

Awareness, Attitude, and Compliance with Ra11313 – Safe Spaces Act among College Students in a Higher Educational Institution in Laguna



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ABSTRACT: This study investigated the 374 respondents of Pamantasan ng Cabuyao on their level of awareness, attitude and level of compliance with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act thru the use of descriptive-correlational method based on the results of the three-part researcher-made questionnaire. The findings showed the respondents' high level of awareness, the very positive attitude, and the very high level of compliance to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act. As to the relationship between variables, the findings showed significant relationships between the level of awareness and attitude; level of awareness and level of compliance; and attitude and level of compliance of the respondents with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act. In conclusion, the students are aware of RA11313 Safe Space Act knowing that their university is a safe space; they have positive attitude towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act which signifies their belief that the university will use the survey's feedback to make improvements; and they comply to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act as they have not committed any violations in the Implementing Rules and Regulation of the act. Similarly, the higher their level of awareness, the more positive their attitude; the higher their level of awareness, the higher their level of compliance; and the more positive their attitude, the higher their level of compliance to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act. Therefore, there is a need to implement the proposed action plan to enhance or sustain the awareness, attitude, and compliance of the college students towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act.

KEYWORDS: Descriptive correlational study, United States, safe space, gender-based sexual harassment.

INTRODUCTION

Republic Act (RA) 11313, or the Safe Space Act, is "an act defining gender-based sexual harassment in streets, public spaces, online, workplaces, and educational or training institutions, providing protective measures and prescribing penalties therefor" (Philippine Commission on Women, 2019). Principally authored by Sen. Risa Hontiveros (Senate of the Philippines, 2019), RA11313 was signed by President Duterte in April 17, 2019 and took effect on August 3, 2019 after the drafting of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the law.

In the United States, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is highlighted prohibiting sexual harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin and forbids discrimination on the basis of sex, as well as, race in hiring, promoting, and firing (US Department of Labor, 2022).

Despite the presence of this law, it did not stop a renowned nuclear physicist at Cornell University from harassing his administrative assistant in 1974 (Adeleke, 2022). Similarly, despite RA7877, or the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995 signed by then President Fidel V. Ramos (Philippine Commission on Women, 2020), cases of sexual harassment increased and is still increasing, according to the Commission on Population and Development (2020).

It is also worthy to mention that in the study of Klein and Martin (2019) genderbased harassment and unwanted sexual attention rather than sexual coercion were more commonly experienced in campuses. This is supported by a comparative analysis on Sexual Victimization and Sexual Harassment among College Students by Magnuson, Augustyn and Rennison (2019) of which 24 colleges were subjected to the study. Those who were victims of sexual harassment reported to feeling uncomfortable in their college environment implying a campus that is not a safe space. More specifically, a study on Sexual Harassment at Institutions of Higher Education: Prevalence, Risk, and Extent by Wood, Hoefler and Kammer-Kerwick (2018) focused on sexual harassment victimization by a faculty/staff member or by a peer since enrollment at their Institution of Higher Education (IHE). Race and

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gender are common in sexual harassment. Results of this study became part of a discussion for institutional program planning and policy creation.

Locally, and specifically in Laguna, there are few studies conducted related to sexual harassment. The study by Algaba, Peji, Sta. Maria and Bawica from the Laguna

State Polytechnic University, titled “Laguna Patroller: Mobile Application for Public Awareness about Violence with Global Positioning System and Image Processing” (2018) created a mobile app by providing the user with a channel for reporting cases of violence to local law enforcement agencies. On a similar note, iJuanaHelpMo: Web and Mobile Application for Reporting Violence: A Framework for Developing Violence Against Women Application was created in 2020 by Francis F. Balahadia and Zerah-Jane M. Mortel College of Computer Studies, Laguna State Polytechnic University Siniloan Campus created a framework for the development of Web and Mobile Application for Reporting Violence Against Women (VAW) capable of using the undetectable mobile application in reporting Violence against Women, a customizable e-reporting mechanism for pre-selected people to contact in times of emergency and provide essential help.

Although there is a study on RA11313 Safe Spaces Act conducted by Remoto and Villalobos (2021) for the province of Negros Occidental as a Local Government Unit with results focusing on the promotion of RA11313 for their province to be a safe space for all; however, there were no studies conducted regarding awareness, attitude, and compliance to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act among college students in higher institutions in Laguna, particularly Cabuyao.

Thus, this study investigated on the awareness, attitude, and compliance to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act specifically in higher institutions in Laguna, particularly Cabuyao. This can be benchmarked by other higher educational institutions on safe spaces in Laguna; it can also improve the current situation of safe spaces among institutions; and the results of this study can be used as guide in creating programs for the improvement of the Gender and Development department of the institution.

METHODS

The researcher utilized the descriptive-correlational research design, which is the most effective research model to use for this study. The research design determined the level of awareness, attitude, and compliance to RA11313 – Safe Spaces Act among college students in Laguna. This research model was specifically conceived to describe systematically, factually, accurately, and objectively a problem or phenomenon. It sought to describe “what is”. From this research design, the researcher sought to probe for the significance of relationship between two or more factors or characteristics (Stangor and Walinga, 2019). The primary sources of data were the college students from Laguna.

The population of the study was from the 5,904 college students of Pamantasan ng Cabuyao enrolled for SY 2021-2022. Using Slovin’s formula, the number of respondents was 374. The actual sample was chosen through the random sampling technique. The respondents were given questionnaires as to their awareness, attitude, and compliance to RA11313 – Safe Spaces Act.

The researcher developed a self-made questionnaire for obtaining the primary data for the study. It was categorized into three (3) parts. Part I focused on the respondents’ level awareness on RA11313 – Safe Spaces Act. Part II focused on the respondents’ attitude. Part III focused on the respondents’ level of compliance to RA11313 – Safe Spaces Act. The statistical scale of measurement utilized was the 4-point Likert scale. Since the questionnaire was self-made, it was tested for face and content validity by a panel of experts of communication, research, and statistics. It was presented to the experts of communication, research, and statistics. After making some adjustments and adding some content, it was submitted to the adviser for final consent and was disseminated to the targeted respondents. The study conducted reliability using Cronbach Alpha.

The results of the study were collected from a survey questionnaire. The survey was devised by recreating a standard questionnaire to measure and ensure that the respondents would answer accordingly, based on the variables presented to them. It was made up of a total of 30 questions designed to evaluate the respondents’ level of awareness (10 questions), level of attitude (10 questions), and level of compliance (10 questions). The researcher assured the confidentiality of the respondents’ identities. The questionnaires were allocated after the respondents answered them for the results to be tallied, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted.

The respondents from the selected educational institution were given letters to ask for and receive their permission to participate in the study, which guaranteed their anonymity and confidentiality of their answers. The respondents were asked to

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answer a self-made questionnaire by the researcher by checking the appropriate answer beside the following statement that best represents their level of awareness, attitude, and compliance to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Discussion of the awareness, attitude, and compliances of the colleges students are discussed in the succeeding tables and textual presentations.

Table 1. The Respondents' Level of Awareness on RA11313 Safe Spaces Act

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Familiar with the Safe Spaces Act.	2.67	High Awareness (Agree)	10
2. The Safe Spaces Act was signed during the Duterte Administration.	2.84	High Awareness (Agree)	9
3. The Safe Spaces Act supports the AntiSexual Harassment Act.	3.16	High Awareness (Agree)	3.5
4. The Safe Spaces Act protects men and women against harassment.	3.21	High Awareness (Agree)	1
5. There are penalties included in the Safe Spaces Act.	3.16	High Awareness (Agree)	3.5
6. An LGU or HEI will be penalized if the Safe Spaces Act is not implemented.	2.95	High (Agree)	8
7. My university implements the Safe Spaces Act.	3.07	High Awareness (Agree)	5
8. My university has a policy on Gender Based Sexual Harassment based on the IRR of the Safe Spaces Act.	3.06	High Awareness (Agree)	6.5
9. My university has promoted the Safe Spaces Act with informative webinars.	3.06	High Awareness (Agree)	6.5
10. My university is a safe space.	3.20	High Awareness (Agree)	2
		(Agree)	
Average	3.04	High Awareness (Agree)	

Table 1 presents the respondents' level of awareness on RA11313 Safe Spaces Act, where Indicator 4, "The Safe Spaces Act protects men and women against harassment" got a weighted mean of 3.21 which ranked 1; followed by Indicator 10, "My university is a safe space" with weighted mean of 3.20 and ranked 2; followed by Indicator 3, "The Safe Spaces Act supports the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act" with weighted mean of 3.16 and Indicator 5 "There are penalties included in the Safe Spaces Act" with weighted mean of 3.16 which shared rank 3.5.

On the other hand, Indicator 1 "Familiar with the Safe Spaces Act" with weighted mean of 2.67 and ranked 10; Indicator 2 "The Safe Spaces Act was signed during the Duterte Administration" with weighted mean of 2.84 ranked 9 and Indicator 6 "An LGU or HEI will be penalized if the Safe Spaces Act is not implemented" with weighted mean 2.95 ranked 8. All ten indicators had verbal interpretations of High.

To sum up, the college students have High Awareness to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act as an average weighted mean of 3.04 was revealed. This means that the respondents know that RA11313 Safe Spaces Act protects both men and women and that their university is a safe space.

The findings support the study made by Salmon, Stanton, Walker and Jenkins (2017) when people within a circle are engaged with each other can maintain enough understanding of 'what is going on' within that circle and they can successfully perform the task at hand, at which case, to comply with what RA11313 requires. The findings also support the study of Nguyen,

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Lim, Nguyen, Brown and Nahavandi (2019), which explains that awareness is necessary in processing human information and essential in decision making, in which case is compliance with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act.

Table 2. The Respondents' Attitude towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Pamantasan ng Cabuyao does a good job of communicating about this new law, RA11313 or the Safe Spaces Act.	3.09	Positive (Agree)	10
2. The Gender and Development Office communicates a clear sense of direction for the students of Pamantasan ng Cabuyao.	3.26	Very Positive (Strongly Agree)	7
3. Satisfied with the information I received from my university.	3.25	Very Positive (Strongly Agree)	8
4. Have enough information to follow rules and regulations of my university.	3.21	Positive (Agree)	9
5. Feel the university is serious when it comes to making it a safe space for students.	3.30	Very Positive (Strongly Agree)	4.5
6. Know what is expected of me as a student of this university.	3.27	Very Positive (Strongly Agree)	6
7. Support the values taught by my university.	3.40	Very Positive (Strongly Agree)	2
8. Made to feel that I am an important part of the university.	3.30	Very Positive (Strongly Agree)	4.5
9. Believe the university will use this survey's feedback to make improvements.	3.43	Very Positive (Strongly Agree)	1
10. Believe following what is stipulated in the law will help me as a student.	3.36	Very Positive (Strongly Agree)	3
Average	3.29	Very Positive (Strongly Agree)	

Table 2 presents the respondents' attitude towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act. Indicator 9, "Believe the university will use this survey's feedback to make improvements" garnered a weighted mean of 3.43, verbally interpreted as Very Positive and ranked 1 among all indicators. Indicator 7, "Support the values taught by my university ranked 2 with a weighted mean of 3.40, verbally interpreted as Very Positive; and Indicator 10, "Believe following what is stipulated in the law will help me as a student" ranked 3 with a weighted mean of 3.36 verbally interpreted as Very Positive.

On the other hand, Indicator 1, "Pamantasan ng Cabuyao does a good job of communicating about this new law, RA11313 or the Safe Spaces Act" ranked 10 with a weighted mean of 3.09 verbally interpreted as Positive. Rank 9 is Indicator 4, "Have enough information to follow rules and regulations of my university" with weighted mean of 3.21 verbally interpreted as Positive. Finally, Indicator 3, "Satisfied with the information I received from my university" ranked 8, with weighted mean of 3.25 verbally interpreted as Positive.

To sum up, an average weighted mean of 3.29 revealed the respondents' attitude towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act as Very Positive. This mean that this is the respondents' attitude towards the university using the survey's feedback to make improvements and having enough information to follow rules and regulations of the university.

The findings support the theory by Cherry (2021) which refers to attitude as a "set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviors toward a particular object, person, thing, or event; as well as the study of Olufemi which theorizes that a person's attitude are actual evaluations 31 the they make about objects, ideas, events or other people and can either be positive or negative; in which case the respondents' attitude towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act.

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Table 3. The Respondents’ Level of Compliance with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Don’t do catcalling.	3.60	Very High (Strongly Agree)	3
2. Don’t do wolf-whistling.	3.58	Very High (Strongly Agree)	4
3. Don’t make unwanted invitations.	3.56	Very High (Strongly Agree)	6.5
4. Don’t use misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic and sexist slurs.	3.57	Very High (Strongly Agree)	5
5. Don’t make using persistent uninvited comments or gestures on a person’s appearance.	3.54	Very High (Strongly Agree)	8.5
6. Don’t make relentless requests for personal details.	3.56	Very High (Strongly Agree)	6.5
7. Don’t make statements of sexual comments and suggestions	3.52	Very High (Strongly Agree)	10
8. Don’t do public masturbation or flash private parts.	3.67	Very High (Strongly Agree)	1
9. Don’t grope, or make any advances, whether verbal or physical, that is unwanted and has threatened personal space and physical safety	3.61	Very High (Strongly Agree)	2
10. Don’t make sexual jokes or remarks.	3.54	Very High (Strongly Agree)	8.5
Average	3.57	Very High (Strongly Agree)	

Table 3 presents the respondents level of compliance with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act. Indicator 8, “Don’t do public masturbation or flash private parts” ranked first and garnered a weighted mean of 3.67 verbally interpreted as Very High; followed by Indicator

9, “Don’t grope, or make any advances, whether verbal or physical, that is unwanted and has threatened personal space and physical safety” which ranked second and had a weighted mean of 3.61 verbally interpreted as Very High; and finally, Indicator 1 “Don’t do catcalling” ranked third and got a weighted mean of 3.60 verbally interpreted as Very High.

However, that which ranked 10 is Indicator 7 “Don’t make statements of sexual comments and suggestions” with weighted mean of 3.52; rank 8.5 are Indicators 5 “Don’t make using persistent uninvited comments or gestures on a person’s appearance.” and 10 “Don’t make sexual jokes or remarks” both with Very High verbal interpretation of their 3.54 weighted mean each. This is followed by Indicator 3 “Don’t make unwanted invitations” and Indicator 6 “. Don’t make relentless requests for personal details” both ranked 6.5 and share 3.56 weighted mean verbally interpreted as Very High.

To sum up, an average weighted mean of 3.57 revealed the respondents’ level of compliance with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act as Very High. This means that the respondents follow rules and regulations that are required of them.

The findings support the studies of Mortensen and Cialdini (2020); Sutinen and Kuperan (1999); and Cherry (2021) which both theorized that a person’s compliance is a behavior, whether with social or psychological underpinnings. Therefore, the respondents’ compliance to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act, is not because of an authority asking them to do it but because their attitude towards the law made them decide to follow it.

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Table 4. Relationship between the Respondents' Level of Awareness and Attitude towards Ra11313 Safe Spaces Act

Indicator	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Respondents' Level of Awareness and Attitude towards Ra11313 Safe Spaces Act	0.668** Moderate correlation	0.000	Significant
**Significant @ 0.01			

As shown in the table, there is a significant relationship between the respondents' level of awareness and attitude towards RA11313-Safe Spaces Act. A Pearson r value of 0.668 indicates a moderate correlation with a probability value of 0.000 which is less than the 0.01 significance level. This implies that the higher the respondents' level of awareness the more positive is their attitude towards RA11313-Safe Spaces Act.

This supports the study conducted in 2020 at the onset of the pandemic. The authors, Ikhlq, Bint-E-Riaz, Bashir, and Ijaz showed a satisfactory level of awareness and a positive attitude towards understanding the coronavirus (2020).

Likewise, a study by Moghadam, Azad, Sahebalzamani, Farahani and Jamaran (2017) stated that having a high level of awareness toward one's major led students studying in medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy to experience a more positive attitude and a higher level of interest. This means that if one is aware of something, then their attitude towards this something may either be positive or negative.

Table 5. Relationship between the Respondents' Level of Awareness and Level of Compliance with Ra11313 Safe Spaces Act

Indicator	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Respondents' Level of Awareness and Level of Compliance with Ra11313 Safe Spaces Act	0.403** Moderate correlation	0.000	Significant
**Significant @ 0.01			

As shown in the table, there is a significant relationship between the respondents' level of awareness and level of compliance with RA11313-Safe Spaces Act. A Pearson r value of 0.403 indicates a moderate correlation with a probability value of 0.000 which is less than the 0.01 significance level. This implies that the higher the respondents' level of awareness the higher their level of compliance is with RA11313-Safe Spaces Act.

This supports the study of De Luca (2019) which discussed how to get employees to follow certain rules. He stated that once employees know that the rules are necessary to their responsibilities, then it is easy for them to comply. Similarly, if school rules are explained to students at the start of the school year, or if new rules are carefully and properly explained to them, they will follow it, especially if sanctions are clearly defined.

Table 6. Relationship between the Respondents' Attitude and Level of Compliance with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act

Indicator	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Respondents' Attitude and Level of Compliance with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act	0.511** Moderate correlation	0.000	Significant
**Significant @ 0.01			

As shown in the table, there is a significant relationship between the respondents' attitude and level of compliance with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act. A Pearson r value of 0.511 indicates a moderate correlation with a probability value of 0.000 which is less than the 0.01 significance level. This implies that the more positive the respondents' attitude is the higher their level of compliance is with RA11313-Safe Spaces Act.

This supports the study of Alharbi, Shono, Alballee & Aloufi (2019) which looked into the knowledge, attitude and compliance of faculty members and students to guidelines. The results of attitude and compliance are of equal measure signifying that respondents' compliance is based on how much they know about a subject, event, or activity.

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CONCLUSION

The college students are aware that RA11313 Safe Space Act protects both men and women and that their university is a safe space. The college students' attitude towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act signifies their belief that the university will use the survey's feedback to make improvements and that they support the values taught by their university. The college students comply to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act as they have not committed any violations stipulated in the Implementing Rules and Regulation of the act.

Further, the higher the level of awareness of the respondents, the more positive their attitude is towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act. The higher the level of awareness of the respondents, the higher is their level of compliance to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act. The more positive respondents' attitude, the higher is their level of compliance to RA11313 Safe Spaces Act. There is a need to continuously implement the proposed action plan to enhance or sustain the awareness, attitude, and compliance of the college students towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Gender and Development Office of the Pamantasan ng Cabuyao should have a calendar of activities designed to make its students aware of RA11313 Safe Spaces Act, not just on the surface but the substance of the law itself. This is possible thru the implementation of the action plan of this study.

The university, thru the Gender and Development Office should make a follow through of this study by actually implementing the recommendations and proposed action plan, not just for compliance purposes of the researcher, but a basis for improvement for the current situation in the university. The values of the university must always be aligned with the protection of all of its stakeholders, most especially the students.

The university, thru the Gender and Development Office, should regularly hold a Gender Sensitivity Training, not just for its students, but for its teaching and non-teaching personnel. After which, another round of survey or Training Needs Assessment should be given to evaluate and further improve the plans and programs of the university.

The students, after having taken the general education subject, Gender and Development (GAD101), should still be required to regularly attend advance topics like, Gender Fair Language, Budget Planning for Gender and Development, that will further enhance or improve their knowledge about Safe Spaces.

The Gender and Development Office should include in their webinar the sanctions that an offender or an LGU/HEI which does not comply with RA11313 Safe Spaces Act.

The Gender and Development Office should design webinars that students will appreciate and bring about positive attitude towards RA11313 Safe Spaces Act.

Future researchers should be encouraged to continue or improve this study as the fight against violence against women is a never-ending battle.

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