Research Paper

From Theory to Practice: Examining the Link Between Classroom Learning on Gender and Advocacy Engagement

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Abstract

Education plays a vital role in shaping students' values and behaviors, particularly regarding gender equality and social justice. In response to the growing call for advocacy-based learning, this study examines the impact of classroom instruction in the Gender and Society course on students' engagement in gender advocacy. Specifically, it explores how pedagogical approaches influence students' awareness, motivation, and real-world application of advocacy skills. Employing a descriptive quantitative research design, data were collected from 164 students through a self-constructed, validated survey using Likert-scale items. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's R correlation analysis were used to interpret the results. Findings reveal that the course significantly enhanced students' attitudes and motivation toward gender advocacy (grand mean = 4.68; SD = 0.54). Contributing factors included interactive teaching methods, relevant content, and instructor support (grand mean = 4.53). While some barriers, such as limited opportunities and lack of knowledge, were identified (grand mean = 3.10), they did not significantly impede advocacy participation. A strong correlation was found between teaching methods and motivation ($r = 0.640$), and a moderate correlation with real-life advocacy application ($r = 0.522$). The study underscores the transformative potential of gender-responsive pedagogy in promoting critical thinking, empathy, and active citizenship. It recommends integrating experiential learning, collaborative projects, and community engagement to sustain student involvement in advocacy. Despite limitations related to sample scope and reliance on self-reported data, the research contributes valuable insights into how gender education can catalyze social change.

Keywords *gender advocacy, classroom learning, gender-responsive pedagogy, student motivation, experiential learning*

INTRODUCTION

Education significantly shapes students' perceptions of gender roles and social issues. Curricula and textbooks influence understanding of gender equality, highlighting the need for unbiased content that fosters critical thinking. Comprehensive sexuality education, focusing on gender power dynamics, helps reduce unintended pregnancies and STIs. Effective strategies include teacher training programs like UNICEF's Communities Care and Doorways initiative, and gender-sensitive policies in the Philippines and Finland. Accountability measures, such as deregistering abusive teachers in Kenya, further protect students (UNESCO, 2018).

The integration of gender education with advocacy is crucial. Schools must adopt inclusive policies, ensure proper implementation, and encourage student participation in decision-making. When enforced, education can drive gender equality.

This study evaluates the Gender and Society course's impact on students' advocacy involvement, exploring how classroom learning influences attitudes, advocacy motivation, and application of gender concepts. Practically, the study will inform curriculum development, teacher training, and institutional policies that promote gender advocacy. It seeks to answer:

1. How does classroom learning influence students' attitudes toward gender advocacy?
2. What factors drive advocacy motivation?
3. What barriers hinder student participation in advocacy?
4. How do students apply classroom learning to real-world advocacy?
5. Is there a significant relationship between teaching methods and motivation, between motivation and perceived barriers, and between teaching methods and advocacy application?
6. What recommendations can enhance advocacy integration in gender education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender-Responsive Pedagogy and Institutional Commitment

Gender equality is central to higher education in Taiwan, backed by legal reforms and inclusive policies. Integrating gender issues into curricula fosters awareness and equity (Shih & Wang, 2021). Strategies include bias-free materials, gender-sensitive teaching, and respect for diversity (10 Ways To Promote Gender Equality In The Classroom, 2022). Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) enhances equity in participation and leadership, and when aligned with Outcome-Based Education, prepares graduates to advance gender equity (Boachie et al., 2021). Studies in Africa show GRP improves girls' performance, though challenges like gender-based violence remain (Ing et al., 2023). Institutions shape inclusive leaders through Gender and Development (GAD) integration, supported by policies and advocacy (Manuel, 2024). Global initiatives like Global Partnership for Education (GPE) highlight education's role in empowering marginalized groups and driving systemic change (Lynch, 2023).

Barriers to Gender Advocacy Participation

Gender equity in education is vital for social empowerment, yet barriers persist, especially for girls in marginalized communities. Cultural norms, early marriage, economic hardship, and poor infrastructure limit girls' education, while gender stereotypes discourage female participation in STEM (Kuteesa et al., 2024). These challenges restrict leadership and advocacy opportunities (Mendizabal, 2024).

Achieving equity requires overcoming barriers to advocacy. Despite education's transformative role, societal norms, institutional resistance, and lack of awareness hinder engagement (Mendizabal, 2024). Teachers face limited training and concerns about backlash; students face peer pressure. A whole-school approach—promoting gender-sensitive policies, teacher training, and open discussion—is essential for fostering future advocates.

Advancing Advocacy in Gender Education

Advocacy challenges unjust power structures by using evidence and lived experiences to drive systemic change (Plan International, 2016). A gender-transformative approach integrates a gender lens to dismantle inequalities through strategic, collective, and cross-sector action. Education offers untapped potential for gender-inclusive, anti-racist advocacy, supported by practices like intersectional analysis, community engagement, and impact evaluation (Brice et al., 2022). Key strategies include adopting decolonial perspectives, aligning with stakeholders, and strengthening data systems. Empowering girls requires collaboration among communities, policymakers, and organizations. Groups like Education Out Loud, E-Net Philippines, and Girls Not Brides show how research-based advocacy can shape policy, promote gender equity, and address

issues such as child marriage and school re-entry (Berdan et al., 2022).

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Method Used
This study employs a descriptive quantitative research design to assess the impact of teaching Gender and Society on students' engagement in gender advocacy. Descriptive research is used to systematically collect and analyze quantifiable data to describe trends, perceptions, and behaviors without manipulating variables.

Survey Instrument and Analysis
Data were gathered using a structured survey developed from literature on gender advocacy, classroom influence, and student engagement. Aligned with the study's objectives, the tool was reviewed by gender and education experts for content validity and pilot-tested for clarity and reliability. The final questionnaire used Likert-scale items covering demographics, perceptions, classroom influences, barriers, and advocacy practices.

Table 1. Five - Point Likert Scale

Weight	Ranges	Qualitative Description
5	4.21-5.00	Strongly Agree
4	3.41-4.20	Agree
3	2.61-3.40	Neutral
2	1.81-2.60	Disagree
1	1.00-1.80	Strongly Disagree

Descriptive statistics (percentages, mean, standard deviation) summarized student attitudes and experiences. Pearson's R correlation analysis examined relationships between variables, such as the effect of teaching methods and perceived barriers on advocacy motivation.

Table 2. Pearson's R correlation interpretation of values

Correlation Value	Qualitative Description
0.80 – 1.0	Very Strong Positive
0.60 - 0.799	Strong positive
0.40 – 0.599	Moderate Positive
0.30 - 0.399	Weak Positive
0.00 - 0.199	Very Weak

Respondents' Description
The target population consisted of 285 students enrolled in nine sections of the Gender and Society course, all of whom had hands-on experience applying gender theory through advocacy programs in their final term. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used, treating each section as a distinct stratum. The minimum sample size, calculated using the Raosoft sample size calculator (95% confidence, 5% margin of error, 50% response distribution), was 164 respondents. The sample from each section was determined using the formula:
Sample per section = (Students in section / Total population) × 164.

Table 3. Respondents

SECTION	NO. OF STUDENTS	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
I-EED2	32	17
I-EED3	33	19
I-EED4	33	19
I-PSY1	36	21
I-PSY6	33	19
I-SEDE2	34	20
I-SEDM1	28	16
I-SEDM2	27	16
I-SEDS1	29	17
TOTAL	**285**	**164**

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Influence of Classroom Learning on Gender Advocacy Attitudes

Table 4 shows that the Gender and Society course significantly improved students' attitudes toward gender advocacy, with a grand mean of 4.68 (SD = 0.54). Students strongly agreed that the course increased awareness of gender issues (M = 4.74), boosted confidence in discussing gender topics (M = 4.55), supported advocacy initiatives (M = 4.65), and positively shifted attitudes toward gender equality (M = 4.60). They also felt more likely to challenge gender discrimination (M = 4.46), with low standard deviations indicating consistent responses.

Table 4. Influence of Classroom Learning on Gender Advocacy Attitudes

	Influences	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
1	Enhanced my awareness	4.74	0.48	Strongly Agree
2	Enhanced my confidence	4.55	0.66	Strongly Agree
3	Support gender advocacy initiatives	4.65	0.61	Strongly Agree
4	Positively shaped my vies on equality	4.60	0.68	Strongly Agree
5	Empowered me to challenge discrimination	4.46	0.76	Strongly Agree
	GRAND MEAN	**4.68**	**0.54**	**Strongly Agree**

These results align with Dowd et al. (2020), which emphasizes the role of teaching materials in shaping gender perspectives. By using inclusive, critical, and gender-responsive content, the course helped students challenge traditional stereotypes, highlighting the need for educators to employ instructional strategies that promote gender equality and critical thinking.

2. Factors Affecting Student Motivation for Gender Advocacy

Table 5 shows that key instructional components of the Gender and Society course strongly motivated students to engage in gender advocacy, with a grand mean of 4.53 (SD = 0.74). Students highly rated the relevance of course content (M = 4.59), effective teaching methods (M = 4.52), and engaging activities (M = 4.51) as factors promoting active participation and critical reflection. Assignments and projects (M = 4.48) also deepened understanding, while instructor encouragement (M = 4.55) emerged as a crucial motivator.

Table 5. Factors Affecting Student Motivation for Gender Advocacy

	Factors	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
1	Effective teaching methods	4.52	0.81	Strongly Agree
2	Relevant content	4.59	0.65	Strongly Agree
3	Engaging activities	4.51	0.76	Strongly Agree
4	Helpful assignments and projects	4.48	0.81	Strongly Agree
5	Encouragement from instructors	4.55	0.74	Strongly Agree
	GRAND MEAN	**4.53**	**0.74**	**Strongly Agree**

These findings align with Robinson's (2023) framework, based on Eccles and Wigfield's (2020) expectancy-value theory, highlighting the importance of task relevance, goal connection, and confidence-building. The course's engaging activities, supportive environment, and real-world relevance motivated students, fostering a foundation for sustained gender justice efforts.

3. Perceived Barriers to Gender Advocacy Engagement

Table 6 shows that students hold a neutral stance on barriers to gender advocacy, with a grand mean of 3.10 (SD = 1.34). The highest-rated barriers were lack of knowledge (M = 3.41) and limited engagement opportunities (M = 3.43), indicating recognition of advocacy gaps. Fear of criticism (M = 3.21) received neutral responses. Lower scores for prioritization (M = 2.69) and institutional support (M = 2.78) suggest the need for greater institutional promotion and support for advocacy.

Table 6. Perceived Barriers to Gender Advocacy Engagement

	Barriers	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
1	Lack knowledge	3.41	1.29	Agree
2	Limited opportunities	3.43	1.28	Agree
3	Fear of criticism or opposition	3.21	1.40	Neutral
4	Low prioritization	2.69	1.33	Neutral
5	Insufficient institutional support	2.78	1.34	Neutral
	GRAND MEAN	**3.10**	**1.34**	**Neutral**

In conclusion, knowledge gaps, limited opportunities, and perceived institutional neglect may hinder student participation in gender advocacy. Addressing these issues, along with providing structured programs, academic integration, and institutional support, can enhance engagement. This aligns with Spricigo et al. (2023), highlighting the importance of supportive environments and intense online instruction.

4. Application of Learning in Real-Life Advocacy Efforts

Table 7 shows that students strongly apply concepts from the gender course to daily life, with a grand mean of 4.40 (SD = 0.73). The highest-rated item (M = 4.50) reflects frequent application of knowledge in community discussions on gender, highlighting awareness and communication skills. Students also integrate gender-sensitive perspectives (M = 4.38) and engage in gender-related events (M = 4.23), demonstrating inclusivity and civic involvement. They feel prepared for gender advocacy (M = 4.35), and even the lower score of 4.20 indicates positive influence on peers and family.

Table 7. Application of Learning in Real-Life Advocacy Efforts

	Applications	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
1	Equip me to discuss gender issues	4.50	0.69	Strongly Agree
2	Engage in advocacy	4.23	0.96	Strongly Agree
3	Apply gender-sensitive perspectives daily	4.38	0.82	Strongly Agree
4	Influence others	4.20	0.96	Agree
5	Participate in real – life initiatives	4.35	0.80	Strongly Agree
	GRAND MEAN	**4.40**	**0.73**	**Strongly Agree**

Consistent with Alexander et al. (2020), the results show that dynamic teacher-student interactions support cognitive, emotional, and behavioral growth. Advocacy learning boosts academic performance and real-world application, with notable gains in the experimental group. It fosters both academic success and active, lifelong citizenship.

5. Impact of Teaching Methods on Engaging in Advocacy

Table 8 shows a strong positive relationship between teaching methods and students' motivation to engage in advocacy, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.640$ ($p < 0.01$). This confirms that effective teaching methods significantly enhance advocacy motivation, rejecting the null hypothesis and highlighting the relationship's significance.

Table 8. Impact of Teaching Methods to Engage in Advocacy

	Students' motivation	Strength of relationship	Decision	Conclusion
Teaching methods	0.640**	Strong Positive	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship

These findings underscore the value of participatory teaching in boosting student motivation, particularly on gender equity and civic engagement. Effective teaching fosters empathy, awareness, and advocacy, echoing Sugano and Mamolo (2021), who link intrinsic motivation to active participation. Both studies affirm that quality instruction and motivation drive student engagement across contexts.

6. Impact of Perceived Barriers to Engage in Advocacy

Table 9 shows a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.062$) between perceived barriers and students' motivation to engage in gender advocacy, falling within the "Very Weak" range (0.00–0.199). The result is not statistically significant, leading to the failure to reject the null hypothesis, indicating no meaningful relationship between perceived barriers and students' motivation for advocacy.

Table 9. Impact of Perceived Barriers to Engage in Advocacy

	Perceived Barriers	Strength of relationship	Decision	Conclusion
Students' motivation to engage	0.062	Very Weak Positive	Fail to Reject Ho	No Significant Relationship

Despite barriers like time and fear of criticism, students remain motivated for gender advocacy, driven by personal values, peer support, and effective teaching. This reflects their resilience and aligns with Lim et al. (2022), who found sustained engagement with supportive environments. Fostering advocacy requires motivation-driven teaching and meaningful participation.

7. Impact of Teaching Methods on Real - life Gender Advocacy Efforts

Table 10 shows a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.522, p < 0.01) between teaching methods and the application of learning in real-life gender advocacy efforts, indicating that effective classroom teaching influences students' ability to apply their knowledge in advocacy. This statistically significant result suggests that improved teaching methods increase students' confidence and willingness to engage in gender advocacy.

Table 10. Impact of Teaching Methods to Real - life Gender Advocacy Efforts

	Application of learning	Strength of relationship	Decision	Conclusion
Teaching methods	.522**	Moderate Positive	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship

The findings affirm that participatory strategies like debates, role-plays, and immersion deepen understanding of gender issues and promote real-world application. These methods build critical skills—communication, collaboration, and empathy—key to advocacy. This aligns with Bloom Bird (2023) on education fostering moral growth, and G.K. (2019) on its role in social change. Ultimately, effective teaching empowers students as agents of gender justice.

8. Recommendations to Strengthen Advocacy Integration

Table 11 presents recommendations for enhancing advocacy engagement in gender education, with a high overall agreement (grand mean = 4.49, SD = 0.71). Students strongly endorse experiential and interactive learning, especially collaborative projects with advocacy groups (M = 4.52), which bridge theory and practice. They also support guest speakers from advocacy organizations (M = 4.43), institutional support for student advocacy (M = 4.42), and immersive activities like fieldwork (M = 4.35) to develop empathy and critical thinking. Additionally, students seek workshops for practical advocacy tools, such as campaign development and leadership (M = 4.37).

Table 11. Recommendations to Strengthen Advocacy Integration

	Recommendations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
1	Experiential learning activities	4.35	0.82	Strongly Agree
2	Guest speakers from gender advocacy organizations	4.43	0.83	Strongly Agree
3	More platforms for students' engagement	4.42	0.78	Strongly Agree
4	Collaborative projects with gender advocacy groups	4.52	0.71	Strongly Agree
5	Additional training and workshops on gender advocacy	4.37	0.82	Strongly Agree
	GRAND MEAN	**4.49**	**0.71**	**Strongly Agree**

These findings highlight the need to reframe the Gender and Society course as a platform for empowerment and action. By incorporating community initiatives, practitioner-led engagements, and institutional support, the course can drive social change. This shift aligns with Promoting Gender Equality through Education and Empowerment – Sample Proposal Activities' (2024) proposal for a multi-layered approach to gender equality, combining education, outreach, and collaboration to prepare students as agents of equity and justice.

9. Proposed Action Plan to Strengthen Gender Advocacy Integration

The action plan promotes gender advocacy through experiential learning—guest talks, workshops, and community campaigns. It emphasizes student-led projects, reflection, and collaboration to build leadership skills. With a clear timeline, budget, and shared responsibilities, the plan is cost-effective and sustainable through inter-office coordination. Progress is monitored through journals, feedback, and surveys, to make the Gender and Society course advocacy-driven and empowering.

Table 12. Proposed Action Plan to Strengthen Gender Advocacy Integration

Objective	Activities	Time Frame	Estimated Budget	Person/Office Responsible
1. Introduce Advocacy Exposure through Guest Speakers	Invite 2 guest speakers from local advocacy groups to discuss real-world gender advocacy work	Midterms and Finals Week	₱1,000 per speaker honorarium × 2 = ₱2,000 (Snacks: ₱500)	Subject Teacher, with support from Gender Focal Point
2. Facilitate a Mini Community-Based Project	Require students to design and implement a small group project	Weeks 10–14 of semester	Materials & printing: ₱1,000	Subject Teacher, in coordination with Student Council
3. Conduct a Basic Skills Workshop	Facilitate a 2-hour in-class workshop on advocacy communication	Week 6 or 7	Resource person token: ₱1,000 Materials: ₱300	Subject Teacher, tap faculty colleague or resource speaker
4. Encourage Reflection and Documentation	Require a personal reflection paper or group video journal on gender advocacy experiences	Final 2 weeks of semester	No cost	Subject Teacher
5. Coordinate Student Participation in Existing Campaigns	Connect students with ongoing local campaigns for optional participation	Depending on scheduled events	Transportation for field visit: ₱1,000	Subject Teacher, with help from Gender and Development Office
6. Showcase Student Outputs in a Culminating Activity	Organize a mini class exhibit or showcase of student projects and outputs	Finals Week	Printing/display materials: ₱700 Certificates: ₱300	Subject Teacher, with help from Student Services Office

CONCLUSIONS

The study shows that the Gender and Society course significantly boosts students' awareness, attitudes, and intent toward gender advocacy (grand mean = 4.68). Classroom learning increases confidence in discussing gender issues and motivates advocacy. Student motivation is strongly influenced by participatory teaching methods, relevant content, and instructor support (grand mean = 4.53). A moderate positive correlation (r = 0.522) between teaching methods and real-life advocacy highlights the effectiveness of experiential strategies like community projects. Despite neutral perceptions of barriers (grand mean = 3.10), students remain engaged in advocacy, suggesting that institutional support and curricular improvements can enhance involvement. The study recommends integrating advocacy-focused pedagogies and incorporating experiential activities like guest speakers and workshops to sustain advocacy efforts.

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

The study's findings are limited by self-reported data from a single institution, affecting generalizability. It does not address long-term behavioral changes or external factors. Future research should include longitudinal designs, comparative studies, and explore qualitative barriers to improve advocacy integration in curricula.

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