

Effectiveness of Ordinance No. 2501 in Protecting Women from Sexual Harassment in Quezon City

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Abstract

This study sought the effectiveness of City Ordinance No. 2501, otherwise known as the Gender and Development (GAD) Code of Quezon City, towards its protection of women against sexual harassment. This study sought the programs and projects of the said Local Government Unit (LGU) and how the residents and victims of sexual harassment in Quezon City view its effectiveness. Moreover, it sought out the mechanisms for its implementation. This study followed a mixed methodology with qualitative data from interviews, data analysis, and quantitative data from surveys. Such methodology was a means to procure a holistic goal of creating recommendations. This study concluded that the programs and projects for GAD and sexual harassment are aligned with City Ordinance No. 2501. Present in its implementation are mechanisms for reporting sexual harassment cases and ways to aid the victim. While the present of such exists, the victims of sexual harassment and residents within Quezon City do not strongly agree with the ordinance being 'effective' as they do not feel safety, inclusivity, and comfortability. This was mostly due to economic and social circumstances. Hence, this study recommend that it improves its dynamicity and reachability for stronger implementation, consideration for inclusivity, and better information dissemination regarding the ordinance.

Keywords

gender and development; public policy analysis; local government; Philippines; sexual harassment

Introduction

Sexual harassment is a serious issue women face ([Gruber & Smith, 2010](#); [Sarpotdar, 2013](#)), according to [Tharumiya & Manicka \(2022\)](#), women are more susceptible to sexual harassment. Moreover, women perceive acts of sexual harassment as they have already been victims at some point in their lives. Three in five women face sexual harassment during their lifetime ([Ancheta, 2018](#); [Hughes, Johnson, & Wilsnack, 2001](#)). Moreover, women who are part of other marginalized sectors are even more susceptible to become such victims. Transgender and queer women, for instance, are more likely to fall prey to such a heinous act ([Wirtz, Poteat, Malik, & Glass, 2018](#)). Hence, a lot of laws that prohibit violence against women and children have been passed even before the enactment of such policies in the local levels. Moreover, the Quezon City Government amended the Gender and Development Code of Quezon City and further prevented women from sexual harassment in any space ([Urada, Morisky, Hernandez, & Strathdee, 2014](#)).

City Ordinance No. 2501 was amended in line with the partnership of the Quezon City Local Government Unit with the United Nations for piloting the Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces initiative. The Gender and Development Code of Quezon City is an excellent way to address the issues of sexual harassment in the country ([Salagubang & Belgasc, 2021](#)). However, with its implementation, we are uncertain of its effectiveness. According to [Benson & Jordan \(2015\)](#), the policy process is a process with stages. These stages include the emergence of the problem, setting of the agenda, policy setting consideration, making

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of the decision, and finally its implementation and evaluation ([Benson & Jordan, 2015](#)). As part of its process, policymakers, whether official or unofficial, must do their part to evaluate and assess its effectiveness.

Assessing our policies can fully maximize policy enactment for the betterment of society. If society keeps the hurdles of our policies, then society may never overcome our problems. Hence, citizens must scrutinize the policies enacted to ensure their effective implementation ([Irvin & Stansbury, 2004](#)). The Gender and Development Code of Quezon City is an excellent mechanism to remit various forms of sexual harassment in the country ([Manuelito & Orcid, 2021](#)). However, with its implementation, there is uncertainty regarding its effectiveness. Hence, the researchers sought for the effectiveness of City Ordinance No. 2501 of Quezon City, Philippines.

To get such output needed for this study, the researchers gathered the necessary information needed for its input. The researchers analyzed information regarding the implementation of City Ordinance No. 2501. The information is evaluated to seek the analysis of the city ordinance. Such output provides feedback for the implementation of the city ordinance. Moreover, such feedback continues the implementation of the Gender and Development Code of Quezon City. Hence, the feedback draws back to the implementation of City Ordinance No. 2501. Such feedback covers the effectiveness of the continuing implementation of the city ordinance.

This study mainly revolves around assessing the effectiveness of the City Ordinance No. 2501, also known as the Gender and Development Code of Quezon City, towards Women's Protection in Quezon City. The study collated quantitative and qualitative data from victims of sexual harassment. Such victims experienced sexual harassment in Quezon City. The research shall also use relevant documents dating as early as 2019 from the Quezon City Local Government Unit (LGU) website and connected social media accounts. The study shall also cover the current version of the Gender and Development Code and no other version thereof.

Methods

The research design used in this study is a mixed methodology. The perception of the Residents of Quezon City about implementing City Ordinance No. 2501 of Quezon City towards women's protection against Sexual Harassment is the data needed for this study. This study used the Sequential Transformative strategy. According to [Creswell \(2014\)](#), the strategy uses quantitative and qualitative data to describe a marginalized group of individuals best. The researchers gathered qualitative data from the website and social media accounts verified from the Quezon City LGU and from some of the Gender and Development Council documents. These were the documents needed as part of the qualitative analysis. Such documents pertain to the various programs, projects, and the likes on implementing the Gender and Development Code. After the data collection, the researchers gathered other qualitative and quantitative data through two survey questionnaires.

For this study, the questionnaire assessed the implementation of City Ordinance No. 2501 towards protecting women against sexual harassment. The questionnaires adapted are from ([Partnership 4 Perevention, 2017](#)). The basis of the questionnaires assessed violence against women in Cambodia. The researchers have modified the questionnaire to fit the research setting. The questionnaires asked for the respondent's profile and a series of questions about their perception regarding the GAD Code. The researchers then did pilot testing before the actual survey. The survey forms were then spread throughout social media. Once the researchers have gathered the needed data, the researchers applied the appropriate statistical treatment to obtain qualitative and quantitative data. The data gathered were distributed among the appropriate sub-questions of the statement of the problem of the study.

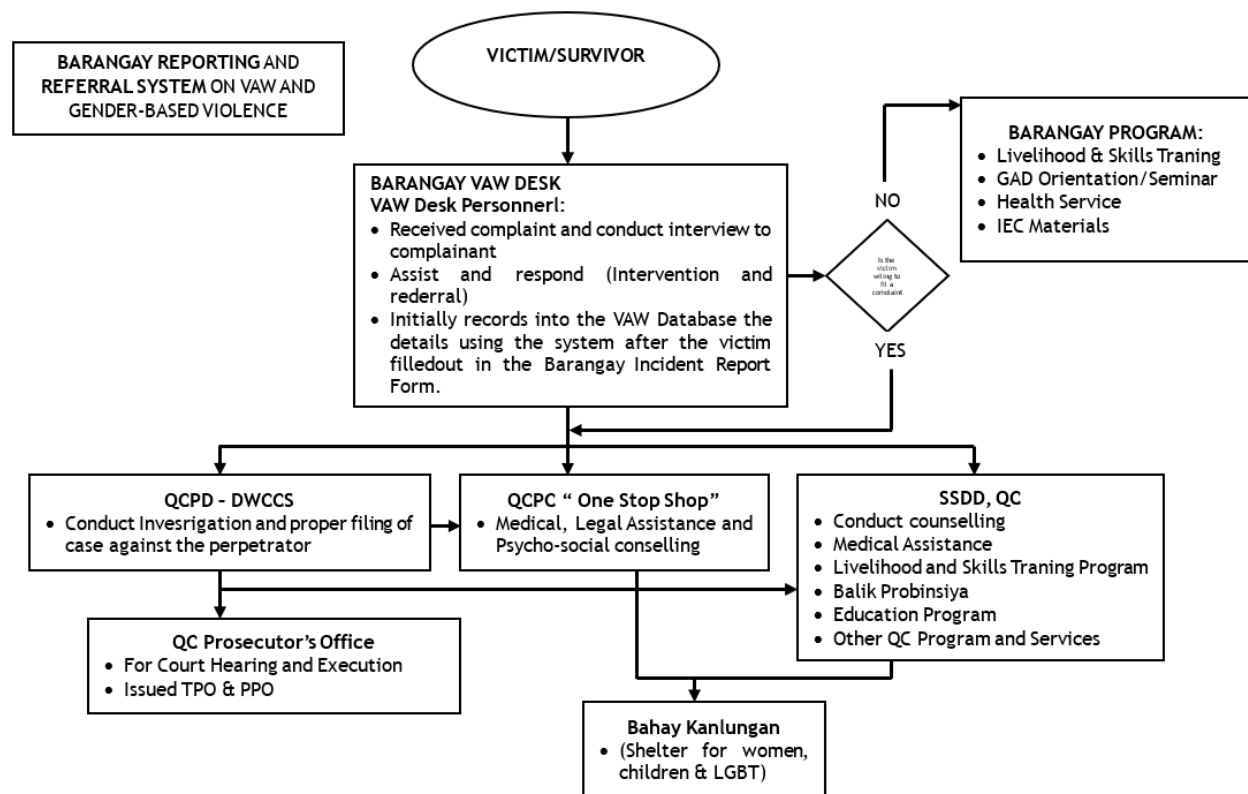
Result and Discussion

Implementation of City Ordinance No. 2501

A thorough document analysis said that these programs aligned with the objectives laid out by the ordinance, including those for victims of sexual harassment and abuses. There are also relevant programs

implemented that are in line with the ordinance's provisions. One of the programs that helps aid with cases of sexual harassment is the QUEZON CITY VAWC Databank System. The QUEZON CITY VAWC Databank System was launched in 2021 for all Barangays to coordinate in reporting cases of VAWC. It will also help track the data needed for investigating such cases alongside the GAD Council and police stations across Quezon City. The project was launched amidst the 18-day campaign against Violence against Women commemoration. The mechanisms discussed are in line with the provisions of the Gender and Development Code. Section 11, Article II, Chapter II of the Gender and Development Code, wherein the Quezon City LGU shall provide comprehensive support on women who have survived violence. The QUEZON CITY Government also opened Bahay Kanlungan, a shelter for abused women, children, and LGBT individuals. According to the QUEZON CITY Government (2021), the shelter shall cater to abused individuals for up to 12 weeks. Free medical and legal assistance is available for those who will avail themselves.

Figure 1. Flow Chart of Barangay Reporting and Referral System on VAW and Gender-Based Violence



If such cases of sexual harassment occur, the Quezon City LGU has implemented a databank system. It is known as the QUEZON CITY VAWC Database. Such a database helps barangays with the Quezon City Police Department aid such cases. Not only that, but survivors may stay at the Bahay Kanlungan, a shelter for abused women, children, and LGBT individuals. Such a system of catering victims is coordinated with various offices. The Quezon City Police Department, the Social Services and Development Department and other subsequent barangays coordinate with such cases. This is to provide wellness and ease for the victims. This shows that, while there are programs launched to cater to such heinous crimes, there are also programs that empower the population susceptible to such crimes. From the findings, it amplifies that sexual harassment causes further harm towards its victims. For instance, Dhillon & Bakaya (2014) found that street-level sexual harassment causes victims to suffer from self-blaming thoughts and self-objectification due to their experience of being catcalled. Moreover, such form of sexual harassment causes some amount of trauma ([Fitzgerald, Collinsworth, & Lawson, 2013](#)).

In terms of implementation, In Section 19, Chapter II, Book II of the Gender and Development Code, the Gender and Development Council is primarily responsible for ensuring that the GAD Code is being implemented. Moreover, in Section 20, Chapter II, Book II, The Technical Working Group of the GAD

Council helps coordinate the offices of the Quezon City LGU and ensure their willing participation in the implementation of the GAD Code. the staffing of the Quezon City LGU for programs under the GAD Code distributed among relevant offices is for the better implementation of specific functions. Moreover, the budget for the GAD Council depends on the Quezon City LGU. The budget's focus includes client-focused programs, organizational-focused, and attributed programs of the GAD Council.

The Victims' Understanding of Quezon City Ordinance No. 2501

The respondents somewhat agree that they, as women, feel protected and not neglected by the Quezon City LGU in the fight against sexual harassment. It proves the claim of [Aquino \(2017\)](#) that concluded that women now feel a lot safer with the newfound knowledge of the city ordinance. However, despite such knowledge, the respondents have stated that they somewhat agree that they can comfortably file a report. While the ordinance protects such women from sexual harassment, such cases still happen, and some go unreported due to social and economic factors. These factors include having little to no funds, relations with the perpetrator, fear of victim-blaming, and other reasons not stated.

Such findings are in connection to the perception of the respondents that they only somewhat agree that despite their social status, they feel protected by the GAD Code. Moreover, while such an ordinance exists, its constituents do not 'feel' its implementation. Because of this, such challenges arise. Such findings draws back to findings from previous studies. For instance, [Swaney \(2021\)](#) found that victims needed to feel confident to even disclose their case of sexual harassment. [Alonso & O'Neill \(2022\)](#) also found that one's social capital plays a huge role as a protector or a risk factor in reporting, preventing, or perpetuating sexual harassment.

Table 1. Likert Scale of the Victims within Quezon City

Criteria	Frequency		Verbal Interpretation
	SD	Weighted Mean	
As a woman, I feel protected and not left out in Quezon City against sexual harassment	0.99	2.83	Disagree
Regardless of my social status, the ordinance protects me	1.20	3.13	Somewhat Agree
I and/or other women feel safe in the streets, homes, and institutions of Quezon City	1.05	2.73	Somewhat Agree
I and/or other women can comfortably file a report or case against sexual harassment	0.98	3.07	Somewhat Agree
I find the programs and projects of the Gender and Development Council of Quezon City for the implementation of the Gender and Development Code of Quezon City to be effective	1.07	3.43	Somewhat Agree
I find the programs and projects of the Gender and Development Council of Quezon City for the implementation of the Revised Gender and Development Code to be efficient	1.27	3.97	Agree

One challenge that arose was the awareness of the constituents (see Table 2.2). The problem of awareness also raised concerns about the scope of the GAD Code. One respondent stated of wanting information to be disseminated down to the barangay level. Respondents said that the implementation is, “...*lingid sa kaalaman ng mga naninirahan sa aming barangay*,” or far from the knowledge of barangay citizens. Because of this, a challenge now for the Quezon City LGU is that they should focus on disseminating information through various media. Moreover, the Quezon City LGU should advertise the law that includes women of other marginalized sectors, especially from another race or the LGBTQIA+ community. This is

because, as one respondent stated,

“...may ibang parte nito [LGBTQIA+] ay nakakaranas.” (...so that the LGBTQ have a wide knowledge.)

One respondent highlighted that the GAD Code should also prevent racist remarks. Respondent stated that

“huwag gumawa ng mga komento na nanunuya, minamaliit o humihiya sa mga kababaihan, mga itim na tao, mga katutubo.” (Don’t make comments that are sarcastic, discriminating, or embarrassing women, black folks, indigenous peoples.)

Hence, another challenge for the Quezon City LGU is that such information should focus on protecting women and protecting their other identities.

Table 2. Content Analysis for Alternatives for Effective Program and Project Implementation

What are possible alternatives that the Gender and Development Council can do to make you aware or make the programs and projects more effective?		
Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Methods for effective Information Dissemination about the Ordinance through Various Media	18	60.00%
More Inclusive Representation	5	16.67%
Further promotion of the accessibility of law enforcement	3	10.00%
Education Programs and Projects regarding Sexual Harassment	3	10.00%
Did not provide any recommendation	1	3.33%
TOTAL	30	100.00%

The respondents somewhat agreed when they were asked if the implementation of the GAD Code was effective (see Table 2). It aligns with their other perceptions of inclusivity, safety, and accessibility. Although, through a Likert Scale, the respondents agree that they consider themselves to be included as beneficiaries in any programs that the Quezon City LGU has to offer when it comes to addressing the issue of sexual harassment. Nonetheless, such problems of inclusivity, safety, and accessibility are flagrant amongst the victims within Quezon City. Moreover, the respondents believe that they somewhat agree that the ordinance protects them as women, even despite their social status. The respondents also only somewhat agree that they feel safe in the streets, home, and institutions—both public and private—in Quezon City. The respondents also only somewhat agree that they can consider themselves to be beneficiaries of the programs of the Quezon City LGU. Such hesitance to agree stems more from their perception of how the GAD Code is perceived to run.

When asked how to improve implementation, some of the respondents pointed out the need for the Quezon City LGU to consider educating men about what makes sexual/street harassment wrong at different levels (see Table 3). One respondent wrote, *“Mainam na binibigyang boses ang mga kababaihan at lahat ng biktima ng [sekswal] na [pang aabuso], pero malaki ang tulong ng mga lalaki kung sila mismo ay makikinig at magbabago ng kanilang mga nakasanayang pribilehiyo.”* (It is nice to give voice to women and everyone who are victims of sexual abuse, but it would be big help from men if they themselves would listen and change from their usual privilege.) On the other hand, the respondents also raised the necessity of how the Quezon City LGU should consider establishing the campaign against sexual harassment. One respondent wrote, *“Gampanin rin ng mga kalalakihang suportahan ang anumang programa sa QUEZON CITY na makakatulong sa mga kababaihan.”* (It is also the duty of men to support any program in [Quezon

City] that will help women.) Some stated that there should be an equal responsibility between women, mostly the victims, and men, who are the perpetrators in most cases. Such findings draw back to the study by [Studzinska \(2016\)](#), men they consider the victims who do nothing to be the least responsible compared to the victims who self-blame and those who blame their perpetrator. Hence, a thorough need for educating men is considered by the respondents of this study.

Table 3. Content Analysis for the Role of Men in the Programs of the GAD Council

Do you believe that men have a role in becoming engaged and involved in the programs of the Gender and Development Council in Quezon City? If yes, what is/are their role/s?		
Themes	Frequency	Percentage
Shared Responsibility in Women's Protection and Implementation of the policy	17	56.7%
Expanded Knowledge towards role of men and women	7	23.3%
Did not give any recommendations	6	20%
TOTAL	30	100%

Nevertheless, this study have found that the respondents agree that the GAD Code is still worthy of becoming more efficient (See Table 2.1). However, most of the respondents suggested having regular forums and counseling in every barangay for both men and women to discuss, inform, and address issues concerning women and harassment. One respondent stated that, *“bukod sa pagtuturo ng self-defense, turuan rin ang mga tao tungkol sa implikasyon ng harassment.”* (Besides teaching self-defense, people should be taught about the implications of [sexual] harassment.) The respondents also added that it would not start by just creating these programs but having enough people to fit the job. Moreover, Help and Protection desks should be in every barangay with enough people. Moreover, there should also be active online social networking sites and pages to respond as fast as possible. By fulfilling these recommendations, it fulfills the suggestion of the respondents to have enough people that will accommodate their concerns and fulfill and ensure the efficiency of the GAD Code.

Evaluation of the Implementation of the Quezon City Ordinance 2501

The residents of Quezon City generally somewhat agree on sentiments regarding the safety and comfortability of women in Quezon City away from sexual harassment (See Table 4). Moreover, residents of Quezon City somewhat agree on the effectiveness of programs under the City Ordinance No. 2501. Such perceptions vary amongst individuals of different SOGIE. Thus, a significant relationship between the SOGIE of residents of Quezon City and their perception regarding the safety, comfortability, and inclusivity amongst women in the GAD Code.

Perceptions regarding the implementation amongst some residents of Quezon City say that while the ordinance is a step towards the right direction, the ordinance needs further improvement in its implementation. Moreover, such implementation must be inclusive, stricter, and accessible. Stricter implementation is key towards a more effective policy. According to [Deeba \(2021\)](#), when states overcome their conservative social norms while applying stricter rule towards sexual harassment is the only instance of stopping the proliferation of such crimes.

One of the respondents stated that “The ordinance is not that effective. I believe that it must be strictly implemented by the right people because, even now, not even the LGBTQIA+ community is safe.” This proves the claim of [Aquino \(2017\)](#) wherein, the study recommended that programs, particularly seminars, should be conducted to disseminate information regarding the city ordinance. Women found themselves a lot safer after knowing the existence of such an ordinance. Furthermore, when asked regarding the role of men, some believe that men must also be included in some of the programs under the GAD Code. One of the respondents answered that “Oo, sila ang inaasahan na katuwang ng mga kababaihan sa pagsugpo

laban sa mga may masasamang balak sa mga kababaihan. Lalo na ang mga nasa awtoridad.” saying that men, especially those who are in authority, are the ones that people rely on when it comes to protecting the women against people with bad intentions against women.

Table 4. Table for Likert Scale of Residents of Quezon City with Their Correlation with Gender

Criteria	Frequency		Verbal Interpretation	p-value with Gender	Conclusion
	SD	Weighted Mean			
Women feel protected and not left out in Quezon City against sexual harassment	1.14	3.23	Somewhat Agree	0.043	Reject H0
Regardless of the social status of women, the ordinance protects them.	1.31	3.07	Somewhat Agree	0.034	Reject H0
I believe that women of Quezon City are comfortable to file a case against sexual harassment.	1.41	3.13	Somewhat Agree	0.004	Reject H0

While some respondents believe that such implementation can be made better through the following sentiments, others do not believe in the same sentiments. This is due to some of the perception of respondents regarding the responsibility of each citizen in its implementation. Moreover, some believe that no such changes should be made as the Quezon City LGU is already doing its part effectively.

Conclusion

The Quezon City LGU has implemented multiple programs in line with the GAD Code. Such programs have aided the prevention of sexual harassment and women's advancement as well. There are programs implemented to aid such goals. The Quezon City GAD Council and the Quezon City Police Department implemented the Quezon City VAWC Databank System, a database system for VAWC victims. They also launched the Bahay Kanlungan, a shelter for abused women, children, and LGBT individuals. Such programs that pertained to women's advancement involved those enriching the political sphere for women and their participation and socio-economic conditions. There are also programs for health and education that are implemented and allocated more financial resources. Implementation was done through various offices relevant to the program's function for such programs.

However, some respondents were found to not file their cases due to fear of victim-blaming and the inaccessibility due to funds needed to file a case. Some respondents were also not aware of the programs mandated by the Quezon City LGU. There are multiple problems and challenges in implementing the GAD Code by the Quezon City LGU. First is the challenge of information dissemination. The ordinance's effect must be carried down from the Quezon City LGU down to the barangays. It is so that the information about the existence and functions of the ordinance towards the public promotes active citizen's participation. Information dissemination for the implementation of the GAD Code reflects a lack of efficiency. One of the top priority sectors of the GAD Budget is for Information, Education, and Communication. In contrast, information dissemination stands out as one of the significant challenges for implementing the GAD Code.

Second is the need for a strict "iron hand implementation" of the ordinance. There is a need for stricter and more active implementation of the city ordinance. Moreover, the respondents believe that the need for better implementation of the city ordinance stems from it not being 'felt' within Quezon City. Even though the GAD Code was enacted, the respondents found it lacking in reaching the public. Moreover, the respondents felt unincluded and unaware of this ordinance protecting and fighting sexual harassment in Quezon City. Relevant sectors like the LGBTQIA+ sector, the youth, men, and even women, do not get enough information that the GAD Code provides. Programs and projects such as awareness, counseling,

where and whom to call, their rights and violations, what is considered sexual harassment, and filing proper complaints to avoid it.

Despite the discrepancies in the implementation of the GAD Code, the respondents somewhat agree that the GAD Code is effective. They only somewhat agree that they can feel safe within Quezon City. Moreover, they can somewhat file a report when they experience sexual harassment. The respondent perceives the recommendations as a hurdle for both its effectiveness and efficiency. Furthermore, the respondents believe that, when such calls for inclusivity, accessibility, and the more robust implementation of the GAD code are met, the GAD Code may now effectively protect women against sexual harassment in Quezon City.

This study recommends that, in terms of policy and program implementation, the Quezon City LGU must implement more localized versions of the ordinance programs to meet such matters of inclusivity, accessibility, and stricter implementation. Moreover, they may focus on disseminating information that shows that the GAD Code is not only for women's protection but also for the LGBTQIA+ community and other marginalized communities that women participate. For other projects, they Quezon City LGU must conduct more education discussions like webinars and forums about the existence of the GAD Code to further provide knowledge for the potential victims to inform and avoid the increase of potential perpetrators. The Quezon City LGU must also provide more help and protection desks in public places and transportation for an accessible place to file complaints and easier access to documents. To further the information for the betterment of policy implementation, they must enhance their citizen's charter to gain access to complaints and information in line with the GAD Code. Research more on the more prevalent type of sexual harassment in Quezon City as, due to sensitivity and such research is time-bounded, this information could be more vital as to what can be prevented more often.

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