



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Assessing the Gender-Based Violence Awareness of University Employees

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| Received: May 21, 2024 Accepted: Jul 11, 2024 | <p>Psychological, socioeconomic, sexual, and physical violence are all forms of gender-based violence (GBV), synonymous with violence against women (VAW), violence against women and girls (VAWG), and violence against women and children (VAWC), disproportionately affecting women, girls, and children. It is rooted in unequal power dynamics and harmful social norms, requiring comprehensive efforts to prevent and address it effectively. This study aimed to explore the level of GBV awareness among employees in the local university and the significant differences in their awareness based on sex and age. Participants involved 17 employees from Ifugao State University (IFSU) - Tinoc Campus, Ifugao, Philippines. Data were subjected to quantitative analysis through a self-designed questionnaire, which was determined to be valid and reliable. Results determined that the university employees have a moderate awareness of all the GBV forms: psychological, socioeconomic, sexual, and physical violence. Moderate awareness among the employees suggests that they may recognize certain signs or situations that constitute GBV but are not fully equipped to address or respond to them effectively. It indicates that they possess some understanding of GBV, but need to be fully knowledgeable about its prevalence, impacts, and available support and intervention resources. Based on sex and age, there were no significant differences in the perceived level of psychological, socioeconomic, and sexual violence. Meanwhile, male and female employees across the age groups have significant differences in their perceived physical violence. While moderate awareness indicates foundational knowledge, there is still a need for further awareness-building efforts to empower employees to recognize, prevent, and respond to GBV effectively.</p> |
| <p>Keywords</p> Gender-based violence Gender-based violence awareness University employees Violence against women Violence against women and girls Violence against women and children | |
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INTRODUCTION

Violence encompasses a range of behaviors, from harassment and discrimination to assault and coercion, that create a hostile or unsafe environment for employees. A common type of violence experienced by employees is gender-based violence (GBV). The United Nations defines GBV as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (United Nations, 1993). It covers all harm inflicted upon an individual or group based on gender identity, perceived sexual orientation, or biological sex (Council of Europe, 2023a; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023).

While violence can impact both males and females, it disproportionately affects females, specifically women and girls (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023). A more specific form of GBV is violence against women (VAW) or violence against women and girls (VAWG). In the exploration of this study, the researchers have utilized the terms GBV, VAW, and VAWG synonymously due to the ubiquitous acknowledgment that most GBV incidents target women and girls, with majority of males as perpetrators (Council of Europe, 2023a; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023).

GBV is a multifaceted issue that not only creates a toxic environment but also perpetuates power imbalances, reinforcing stereotyping in the workplace. GBV affects one in three women, or 30% of women, at some point in their lives (World Bank, 2019; World Health Organization, 2021), and thus, is acknowledged as a significant global violation of human rights and a health concern (Akudolu et al., 2023). Recognizing and addressing this problem requires comprehensive strategies that prioritize awareness, prevention, education, training, and establishing supportive mechanisms for survivors in the workplace. By promoting gender equality and fostering a culture of respect and dignity at work, institutions can effectively combat GBV and promote the well-being and empowerment of all employees.

GBV was significantly prevalent among female university employees. An association was discovered between women's encounters with sexual harassment, incivility, and bullying in the academic setting. Due to the high stress and demands of university, female personnel often have to deal with rude or disrespectful behavior while doing their jobs. With this, there is a pressing need for effective support systems for victims of sexual harassment, and proactive organizational frameworks are crucial for combating sexual harassment in higher education (Agbaje et al., 2021). Administrators might consider instituting policies and standards that delineate permissible and unacceptable conduct among employees regarding sexual harassment in the work environment (Friborg et al., 2017). Restructuring working conditions in universities, particularly concerning women, confronting detrimental academic masculinity, and instituting effective strategies to eliminate VAW are imperative (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020).

Notably, many victims of GBV abuse have not reported to law enforcement, relevant organizations, family members or relatives. Victims perceive violence as a common occurrence, feel embarrassed or ashamed of themselves, and believe that seeking help will not be effective (Asegu et al., 2023). Further, victims may not know what to do, afraid of public ridicule and bring embarrassment to their family (Asegu et al., 2023), afraid of losing jobs (Agbaje et al., 2021; Asegu et al., 2023), socioeconomic insecurity, and poverty (Dahal et al., 2022). Fear remains the most extensive reason for silence, such as fear of losing their home, fear for the safety of their children, and fear to the legal system and process (Gurm & Marchbank, 2020).

Research Significance

Studying the awareness of GBV among the employees of the local university is crucial for various reasons. It may provide insight into the level of understanding and recognition of this pervasive issue within the university community, which is essential to effectively address and prevent GBV-related incidents. Understanding the level of awareness helps identify gaps in the university practices relevant to GBV, informing the development of targeted interventions to further knowledge and response mechanisms. Exploring awareness helps uncover cultural or institutional barriers that hinder employee reporting and support-seeking behaviors, thereby, creating avenues to come up with a more supportive and responsive environment for victims and survivors. Further, such exploration facilitates the implementation of preventive measures, support services, and policy reforms, and thus, foster a culture of gender equality, enhance employee well-being, and promote a culture of respect, equity, and safety for all employees.

Research Gap

With the widespread observance of GBV among female employees in the university, effective support services for victims, including the promotion of proactive organizational frameworks, are urgently needed (Agbaje et al., 2021). There is a need to establish policies and benchmarks that clearly define acceptable and unacceptable behaviors among employees (Friborg et al., 2017), and implement efficacious strategies to eradicate GBV (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). A baseline to this approach is the need to have a more profound employees' comprehension of the scope and attributes of different forms of GBV, VAW (Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005), VAWG, and VAWC (Philippine Commission on Women, 2024b). This constitutes exploring the GBV awareness of university employees in the local university. Exploring GBV awareness among university employees is imperative as it safeguards the fundamental rights of all members, ensuring a workplace free from violence of any form.

Research Aim and Questions

The study aimed to explore the level of GBV awareness among the local university employees. It also aimed to explore the differences in the employees' GBV awareness when grouped according to sex and age. In the conduct of the study, the following guide questions were used:

1. What is the level of GBV awareness among university employees?
2. Are there significant differences in the level of GBV awareness among university employees according to sex and age?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender-based Violence Forms

Psychological Violence. All GBV forms contain psychological, emotional, or mental elements, given that their fundamental goal is to cause damage to a person's dignity. There are unique expressions of violence that do not fit into other categories of GBV, leading to a distinct form of psychological violence (Council of Europe, 2023b). These include intimidating behavior, spreading false information, concealing information, restricting freedom, showing a deliberate lack of concern, and showing little respect for another person. Likewise, it involves isolating a woman or a girl, imposing financial constraints, indulging in violence, or making threats against her cherished assets (Akudolu et al., 2023; Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). It also covers making someone feel bad about themselves, insulting them, or embarrassing them (Asegu et al., 2023). Overall, it encompasses various manipulative and abusive acts with psychological aspects, making it challenging due to its cultural and diverse manifestations (Akudolu et al., 2023; Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002).

Socioeconomic violence. Women are often deprived of the requisite economic sustainability and social protection opportunities (Akudolu et al., 2023). Unemployment rates have been rising and have typically been higher among women, having an upward trend and have consistently maintained a more significant level (World Economic Forum, 2022). It could be linked to ongoing systemic impediments and social and technological developments in the labor force, where women and girls face formidable challenges. In South Asia, women continue to encounter substantial barriers to attaining property and independence. Women are commonly assigned riskier and low-paying professions due to their unique burden of unpaid work, limiting their workforce participation (Ali et al., 2023). In universities, women who work casually or on a contract basis, and hence, earn a lower income, tend to face more GBV-related incidents due to the lack of or inefficient processes, and the fear of vengeance. Victims may not seek help because of negative perceptions of university-based policies and support mechanisms (Agbaje et al., 2021).

Sexual Violence. It includes forced intercourse with the use of threat, intimidation, and physical force, as well as coerced participation in humiliating sexual activities, and the refusal to use contraception or take discretion against sexually transmitted diseases. Sexual violence is the act of subjecting a woman to sexual acts against her consent, whether by an individual or a group of people. It can be committed by an intimate partner, relative, acquaintance, or stranger, targeting young girls, teenagers, and women (Akudolu et al., 2023; Krantz & Garcia-Moreno, 2005). Instances in South Asia may be linked to the prevalent and accepted practice of child marriage, an imbalance in the sex ratio of the population, and the disregard for women's health (Ali et al., 2023). Rape and attempted rape often involve male perpetrators who are influential and wealthy, targeting victims in the lower class, where most of these cases were resolved through financial negotiations as opposed to litigation (Dahal et al., 2022). Other cases involve telling sexual verbal jokes or comments, showing porn movies, and not consensual sexual touch, such as touching the breasts, genitalia, or kissing (Asegu et al., 2023). Sexual harassment among university women may occur as a result of a poor organizational climate and working environment that allow supervisors, colleagues, or subordinates to engage in sexual harassment (Agbaje et al., 2021).

Physical Violence. Often, intentionally inflicted damage is obscured by pretexts of unintentional occurrences. It is demonstrated through explicit hostile behaviors, including but not limited to biting, slapping, stomping, strangulation, and the use of weapons. It could potentially lead to psychological constraints, medical complications, and in the direst cases, death. Women suffer severe injuries on occasion, which at times, leads to their demise (Akudolu et al., 2023). The prevalence of physical violence in South Asia can also be ascribed to the institutional environment and discriminatory cultural norms that contribute to the disregard for the rights of women (Ali et al., 2023). The majority of women were subjected to physical violence at the hands of intoxicated males. Additionally, battery, disputes, and verbal maltreatment were frequently encountered by women (Dahal et al., 2022). Moreover, physical bullying among university women may indicate a long-lasting issue and a broken system, hinting at an organizational culture that allows detrimental behaviors or negative actions (Agbaje et al., 2021).

Violence Against Women and Children in the Philippines

In the Philippines, many GBV cases are not reported to the police, and thus, perpetrators do not face legal consequences. Many female victims show reluctance to take legal action against their attackers, who are usually their husbands or male partners. Although many victims go to the VAWC desks in their barangays, the intention is simply to seek momentary assistance, but with no intention of reporting the incident to the police for legal action. This is because of the victims' belief that their husbands or companions will eventually change (Commission on Human Rights, 2022; Lagsa, 2022; Kanval et al., 2024). Some women are unable to openly reveal that they are physically or sexually abused by their partners due to the fear of getting implicated in a scandal, and are likewise embarrassed to describe their experiences (Lagsa, 2022; Philippine Commission on Women, 2024a). A majority of abused women are financially dependent on their spouses or partners and cannot stand the loss of breadwinners for their families, and hence, opt to keep silent and tolerate the abuse for the sake of their children (Lagsa, 2022).

In response to GBV, the safety of both women and children has been a priority in the country. Republic Act (R. A.) 9262 or the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) Act of 2004, was enacted in response to the country's ongoing incidences of VAWC. As indicated in this law, children are "those who are below eighteen (18) years of age or over but are unable to fully take care of themselves or protect themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition" (Official Gazette, 2009; Philippine Commission on Women, 2010). R.A. 9262 or the Anti-VAWC Act of 2004 asserts that all forms of VAWC are public crimes. It defines VAWC as "any act or a series of acts committed by any person

against a woman who is his wife, former wife, or against a woman with whom the person has or had a sexual or dating relationship, or with whom he has a common child, or against her child whether legitimate or illegitimate, within or without the family abode, which result in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering, or economic abuse including threats of such acts, battery, assault, coercion, harassment or arbitrary deprivation of liberty" (Official Gazette, 2004).

Integrated into the Anti-VAWC Act of 2004 is the creation of an Inter-Agency Council on VAWC to ensure its strict implementation and reduce crime against women and children. This inter-agency council consists of national and local agencies collaborating for security, social welfare and development, human rights and justice, labor and workforce, health and wellness, and education (Official Gazette, 2004). Aside from the Anti-VAWC Act of 2004, other laws crafted to protect the women and children in the country include R. A. 3815: The Revised Penal Code, R. A. 7877: Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995, R. A. 9710: Magna Carta of Women, R. A. 8353: Anti-Rape Law of 1997, R. A. 8369: Rape Victim Assistance and Protection Act of 1998, and R. A. 9208: The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003.

Despite the plethora of legal frameworks that safeguard children and women, GBV continues to escalate within the nation. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) 2017 - National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), one in every four (26%) Filipino women aged 15 to 49 have experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence. Within this group, physical violence was reported by 14% of the women, emotional violence by 20%, and sexual violence by 5%, all perpetrated by their current or former spouse or companion (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2018). One reason why Filipino women are vulnerable to violence is the belief that they fail to fulfill their marital duties, which can result in physical abuse from their partners. Workplace sexual harassment reports may stem from physical attraction. Further, majority of women are being sexually assaulted due to their flirtatious behavior (Philippine Commission on Women, 2024a).

Gender and Development Policies Towards Gender Equality in the Philippines

As a characteristic of the Philippine patriarchal society, and based on most traditions, it has been a societal assumption that men should be the primary revenue earners and decision-makers. At the same time, women are expected to fulfill household tasks. While changes on this aspect are taking place, and a growing acknowledgment of women's rights is observed, some aspects of these systems persist. A multitude of organizations and social movements, however, strive to deconstruct this patriarchal system, advance gender equality, and empower women in the nation.

In the recent years, the country has undertaken proactive measures to advance gender equality and consciousness in support to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Global Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015. The nation's dedication to achieving gender equality is firmly grounded in SDG 5: Gender Equality. The pursuit of authentic and lasting gender equality for women and girls in all spheres of life is the main goal of SDG 5. Its objectives include abolishing VAWG, preventing child and forced marriage, ensuring equitable chances for leadership involvement and promotion, and assuring global access to reproductive and sexual health liberty (Philippine Commission on Women, 2024b; United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

Another movement observed to eradicate GBV, VAW, VAWG, or VAWC in the country constitutes the implementation of various Gender and Development (GAD) policies, programs, and activities. GAD highlights the significance of the active participation of women in political processes to strengthen their standing, and encourage women participation in the development process instead of being inert beneficiaries of development aids. It seeks to promote gender equality as a fundamental principle to guide decisions related to development, strives to reform society's economic, political, and social structures, and questions the legitimacy of traditional gender roles assigned to males and females. It encompasses a perspective and process of development distinguished by the subsequent qualities:

participation and empowerment, sustainability, equity, non-violence, promotion of self-determination, adherence to human rights, and actualization of human capabilities (Philippine Commission on Women, 2024a). Further, the establishment of the gender-responsive education policy for the educational sector provides significant benefits to the school employees and the students. By addressing gender issues and ensuring that all genders have equal access to learning opportunities, this policy helps to achieve gender equality in education (Canuto & Espique, 2023).

In the local university, Ifugao State University (IFSU) has been actively involved in the implementation of various GAD programs, projects, and activities for its employees, reflecting the country's dedication and mandate towards achieving SDG 5: Gender Equality along with the other SDGs. IFSU embodies "an institution of men and women who strongly believe that development is for all, where everyone, male, and female, has the right to equal opportunities to achieve a full and satisfying life" (IFSU, 2024). With this, several policies and guidelines are crafted for the protection of its employees. This includes adherence to non-discrimination against women and transgender applicants and employees, strict implementation of employee maternity and paternity leaves and benefits, continuous establishment of childcare infrastructure and facilities such as lactation rooms, and observance of women's mentoring schemes. The university is also actively involved in GAD-related information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns, collaborating with local government units (LGUs), conducting GAD-related extension and research activities, capacitating employees to participate in GAD seminars, workshops, and training (SWT), conferences and meetings, and utilizing appropriate technologies to address gender issues and concerns (IFSU, 2024; IFSU GAD, 2021).

The country has become the second gender-equal nation in East Asia and the Pacific as a result of the implementation of GAD programs and SDG 5 initiatives (World Economic Forum, 2022). This achievement is broad in scope, encompassing education, employment, political representation, healthcare, legal rights, cultural standards, and social expectations. This recognition implies that men and women have equal access to resources, opportunities, and social benefits, promoting a fair and unbiased society where people are recognized based on their ability rather than their gender. It demonstrates that the Philippines has successfully developed a sociocultural framework that promotes equal opportunities, rights, and treatment for people of all genders.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study utilized a quantitative approach to assess the level of awareness regarding GBV among the selected university employees. The same approach was also used to determine notable differences in their demographic profiles. Quantitative research is distinguished by its structured and standardized approaches to data collection, facilitating the measurement of specific variables and the application of statistical methods for data analysis (Creswell, 2009). The study systematically gathered and examined numerical data from the participants' responses to achieve its research aims and address the research questions. Likewise, a survey research method was employed to capture real-time phenomena and gather data samples from participants representing a population (Williams, 2007). The study was conducted during the third quarter of 2023.

Participants

Using total enumeration, the study involved 17 employees of the IFSU - Tinoc Campus. It is located at Tinoc, Ifugao, Philippines, and is one of the six campuses of IFSU. The employee participants comprised both the teaching and the non-teaching staff of the campus. Although everyone was included, the number of participants reflects the small workforce population of the campus due to its low student population. As presented in Table 1, the employees comprised 47% males and 53% females. They were grouped according to ages 21 - 30 years old, and 31 - 40 years old, both at 24%,

including 41 - 50 years old at 47%, and 51 - 60 years old at 6%. The employees were selected in response to the university's aims of conducting GAD-related studies in support to SDG 5 and the country's Anti-VAWC Act of 2004. The participants were not further categorized, which might lead to subgroups that were too small to draw meaningful conclusions from. Instead, the participants were studied collectively.

Table 1. Demographic profiles of the university employees

| Profiles | N = 17 | Percentage |
|----------------------|--------|------------|
| 1. Sex | | |
| a. Male | 8 | 47% |
| b. Female | 9 | 53% |
| 2. Age | | |
| a. 21 - 30 years old | 4 | 24% |
| b. 31 - 40 years old | 4 | 24% |
| c. 41 - 50 years old | 8 | 47% |
| d. 51 - 60 years old | 1 | 6% |

Instrument

The researchers used a self-designed survey questionnaire. It was validated by two local police officers and a social worker specializing in GBV, VAW, and VAWC. The survey was found to have an Aiken's validity coefficient of .94, implying valid item questions. Through pilot testing involving 30 participants, the survey was found to have an overall Cronbach's alpha of .98, indicating its reliability and excellent internal consistency. The acts of violence included in the survey were based on the reported cases from the local social worker's office and police stations, including the various forms of GBV as discussed in the literature and the Anti-VAWC Act of 2004. With these, 30-item statements were structured and categorized under the forms of GBV regarding psychological, socioeconomic, sexual, and physical violence. The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was used to identify the demographic profiles of the employees in terms of sex and age. The second part consists of the 30-item statements to identify GBV awareness through a 4-point Likert scale with 4 = Extremely Aware (EA), 3 = Moderately Aware (MA), 2 = Slightly Aware (SA), and 1 = Not at all Aware (NA).

Procedure

After evaluating the validity and reliability of the test items, the survey questionnaires were finalized, printed, and reproduced for data gathering. Afterward, the researchers provided each employee participant with the survey. Directly, informed consent was sought from the employees, detailing the study's aims, procedures, duration, and potential risks. The benefits of participation, including identifying workforce support systems and campus-wide interventions, were underscored. Emphasis was placed on the confidentiality of personal data, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw without repercussions. The participants were guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of their data, with diligent efforts made to safeguard their sensitive information. The researchers personally administered the survey, promptly addressing any participant's concerns.

Using varied set-ups, the participants were given options on how they intended to answer the survey. Some chose to respond directly to the questionnaire, while others requested time to review the items and answer them later. Likewise, some appealed to be in solitude in answering the survey after the researchers explained the study's objectives and contents. Throughout the data gathering, the researchers promptly addressed the participants' concerns. After all the participants responded, data collection and tabulation were conducted using personal computers, with responses stored securely. Statistical analyses were conducted in collaboration with expert colleagues, followed by presenting and interpreting findings.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed to analyze the data concerning employees' awareness of GBV. Frequency count and percentage were utilized to identify the demographic profiles of the employees. Mean (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) were calculated to gauge the level of GBV awareness among employees. A t-test was employed to assess discrepancies in GBV awareness based on employees' sex. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore variations in GBV awareness concerning employees' age groups. To interpret findings regarding GBV awareness, a statistical range was used with 1.00 - 1.49 = Not at all Aware (NA), 1.50 - 2.49 = Slightly Aware (SA), 2.50 - 3.49 = Moderately Aware (MA), and 3.50 - 4.00 = Extremely Aware (EA).

RESULTS

The level of GBV awareness of the IFSU - Tinoc Campus employees is shown in Table 2. Results indicate that the employees were moderately aware of all the GBV forms. Among the GBV forms, they perceived a higher level of moderate awareness of psychological violence. This was followed by socioeconomic violence, sexual violence, and then physical violence.

Table 2. Level of Gender-based Violence Awareness of the University Employees

| Gender-based Violence (GBV) Forms | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Level |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------|------------------|
| a. Psychological Violence | 3.02 | 0.97 | Moderately Aware |
| b. Socioeconomic Violence | 2.98 | 0.94 | Moderately Aware |
| c. Sexual Violence | 2.94 | 1.11 | Moderately Aware |
| d. Physical Violence | 2.88 | 0.93 | Moderately Aware |

As shown in Table 3, the results show varying differences among the employees' GBV awareness when grouped according to sex. There is a significant difference between male and female employees concerning their awareness of physical violence. Meanwhile, there is no significant difference in their awareness of psychological violence, socioeconomic violence, and sexual violence. Upon further inspection, mean values show that the male employees have higher moderate awareness than females.

Table 3. Differences in the Level of Gender-based Violence Awareness Among the Employees According to Sex

| Gender-based Violence (GBV) Forms | Male | | Female | | <i>t</i> -value | <i>p</i> -value |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|---------------------|-----------------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | | |
| a. Psychological Violence | 3.06 | 1.02 | 2.98 | 0.93 | 0.172 ^{ns} | .866 |
| b. Socioeconomic Violence | 3.10 | 0.88 | 2.87 | 0.99 | 0.513 ^{ns} | .615 |
| c. Sexual Violence | 3.03 | 1.10 | 2.86 | 1.11 | 0.321 ^{ns} | .753 |
| d. Physical Violence | 3.38 | 0.74 | 2.44 | 0.88 | 2.359* | .032 |

Note: * = significant ($p < .05$); ns = not significant ($p > .05$)

The data also show varying results when grouped according to age, as seen in Table 4. There are no significant differences in the employees' level of GBV awareness regarding psychological violence and socioeconomic violence. Likewise, there is no significant difference in the employees' perception of sexual violence. On the other hand, there is a significant difference in the level of physical violence awareness among the employees. It is also notable that the employees aged 31 - 40 years old were extremely aware of all the GBV forms. This is in comparison with the other age groups, whose level of awareness was generally moderate regarding psychological, socioeconomic, sexual, and physical violence.

Table 4. Differences in the Level of Gender-based Violence Awareness Among the Employees According to Age

| Gender-based Violence (GBV) Forms | 21 - 30 y/o | | 31 - 40 y/o | | 41 - 50 y/o | | 51 - 60 y/o | | f-value | p-value |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------------|------|---------------------|---------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| a. Psychological Violence | 3.39 | 0.87 | 3.91 | 0.29 | 2.48 | 0.86 | 2.27 | 0.47 | 4.710* | .019 |
| b. Socioeconomic Violence | 3.36 | 0.88 | 3.83 | 0.38 | 2.42 | 0.74 | 2.17 | 0.41 | 4.670* | .020 |
| c. Sexual Violence | 3.44 | 0.90 | 3.81 | 0.39 | 2.27 | 1.07 | 2.83 | 0.58 | 3.167* | .061 |
| d. Physical Violence | 2.75 | 0.96 | 3.75 | 0.50 | 2.63 | 0.92 | 2.00 | 0.71 | 2.029 _{ns} | .160 |

Note: * = significant ($p < .05$); ns = not significant ($p > .05$)

DISCUSSION

The IFSU - Tinoc Campus employees were determined to have a moderate awareness of GBV. This awareness level typically indicates that they possess some understanding of the issue, but may need to be fully knowledgeable about its various aspects, including its prevalence, forms, impacts, and available resources for support and intervention. It further suggests that they possess a basic understanding of the GBV concepts and their relevance within the university environment. Despite positive advances and active implementation of university GAD policies, programs, and activities in eradicating GBV, this may be still due to the persistent GBV issues in the country, as noted by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2018). The employees may recognize some behaviors or situations that constitute GBV, but they may need to grasp the extent or complexity of the issue entirely. Moderate awareness suggests that employees may recognize certain signs or behaviors associated with GBV, but are not fully equipped to address or respond to them effectively, contradictory with the full implementation of the Anti-VAWC Act of 2004 and aspirations of the United Nations and the Philippine Commission on Women (2010). This indicates that they may be aware of specific policies or procedures to address GBV, but still need to be more familiar with all available resources or support services. The moderate level of awareness does not fully reflect the country's gender equality rank as determined by the World Economic Forum (2022). In this context, it is imperative to improve educational initiatives, training programs, and awareness campaigns to enhance employees' understanding of GBV to further empower them to take proactive measures in preventing and addressing related issues within the university setting.

Among the GBV forms, the employees have the most perception of psychological violence. Related to the abuses given by Akudolu et al. (2023), Krantz and Garcia-Moreno (2005), Watts and Zimmerman (2002), and Asegu et al. (2023), the acts of psychological violence in this study included intimidation, harassment, public humiliation, stalking, property damage, repeated verbal abuse, and witnessing pornography in any form. It also included causing or allowing the victim to witness physical, sexual, or psychological abuse of another, mental infidelity, the unlawful or unwanted withholding of the right to visitation and custody of common children, and witnessing abusive injury to pets. This suggests that they have a heightened understanding of the various forms and manifestations of non-physical violence and behaviors that can profoundly impact individuals' mental and emotional well-being, a clear indication of psychological violence as identified by the Council of Europe (2023b). A higher moderate awareness of psychological violence among the university employees demonstrates that they are attuned to recognizing subtle signs of emotional abuse and coercion. This is a testament to the employees upholding the GAD and SDG 5 as supported by IFSU (2024) and the Philippine Commission on Women (2024a). Additionally, it suggests the need for specific educational or training

initiatives focused on raising awareness about psychological violence and its effects, underscoring the importance of addressing physical and emotional safety and well-being within the university.

The non-significant difference in psychological violence, socioeconomic violence, and sexual violence between male and female employees suggests similar perception of both male and female university workforces in these forms of violence. Likewise, the non-significant difference in their awareness of psychological, socioeconomic, and sexual violence discloses that employees across different age groups possess similar levels of knowledge and understanding regarding these forms of violence. It also indicates that these GBV forms are widely recognized and understood regardless of generational differences, reflecting broader societal awareness and efforts to address these issues. The non-significant difference could signify that the organization has implemented effective policies and interventions to mitigate such violence, thereby, minimizing gender disparities in exposure, echoing Agbaje et al.'s (2021) call for effective support systems and proactive organizational frameworks.

On the other hand, the significant difference between the male and female employees regarding their awareness of physical violence may indicate a potential gender disparity in perceptions, experiences, or knowledge of GBV. Fortunately, the prevalence of physical violence against women and children in the area has diminished, as evidenced by the impact of cultural and societal norms as identified by Ali et al. (2023). It can be noted that male employees have a higher perception of physical violence than females. This shows the former's deeper understanding of physical threats as dictated by societal norms, emphasizing protection and physical prowess among males. This is despite the notion that males remain as the major perpetrators of GBV against women, as indicated by the European Institute for Gender Equality (2023). It can also reflect differential exposure to physical violence, with males potentially encountering more situations that highlight the importance of vigilance against physical harm, contrary to the prevalence of GBV issues among university female employees as determined by Agbaje et al. (2021). Further, it may indicate that men are more proactive in identifying and responding to threats. It is crucial, however, to consider whether this awareness stems from actual differences in exposure to violence, societal expectations regarding masculinity and protection, or disparities in safety education. Conversely, it might also suggest that females perceive or report instances of physical violence differently, influenced by cultural or personal factors such as socialization, fear of reporting, or normalization of certain behaviors. As Gurm and Marchbank (2020), Asegu et al. (2023), and Lagsa (2022) posited, women can be overwhelmed by fear or with embarrassment in sharing their experiences.

A significant difference in the level of physical violence awareness among the employees' age groups indicates a variance in their generational perceptions. The younger employees have a higher awareness level than the older ones. This suggests that generational factors may influence perceptions, experiences, or knowledge. Similar to the specific examples of physical violence identified by Akudolu et al. (2023), Krantz and Garcia-Moreno (2005), Ali et al. (2023), Dahal et al. (2022), and Agbaje et al. (2021), the study included determining the employees' awareness concerning punching, kicking, pulling of hair, slapping, pinching, scratching, or biting, strangulation or choking, and beating with the use of weapons. It also included physical bullying and shoving, withholding medical attention and food, being physically restrained, being drugged against will, and being stabbed or shot. Higher awareness of these acts of violence may indicate that younger employees may have grown up in an era with heightened awareness of physical violence, possibly due to increased media coverage or evolving safety regulations. Meanwhile, older employees may rely on past experiences or traditional workplace norms to gauge safety concerns. The heightened awareness of physical violence may be corroborated to the collective efforts of various agencies to engage citizens in promoting policies, programs, and laws against all GBV forms, support of GAD and SDG 5-related activities, and the full implementation of the Anti-VAWC Act of 2004, as Philippine Commission on Women (2024a) denotes.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

GBV is a pervasive and deeply ingrained social issue that encompasses various forms of violence, discrimination, and abuse inflicted upon individuals based on their gender or perceived gender identity. It can be manifested in numerous forms, including psychological, socioeconomic, sexual, and physical violence. It disproportionately impacts majority of women, girls, and children. Addressing GBV requires comprehensive and coordinated efforts at multiple levels, including legal frameworks, policy interventions, community mobilization, and supporting public awareness. The objective of this study was to determine the level of GBV awareness among the local university employees, including determining significant differences based on their sex and age. It was found that the employees perceived a moderate level of psychological, socioeconomic, sexual, and physical violence. Psychological violence had the most moderate awareness. Further, there were no significant differences in the perceived level of psychological, socioeconomic, and sexual violence among the male and female employees across their age groups. Meanwhile, there was a significant difference in the acts of physical violence as perceived by the male and female employees, whether they were younger or older.

With the moderate GBV awareness of the local university employees, they may not fully understand the intersectional nature that shapes experiences of such violence. While moderate awareness indicates a foundation of knowledge, there is, therefore, a need for further education, training, and awareness-building efforts to empower employees to effectively recognize, prevent, and respond to GBV in all its forms. Effective prevention strategies involve challenging harmful gender norms, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, providing access to support services, and holding perpetrators accountable through legal mechanisms. Efforts to eradicate GBV must be intersectional, recognizing and addressing the intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization that exacerbate vulnerability to violence. Overall, putting an end to GBV requires sustained commitment, collective action, and a holistic approach that addresses its root causes while supporting survivors and fostering gender-inclusive societies built on respect, equality, and justice.

The study made a valuable contribution by offering insight into the extent to which university employees comprehend and acknowledge GBV. This information is critical in order to address and prevent the issue proactively. Exploring awareness can uncover institutional barriers that hinder reporting and support-seeking behaviors among employees, thereby, paving the way for the conception of a more supportive and responsive environment. Comprehending the level of awareness aids in pinpointing deficiencies in university procedures about GBV, guiding the creation of specific interventions to enhance understanding and response strategies. With this study, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The study had a limited sample size and did not indicate a broader population. Moreover, the acts of violence in this study were based on a specific sociological and cultural context, and therefore, may not apply to communities with various social and cultural norms and practices.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the conceptualization, review-editing, literature review writing, and the conduct of the research. All authors contributed to data collection, acquisition, and analysis. All authors have read and approved the final and publishable version of this article.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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