



## Awareness on Republic Act No. 7610 Among High School Students at Wesleyan University Philippines: Focus on Articles VIII (Working Children) & IV (Child Trafficking)

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### Abstract

This research described the level of awareness of 215 Wesleyan University-Philippines high school students regarding Article VII and Article IV of Republic Act No. 7610 otherwise known as the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act. The researchers found that the high school students at WUP are fully aware of how important it is for employers to protect the health, safety, and well-being of child workers. On the other hand, the students only slightly agreed that children should be allowed to work at all times. This suggests that they are concerned about how it might affect the children's education and development. Some respondents agreed that it is important to get clear permission from the child, their guardian, and the right authorities before signing an employment contract in the public entertainment or information industries. However, most of them agreed that the protection and well-being of child workers should come before giving them unlimited work opportunities. Also, the students strongly support stricter measures to prevent child trafficking, which show that they are fully aware of the problem and agree that something needs to be done. There is, however, a clear lack of information and agreement among the students about the specific punishments for individuals involved in child trafficking. This gap shows the importance of educating schools about the legal consequences of trafficking children and how important it is to have harsh penalties for people who try to do it.

**Keywords:** Awareness, child labor, child trafficking, high school students, RA 7610

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### 1. Introduction

The level of awareness that Wesleyan University-Philippines high school students have possess regarding Philippine legislation, specifically Republic Act No. 7610, is crucial in safeguarding that the rights and well-being of children are protected. The Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act

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(Republic Act No. 7610) was signed into law on June 17, 1992. It is one of the Philippines most significant laws for child protection. This law has many parts that are meant to deal with problems like child labor and trafficking. The main goal is to give children a safe and caring place to live that helps them grow and develop in all areas. Article VIII, which talks about child labor, and Article IV, which fights child trafficking (Kamaruddin & Mohd Zin, 2022), are two very important parts in this legislation.

Section VIII of Republic Act No. 7610 delineates the regulatory framework for child labor, with a particular emphasis on safeguarding the rights and welfare of such children. The regulation allows children under the age of fifteen to be employed in certain situations, provided that it does not compromise their safety, health, morals, or typical development, and is conducted predominantly under the direct supervision of their parents or legal guardians. Furthermore, parents or legal guardians are mandated to ensure that these working children receive appropriate education (Turnbull, H., Turnbull & Cooper, 2018). On the other hand, Article IV of the Act addresses the heinous crime of child trafficking, imposing severe penalties on individuals involved in trading or dealing with children for monetary gain or any form of consideration (Ma, Chen, Mahmood & Shahab, 2022).

By understanding and promoting awareness of these articles, high school students at Wesleyan University-Philippines can contribute significantly to the prevention of child exploitation and the promotion of child rights within their communities.

Thus, this study finds meaning and significance. It specifically explored the high school students' understanding of articles VIII and IV of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act, also known as Republic Act No. 7610 in the Philippines.

## **2. Method**

This study employed a descriptive research method, utilizing a questionnaire to collect the requisite information from the respondents (Garcia & Subia, 2019). Aggarwal (2008), as cited by Salaria (2012), defines descriptive research as the systematic collection of information on existing conditions or situations, with the purpose of describing and interpreting them. This study involved collecting data from high school students at Wesleyan University-Philippines, specifically from Grades 7 to 10. The students were asked to provide their understanding of articles VIII and IV of the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act, also known as Republic Act No. 7610 in the Philippines. A total of 215 high school students were the respondents of this study (Grade 7 = 50; Grade 8=51; Grade 9=51; and Grade 10=63). They answered the questionnaire which was based on RA 7610 which was validated by five experts in the field of education and law. The instrument was found to be reliable, with a

Cronbach's alpha value equal to 0.877. The data gathering lasted for 3 weeks and the statistical tools utilized to gather data were the Likert scale and weighted mean.

### 3. Results

#### 1. Article VIII. Working Children

*Table 1. Article VIII*

<b>Article VIII-Working Children (n=215)</b>	<b>WM</b>	<b>Verbal Description</b>
1. Do you agree that children working under the direct responsibility of their parents or legal guardians, with no other employees involved, should be allowed as long as it doesn't endanger their safety, health, morals, or development, and provided they receive prescribed education?	2.97	Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware
2. Do you agree that a child's participation in public entertainment or information (e.g., cinema, theatre, radio, television) should be allowed if deemed essential, with strict compliance to protection, health, safety, morals, and approval from relevant authorities?	3.38	Strongly Agree/Fully Aware
3. Do you believe that employers should be responsible for ensuring the protection, health, safety, and morals of children employed in any capacity?	3.64	Strongly Agree/Fully Aware
4. Do you agree that employers should implement measures to prevent the exploitation or discrimination of child employees, considering factors such as remuneration, working hours, and training opportunities?	3.56	Strongly Agree/Fully Aware
5. Do you believe that children should be allowed to work under any circumstances, even if it may impact their education and development?	1.79	Slightly Agree/Slightly Aware
6. Do you believe it is for children's employment contracts in public entertainment or information industries to have the explicit agreement of the child (if possible), their parent or guardian, and approval from relevant authorities?	2.77	Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware
7. Do you agree that employers should provide training and skill acquisition programs for child employees, subject to approval and supervision from competent authorities?	3.44	Strongly Agree/Fully Aware
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware</b>

*Legend: 1.00 to 1.74 Disagree/Not Aware; 1.75 to 2.49 Slightly Agree/Slightly Aware; 2.50 to 3.24 Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware; 3.25 to 4.00 Strongly Agree/Fully Aware*

Table 1 shows that the high school students of Wesleyan University Philippines are moderately aware of Article VIII of Republic Act No. 7610 which pertains to the rights of working children with a weighted mean of 3.08.

They are fully aware of the statement: “Employers’ responsibility for ensuring the protection, health, safety, and morals of children employed in any capacity” (WM=3.64) and “that employers should implement measures to prevent the exploitation or discrimination of child employees, considering factors such as remuneration, working hours, and training opportunities” (WM=3.56). However, they slightly agree that “Children should be allowed to work under any circumstances, even if it may impact the children’s education and development” (WM=1.79) and they moderately agree that “it is for children's employment contracts in public entertainment or information industries to have the explicit agreement of the child (if possible), their parent or guardian, and approval from relevant authorities” (WM=2.77).

The findings indicate a strong awareness and agreement among respondents regarding the critical responsibility of employers to protect the health, safety, and morals of child employees, as well as to prevent their exploitation and discrimination, as evidenced by the high mean scores (WM=3.64 and WM=3.56). However, there is only slight agreement with the notion that children should be allowed to work under any circumstances, even if it may negatively impact their education and development (WM=1.79). Additionally, there is moderate awareness on the necessity for explicit agreements involving the child, their parent or guardian, and relevant authorities for employment contracts in public entertainment or information industries (WM=2.77). This suggests a recognition of the importance of protecting children in the workplace, balanced with some support for regulated child employment under specific conditions (Pavlichenko, Ostapenko, Kryvenko, Fomina & Lets (2023).

## **2. Article IV. Child Trafficking**

Table 2 presents the awareness of high school students at Wesleyan University Philippines on Article IV of Republic Act No. 7610 on child trafficking. The respondents are moderately aware of the article with a weighted mean of 2.84.

Table 2. Article IV

Article IV-Child Trafficking (n=215)	WM	Verbal Description
1. Do you believe that children travelling alone to foreign countries without valid clearance from the Department of Social Welfare and Development or written permission from their parents/legal guardians should be considered attempted child trafficking?	2.51	Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware
2. Do you agree that recruiting women or couples to bear children for child trafficking should be considered a form of attempted child trafficking?	2.85	Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware
3. Do you agree that simulating birth for child trafficking, as done by doctors, hospital or clinic officials, nurses, midwives, or local civil registrars, should be considered a punishable offense?	2.98	Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware
4. Do you believe that finding children among low-income families, hospitals, clinics, nurseries, day-care centers, or other child-caring institutions for child trafficking should be strongly condemned?	2.74	Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware
5. Do you agree with the imposition of penalties, two degrees lower than those prescribed for consummated felonies under Section 7, upon individuals involved in attempted child trafficking?	2.49	Slightly Agree/ Slightly Aware
6. Do you believe that stricter measures should be implemented to prevent attempted child trafficking, such as those outlined in Section 8 of the Act?	3.46	Strongly Agree/ Fully Aware
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware</b>

*Legend: 1.00 to 1.74 Disagree/Not Aware; 1.75 to 2.49 Slightly Agree/Slightly Aware; 2.50 to 3.24 Moderately Agree/ Moderately Aware; 3.25 to 4.00 Strongly Agree/ Fully Aware*

They are fully aware of and strongly agree with the statement that "Stricter measures should be implemented to prevent attempted child trafficking" (WM=3.46). However, they are not fully aware of "The imposition of penalties, two degrees lower than those prescribed for consummated felonies under Section 7, upon individuals involved in attempted child trafficking" (WM=2.49). The high agreement in weighted mean (3.46) shows that most of the respondents who answered agreed that stricter rules are needed to stop people from trying to traffic children. However, there is a clear lack of knowledge and agreement about the specific legal penalties for people who try to traffic children (Rashad, 2023; Okorie & Okeja, 2023), as shown by the significantly lower mean score (WM=2.49). This difference shows that even though high school students understand and support stronger measures to stop child trafficking, they may not fully understand or agree with the laws and penalties that apply to these crimes. This means that more people need to learn about and understand the legal aspects of stopping child trafficking (Tomes, 2013; Moore, 2018).

## **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### Conclusions

The following conclusions are derived from the findings of this study:

1. The high school students of WU-P are fully aware of how important it is for employers to protect the health, safety, and well-being of child workers. However, they only moderately support the idea that children should be able to work at all times, reflecting concerns about how it might affect their education and development.
2. There is some agreement among high school students about how important it is to get clear permission from the child, their guardian, and the right authorities before signing an employment contract in the public entertainment or information industry. However, most high school students agree that protecting and caring for child workers should come before giving them unlimited work opportunities.
3. The WUP high school students strongly back stricter measures to prevent child trafficking, showing that they are well aware of the need for such actions and agree that they should be taken.
4. There is a lack of knowledge and agreement among WUP high school students about the specific penalties for individuals involved in child trafficking.

### Recommendations

The following are suggested based on the findings and conclusions of the study:

1. The WU-P High School Principal should implement an increased awareness program emphasizing the unfavorable effects of child employment in their development and education.
2. The Associate Dean of the John Wesley School of Leadership and Governance (JWSLG) must conduct a seminar on guidelines and the necessity of obtaining consent from all parties before the children sign job contracts in the public entertainment and information industry.
3. WU-P High School Teachers and JWSLG Professors must set up educational campaigns and workshops to remind people how important it is to take stricter steps against attempts to traffic children.
4. The JWSLG and Criminal Justice Education professors should hold informational sessions about the specific punishments for trying to traffic a child. This will make sure that students are aware of the law's effects and understand how important strict enforcement is.

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