

Teachers' Level of Awareness on and Implementation of Child Protection Policy

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive correlational research aimed to determine the level of awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy among teachers. This study also aims to determine the significant relationship between the awareness and implementation in the four secondary schools in Banga District 1. The study involved 64 junior high school teachers where a survey questionnaire was used to determine teachers' level of awareness and implementation of child protection policy. The teachers' level of awareness regarding the Child Protection Policy was evaluated using a weighted mean. To examine the relationship between teachers' awareness and their level

of implementation of the policy, Pearson's r was employed. An adapted survey questionnaire served as the research instrument, and a total enumeration sampling technique was used, meaning all members of the target population were included as respondents. The data indicate a very high awareness of teachers regarding Child Protection Policy. It was also shown that teachers are highly engaged in the implementation of child protection policy. Furthermore, there is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between the level of awareness and the level of implementation of the child protection policy among teachers. The data indicates that as teachers' awareness of the policy increases, so does their effectiveness in implementing it. The study concludes that while teachers demonstrate strong knowledge and enforcement of Child Protection Policy, further training and inter-agency collaboration are necessary for enhanced implementation. Recommendations include targeted training on specific policies, strengthened partnerships with agencies, and periodic policy evaluations to improve child protection efforts in schools.

Keywords: *child protection policy, awareness, implementation*

INTRODUCTION

Ensuring the safety and well-being of students is important responsibility of teachers, administrators, and the school community as a whole. In addition to offering high-quality education, schools should foster an environment that values safety, respect, and defense against abuse and discrimination. However, problems like bullying and child abuse still exist in school environments in spite of continuous effort. These problems underline the need of taking the appropriate actions and involving both teachers and school administration in the implementation of such policy.

The Special Protection of Children against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act, commonly known as Republic Act No. 7610 or the Child Protection Policy (CCP) was approved by the Senate and House of Representatives on February 7, 1992. It is a law that, among other things, establishes penalties for violating the law and offers enhanced protection and deterrence against child abuse, exploitation, and discrimination (Republic Act 7610, 2012).

The Department of Education (DepEd) acknowledges that because of the difficult circumstances that teachers and other officials both inside and outside the school encounter, incidents of abuse may occur in a school setting. As a result, it put the CPP into effect to provide extra protection to kids who are in danger or threatened by circumstances beyond their control that interfere with their normal development and help the relevant organizations with their rehabilitation (Labaria et al., 2022).

In addition to the CCP, the Senate and Congress also approved Republic Act No. 10627, which is referred to as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013. This law requires all schools in the Philippines to create and enforce policies aimed at preventing and addressing bullying incidents, including physical, verbal, and cyberbullying. Schools are obligated to establish procedures for reporting and investigating such incidents, provide support for victims, and impose suitable disciplinary measures. Furthermore, the law mandates educational programs for students, staff, and parents regarding bullying, as well as annual reporting on bullying incidents, with penalties for those that do not comply (Republic Act No. 10627, 2013).

Following the implementation of this Order at DepEd for a number of years, it is noteworthy to learn how teachers fared in terms of their involvement and participation in this program. Thus, this study aimed to establish the relationship between the teacher's awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the level of awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy among teachers, determined the extent to which they understand and apply its provisions in their schools. The findings of the study provided insights into areas needing improvement and guide the development of targeted interventions to enhance child protection practices in educational institutions.

Specifically, it answers the following to questions:

1. What is the teachers' level of awareness on Child Protection Policy?
2. What is the teachers' level of implementation of Child Protection Policy?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of awareness and level of implementation of the Child Protection Policy?

Hypotheses

In view of the proceeding questions, the following hypotheses were tested at *0.05* level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the teachers' level of awareness and level of implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

Significance of the Study

The result of this study may beneficial to the following:

Department of Education. The study may apprise the department to what extent the Child Protection Policy is being implemented in different schools and how it affects the behavior of learners. This may help them to be aware of the situation of teachers in the field. It may also guide them to formulate or make amends on the policy for better implementation. The findings may also serve as basis for designing training programs that strengthen teachers' capacity to uphold child rights while maintaining effective classroom discipline.

Holy Trinity College of General Santos City. This study may provide a reference for future researchers with the same study and at the same time as an educational institution the result of this study may be a basis for enhancing or developing their programs on Child Protection Policy. The research may enhance the institution's educational resources, providing students with valuable perspectives on the implementation of national policies within local school settings.

School Administrators. This study may give information on how the child protection policy is implemented. It may also help them to be aware of the behavior of students within the school premises and take action if possible. It may help them to know the impact of policy that may affect the disciplinary practices of teachers. Likewise, it may guide them in identifying areas where stronger administrative support or monitoring is needed to ensure consistent policy implementation.

Teachers. The results may help teachers assess themselves to what extent they implement Child Protection Policy to different learners and what methods may be fit to cater the different needs of learners specifically for disciplining students. It also may provide a guide on how to handle the possible unnecessary situation between them and learners.

Stakeholders. The result may significant to various stakeholder involved in child welfare and protection beyond the school setting. It may help to inform policy enhancement, improve intervention strategies, and support the development of collaborative program that strengthen child protection mechanism within communities.

Learners. The learners may be aware of their attitude and behavior that may cause damage to their classmates as well as to their teachers. It may serve as their guide to improve academic performance and change their habits to perform well. It may also be for them to be aware of what are their rights and how to use these rights properly. Through this, they may also develop a greater sense of responsibility and respect within the school

Researcher. As an educator, the result of this study may serve as an insight and an encouragement to find ways to enhance the awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy. Engaging in this research allows the researcher to deepen her understanding of the core values of the policy. This may enable the researcher to develop essential character traits such as patience, understanding, and deep concern for learners.

Other Researchers and Future Studies. The findings of this study may be useful as a further reference by other researchers in their future research that is related to child protection policy awareness and implementation. It might also work as a foundation and useful blueprint for the forthcoming relevant research.

Scope and Delimitations

This study sought to evaluate the extent to which teachers are aware and implement the Child Protection Policy in their schools.

All junior high school teachers in three (3) secondary schools and one (1) integrated school in Cluster 1 of Banga, South Cotabato were the respondents of this study specifically San Jose National High School at Barangay San Jose, Lampari National High School at Barangay Lampari, Lamba National High School, and Lambukay Integrated School which are located at Barangay Lamba.

In gathering data, a validated modified questionnaire was utilized to obtain the teacher's level of awareness and level of implementation of the Child Protection Policy. Numerical data was interpreted using frequency, mean, and Pearson-r. These statistical tools helped organize and analyze the collected responses in a systematic manner.

On the other hand, the study is limited to public secondary and integrated school teachers in Cluster 1 of Banga, South Cotabato, and does not include private schools in the same area. Teachers who are handling elementary and senior high students are not included as respondents of the study. The study relies on quantitative data gathered through a structured questionnaire and does not include any qualitative

method. Likewise, the study focuses only on the level of awareness and implementation of teachers in their schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Department of Education Child Protection Policy

Violence against children remains an urgent issue globally. This violence frequently appears in the form of abuse. The situation in the Philippines is no exception. Safeguarding children is a shared responsibility. This is due to the widespread violence against children in many places, including schools, child protection policy is taken to ensure that children are free from harm, that their health and development are not stunted, and that they are raised in environments conducive to receiving high-quality, consistent care. It is a policy made by the government in accordance with the 1987 Philippine Constitution. This study gauges the teacher's level of awareness and level of implementation of the said policy.

DepEd has achieved a highly important milestone in its ongoing efforts to safeguard the rights of its learners and ensure their protection from abuse. In 2012, the Department of Education demonstrated its strong dedication to safeguarding children by issuing DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 titled DepEd Child Protection Policy (CPP). This policy aims to provide specific protection for children who are vulnerable to the banned acts outlined in the policy. This policy strongly highlights its unwavering commitment to completely prohibiting child abuse, exploitation, assault, discrimination, bullying, and any other forms of mistreatment. Additionally, it encourages the implementation of constructive and non-aggressive methods of discipline (Aguilar & Carbonell, 2024).

In addition, the aim of the DepEd Child Protection Policy is to protect children from harm and abuse, which emphasizes the importance of this policy. The concerns regarding strictness reflect the apprehensions expressed by some participants about the policy's rigidity. It may seem that the child protection strategy is vital for guaranteeing children's safety. Consequently, the participants concurred that child protection policies are crucial (Mag-atas & Carmona, 2023).

Organizations working with children, such as schools, daycare centers, sports teams, churches, and other community organizations, must have child protection policies. They assist in ensuring that every member of staff and volunteers is aware of their duties and obligations to protect children, as well as the protocols to follow in the event of a suspicion or admission of abuse (United Nations Children's Fund, 2018).

Roche (2023) claimed that the current child protection system in the Philippines is considered to be top-down, with government policies and specific legislation carried out so badly that the system's integrity is called into question. Furthermore, several studies have been done on the results of child protection initiatives, the efficacy of existing programs, or the impact child protection measures have on the children and youth of the Philippines.

According to Ruelo et al. (2020), as for the students, they were more likely to experience violence and abuse if they did not know and comprehend the CPP. Regarding the teachers, Casipe and Bete (2023) stated that a strategy for raising teacher awareness is to provide them with excellent training and actively disseminate information about the CPP. Lack of specific information and ignorance of the policy causes confusion and uncertainty about its implementation among teachers.

It was advantageous for school administrators to exchange best practices. Superintendents of divisions and specialists must understand one another's techniques for resolving issues during the implementation of the CPP. Patzer (2020) described this type of sharing activity as a fantastic method to promote teacher cooperation and significant career advancement. According to the result of his study, when educators engage in collaborative activities, they grow more inventive and more content with their jobs. Heads of schools should constantly consult specialists to assist in facilitating and informing youngsters about the policies intended and interested parties.

In summary, Child Protection Policy is a set of guidelines and procedures intended to protect children from abuse, exploitation, and other threats. The principle that the child's best interests come first forms the basis of the policy. Children are protected from discrimination, abuse, and neglect by the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act, also known as Republic Act (RA) 7610. In order to provide our students with additional protection against these kinds of abuses, the DepEd Child Protection Policy was created. It reiterates DepEd's policy on zero-tolerance to any act of child abuse, bullying, discrimination, abuse, violence, and other forms of exploitation.

Duties and Responsibilities of School / Personnel in the Implementation of the Child Protection Policy

Based on Article 218 of the Philippine Family Code, while a child is receiving care, training, and supervision, the academic and non-academic staff members, as well as administrators and teachers, must exert a special parental authority and responsibility towards them. Any actions permitted, whether occurring within or outside the premises of the school, organization, or institution, fall under this authority and responsibility (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012).

A child protection policy is crucial as it establishes protocols and regulations to establish a secure setting for children. It ensures the safety of both students and school staff by clearly establishing protocols and strategies for safeguarding children. Child protection systems exhibit many characteristics and degrees of state involvement, although their common objective is to mitigate the adverse consequences of child abuse and maintain a proper equilibrium between safeguarding children and upholding the integrity of family life. Child protection policies are essential in eliminating child abuse and providing help to children under the care of local authorities (Deysolong, 2023).

Every organization should have an effective child protection strategy in place. However, teachers will ultimately bear the repercussions of this implementation, making it an additional burden for them. But since the law protects its citizens and we are dealing with defenseless children, this issue should not be

regarded lightly. At every stage of their existence, they require a consistent level of nurturing and care. They do not have to suffer as a result of abuse and poor management (Bayucca, 2020).

According to Adewale and Potokri (2023), teachers have a crucial role in implementing policies and achieving objectives. For this reason, every policy intended for schools needs to be thoroughly disclosed to teachers. Government policies are mostly activities designed to steer a particular sector in a way that facilitates the achievement of objectives. Thus, a child protection policy is a purposeful move on the part of the government to guide and safeguard children's lives both within and outside of schools so that they can exercise their constitutionally guaranteed rights.

Furthermore, the implementation of social protection measures that specifically cater to the needs and vulnerabilities of children is crucial in order to enhance child well-being and alleviate child poverty. Enforcing child protection regulations in schools can foster a secure atmosphere and provide assistance to mistreated students.

Teachers' Awareness on Child Protection Policy

Understanding teachers' level of awareness on child protection policy can be able to assess how well current policies and procedures are functioning. Insufficient awareness of child protection policies among teachers may result in increased risks and vulnerabilities for children. By recognizing these shortcomings, we can implement suitable actions to enhance the enforcement of child protection policies and ensure students' safety and well-being.

The research conducted by Pescadero (2020) showed that teachers and students in the City Division of Cabuyao are knowledgeable about the CPP. Additionally, the schools have implemented the CPP, which encompasses prevention, prompt responses to school violence, mitigation, intervention, and reporting of incidents.

Similarly, based on the study conducted by Labaria et al. (2022) found out that the respondents are aware of the policy's provisions, which is described as knowledgeable. It follows from this that Bataraza District 1 Elementary School teachers are qualified to handle any unfavorable situation involving this policy. The study therefore concluded that given that teachers are knowledgeable with the provisions of the child protection policy, the Department of Education and relevant agencies ought to consistently conduct teacher enhancement training and programs that address the key points of the policy.

In addition, Aguilar and Carbonell (2024) found on their study that the respondents had a thorough awareness of the CPP. Teachers and school administrators demonstrated a high level of understanding, especially with regard to the policy's implementation in all educational institutions and its aim of eradicating violence against children. Although there was a significant level of general awareness, reading and comprehending the official DepEd policy paper revealed the lowest level of comprehension. However, the majority of statements showed that the respondents had a thorough understanding of the policy.

Furthermore, it was showed on the study of Alcala and Cornelia (2025) on teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) and their responsiveness in implementing its provisions in public secondary schools in Sibulan, Negros Oriental. Teachers demonstrated very high CPP awareness and self-rated their responsiveness as very high in prevention intervention and disciplinary domains.

However, Adewale (2023) found that several teachers did not fully understand the policy's contents. Put differently, they do not know enough about policy for whatever reason. For example, not all teachers have proper access to the child protection policy paper. A lot of teachers only use the data that is displayed throughout the classrooms. One of the obstacles preventing liaison individuals from carrying out their responsibilities in an efficient manner is teachers' inadequate understanding of pupil's information, parental involvement, and domestic abuse in the schools.

Similarly, Tingcang (2024) showed in his study about the level of teachers' awareness and level of implementation of the Child Protection Policy programs of Carmona National High School that the teachers are knowledgeable about the CPP, but they do not fully understand what it is. Teachers have a crucial role in helping students understand the child protection policy, but students must also grasp the policy in order to know their rights and prevent violations and harm of any kind.

The majority of students lack comprehensive understanding regarding safety and welfare in relation to the Child Protection Act. Similarly, students do not know much about the Child Protection Act. Students' perspectives on the Child Protection Act have the potential to be improved or developed if measures are taken to prevent the misuse of when kids know their rights, they can stand up for themselves. Students can also abide by the basic guidelines and policies at school. in order for them to maintain self-control and refrain from doing anything unpleasant. Moreover, students who are aware about child protection are safer from abuse violations when they respond appropriately, but do not promise their security (Ruelo et al., 2020).

In addition, parents' rights and obligations under the policy should be understood by parents, since educators have brought attention to the difficulties surrounding parental involvement. In order for schools and parents to successfully execute the policy, it is crucial that they communicate clearly and work together. Creating a disciplined and supportive learning environment also depends on establishing discipline expectations at the beginning of the school year. It provided a basis for encouraging students to act morally and responsibly, and it is crucial to maintain discipline impartiality in order to guarantee that every student is treated equally and fairly. Ensuring that regulations are applied consistently guarantees fair and impartial disciplinary measures for every pupil.

Bayuca (2023) showed on his study that although a large number of teachers have a thorough comprehension of the CPP, there are nevertheless clear inconsistencies in how it is interpreted and applied. Also, the efficient implementation of the policy is further complicated by issues including low parental involvement, uneven enforcement of the regulation, and students' ignorance of their rights. Additionally, there is worry about children abusing their rights and the necessity of improved communication between families and institutions.

Finally, understanding the awareness of teachers about child protection policies can help create a culture of vigilance and accountability within educational institutions. It emphasizes the importance of child protection and encourages open communication and reporting of any concerns or incidents. This, in turn, fosters a safe and supportive environment for students, where their well-being is prioritized. Assessing the awareness of teachers about child protection policies is crucial for safeguarding the welfare of children. It helps identify gaps in knowledge, improve training programs, strengthen policy implementation, and create a culture of vigilance and accountability within educational institutions.

Teachers' Implementation of the Child Protection Policy

The implementation of the Child Protection Policy in educational settings is essential for creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment for every student. Developed to address increasing worries about child abuse, bullying, and various forms of violence in schools, the policy outlines specific guidelines and preventive strategies aimed at safeguarding the rights and well-being of children.

Even with their hurdles, the teachers employed coping strategies to get through obstacles in the way of putting the child safety policy into practice. Teachers manage by continuing to keep a close eye on things and work in tandem with the CPP committee and their direct supervisor. It supports them in strengthening their capacity to provide policies in a successful and timely manner.

Aguilar and Carbonell (2024) found out that the educational institution has achieved a level of implementation. Schools achieved the highest level of implementation in actively coordinating with the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO), and other government and non-government organizations. According to the findings, there is generally strong compliance with the Child Protection Policy in schools. Only four of the fifteen indications received a high implementation rating; the other eleven were nonetheless regarded as implemented. The yearly capacity-building exercise for Child Protection Committee members received the lowest rating. However, the results demonstrate that the regulation is being actively enforced by schools.

Similarly, study findings of Antiza et al. (2024) on child protection policy awareness and schools' responsiveness indicate a strong foundation for child protection from their schools in the Valencia City division. The policies have significantly contributed to safeguarding children's interests, with schools demonstrating high awareness and responsiveness in disciplinary actions. There is a relationship between awareness of child protection policies and schools' responsiveness.

Another study conducted by Pescadero (2020) on the effectiveness of the Child Protection Policy implementation in schools in the City Division of Cabuyao, Reports of bullying incidents were found to be the most swiftly documented and communicated to school administrations, achieving the highest compliance level. Conversely, the area that rated the lowest was the Child Protection Committee's process for identifying students at risk of serious harm on physical, emotional, or mental aspect. Even though, the committee works collaboratively with other agencies such as the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO), and other

partners, this segment showed the least effective implementation. Overall, the results indicate that while all elements of incident reporting are being applied, the execution levels differ among various components.

It was also showed on the study of Labaria et al. (2022) that the elementary schools in Bataraza District 1, Palawan, implemented a child protection policy. This indicates that the school located in Bataraza District I has adopted the child protection policy and has concluded that school administrators should make the CPP more effectively implemented by regularly reviewing and assessing its key components and including parents and other interested parties as executive committee members. Therefore, it is the collective responsibility of educators, administrators, parents, and the school community to ensure that the policy is strictly followed and that all parties are fully aware of it.

In addition, based on sentiment and coping mechanisms, teachers derive insights from the implementation of the policy by taking responsibility when challenging situations arise, emphasizing the importance of sharing good values with students, building strong relationships with parents and students, and advocating for the welfare of all children as well as making decisions based on policy (Casipe et al., 2023).

Although it may ignore cultural factors, the child protection policy encourages positive behavior in students by fostering a courteous and safe learning environment. Teachers had difficulties putting the policy into practice because they had to balance classroom autonomy with parental engagement and their fear of the repercussions. Effective implementation requires parents and schools to collaborate and communicate clearly. Establishing rules for behavior at the beginning of the school year is essential to fostering a disciplined classroom. Ensuring equitable treatment for all pupils is ensured by applying rules consistently. One major issue with the policy's implementation is class size. Building strong, positive connections with students and maintaining good communication with parents, guardians, and other stakeholders are essential to fostering a safe and inclusive learning environment (Mag-atas & Carmona, 2023).

The findings of the study conducted by Alda et al. (2024) implied that the secondary schools in the Narra Del Sur District are adhering to the procedures specified in the CPP. The results suggested that there is a solid basis for the district's child protection initiatives, with a focus on preventive measures.

However, ongoing efforts to strengthen implementation, especially in areas that require improvement, will be necessary to ensure comprehensive protection for all students. Through identifying opportunities for growth and leveraging current advantages, educational institutions can augment their ability to furnish a secure and nurturing atmosphere for every pupil.

It was also revealed in the study of Zamora (2021) that school heads encountered problems like the absence of sufficient financial and human resources and the unfavorable dispositions of students. In responding to such problems, it was observed that school heads enforced the provisions of the policy strictly, consulted with different stakeholders, and undertook effective communication initiatives. It was then discovered that a successful CPP implementation could only occur if school heads use child centered

and policy-driven decision making, develop positive relationships with stakeholders, and enhance the school's communication mechanisms.

Additionally, Ahsan et al. (2022) indicate that the CPP in Palu City has been executed in accordance with the Law on Child Protection that enforces the necessity of weighting of criminal punishment and penalties against child abuse. However, the effect and the execution itself considered inadequate and not satisfactory.

Furthermore, the shortage of skilled school-based personnel and the lack of support and collaboration with other organizations emerge as major difficulties among the obstacles listed by the CPC. This emphasizes how crucial it is to improve teamwork and guarantee that experts are accessible in order to effectively intervene in child protection issues. Teachers also voice concerns about coordination with other agencies, the need for more understanding of the CPP, and the lack of qualified professionals. The need for ongoing training and awareness-building initiatives to ensure comprehensive policy implementation is indicated by the CPC members' desire for a deeper understanding of the CPP. These difficulties are similar to those that the CPC has outlined, emphasizing the necessity of coordinated efforts to resolve these problems at the institutional level (Alda et al., 2024).

In general, the Child Protection Policy has been well implemented in schools, with most organizations actively putting the policy in place and engaging with governmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure that students are safe. With early reporting of incidents of bullying and regular engagement with child protection agencies, there has been a tangible commitment by schools towards safeguarding children. But there are still issues, such as poor understanding by some teachers, limited access to the full policy, and no efforts made to build capacity, especially for Child Protection Committees (Fuente, 2021). High numbers of pupils, limited resources, and no coordination with parents and stakeholders are just some of the issues that some schools experience and which make policy implementation challenging. Teachers have countered these by employing coping strategies include being watchful and working closely with supervisors and CPP committees.

Ensuring children's safety and security in schools is a top priority for education. Understanding the extent to which schools have established and adhere to child safety rules is critical to this attempt. However, the level of implementation may vary based on the characteristics of the persons engaged and the involvement of many stakeholders in maintaining these rules within the school system. Thus, child protection is a shared duty that necessitates ongoing efforts for policy implementation and objective attainment. This underscores the importance of strengthening awareness and commitment among those responsible for safeguarding children in the school environment.

Importantly, monitoring the implementation of child protection policies holds teachers accountable for their role in safeguarding children. It helps create a culture of responsibility and ensures that everyone involved understands the importance of adhering to these policies. By assessing implementation, valuable feedback and data that can be used to improve existing policies and procedures can be gather. It helps

identify areas where additional training or resources may be needed, ultimately leading to a stronger and more effective child protection framework.

Theoretical Framework

This study was supported by the Institutional Theory of John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977). Because of institutional forces, organizations adhere to and adopt structures, practices, and norms. Their work has been fundamental in understanding this process.

Teachers' actions and practices are shaped by the institutionalization of child protection regulations in educational contexts, which can be better understood through the perspective of institutional theory. The impact of normative norms and outside forces on organizational behavior is taken into account. Within this framework, the theory aids in the examination of how institutionalized child protection policy's function, directing and impacting disciplinary actions in the classroom.

By grounding the research in Institutional Theory, the study can investigate how teacher practices and behavior in preserving a safe and secure learning environment are impacted by the institutionalization of child protection rules in educational organizations.

This study is also anchored in the 1987 Philippine Constitution and the United Nations Convention on the Child's Rights (UNCRC) (1989). These legal and international principles are the bases of policy framework, management decisions, and educational implications where this study stems from. These principles were selected to give legal and theoretical insights into the gaps between the experiences on implementing child protection policies.

Additionally, with the cooperation of its partners and stakeholders, the necessity of child safety policy is acknowledged by the government organizations such as the Department of Education, and ensure that every school is suitable for teaching the children. Because every decision and interaction involving children must be made with the child's best interests in mind. Considering the primary rights and responsibilities of parents/legal guardians, the department aims to provide the extra protection against all types of abuse, exploitation, and care that is necessary for the child's wellbeing (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012).

Research Gap

Several studies have been conducted regarding teachers' awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy. For instance, Pescadero (2020) and Labaria et al. (2022) found that teachers and educational institutions had a good grasp of the CPP and were capable of executing its preventive, intervention, and reporting strategies with students. Aguilar and Carbonell (2024) as well as Alcala and Cornelia (2025) also claimed that teachers showed a strong level of awareness and responsiveness to the policy, especially regarding its impact within the school environment. However, other research (Adewale, 2023; Tingcang, 2024) indicated that many teachers were not well-versed in the details of the policy due to factors such as a lack of access to official materials and reliance on secondary information sources.

As for implementation, a number of studies (Mag-atas & Carmona, 2023; Antiza et al., 2024; Alda et al., 2024) showed that schools cooperated with parents, stakeholders, and government agencies to comply with the child protection policy. But there were other issues including big class numbers, varying levels of parental participation, scarce resources, and insufficient continuous training (Zamora, 2021; Ahsan et al., 2022). These problems suggest that although there is child protection policy in school, different schools and districts may implement them differently.

While these studies provide useful insights into child protection policy awareness and implementation, these findings may not fully reflect the context of schools in the Division of South Cotabato, notably in Banga I District. Even though many studies conducted in different schools regarding the school environment, stakeholder involvement, and policy enforcement, each schools have unique difficulties that can impact how the child protection policy is viewed and implemented.

Therefore, this study wants to address the gap by focusing on secondary school teachers in Banga I District, Division of South Cotabato. By determining the level of awareness and the extent of child protection policy implementation, this study aims to provide localized insights that can improve child protection implementation in the schools and help create safer and more supportive learning environments for students.

Definition of Terms

To have a better understanding of this study, the following terms were operationally defined.

Awareness. This refers to the knowledge of teachers in terms of definition, concept, coverage and the way of implementation of Child Protection Policy. It involves gaining an understanding of the key variables and issues involved in Child Protection Policy, as well as any potential solutions or strategies that could be employed to address the issue on the said policy. Awareness specifically pertains to how secondary school teachers understand their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the protection of learners.

Child Protection Policy (CPP). This refers to programs, services, procedures and structures that are intended to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination and violence. In the Philippines it protects the rights and welfare of the children as well as on how they will be protected. It is the right of children to receive assistance, including proper care and nutrition and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development. The Child Protection Policy serve as the main framework in assessing how schools and teachers safeguard learners within the classroom and school environment.

Implementation of CPP. This refers to the applying and enforcing a set of principle and procedures meant to safeguard children from harm and promote their wellbeing. This requires implementing the policy by incorporating it into all aspects of an organization's or institution's activities, whether it is a school, a government agency, or a non-profit organization. In addition, implementation focuses on how teachers and

school administrators put the Child Protection Policy into practice in their daily teaching and disciplinary practices.

Conceptual Framework

This study is supported by John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977) Institutional Theory. Which argues that such organizations such as schools are shape by formal structures, policies, and social norms. Policies like Child Protection Policy represent institutionalized expectations that are schools are required to adopt. However, the extent to which expectations are realized depends on the awareness and practices of the teachers, serve as the primary implementers in the schools. Since teachers are the primary implementers of the CPP, their level of awareness directly influences how consistently and effectively the policy is implemented in schools.

The focus of this study was on the teachers' level on awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy. More so, the conceptual framework, as shown in Figure 1, illustrates the independent variable, which is the level of teachers' awareness on CPP. While the dependent variable is the level of teacher's implementation of the CPP. This framework posits that teachers' awareness of the policy may influence how effectively they implement it in the school setting.

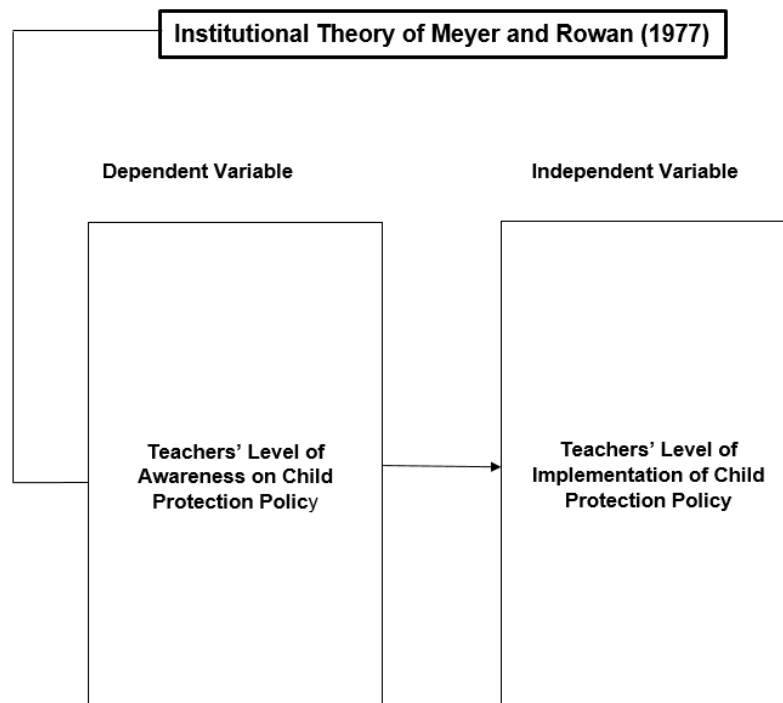


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design, a quantitative research design is a systematic examination of phenomena that gathers measurable data by methods from computers, statistics, or mathematics (Fleetwood, 2023). Under this quantitative approach, a descriptive-correlational research design was utilized.

Descriptive correlation was used since the study describes variables and the relationship of two variables. Descriptive correlational research design, according to Quaranta (2016), is a study in which the researcher's main goal is to describe the correlations between variables rather than attempting to establish a causal relationship.

In this study, descriptive correlational design was used to describe the relationship between the teacher's level of awareness to Child Protection Policy and level of its implementation. It was statistically treated to interpret the result.

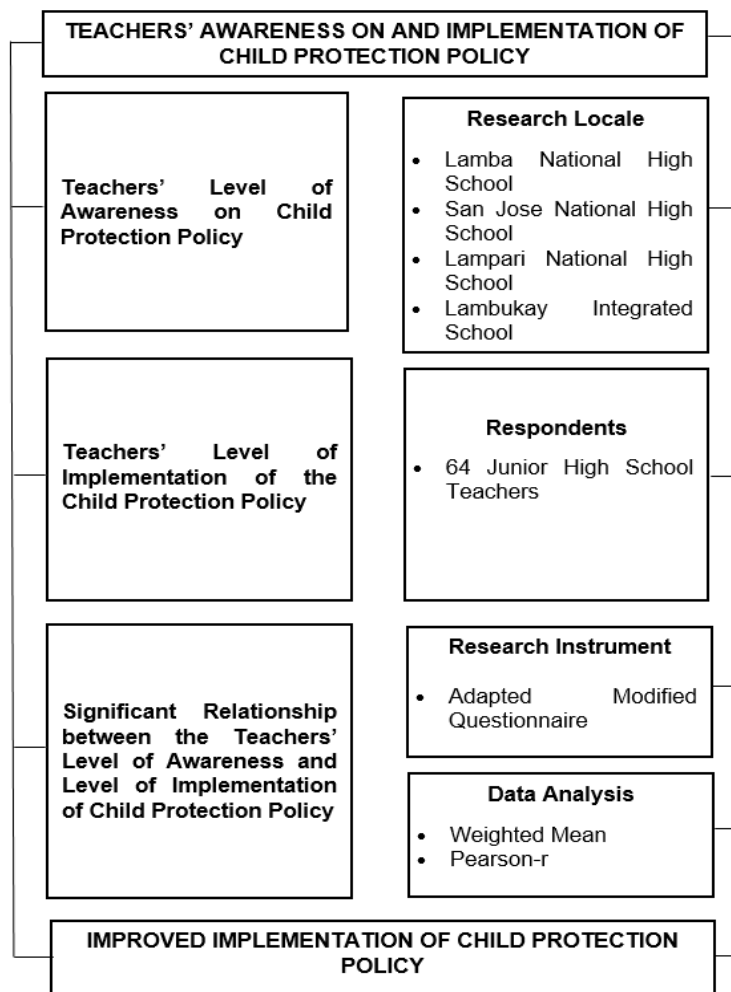


Figure 2. Research Design Research Locale

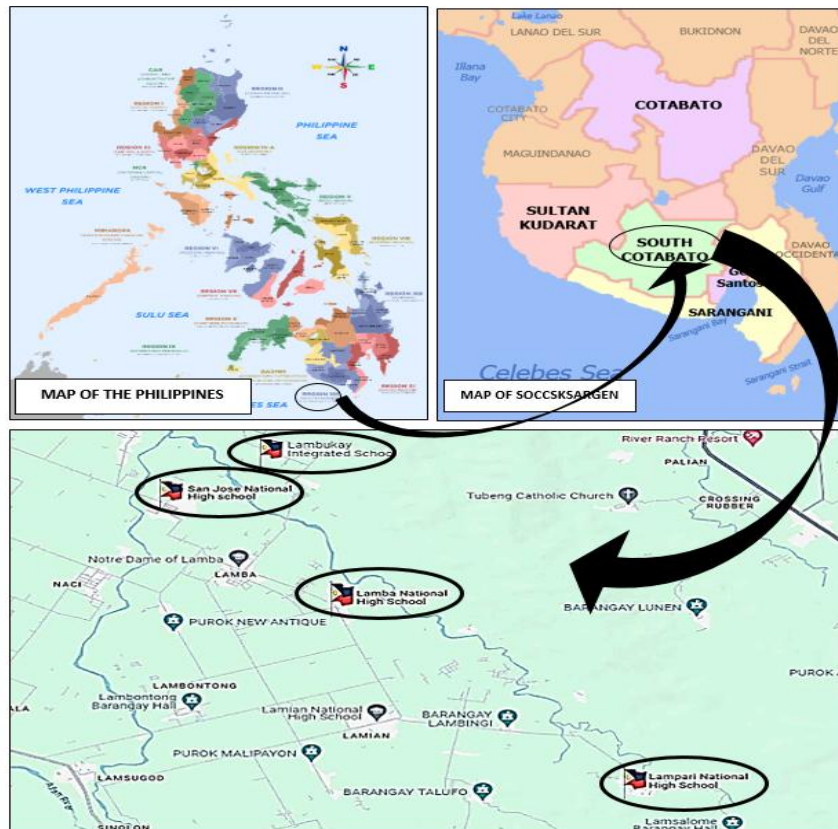
Research Locale

This study was conducted at four (4) schools in Banga 1, South Cotabato, namely, San Jose National High School at Barangay San Jose, Lampari National High School at Barangay Lampari, Lamba National High School and Lambukay Integrated School which are located at Barangay Lamba, these barangays are part of Municipality of Banga in South Cotabato.

The municipality of Banga in South Cotabato comprises 22 barangays, with three barangays serving as the study's focal points Barangay Lamba, Lampari, and San Jose. Each of these barangays is home to a diverse population, including Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous people.

In terms of education, each barangay is dedicated to providing quality education to learners, particularly in the context of secondary schools. For instance, Barangay Lamba has Lamba National High School and Lambukay Integrated School. Similarly, Barangay Lampari also has Lampari National High School, and Barangay San Jose has San Jose National High School.

The schools ensure child protection through a clear policy and regular teacher training through their Learning Action Cell sessions. Teachers are trained to identify abuse, follow reporting procedures, and safeguard students. The presence of diverse culture within the communities highlights the need for consistent and culturally responsive Implementation of Child Protection Policy across schools within the different barangays.



(Source: <https://maps/cluster+1+bangasouth+cotabato>)

Figure 3. Map of the Locale of the Study

Selection Process

A total enumeration sampling technique was employed, meaning that all members of the defined target population were included as respondents. A full time junior high school teachers actively handling classes in the identified school of the School Year 2023-2024 are the target population of this study. The selection of teachers from a mix of schools of varying sizes aimed to ensure a balanced and inclusive perspective when it comes to awareness and implementation of the child protection policy.

Respondents

The respondents for this study were all the junior high school teachers of three secondary and one integrated school in Banga 1, South Cotabato. Specifically, 16 junior high school teachers from Lamba National High School, 11 from Lampari National High School, eight (8) from Lambukay Integrated School and 29 from San Jose National High School making a total of 64 respondents. These teachers were directly implementing the Child Protection Policy in their schools.

Research Instrument

The researcher used an adapted survey questionnaire on Awareness and Implementation of the DepEd Child Protection Policy in Schools by Macatimpag (2018). It includes questions that determine how teachers understand and apply child protection policies. It also provides verbal interpretations and rankings.

A five-point scale was used to assess the level of awareness among teachers on Child Protection Policy; a score in the highest range (4.21-5.00) indicated a Very Highly Aware, who possesses proficiency and knowledge on child protection policy, while a score in the lowest range (1.00-1.80) indicated a Not Aware, where the teacher can understand child protection policy only with the guidance of the experts on it.

Scale	Mean Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Very Highly Aware	The teacher possesses proficiency and knowledge on Child Protection Policy.
4	3.41 – 4.20	Highly Aware	The teacher can adequately understand Child Protection Policy.
3	2.61 – 3.40	Aware	The teacher can understand some aspects of Child Protection Policy.
2	1.81 – 2.60	Slightly Aware	The teacher can understand Child Protection Policy only with the guidance of the experts on it.
1	1.00 – 1.80	Not Aware	The teacher can hardly understand Child Protection Policy even with guidance from the expert.

A five-point scale was used to assess the level of implementation of the policy; a score in the highest range (4.21-5.00) indicated a Very Highly Implemented, who teacher implements a child protection policy towards students on all occasions, while a score in the lowest range (1.00-1.80) indicated a Slightly Implemented, where the teachers' level of implements a child protection policy towards students on rare occasions.

Scale	Mean Range	Description	Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Very Highly Implemented	The teacher implements a child protection policy towards students on all occasions.
4	3.41 – 4.20	Highly Implemented	The teacher implements child protection policy towards students on many occasions.
3	2.61 – 3.40	Implemented	The teacher implements a child protection policy towards students on some occasions.
2	1.81 – 2.60	Slightly Implemented	The teacher implements a child protection policy towards students on rare occasions.
1	1.00 – 1.80	Not Implemented	The teacher did not implement a child protection policy towards students.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the conduct of the study, the researcher requested permission from the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the study in secondary and integrated schools of Banga 1 teachers. Upon approval, the researcher sent out letters directly to the principals of each school concerned to ask permission and schedule of the distribution of the questionnaire to the junior high teachers.

During the conduct of the study, the researcher asked for vacant time from the teachers to administer the questionnaire. Each respondent received general instructions, study descriptions and intent, and an informed consent form. The researcher collected the questionnaire after the respondents had completed it. The data collected was tallied and statistically treated for interpretation.

Data Analysis

The collected data analyzed by the researcher using the following statistical measures. Weighted mean was utilized to evaluate the teachers' level of awareness on child protection policy. Additionally, it was employed to assess the extent of teachers' implementation of the child protection policy.

On the other hand, Pearson-r was used to assess the relationship between the teacher's level of awareness and their level of implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher made certain that all ethical considerations were followed as mandated by the Holy Trinity College of General Santos City to avoid engaging in practices that may implicitly or explicitly abuse or exploit those with whom she sought to conduct research with.

Informed Consent. The respondents in the study were oriented and given information about how and when the study will be conducted. They also given consent and affixed their signature to confirm approval in participating with study.

Voluntary Participation. The respondents in this study were asked to participate voluntarily. Refusal to participate and withdrawal from participation were also considered without forcing them to participate.

Gender Sensitivity. The researcher practiced gender sensitivity by respecting respondents' gender preferences, promoting equality, and fostering respect and compassion regardless of gender.

Data Privacy. Maintaining confidentiality and privacy of the respondents' information was applied. The names and personal records were kept by the researcher. No information regarding the respondents were shared with anyone and were only used for research.

Cultural Sensitivity. The researcher was culturally sensitive by communication in the respondents' own language, following community and school norms, and respecting beliefs and customs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Level of Awareness on Child Protection Policy

The data on Table 1 presents the items that measure the level of awareness of teachers in Child Protection Policy (CCP). The items where the rating will be coming from is on their awareness of the existing policy of the Department of Education in child protection as well as understanding it.

The table also shows items on the awareness of the teachers that the state is obligated to uphold the right of children to proper care, nutrition, and protection from neglect, abuse, cruelty, and exploitation, as per the 1987 Philippine Constitution. It also includes items on teacher's knowledge on bullying that occurs when a student acts or series of acts towards another student in a school setting. Moreover, positive and non-violent discipline is a holistic, constructive, and proactive teaching approach. Lastly, the results also show teachers' awareness that DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 offers a zero-tolerance policy against all forms of abuse. The CPP provides special protection for children in harmful situations.

Table 1. Teachers' Level of Awareness on Child Protection Policy

Items	Mean	Description
1. I am aware that there is a DepEd Order on Protecting Children in School from Abuse, Violence, Exploitation, Discrimination, Bullying and other forms of abuse.	4.68	Very Highly Aware
2. I am aware, read and understand the DepEd Order No. 40 s. 2012.	3.95	Highly Aware
3. I am aware that the state shall defend the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development in pursuant to the 1987 Philippine Constitution.	4.58	Very Highly Aware
4. I am aware that DepEd aims to ensure that all schools are conducive to the education of children with the absence of violence against children.	4.77	Very Highly Aware
5. I am aware that the Child Protection Policy (CPP) aims to provide special protection to children who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances which affect their normal development and functioning.	4.62	Very Highly Aware
6. I am aware that DepEd Order Order No. 40, s. 2012 has zero tolerance policy for any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse.	4.32	Very Highly Aware
7. I am aware that bullying is committed when a student commits an act or series of acts directed towards another student/s in a school setting, which results in physical and mental abuse, harassment, intimidation, or humiliation.	4.65	Very Highly Aware
8. I am aware that corporal punishment is a penalty imposed for an alleged or actual offense, which was carried out, for the purpose of discipline.	4.28	Very Highly Aware
9. I am aware that positive and non-violent discipline of Children is a way of thinking and a holistic, constructive and proactive approach to teaching that helps children develop appropriate thinking and behavior in the short and long-term and foster discipline.	4.37	Very Highly Aware
10. I am aware that violence against children committed in schools is an act or series of acts committed by the school administrators, academic and non-academic personnel against a child.	4.00	Highly Aware
Overall Mean	4.42	Very Highly Aware

Table 1 illustrates the teachers' level of awareness regarding the CPP in their schools. The overall mean score of 4.42 indicates that teachers are Very Highly Aware of the various components of the CPP. Teachers are Very Highly Aware with mean score of 4.77 of DepEd's aim to create a school environment free from violence, reflecting their deep understanding of the need for safe, conducive learning spaces for children. Similarly, teachers are also Very Highly Aware with mean score of 4.68 of the DepEd Order on

Protecting Children in school from abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse.

As for the understanding DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 teachers are Highly Aware with mean score of 3.95, indicating that teachers are highly aware with the policy, however, there may be room to improve their comprehensive understanding of its specific policy. In addition, teachers are also highly aware of violence against children committed in schools is an act or series of acts committed by the school administrators, academic and non-academic personnel against a child with mean score of 4.00. This means that teachers understand the concept of violence against children and recognize its importance. However, even though teachers know the policy, there may still be chances to improve their ability to identify more subtle or less obvious forms of violence. They also need to make sure they apply the policy consistently in real situations.

The result of the study regarding teachers' level of awareness aligns with the study of Pescadero (2020), it showed that teachers and students in the City Division of Cabuyao are knowledgeable about the CPP.

In addition, Aguilar and Carbonell (2024) found on their study that the teachers and school administrative had a thorough awareness of the Child Protection Policy. They demonstrated a high level of understanding, especially with regard to the policy's implementation in all educational institutions and its aim of eradicating violence against children. Although there was a significant level of general awareness, reading and comprehending the official DepEd policy paper revealed the lowest level of comprehension.

Furthermore, the data revealed that teachers possess a very high level of awareness regarding the CPP, especially concerning DepEd's aim to create a school environment free from violence, reflecting their deep understanding of the need for safe, conducive learning spaces for children. This suggests that teachers are well-informed about their responsibilities and children's rights as outlined in the policy.

Although the overall mean level is low on the awareness regarding the reading and understanding of DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 and violence against children committed in schools is an act or series of acts committed by the school administrators, academic and non-academic personnel against a child, it reveals that while awareness is present, there may be inadequate comprehension of the specific provisions of the policy and understanding of violence as series of act committed by the school administrators and teachers. It can be inferred from these findings that schools and school heads affected by this order may not timely provide necessary accessibility accommodations to improve the quality of life for students who require them, which could negatively influence how the policy is applied, enforced, and interpreted in decision-making processes.

Consequently, the study implies that the necessity for continuous professional development, workshops as well as in-service training centered on the specific elements of the policy as well as the execution of the CPP.

Teachers' Level of Implementation of Child Protection Policy

The data on Table 2 presents the teacher's level of implementation of the child protection policy. The items include how teachers ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the existing policy on child protection. It also contains how the teachers coordinate with the involved agencies that could help them in the implementation of the policy.

The table also shows items on the practices positive and nonviolent discipline implementation of the teachers, initiates information dissemination programs and organize activities for the protection of children, reports any incidents of bullying to the school head immediately as well as identifies students who maybe suffering from significant harm and also conducts appropriate training and capability building activities on child protection measures and protocols.

Table 2. Teachers' Level of Implementation of Child Protection Policy

Items	Mean	Description
1. ensures that all learners, school personnel, parents, guardians or custodians and visitors are made aware of the Child Protection Policy.	4.57	Very Highly Implemented
2. organizes and convenes the Child Protection Committee for the school.	4.32	Very Highly Implemented
3. conducts disciplinary proceedings in cases of offences committed by pupils, students or learners.	4.50	Very Highly Implemented
4. coordinates with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) or appropriate government agencies or non-government organizations through a Child Protection Hotline for abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying and other similar acts committed against learners.	4.38	Very Highly Implemented
5. practices positive and nonviolent discipline, as may be required under the circumstances; provided, that in no case shall corporal punishment be inflicted upon them.	4.42	Very Highly Implemented
6. initiates information dissemination programs and organize activities for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination and bullying or peer abuse.	4.22	Very Highly Implemented
7. reports any incidents of bullying to the school head immediately.	4.48	Very Highly Implemented
8. identifies students who maybe suffering from significant harm based on any physical emotional or behavioral signs.	4.32	Very Highly Implemented
9. coordinates closely with the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippines National Police	3.95	Highly Implemented

(PNP), the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), other government agencies and non-governmental organization.		
10. conducts appropriate training and capability building activities on child protection measures and protocols.	4.05	Highly Implemented
Overall Mean	4.32	Very Highly Implemented

Table 2 shows the teachers' level of implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP), Data shows that overall, it is Very Highly Implemented with a total mean score of 4.32. Teachers are proactive in ensuring that the CPP is well communicated to all stakeholders, including learners, school personnel, parents, guardians, and visitors, reflected as Very Highly Implemented with mean score of 4.57. This suggests that teachers communicate to the different stakeholders, and they take significant steps to ensure everyone within the school community understands and involved in implementing the policy.

Teachers also conduct disciplinary proceedings in cases of offences committed by pupils, students or learners described as Very Highly Implemented by the teachers with mean score of 4.50. This indicates that they actively engage in policy enforcement and the establishment of necessary school disciplinary action to address the misbehavior of students or learners to ensure fair and equal child protection in the school.

Overall, components of CCP are Very Highly Implemented by the teachers, except for the item on coordinating closely with the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippines National Police (PNP), the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), other government agencies and non-governmental organization which is only Highly Implemented with a mean score of 3.95. The findings highlight the need for improve collaboration of schools with different stakeholders to ensure the welfare and safety of the children or students in the institutional setting.

This result of the study is supported by the study of Asio et al. (2020), that showed public elementary and high schools had a high rate of child protection policy implementation.

It was also similar to the study of Fuente (2021) which found that teachers not only possess sufficient information of the Child Protection Policy, but also hold a favorable opinion of its implementation in schools. However, the shortage of skilled school-based personnel and the lack of support and collaboration with other organizations emerge as major difficulties among of the obstacles listed by the Child Protection Policy (Alda et al., 2024). This emphasizes how crucial it is to improve teamwork and guarantee that experts are accessible in order to effectively intervene in child protection issues. Thus, child protection is a shared duty that necessitates ongoing efforts for policy implementation and objective attainment.

With this, result revealed that the implementation of CPP among teachers is Very Highly practiced. This is a good sign among the teachers, as it demonstrates that they are not only familiar with the policy but actually apply it in carrying out their daily duties. This also implies that teachers are making a significant

contribution towards establishing a safe environment where every learner can feel free to be themselves, by doing what is right, such as reporting any bullying incidents, implementing corrective measures and also by communicating with all stakeholders on the policy.

On the other hand, the low mean score in actions coordinated with PNP, Women and Child Protection Desk and DSWD, reflect that although there are strong school-based actions in implementing the CPP, there is a need to improve collaboration with the external. This means that teachers still have to improve the inter-agency support system since the inter-agency coordination is expected to intervene in more serious or sensitive cases of children’s protection that the school cannot handle on its own.

This indicates that while teachers are doing their part and roles inside the school well, they still need to have a more defined and consistent partnership with the government and non-government agencies for a broader approach to child protection.

Significant Relationship Between the Level of Awareness and Level of Implementation on Child Protection Policy

The data on Table 3 presents the relationship between the teacher’s level of awareness and implementation with regards to the child protection policy.

Table 3. Significant Relationship Between the Teachers’ Level of Awareness and Level of Implementation on Child Protection Policy

Variable	Level of Awareness		Remarks
	r- value	p- value	
Level of Implementation	0.619	0.005	Significant

Table 3 shows the significant relationship between the teachers’ level of awareness and their level of implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP). The computed r-value of *0.619* indicates a moderate positive correlation between awareness and implementation, suggesting that as teachers’ awareness of the CPP increases, their level of implementation also improves.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used once the result of the normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is normal.

The p-value of *0.005* is less than the standard significance level of *0.05*, which indicates that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. This result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0), confirming that there is a significant relationship between the teachers’ level of awareness and the level of implementation of the CPP. The findings suggest that teachers who are more aware of the policy and objectives of the CPP are more likely to effectively implement the policy, thereby enhancing the protection and safety of learners within the school environment.

This is connected to the results study of Asio et al. (2020), which show a moderate to direct correlation between teachers' awareness and their implementation to the child protection policy. The similarity in findings further supports the idea that teachers' awareness plays an important role in ensuring the effective implementation of child protection measures in schools.

Moreover, the result of the study was also similar to the findings of Antiza et al. (2024) on awareness and schools' responsiveness on CPP. Results indicate a strong foundation for child protection from their schools in the Valencia City division. In the study, policies have significantly contributed to safeguarding children's interests, with schools demonstrating high awareness and responsiveness in disciplinary actions. Overall, the study reveals a relationship between awareness of child protection policies and schools' responsiveness.

In addition, Labaria et al. (2022) found out on his study that the teachers are knowledgeable about the CPP and schools in Bataraza District 1, Palawan is compliant to the implementation of the said policy. Similarly, the findings revealed that there is significant relationship between the level of awareness of teachers to the implementation of the policy in schools.

Furthermore, results showed that teachers are Highly Aware of the CPP and that the practice of its implementation is also highly practiced in schools. A moderate statistically significant positive correlation was observed between the level of awareness of the policy and its level of implementation. Overall, when teachers are aware and have a better grasp of child protection policy, they effectively apply it to their students, ensuring a safe environment for learning. This indicates that strengthening teachers' knowledge of the policy can further support the consistent protection and well-being of learners in the school setting.

Integration of Theory with the Findings of the Study

The findings of this study are supported by the Institutional Theory of Meyer and Rowan (1977), which posits that organizations adopt formal policies to gain legitimacy and eventually internalize them as standard practices. The high level of teacher awareness and implementation of the CPP indicate that the policy has been institutionalized within schools, becoming an accepted and embedded part of professional responsibilities rather than merely a symbolic mandate.

Furthermore, the statistically significant moderate positive correlation between awareness and implementation suggests that as teachers internalize the norms and expectations embodied in the CPP, their practices align accordingly, reinforcing its implementation in the school setting. Although implementation is generally strong, coordination with external agencies may be more firmly established within internal school structures than in broader inter-agency collaboration.

This finding highlights the importance of institutional support within schools in sustaining teachers' commitment to the policy. Likewise, the presence of established policies and shared professional norms may guide teachers in consistently applying the provisions of the Child Protection Policy in their daily

interactions with learners. Strengthening partnerships with external agencies can also reinforce these institutional practices and enhance the overall protection of children in the school environment.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the results of the study the following were the salient findings of the study:

1. *Teachers' Level of Awareness on Child Protection Policy*

Results show that teachers are Very Highly Aware of the Child Protection Policy, with a total mean score of 4.42. The highest awareness is related to DepEd's commitment to providing a violence-free educational environment, with a mean score of 4.77. Although most teachers demonstrate a solid understanding of the policy's different aspects, there is a slight lower awareness regarding the specific content of DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 with a mean of 3.95 and violence against children committed in schools is an act or series of acts with mean of 4.00, indicating an area for further improvement.

2. *Teachers' Level of Implementation of Child Protection Policy*

Data show that the teachers' implementation of the CPP is Very Highly Implemented, with a total mean score of 4.32. Teachers ensure that all stakeholders are informed about the policy with a mean score of 4.57, and consistently report bullying incidents and conduct disciplinary proceedings. Coordination with external organizations, such as the DSWD and the PNP, has a lower mean score of 3.95, indicating a need for more active collaboration.

3. *Significant Relationship Between the Level of Awareness and Implementation on Child Protection Policy*

The analysis reveals a moderate positive correlation between teachers' level of aware their level of implementation of the CPP, with an r-value of 0.619. The p-value of 0.005 indicates this relationship is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are hereby made:

1. The results indicate that teachers are proficient and knowledgeable on the CPP. Their strong familiarity with key aspects of child protection, such as maintaining a violence-free school environment and understanding children's rights, suggests that they are well-prepared to uphold these policies. However, they are slightly knowledgeable on DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 and understanding that violence against children in school is a series of act that is why teachers need

for more comprehensive training or dissemination of information regarding these specific directives. Overall, the high awareness demonstrates that teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge to protect students effectively.

2. The findings reveal that teachers implement the CPP towards students in all occasions in their respective schools. Their efforts to inform stakeholders, conduct disciplinary proceedings, and report bullying are indicative of a proactive approach to ensuring student safety. However, there is room for improvement in external coordination with government agencies and organizing training programs. Despite these areas for growth, the overall level of implementation shows that teachers are actively enforcing the policy and taking significant steps to maintain a secure school environment.
3. There is a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' level of awareness and their level of implementation of the CPP. The data indicates that as teachers' awareness of the policy increases, so does their effectiveness in implementing it. This highlights the critical role that awareness plays in ensuring the successful execution of child protection measures. Therefore, raising awareness and providing adequate training on the policy are essential steps toward improving its implementation in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions made in the study, the following were recommended:

1. DepEd may provide more focused training sessions and workshops on specific policies like DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, to enhance teachers' comprehensive understanding of its aspects specifically the different violence against children that consider as an act and ensure that they are fully aware of all aspects of the Child Protection Policy.
2. Schools may conduct regular policy updates and refresher programs to reinforce teachers' awareness of the CPP, ensuring that any changes or additions to the policy are clearly communicated and understood by all staff members.
3. Schools may strengthen partnerships and follow proper coordination from Barangay Social Worker to Municipal Social Worker up to the Provincial Social Worker likewise the school should also maintain partnership to the Municipal Philippine National Police up to the Provincial Philippine National Police to implement CPP effectively.
4. School administrators may establish monitoring systems to assess how improvements in awareness directly impact the implementation of the CPP. This may involve periodic evaluations to ensure that teachers not only understand the policy but also effectively apply it in their daily interactions with students.

5. Learners may encourage to engage in activities and discussions that promote their understanding of their rights and the importance of a safe, bully-free, and supportive learning environment, empowering them to report any incidents of abuse or bullying.
6. Future researchers may conduct further studies that evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the CPP also explore the impact of comprehensive awareness programs on the successful implementation of the CPP across different regions, providing comparative data that may inform policy revisions and enhancements.

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