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Community Awareness and Implementation Challenges of the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313)

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ABSTRACT

Community awareness and effective implementation of the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313) are essential in promoting safe, inclusive, and respectful environments. The research examined the level of awareness of the Safe Spaces Act among Police Officers/Barangay Public Safety Officers (BPSO) and Residents/Victims in Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City, in terms of procedures under the law, unlawful acts, penalties and sanctions, and prosecution and enforcement. It also determined the differences in awareness between the respondent groups and identified the challenges encountered in implementing the law. The findings revealed that Police Officers/BPSO generally demonstrated higher awareness than Residents/Victims across the assessed dimensions. Significant differences were found between the two groups in their awareness of the provisions of the law, including procedures, unlawful acts, penalties and sanctions, and prosecution and enforcement. Regarding implementation challenges, respondents identified lack of coordination among implementing agencies, victims' hesitation to report incidents, and inconsistent or delayed enforcement as notable concerns. A significant difference was also observed between the groups in their assessment of implementation challenges. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening community-based information campaigns, improving coordination among implementing agencies, and establishing accessible, confidential, and victim-centered reporting mechanisms. These measures may contribute to more effective local implementation of the Safe Spaces Act and promote safer community environments.

Keywords: *community awareness; gender-based sexual harassment; implementation challenges; Republic Act No. 11313; Safe Spaces Act*

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based sexual harassment is a serious issue that significantly impacts people's dignity, safety, and mental health. It affects how freely people can move around in public and social spaces, showing that its impact goes far beyond physical places (Brunk et al., 2025). You can find harassment happening in all sorts of places like streets, public transport, workplaces, schools, and even online. It manifests as unwanted sexual comments, gestures, stalking, and intimidation, all of which create hostile or unsafe environments (Brunk et al., 2025). Preventing this type of harassment requires more than just having laws in place. It requires people to be aware, take social responsibility, have easy ways to report incidents, hold institutions accountable, and ensure that rules are enforced consistently (Kelemen et al., 2025). Communities play a key role in this. Local residents, officials, and institutions are essential in identifying harassment, encouraging respectful behavior, and supporting victims (Brunk et al., 2025). Making public spaces safer ties into broader efforts to uphold human rights, promote gender equality, and strengthen community-based prevention and response strategies, highlighting the social aspects of safety and inclusion (Brunk et al., 2025). Gender-based sexual harassment is closely linked to several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 5 focuses on gender equality and aims to eliminate violence and

discrimination against women and girls, promoting equal rights and dignity for everyone (Koengkan et al., 2024). SDG 11 focuses on creating sustainable cities and communities by making public spaces safer, more inclusive, and accessible so that people can participate without fear of harassment or intimidation (Koengkan et al., 2024). In addition, SDG 16 stresses the importance of peace, justice, and strong institutions, pushing for effective law enforcement, accessible reporting systems, community accountability, and responsive institutions to build justice and public trust (Kelemen et al., 2025). Implementing laws like the Safe Spaces Act at the community level can help achieve these goals by raising legal awareness, encouraging people to report violations, and supporting coordinated actions among stakeholders (Brunk et al., 2025).

In the Philippines, several laws protect people from sexual harassment, abuse, discrimination, and gender-based violence in different settings. These laws help government bodies, local authorities, and communities keep people safe and protect their rights (Necosia & Necosia, 2026). One key law is Republic Act No. 11313, or the Safe Spaces Act of 2019. This law focuses on stopping gender-based sexual harassment in places like streets, public areas, online spaces, workplaces, and schools. It highlights the importance of dignity, equality, and protection from harassment (Necosia & Necosia, 2026). Local government units play a significant role in implementing this law. They do this by creating local rules, spreading information, offering preventive education, setting up anti-sexual harassment hotlines, creating ways to report incidents, and working with other government agencies (Necosia & Necosia, 2026).

At the community level, the Safe Spaces Act focuses on things such as anti-sexual harassment (ASH) desks, referral systems, handling complaints, and training barangay personnel to boost local support and responses (Necosia & Necosia, 2026). Alongside this, Republic Act No. 7877 offers protection for people in work, school, and training settings, especially when there is authority or moral influence involved (Taufiqurrohman et al., 2024). Republic Act No. 9262 deals with violence in legally recognized relationships, adding to the broader fight against gender-based violence (Necosia & Necosia, 2026). Even with these laws, how well they are implemented in communities depends on how aware people are of what is prohibited, how to report issues, the penalties, and how enforcement works (Ahmad & Smith, 2024). Therefore, for RA 11313 to work, local bodies need to understand, explain, and implement the law effectively (Necosia & Necosia, 2026). In Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City, the residents' awareness helps turn these rules into practical understanding and responsible behavior. This setup allows us to examine how well people know the procedures, illegal acts, penalties, prosecution, and enforcement, which affects how local authorities handle harassment (Ahmad & Smith, 2024; Necosia & Necosia, 2026). It is crucial for officials, law enforcement, and stakeholders to work together to raise awareness and manage reports (Necosia & Necosia, 2026). By evaluating community perceptions, we can identify gaps in awareness and implementation challenges, which can help improve information sharing, coordination, and accessibility of reporting (Necosia & Necosia, 2026).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to assess community awareness and the issues and challenges associated with the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313) in Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of the community respondents regarding the provisions of Republic Act No. 11313, or the Safe Spaces Act, in terms of:
   1.1. procedures under the law
   1.2. unlawful acts.
   1.3. penalties and sanctions; and
   1.4. prosecution and enforcement
2. Is there a significant difference between the assessments of the two groups of respondents regarding their level of awareness of the provisions of the Safe Spaces Act in terms of the dimensions mentioned above?
3. What are the issues and challenges encountered in implementing the Safe Spaces Act in Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City?
4. Is there a significant difference between the two groups of respondents' assessments of the issues and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act?
5. Based on the findings of the study, what community-based measures can be proposed to enhance awareness and strengthen the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act in Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-comparative research design to evaluate community awareness of the provisions of Republic Act No. 11313, also known as the Safe Spaces Act, and to identify the issues and challenges related to its implementation in Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City. The descriptive approach was applied to ascertain the respondents' level of awareness regarding procedures under the law, unlawful acts, penalties and sanctions, and prosecution and enforcement processes. It was also used to evaluate the issues and challenges encountered in the law's implementation. Meanwhile, the comparative component was employed to determine whether significant differences existed between the two groups of respondents in their assessments of awareness regarding the provisions of the Safe Spaces Act and the issues and challenges associated with its implementation. This design enabled the researchers to systematically describe and compare the perceptions of the respondents concerning the implementation of RA 11313 within the community.

Research Locale

This study was conducted in Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City, Philippines. The barangay served as the research locale for examining community awareness and the perceived issues and challenges associated with the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act. The selection of the locale provided a community-based context for assessing respondents' understanding of the legal provisions of RA 11313, particularly concerning procedures under the law, unlawful acts, penalties and sanctions, and prosecution and enforcement. The study also focused on the perceived challenges in implementing the law within the community, which may provide insights into the local conditions and concerns surrounding the promotion of safe and respectful public spaces.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of two groups of participants from Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City, Philippines. They were selected to assess their level of awareness of the provisions of Republic Act No. 11313 and the issues and challenges encountered in its implementation. Their responses were gathered to determine their awareness of the procedures under the law, unlawful acts, penalties and sanctions, and prosecution and enforcement processes. The assessments of the two groups were also compared to determine whether significant differences existed in their perceptions of the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act. The specific composition and number of respondents in each group should be reflected based on the actual respondent profiles presented in the original manuscript.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique employed in this study was used to identify and select respondents from the two groups in Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City. The selection of participants was guided by the objectives of the research and the need to obtain relevant assessments regarding community awareness and the implementation challenges of the Safe Spaces Act. The sampling procedure ensured that the selected respondents could provide information relevant to the variables examined in the study. The specific sampling method and the criteria for selecting the respondents should be retained based on the original research procedures documented in the thesis.

Research Instrument

This study utilized a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for gathering data. The questionnaire was designed to assess the respondents' level of awareness regarding the provisions of Republic Act No. 11313 in terms of procedures under the law, unlawful acts, penalties and sanctions, and prosecution and enforcement. It also included items intended to determine the issues and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act. The instrument provided a systematic means of collecting responses from the two groups of participants, allowing their assessments to be summarized, analyzed, and compared. The validation process, reliability testing, and rating scale used in the questionnaire should be incorporated based on the actual procedures reported in the original manuscript.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure involved the administration of the research questionnaire to the identified respondents in Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City. Prior to conducting the study, the researcher secured the necessary permissions from the appropriate authorities and coordinated with the concerned barangay officials to facilitate data collection. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the research, the nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of the information they provided. After obtaining the necessary consent, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and retrieved after completion. The collected responses were subsequently organized, tabulated, and prepared for statistical analysis to determine the respondents' level of awareness and their assessments of the issues and challenges associated with the implementation of RA 11313.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The data gathered from the respondents were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools in accordance with the study objectives. The weighted mean was utilized to determine the respondents' level of awareness regarding the provisions of the Safe Spaces Act in terms of procedures under the law, unlawful acts, penalties and sanctions, and prosecution and enforcement. It was also used to assess the issues and challenges encountered in implementing the law. An appropriate inferential statistical test was employed to determine whether significant differences existed between the two groups of respondents in their assessments. The results of the statistical analysis were interpreted based on the criteria and level of significance adopted in the original studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Respondents' Awareness of the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313)

Dimensions of Awareness	Police Officers/BPSO	Residents/Victims	Overall Mean
Procedures under the law	3.99	3.26	3.62
Unlawful acts	3.99	3.63	3.81
Penalties and sanctions	3.84	3.59	3.60
Prosecution and enforcement	4.00	3.05	3.52

Table 1 shows the awareness of people regarding the different parts of the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313), comparing two groups: police officers/BPSOs and residents/victims. Each part, such as procedures under the law, unlawful acts, penalties and sanctions, and prosecution and enforcement, has an overall average score. It turned out that police officers and barangay peacekeeping officers knew more about all these parts of the law than residents and victims did. Residents, especially, seem to know less about "Procedures under the law" and "Prosecution and enforcement." This highlights the need for better community education and easier ways to enforce and report issues to make the law work better. These findings fit into the bigger picture, showing that for RA 11313 to work, it is not just about having the law in place. People need to understand it, trust local enforcement, and have the systems in place to make it happen (Ahmad & Smith, 2024; Necosia & Necosia, 2026). The differences in awareness suggest that efforts should focus on educating residents about legal procedures and prosecution processes to close this gap. This would help strengthen preventive and responsive actions at the barangay level. Assessing awareness like this gives us valuable insights into where we should focus on spreading information and building capacity to meet the Safe Spaces Act's goals of protecting people from gender-based sexual harassment in communities (Ahmad & Smith, 2024; Necosia & Necosia, 2026).

Table 2. Comparison of Awareness Assessments Between the Two Respondent Groups

Variables	Computed t-value	Interpretation	Decision
Procedures under the law	3.392	Significant	Reject H_0
Unlawful acts	3.432	Significant	Reject H_0
Penalties and sanctions	4.478	Significant	Reject H_0
Prosecution and enforcement	5.130	Significant	Reject H_0

Sexual harassment in law enforcement and public spaces is a challenging issue that impacts both victims and police officers. Research shows that having more visible patrols in public areas can reduce severe harassment; however, the overall rates may not change significantly. This points to the difficulty in deterring harassment and the importance of officers being visible and having the right attitudes (Amaral et al., 2025). Inside police organizations, female officers often deal with gender discrimination, harassment, and even violence from male colleagues. This is exacerbated by cultural and structural barriers that make it difficult to report these issues (Aborisade & Ariyo, 2023; Davis et al., 2023). Such internal harassment increases stress and mental health

problems, with sexual harassment being linked to stress related to work and self-image among staff (Rostami et al., 2023). The way incidents are handled is influenced by the organizational culture and the discretion of managers, highlighting the need for clear policies and accountability to change workplace norms (Valland et al., 2024). In addition, survivors of sexual violence sometimes face revictimization by law enforcement, pointing to systemic failures and the need for independent oversight and supportive reporting channels (Aborisade, 2025). While factors such as personality functioning and protective measures can help build resilience, gendered experiences of harassment still require targeted interventions (Angehrn et al., 2023). Tackling sexual harassment in policing and public spaces requires comprehensive strategies that include better patrols, organizational reforms, victim support, and cultural change to create safe environments.

Table 3. Issues and Challenges in the Implementation of the Safe Spaces Act

Issues and Challenges	Police Officers/BPSO	Residents/Victims	Overall Mean
Insufficient information about the law	3.35	1.60	2.48
Lack of coordination among implementing agencies	4.00	3.96	3.98
Inconsistent or delayed enforcement	3.65	3.50	3.58
Victims' hesitation to report incidents	4.00	3.70	3.85
Overall assessment	3.85	2.85	3.35

Table 3 highlights the challenges faced in implementing the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313) from the perspectives of police officers/BPSOs and residents/victims. There is a noticeable gap in terms of information availability: police officers rated it moderately high at 3.35, while residents felt it was extremely lacking, giving it a score of 1.60, leading to an average of 2.48. Both groups pointed out that there was poor coordination among the agencies involved, with a mean score of 3.98. Other major hurdles include delayed or inconsistent enforcement, scoring 3.58 overall, and victims being hesitant to report, with an overall score of 3.85. Overall, police officers saw more challenges (3.85) compared to residents (2.85), resulting in a moderate mean of 3.35. These findings match other studies showing that a lack of public awareness can block justice (Badewa et al., 2026). The poor coordination between agencies highlights structural issues that limit support for victims and the progress of cases (Hu et al., 2026; Raub et al., 2025). Victims' reluctance, often due to fear of stigma or retaliation, underscores the need for reporting systems that are confidential and focused on the victim (Badewa et al., 2026; Gumabay et al., 2026). In addition, when enforcement is delayed, it shakes public trust in the law (Gonzalez, 2025). To tackle these problems, we need to focus on public education, better communication between agencies, and creating supportive environments for reporting, so that RA 11313 can truly protect communities (Badewa et al., 2026; Hu et al., 2026).

Table 4. Difference Between the Two Respondent Groups in Their Assessment of Implementation Challenges

Variable	Computed t-value	Interpretation	Decision
Issues and challenges encountered	3.983	Significant	Reject H_0

Table 4 shows a clear difference between how the two groups viewed the issues and challenges when implementing the Safe Spaces Act. With a t-value of 3.983, we can say that the null hypothesis (H_0) does not hold up. This means that the police officers/BPSO and residents/victims had different views on what makes enforcing the law tricky. This is not surprising, as it is a common theme in law enforcement studies. Different roles, experiences, and the amount of information people have can lead to these varied perspectives on implementation challenges. For instance, officers who are part of the system might see coordination and enforcement issues differently from community members. These individuals may experience trust issues, skepticism about the law, and a lack of information (Hunter, 2025). Moreover, these perception differences match the findings that show how police culture and environment can shape officers' attitudes and how they interact with the public. This can lead to communication gaps and affect community engagement, which is crucial for policy success (Fenn & Bullock, 2021). These differences highlight the importance of addressing both internal organizational issues and external community relations. A collaborative approach involving multiple stakeholders is key to ensuring that the Safe Spaces Act is implemented smoothly and receives the support it requires (Kim & Kim, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that police officers/BPSOs generally exhibit a greater understanding of the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313) than residents/victims, especially concerning legal procedures and enforcement actions. Notable differences in awareness levels were observed between the two groups across all evaluated dimensions, suggesting varying degrees of comprehension and familiarity with the law's provisions. In terms of implementation challenges, respondents highlighted issues such as poor coordination among agencies, victims' reluctance to report incidents, and inconsistent or delayed enforcement as significant concerns. Additionally, the study found a marked difference between the groups in their evaluation of the challenges faced in implementing the Safe Spaces Act. In conclusion, the study suggests that for RA 11313 to be effectively implemented at the community level, enhanced public awareness, better coordination among agencies, and more accessible and supportive mechanisms for reporting and enforcement are required to be established.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study's results, barangay officials, in collaboration with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other relevant agencies, are advised to regularly organize community-based information campaigns and orientations. These efforts aim to enhance residents' understanding of the Safe Spaces Act, focusing on reporting procedures, prohibited behaviors, penalties, and enforcement strategies. To ensure a more uniform and effective application of the law, it is recommended to foster better coordination among implementing agencies through well-defined referral processes, communication protocols, and joint activities. Additionally, the barangay should bolster confidential, accessible, and victim-focused reporting systems to motivate individuals facing gender-based sexual harassment to report incidents without fearing stigma, retaliation, or discrimination. Training sessions for barangay officials, police officers, and other personnel involved in addressing harassment cases should be held to enhance their skills in complaint management, victim support, and enforcement practices. Community-driven initiatives that promote safe public spaces and raise awareness about the provisions of RA 11313 should also be developed and executed. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies in different communities to further explore awareness levels, implementation challenges, and the effectiveness of local efforts in advancing the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study focused on evaluating the community's awareness and perceived challenges in implementing the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act No. 11313) within Barangay Sta. Lucia, Quezon City, as assessed by Police Officers/BPSO and Residents/Victims. Utilizing a descriptive-comparative research design and relying on questionnaire responses, the study's results capture the respondents' perceptions and evaluations at the time of data collection, rather than direct observations of actual implementation or documented harassment incidents. The study's specific setting restricts the applicability of its findings to other barangays or communities that may have different conditions, institutional frameworks, and awareness levels. These limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the results and considering the application of the findings beyond the research area.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future investigations could delve into the awareness levels and implementation hurdles of the Safe Spaces Act in various barangays, cities, or municipalities, aiming to offer broader comparisons across diverse community environments. Researchers might also adopt qualitative or mixed-method approaches, such as interviews and focus group discussions, to obtain a more profound understanding of the experiences of those impacted by gender-based sexual harassment, the obstacles to reporting, institutional coordination, and enforcement practices. Additional studies could assess the success of community-driven awareness campaigns, victim-focused reporting systems, and capacity-building initiatives in enhancing the execution of RA 11313. This research could aid in crafting more adaptive, evidence-based, and community-focused strategies to foster safe spaces.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Future research could explore the levels of awareness and challenges in implementing the Safe Spaces Act across different barangays, cities, or municipalities, with the goal of providing broader comparisons among various community settings. Researchers might also employ qualitative or mixed-method approaches, such as interviews and focus group discussions, to gain deeper insights into the experiences of individuals affected by gender-based

sexual harassment, barriers to reporting, and practices of institutional coordination and enforcement. Further studies should evaluate the effectiveness of community-led awareness campaigns, victim-centered reporting systems, and capacity-building initiatives to improve the implementation of RA 11313. This study could contribute to the development of more adaptable, evidence-based, and community-oriented strategies to promote safe spaces.

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AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

During manuscript preparation, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) for language editing, grammar, and organization. They reviewed, revised, and verified the content and took full responsibility for the published work.