

EVALUATING GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT MAINSTREAMING WITHIN PROVINCIAL LOCAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES IN THE PHILIPPINES

AVALIAÇÃO DA INTEGRAÇÃO DE GÊNERO E DESENVOLVIMENTO NAS ESTRUTURAS DE GOVERNANÇA LOCAL PROVINCIAL NAS FILIPINAS

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Mary Leanne A. Laganhon*

*Carlos Hilado Memorial State University, Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2940-6920>

maryleanne.laganhon@chmsu.edu.ph

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Abstract

Mainstreaming Gender and Development (GAD) is vital to inclusive and responsive governance, requiring the integration of gender perspectives into local government systems, policies, and programs. This study assessed the extent of GAD mainstreaming within provincial local governance structures in the Philippines, specifically in the Province of Negros Occidental. Using five key institutional mechanisms (Focal Point System, Database, Planning and Budgeting, Development Plans, and Monitoring and Evaluation) the research employed a descriptive-quantitative design involving 369 respondents from 31 local government units (LGUs). A validated survey instrument based on national guidelines was utilized to gather data, which was analyzed using descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests to examine variations across districts and respondent types. Results revealed a generally high level of GAD mainstreaming across four institutional mechanisms, with mean scores indicating strong engagement in focal person systems, planning and budgeting, development plans, and monitoring and evaluation. However, the database mechanism was rated only at a moderate extent ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.92$), underscoring persistent limitations in gender-disaggregated data management and utilization. These findings suggest that while significant strides have been made in institutionalizing gender-responsive practices locally, critical gaps remain, particularly in data infrastructure and technical capacity. For example, LGUs often lack standardized gender-disaggregated data systems, limiting their ability to prioritize gender issues in planning and budgeting. This study contributes to the discourse on gender equity in governance by providing empirical evidence on the status, strengths, and challenges of GAD mainstreaming in LGUs, thereby informing

Resumo

A integração da Perspectiva de Gênero e Desenvolvimento (PGD) é vital para uma governança inclusiva e responsiva, exigindo a incorporação de perspectivas de gênero nos sistemas, políticas e programas do governo local. Este estudo avaliou o grau de integração da PGD nas estruturas de governança local provinciais nas Filipinas, especificamente na Província de Negros Occidental. Utilizando cinco mecanismos institucionais principais (Sistema de Ponto Focal, Banco de Dados, Planejamento e Orçamento, Planos de Desenvolvimento e Monitoramento e Avaliação), a pesquisa empregou um delineamento descritivo-quantitativo envolvendo 369 respondentes de 31 unidades de governo local (UGLs). Um instrumento de pesquisa validado, baseado em diretrizes nacionais, foi utilizado para coletar os dados, que foram analisados por meio de estatísticas descritivas e testes não paramétricos para examinar as variações entre distritos e tipos de respondentes. Os resultados revelaram um nível geralmente alto de integração da PGD nos quatro mecanismos institucionais, com pontuações médias indicando forte engajamento nos sistemas de ponto focal, planejamento e orçamento, planos de desenvolvimento e monitoramento e avaliação. Contudo, o mecanismo de banco de dados foi avaliado apenas em um grau moderado ($M = 3,44$, $DP = 0,92$), ressaltando as limitações persistentes na gestão e utilização de dados desagregados por gênero. Esses resultados sugerem que, embora avanços significativos tenham sido feitos na institucionalização de práticas sensíveis ao gênero em nível local, lacunas críticas permanecem, particularmente na infraestrutura de dados e na capacidade técnica. Por exemplo, os governos locais frequentemente carecem de sistemas padronizados de dados desagregados



targeted training modules (e.g., gender-sensitive budgeting workshops and training on database management systems) and policy refinement.

Keywords: Database, Development Plans, Gender and Development (GAD), Local Governance, Philippines.

por gênero, o que limita sua capacidade de priorizar questões de gênero no planejamento e orçamento. Este estudo contribui para o debate sobre equidade de gênero na governança, fornecendo evidências empíricas sobre o status, os pontos fortes e os desafios da transversalização da perspectiva de gênero nos governos locais, subsidiando, assim, módulos de treinamento direcionados (por exemplo, oficinas de orçamento com perspectiva de gênero e treinamento em sistemas de gerenciamento de banco de dados) e o aprimoramento de políticas.

Palavras-chave: Banco de dados. Planos de Desenvolvimento. Gênero e Desenvolvimento (GAD). Governança Local. Filipinas.

1 INTRODUCTION

Gender and Development (GAD) mainstreaming is widely advocated at the international and domestic levels as a means of advancing gender equity through integrating gender perspectives into processes of governance, policy-making, and development programming. GAD mainstreaming was instituted at the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and served as a beacon for national and local governments to ensure that men and women would benefit equitably in development intervention and governance [1]. Despite the popularity of this framework, however, gender stereotypes persist. Almost 90% of individuals worldwide are gender-biased, thinking that men are more suited for leadership and executive roles [2]. To frame this study, feminist political ecology provides a useful lens, emphasizing how gender relations intersect with power and resource access in local governance structures. At the same time, intersectionality theory highlights how overlapping social identities (e.g., gender, class, rural/urban location) shape LGU staff's ability to engage with GAD mandates. Integrating these perspectives allows a deeper understanding of why some districts (e.g., urbanized District 3) perform better than rural districts, as structural inequalities and differentiated access to resources mediate the practice of mainstreaming.

The Philippines stands at the forefront of mainstreaming gender equality policies in the Southeast Asian region. Institutionalizing GAD is a requirement for all government agencies, including the local government units (LGUs), as part of their mandate under the

Republic Act No. 9710, also known as the Magna Carta of Women. This implies that government agencies must integrate gender perspectives into planning, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation processes. National mandates such as the PCW-DILG-DBM-NEDA Joint Memorandum Circular 2013-01 stipulate five major institutional mechanisms: the Focal Point System, Database, Planning and Budgeting, Development Plans, and Monitoring and Evaluation [3], [4]. These constitute mechanisms of progress for gender equality, guaranteeing that policies and programs are inclusive but also measurable and accountable. The League of Cities of the Philippines [5] stresses that consistent application of these instruments strengthens the institutionalization of gender perspectives locally, particularly in provinces.

For instance, in the Province of Negros Occidental, LGUs significantly vary in terms of compliance with GAD mandates. Indeed, many LGUs have appointed GAD focal persons and appropriated funds for gender programs, yet there is limited empirical data assessing the extent and effectiveness of GAD mainstreaming. Some literature has reported data inconsistencies, poor technical capacity for gender analysis, and weak integration of gender perspectives into development planning and performance monitoring [3], [6]. In addition, recurring “attitudinal problems,” defined in this study as resistance to gender equality initiatives, stereotypes about gender roles, and reluctance of some local officials to prioritize GAD concerns, remain a barrier that weakens implementation. These challenges are further compounded by a limited GAD database and disparities in technical skills, which are critical for inclusive governance and policy responsiveness [7], [8]. Additionally, planning and budgeting mechanisms are neither participatory nor gender-sensitive, leading to the underutilization of GAD budgets and poorly targeted interventions [9].

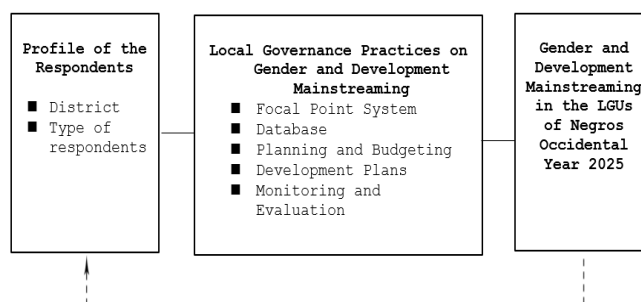
Moreover, monitoring and evaluation systems are haphazardly applied across LGUs, undermining the ability to measure the impact of GAD programs and make timely recalibration. As posited by Wunnava [10], strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks are required to recognize implementation bottlenecks, ensuring accountability and stimulating improvements to the policy delivery. These insights suggest there is an urgent call for an evidence-based, systematic evaluation of GAD mainstreaming practices, particularly across districts and stakeholder groups in Negros Occidental, Philippines. This study specifically addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of Local Governance Practices on Gender and Development Mainstreaming when taken collectively and in terms of the following areas: (a) Focal Point System; (b) Database; (c) Planning and Budgeting; (d) Development Plans; and (e) Monitoring and Evaluation, when respondents are taken as a whole and grouped according to district and type of respondents?
2. Is there a significant difference in the extent of Local Governance Practices on Gender Development Mainstreaming in the aforementioned areas when respondents are grouped according to district and type of respondents?
3. What prevalent challenges were encountered by the respondents in Gender and Development Mainstreaming?

2 FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The basis for the conduct of this study was anchored on the fact that, to date, no data have been stored through local governance practices on GAD mainstreaming in LGUs of the Province of Negros Occidental as a basis for potential improvements that are responsive to both local and global demands. The proponent believed that there is a need to take a closer look at these significant areas to determine the overall place and value of both men and women in society.

The schematic diagram shows the primary constructs as bases for respondents' assessments. These constructs include the Local Governance Practices on Gender and Development Mainstreaming, which has five areas: focal point system, database, planning and budgeting, development plans, and monitoring and evaluation. The gathered data based on these areas were computed, analyzed, and interpreted, and the results were used as a basis for the proposed action plan. Figure 1 shows the schematic diagram of the relationship between variables.

Figure 1*Framework of the Study.*

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to evaluate the extent of local governance practices on GAD mainstreaming. More specifically, this study aimed to assess the areas of GAD mainstreaming, including focal point system, database, planning and budgeting, development plans, and monitoring and evaluation using structured surveys.

3.2 Respondents

This study involved 369 permanent employees from various LGUs in the Province of Negros Occidental who were employed since 2023, including 31 designated GAD focal persons. The sample size was determined using Raosoft's calculator [11], ensuring a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Respondents were proportionately stratified by district and respondent type. Stratification ensured that each LGU and respondent type was adequately represented. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents according to district and strata by LGU.

Table 1*Respondents Distribution and Sample.*

<i>LGU</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Number of Employees</i>	<i>Sample</i>
Escalante City	1	213	9
Don Salvador Benedicto	1	55	2
Calatrava	1	264	11
San Carlos City	1	908	38
Toboso	1	52	2
Manapla	2	123	5
Sagay City	2	681	28
Cadiz City	2	767	32
Victorias City	3	372	16
EB Magalona	3	121	5
Silay City	3	742	31
Talisay City	3	555	23
Murcia	3	149	6
Bago City	4	769	32
Pulupandan	4	95	4
La Carlota City	4	509	21
San Enrique	4	80	3
Valladolid	4	105	4
Pontevedra	4	91	4
La Castellana	5	138	6
Himamaylan City	5	389	16
Hinigaran	5	136	6
Binalbagan	5	185	8
Isabela	5	118	5
Moises Padilla	5	58	2
Candoni	6	121	5
Hinobaan	6	160	7
Ilog	6	114	5
Cauayan	6	156	7
Kabankalan City	6	349	15
Sipalay City	6	275	11
Total		8850	369

3.3 Research instrument

The data used in this study were obtained and measured using a researcher-made questionnaire. All items were lifted from the publication entitled “Towards Gender-Responsive Local Governance: Gender and Development Mainstreaming in Philippine Cities,” developed and released by LCP [5] with support from the Embassy of Canada through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI). The measure involved assessment of five domains, which were reflective of the local government units’ key functions,

namely, focal point system (nine items), database (seven items), planning and budgeting (ten items), development plans (ten items), and monitoring and evaluation (five items). Respondents were asked to indicate their views on local governance practices relating to the implementation of gender and development mainstreaming on a scale of 1 to 5 (i.e., 1 - very low extent; 2 - low extent; 3 - moderate extent; 4 - great extent; and 5 - very great extent).

The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation using Lawshe's content validity approach [12]. Face validators were five researchers, statisticians, and grammarians while content validators were thirteen researchers, public administrators, GAD advocates, and GAD focal persons from various agencies and LGUs outside Negros Occidental. Thereafter, the questionnaire was subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha. The pilot respondents for this purpose were 30 employees in the local government of Bacolod City, including their GAD focal person. The overall face validity index was 4.55, interpreted as excellent. Meanwhile, its content validity index was 0.89, higher than the acceptable level of 0.78, making the instruments valid.

3.4 Data gathering procedure

Before the actual conduct of the study, permission was secured through written communication from the chief executives in various cities and municipalities in the Province of Negros Occidental. When given permission, the researcher immediately coordinated with the target respondents at their respective units to administer the survey questionnaires while observing health and safety protocols. Likewise, the proponent had properly explained and communicated the very purpose and intent of the survey or study. They were also informed that their participation was completely voluntary. Moreover, the respondents were given 15 minutes to answer the questionnaires. Thereafter, the proponent expressed gratitude to all respondents for their active involvement in this endeavor. After the administration of the questionnaires and upon completion of the responses, the researcher put into record all generated data and information for computation, tabulation, and analysis purposes.

3.5 Data analysis

To address Research Question 1, the mean and standard deviation were computed to assess the respondents' perceived extent of local governance practices on GAD mainstreaming across five key areas: focal point system, database, planning and budgeting, development plans, and monitoring and evaluation. For Research Question 2, the Kruskal-Wallis H-test was employed to examine statistical differences in the perceived extent of GAD mainstreaming practices when respondents were grouped according to district. Additionally, the Mann-Whitney U-test was used to determine differences based on respondent type (i.e., implementers and beneficiaries). Non-parametric tests were selected over parametric alternatives because the survey data were ordinal (Likert scale responses) and did not meet normality assumptions based on preliminary tests. Non-parametric methods such as Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney are thus more appropriate for analyzing differences in medians across groups when distributions are non-normal, ensuring robustness and validity of statistical inferences. To address Research Question 3, percentage scoring was applied to identify and quantify the most prevalent challenges encountered by respondents in the implementation of GAD mainstreaming initiatives.

3.6 Ethical considerations

In adherence to ethical research standards, this study ensured the protection, privacy, and voluntary participation of all respondents. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from each participant, with assurances that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. The study was conducted in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and no personally identifiable information was collected or disclosed. Participants were briefed on the purpose of the research and informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Moreover, data collection tools were reviewed and validated to minimize risks and ensure that questions were respectful, unbiased, and appropriate. All statistical procedures used were applied objectively to maintain the integrity of the findings and uphold ethical transparency throughout the research process.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 reveals that the extent of local governance practices among LGUs in Negros Occidental, Philippines, on GAD mainstreaming is "high," indicating a relatively consistent perception of governance quality among respondents. The results demonstrate that nearly all areas of local governance practices fall within the "high" category, reflecting a strong commitment to effective governance. However, the area concerning database management shows a slightly lower mean value of 3.44 and a standard deviation of 0.92, categorizing it as having a "moderate" extent of local governance practices as perceived by the respondents.

Table 2

Extent of Local Governance Practices on Gender and Development Mainstreaming

Gender and Development Mainstreaming	M	SD	Interpretation
Focal Point System (FPS)	3.55	0.96	High
Database (DB)	3.44	0.92	Moderate
Planning and Budgeting (P&B)	3.59	0.99	High
Development Plans (DP)	3.58	0.97	High
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	3.55	1.00	High
Whole	3.54	0.90	High

1.00-1.49 Very low, 1.50-2.49 Low, 2.50-3.49 Moderate, 3.50-4.49 High, and 4.50-5.00 Very high

The results implied that LGUs' gender and development mainstreaming practices were seriously considered, addressing the myriad interests and concerns for men and women in their respective organizations [13]. In the Focal Point System, the LGUs had ascertained the development, implementation, monitoring, review, and update of GAD plans and related programs, activities, and projects [14]. Though moderate, the LGUs made updates on the GAD database, but weaknesses such as inconsistent gender-disaggregated records and lack of integration with planning systems hinder evidence-based decision-making. Without reliable databases, LGUs struggle to align GAD budgets with actual gender needs, often resulting in underfunded or misallocated programs. Targeted interventions are needed, such as training modules on digital gender data management, standardization of indicators, and linking database outputs directly into

planning and budget templates required by DBM and DILG. [5]. In relation to the GAD Planning and Budgeting domain, the LGUs had integrated the yearly development and implementation of GAD-related programs, projects, and activities for the benefit of their respective local constituents. When it comes to Development Plans, the LGUs aligned and integrated their local development plans following the local planning process and timetable as provided by the DILG-NEDA-DBM-DOF JMC No. 1, series of 2007. Insofar as Monitoring and Evaluation is concerned, the LGUs made regular assessments of the effectiveness and efficiency of their mainstreaming efforts and corresponding compliances with the localization of the Magna Carta of Women in their desire to address gender-related issues and promote equality.

Table 3 in the succeeding page shows the extent of local governance practices on GAD mainstreaming in the Negros Occidental when respondents were grouped according to district and types. In the area of the Focal Point System, Districts 2 ($M = 3.34$) and 6 ($M = 3.41$) exhibit moderate local governance practices, indicating areas for potential improvement. In contrast, the other districts demonstrate a high extent of local governance practices within this system, reflecting greater engagement in governance activities. Additionally, an analysis of respondent types reveals that beneficiaries ($M = 3.55$) and implementers ($M = 3.65$) report a high level of local governance practices associated with the focal point system. These findings collectively imply a generally positive trend in local governance practices among the groups studied, particularly in relation to the focal point systems, while also highlighting specific districts that can benefit from enhanced support and resources. In other words, the LGUs in the province had ascertained the development, implementation, monitoring, review, and update of GAD plans and related programs, activities, and projects [14]. At the local level, the LGUs' GAD Focal Point System (GFPS) had set the direction, advocacy, planning, and mainstreaming of GAD perspectives for inclusion in their programs, projects, activities, and processes.

Table 3*Extent of local governance practices by district*

D	FPS	DB	P&B	DP	M&E
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
1	3.37(0.84)	3.30(0.75)	3.36(0.98)	3.37(0.91)	3.37(0.87)
2	3.34(0.87)	3.22(0.87)	3.37(0.92)	3.37(0.87)	3.35(0.94)
3	3.74(1.07)	3.71(1.00)	3.84(0.99)	3.88(1.02)	3.91(1.03)
4	3.68(1.11)	3.48(0.98)	3.66(1.14)	3.57(1.13)	3.56(1.06)
5	3.76(0.81)	3.46(0.88)	3.93(0.68)	3.84(0.76)	3.66(0.94)
6	3.41(0.88)	3.36(0.95)	3.35(0.95)	3.38(0.89)	3.38(1.03)

D = District, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

In the Focal Point System, Districts 2 and 6 exhibit moderate local governance practices, indicating areas for potential improvement, while District 3 stands out with consistently higher scores across all mechanisms. This outperformance is attributed to urbanized LGUs in District 3 that maintain better-funded GAD offices, employ full-time GAD focal persons, and have stronger partnerships with civil society organizations. These institutional advantages suggest that urban LGUs with larger budgets and professional staff are more capable of mainstreaming GAD initiatives compared to rural LGUs, where resources and technical capacity remain limited. In contrast, the other districts demonstrate a high extent of local governance practices within this system, reflecting greater engagement in governance activities. Additionally, an analysis of respondent types reveals that beneficiaries and implementers have a high level of local governance practices associated with the FPS. These findings collectively implied a generally positive trend in local governance practices among the groups studied while also highlighting specific districts that benefit from enhanced support and resources. In other words, the LGUs in the province had ascertained the development, implementation, monitoring, review, and update of GAD plans and related programs, activities, and projects [14].

In the Database area, the analysis reveals that nearly all districts exhibit a moderate extent of engagement, with the notable exception of District 3, which stands out with a high extent of local governance practices. Furthermore, when respondents are categorized by type, both beneficiaries and implementers demonstrate a moderate extent of local governance practices in the database area. These findings suggest a generally positive trend in local governance across most districts while highlighting District 3 as a model for effective governance practices that could serve as a benchmark for others. Though

moderate, as previously noted, the LGUs made the necessary updates on the GAD database and subjected it to analysis. However, limited standardization of databases hampers comparability across districts. District 3's relatively strong database performance can be traced to Silay City's adoption of digital gender-disaggregated systems, which feed directly into their planning templates. In contrast, rural LGUs often rely on paper-based or outdated records, weakening the evidence base for budgeting. This local trend mirrors global evidence. UN Women reports that most countries lack comprehensive gender-disaggregated data, limiting governments' ability to track progress on SDG 5. Similarly, the World Bank highlights data gaps as a key bottleneck in gender-responsive budgeting. Thus, Negros Occidental's moderate database performance aligns with a wider international pattern where technical capacity and institutional investment in data systems remain underdeveloped [5].

For the area of Planning and Budgeting, Districts 1, 2, and 6 demonstrate a high extent of local governance practices. This indicates a strong commitment to effective governance in these significant areas. In contrast, the remaining districts exhibit a moderate level of governance practices, suggesting opportunities for enhancement. Additionally, when examining the types of respondents, both beneficiary and implementer groups report high levels of local governance practices in planning and budgeting and development plans. These findings indicated a high engagement in governance practices among the respondents while underscoring the exemplary performance of Districts 1, 2, and 6 as leaders in effective planning and budgeting strategies. Thus, the LGUs generally integrated the yearly development and implementation of GAD-related programs, projects, and activities for the benefit of their respective local constituents. Specifically, the LGUs had formulated their plan and budget; however, limited and inconsistent databases often constrained evidence-based prioritization. For example, the absence of reliable sex-disaggregated data on livelihood participation or domestic violence cases led to generic interventions rather than targeted, high-impact programs. Addressing this requires integrated training on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), use of standardized GAD database templates, and simulations on translating raw data into budget priorities. LGUs are thus encouraged to align database-driven insights with DBM's Budget Operations Manual for LGUs [5].

When it comes to Development Plans, the LGUs aligned and integrated their local development plans following the local planning process and timetable as provided by the DILG-NEDA-DBM-DOF JMC No. 1, series of 2007. They took into consideration the structure, the multi-sector development and land use plans, and the yearly investment plan and budget. Likewise, the LGUs had exerted efforts in the promotion, protection, and fulfillment of women’s human rights, economic empowerment, and gender-responsive governance towards the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment [5]. These development plans allow LGUs to coordinate and integrate sectoral and thematic concerns, such as GAD, that create a more equitable community where men and women have equal rights and opportunities to participate and benefit from development [4].

Finally, in the area of Monitoring and Evaluation, Districts 3, 4, and 5 demonstrate a high extent of local governance practices, with mean values ranging from 3.91 to 3.56. This indicates a strong commitment to effective monitoring and evaluation strategies within these districts. Conversely, the remaining districts show a moderate extent of governance practices in this area, highlighting potential avenues for improvement. Meanwhile, when the respondents are categorized by type, both beneficiaries and implementers report a high level of local governance practices in monitoring and evaluation, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Extent of local governance practices by type

Type	FPS	DB	P&B	DP	M&E
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
Beneficiary	3.55 (0.96)	3.44 (0.92)	3.58 (1.00)	3.57 (0.97)	3.55 (1.00)
Implementer	3.65 (0.98)	3.33 (1.01)	3.60 (0.90)	3.62 (0.97)	3.57 (0.99)

These results show that while LGUs reported regular assessments, the quality of monitoring varies. District 3’s stronger results stem from dedicated M&E units and external validation by civil society partners, while other districts often perform checklist-style monitoring to meet compliance. This reinforces the pattern that institutional resources, technical staff, and external accountability mechanisms distinguish high-performing districts from lagging ones. In addition, the LGUs issued and established a

monitoring and evaluation system, progress monitoring, and submission of accomplishment reports and evaluation reports. Accordingly, effective monitoring and evaluation promote good governance in local government institutions [15].

Table 5 shows a notable and statistically significant difference in governance practices relevant to gender development mainstreaming when the respondents were grouped by district. This distinction is especially visible in numerous essential areas, such as focal point systems, databases, planning and budgeting processes, development plans, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Table 5

Differences in the extent of local governance practice according to district

Areas	X ²	p	Interpretation
Focal Point System	20.74	<.001	Significant
Database	18.45	0.002	Significant
Planning and Budgeting	27.67	<.001	Significant
Development Plans	27.62	<.001	Significant
Monitoring and Evaluation	23.33	<.001	Significant

These results implied that LGUs, coming from various districts, though differed in their extents of local governance practices on GAD mainstreaming in the area of focal point system, had generally ascertained the development, implementation, monitoring, review, and update of GAD-related plans, programs, activities, and projects as promoted by the Philippine Commission on Women [3]. In other words, the LGUs in various districts had necessarily set the direction, advocacy, planning, and mainstreaming of GAD-related perspectives for inclusion in their programs, projects, activities, and processes.

Table 6 shows the difference in the extent of local governance practices on GAD mainstreaming in terms of Areas when the respondents were grouped according to type.

Table 6

Differences in the extent of local governance practice according to type

Areas	U	p	Interpretation
Focal Point System	4877.50	0.53	Not significant
Database	5356.00	0.84	Not significant
Planning and Budgeting	5354.50	0.84	Not significant
Development Plans	5067.50	0.76	Not significant

Monitoring and Evaluation		5189.00	0.93	Not significant
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The results reveal that there are no significant differences in the extent of local governance practices related to gender development across several key dimensions, including focal point systems, databases, planning and budgeting, development plans, and monitoring and evaluation. This lack of statistical significance at the 0.05 level suggests a uniformity in governance practices across these areas, indicating that improvements may be needed to enhance the effectiveness of local governance in promoting gender development initiatives. The results further implied that LGUs had adopted a more or less similar strategy in pursuing gender equality through gender-responsive governance and a society where men and women equally contribute to and benefit from developments. In other words, the LGUs shared similar approaches in creating policies that consider the interests and concerns of the men and women in their respective organizations [13].

Moreover, in support of the localization of Magna Carta of Women, the PCW-DILG-DBM-NEDA Joint Memorandum Circular 2013-01, along with other related laws and policies, has been adopted to provide the local government units with necessary guidelines in their implementation [5]. The implementation of the Magna Carta of Women at the local level includes consideration of the following institutional mechanisms: Focal Point System, Database, Planning and Budgeting, Development Plans, and Monitoring and Evaluation. Moreover, the Magna Carta of Women sought to eradicate discrimination by way of recognizing, protecting, fulfilling, and promoting women's rights, particularly those belonging to the marginalized sectors of society [14].

Table 7 shows the prevalent challenges encountered in GAD mainstreaming according to district. The results reveal that the "lack of gender awareness and sensitivity training" emerges as a significant barrier. An outstanding majority of focal persons from each district reported experiencing this challenge. However, District 4 stands out, with only 40% of its focal persons acknowledging this issue. These results implied that LGUs fall short in their campaign to give due recognition to gender roles and the identification of privileges.

Table 7*Prevalent challenges in GAD mainstreaming*

Challenges	District					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Lack of gender awareness and sensitivity training	80%	67%	60%	40%	67%	57%
Attitudinal problems	60%	67%	60%	60%	50%	0%
Lack of conceptual clarity and technical capacity	20%	33%	60%	40%	67%	33%
Lack of accountability	40%	33%	20%	20%	0%	33%
Problem of financial and material resources	40%	0%	20%	40%	33%	67%
Lack of coordination among the concerned bodies/offices/units	40%	33%	60%	0%	0%	17%
Imbalanced division of labor	40%	33%	40%	0%	17%	33%
Financial dependence of women on men	20%	33%	20%	0%	50%	50%
Lack of authority from the facilitator's office.	40%	0%	20%	0%	17%	17%

The challenge of "attitudinal problems" has been recognized by nearly all districts, with over 50% of focal persons reporting it as a significant issue. In a notable exception, focal persons from District 6 reported a striking 0%, indicating that "attitudinal problems" do not appear to be a challenge in their framework. The results suggested that whether attitudinal problems are a challenge or not, they have to be seriously considered as they could affect working relationships between and among people, productivity, and work quality when left unaddressed [16]. In contrast, the "lack of conceptual clarity and technical capacity" has been acknowledged by focal persons from Districts 1, 2, 4, and 6 as a significant barrier to effective GAD mainstreaming. The results suggested that LGUs' inadequate campaign on gender awareness and training led to people's unclear distinction of ideas relative to gender-related issues and technical support for gender mainstreaming. In other words, it hampered people's thorough understanding of gender issues and their importance [17].

Less than 50% of focal persons across all districts identified "lack of accountability" as a challenge in GAD mainstreaming. The result suggested that while the issue of accountability was seen as a less significant barrier, it cannot be understated as it can weaken clarity as regards the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the organizations and further erode accountability if left unchecked. In addition, accountability is crucial in workplaces as it fuels successful organizations, bolsters culture, improves individual and collective performance, and strengthens adherence to compliance [18]. Similarly, the "problem of financial and material resources" was also deemed a non-challenge by less than 50% of focal persons in most districts. However, District 6 presents a notable exception; 67% of focal persons recognized the problem of financial and material resources as a significant challenge. These results implied inadequate financial and material resources to support the conduct and implementation of GAD mainstreaming of LGUs. The country's Department of Budget and Management [19] emphasized that public financial management, along with other resources, is vital in the determination and prioritization of high-impact programs, projects, and activities that are truly responsive to the needs of the people.

Focal persons in District 3 have identified the lack of coordination among the concerned units as a significant challenge in GAD mainstreaming, with 60% of respondents acknowledging this issue. The result indicated that, in the absence of coordination, the LGUs' efforts and productivity concerning GAD mainstreaming initiatives decreased [20]. In contrast, "imbalanced division of labor," "financial dependence of women or men," and "lack of authority from the facilitators' office" were perceived as less challenging. The results suggested that issues could not be understated as they hampered the successful conduct and implementation of GAD mainstreaming initiatives of LGUs in various districts. Imbalanced division of labor led to inefficiency and inequitable gains from tasks given, particularly to men and women. Financial dependency had been linked to poor health [21]. Finally, the lack of authority from the facilitators' office did not provide a clear picture of the roles that GAD facilitators have to play in collaborating with the conduct and implementation of gender and development mainstreaming initiatives. This negates the GAD facilitators' right to exercise their power in collaborative governance [22].

5 CONCLUSION

This study assessed the extent of local governance practices on GAD mainstreaming in the province of Negros Occidental, Philippines. It specifically focused on five key institutional mechanisms mandated by national policy: the Focal Point System, Database, Planning and Budgeting, Development Plans, and Monitoring and Evaluation. Utilizing a descriptive quantitative design and engaging 369 respondents from various LGUs, the research aimed to identify the degree of implementation of these mechanisms, determine statistical differences across districts and respondent types, and highlight prevalent challenges in GAD mainstreaming efforts.

The study revealed that the extent of local governance practices on GAD mainstreaming was rated as high, with an aggregate mean of 3.54. Planning and Budgeting recorded the highest mean among the five dimensions, while the Database dimension was rated as moderate, indicating room for improvement in gender-disaggregated data systems. Statistically significant differences across districts were observed in all five dimensions, suggesting uneven implementation of GAD initiatives. However, no significant difference was found between implementers and beneficiaries, implying a shared perception of the current GAD mainstreaming across roles. The most critical challenges identified were the lack of gender awareness and sensitivity training, attitudinal problems, and limited technical capacity. District-specific variations further emphasized the need for targeted interventions such as standardized gender-sensitivity training modules for frontline staff, technical workshops on digital database management and integration into local development planning, and specialized training on gender-responsive budgeting. Concrete policy recommendations include: mandatory training for LGU staff on gender-disaggregated data collection and management; integration of database outputs into local budget hearings to ensure evidence-based allocations; and provincial-level digital platforms to standardize GAD indicators across districts. These reforms will institutionalize gender data as the backbone of planning and budgeting, reducing reliance on unspecific or generic interventions.

Despite the valuable insights, the study acknowledges the following limitations. First, the research relied primarily on self-reported perceptions, which may be subject to bias or variability in understanding of GAD concepts. Second, the cross-sectional design

limits the ability to assess progress over time or causal relationships. Future research should consider longitudinal studies, incorporate qualitative methods such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews, and explore the impact of GAD initiatives on community-level outcomes. Comparing these findings with other regions underscores the study's originality. For instance, Ethiopia's LGUs also reported weak technical capacity for GAD, while municipalities in Indonesia similarly faced challenges integrating gender into planning without robust data systems. By contrast, some EU member states have developed mandatory gender-disaggregated data infrastructures, illustrating a more institutionalized approach. The Philippine case contributes new evidence from a Southeast Asian province-level perspective, adding comparative value to global GAD mainstreaming research.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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