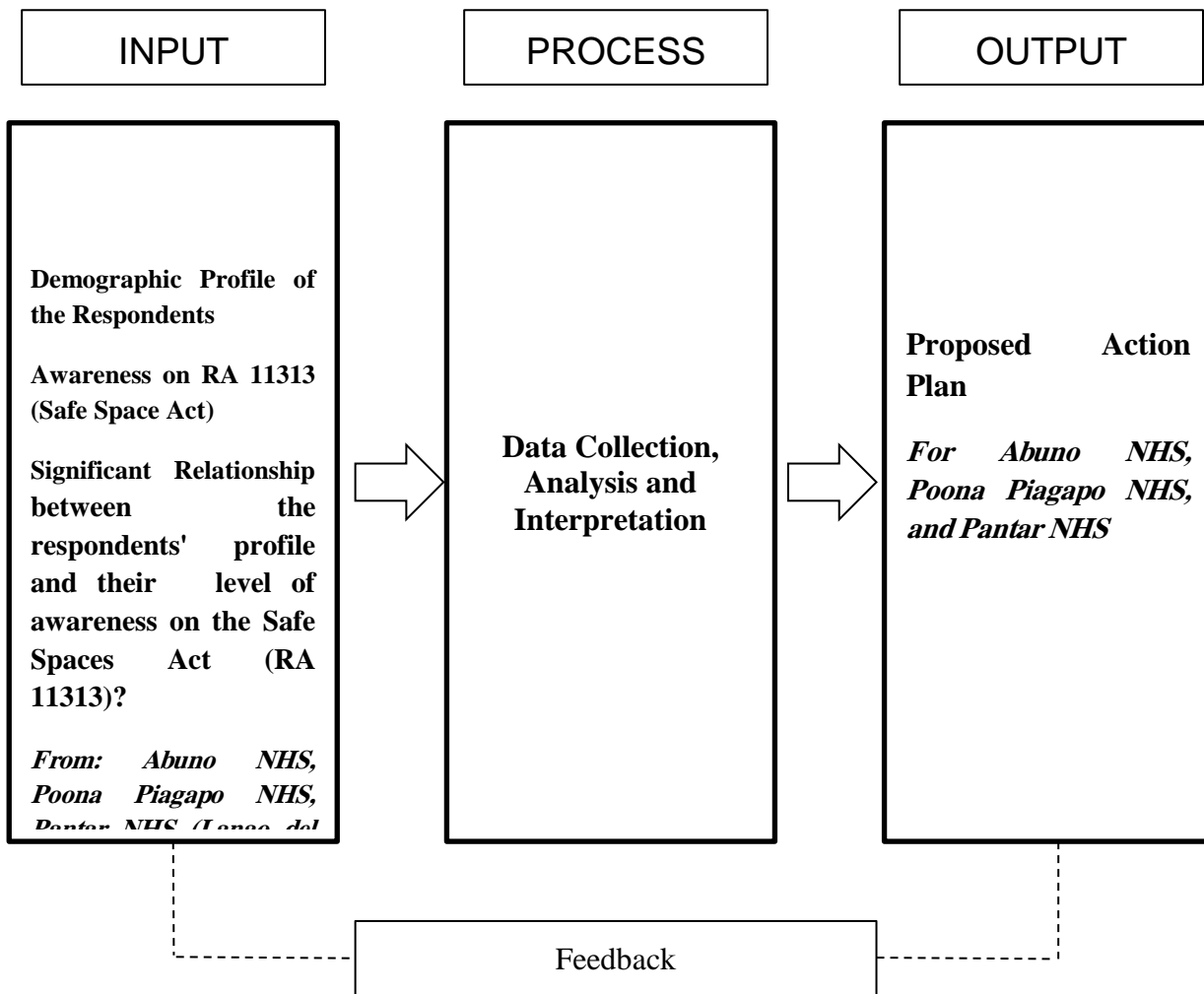


Figure 1 – Schematic Diagram showing the variables used in the study

Statement of the Hypothesis

The study attempted to test the following hypothesis:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of awareness on the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313) among Grade 12 students of the three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of awareness on the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313) among Grade 12 students of the three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte.

2. Literature Review

Gender-Based Sexual Harassment in the Philippine Context

Gender-based sexual harassment is a pervasive issue in the Philippines, deeply rooted in societal norms and power imbalances that manifest in various environments, including the critical setting of educational institutions. It represents a significant barrier to achieving gender equality and undermines the fundamental human rights of individuals, particularly women and girls. The problem extends beyond isolated incidents, creating hostile and intimidating climates that can severely impact the personal development, academic performance, and overall wellbeing of students (Respicio, 2025).

The prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) and harassment in the Philippines is a well-documented concern. According to the 2017 National Demographic and Health Survey, a significant portion of the female population has experienced some form of violence, with 1 in 20 women and girls aged 15–49 reporting having experienced sexual violence in their lifetime (de la Fuente, 2022). A baseline study conducted by the Council for the Welfare of the Children revealed that violence against children is widespread, with 2 out of 3 children experiencing physical violence, 1 out of 4 experiencing sexual violence, and 2 out of 5 experiencing psychological violence (de la Fuente, 2022). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has identified sexual harassment as the most frequent form of sexual violence in school settings, affecting students in both primary and secondary levels (de la Fuente, 2022).

A 2016 Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey found that three in five women have experienced sexual harassment at least once in their lifetime, with 70% of these incidents occurring during the day and 58% happening on streets, major roads, and public transport vehicles (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, n.d.). The issue extends into the digital realm, with a 2020 global study by Plan International revealing that 68% of girls and young women in the Philippines have experienced online harassment on social media—higher than the global average of 58% (Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, n.d.). The Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA) has been documenting cases of online gender-based violence since 2012, with 659 cases documented as of December 2022, and an additional 57 cases recorded in the first half of 2025 alone (FMA, 2025).

Educational institutions in the Philippines are critical settings where gender-based harassment and violence occur. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 results, the Philippines had the highest percentage of bullying among all participating countries, with 65% of Filipino students reporting being victims of any type of bullying at least a few times a month (Philippine Information Agency, 2024). While PISA 2022 showed a decrease, one in three Filipino students still experienced bullying. This pervasive culture of bullying often intersects with gender, as students, particularly those who do not conform to traditional gender norms or are part of the LGBTQ+ community, are frequently targeted (ABS-CBN News, 2017).

The Department of Education (DepEd) has acknowledged the severity of the issue, implementing policies like the Child Protection Policy in 2012 and the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 (de la Fuente, 2022). However, the implementation of these policies has faced challenges. DepEd's Gender-responsive basic education policy (DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017) calls for safe learning environments but does not articulate specific mechanisms for implementation at the school level (de la Fuente, 2022). This gap between policy and practice highlights the need for more concrete and actionable strategies.

Republic Act No. 11313: The Safe Spaces Act

Republic Act No. 11313, known as the Safe Spaces Act or the "Bawal Bastos Law," represents a landmark piece of legislation in the Philippines, enacted in 2019 to comprehensively address the issue of gender-based sexual harassment. The law significantly expands the scope of protection against harassment beyond the confines of the workplace and educational institutions, which were the primary focus of the earlier Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995 (RA 7877). The Safe Spaces Act recognizes that harassment is a pervasive problem that occurs in a wide range of settings, including public spaces, online platforms, and transportation (Respicio, 2025).

The Safe Spaces Act provides a broad and inclusive definition of gender-based sexual harassment (GBSH), recognizing it as any unwanted and uninvited sexual action, gesture, or remark directed against any person, regardless of intent (Supreme Court of the Philippines, n.d.). Under the law, GBSH encompasses a wide range of behaviors such as catcalling and wolf-whistling, persistent and unwanted invitations, misogynistic, transphobic, or homophobic slurs, intrusive gazing, taunting, public masturbation or flashing, groping, and stalking (Supreme Court of the Philippines, n.d.). The scope extends beyond traditional public spaces to include privately owned areas open to the public, such as malls, restaurants, and educational institutions.

Section 13 of the law explicitly outlines the duties of educational and training institutions to prevent and address gender-based sexual harassment (Bangsamoro Women Commission, n.d.). Prohibited acts within this context include any form of GBSH committed by peers, teachers, staff, or any other person within the school premises or in connection with school-related activities. The law mandates that schools must create a safe and gender-sensitive environment, establish clear policies, provide awareness programs, and set up effective reporting and investigation mechanisms. School heads are held accountable for ensuring compliance, with penalties for non-implementation or failure to act on reported cases (Bangsamoro Women Commission, n.d.).

The law establishes a tiered system of penalties for gender-based sexual harassment, with sanctions increasing in severity for repeat offenders. For acts such as catcalling and wolf-whistling, penalties range from *arresto menor* or a fine of ₱30,000.00 for the first offense to *arresto mayor* in its maximum period or a fine of ₱100,000.00 for the third offense (Supreme Court of the Philippines, n.d.). More severe forms carry heavier criminal penalties. The law also provides for administrative sanctions against government employees and prescribes specific measures for minors, who are subject to administrative liability under school regulations (Bangsamoro Women Commission, n.d.).

Section 13(b) enumerates specific obligations of educational institutions, including adopting a zero-tolerance policy, prominently displaying copies of the Safe Spaces Act, conducting regular awareness activities, and establishing a Committee on Decorum and

Investigation (CODI) tasked with receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints (Philippine Commission on Women, n.d.). The CODI must include representatives from the administration, faculty, and student body, be headed by a woman, and have women comprising at least half of its membership. Schools are also obligated to provide appropriate support services to victims and submit regular reports on implementation to concerned government bodies (Department of Education Regional Office VIII, 2024).

Student Awareness of the Safe Spaces Act

The ultimate effectiveness of the Safe Spaces Act in protecting students hinges significantly on their level of awareness. A law, no matter how comprehensive, cannot fulfill its purpose if the very people it is designed to protect are unaware of its existence, its provisions, and the mechanisms it provides for redress. Student awareness is not a passive state but an active understanding that empowers individuals to recognize harassment, assert their rights, and seek support (Philippine Commission on Women, n.d.).

Awareness is the foundational prerequisite for the enforcement of any law. For a student to report an incident of gender-based sexual harassment, they must first be able to identify the behavior as a violation. Many forms of harassment, such as catcalling or sexist jokes, are often dismissed as "normal" or "harmless" behavior, especially in a cultural context where such actions have been historically tolerated. The Safe Spaces Act provides a clear definition of what constitutes harassment, and awareness campaigns are designed to educate students on these specific behaviors (Supreme Court of the Philippines, n.d.).

A study by Borito and Yango (2022) found a significant positive relationship between students' level of awareness and their attitude towards the Safe Spaces Act, as well as their level of compliance. This suggests that increased awareness can lead to a more positive and respectful school climate, where students are less likely to engage in harassing behaviors and more likely to intervene as bystanders.

Several studies conducted in higher education institutions have found high levels of awareness among college students. Mendoza et al. (2025) found that College of Criminal Justice Education students at Occidental Mindoro State College were "very aware and fully understand the Republic Act 11313 and its key provisions." Similarly, Flores (2024) noted high awareness among 374 college students at Pamantasan ng Cabuyao, although challenges in implementation were also identified. Borito and Yango (2022) also reported high levels of student awareness and adherence in a private higher education institution.

In contrast, Generale and Emilyn (2023) found that high school learners were only "moderately aware" of gender-related laws and mandates. This finding is significant because it points to a potential gap in the dissemination of information at the basic education level. If students are not learning about these laws in high school, they may enter college or the workforce without the necessary knowledge to protect themselves and assert their rights. This discrepancy between the awareness levels of college and high school students underscores the importance of the present study, which focuses specifically on Grade 12 students in public high schools in Lanao del Norte.

Ragusta (2024) examined awareness among political science students and found generally high awareness, with an overall mean of 3.62 ("Very High"). However, a significant difference was found among students of different year levels, suggesting that awareness increases as students progress through their academic program. No significant difference was found between male and female respondents. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating gender sensitivity discussions into academic curricula.

The conflicting findings from existing studies highlight the need for more localized and context-specific research. The variation in results can be attributed to several factors, including geographical location, socio-economic background, academic track, and specific awareness-raising initiatives implemented at the local level. The three selected public high schools in this study—Abuno National High School, Poona Piagapo National High School, and Pantar National High School—represent diverse geographical and socio-cultural settings within Lanao del Norte, serving students from varying socio-economic backgrounds and community contexts that may influence their exposure to information about the Safe Spaces Act.

The Selected Schools Context

The experience of gender-based harassment among students in Mindanao is shaped by a unique confluence of cultural, social, and political factors. The cultural, social, and political landscape of Mindanao, including the presence of diverse ethnic and religious groups and the historical context of conflict, can shape the nature of and responses to GBSH (Vitusis, 2025). A study on the perceptions of Meranao women in local governance highlighted the significant roles that education, family, religious beliefs, and community alliances play in shaping women's participation and leadership (Vitusis, 2025). These factors are equally relevant when considering how students perceive and respond to harassment.

A case study conducted in Misamis Occidental, a province in Northern Mindanao, explored the challenges faced by gender-based harassment victims, with a significant number of participants being students (Aquit et al., 2024). The study found that victims experienced substantial psychological and emotional distress, including anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem. Another study focusing on the status of the anti-bullying policy at MSU-LNCAT found that various forms of bullying, including social,

verbal, and physical, were reported to exist on campus (Aquit et al., 2024). The study recommended strengthening the anti-bullying policy, educating faculty on prevention methods, and increasing stakeholder awareness.

The implementation of the Safe Spaces Act in Lanao del Norte occurs within a unique regional context characterized by a diverse cultural landscape, a mix of Christian and Muslim communities, and a history of both conflict and resilience in the aftermath of the 2017 Marawi siege. The national government, through agencies like the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), has been working to promote gender equality and women's empowerment across the country, including in Lanao del Norte and the broader Bangsamoro region. The establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) has also brought a new layer of governance and advocacy for women's rights in the region.

The Philippine Commission on Women has established Gender and Development (GAD) Local Learning Hubs in various regions across the country, including Northern Mindanao. These hubs serve as centers for learning and capacity-building on gender and development issues, bringing together various stakeholders to work collaboratively on addressing gender issues at the local level. Additionally, numerous youth and civil society organizations in Lanao del Norte and the broader Mindanao region are actively working to promote safe spaces and address issues of gender-based violence and harassment.

Knowledge Gap

A thorough review of the existing literature reveals a complex landscape of legal frameworks, institutional mandates, and ongoing challenges in the fight against gender-based sexual harassment in Philippine educational institutions. While the Safe Spaces Act provides a strong legal foundation and clear requirements for schools, the gap between policy and practice remains a significant concern.

One of the most significant gaps identified is the lack of specific data on the awareness levels of Grade 12 students in public high schools in Lanao del Norte. While there are studies on student awareness in other regions, at higher education institutions, and in private schools, there is a dearth of research focusing specifically on this demographic in public secondary schools within this particular province and regional context. The diversity across the three selected schools—spanning urban and rural settings, different municipal governance structures, and varying levels of resource availability—further underscores the need for localized, multi-site research in the public basic education sector.

Another significant gap is the discrepancy between the policy mandates of the Safe Spaces Act and their actual implementation in public secondary schools. While the law provides clear requirements for all educational institutions, the extent to which these requirements are being met in public high schools with limited administrative and financial resources can vary widely. Some public schools may have established CODIs and developed anti-harassment policies, but these mechanisms may not be functioning effectively due to lack of resources, training, or commitment. Other public schools, particularly those in rural or conflict-affected areas, may not have fully complied with the law's mandates.

The present study aims to fill these gaps by providing a localized assessment of student awareness at Abuno National High School, Poona Piagapo National High School, and Pantar National High School, which can serve as a basis for developing a targeted, context-specific, and culturally sensitive action plan for public secondary schools in Lanao del Norte.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to determine the level of awareness of Grade 12 students of three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte regarding the provisions of Republic Act No. 11313. The descriptive approach was appropriate because the study aimed to systematically describe the current status of students' awareness without manipulating any variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte: (1) Abuno National High School, located in Barangay Panul-Iran, Iligan City; (2) Poona Piagapo National High School, located in Barangay Pened, Municipality of Poona Piagapo; and (3) Pantar National High School, located in Pantar, Lanao del Norte. These institutions are public secondary schools under the Department of Education (DepEd) Division of Lanao del Norte that offer Senior High School programs.

Abuno National High School serves students from an urban barangay in Iligan City with relatively greater access to information and institutional resources. Poona Piagapo National High School is situated in a rural municipality where students may have different exposure to digital platforms and awareness campaigns. Pantar National High School is located in another rural municipality, serving a predominantly agricultural community. The diverse geographical and socio-economic contexts of these three schools allowed the study to generate meaningful findings that reflect the varied realities of public senior high school students in the province.

Respondents and Sampling

The respondents consisted of 90 Grade 12 students officially enrolled during the Academic Year 2025–2026, with approximately 30 students from each school, representing various academic tracks and strands offered at the Senior High School level (such as Academic and Technical-Vocational-Livelihood). The study employed a non-probability convenience sampling method, selecting students who were readily accessible and willing to participate. Coordination was made with Senior High School advisers and school principals to facilitate access to Grade 12 classes and ensure representation from different academic tracks.

Focusing on Grade 12 students was appropriate as they are at a critical stage of social and academic development and are expected to have sufficient exposure to school policies, orientations, and student welfare programs related to gender-based sexual harassment. Their status as graduating senior high school students also makes them key informants for understanding how well the Safe Spaces Act has been integrated into the public basic education system.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made structured survey questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection, carefully designed in alignment with the objectives of the study and the key provisions of Republic Act No. 11313. The questionnaire was composed of three parts:

Part I focused on the demographic profile of respondents, including items on sex, age, and academic program (track/strand).

Part II measured the respondents' level of awareness of RA 11313, specifically in terms of: (a) concept and scope of gender-based sexual harassment, (b) acts constituting gender-based sexual harassment in educational institutions, and (c) gender-based online sexual harassment. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale consisting of: 4 = Highly Aware, 3 = Moderately Aware, 2 = Low, and 1 = Not At All.

Part III served as the basis for the proposed action plan and included items that helped identify specific areas where students' awareness was limited and where school-based interventions, information campaigns, and preventive programs may be strengthened.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the conduct of the study, formal permission was secured from the school principals and Senior High School coordinators of the three schools. Upon approval, validated survey questionnaires were distributed to selected Grade 12 student respondents using printed copies to ensure accessibility across all three school sites, including those with limited internet connectivity.

Before answering the questionnaire, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the respondents. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that their responses would be treated with strict confidentiality and anonymity. Respondents were also assured that their participation would not affect their academic standing and that no identifying information would be collected. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire, and clear instructions were provided to ensure accurate and honest responses.

After the questionnaires were accomplished, they were collected, checked for completeness, and systematically organized for data encoding and analysis. Data from the three schools were coded separately to allow for comparative analysis by school site, in addition to the overall analysis.

Data Analysis

The study used both descriptive and inferential statistical tools:

Frequency and Percentage Analysis was used in the presentation and analysis of data obtained, particularly on the profile of the respondents (sex, age, and academic program/track) and their level of awareness on RA 11313.

Weighted Mean was utilized to analyze the data gathered from the respondents' level of awareness on RA 11313 across the three dimensions. The following mean score scales were used:

Scale	Verbal Interpretation
3.25–4.00	Highly Aware
2.50–3.24	Moderately Aware
1.75–2.49	Low
1.00–1.74	Not at All

Pearson's Chi-Square Test was employed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the respondents' profile (sex, age, academic program/track) and their level of awareness on RA 11313.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Descriptive Level of Respondents in Terms of Sex (n=90)

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	55	61.11%
Male	35	38.89%
Total	90	100.00%

The majority of the respondents were female (61.11%), while male respondents comprised 38.89% of the total sample. This distribution is consistent with the general enrollment trend in Philippine public senior high schools where female students often outnumber their male counterparts. The predominance of female respondents is significant as women are often the primary targets of gender-based sexual harassment, and their perspectives can provide crucial insights. However, the substantial number of male respondents ensures that both perspectives are represented, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of awareness levels across genders.

Table 2: Descriptive Level of Respondents in Terms of Age (n=90)

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16–18	64	71.11%
19–21	24	26.67%
22–25	2	2.22%
Total	90	100.00%

The majority of respondents (71.11%) belonged to the age bracket of 16–18 years old, which is the typical age range for Grade 12 students under the K–12 program. Twenty-four respondents (26.67%) were in the 19–21 age bracket, which may include students who started school late, had to repeat a grade level, or were affected by circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic disruptions. Only 2 respondents (2.22%) were in the 22–25 age bracket, representing overage learners.

Table 3: Descriptive Level of Respondents in Terms of Academic Program (n=90)

Academic Program	Frequency	Percentage
Academic Track	66	73.33%
TVL Track	24	26.67%
Total	90	100.00%

The majority of respondents (73.33%) were enrolled in the Academic Track, while 24 respondents (26.67%) were in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Track. No respondents from the Sports and Arts and Design tracks participated. The predominance of Academic Track students reflects the general enrollment pattern in Philippine public senior high schools.

An equal number of 30 respondents (33.33% each) were drawn from each of the three schools, ensuring balanced representation across the three selected public high schools and allowing for meaningful comparative analysis.

Table 4: Descriptive Level of Awareness on the Definition and Scope of Gender-Based Sexual Harassment (n=90)

Statement	Highly Aware	Moderately Aware	Low	Not At All	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
1. Catcalling	33 (36.67)	33 (36.67)	18 (20.00)	6 (6.67)	3.0333	Moderately Aware
2. Homophobic remarks	25 (27.78)	41 (45.56)	16 (17.78)	8 (8.89)	2.9222	Moderately Aware
3. Sexist remarks	29 (32.22)	38 (42.22)	19 (21.11)	4 (4.44)	3.0222	Moderately Aware
4. Transphobic remarks	21 (23.33)	42 (46.67)	19 (21.11)	8 (8.89)	2.8444	Moderately Aware
5. Stalking	36 (40.00)	36 (40.00)	9 (10.00)	9 (10.00)	3.1000	Moderately Aware
Average Weighted Mean					2.9844	Moderately Aware

The overall weighted mean of 2.9844, interpreted as "Moderately Aware," indicates that respondents had a fair understanding of the basic concepts and scope of gender-based sexual harassment. Stalking (Item 5) obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.1000, which may be attributed to its frequent portrayal in media and popular culture, making the concept more recognizable to students. This aligns with Ragusta (2024), who noted that students often demonstrate better understanding of harassment behaviors that are more visible or commonly discussed.

However, transphobic remarks or slurs (Item 4) obtained the lowest weighted mean of 2.8444, with only 23.33% indicating "Highly Aware." This suggests that awareness of transphobic harassment is comparatively lower, which may reflect limited exposure to discussions on transgender issues and gender identity in the school environment. This is consistent with Generale and Emilyn (2023), who found that high school learners often have limited awareness of gender-related concepts beyond basic definitions, particularly those involving LGBTQ+ identities. Similarly, homophobic remarks (Item 2) obtained a weighted mean of 2.9222, indicating that while students recognize overt forms of homophobia, they may not fully understand the nuanced manifestations of such harassment.

Table 5: Descriptive Level of Awareness on Acts Constituting Gender-Based Sexual Harassment in Educational Institutions (n=90)

Statement	Highly Aware	Moderately Aware	Low	Not At All	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
1. Catcalling, wolf-whistling, slurs	35 (38.89)	36 (40.00)	11 (12.22)	8 (8.89)	3.0889	Moderately Aware
2. Persistent comments on appearance	22 (24.44)	51 (56.67)	14 (15.56)	3 (3.33)	3.0222	Moderately Aware
3. Relentless requests for personal details	29 (32.22)	39 (43.33)	18 (20.00)	4 (4.44)	3.0333	Moderately Aware
4. Sexual comments, jokes, names	45 (50.00)	30 (33.33)	9 (10.00)	6 (6.67)	3.2667	Highly Aware
5. Public masturbation, flashing, groping	25 (27.78)	39 (43.33)	19 (21.11)	7 (7.78)	2.9111	Moderately Aware
Average Weighted Mean					3.0644	Moderately Aware

The overall weighted mean of 3.0644 was interpreted as

"Moderately Aware." Sexual comments, suggestions, persistent telling of sexual jokes, and use of sexual names (Item 4) stood out as the only item interpreted as "Highly Aware" (WM = 3.2667), with 50.00% indicating "Highly Aware." This high awareness may be attributed to the fact that sexual jokes and comments are among the most commonly observed and discussed forms of harassment in school settings, making them more recognizable to students (Aquit et al., 2024).

Conversely, public masturbation, flashing of private parts, groping, and making offensive body gestures (Item 5) obtained the lowest weighted mean at 2.9111. Despite being among the most severe forms of harassment, 21.11% of respondents indicated "Low" awareness. This is concerning because these severe acts can cause significant trauma to victims and require immediate institutional response. The lower awareness of severe physical acts may reflect a gap in school-based education that focuses more on verbal harassment while neglecting to adequately discuss physical forms of violence.

Table 6: Descriptive Level of Awareness on Gender-Based Online Sexual Harassment (n=90)

Statement	Highly Aware	Moderately Aware	Low	Not At All	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)		
1. Physical, psychological, emotional threats online	30 (33.33)	40 (44.44)	13 (14.44)	7 (7.78)	3.0333	Moderately Aware

2. Cyberstalking, incessant messaging	27 (30.00)	47 (52.22)	8 (8.89)	8 (8.89)	3.0333	Moderately Aware
3. Uploading/sharing without consent	34 (37.78)	34 (37.78)	16 (17.78)	6 (6.67)	3.0667	Moderately Aware
4. Unauthorized recording and sharing	39 (43.33)	30 (33.33)	15 (16.67)	6 (6.67)	3.1333	Moderately Aware
5. Impersonating identities, posting lies	35 (38.89)	35 (38.89)	11 (12.22)	9 (10.00)	3.0667	Moderately Aware
Average Weighted Mean					3.0667	Moderately Aware

The overall weighted mean of 3.0667 was interpreted as "Moderately Aware." Unauthorized recording and sharing of any of the victim's photos, videos, or information online (Item 4) obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.1333, with 43.33% indicating "Highly Aware." This relatively higher awareness may be attributed to widespread media coverage and social media discussions about unauthorized sharing of intimate images, commonly known as "revenge porn," which has gained significant public attention in recent years (Foundation for Media Alternatives, 2025).

Physical, psychological, and emotional threats online (Item 1) and cyberstalking with incessant messaging (Item 2) both obtained the lowest weighted means of 3.0333. This moderate awareness of online threats may reflect *students' daily exposure to social media interactions where such behaviors are sometimes normalized or dismissed as harmless. The fact that 14.44% of respondents indicated "Low" awareness of online threats suggests that some students may not fully recognize the severity of such behaviors as violations of RA 11313.*

Table 7: Summary of Awareness Levels on Safe Spaces Act (n=90)

Dimension	Average Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
A. Definition and Scope of GBSH	2.9844	Moderately Aware
B. Acts Constituting GBSH in Educational Institutions	3.0644	Moderately Aware
C. Gender-Based Online Sexual Harassment	3.0667	Moderately Aware
OVERALL AWARENESS	3.0385	Moderately Aware

Table 7 summarizes the overall awareness across all three dimensions, all receiving moderate awareness ratings. The grand overall weighted mean of 3.0385 indicates that while respondents have foundational knowledge of the law, there remains significant room for improvement. Among the three dimensions, gender-based online sexual harassment (Dimension C) obtained the highest weighted mean (3.0667), followed closely by acts constituting gender-based sexual harassment in educational institutions (Dimension B) with 3.0644. The definition and scope of gender-based sexual harassment (Dimension A) obtained the lowest weighted mean (2.9844).

This pattern is consistent with Ragusta (2024), who noted gaps in students' understanding of the conceptual framework of RA 11313 despite familiarity with specific prohibited behaviors. The moderate overall awareness has important implications for the effective implementation of the Safe Spaces Act in public schools. As emphasized by the Philippine Commission on Women (n.d.), student awareness is a critical prerequisite for the law's effectiveness.

Table 8: Relationship between Socio-Demographic Profile and Level of Awareness

Socio-Demographic Profile	Chi-Square Test Value	df	p-value	Critical Value	Decision	Verbal Interpretation
Sex	5.1579	3	0.1606	7.8147	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant
Age	7.0886	6	0.3127	12.5916	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant
Academic Program	4.6611	3	0.1984	7.8147	Fail to Reject H_0	Not Significant

The results of the Chi-Square tests consistently showed no significant relationship between any of the demographic variables and the respondents' level of awareness on RA 11313. For sex, the computed Chi-Square value of 5.1579 was less than the critical value of 7.8147 ($p = 0.1606 > 0.05$). Similarly, for age ($\chi^2 = 7.0886$, $p = 0.3127$) and academic program ($\chi^2 = 4.6611$, $p = 0.1984$), the null hypothesis was not rejected in all cases.

This uniformity in awareness levels across different demographic groups may be attributed to several factors. First, all respondents are enrolled in the same grade level and are likely to have been exposed to similar school-based information campaigns. Second, the selected schools may have implemented uniform awareness initiatives that reached all students regardless of demographic profile. Third, social media and peer interactions, which are significant sources of information for young people, tend to transcend demographic boundaries. These findings support Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), which posits that learning occurs through observation and interaction within the social environment.

However, the non-significant relationships also highlight a critical point: the current level of awareness is uniformly moderate across all student groups, suggesting that no particular demographic segment has achieved a notably higher level of awareness that could serve as a model for others. This reinforces the need for comprehensive, school-wide interventions that target all students equally.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study involved 90 Grade 12 students from three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte: Abuno National High School, Poona Piagapo National High School, and Pantar National High School. The demographic profile of the respondents revealed the following:

In terms of sex, the majority of the respondents were female (55 or 61.11%), while male respondents comprised 35 (38.89%) of the total sample. This distribution reflects the general trend in Philippine public senior high schools where female enrollment is typically higher than male enrollment.

In terms of age, the majority of the respondents, 64 (71.11%), belonged to the 16–18 age bracket, which is the typical age range for Grade 12 students. Twenty-four respondents (26.67%) were in the 19–21 age bracket, while only 2 respondents (2.22%) were in the 22–25 age bracket.

In terms of academic program, 66 respondents (73.33%) were enrolled in the Academic Track, while 24 respondents (26.67%) were in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Track. No respondents from the Sports and Arts and Design tracks participated in the study.

In terms of school distribution, an equal number of 30 respondents (33.33% each) were drawn from Abuno National High School, Poona Piagapo National High School, and Pantar National High School.

On the definition and scope of gender-based sexual harassment (Part A), the overall weighted mean was 2.9844, interpreted as "Moderately Aware." Among the five items, stalking (Item A5) obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.1000, while transphobic remarks or slurs (Item A4) obtained the lowest weighted mean of 2.8444.

On acts constituting gender-based sexual harassment in educational institutions (Part B), the overall weighted mean was 3.0644, interpreted as "Moderately Aware." Sexual comments, suggestions, persistent telling of sexual jokes, and use of sexual names (Item B9) obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.2667, interpreted as "Highly Aware." Public masturbation, flashing of private parts, groping, and making offensive body gestures (Item B10) obtained the lowest weighted mean of 2.9111.

On gender-based online sexual harassment (Part C), the overall weighted mean was 3.0667, interpreted as "Moderately Aware." Unauthorized recording and sharing of any of the victim's photos, videos, or information online (Item C12) obtained the highest

weighted mean of 3.1333, while physical, psychological, and emotional threats and unwanted remarks online (Item C9) and invasion of privacy through cyberstalking and incessant messaging (Item C10) both obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.0333.

The grand overall weighted mean for all three dimensions was 3.0385, interpreted as "Moderately Aware."

The Chi-Square test was employed to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the respondents' profile and their level of awareness on RA 11313. The results revealed the following:

There is no significant relationship between sex and level of awareness ($\chi^2 = 5.1579$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.1606$, critical value = 7.8147).

There is no significant relationship between age and level of awareness ($\chi^2 = 7.0886$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.3127$, critical value = 12.5916).

There is no significant relationship between academic program and level of awareness ($\chi^2 = 4.6611$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.1984$, critical value = 7.8147).

In all three cases, the null hypothesis was not rejected, indicating that awareness of the Safe Spaces Act is not *significantly influenced* by the respondents' demographic characteristics.

Conclusions

The respondents were predominantly female, within the typical age range for Grade 12 students, enrolled in the Academic Track, and equally distributed across the three selected public high schools in Lanao del Norte. The Grade 12 students of these schools have a moderate level of awareness of the provisions of RA 11313 (Safe Spaces Act) on gender-based sexual harassment. While they demonstrate a fair understanding of specific prohibited acts, particularly sexual jokes and comments in school settings and unauthorized sharing of intimate images online, their awareness of foundational concepts such as transphobic and homophobic harassment remains comparatively lower. Furthermore, there is no significant relationship between the respondents' profile (sex, age, and academic program) and their level of awareness on the Safe Spaces Act. This suggests that awareness levels are uniformly moderate across all demographic groups, indicating that current information dissemination efforts in the three schools have reached students equally but have not been sufficient to elevate awareness beyond the moderate level.

Given these findings, the moderate level of awareness across all dimensions underscores the need for strengthened, targeted, and continuous awareness campaigns and institutional interventions to ensure that students not only recognize harassment behaviors but also understand their rights, the legal implications of such acts, and the available reporting mechanisms under RA 11313. The absence of significant differences across demographic groups implies that a universal, school-wide approach to awareness-raising is necessary, rather than interventions targeting specific segments of the student population.

1.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are offered:

For School Administrators:

1. Strengthen the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act by ensuring that the Committee on Decorum and Investigation (CODI) is fully functional, visible, and accessible to all students, with a woman as head and women comprising at least half of the membership.
2. Develop and implement a comprehensive, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive Code of Conduct that clearly defines all forms of gender-based sexual harassment, including transphobic and homophobic slurs, severe physical acts, and online harassment.
3. Conduct regular, mandatory gender sensitivity seminars and legal literacy workshops for all students, faculty, and non-teaching personnel at least once per semester.
4. Establish multiple, confidential reporting channels, including online forms, drop boxes, and dedicated hotlines.
5. Collaborate with local government units, non-government organizations, and youth-led advocacy groups to leverage external resources.

For Guidance Counselors and School Personnel:

1. Integrate discussions of RA 11313 and gender-based sexual harassment into guidance and counseling sessions, homeroom activities, and values education classes.

2. Provide targeted counseling and support services for victims, including mental health and psychosocial support and referrals to relevant agencies.
3. Train teachers and staff to recognize signs of harassment, respond appropriately to disclosures, and document incidents in accordance with school policies.

For Students:

1. Actively participate in school-based awareness campaigns, seminars, and workshops on the Safe Spaces Act.
2. Practice bystander intervention by safely and appropriately intervening when witnessing incidents of harassment.
3. Use social media and digital platforms responsibly, being mindful of the potential for online harassment and legal implications.
4. Engage in peer-to-peer education by organizing student-led initiatives to promote a culture of respect and gender sensitivity.

For the Department of Education and Policymakers:

1. Develop and disseminate standardized, age-appropriate educational modules on the Safe Spaces Act for integration into the basic education curriculum, particularly in subjects such as Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao, Araling Panlipunan, and Media and Information Literacy.
2. Provide sufficient funding, training, and technical assistance to public schools, particularly those in rural and resource-constrained areas.
3. Establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess compliance and effectiveness of Safe Spaces Act implementation.
4. Strengthen partnerships with the Philippine Commission on Women and other relevant agencies for a coordinated approach.

For Future Researchers:

1. Conduct similar studies in other public and private schools in Lanao del Norte and other regions to validate findings.
2. Explore the relationship between awareness and actual behavior by examining whether aware students are more likely to report incidents or intervene as bystanders.
3. Examine the experiences of students who have actually encountered or witnessed gender-based sexual harassment to understand the gap between awareness and action.

Summary of Proposed Action Plan

The action plan consists of **five interconnected objectives** designed to strengthen Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313) implementation across three public high schools in Lanao del Norte:

Table 9: Proposed Action Plan

Objective	Core Purpose	Key Activities
1.Student Awareness	Close knowledge gaps through structured education	Semester orientations, IEC materials, curriculum integration, annual campaigns, social media outreach
2. Institutional Mechanisms	Build effective prevention and response systems	Establish functional CODI, develop anti-harassment policy, create confidential reporting channels, ensure timely investigations, provide victim support
3.Personnel Capacity	Equip staff to lead and enforce the law	Annual training workshops, performance incentives, designate focal persons, fund specialized training
4.Community Engagement	Extend safety culture beyond school walls	Parent orientations, community forums, LGU collaboration, partnerships with youth groups and religious leaders

5. Monitoring & Evaluation	Track progress and ensure accountability	Annual awareness surveys, incident data review, compliance reporting, focus group feedback
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Central Strategy: The plan moves beyond one-time information campaigns to continuous, multi-layered interventions—integrating education into curriculum, institutionalizing reporting and support systems, building staff expertise, engaging families and communities, and using data to drive improvements.

Target Gaps: Transphobic/homophobic harassment awareness, severe physical acts, and online harassment—areas where student awareness was found to be lowest.

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