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SCHOOL AS A SAFE SPACE THROUGH GENDER-RESPONSIVE BASIC EDUCATION POLICY

ШКОЛА ЯК БЕЗПЕЧНИЙ ПРОСТІР ЗАВДЯКИ ГЕНДЕРНО ЧУТЛИВІЙ ПОЛІТИЦІ БАЗОВОЇ ОСВІТИ

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ABSTRACT

Quality education promotes gender-responsive policies. Yet, this is not always the case in developing countries like the Philippines. There are gaps in policy implementation, and safety issues faced by LGBTQIA+ learners persist.

Purpose. This study focuses on teachers' and learners' perception of Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (GRBEP) implementation and the safety of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and expanding identities (LGBTQIA+) learners in public and private schools. Hence, it determined the GRBEP implementation level and LGBTQIA+ learners' safety level. No significant correlation between policy implementation and learners' safety, and no significant difference between public and private schools' policy implementation and learners' safety were assumed. The minimal studies and the urgent need to ensure a gender-responsive and safe learning

Якісна освіта сприяє впровадженню гендерної політики. Тим не менш, це не завжди відбувається в країнах, що розвиваються, таких як Філіппіни. Маємо прогалини у впровадженні гендерної політики, а також поширеність проблем безпеки, з якими стикаються учні нетрадиційної орієнтації.

Мета. Це дослідження має на меті підкреслити сприйняття вчителів і учнів гендерно чутливої базової політики освіти та безпеку учнів – лесбійок, геїв, бісексуалів, трансгендерів, квірів, інтерсексуальних, асексуальних учнів та учнів з розширеною гендерною ідентичністю (ЛГБТКІА+) в державних і приватних школах. Було визначено рівень впровадження гендерно чутливої базової політики і рівень безпеки учнів. Не було встановлено жодного суттєвого взаємозв'язку між впровадженням такої політики та безпекою учнів, а також не було визначено істотної різниці між реалізацією політики державних та приватних шкіл у забезпеченні безпеки учнів. Мінімальна кількість досліджень і невідкладність забезпечення гендерно чутливого та

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environment underscore the significance of this research.

Methodology. Validated questionnaires were distributed to 744 learners and teachers: 401 from private schools and 343 from public schools. The data collected were analyzed using mode, percentage, Pearson's product-moment correlation, and independent samples test.

Results. Learners and teachers perceived a "high level of implementation" of GRBEP in schools. LGBTQIA+ learners were generally "safe" in schools. The implementation level of Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy correlates with the safety level of LGBTQIA+ learners in school, as it was statistically significant ($p=.026 < \alpha=0.05$). There is no substantial evidence of a difference between public and private schools' implementation level of GRBEP ($p = 0.544 > \alpha=0.05$). There is not enough evidence of a significant difference between public and private schools' safety levels of LGBTQIA+ learners ($p = 0.188 > \alpha=0.05$).

Conclusion. An efficient GRBEP implementation by schools ensures a working educational policy. LGBTQIA+ learners are safe in the learning environment. Public and private schools must strengthen awareness campaigns, address misconceptions and overlooked realities, conduct real-time monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms, as well as foster partnerships and linkages to uphold a safe space for every learner. With these actions, policymakers and school administrators can work towards creating a true quality and inclusive education that supports the well-being and success of all learners, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Keywords: LGBTQIA+ safety, learners and teachers, Philippine education, education policy, policy implementation, policy gaps, inclusive education.

безпечного навчального середовища підкреслюють важливість цього дослідження.

Методологія. Пропоновані анкети були розповсюджені 744 учням та вчителям, з яких 401 – з приватних шкіл та 343 – з громадських шкіл. Зібрані дані були проаналізовані за допомогою приросту, відсотків, кореляції Пірсона «пропозиція-час» та тесту незалежних вибірок.

Результати. Учні та вчителі відчують «високий рівень впровадження» гендерної політики в школах. З іншого боку, представники ЛГБТКІА+ були в школі в цілому «у безпеці». Рівень реалізації гендерно чутливої базової освіти співвідноситься з рівнем безпеки учнів ЛГБТКІА+ у школі, оскільки він був статистично значущим ($p = .026 < \alpha = 0,05$). Немає суттєвих доказів різниці між рівнем впровадження гендерно чутливої базової освіти державними та приватними школами ($p = 0,544 > \alpha = 0,05$). Немає достатньо доказів суттєвої різниці між рівнем безпеки в державних і приватних школах учнів ЛГБТКІА+ ($p = 0,188 > \alpha = 0,05$).

Висновки. Ефективне впровадження гендерно чутливої базової освіти в школах забезпечує успішну освітню політику. Учні ЛГБТКІА+ навчаються в безпеці в навчальному середовищі. Державні та приватні школи мають зміцнювати кампанії з підвищення обізнаності щодо цієї проблеми, уникати помилок та непередбачуваних ситуацій, проводити постійний моніторинг, оцінку та механізми зворотного зв'язку в режимі реального часу, а також сприяти партнерству та взаємозв'язкам для підтримки безпечного простору для кожного учня. Завдяки цьому політики та адміністратори шкіл можуть працювати над створенням дійсно якісної та інклюзивної освіти, яка підтримує благополуччя та успіх усіх учнів, незалежно від їхньої сексуальної орієнтації, гендерної ідентичності або гендерного вираження.

Ключові слова: ЛГБТКІА+ безпека, учні та вчителі, філіппінська освіта, освітня політика, реалізація освітньої політики, прогалини освітньої політики, інклюзивна освіта.

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Department of Education, (DepEd), guided by Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5, promises to provide inclusive, equitable, and quality education, and promote gender equality (Department of Education, 2022). Per International Human Rights Law, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and expanding identities (LGBTQIA+) learners have the right to an education free of violence and

discrimination that fosters respect for human rights and fundamental liberties (OHCHR, 2019).

Hence, schools are essential avenues to deepen understanding, appreciation, and involvement in initiatives that advance the rights of everyone. Schools are educational institutions in this context, particularly the secondary level. They are a haven for children and youth to dream, learn, and live freely. However, this is not always the case.

According to the United Nations (2019), LGBTQIA+ learners experience taunting, name-calling, public mockery, intimidation, pushing and beating, theft or damages to property, obscene notes and graffiti, social isolation, cyberbullying, physical and sexual assault, and even death threats. These occur in classrooms, playgrounds, restrooms, changing rooms, online classrooms, as well as on the way to and from school (United Nations [UN], 2019). They are more likely to feel unsafe at school, miss school activities, skip classes, perform poorly academically and drop out (UN, 2019).

Implementation of policies effectively enhances sustainability (Mugambwa et al, 2020). However, theoretical efforts have thus far failed to produce a theory that is coherent enough to guide the implementation of government policies. Priority should be given to public policy implementation to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals on inclusive and quality education, and gender equality. Due to rapid changes globally, challenges in education policy implementation emerge. Mugambwa et al., (2020) argue that modeling dynamic systems will facilitate and enhance policy implementation.

The Department of Education (DepEd) mandated Gender-Responsive Basic Education to safeguard children and youth in schools from gender-based violence, abuse, discrimination, and bullying (DepEd, 2017).

DepEd Order No. 32, series of 2017, which is titled Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (GRBEP), provides the guidelines to integrate the principles of gender equality, equity, and sensitivity into the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and facilities of basic education in the country. DepEd has mandated the strict implementation of the aforementioned executive order, protecting the community from gender-based violence and discrimination nationwide in all elementary and secondary DepEd institutions (Garcia, 2022). This policy is strengthened by the Safe Spaces Act or Republic Act 11313. The law broadened the concept of sexual harassment in public spaces such as schools (Official Gazette, 2019).

Local laws, popularly known as ordinances, also ensure all learners' safety in schools. Anti-discrimination ordinances have been implemented in several cities and eight provinces in the Philippines in recent years. Local governments of Manila City (Ordinance No. 8695, S-2020), Iloilo City (Regulation Ordinance No. 2018-090), Baguio City (Ordinance No. 13, S-2017), Quezon City (Ordinance No. SP-2357, S-2014), Davao City (Ordinance No. 0417-12), and Cebu City (Ordinance No. 2339, S-2012) passed ordinances prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQIA+ members in their workplace and educational institutions. Within Eastern Visayas, only the municipality of San Julian, Eastern Samar (Ordinance No. 05, S-2014) enacted a similar ordinance.

These ordinances expanded the the Department of Education's Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy nationwide objective in public and private schools. LGBTQIA+ youth spend their time mostly in schools, a difficult and threatening space (Johns et al.,

2019). Schools can be scary for them as they experience increased victimization and a lack of safety (Kosciw, et al., 2020). This is alarming since these learners spend approximately 200 to 220 days per year in school, on average eight hours per day. Schools pose a severe concern for LGBTQIA+ youth due to the lack of safety in their school environment.

Galamgam et al., (2021) discovered that a school's policy implementation was not reaching its full potential. Due to a lack of support, monitoring, projects, and services from agencies to teachers, particularly the DepEd, not all teachers noticed the eradication of gender stereotypes and the integration of learning curriculum, resources, and instructional methods (Galamgam et al., 2021).

Though Masangkay (2019) revealed that schools recognize policy and plan formulation, gender-responsive facilities, structure, curriculum, and policy benefits as important indicators in promoting GRBE to learners, Galamgam et al. (2021) discovered a severe lack of GRBE-aligned school health, youth development, and sports development programs, projects, and services, a lack of cooperation and partnership with agencies and organizations for education and other GAD support services, a lack of monitoring and evaluation, research for learner support policy development and service delivery, as well as career guidance and support.

For LGBTQIA+ learners, schools are often unsafe (Guanci, 2022; Russell et al., 2021). Russell et al. (2021) revealed that LGBTQIA+ learners experience hostile school climates, frequent discrimination, and bullying because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Lalu (2020) noted that despite the fundamental right of every Filipino to receive education, LGBTQIA+ learners in the Philippines face shame and prejudice in the classroom. As evidenced by the recent example of Assumption Iloilo, some schools have regulations that allow learners to be expelled for being gay (Lalu, 2020). Hostile school climates and discriminatory experiences can threaten LGBTQIA+ learners' well-being.

In schools, gender-based violence happens, and is not limited to sexual or physical attacks. It can occur in various ways (Pantaleon & Ison, 2020) despite the enactment of the Safe Spaces Act in 2019. Homosexuals, such as lesbians and gays, can be the victims. Pantaleon & Ison (2020) stressed that appropriate implementation of school-based, school-wide violence reduction interventions for teachers and learners would be an effective technique for equitable, compassionate, and peaceful settlement of gender-related violence and abuses.

Numerous researchers have cited the socioemotional, behavioral, and educational risks that LGBTQIA+ learners face in schools (Leung et al., 2022). Attitudes toward violence against the LGBTQIA+ community in the school context were associated with the use of violence as a form of fun to feel better about oneself when violence was perceived as legitimate, and as a means of relating (Pina et al., 2021).

According to Pina et al., (2021), homosexual males and transgender minors were vulnerable to more significant unfavorable attitudes and violent conduct. Cabigan & Grecalda (2023) found the level of obstacles faced by LGBTQIA+ learners in terms of violence, school-related discrimination, and religious freedom to be moderately evident, and their emotional, physical, and social behaviors are incredibly high, high, and high, respectively.

Private school responders were less compliant with policy implementation (Pena et al., 2022). Generale & Emilyn (2023) discovered that high school learners were only moderately aware of gender-related laws and mandates. Despite the efforts of the teachers and the school, LGBTQIA+ learners in high school remain victims of bullying and discrimination (Mutya, et al., 2021).

Despite the mandate to implement GRBEP and the Safe Spaces Act, the safety of LGBTQIA+ learners is still at risk. Bullying was the most prevalent behavior these learners experienced in school (Santos, 2022). Studies reveal persistent teasing, threatening, intimidating, and name-calling, which negatively impacted them, especially their emotions and feelings. They can feel anxious, threatened, conceal feelings, and be unable to trust others. In addition to bullying, LGBTQIA+ learners are often subjected to violence, sexual harassment, and discrimination in schools (Cabigan & Grecalda, 2023; Lalu, 2020; Russell et al., 2021; Thoreson, 2017).

Although Teodoro's (2021) study demonstrated that teachers have a high level of acceptance of LGBTQIA+ learners, as regarded equally by their LGBTQIA+ learners, Mutya et al. (2021) believed that learners who identify as LGBTQIA+ are frequently stigmatized and alienated in school. They expect their demands to be met and understood in the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school facilities. However, schools are ill-equipped to meet these demands.

A few schools are opening doors for LGBTQIA+ to express themselves by allowing feminine male and masculine female Senior High School (SHS) learners to wear uniforms they identify with. However, few schools also provide programs and activities to showcase the learner's individualities, talents, skills, and mental capacities. Many schools remain irresponsive to the call of the DepEd to promote and create a gender-responsive school community.

There are LGBTQIA+ learners who sleep with their traumatic experiences at school and while going to or from the educational institution. Cases of bullying, harassment, and discrimination toward non-binary genders, both online and off, are still rampant in some schools in the country. The learners' schoolmates are often the perpetrators. Worse, teachers can be lenient about these safety issues, and fail to ensure a gender-sensitive learning environment. The scenarios on the ground pose a significant concern that needs urgent attention and intervention.

All these studies and observations prompted the need to determine the implementation level of GRBEP and the level of safety of LGBTQIA+ learners as perceived by teachers and learners. Studies examining the association between GRBEP implementation and LGBTQIA+ learners' safety are rarely done. Also, no study has ever compared public and private schools' policy implementation and LGBTQIA+ learners' safety. Ideally this inquiry would posit areas for educational policy management and governance interventions for schools to ensure a safe space.

– **Statement of Null Hypotheses**

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between the GRBEP implementation and the safety of LGBTQIA+ learners.

H0₂: There is no significant difference between public and private schools' GRBEP implementation levels.

H0₃: There is no significant difference between the safety level of LGBTQIA+ learners at public and private schools.

METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire made by this researcher underwent evaluation by three experts. Forty-one items (95%) had an I-CVI = 1.00, which, according to the standards of Polit & Beck (2006) and Polit et al. (2007), were regarded as having excellent content validity. Two items (5%) had fair content validity, with an I-CVI = 0.67. However, the S-CVI/UA = 0.95 revealed high content validity. After the evaluation, revisions and removal of items in two parts of the tool were implemented. Pilot testing with 30 sample respondents followed. Cronbach’s alpha showed that all scales had reached an excellent reliability of $\alpha = 0.97$. The procedures strengthened the appearance, presentation, and relevance of the tool for release to the respondents. The questionnaires were then administered to senior high school teachers and learners at public and private schools in Maasin City, Southern Leyte, Philippines, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/115-3KA7rXfuq0atejXm9OYFIloYYdN-M?usp=sharing>.

Ethical Procedure

The Ethics-Committee-approved proposal and experts-validated tool led this researcher to send letters to the superintendent of Maasin City Division and the school principals of participating schools. The identities of the SHS teachers and learners were obtained with the superintendent's approval and the school heads' assistance. After approval, consent forms for teachers and assent forms for learners were provided before the study was carried out. They were informed that their participation was voluntary, and the study objectives and procedures were outlined.

RESULTS

– **Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (GRBEP) Implementation**

Table 1

Schools’ GRBEP Implementation Level

Statements	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	Mo
Learners’ and Teachers’ Development					
1. Advocate gender equality in all aspects of development	2	25	55	17	3
2. Include in the school calendar the observance of celebrations related to Gender and Development (GAD)	11	34	44	10	3
3. Support policies on curriculum, instruction, and assessment	3	19	55	20	3
4. Ensure that projects, programs, and activities are made congruent with GRBEP	6	31	47	15	3
5. Conduct capacity building on health development, school sports development, and youth formation	3	21	50	24	3

Learning and Teaching Delivery

<i>Design gender-responsive models of instruction</i>	4	28	54	12	3
<i>Formulate gender-responsive teaching and learning approaches and assessment models</i>	5	27	54	13	3
<i>Maintain gender-responsive instructional delivery and services</i>	5	28	53	14	3
<i>Ensure gender-sensitive learning strategies and standards</i>	4	21	44	20	3

Learning and Teaching Environment

<i>Ensure a gender-responsive physical or social learning environment</i>	4	21	53	20	3
<i>Promote the institutionalization of gender-responsive teaching-learning plans, guides, processes, activities, and mechanisms and measures</i>	4	27	47	22	3
<i>Provide adequate and responsive capacity-building activities for teachers</i>	5	26	50	18	3
<i>Strengthen and sustain the capacity of administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers in handling gender-based cases</i>	4	26	50	18	3

Learning and Teaching Resources

<i>Create and distribute gender-responsive learning resources (LRs)</i>	6	35	46	12	3
<i>Ensure well-trained writers, editors, evaluators, layout artists, illustrators, and focal persons of LRs</i>	5	30	47	16	3
<i>Conduct prospective publishing and development teams' orientation</i>	6	31	48	14	3
<i>Provide and assure quality GAD learning resources</i>	4	27	44	15	3

Learning and Teaching Assessment

<i>Ensure gender-responsive and culture-sensitive formative and summative assessments</i>	4	31	49	14	3
<i>Include GAD core messages and key concepts in the test development process</i>	5	35	46	13	3
<i>Conduct a GAD orientation for test-item writers</i>	7	36	42	13	3
<i>Integrate gender-equality elements in monitoring all forms of assessments in the school</i>	4	30	48	16	3

Learning and Teaching Facilities

<i>Establish development programs and educational facilities consistent with GRBEP principles</i>	5	32	49	13	3
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<i>Ensure safe, functional, gender-sensitive facilities</i>	4	25	49	21	3
<i>Provide teen hubs or adolescent-friendly spaces</i>	6	29	45	18	3
<i>Build GRBEP-compliant learning centers</i>	9	35	41	14	3
	5	28	48	16	3

(Legend: 1 = No implementation at all, 2 = Low level of implementation, 3 = High level of implementation, 4 – Advanced level of implementation, Mo = Mode)

Table 1 shows the “high level of implementation” of GRBEP in schools, as perceived by the learners and teachers. However, the smallest difference, 6%, between “low level of implementation” (36%) and “high level of implementation” (42%), focused on schools “conducting a Gender and Development (GAD) orientation for test-item writers” and “building GRBEP-compliant learning centers.”

Teachers and learners believed schools did not “include in the school calendar the observance and celebrations related to GAD,” with 11% or “no implementation at all.” More importantly, 24% of the respondents said schools had an “advanced level of implementation” with regard to “conducting capacity building on health development, school sports development, and youth formation.”

– **Safety of LBTQIA+ Learners in School**

Table 2

School Safety Level for LGBTQIA+ Learners

Statements	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	Mo
<i>Bullying from schoolmates or classmates</i>	20	30	40	10	3
<i>Hostility of classmates or schoolmates</i>	6	26	55	11	3
<i>Discrimination from co-learners or teachers</i>	19	27	41	11	3
<i>Death threats from classmates or schoolmates</i>	24	13	37	26	3
<i>Catcalling in classrooms or school premises</i>	14	36	40	9	3
<i>Alienation from school activities or learning opportunities</i>	6	24	54	14	3
<i>Risks in behavior in classrooms or on school premises</i>	8	28	51	11	3
<i>Unfavorable attitudes toward peers or classmates</i>	11	32	46	9	3
<i>Homophobic remarks from classmates, schoolmates, or teachers</i>	16	32	40	10	3
<i>Unwanted sex invites from classmates, schoolmates, or teachers</i>	15	20	37	27	3

<i>Online hate by schoolmates or classmates</i>	15	32	42	10	3
<i>Isolation due to virtual pressure from online bullying via Messenger</i>	14	29	43	12	3
<i>Demotivated to attend online meetings because of hurtful remarks from classmates, schoolmates, or teachers</i>	11	24	51	13	3
<i>Cyberstalking and incessant messaging of classmates, schoolmates, or teachers</i>	14	28	44	12	3
<i>Online threats sent by classmates, schoolmates, or teachers</i>	15	22	46	16	3
<i>Impersonation of identities by classmates or schoolmates</i>	14	24	47	13	3
<i>Recording or sharing of photos, videos, or information without permission by classmates or schoolmates</i>	20	31	40	8	3
<i>Posting lies on social media by classmates or schoolmates to harm the learner's reputation</i>	18	29	38	13	3
	15	27	44	13	3

(Legend: 1 = Extremely unsafe, 2 = Unsafe, 3 = Safe, 4 = Very safe, Mo = Mode)

Learners and teachers perceived schools to be generally “safe,” as shown in Table 2. However, LGBTQIA+ learners were “extremely unsafe” from “death threats from classmates or schoolmates” as shown by 24% of the responses. A difference of 4%, between “unsafe” (36%) and “safe” (40%), indicated a prevalence of “catcalling in classrooms or on school premises,” and are “very safe” from “unwanted sex invites from classmates, schoolmates, or teachers.”

– **Relationship between GRBEP Implementation Level and the Safety Level of LGBTQIA+ Learners**

Table 3
Correlations

		GRBEPI	LGBTQIA+S
GRBEPI	Pearson Correlation	1	.081*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.026
	N	744	744
LGBTQIA+S	Pearson Correlation	.081*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	
	N	744	744

(**GRBEPI** = Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy Implementation, **LGBTQIA+S** = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and expanding identities Safety; an asterisk (*) signifies a correlation)

A Pearson’s product-moment correlation was run. The result determined a weak positive correlation between the implementation level of Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy and the safety level of LGBTQIA+ learners in school, which was statistically significant ($r = .081, n = 744, p = .026$). The P-value is less than $\alpha = 0.05$; thus, the study rejected the null hypothesis.

– **GRBEP Implementation Level Compared**

Table 4

Independent Samples Test for Public and Private Schools

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PubSGI – PriSGI	3.300	.377	.188	-1.620	1.060	-.665	3	.554

(**PubSGI** = Public Schools GRBEP Implementation, **PriSGI** = Private Schools GRBEP Implementation)

Table 4 shows no significant evidence of a difference between public and private schools’ implementation level of GRBEP ($t(3) = -.665, p = 0.544$), as the P-value is higher than $\alpha = 0.05$. Hence, it indicated a maintained null hypothesis.

– **Safety of LGBTQIA+ Learners Compared**

Table 5

Independent Samples Test for Public and Private Schools

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PubSS – PriSS	2.494	.988	.571	-1.468	4.838	1.701	3	.188

(**PubSS** = Public Schools Safety, **PriSS** = Private Schools Safety)

Based on Table 5, there is not enough evidence of a significant difference between public and private schools’ safety level of LGBTQIA+ learners ($t(3) = 1.701, p = 0.188$). Since the P-value is higher than $\alpha = 0.05$, the study failed to reject the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

Learners and teachers saw a high level of GRBEP implementation in schools, which affirmed Villanueva’s (2023) findings that showed a well-implemented policy as perceived by teachers. Schools demonstrated advanced implementation in capacity building for health development, school sports development, and youth formation. These results manifest efficient educational management and governance.

Nevertheless, based on the evidence, schools did not incorporate GAD-related observances and celebrations in their calendar.

Also, a significant number of teachers and learners argue about whether or not a GAD orientation for test-item writers was conducted and GRBEP-compliant learning centers were built in schools. The result emphasizes the value of focused interventions in research, learning settings, pedagogy (Sytnykova, 2020), curriculum development, capacity building, and knowledge management (Barairo et al., 2024).

On the other hand, learners and teachers thought schools were safe, even though Kosciw et al. (2020) report that schools are scary due to the lack of safety for non-binary learners. It contextualizes the general condition of physical and online classrooms to be protective and protected learning spaces. However, though LGBTQIA+ learners were highly safe from unsolicited sex invitations from peers, schoolmates, or teachers, they were extremely vulnerable to death threats from classmates and schoolmates. Catcalling was common in classrooms and on school grounds.

Although internet platforms, printed materials, and curriculum integration are common ways of informing educational stakeholders of gender-responsive policies, and implementing them, there can be important obstacles to overcome, including limited funding, ignorance, and cultural resistance (Inductivo, 2024). Inductivo (2024) emphasizes that to guarantee the successful execution of policies, cultural change, sufficient funding, and improved critical thinking are essential.

Fortunately, the implementation level of Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy can be associated with the safety level of LGBTQIA+ learners in school. A gender-responsive policy can promote safety for third-gendered learners. In consideration between public and private schools' implementation level of GRBEP and the safety level of LGBTQIA+ learners as not statistically different, it means that their relationship is likely due to chance.

These results somehow clarify findings by Pena et al. (2022) that public school learners were more knowledgeable about the provisions of the policy while private school learners were less compliant with policy implementation. Both types of schools are observed to probably be compliant with the policy, making sure that LGBTQIA+ learners are safe as well.

This investigation projects a consideration of determining the significant difference between learners' and teachers' perceptions of gender-responsive educational policy implementation and third-gendered learners' safety in schools. It is empirical in order to provide an in-depth discovery of the "whys" and "hows" of schools in managing and governing toward a gender-responsive and gender-sensitive academic community.

CONCLUSION

Efficient GRBEP implementation in schools ensures a working educational policy. LGBTQIA+ learners are safe in the learning environment. While GRBEP implementation correlates with LGBTQIA+ learners' safety in schools, the policy implementation and learners' safety in public and private schools have no significant statistical difference. To heighten the effectiveness of gender-responsive policies, all school leaders need to determine their policy compliance and its extent, as well as the implementation

challenges, and address them. While third-gendered learners are considerably safe in schools, policy implementers like teachers can maximize their efforts through the active participation and interventions of other stakeholders within the academic community.

Public and private schools must strengthen awareness campaigns, address misconceptions and overlooked realities, conduct real-time monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms, and foster partnerships and linkages to uphold a safe space for every learner. Ultimately, policymakers and school administrators can work towards creating a quality and inclusive education system that supports the well-being and success of all learners, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

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