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Perceptions of higher education learners on the deliberate behavior modelling of teacher education faculty in integrating gender and development concepts

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the perceptions of higher education learners on how teacher education faculty integrate Gender and Development (GAD) concepts into instructional practices and model gender-responsive behavior. Guided by two objectives, the research examined (1) how students perceive GAD integration in classroom instruction and (2) how they observe and interpret faculty modeling of gender sensitivity. Using semi-structured interviews with 20 higher education students, thematic analysis revealed three major insights: first, students appreciated when GAD concepts were meaningfully integrated into content, assessments, and reflective discussions; second, students were deeply influenced by instructors who consistently modeled inclusive language, fair classroom practices, and intentional support for marginalized identities; and third, these experiences helped students challenge personal biases, expand their understanding of gender equity, and reimagine their role as future educators. While some participants noted instances of tokenistic or performative inclusion, the study highlights that authentic, deliberate modeling of gender-responsive teaching fosters deeper awareness and behavioral change among learners. These findings underscore the need for teacher education programs to go beyond curricular mandates and cultivate a culture of lived gender inclusivity through both pedagogical content and faculty conduct.

Keywords: Gender and Development (GAD); Teacher Education; Behavioral Modeling; Gender-responsive Pedagogy; Student Perceptions; Higher Education Learners

1. Introduction

In higher education, especially in teacher preparation programs, students' perceptions of faculty behavior significantly shape their understanding of gender equity [1]. Studies show that when instructors model gender fairness through language, participation, and bias awareness it influences how future teachers conceptualize inclusive teaching [2-3]. Similarly, a study reported that inclusive behavior by lecturers fostered constructive classroom climates in Philippine public schools [4]. Education policy globally emphasizes gender-responsive teaching. For instance, student groups in the Philippines demonstrated positive attitudes toward gender equality after exposure to gender-sensitivity training [3]. In Dubai, first-year undergraduates noted that gender influenced their evaluation of teaching competence—highlighting students' keen reception of faculty gender dynamics [5]. In Spain, teacher-training students developed sophisticated conceptions of equity through reflective coursework [6].

However, student perceptions can also be influenced by ingrained bias. Richardson and King [1] found subtle gendered differences in how male and female students experienced higher education. Similarly, Altakhaineh et al. [7] demonstrated that pre-service teachers in the UAE expressed clear gender preferences for instructors, largely reflecting cultural conditioning. Chavez, Lamorinas, and Ceneciro [8] emphasized that everyday language, including humor and casual expressions, can perpetuate gender bias and disempowerment highlighting the need for educators to model inclusive and critically aware discourse in academic settings.

Large-scale quantitative studies also reveal gendered perceptions of faculty practice. Reyes et al. [9] demonstrated differences in how male and female students perceive STEM teaching quality, suggesting gender shapes evaluation of pedagogy. Globally, Nikolakaki et al. [10] showed that online student reviews often reflect gender bias, with male instructors receiving more favorable scores. Conversely, feminist scholarship highlights how intentional, inclusive pedagogy counters such bias. Sezgin [2] emphasized that reflective awareness of gender in language and instruction builds equitable classroom environments. In the U.S., PSEW's "chilly climate" research [11] documented subtle classroom biases, prompting calls for faculty behavioral modeling to create safer learning spaces.

Research indicates that inclusive teacher behavior can positively influence student perceptions [11-13], cultural and gender stereotypes still shape student evaluations. Despite the expansion of Gender and Development (GAD) policies in higher education, existing scholarship remains largely concentrated on institutional compliance, curricular integration, and faculty-reported practices. Far less attention has been given to how learners themselves interpret, negotiate, and internalize the gender-responsive behaviors modeled by teacher educators in everyday classroom life. In the Philippine teacher education context, where future educators are socialized into professional norms, this interpretive dimension is particularly consequential.

This study advances the literature by shifting the analytic focus from institutional intent to student sense-making. Rather than documenting whether GAD is present, it interrogates how learners distinguish between authentic and performative inclusion, how they identify moments of congruence or contradiction between faculty discourse and practice, and how these observations shape their emerging professional identities. By foregrounding student interpretations, the study positions behavioral modeling not as a supplementary strategy but as a formative mechanism through which gender norms are reproduced, negotiated, or transformed in teacher preparation. In doing so, it contributes a contextually grounded understanding of how GAD values are socially constructed within the relational dynamics of Philippine higher education classrooms.

2. Literature

The integration of Gender and Development (GAD) in higher education plays a key role in creating inclusive and equitable learning environments. Scholars emphasize that GAD must be present not only in curriculum content but also in faculty behavior, especially in teacher education where faculty serve as role models. Research highlights that consistent modeling through language use, classroom interactions, and inclusive practices is essential in fostering genuine gender awareness. Although much attention has been given to faculty perspectives and institutional efforts, less is known about how students perceive these behaviors. As direct recipients of instruction, students offer critical insight into the effectiveness of GAD implementation. This review examines both local and international studies to understand how faculty behavior influences student learning about gender equity. It focuses on student perspectives as a key to strengthening GAD integration in teacher education programs.

2.1. Gender-responsive teaching and faculty behavior modeling

A growing body of research highlights the pivotal role of faculty in modeling inclusive behaviors that shape students' attitudes toward gender equity. Casas et al. [3] emphasized that deliberate gender sensitivity training for student leaders fosters awareness and promotes the use of gender-neutral language. Arellano-Hernandez [14] further found that capacity-building and revised syllabi in social sciences led to heightened recognition of gender rights among students. Gurung and Rajbanshi [15] also supported this by asserting that consistent modeling by educators plays a vital role in promoting gender-sensitive learning environments.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory provides a foundational lens for examining how authority figures shape behavioral norms through observation and reinforcement [16]. However, this study extends beyond confirming that modeling influences learners. The findings interrogate the conditions under which modeling succeeds, fails, or produces ambivalent effects. Students did not automatically internalize all modeled behaviors; rather, they selectively interpreted them based on perceived authenticity, relational consistency, and contextual relevance. Instances of tokenistic GAD integration reveal limits to observational learning when modeling lacks coherence or emotional resonance, imitation does not occur. Conversely, spontaneous corrective actions during moments of bias were described as particularly influential, suggesting that modeling is most effective when enacted in morally consequential situations rather than scripted instructional segments. Thus, Social Learning Theory is engaged not as a confirmatory framework but as a critical analytic lens. The study demonstrates that observational learning in gender-responsive pedagogy is mediated by trust, credibility, and institutional culture. Modeling becomes transformative when it disrupts dominant norms visibly and consistently; it becomes negligible when it is perceived as symbolic compliance. This theoretical engagement reframes behavioral modeling as a contested and relational process rather than a linear transmission of values.

In Philippine contexts, Hernandez and Cudiamat [17] piloted gender-sensitive differentiated instruction, showing that students develop critical awareness of gender stereotypes. The study "Communicating the Implementation of GAD" [18] argued that policies alone are insufficient without translation into actual classroom practices by faculty. Kandiyoti and Saleh [19] found that participatory teaching methods in Middle Eastern universities successfully challenged gender stereotypes, reaffirming the global relevance of inclusive pedagogy.

2.2. Student perceptions and impact of faculty gender modeling

Students are not passive recipients of knowledge but are active observers and interpreters of faculty behavior. Kurtz-Costes, Helmke, and Ülkü-Steiner [20] found that teacher gender and behaviors shape students' academic self-concept. Ahmed and Siddiqui [21] observed that gender-responsive teaching increases academic motivation. Chaves and de Souza [22] identified a gap between faculty intentions and students' perceptions of gender inclusivity. Similarly, León and Montero [23] highlighted that students actively assess whether faculty practices align with gender-sensitive standards. Halpern [24] emphasized understanding gender differences beyond stereotypes. Lu and Liang [25] found that both explicit and implicit faculty actions model equity attitudes even among younger learners. In the Philippine setting, Roa and Morales [26] revealed that students acknowledge efforts at gender sensitivity but noted inconsistency in faculty implementation. Stabile and Allin [27] and Yeo and Lee [28] reported that gender-inclusive practices lead to higher student engagement and fairness.

Reyes et al. [29] showed that gendered perceptions in STEAM affect students differently, implying a need for nuanced modeling. Li, Whitcomb, and Singh [30] and Maries, Karim, and Singh [31] found that female students face reduced recognition and performance due to stereotypes, which faculty can counter through inclusive behaviors. Dumanjug et al. [32] and Demalata et al. [33] identified gaps between female student confidence and academic performance, stressing the complex impact of modeled behaviors on learners.

2.3. Institutional policy, capacity, and the gap between awareness and practice

Although national and institutional policies have promoted GAD, practical implementation remains inconsistent. Esteban [34] and Ilagan [35] reported that while curricula include gender topics, classroom practices differ across institutions. Doguiles and Rapsing [36] noted similar discrepancies in secondary education, emphasizing the need for sustained support. UNESCO [37] warned that policies must be paired with cultural and pedagogical reforms. De Leon et al. [38], stressed that teacher preparedness is essential for

inclusive education. Aloba et al. [39] found that universities with active GAD centers supported more consistent practice, while others lacked structural support.

2.4. Gender bias in faculty evaluation and student feedback

Bias in student evaluations presents another layer of complexity. Boring et al. [40] showed that students tend to favor male faculty regardless of teaching quality. Graves et al. [41] and Renström et al. [42] documented that male lecturers receive higher ratings, revealing deep-rooted gendered expectations. Nikolakaki, Lai, and Terzi [10] used "Rate My Professors" data to confirm such biases, while Yadav [43] suggested that anonymous feedback can reduce this issue. These biases challenge gender equity in faculty recognition and promotion, highlighting the importance of institutional accountability in evaluation processes.

2.5. Inclusive language, cultural responsiveness, and participatory pedagogy

Inclusive pedagogical methods play a significant role in creating safe and equitable learning environments. Leraas et al. [44] found that students identifying with non-binary or feminine traits thrive more in gender-sensitive classrooms. UNESCO's guide on gender equality [45] stressed that representation in curriculum content and inclusive class dynamics are crucial. Nikolakaki et al. [10] and Khokhlova et al. [46] showed that students appreciate and positively rate instructors who model inclusivity. Participatory teaching methods—highlighted by Tantengco and Maramag [47] are effective in dismantling stereotypes, especially when modeled by faculty. These practices demonstrate that the teacher's role in gender mainstreaming is both pedagogical and relational.

Reyes et al. [9] and Casas et al. [3] provided evidence from the Philippine context, highlighting unique challenges and opportunities for gender mainstreaming in education. Their studies found that GAD training significantly raised awareness and that student perspectives are key to understanding gaps in policy and practice. Arellano-Hernandez [14] and Lopez and Andal [48] affirmed that when teacher education aligns GAD with pedagogy, positive shifts occur in student understanding and classroom culture.

Given the breadth of existing literature, it becomes evident that while institutional policies and faculty intentions contribute to gender-inclusive education, the true measure of success lies in how students receive and internalize these efforts. This study is grounded in the belief that learners' perceptions are powerful indicators of whether GAD concepts are merely preached or genuinely practiced. The author posits that observing deliberate behavioral modeling such as equitable classroom practices, inclusive speech, and responsiveness to gender-based issues forms the foundation of students' understanding and eventual advocacy of gender equity. Therefore, by exploring how higher education learners interpret and experience their teacher education faculty's modeling of gender responsiveness, this study reinforces the goal of bridging the gap between institutional mandates and lived educational realities. It aims to affirm that the role of modeling is not peripheral but central to GAD education, especially in shaping the next generation of educators.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study was grounded in an interpretivist qualitative tradition, specifically adopting a phenomenological orientation focused on understanding learners' lived experiences and meaning-making processes in relation to faculty modeling of Gender and Development (GAD) principles. A qualitative approach was appropriate as it allowed for an in-depth understanding of human experiences, attitudes, and interpretations in natural settings [49]. The goal was not to measure the extent of GAD implementation, but to examine how students construct social meaning from observed behaviors, instructional strategies, and relational dynamics within teacher education contexts.

Situating the inquiry within phenomenology, the research foregrounded participants' subjective interpretations how they distinguish authenticity from tokenism, how they reconcile contradictions between policy and practice, and how these interpretations inform their emerging professional identities. Thematic analysis was therefore conducted not merely to categorize responses, but to identify shared structures of experience and patterned interpretations across narratives. This analytic orientation clarified that the study sought to understand lived educational realities and institutional sense-making processes rather than generate generalized descriptions of practice.

This approach was particularly suitable for capturing the meanings, perspectives, and social realities as experienced and articulated by the participants [50]. Since the study aimed to gather insights into students' observations of faculty behavior both explicit and subtle it relied on descriptive data directly from learners to reveal how gender-responsiveness was demonstrated and perceived within teacher education institutions. This study adhered to established qualitative research reporting standards to ensure transparency and methodological rigor. The research design, participant recruitment, data collection procedures, analytic process, and strategies for trustworthiness were documented in alignment with the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) framework. Key elements including reflexivity, data saturation, validation strategies, and ethical safeguards were incorporated to strengthen credibility, dependability, and confirmability of findings.

3.2. Population and sampling

The study involved twenty (20) higher education students enrolled in teacher education programs from selected institutions in the Philippines. The sample size was determined following qualitative research principles emphasizing thematic depth rather than numerical generalization. Recruitment continued until thematic saturation was achieved, meaning no substantially new patterns or conceptual insights emerged from subsequent interviews. Participants represented diverse profiles across gender identity, year level, and institutional type to ensure variation in perspectives relevant to Gender and Development (GAD) experiences. The sample size was determined based on qualitative principles prioritizing thematic depth over statistical generalization. Recruitment continued until thematic saturation was reached, defined as the point at which no new conceptual patterns emerged from subsequent interviews. Participants were purposively selected to represent variation across gender identity, year level, and institutional context to ensure diverse perspectives on GAD-related experiences. This strategy strengthened the analytical depth of the findings while maintaining coherence with the study's interpretive focus. Purposeful sampling was employed to ensure that participants could offer relevant and insightful perspectives based on their lived experiences as learners [51].

The inclusion criteria required that participants *(1)* were currently enrolled in a teacher education program, *(2)* had completed at least one academic year in the institution to ensure sufficient exposure to faculty teaching practices, and *(3)* had taken at least one subject where GAD concepts were formally or informally discussed. This ensured that participants had enough contextual understanding to comment meaningfully on both instructional content and behavioral modeling.

This sampling strategy was aligned with qualitative research practices that prioritize depth over breadth, enabling researchers to focus on individuals who can provide rich, detailed accounts [52]. Furthermore, maximum variation sampling was considered to include diverse student backgrounds in terms of gender, year level, and institutional type, which helped capture a wider range of perceptions [53].

This approach to sampling allowed the study to explore not just individual narratives but also emerging patterns across different learner experiences, contributing to a deeper understanding of how gender-responsiveness was perceived and interpreted in the higher education setting.

3.3. Instrument

The primary instrument used for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide developed by the researcher. This interview protocol was designed to explore higher education learners' perceptions regarding the integration of Gender and Development (GAD) concepts in their faculty's instructional practices and the modeling of gender-responsive behavior. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow flexibility in probing deeper into participants' experiences while ensuring that key topics relevant to the research objectives were covered [54]. The interview questions were crafted based on a thorough review of relevant literature on gender mainstreaming in education, student perceptions of faculty behavior, and behavior modeling theories. The guide included open-ended questions aimed at eliciting detailed narratives about students' observations of teaching methods, classroom interactions, and faculty conduct related to gender sensitivity.

To ensure content validity, the interview guide underwent expert review by three specialists: one faculty member with advanced training in Gender and Development education, one qualitative research methodologist with experience in interview-based studies, and one teacher education practitioner with expertise in curriculum design and inclusive pedagogy. The panel evaluated question clarity, alignment with research objectives, cultural sensitivity, and appropriateness for higher education learners. Following their recommendations, ambiguous wording was clarified, redundant prompts were consolidated, and additional probes were incorporated to capture both explicit instructional practices and implicit behavioral modeling. A pilot test was conducted with five teacher education students who were not part of the main sample. Feedback from the pilot phase led to improved sequencing of questions, refinement of terminology related to gender identity and inclusivity, and adjustment of follow-up prompts to encourage deeper reflective responses while maintaining participant comfort. [55]. A pilot test was also conducted with a small group of students not included in the final sample to assess the effectiveness of the questions and to refine the instrument based on participant responses and interview flow [56].

The semi-structured format allowed for a conversational approach, enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions and clarify responses, thus providing rich, nuanced data that reflected the complexity of students' perceptions [57]. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy in transcription and analysis. The **Table 1** below presents the instrument of this inquiry:

Table 1. Instrument of the study.

Objectives	Interview questions	Participants
To explore how higher education learners perceive the integration of Gender and Development (GAD) concepts in their teacher education faculty's instructional practices.	1. Can you recall instances when your instructor discussed or included gender-related topics in your lessons? 2. How would you describe your experience learning about gender issues through your courses? 3. In what ways do you think your instructors are intentional in integrating GAD concepts in teaching?	Teacher Education Learners in Higher Education
To examine how students observe and interpret the modeling of gender-responsive behavior by their teacher education faculty.	1. How do your instructors demonstrate gender sensitivity in class or during interactions? 2. Have you witnessed any behaviors from your instructors that promote inclusivity or challenge gender stereotypes? 3. How do these behaviors or practices affect your understanding of gender issues and your own behavior as a future educator?	

3.4. Data gathering procedure

The data collection process began after securing the necessary permissions from the institution's research ethics committee and obtaining informed consent from all participants. Twenty higher education students enrolled in teacher education programs were purposively selected based on their exposure to courses where Gender and Development (GAD) concepts were likely to be integrated.

Participants were contacted through institutional emails and classroom announcements, and were provided with a brief overview of the study, their rights as participants, and confidentiality terms. Upon confirmation, individual interviews were scheduled at a mutually convenient time, either face-to-face in a quiet, private location within campus or via a secure video conferencing platform, depending on participant preference and availability. During the interviews, the researcher used a semi-structured guide designed to explore students' perceptions of their instructors' GAD integration and behavior modeling. Open-ended questions allowed for flexibility and deeper exploration of participant experiences. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant permission.

After each session, the recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis. Participants were assigned codes to protect their identities, and all data were stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. The data gathering process was completed over a span of four weeks. Throughout the procedure, the researcher maintained a non-directive and neutral stance, encouraging honest and reflective responses while ensuring participants felt comfortable and respected during the entire process.

3.5. Data analysis

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely recognized method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. This approach was appropriate for the study's goal of understanding higher education learners' perceptions of how GAD concepts were integrated and modeled by teacher education faculty. The researcher followed Braun and Clarke's [58] six-phase framework for thematic analysis: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for patterns, (4) reviewing patterns, (5) defining and naming categories, and (6) producing the report. After transcribing the interviews verbatim, the researcher immersed in the data by reading each transcript multiple times to gain a holistic understanding.

Initial coding was conducted manually by highlighting key phrases, ideas, and recurring expressions that aligned with the study's objectives. Codes were then clustered into broader analytical categories that captured shared meanings in participants' perceptions. These categories were continuously examined to ensure internal coherence and clear distinctions across groupings, meaning that the data within each category were consistent while remaining analytically distinct from others [59]. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis, peer debriefing and member checking were conducted. Selected participants were given the opportunity to review the preliminary interpretations and confirm whether the analysis accurately reflected their perspectives. [60] Peer reviewers also provided feedback to refine the analytic structure and minimize researcher bias. The use of thick description and direct participant quotations ensured that the findings remained grounded in the lived experiences of the respondents, aligning with the interpretivist paradigm that guided this qualitative inquiry.

3.6. Ethical considerations

The researcher ensured that all ethical protocols were strictly observed throughout the study. Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the institution's research ethics review committee. This was done to guarantee that the study adhered to principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice as outlined in established ethical research guidelines. Participants were fully informed of the nature and purpose

of the study through a written informed consent form. This form explained the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any time without consequences, and how data would be used and protected. Participants were asked to sign the consent form only after they had reviewed the information and had the opportunity to ask questions. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. All interview responses were coded and stored securely, and any personally identifiable information was removed or replaced with pseudonyms in transcripts and reports. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher.

4. Results

Research Objectives 1. To explore how higher education learners perceive the integration of Gender and Development (GAD) concepts in their teacher education faculty's instructional practices.

Question No. 1. Can you recall instances when your instructor discussed or included gender-related topics in your lessons?

1.1 Substantive and Intentional Integration of GAD

A majority of participants (15 out of 20) described instances in which GAD concepts were deliberately and meaningfully embedded into subject content. In these accounts, gender was not presented as an isolated topic but was integrated into disciplinary discussions, case analyses, and reflective tasks. Students interpreted such integration as credible when it was contextually connected to pedagogical practice and when faculty demonstrated conceptual clarity and consistency.

One participant reflected: "We were studying classroom management strategies in one of our major subjects, and I'll never forget what my professor said: 'Discipline systems often unconsciously target boys more harshly and ignore the emotional needs of girls. ' It was such a simple statement, but it made me reflect on how I viewed my own students during fieldwork. From that moment on, I stopped labeling my students as 'problematic' based on behavior and started looking at context and gendered expectations. Our teacher helped us realize that being gender-responsive wasn't just about content it's about how you see and treat learners differently." This narrative illustrated how modeling extended beyond informational delivery. The student's interpretation shows internal cognitive and professional reframing, suggesting that the impact was not merely conceptual but identity-shaping. The emphasis on "how you see and treat learners differently" indicates that students interpreted GAD integration as a shift in pedagogical lens rather than a discrete topic.

Similarly, another participant shared: "In our assessment class, we were discussing grading fairness, and my professor shared a study about how girls and LGBTQ+ students often underperform in oral exams due to anxiety caused by classroom culture. That hit me hard. I realized I had classmates who barely spoke up and that I never really questioned why. Our instructor didn't just mention this in passing—he created space for us to brainstorm alternative assessment formats. It changed how I viewed my responsibility as a future teacher."

Here, the phrase "created space" signals that students evaluate GAD integration not only by content inclusion but by pedagogical responsiveness. The modeling became influential because it moved from awareness to structural reconsideration of assessment practices. Across these accounts, intentionality, contextualization, and follow-through emerged as key markers of authenticity.

1.2 Symbolic or Performative Inclusion of GAD

In contrast, 11 out of 20 participants described experiences where gender-related content felt superficial or compliance-driven. These narratives reveal a patterned perception that some forms of integration were episodic, observance-based, or disconnected from broader pedagogical practice. Rather than internalization, these instances produced skepticism.

One student recounted: "I remember one lesson during Women's Month when our professor played a 5-minute clip about empowered Filipinas, and we were asked to react in one sentence. After that, the class moved on to our scheduled lesson. It felt rushed and hollow—like we had to acknowledge gender, but weren't really invited to engage with it. That moment made me wonder if GAD was just a requirement to fulfill rather than something we truly needed to understand." The phrases "rushed and hollow" and "requirement to fulfill" suggest that students actively interpret depth and intentionality. The brevity of engagement signaled symbolic compliance rather than substantive integration. Importantly, this perception was not about the absence of GAD content but about its limited pedagogical anchoring.

Another participant explained: "Our lesson on learning styles briefly included a slide about gender-sensitive teaching. The slide listed things like 'avoid stereotypes' and 'be inclusive,' but when I asked for examples, the professor said, 'You'll understand more when you're already teaching. ' I felt dismissed. I wanted guidance, not just buzzwords. It was frustrating because I knew gender issues were important, but our professor treated it like a footnote." This emphasized a perceived failure of modeling. The dismissal of inquiry weakened credibility and disrupted observational learning. The student's emphasis on "guidance, not just buzzwords" demonstrates that learners differentiate between conceptual acknowledgment and practical enactment. Across these accounts, students constructed meaning by comparing espoused values with enacted practice. When alignment was weak, perceived impact diminished.

1.3 Dialogic and Student-Initiated Gender Engagement

Nine participants described a different pattern: gender discussions initiated by students but sustained through faculty openness. In these cases, instructors did not always pre-plan GAD integration, yet their responsiveness created meaningful learning environments. Students interpreted openness as a form of modeling in itself.

One participant shared: "I chose to present on gender roles in early childhood education for a reporting task, and to my surprise, my professor reshaped the entire session around our topic. She paused the scheduled lecture and asked the class to reflect on how teacher expectations differ between boys and girls. It wasn't something she planned, but she made us feel like our ideas mattered. She even asked us to think of specific classroom practices that could be biased. I felt that my voice actually contributed to the learning of the whole class." Here, modeling occurred through flexibility and validation. The faculty member's willingness to "pause the scheduled lecture" signaled that gender discourse was not peripheral. The student's interpretation centered on voice, contribution, and collective reflection, indicating that dialogic responsiveness strengthened engagement.

Another student recalled: "One day, a classmate brought up a news story about a trans student being misgendered by a teacher. We expected the professor to brush it off, but instead, he asked us to write a short reaction and opened the floor for discussion. It wasn't graded. He just said, 'We need to make space for these stories in education. ' That moment stood out for me. He showed us that real issues belong in our lessons, even if they're not in the syllabus." The phrase "make space" reflects a relational interpretation of inclusion. Even without formal curricular embedding, students perceived authenticity in spontaneous acknowledgment of real-world issues. This suggests that modeling effectiveness may depend not solely on structured design but also on situational responsiveness.

Across themes, students demonstrated evaluative discernment. They did not uniformly praise or criticize GAD integration; instead, they distinguished between substantive, symbolic, and dialogic practices. Authenticity was interpreted through consistency, depth, responsiveness, and alignment between discourse and action. Conversely, brevity, dismissal, and lack of contextualization signaled performative engagement. These findings indicate that higher education learners are active interpreters of faculty behavior. The

integration of GAD concepts becomes influential when it is pedagogically embedded, relationally enacted, and contextually sustained. When reduced to compliance gestures, its perceived legitimacy and transformative potential weaken.

Question No. 2. How would you describe your experience learning about gender issues through your courses?

2.1 Transformative and Identity-Reframing Learning

Thirteen out of twenty participants described their experiences as personally transformative. These students emphasized that learning about gender issues extended beyond cognitive understanding and involved emotional reflection, discomfort, and personal reassessment. Importantly, transformation occurred when faculty combined structured activities with empathy and guided reflection, signaling authenticity and intentional facilitation.

One participant explained: "I used to think gender equality was only about giving the same rules to boys and girls. But in one of our classes, we had to write a reflection after analyzing how media portrays LGBTQ+ youth. That activity really made me think about how much I had internalized harmful stereotypes. I felt uncomfortable at first, but I also felt safe to admit that. My professor didn't judge us—she just guided us through it. That class didn't just inform me it changed me."

The shift from a simplified understanding of equality to recognition of internalized stereotypes demonstrates cognitive restructuring. The participant's acknowledgment of discomfort, coupled with a sense of safety, indicates that transformation was facilitated through guided emotional engagement rather than directive correction. The statement "That class didn't just inform me it changed me" reflects internalization, suggesting that the learning experience reshaped identity rather than merely adding knowledge.

Similarly, another student shared: "I still remember when we read a story about a young girl being denied education. Our professor asked us to reflect on how gender roles shaped our own access to opportunities. I cried after that class. For the first time, I saw my mother's sacrifices differently. I began to connect gender not only with big societal issues but with the people I love. That experience stayed with me longer than any exam. "It highlighted the emotional and relational dimensions of gender learning. The student connected macro-level gender inequality to personal family history, demonstrating how reflective pedagogy bridges structural analysis and lived experience. Meaningful learning was described as enduring and emotionally resonant, often surpassing traditional assessments in impact.

2.2 Fragmented and Surface-Level Exposure

In contrast, ten participants described their experiences as inconsistent or limited in depth. While gender topics were present, they were perceived as episodic and lacking continuity. These narratives reveal that students differentiate between exposure and engagement; inclusion alone did not guarantee significance.

One participant stated: "We had a session once where the topic was gender roles in textbooks. It was interesting, but that was it—just one day. No follow-up, no assignment, no deeper discussion. I remember thinking, 'Was that supposed to be enough?' It felt more like a courtesy mention rather than something we needed to care about long term."

The rhetorical question "Was that supposed to be enough?" signals evaluative judgment. The absence of follow-up diminished perceived importance, framing the session as symbolic rather than embedded within the curriculum. Students interpreted continuity as an indicator of institutional commitment.

Another participant reflected: "Our professor told us that gender inclusivity is important, but the only thing we did was watch a short clip and answer a few yes-or-no questions. I wanted more. I was ready to explore the topic in depth, but the class just moved on like it didn't matter that much."

The phrase "I wanted more" reveals readiness for deeper engagement. The minimal activity structure limited dialogic exploration, signaling to students that gender issues were secondary. Fragmentation reduced transformative potential and reinforced the perception that gender education was peripheral rather than foundational. It demonstrates that the difference between transformation and superficiality lies not in topic presence but in pedagogical depth, emotional engagement, and sustained integration.

2.3 Safe Spaces as Catalysts for Expression and Growth

Nine participants emphasized that the meaningfulness of gender education depended heavily on classroom climate. Psychological safety emerged as a mediating factor that enabled students to articulate experiences, question assumptions, and negotiate diverse viewpoints. In these narratives, faculty tone and responsiveness were as influential as content.

One participant shared: "As a bisexual student, I've always been quiet in class whenever gender is discussed. But in our GAD-integrated class, our professor made it a point to use inclusive language and always ask if anyone wanted to share their perspective. I finally opened up about my experience during one discussion—and it was the first time I felt seen. No one laughed. No one brushed it off. That classroom became a safe space for me, and that's something I'll carry into my future classroom as well."

The phrases "felt seen" and "carry into my future classroom" indicate that psychological validation contributed to professional identity formation. Modeling inclusive language created conditions for authentic participation, particularly for students from marginalized identities. The absence of ridicule was interpreted as meaningful institutional support.

Another participant described: "I came from a family that rarely talked about gender issues, so when our course started talking about them, I was unsure. But our professor encouraged us to speak honestly—even if our opinions weren't fully formed. We debated respectfully, reflected on our assumptions, and I grew so much from hearing my classmates. It made me realize that learning about gender isn't just about being 'correct'—it's about being open."

It showed that openness to evolving perspectives was valued over ideological conformity. Respectful debate allowed students to confront prior socialization without fear of condemnation. Learning was interpreted as dialogic growth rather than prescriptive instruction. Therefore, it demonstrated that students' experiences of learning about gender issues were not uniform. Transformative engagement occurred when learning was emotionally grounded, dialogic, and sustained. Fragmented exposure weakened perceived significance, even when content was present. Psychological safety functioned as a critical condition enabling reflection, vulnerability, and professional growth. These findings indicate that gender education in teacher preparation contexts operates as a relational and interpretive process. Students evaluate depth, continuity, and authenticity in determining whether learning becomes identity-shaping or merely informational. A meaningful integration depends not only on curricular inclusion but on pedagogical design, faculty responsiveness, and classroom climate.

Question No. 3. In what ways do you think your instructors are intentional in integrating GAD concepts in teaching?

3.1 GAD in Curriculum and Assessment

Fourteen out of twenty participants described intentional integration as visible in lesson design, instructional materials, and evaluation criteria. In these accounts, GAD principles were not peripheral

references but structurally incorporated into academic requirements. Students interpreted this structural embedding as evidence of seriousness and institutional legitimacy.

One participant noted: "I noticed that in our Educational Planning class, our professor would always challenge us to think about how policies affect both men and women differently. It wasn't just a lecture she gave us actual documents to analyze, and we had to evaluate them from a gender perspective. Even our final paper had a rubric item about gender inclusiveness. That really told me they were serious about GAD."

The inclusion of gender inclusiveness within grading rubrics signaled accountability rather than symbolic acknowledgment. The phrase "That really told me they were serious about GAD" demonstrates how students interpret assessment structures as indicators of institutional commitment. Intentionality, therefore, was measured through academic consequence and not only through verbal advocacy.

Similarly, another participant explained: "Our professor in English did this great thing where we had to analyze poems and short stories for gender themes. It wasn't just literature—it became a way to understand the lives of women, LGBTQ+ people, and even the concept of masculinity. And when we created our own stories, we were asked to reflect on whether our characters challenged or reinforced stereotypes."

Gender analysis was embedded within disciplinary inquiry, reinforcing the idea that GAD functions as an interpretive lens rather than an external addition. The shift from textual analysis to self-reflection ("whether our characters challenged or reinforced stereotypes") demonstrates how intentional design fosters reflexivity. Students perceived integration as authentic when it altered how academic tasks were structured and evaluated.

3.2 Inclusive Language and Responsive Communication

Eleven participants emphasized that intentionality was communicated through language use, correction of bias, and dialogic practices. Rather than focusing solely on curricular content, these students highlighted how everyday communication signaled commitment to gender responsiveness.

One participant shared: "Our professor made it a habit at the start of the semester to ask what pronouns we preferred not just as a formality but because he really used them consistently. That small thing made a big difference. You could see that he respected everyone and made sure no one felt erased."

The consistency of pronoun usage was interpreted as respect enacted in practice. The phrase "not just as a formality" reveals students' attentiveness to authenticity. What might appear minor administratively was experienced as identity affirmation. This suggests that intentionality is evaluated through follow-through rather than symbolic gestures.

Another participant recounted: "There was this time a classmate made a joke about gay people. Before it got worse, our teacher calmly but firmly said, 'That's not something we laugh about here.' Then she explained why it was harmful and used it as a teachable moment. It wasn't about scolding it was about making us think."

This showed a real-time intervention as a form of modeling. The balance of firmness and explanation reframed the moment from disciplinary correction to reflective learning. Students interpreted such responses as evidence that GAD principles guide spontaneous decision-making, not only planned instruction. Intentionality emerged through communicative alignment between stated values and situational responses. Faculty credibility increased when inclusive language was practiced consistently and microaggressions were addressed constructively.

3.3 Personal Values and Professional Practice

Twelve participants identified intentionality through observable consistency between instructors' personal commitments and classroom behavior. Students evaluated authenticity by examining whether GAD advocacy extended beyond lectures into professional roles and interpersonal treatment.

One participant reflected: "What made me believe in GAD is not just what our teacher taught, but how she lived it. She's part of the GAD committee in school, and she tells stories of the trainings she attends and how she applies them. When she teaches, you feel that she believes in it not just because it's part of the curriculum, but because it's who she is."

A institutional involvement reinforced perceived sincerity. The distinction between compliance and identity ("because it's who she is") underscores how students interpret authenticity through continuity across contexts.

Another participant explained: "Our instructor once shared that he grew up seeing how unfairly his mom was treated at work and at home. That shaped how he now teaches and treats his students. He gives equal time for everyone to speak, never interrupts, and encourages us to speak up even if we're unsure. For me, that consistency between what he teaches and how he acts is what makes his GAD teaching real." Personal narrative functioned as moral grounding for professional practice. The emphasis on equal speaking time demonstrates how values translate into classroom structure. Students interpreted coherence between biography and pedagogy as strengthening legitimacy.

A further participant stated: "She didn't just lecture about gender she made us feel what inclusivity looked like. You could tell she respected all of us equally, even outside class. When we see her in student org events, she supports LGBTQ+ initiatives and advocates for safe spaces. So even if GAD wasn't the topic of the day, she was still teaching it by being who she is."

This expands modeling beyond instructional time. The phrase "still teaching it by being who she is" reflects the perception that identity and action constitute ongoing pedagogy. Intentionality, therefore, was interpreted as embodied practice rather than episodic instruction. Students constructed intentionality through observable patterns: structural embedding, communicative inclusivity, and value-practice coherence. Importantly, intentionality was not inferred solely from frequency of GAD mention. Instead, students assessed alignment between curriculum design, real-time behavior, and institutional participation. The findings inidicated that learners are discerning observers of faculty conduct. Integration is perceived as authentic when it is academically consequential, relationally enacted, and consistently embodied. Where these elements converge, students describe GAD teaching as credible and influential; where misalignment occurs, perceived intentionality weakens.

Research Objectives 2. To examine how students observe and interpret the modeling of gender-responsive behavior by their teacher education faculty.

Question No. 1. How do your instructors demonstrate gender sensitivity in class or during interactions?

1.1 Inclusive Language as Everyday Modeling

Fifteen out of twenty participants identified consistent use of inclusive and respectful language as a primary marker of gender sensitivity. Students interpreted intentional word choice not as superficial politeness but as identity-affirming practice. Faculty members who avoided gendered assumptions and adopted neutral forms of address were perceived as attentive and self-aware.

One participant shared: "One thing I really appreciated was how our professor always asked us what pronouns we preferred. It made me feel acknowledged without having to explain myself or come out in front of everyone. He would say, 'Let me know if I get it wrong—I'm still learning too.' That humility and effort stayed with me. He also never made assumptions about relationships in his examples he'd say, 'a partner' instead of 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend.' Small things, but they make a huge difference."

The participant's emphasis on humility ("I'm still learning too") suggests that vulnerability strengthened credibility. Students interpreted consistent pronoun usage and non-assumptive examples as signals that inclusivity was practiced rather than merely endorsed. The phrase "Small things, but they make a huge difference" indicates that everyday linguistic choices functioned as subtle yet powerful forms of modeling. Similarly, another participant explained: "I had a teacher who never used gendered greetings like 'good morning, boys and girls.' She would just say, 'Hello, class!' or 'Hi everyone!' And during discussions, if someone misgendered a peer, she would gently intervene and use the correct pronoun after. It wasn't confrontational it was modeling. I started doing the same with my friends. I realized she was training us to be more mindful just by example." The student explicitly identifies the behavior as modeling. The replication of inclusive language in peer contexts ("I started doing the same") demonstrates observational learning in action. Importantly, intervention was described as gentle rather than punitive, suggesting that tone mediated effectiveness. Across this theme, gender sensitivity was interpreted as consistency in everyday communication, especially in corrective moments.

1.2 Equitable Participation andRedistribution of Voice

Thirteen participants described gender sensitivity as visible in how instructors managed classroom participation. Students were attentive to who spoke, who was interrupted, and how authority was distributed. Faculty intentionality was interpreted through subtle redistribution of voice rather than overt declarations of equality.

One participant recounted: "In my class, I noticed our professor would take note of who had already spoken and gently call on others who hadn't. One time, after three male students dominated the debate, she asked, 'Let's hear from someone else maybe someone who hasn't spoken yet?' That moment stuck with me because she wasn't silencing anyone; she was just opening the floor for voices that are often overshadowed. She explained afterward that part of gender sensitivity is noticing who gets to speak and who gets heard."

This highlights students' sensitivity to participation dynamics. The phrase "noticing who gets to speak and who gets heard" reflects awareness of structural inequality within classroom dialogue. Faculty modeling was perceived as intentional when it corrected imbalance without antagonism. Another participant described: "There was this session when a guy kept interrupting a girl during a group report. Our instructor let it slide the first time but intervened the second time. She said, 'Let's give her the space to finish her thought first.' It wasn't scolding it was graceful, but it sent a message. After that, the class dynamic shifted. People were more careful about interrupting each other. It taught us respect in action, not just as a concept."

The intervention altered classroom norms, demonstrating how modeling can reshape collective behavior. Students interpreted this not as disciplinary enforcement but as normative guidance. The shift in class dynamic illustrates how gender sensitivity becomes institutionalized through consistent correction of inequity. Students interpreted gender-responsive behavior as relational awareness of power distribution rather than abstract affirmation of equality.

Active Advocacy

Eleven participants emphasized that gender sensitivity extended beyond classroom etiquette into active support for marginalized identities. Students interpreted advocacy as evidence that faculty members were not neutral observers but intentional cultivators of inclusive space.

One participant reflected: "I remember when one of our classmates was being bullied anonymously on social media for being trans. It wasn't even in our class, but our instructor brought it up gently, saying, 'No one should be made to feel less because of who they are. Our class is a safe space, and that includes everyone's identity. ' That statement made a huge difference. He didn't name names, but he made his stance clear. That's gender sensitivity—not being passive, but actively protective." The phrase "not being passive, but actively protective" reveals how students define gender sensitivity through moral positioning. Faculty silence in such contexts may be interpreted as complicity, whereas gentle but explicit affirmation reinforced psychological safety.

Another participant shared: "Our professor assigned readings that included stories from queer perspectives and talked about how gender intersects with culture and poverty. It wasn't just token representation it was integrated in the lesson. She even invited a guest speaker from an LGBTQIA+ advocacy group. She told us, 'These voices belong in this classroom as much as any others. ' I think that was the first time I felt truly seen in an academic space." Curricular integration combined with public affirmation strengthened perceived authenticity. The participant's statement "the first time I felt truly seen" signals the emotional significance of representational inclusion. Students distinguished between token visibility and sustained integration linked to intersectional analysis. Students interpreted gender sensitivity through patterns of alignment: language matched values, participation management reflected equity, and advocacy extended beyond neutrality. Modeling was perceived as effective when it was consistent, responsive, and embodied in spontaneous moments requiring judgment. Importantly, students did not describe gender sensitivity as a static trait but as a set of observable practices enacted in real time. The credibility of modeling depended on follow-through, relational tone, and willingness to intervene when necessary. These findings suggest that teacher education faculty influence future educators not only through explicit instruction but through the normalization of inclusive conduct in everyday academic life.

Question No. 2. Have you witnessed any behaviors from your instructors that promote inclusivity or challenge gender stereotypes?

Gendered Knowledge and Authority

Fourteen of the twenty participants described instructors who intentionally unsettled taken-for-granted gender assumptions through curriculum design and guided discussion. Rather than merely adding "inclusive examples," these instructors reframed knowledge itself questioning who is represented, whose stories are centered, and how authority is socially constructed. Students' accounts suggest that inclusivity was not treated as an isolated value but embedded within lesson structures across disciplines. Through reflective questioning, alternative exemplars, and critical assignments, instructors exposed the cultural production of gender norms in leadership, history, and professional roles.

Importantly, participants' narratives reveal a process of cognitive disruption. Several students acknowledged that they had previously internalized gendered expectations without conscious awareness. The classroom became a site where those assumptions were surfaced and interrogated. This indicates that perceptions of inclusivity were formed not only through content exposure but through structured reflection that made implicit beliefs visible. At the same time, the data show a subtle tension: while students reported personal transformation, they also implied that such critical engagements were dependent on individual instructors rather than institutional norms, suggesting variability in modeling practices.

One participant explained: "In one of our classes about leadership, our professor asked why we always think of leaders as men. She showed us local community leaders, many of whom were women, and asked us to reflect on how gender shapes our expectations of authority. It made me realize I had internalized the idea that assertiveness and leadership are male traits. That discussion shifted how I saw myself and my potential."

Another participant reflected on historical representation: "Our history teacher pointed out how most textbooks center men and exclude women's contributions. Then she gave us an assignment: find a forgotten or underrepresented woman in Philippine history and present her story. It opened my eyes. I always assumed history was neutral, but it's really selective—and that realization challenged what I used to believe about gender and knowledge." Inclusivity was experienced as epistemic reframing challenging how knowledge is curated and legitimized. Students' perceptions of instructor inclusivity were therefore shaped by moments where authority structures were questioned, not simply where gender topics were mentioned.

2.2 Dialogic Accountability

Eleven participants recounted incidents in which instructors actively confronted gender-insensitive remarks or discriminatory humor. Rather than ignoring problematic statements, instructors transformed these moments into dialogic interventions. The analytical significance lies in how authority was exercised not through public shaming, but through guided unpacking of assumptions. Students interpreted this as modeling accountability and moral courage within academic space. However, the narratives also reveal complexity. Some students described holding their breath before the instructor responded, suggesting uncertainty about whether intervention would occur. This anticipatory silence highlights a perceived risk in classroom dynamics: inclusivity depends on timely instructor action. When instructors intervened, students described relief and heightened trust. Thus, perceptions of inclusivity were shaped less by policy statements and more by visible micro-level responses to bias.

One student described: "There was this time when a male classmate joked about women being too emotional to lead. I held my breath, expecting the professor to move on, but he didn't. He stopped and said, 'Let's unpack that why do you think that? Where do those ideas come from?' He didn't shame him but guided him through the bias behind the statement. It became a powerful moment for the whole class."

Another shared: "A student once used 'gay' as a punchline during a group sharing. I flinched, but before I could say anything, our teacher interrupted and asked for a pause. She said, 'In this classroom, we don't use identities as jokes. ' That moment stayed with me. It wasn't dramatic, but it was firm. I realized that silence in moments like that can make you complicit, and she wasn't having that." Inclusivity was perceived through boundary-setting practices. Instructors' immediate yet measured responses shaped classroom norms, signaling that respect was non-negotiable. Students' reflections also suggest that modeling failure had instructors remained silent would have reinforced bias. Thus, inclusivity was constructed through active disruption rather than passive tolerance.

2.3 Redistributing Classroom Roles and Competence

Nine participants described inclusive practices embedded in task allocation and participation structures. Instructors were observed intentionally interrupting gendered role patterns particularly leadership assignment and technical task distribution. The analysis suggests that inclusivity was operationalized through structural adjustments that redistributed opportunity and visibility. Students' revealed that gendered assumptions often emerged unconsciously among peers. Leadership and technical tasks were frequently defaulted to male students, while supportive or design-oriented roles were associated with female students. Instructors who paused to question these patterns created reflective interruptions. Notably, participants emphasized that these interventions did not feel coercive but awareness-building. This distinction is significant: inclusivity was effective when framed as reflective choice rather than forced compliance.

One participant explained: "During our research presentation, our instructor noticed that most of the group leaders were male. She paused and said, 'Let's reflect, did we choose leaders based on skills or assumptions?' That really hit me. She didn't shame us, but she made us think about how we

unconsciously assign roles. In the next activity, more women volunteered to lead, and I even led my group. I realized I had been holding back because I thought others would take me less seriously. Her comment helped shift that mindset for me. It wasn't about forcing equality it was about making us aware of our habits."

Another noted: "I'm in an Education Tech class, and our instructor noticed that the guys were always the ones handling the computers while the girls were assigned to write or design. So, he said, 'Let's switch it up tech is for everyone. ' I wasn't confident at first, but he guided us step-by-step. Eventually, I learned to edit videos and code basic programs. It really changed how I viewed myself I stopped thinking of tech as something only for guys. Our teacher didn't just talk about equity, he created a space where we could live it."

In addition, inclusivity extended beyond discourse into embodied practice. Perceptions of gender equity were shaped by experiential participation, where competence was redefined through opportunity rather than stereotype. Inclusivity was experienced through three interconnected practices: epistemic reframing, dialogic intervention, and structural redistribution of roles. Students' perceptions were formed not simply through what instructors said, but through how authority was exercised in moments of tension, bias, or patterned inequality. The data also reveal variability students' anticipation of instructor silence indicates that inclusive modeling was not assumed but tested in real time. Challenging gender stereotypes in higher education classrooms involved both discursive and structural actions. Inclusivity was most salient when instructors disrupted norms, made bias visible, and redistributed participation in ways that fostered reflective awareness rather than compliance.

Question No. 3. How do these behaviors or practices affect your understanding of gender issues and your own behavior as a future educator?

3.1 Teacher Identity as Ethical and Social Practice

Thirteen participants described a significant shift in how they conceptualized the role of a future educator. Rather than viewing teaching as primarily instructional delivery, they began to frame it as an ethical and relational practice. Exposure to gender-responsive behaviors reframed professional identity from content transmission to value enactment. Students did not merely observe inclusive actions; they interpreted them as defining features of what responsible teaching should look like. This shift appears to stem from modeling that made moral positioning visible in everyday classroom interactions. When instructors addressed bias calmly, redistributed participation, or affirmed marginalized identities, they enacted a form of professional integrity that students internalized as normative. Participants' reflections suggest that their understanding of gender issues became intertwined with their evolving professional self-concept. Inclusivity was no longer perceived as an external institutional expectation but as integral to credibility and trustworthiness as a teacher. At the same time, the data indicate a developing sense of accountability students recognized that authority in the classroom inevitably communicates values, whether intentionally or not. These extracted show that students' understanding of gender equity was shaped through relational modeling. Instructor behavior functioned as a template for ethical conduct, prompting participants to imagine themselves as future educators whose daily decisions carry social consequences.

One participant expressed: "My view of teaching changed. It's not just about finishing the syllabus it's also about how your students feel in your presence. When my professor corrected a student gently for making a sexist remark, it reminded me that our actions say more than our lessons."

Another noted: "It made me feel accountable. I saw how my teacher modeled fairness and respect every day. It made me realize that students really watch what we do, and I want to be someone they can learn inclusivity from not just academically but in how I treat them."

3.2 Developing Reflective Empathy

Sixteen participants reported that faculty practices prompted them to confront personal assumptions about gender. Rather than passively accepting inclusive messages, students described a process of self-examination in which previously unchallenged beliefs were surfaced and reassessed. This indicates that the impact of inclusive modeling extended beyond awareness to reflexive transformation. Participants' revealed that biases were often subtle and normalized embedded in expectations about leadership, communication styles, and competence. When instructors disrupted these patterns, students experienced moments of cognitive dissonance that catalyzed change. Importantly, empathy development emerged not from abstract lectures about diversity but from witnessing consistent, respectful engagement with diverse identities. Students' perceptions of gender issues were therefore formed experientially, through observing how authority can validate or marginalize individuals in small but meaningful ways.

One participant reflected: "I realized I had biases I never questioned—like assuming that boys should lead or girls should be quiet in debates. Watching my teacher break those patterns made me realize I could too. Now, I try to check myself when I catch those thoughts."

Another shared: "One time, a student in our class shared that they didn't identify as male or female, and I wasn't sure how to respond. But our teacher just nodded, thanked them, and used their preferred name and pronouns from then on. That moment stuck with me. It showed me that respecting identities doesn't need to be dramatic—it's about being kind and aware."

These narratives demonstrate that understanding gender issues became linked to everyday responsiveness rather than ideological declaration. Students emphasized subtle, consistent gestures of recognition, suggesting that inclusivity is perceived as credible when normalized rather than performative. The data also imply that without such modeling, uncertainty or discomfort might persist unaddressed. Participants described a dual process: reconstructing professional identity and re-evaluating personal beliefs. Faculty behaviors influenced not only what students think about gender issues but how they anticipate acting within future classrooms. The findings indicate that inclusive modeling shapes future-oriented intentions encouraging students to enact fairness deliberately, monitor their assumptions, and cultivate empathetic classroom climates. Rather than portraying change as immediate or uniform, the accounts reveal an ongoing reflective process. Students are still negotiating how to translate observed practices into their own teaching philosophies. This suggests that the impact of inclusive faculty behavior operates through gradual internalization, where professional responsibility and personal growth intersect.

5. Discussion

The findings reveal not only varied perceptions of GAD integration but also important tensions in how gender-responsiveness is interpreted and legitimized within teacher education spaces. While some participants described transformative learning experiences, others characterized similar practices as superficial or compliance-driven. This divergence suggests that students are not passive recipients of faculty modeling; rather, they actively interpret, evaluate, and judge the depth and authenticity of gender-responsive practices. Their responses indicate that visibility of GAD does not automatically translate into meaningful internalization.

Contradictions emerged between formal inclusion (e.g., slides, observance-based activities) and relational inclusion (e.g., corrective interventions during sexist remarks, redistribution of participation).

Students appeared more influenced by spontaneous, embodied responses to bias than by pre-planned gender modules. Their perceptions were shaped not only by content exposure but by classroom power dynamics, consistency of faculty behavior, and alignment between espoused values and enacted practices. These findings indicate that credibility is constructed relationally; students measure authenticity through action, especially in unscripted moments. Where alignment was weak, students perceived tokenism. Where alignment was consistent, students described trust and transformation.

These patterns suggest that the effectiveness of behavioral modeling depends less on frequency of GAD references and more on perceived integrity and contextual responsiveness. Students' meaning-making processes were informed by prior cultural beliefs, personal identities, and peer interactions, revealing that GAD learning is co-constructed rather than transmitted. In this sense, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory [16] is not merely confirmed but refined. While Bandura [16] asserts that learning occurs through observation and internalization of modeled behavior, the present findings demonstrate that observational learning is mediated by perceived authenticity. Modeling succeeds when behavior, language, and moral positioning are coherent. It weakens when learners detect performativity or inconsistency.

Aloba et al. [39] have emphasized the power of embedding GAD in regular course content as a strategy to normalize conversations around gender. Participants who experienced this described their learning as engaging and reflective. This finding reinforces what Kollmayer et al. [13] asserted: that reflective teaching can provoke students to question inequities and develop socially responsive teaching styles. However, the present findings extend this by demonstrating that integration alone is insufficient; reflection must be dialogic and critically engaged to disrupt deeply internalized stereotypes.

Students who encountered this form of instruction felt GAD was presented as a checklist item, devoid of critical engagement. This observation reflects findings from "Communicating the Implementation of GAD" [18], which emphasized that institutional policies alone are insufficient unless translated meaningfully into classroom practices. UNESCO [37] also cautioned that such reforms must go beyond policy by integrating inclusive culture and pedagogy. Similarly, Esteban [34] and Ilagan [35] noted that while curricula may contain gender content, classroom-level execution remains inconsistent. The present findings deepen this body of work by revealing that students themselves recognize performativity, and that token integration may undermine rather than strengthen institutional credibility.

León and Montero [23] further emphasize that learners critically assess faculty practices and value spaces where their voices shape the discourse. Similarly, Roa and Morales [26] highlight that GAD efforts are more impactful when faculty demonstrate consistency and receptiveness to student input. As UNESCO [37] affirms, truly inclusive pedagogy is participatory empowering students to co-create knowledge and meaning through lived experience. This openness builds what Doguiles and Rapsing [36] describe as "relational gender pedagogy." The present findings show that participatory responsiveness strengthens modeling because it reduces hierarchical distance and fosters shared ownership of ethical standards. Students described becoming more empathetic and self-aware, a shift supported by Alinea and Reyes [12], who emphasized the power of reflection and emotional engagement in GAD learning. However, transformation in this study was neither automatic nor uniform. It occurred most strongly when modeling was consistent, relational, and reinforced across contexts, suggesting that internalization requires sustained exposure rather than isolated encounters.

Conversely, Limited Depth and Fragmented Exposure aligns with findings from Esteban [34] and Ilagan [35], who reported that while gender topics are formally included in curricula, implementation across classrooms remains inconsistent. Roa and Morales [26] similarly observed that students recognized initial efforts at gender sensitivity but noted a lack of coherence. Without sustained engagement, gender-related lessons risk being treated as peripheral rather than integral to academic formation. The presence of a psychologically safe classroom climate encouraged open dialogue and deepened empathy. This finding

echoes those of Leraas et al. [44], who noted that students identifying with non-binary or feminine traits thrive more in gender-sensitive environments. Likewise, Lu and Liang [25] emphasized that inclusive and emotionally safe classroom practices modeled by faculty foster equitable attitudes, especially when engaging with complex identity issues. The present findings suggest that safety functions as a mediating condition; modeling becomes transformative only when students feel secure enough to reflect and disclose. Khokhlova et al. [46] highlighted that students are more likely to engage authentically when instructors model equitable communication practices. Nikolakaki et al. [10] and Tantengco and Maramag [47] likewise underscore inclusive discourse as central to dismantling stereotypes.

In terms of identity development, Reimagining the Role of a Future Educator aligns with Reyes, Bayten, and Mercado [29], who emphasized ethical conduct and social responsibility in teaching. Observing consistent gender-responsive modeling allowed students to envision themselves as agents of equity. Likewise, Challenging Personal Biases and Expanding Empathy confirms the argument of Alinea and Reyes [12] that emotional and reflective learning is central to effective GAD education. The present findings extend this argument by demonstrating that identity reconstruction is triggered when students confront dissonance between prior assumptions and observed equitable practice.

While numerous studies have explored GAD from institutional and faculty-centered perspectives, this research foregrounds students as evaluators of authenticity. The findings suggest that although efforts to integrate GAD are visible, their depth, consistency, and authenticity vary significantly. Analyzing contradictions between performative compliance and embodied inclusion, this study contributes a nuanced understanding of how gender-responsive modeling is interpreted in teacher education contexts.

Practically, these findings suggest that teacher education programs must move beyond policy-driven integration toward sustained relational enactment of gender equity. Faculty development should emphasize consistency, real-time responsiveness to bias, and reflective facilitation strategies. The study is limited to one institutional context, which may influence transferability. Participant composition and institutional culture may shape interpretations of modeling practices. Future research may examine cross-institutional comparisons, longitudinal development of gender-responsive teacher identity, and discipline-specific variations in modeling practices. Overall, the findings underscore that effective GAD integration in teacher education requires coherence between discourse, behavior, and relational ethics. Students do not simply observe they evaluate. Where modeling is authentic, sustained, and contextually responsive, gender-responsive norms are more likely to be internalized and enacted in future classrooms.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how undergraduate pre-service teachers in a Philippine coeducational teacher education program perceive the integration of Gender and Development (GAD) concepts in instructional practices and how they interpret the gender-responsive behaviors modeled by their faculty members. Organized through thematic analysis, the findings demonstrate that students' perceptions are shaped not merely by the presence of GAD-related content in the curriculum, but by how consistently and authentically these principles are enacted within classroom interactions. Across themes, participants differentiated between substantive and symbolic integration. Gender-responsive practices were viewed as meaningful when faculty members intentionally embedded gender perspectives into discussions, assessments, and critical reflections, and when inclusive language and equitable participation were consistently practiced. In these instances, students described a deeper engagement with issues of gender equity and a heightened awareness of their own responsibilities as future educators. However, when GAD references appeared compliance-driven or episodic, students perceived them as disconnected from lived realities, limiting their influence on long-term professional formation. The findings further underscore that modeling operates as a relational and

interpretive process. Students closely observed how faculty responded to bias, navigated sensitive discussions, and distributed authority within the classroom. These observed behaviors influenced not only cognitive understanding of gender concepts but also the internalization of professional norms. The study therefore reinforces that behavioral modeling in teacher education is central to shaping future teaching practices, particularly within mixed-gender higher education settings where gender dynamics are continually negotiated. While the conclusions are grounded in the experiences of twenty undergraduate pre-service teachers from a single Philippine state university and are therefore context-specific, they offer analytically transferable insights into how gender-responsive pedagogy is experienced and interpreted by learners. Strengthening the coherence between institutional mandates, instructional content, and everyday faculty conduct may enhance the transformative potential of GAD integration. Highlighting the conditions under which modeling is perceived as credible and impactful, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how gender equity principles are transmitted, contested, and ultimately internalized within teacher education programs.

7. Limitations of the study

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the research was conducted within a single Philippine state university offering a teacher education program. Although the institutional context provides meaningful insight into Gender and Development (GAD) integration within a coeducational setting, the findings reflect experiences shaped by a specific institutional culture, faculty composition, and policy environment. As such, the conclusions are contextually grounded and analytically transferable rather than statistically generalizable.

Second, the sample consisted of twenty (20) undergraduate pre-service teachers, with a predominance of female participants. While this distribution reflects the typical gender composition of teacher education programs in the Philippines, the imbalance may have influenced the range of perspectives captured, particularly regarding gendered classroom experiences. Subtle differences in how male and female students interpret faculty modeling may not have been fully explored within the scope of this study.

Third, the data relied on self-reported perceptions gathered through interviews. Although thematic analysis enabled in-depth exploration of meaning-making processes, participants' narratives may have been shaped by recall bias, social desirability, or their current relationships with faculty members. The study did not include classroom observations or faculty interviews, which could have provided triangulation and allowed for comparison between enacted practices and perceived behaviors.

Fourth, while the study adopted a phenomenological orientation to foreground lived experience, it did not examine longitudinal outcomes. The research therefore cannot determine whether perceived modeling translates into sustained professional practice once students enter the teaching profession. Although thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and contradictions in the data, interpretation remains shaped by the researchers' analytical lens. Efforts were made to enhance credibility through systematic coding and thematic refinement; however, qualitative interpretation inherently involves reflexive judgment.

8. Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that strengthening Gender and Development (GAD) integration in teacher education requires moving beyond compliance-driven implementation toward more intentional and relationally grounded practice. Teacher education institutions should invest in sustained faculty development initiatives that focus not only on incorporating gender concepts into syllabi but also on cultivating authentic behavioral modeling. Training programs may emphasize strategies for addressing gender bias in real time, facilitating equitable participation, and aligning instructional content with inclusive classroom conduct.

Creating structured reflective spaces for pre-service teachers, such as guided discussions or practicum debriefings, may further support the critical examination of observed practices and deepen the internalization of gender-responsive values.

At the institutional level, clearer mechanisms for monitoring the coherence between GAD policy mandates and everyday classroom implementation may enhance consistency and credibility. Incorporating student feedback into quality assurance processes could provide valuable insight into how gender-responsive practices are perceived and where gaps between intention and enactment may exist.

Future research should expand the scope of inquiry beyond a single institution to include multiple teacher education programs across varied geographical and institutional contexts. Comparative studies may reveal how institutional culture, leadership priorities, and faculty demographics influence the modeling of gender-responsive behavior. Further investigation into gender-differentiated interpretations of faculty practices may also provide deeper understanding of how male and female students experience and internalize gender-related dynamics in coeducational settings. Methodological triangulation through the inclusion of classroom observations, faculty interviews, and document analysis would strengthen analytic depth and allow examination of alignment between intended practices and student perceptions. A longitudinal research tracking graduates into their early teaching careers would offer valuable evidence regarding whether and how observed faculty modeling translates into sustained gender-responsive practice in professional settings.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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