



Examining Teachers' Awareness of Gender-Responsive Teaching Through a School Learning Action Cell (SLAC): A One-Group Pretest–Posttest Study

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Integrating Gender and Development (GAD) principles into classroom instruction is a key mandate of the Philippine Department of Education. However, despite established policies and institutional guidelines, many teachers still encounter difficulties in translating gender-responsive concepts into effective classroom practices. This study evaluated the effectiveness of a School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) session in improving secondary school teachers' knowledge and awareness of gender-responsive teaching.

Materials and Methods: A quantitative one-group pretest–posttest design was employed with 30 secondary school teachers. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument composed of Likert-scale statements and situational items administered before and after a structured SLAC session. The intervention focused on key principles, policies, and practical applications of gender-responsive teaching. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' responses, while a paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference between pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant.

Results: Participants demonstrated generally favorable baseline awareness of gender-responsive teaching ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.68$). Knowledge scores increased from the pretest ($M = 8.90$, $SD = 2.50$) to the posttest ($M = 9.77$, $SD = 1.72$). The paired-samples t-test showed a statistically significant improvement, $t(29) = -3.21$, $p = .003$. The lower posttest standard deviation also indicated greater consistency in participants' understanding after the intervention.

Conclusion: A single, well-designed SLAC session can significantly improve teachers' knowledge and awareness of gender-responsive teaching within a limited period. Nevertheless, sustained, scenario-based professional development is recommended to strengthen teachers' confidence and competence in addressing more complex gender-related classroom situations.

Keywords: Gender-Responsive Teaching, School Learning Action Cell, Teacher Awareness, GAD Integration, Professional Development, Inclusive Education

Introduction

Gender-responsive teaching is an important component of inclusive and equitable education. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) promotes Gender and Development (GAD) programs to encourage schools to integrate gender fairness in classroom instruction, learning materials, assessment, and school activities (Department of Education, 2017). Teachers play an important role in ensuring that learners experience a classroom environment that is free from discrimination and gender bias.

Despite existing policies, some teachers still encounter difficulties in applying gender-responsive practices in actual classroom situations. Galamgam et al. (2021) noted that while teachers are generally aware of gender-related policies, classroom implementation remains inconsistent. Similarly, Sicuan (2024) emphasized that teachers often require additional support in handling gender-sensitive situations and inclusive classroom practices.

One strategy used by schools to improve teaching practices is the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC). SLAC sessions encourage collaboration, peer learning, and reflective discussions among teachers (Culajara, 2023). Previous studies found that school-based professional development activities can help improve teachers' instructional competence and classroom practices (Antiola & Fernal, 2024; Mulay, 2025).

This study examined whether an SLAC session could improve teachers' awareness of gender-responsive teaching practices. The study was anchored on Transformative Learning Theory and Social Learning Theory, which emphasize reflection, collaboration, and learning through interaction.





Gender-responsive teaching has become a very important component of inclusive and equitable education systems worldwide. In the Philippines, the Department of Education has institutionalized Gender and Development (GAD) through policies that mandate the integration of gender principles into curriculum design, teaching strategies, assessment practices, and school governance. Despite these directives, empirical evidence suggests that teachers' application of gender-responsive practices remains inconsistent, particularly in classroom management and instructional decision-making.

The researchers are public school educators actively involved in implementing Gender and Development (GAD) programs and School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) activities within the Department of Education. Their direct engagement in teacher professional development and classroom instruction motivated the conduct of this study. The researchers recognize that their experiences and advocacy for inclusive education may influence the interpretation of findings; therefore, efforts were made to ensure objectivity through standardized data collection procedures and statistical analysis.

Previous studies indicate that many professional development initiatives focus primarily on policy orientation rather than measuring their immediate instructional impact. As a result, teachers may demonstrate awareness of gender equality concepts without consistently translating them into classroom practices. This gap underscores the need to examine the effectiveness of school-based, short-term professional learning interventions that are feasible within limited time and resource constraints.

This study addresses this gap by examining the impact of a single School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) session on secondary teachers' knowledge and awareness of gender-responsive teaching. Anchored in Transformative Learning Theory and Social Learning Theory, the study evaluates whether a structured, collaborative learning session can produce measurable improvements in teachers' gender-responsive competence. By focusing on short-term outcomes, the research provides practical insights into the potential of SLAC as a scalable and cost-efficient professional development mechanism that supports gender mainstreaming in education.

Objectives

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of a School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) session in improving teachers' awareness of gender-responsive teaching. Specifically, it sought to: (1) determine the level of teachers' awareness regarding gender-responsive teaching practices; and (2) determine whether a significant difference exists between teachers' pretest and posttest scores after the SLAC session.

Literature review

Gender-responsive teaching promotes fairness, inclusivity, and equal participation among learners regardless of gender identity. UNESCO (2021) explained that gender-responsive pedagogy helps create safe and inclusive learning environments by reducing stereotypes and discriminatory practices in schools. In the Philippine setting, the Department of Education strengthened gender mainstreaming through the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy.

However, several studies reported that challenges in implementation still exist. Galamgam et al. (2021) found that teachers often possess general awareness of gender concepts but may struggle to apply these principles consistently in classroom situations. Sicuan (2024) also emphasized the need for continuous teacher training related to gender-sensitive instruction and classroom management.

School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions have been recognized as collaborative professional development activities that support reflective teaching and peer learning. Culajara (2023) and Mulay (2025) reported that SLAC sessions positively influence teachers' instructional practices and professional growth. Similarly, Antiola & Fernal (2024) found that school-based collaborative learning activities help strengthen teacher competence and confidence.

The present study was anchored on Transformative Learning Theory by Mezirow (1991), which explains that adult learning occurs through reflection and reassessment of experiences. It was also grounded in Social Learning Theory by Bandura (1977), which highlights learning through observation and social interaction. These theories support the use of collaborative learning environments such as SLAC sessions in improving teachers' awareness of gender-responsive teaching practices.



Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the Gender and Development (GAD) framework and the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) mechanism of the Department of Education. Using the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model, the framework illustrates how teachers’ baseline knowledge of GAD principles (Input), when subjected to a structured SLAC session (Process), leads to increased knowledge, awareness, and commitment to gender-responsive teaching (Output).

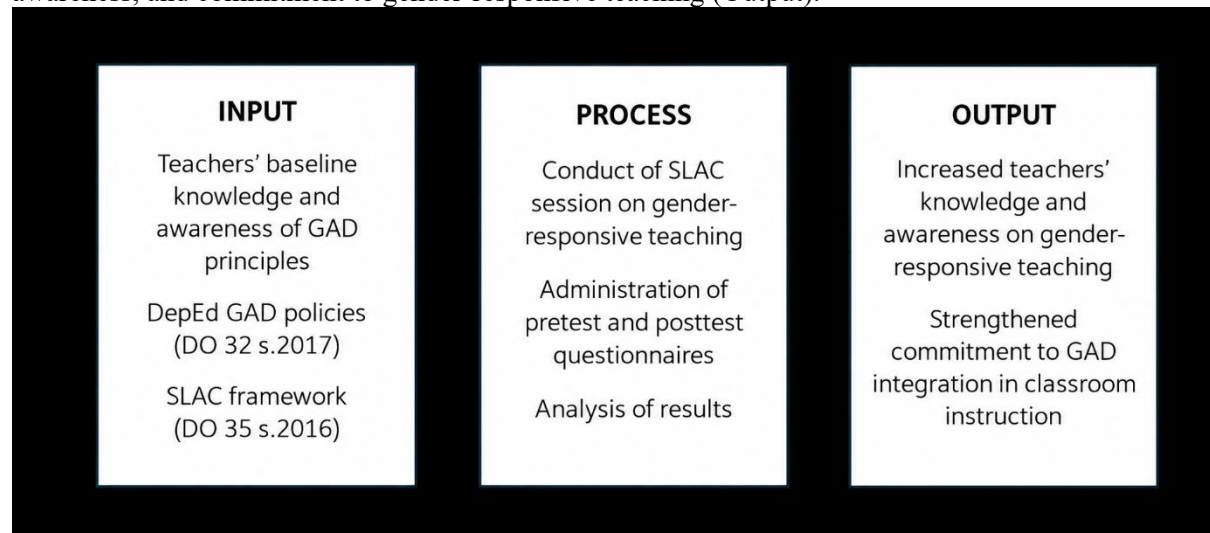


Figure 1: IPO Model of Conceptual Framework

The framework underscores the role of collaborative professional learning in bridging policy mandates and classroom practice. By aligning legal GAD policies with school-based professional development, the model highlights SLAC as a mechanism for institutionalizing gender-responsive teaching within everyday instructional contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. This design was used to determine whether participation in a School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) session improved teachers’ awareness of gender-responsive teaching practices.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants of the study were thirty secondary school teachers from Tambulig National High School. Complete enumeration sampling was used since all teachers who attended the SLAC session participated in the study.

Research Instrument

The researchers used a researcher-made questionnaire composed of Likert-scale items and situational multiple-choice questions related to gender-responsive teaching practices. To establish content validity, the instrument was evaluated by three experts in educational research and Gender and Development (GAD). Revisions were incorporated based on their suggestions. A pilot test was conducted among teachers outside the study participants, yielding a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating good internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was secured from the school administration. Participants answered the pretest before the SLAC session. The SLAC session included discussions on gender-responsive teaching, gender bias in instructional materials, inclusive classroom practices, and DepEd GAD policies. After the session, participants completed the posttest questionnaire.



Statistical Treatment of Data

Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to describe teachers' awareness levels. A paired-sample t-test was employed to determine whether a significant difference existed between pretest and posttest scores. Jamovi software was used for data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality of responses was strictly observed.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study on the effect of the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) session on teachers' awareness of gender-responsive teaching. It includes the analysis of pretest and posttest scores and the results of the paired-sample t-test. The discussion explains how the SLAC session contributed to improving teachers' awareness and understanding of gender-responsive classroom practices.

Table 1: Teachers' Self-Reported Competence and Awareness in Gender-Responsive Teaching Practices

Teachers' Self-Reported Competence and Awareness in Gender-Responsive Teaching Practices	Total Score	Mean	SD	Likert Description
1. I am aware of DepEd policies on gender-responsive education.	125	4.17	0.65	Agree
2. I can identify gender bias in textbooks or lesson materials.	123	3.97	0.67	Agree
3. I intentionally use examples and resources that represent diverse genders in my lessons.	120	3.87	0.78	Agree
4. I feel confident applying gender-responsive strategies in classroom management.	118	3.80	0.71	Agree
5. I encourage equal participation and leadership opportunities for all students.	134	4.33	0.48	Strongly Agree
6. I am aware of methods for integrating gender principles into my specific subject area.	118	3.80	0.81	Agree
7. I regularly reflect on and adjust my teaching practices to avoid gender bias.	125	4.03	0.49	Agree
8. I understand how gender sensitivity affects students' engagement and achievement.	125	4.03	0.72	Agree
9. I have sufficient knowledge to handle classroom situations involving gender issues.	113	3.63	0.85	Agree
10. My school culture supports and reinforces gender-responsive teaching practices.	122	3.93	0.74	Agree
Total	1223	3.99	0.68	Agree

The analysis of teachers' responses indicates a generally positive level of awareness and competence in gender-responsive teaching, with a total mean of 3.99 (SD = 0.68), corresponding to "Agree" on the Likert scale (Department of Education, 2017). The highest-rated item, promoting equal participation and leadership opportunities for all students (Item 5, M = 4.33, SD = 0.48), reflects teachers' strong commitment to creating inclusive classroom environments (Talib-Bauda et al., 2025). Other highly rated items, including awareness of DepEd policies (Item 1, M = 4.17) and reflective teaching practices to avoid gender bias (Item 7, M = 4.03), further demonstrate that teachers generally understand and apply gender-responsive strategies in their instruction (Culajara, 2023; Mulay, 2025).

When considered alongside the SLAC session results (Table 1), which showed a statistically significant improvement in knowledge and awareness after the intervention ($t(29) = -3.21$, $p = .003$;





mean difference = -0.867), the survey data reinforce that teachers not only increased their understanding but also maintained positive attitudes and consistent engagement in gender-responsive practices.

However, the lowest-rated item, confidence in handling classroom situations involving gender issues (Item 9, $M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.85$), highlights a gap in preparedness for more complex gender-related scenarios (Talib-Bauda et al., 2025). This suggests that while teachers demonstrate overall awareness of gender principles in content, teaching techniques, and classroom management, additional targeted support or scenario-based training could further strengthen their ability to apply these strategies effectively.

Overall, the findings indicate that secondary teachers possess a moderate to high level of awareness regarding the integration of gender principles in teaching, while also identifying areas for further capacity-building to ensure confident and consistent application in diverse classroom situations (Department of Education, 2017; Culajara, 2023; Mulay, 2025).

Table 2. Teachers' Knowledge and Awareness Scores Before and After the SLAC Session

Measure	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE	Shapiro-Wilk W	p (Normality)	t	df	p (Paired t)	Mean Difference	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Pre-Test	30	8.90	9.50	2.50	0.456	0.893	.006	-3.21	29	.003	-0.867	-1.42	-0.314
Post-Test	30	9.77	10.50	1.72	0.313	0.893	.006						

Note. $H_a: \mu_{Pre} - \mu_{Post} \neq 0$. A low Shapiro-Wilk p -value ($< .05$) indicates violation of normality, but the paired t -test is robust to moderate non-normality.

The pretest mean score was 8.90 ($SD = 2.50$), while the posttest mean increased to 9.77 ($SD = 1.72$). The paired-sample t -test revealed a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores, $t(29) = -3.21$, $p = .003$. The findings suggest that the SLAC session contributed to improved teacher awareness of gender-responsive teaching practices. The results also indicate a more consistent understanding among participants after the intervention.

The Shapiro-Wilk test results ($W = 0.893$, $p = .006$) indicate that the pretest and posttest scores deviate from a normal distribution. Although the normality assumption is violated, the paired samples t -test is considered robust to moderate non-normality, especially with sample sizes of 30 or more (Field, 2018; Laerd Statistics, 2015).

The paired samples t -test shows a statistically significant improvement in teachers' knowledge and awareness after the SLAC session, $t(29) = -3.21$, $p = .003$. The mean difference of -0.867 and the 95% confidence interval $[-1.42, -0.314]$ confirm that the observed increase in scores is unlikely due to chance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Bhandari, 2023).

These findings clearly demonstrate that the SLAC session significantly enhanced teachers' competence in applying gender-responsive practices. Teachers not only improved their knowledge, but the variability in scores also decreased, indicating a more uniform understanding of gender-responsive principles across the group. This addresses both research questions by showing improved competence and a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores (Department of Education, 2017; Talib-Bauda et al., 2025).



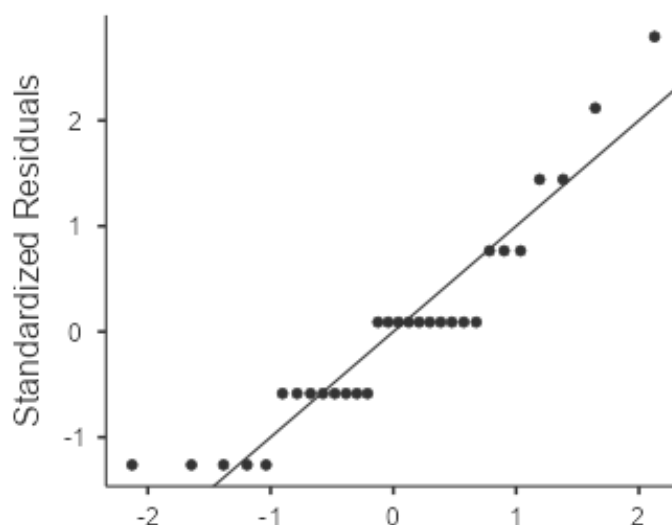


Figure 2. Q-Q Plot of Residuals for Pretest and Posttest Scores

The residual diagnostics provide strong support for the effectiveness and validity of the SLAC intervention in improving teachers' knowledge and awareness of gender-responsive teaching (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Laerd Statistics, 2015). The nearly linear pattern shown in the Q-Q plot indicates that the standardized residuals closely approximate a normal distribution, suggesting that the statistical model accurately represents most of the variability in teachers' pretest and posttest scores without systematic bias (Field, 2018). Minor deviations at the lower and upper tails likely reflect natural differences among teachers, such as prior exposure to GAD concepts, varying levels of teaching experience, or differing familiarity with gender-inclusive strategies (Talib-Bauda et al., 2025). These small variations are common in professional development studies and do not compromise the reliability of the results, particularly since the deviations observed were minimal.

Overall, the residual pattern confirms that the assumptions underlying the statistical tests were satisfactorily met, supporting the robustness of the analysis used to evaluate the SLAC session's impact (Bhandari, 2023; Laerd Statistics, 2015). Because normality was sufficiently satisfied, the observed improvement in teachers' gender-responsiveness scores—and the resulting conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the intervention—can be considered sound and trustworthy. These results add to the growing evidence that short, school-based professional learning modalities, such as SLAC, can meaningfully strengthen teacher competence even in complex areas like gender-responsive pedagogy (Mulay, 2025; Culajara, 2023). For schools implementing DepEd's GAD initiatives, this demonstrates that a well-structured SLAC session is both feasible and statistically reliable for enhancing inclusive and equitable classroom practices (Department of Education, 2017).

Discussion

The descriptive findings show that teachers had a generally positive level of awareness and competence in gender-responsive teaching, as indicated by the grand mean score of 3.99 (SD = 0.68). This shows that the participants held positive knowledge regarding gender responsive concepts and were generally able to incorporate equitable methods in classroom teaching. The highest rated item, which showed instructors' commitment to promote equitable participation among learners, shows that teachers realized the value of giving boys and girls equal chances to participate in classroom activities. This finding is in line with the goal of gender-responsive basic education that promotes learner-centered, inclusive, and equitable teaching practices (Department of Education, 2017).



However, the least confident item was how to manage difficult gender-related circumstances in the classroom. This finding implies that while instructors may be aware of the core concepts of gender responsiveness, they may need more help to implement these principles in sensitive, situational, or conflict-related classroom settings. Gender-responsive teaching demands more than just knowledge; it requires practical decision-making abilities, reflective judgment, and the ability to respond effectively to varied learners' needs (Forum for African Women Educationalists, 2018).

The inferential results also indicated a statistically significant increase in teachers' knowledge and awareness after the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) session. The difference in pretest ($M = 8.90$, $SD = 2.50$) and posttest ($M = 9.77$, $SD = 1.72$) scores was significant, $t(29) = -3.21$, $p = .003$, indicating that the intervention significantly improved participants' comprehension of gender-responsive teaching. The fact that the posttest scores had a smaller standard deviation further shows that teachers' knowledge was more homogeneous following the session. This supports the claim that school-based professional development could help close the knowledge gap among teachers by offering structured spaces for learning, reflection, and cooperation (Culajara, 2023; Deala & Lopez, 2024).

The results show that even a single session at SLAC can increase teachers' knowledge and ability to deliver gender-responsive instruction. This finding is consistent with prior reports that SLAC is a good venue for continued professional development because it allows instructors to work on instructional issues inside their own school setting (Antiola & Fernal, 2024; Mulay, 2025). Through collaborative discussion, instructors learn from each other how to share experiences, dispel myths, and build practical techniques that are immediately relevant to classroom reality.

The Transformational Learning Theory also supports the findings. According to Mezirow (1991), adult learning becomes significant when people critically examine their preconceptions and adjust their perspectives. The SLAC session in this study may have prompted teachers to reflect on their attitudes regarding gender roles, classroom involvement, and inclusive teaching techniques. Likewise, the collaborative character of SLAC aligns with Social Learning Theory, which suggests that people learn through observation, interaction, and shared experiences in a social context (Bandura, 1977). The interaction with peers during the SLAC session may have led to the growth in their knowledge and awareness.

Despite promising outcomes, the lower confidence levels in complicated gender-related classroom scenarios imply that future SLAC sessions should move beyond awareness-building. More practice-oriented activities, such as case study, role-playing, classroom simulations, and scenario-based problem solving, could allow teachers to gain greater confidence and skill in using gender-responsive tactics. Teachers need continuous, ongoing professional development to help them transform knowledge into consistent practice in the classroom (Donath et al., 2023).

Knowledge Contribution

This study contributes to educational research in three key ways. Theoretically, it strengthens the application of Transformative Learning Theory and Social Learning Theory in gender-responsive teacher development. Practically, it provides empirical evidence that SLAC can serve as an effective short-term professional development strategy for enhancing gender awareness. From a policy perspective, the study supports the operationalization of DepEd's GAD framework by demonstrating how school-based learning mechanisms can translate policy mandates into classroom practice.



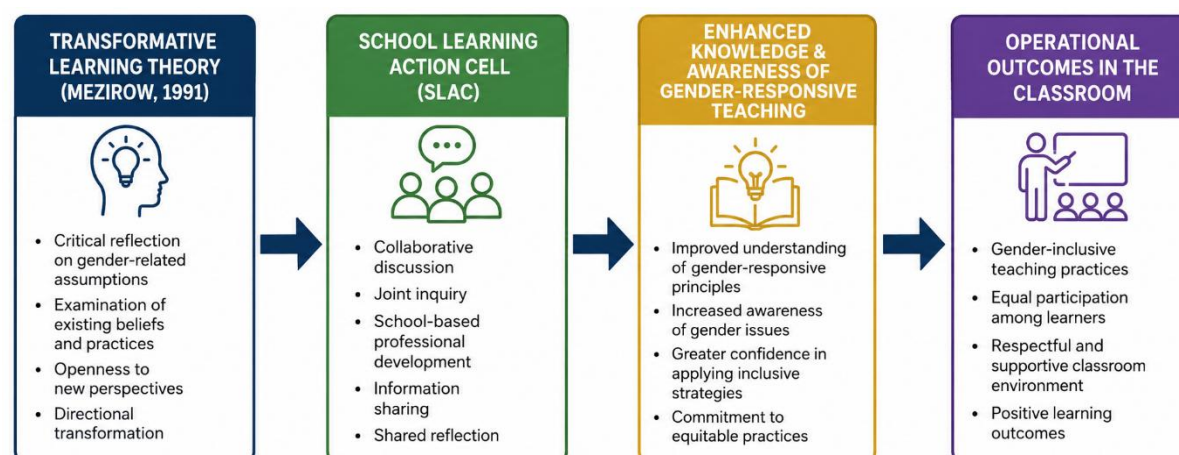


Figure 3. Diagram of the Knowledge Contribution of the Study

The diagram illustrates the knowledge contribution of the study across three levels. At the theoretical level, the study reinforces the applicability of Transformative Learning Theory and Social Learning Theory in the context of gender-responsive teacher development. These theories frame how teachers critically reflect on gender biases and learn through collaborative engagement. At the practical level, the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) functions as a short-term, school-based professional development mechanism that facilitates knowledge enhancement and shared learning. At the policy level, the improved teacher competence resulting from SLAC sessions demonstrates how the Department of Education's Gender and Development (GAD) framework can be effectively translated from policy mandates into actual classroom practices. Together, these contributions highlight the study's integrated impact on theory, practice, and policy in gender-responsive education.

Recommendation

Based on the study's findings, it is evident that while secondary teachers at Tambulig National High School demonstrate a moderate to high level of awareness and competence in gender-responsive teaching, certain areas—particularly managing complex gender-related classroom situations—require further support. Consequently, the following recommendations are proposed to build on the positive outcomes of the SLAC session and enhance teachers' capacity to implement gender-responsive practices effectively and consistently.

Targeted Professional Development: Schools should design follow-up workshops or scenario-based training to help teachers gain confidence in managing complex gender-related classroom situations. This could include role-playing, case studies, and interactive discussions of real classroom scenarios.

Continuous Monitoring and Support: School administrators should establish mechanisms for ongoing mentoring and peer collaboration to sustain and enhance the application of gender-responsive teaching strategies.

Integration of Gender-Responsive Materials: Teachers are encouraged to consistently incorporate gender-inclusive examples, resources, and activities across all subject areas, reinforcing equitable learning opportunities.

Limitations

The study utilized a one-group pretest–posttest design without a control group. Because of this, the improvement in posttest scores cannot be attributed solely to the SLAC intervention. The findings are also limited to one school setting with a relatively small number of participants. Future studies may use experimental or mixed-method designs involving larger samples and longer intervention periods.



Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The researchers affirm that all data, analyses, interpretations, and findings presented in this study are original, authentic, and personally conducted by the researchers. Artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted tools were used only for language refinement, grammar checking, and improvement of sentence clarity. All academic content, statistical results, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the researchers.

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