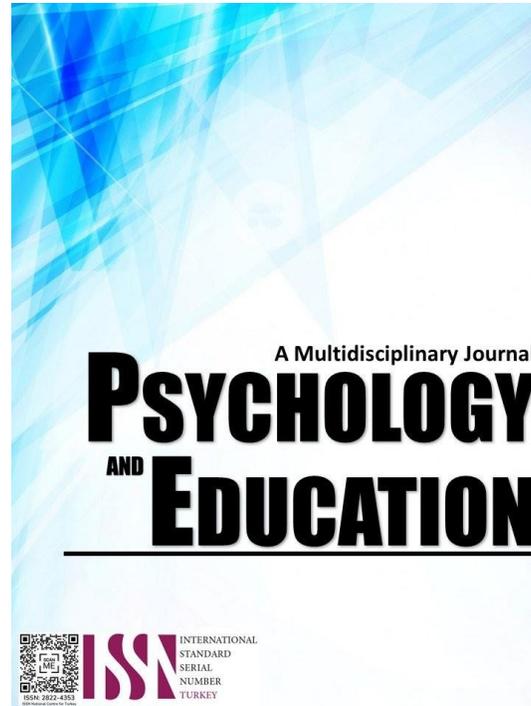


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Level of Teachers' Awareness and School Responsiveness to the Children Protection Policy

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Abstract

The study aimed to determine the relationship between teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy. Specifically, it sought to: (1) determine the level of teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy in Region X Schools, (2) assess the level of school responsiveness towards the Child Protection Policy, and (3) examine the significant relationship between teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy. The study utilized a descriptive correlational design with a convenience sampling technique involving 120 teacher respondents. The researchers adopted a questionnaire that underwent validity and reliability testing. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficient. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy.

Keywords: *child protection policy, school development plan, teachers' awareness, school responsiveness, child safety*

Introduction

Children are the treasures and gifts from God. They are the hope of tomorrow and the future of our nation. In them, the strong foundation of our society lies. We need to nurture our children, respect their rights and protect them from cruelties by helping them develop holistically and fully. With a healthy and safe environment, we pave the way for children to reach their highest potential and make them become great citizens of the country. And with great citizens, a great future for our country and the world as a whole awaits. Nevertheless, the world we knew is not the world we ever dreamed of. There were numerous cases of child abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse reported where the rights of children were neglected and even ignored. Child protection is not very clearly implemented or even provided to children in this country.

Children International (n.d.) declared that child protection is both a necessity and a top priority. They further state that keeping the children safe from any form of abuse is working toward their holistic well-being. They observe certain protocols which are based on their policies and guiding principles. These protocols include local laws on child abuse, procedures that are mandatory by local law, a list of local authorities to whom child abuse cases were reported and others. In the case of the educational institutions here in the Philippines, the Child Protection Act (RA No. 7610) and the Child Protection Policy of the Department of Education (DepEd Order #40 s. 2012) are two key pieces of legislation that aim to safeguard the well-being and safety of the children. This policy was issued to all concerned emphasizing the assurance of special protection from all forms of abuse and exploitation of children, highlighting the necessary care for children's well-being and reiterating a zero-tolerance policy for any act of child abuse, exploitation, and other forms of abuse to children. This mandate further declares the need for all public and private elementary and secondary schools to establish a Child Protection Committee or CPC represented by all stakeholders who handle the proper implementation and monitoring of the said policy in every locality or school. Despite the existence of these policies, concerns about any forms of abuse persist. Several factors were considered as to why such problems continue.

Teachers, as frontline professionals, play a crucial role in identifying and addressing child protection issues. However, their awareness and understanding of child protection policies can significantly impact the effectiveness of these measures. This is the reason why this study was conceived. This is conducted to investigate the relationship between the level of the teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy, particularly in relation to the School Development Plan. This is in the hope of alleviating or lessening the occurrence of child abuse cases in every school in the country. The study explores the extent to which teachers understand the policy and its implications for their practice, as well as the extent to which schools incorporate child protection measures into their development plans.

The proponents of this study are teachers and school heads from the separate district schools in Iligan City, Misamis Oriental, and Bukidnon who collaboratively to the fulfilment of the requirements in Philippine Legislation subject under the Graduate Studies of Capitol University. An adopted questionnaire from Macatimpag (2018) was used to gather the responses of the respondents through a convenient sampling method. Data were then subjected to analysis by a statistician to get the analysis of the results, discoveries, and findings.

Under the results and discussions of this study, we can observed that there is a consistently high level of teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the child protection policy. This would mean that as teachers' awareness of the policy increases, the level of school responsiveness in implementing child protection measures also increases. But this result has an opposite view of what teachers observed in reality. This is because of the "social desirability bias" of the respondents' responses. Social responsibility bias is a type of response bias that is the tendency of the respondents to answer questions in a manner that is viewed favourably or positively by others. This would be synonymous with over-reporting of good behaviour.

The significance of this research was that this would provide valuable insights into the current state of child protection in schools and would help identify areas for improvement. By examining the awareness and responsiveness of teachers and schools, the study would provide information on the development of more effective strategies for preventing child abuse and ensuring the well-being of children. The study has drawn on a range of theoretical frameworks, including the ecological model of child development, which emphasizes the importance of environmental factors in shaping child outcomes. This also considered the role of school policies and practices in creating a protective environment for children. The findings of this study would have important implications for policy and practice in the Philippines. They would inform the development of more effective child protection policies and programs, as well as guide teachers and schools on how to better support the well-being and safety of children. Overall, this study aimed to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex issues surrounding child protection in schools and to inform the development of more effective strategies for preventing child abuse and ensuring the well-being of children.

Research Questions

The study aimed to determine the relationship between the teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy in Region X Schools?
2. What is the level of school responsiveness towards the Child Protection Policy?
3. What is the significant relationship between the teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy?

Literature Review

Child protection policies play a role, in safeguarding children from abuse and neglect. These frameworks are global and have been implemented in systems to promote a safe learning environment. In Spain, schools are legally required to adopt child protection policies and offer teachers training. However, research has shown inconsistencies in how these policies are applied across schools (Lopez et al., 2018; Garcia & Hernandez 2019).

Martinez and his team conducted a study on how teachers in schools perceive and adhere to child protection policies. The results revealed that while most teachers were aware of the policies there was variability in their interpretation and implementation emphasizing the importance of training programs that not only cover policy awareness but also provide practical skills for identifying and addressing child abuse cases. Martinez et al. suggested that schools should prioritize child protection in their development strategies by offering support and resources to educators and the necessity of collaboration, between schools and external child protection agencies to ensure a response (Martinez et al., 2021).

Similarly, Adewale (2006) in his study on assessing the awareness of child protection policy in secondary schools in Lagos, Nigeria found that teachers had a moderate level of awareness of the policy, with some knowledge gaps identified. While factors such as gender and years of teaching experience did not significantly impact awareness levels, educational qualification and school ownership type were found to have a positive relationship with awareness. The study recommended the establishment of a committee for policy awareness and the provision of training for teachers to improve their understanding of child protection policies. By highlighting the moderate level of awareness among teachers and the need for increased knowledge and implementation of child protection policies, the study emphasizes the importance of improving strategies to enhance awareness among educators. The positive relationship between educational qualification, school ownership type, and awareness of the policy underscores the significance of targeted awareness strategies based on these factors.

Moreover, the study underscores the necessity for secondary schools in Lagos State to enhance their efforts in increasing awareness of child protection policies among teachers. The recommendations provided, such as forming a committee for policy awareness and offering training sessions, aim to bridge the identified knowledge gaps and ultimately contribute to creating safer environments for children in schools. The absence of conflicts of interest and the lack of funding information reported in the study ensures the credibility and impartiality of the research findings.

Child protection policies are vital in ensuring the safety and welfare of children in schools. In Canada, these policies are mandated by federal and provincial regulations, requiring schools to establish procedures for identifying and responding to child abuse and neglect (Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2019). Despite the legal framework, studies have shown that the effectiveness of these policies often depends on the awareness and preparedness of school staff (Finkelhor et al., 2014; Crosson-Tower, 2019).

Brown and Smith (2022), address the critical issue of child protection within the educational context in Canada. It highlights the significant role that teachers play in implementing child protection policies and ensuring the safety of students. The findings indicated a high level of general awareness among teachers but revealed significant variations in their understanding and practical application of these policies.

One of the key issues identified was the inconsistency in the training provided to teachers. Many participants reported that initial training on child protection policies was superficial, with limited opportunities for ongoing professional development. This inconsistency led to varying levels of preparedness and confidence among teachers in handling child protection issues. The study also

emphasized the importance of school culture and leadership in effectively implementing these policies. Schools with proactive leadership and clear communication channels were more successful in fostering an environment where teachers felt supported and equipped to address child protection concerns.

Based on their findings, Brown and Smith recommended several measures to enhance the effectiveness of child protection policies in Canadian schools. These include the need for enhanced and continuous training programs for all staff, the integration of child protection policies into the broader school development plan, and the importance of strong leadership and supportive school culture. Additionally, they highlighted the necessity for schools to collaborate with external child protection agencies to provide additional resources and support. This study contributes to the ongoing efforts to improve child protection in educational settings by identifying key gaps and providing actionable recommendations for schools.

In the same line, Sinanan (2011), provides a comprehensive list of references related to child abuse and its prevention, covering various aspects such as risk factors, reporting mechanisms, prevention strategies, and the impact of abuse on children. This extensive list of references serves as a valuable resource for researchers, educators, and policymakers seeking to deepen their understanding of child abuse and develop effective intervention strategies. The inclusion of diverse sources, including books, articles, and government reports, enhances the credibility and breadth of information presented in the study, offering a well-rounded perspective on the complex issue of child maltreatment.

Furthermore, the study underscores the critical role of teachers in detecting and reporting child abuse, highlighting the challenges that some school personnel may face in reporting such cases. By utilizing Bronfenbrenner's ecological model and Belsky's ecological perspective, the research aims to unravel the intricate systems that contribute to child maltreatment, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of this societal issue. This theoretical framework provides a holistic understanding of the factors influencing child abuse and emphasizes the importance of considering various ecological levels when addressing this pervasive problem.

Moreover, the article delves into the impact of state interventions on families involved in child abuse cases, pointing out that child abuse often stems from flaws in family system spatial relationships and boundaries. The study highlights the ambiguity surrounding the effects of state interventions on families and emphasizes the need for further research in this area (Author, Year). By analyzing reports of child physical abuse by education personnel, the research identifies key factors influencing reporting behavior, such as age, gender, race, and family risk factors. The study advocates for training programs for teachers to enhance their ability to identify and report child abuse effectively, as well as the implementation of clear policies within schools to guide reporting procedures.

Also, Stevens, R. and Hall, L. (2020), investigates the critical issues surrounding child protection within the educational framework of Australia particularly relevant in light of increasing awareness about the importance of safeguarding children in school environments. The study revealed a significant disparity between policy awareness and practical implementation and have found that while teachers were generally aware of the child protection policies, many felt unprepared to handle actual cases due to inadequate training and a lack of practical experience (Stevens & Hall, 2020). One of the major findings of the study was the notable gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Despite teachers being informed about the existence of child protection policies, there was a clear deficiency in their confidence and ability to implement these policies effectively in real-life scenarios. This gap can be attributed to insufficient professional development opportunities that focus on practical skills necessary for identifying and reporting child abuse. Stevens and Hall emphasize the need for more robust training programs that go beyond basic policy awareness to include comprehensive, scenario-based training sessions that can better equip teachers to manage child protection issues (Stevens & Hall, 2020).

In addition, the study highlighted the critical role of school leadership in fostering a culture of safety and responsiveness. Schools with strong leadership and clear communication channels were found to be more effective in implementing child protection policies. The authors recommended that child protection training be integrated into the professional development plans of schools and that leadership teams should play an active role in ensuring that all staff members are adequately trained and supported. Stevens and Hall also stressed the importance of embedding child protection policies into the overall school development plan to ensure consistency and accountability across the board. This holistic approach is essential for bridging the gap between policy awareness and practical implementation, ultimately enhancing the safety and well-being of students in Australian schools (Stevens & Hall, 2020).

In recent years research within the Philippines has focused extensively on the implementation and impact of Child Protection Policies (CPP) in schools as well as the awareness levels of teachers regarding these policies. One significant study by Santiago and Padilla (2018) explored the depth of teachers' understanding of the CPP and its correlation with school responsiveness. They found that schools with comprehensive training programs for teachers exhibited higher levels of policy adherence and more proactive approaches to child protection measures. This suggests a strong relationship between teacher awareness and school responsiveness to CPP.

In another relevant study, Dela Cruz and Gonzales (2019) examined the integration of Child Protection Policies in School Development Plans. Their research indicated that schools with well-developed plans, which included regular updates and reviews of CPP, showed higher levels of teacher awareness and better policy implementation. They emphasized that continuous professional development and clear communication channels are crucial in fostering an environment where teachers are both knowledgeable and active in child protection efforts.

Additionally, research by Alonzo (2020) focuses on the effectiveness of CPP workshops and seminars in enhancing teachers' understanding and responsiveness. Alonzo's findings revealed that schools that frequently conducted these training sessions not only gained an improvement in teachers' policy awareness but also observed stronger enforcement of child protection measures. This implies the importance of ongoing education and support for teachers in maintaining high standards of child protection.

Moreover, a study conducted by Reyes et al. (2021) provided insights into the structural and administrative support systems that facilitate the successful adoption of CPP in schools. Their research showed that schools with active child protection implementers and well-defined reporting practices tend to have higher levels of teacher engagement in CPP. This strong support plays a critical role in seeing to it that teachers are not only aware of the policies but also feel supported in their efforts to implement them.

Teachers' awareness and proper training are crucial mechanisms in ensuring an effective implementation of child protection policies in school. In the study of De Guzman and Gozun (2012) in Metro Manila, it was found that the majority of teachers in schools were aware of the existence of Child Protection Policies. However, there are substantial gaps and holes in their understanding of specific protocols and procedures. Thus, it was suggested in their study that it is necessary for the school to have more comprehensive or extensive training programs to equip teachers and staff with the needed knowledge and skills to recognize and respond to cases of child abuse and abandonment.

Furthermore, Bayuca (2020) recommended incorporating training modules on positive discipline, stress management, and gender sensitivity in seminars for teachers. This aligns with the idea that enhancing teachers' skills and knowledge can improve the implementation of child protection policies in schools.

Research by Villanueva and Santos (2022) delved into the perceptions of teachers regarding the challenges and barriers to effective CPP implementation. The researchers found that schools that positively addressed these challenges through targeted interventions and support systems experienced better policy adherence and responsiveness. This features the necessity for schools to not only adopt CPP but also actively work to mitigate any hindrances to its effective implementation.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a correlational research design that focuses on the relationships between variables which are the level of teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy.

This research used a convenient sampling method which used an adopted questionnaire to gather the needed data from 120 respondents of Misamis Oriental General Comprehensive High School (MOGCHS), Iligan City East National High School (ICENHS), Patpat Elementary School-Baungon District, Bershiba Elementary School, Impasug-ong Central Elementary School and Salay Central School. The questionnaire was converted into Google Forms and the link was sent to all respondents for them to answer. Data gathered were then statistically analyzed by an expert statistician.

The theory of Triangulation by Thomas Levin (2014) through interviews was also used in this study to elaborate on the response of every respondent. In this study, the level of teachers' awareness as independent variable was tested to find out the relationship that exists between the school's responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy as the dependent variable.

Respondents

The respondents of this study were the public-school teachers from the six (6) public schools under the Provinces of Bukidnon, Misamis Oriental, and Lanao del Norte. They were a mixture of males and females selected through the convenience sampling method. In the identified six (6) public schools, the estimated total population was about 600 heads. The researchers used 20% of the total population resulting in 120 heads as respondents. Below is the illustration of the selection.

<i>Name of School</i>	<i>Estimated Total Population</i>	<i>Identified Number of Respondents</i>
Misamis Oriental General Comprehensive High School (MOGCHS)	300	40
Iligan City East National High School (ICENHS)	100	20
Patpat Elementary School – Baungon District	50	15
Bershiba Elementary School	50	15
Impasug-ong Central Elementary School	50	15
Salay Central School	50	15
Total Respondents		120

Instrument

The data needed for this study were gathered using a survey questionnaire adopted from Macatimpag (2018). Validity is already ensured since this is an adopted one. Such a questionnaire has three parts. The first part is the demographic profile of the respondents. The second part is the teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy, while the last part is the responsiveness of the school towards

the implementation of the policy.

The demographic variables include gender, age, nature of work, and years of service. On the other hand, the awareness and responsiveness variables are measured on a 5-point Likert scale because this is more convenient to fill out by the respondents.

Table 1. Likert Rating Scale used with Teachers' Awareness

Rating	Description	Interpretation
5	Very Aware	Very High
4	Aware	High
3	Moderately Aware	Average
2	Slightly Aware	Low
1	Not Aware	Very Low

Table 2. Likert Rating Scale used with School Responsiveness

Rating	Description	Interpretation
5	Highly Implemented	Very High
4	Implemented	High
3	Moderately Implemented	Average
2	Slightly Implemented	Low
1	Not Implemented	Very Low

Procedure

The researchers utilized the Google Forms in conducting the survey questionnaire to the respondents in the specified schools. This method is very convenient since the research setting is remote from each other.

The data gathered from this research instrument were tallied and computed for interpretation according to the frequency of items checked by the respondents. Along with the primary data, the researchers also made use of secondary resources in the form of published articles and pieces of literature to support survey results.

Data Analysis

This study used the following statistical tools to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of data. Descriptive statistics are used to characterize the essential properties of a study's findings. They give quick summaries of the sample and the parameters. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage are used to determine the respondents' scores. At the same time, the mean and standard deviation were employed to determine the level of teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy. The data gathered was collated and plotted in Microsoft Excel for Inferential statistics.

Results and Discussion

In this section, tables are used to present the data to deliberate on the analysis of the results of the study. The discussions of the discoveries or findings are reinforced by research or studies that have been published and validated as reliable and that answer the statement of the problem.

Problem 1. What is the level of teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy?

Table 1 presents the level of teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy. Among these indicators, the highest mean score, at 4.71, is observed for Indicator 11, which delineates the definition and consequences of bullying within the school setting. This notable score underscores an exceptional understanding among teachers regarding the intricacies of bullying behaviors and their impact on students. The high level of awareness exhibited here suggests that educators are well-equipped to identify and address instances of bullying, thereby contributing to the creation of a safer and more inclusive learning environment.

Meanwhile, the lowest mean score, at 4.14, is observed for Indicator 12, which pertains to corporal punishment. This lower score suggests a slightly less comprehensive understanding among teachers regarding the concept and implications of corporal punishment within the school environment. While still within the range of "Very Aware," the comparatively lower mean indicates a potential area for further education and awareness-raising efforts.

It implies that there may be room for improvement in ensuring that educators fully comprehend the ramifications and alternatives to corporal punishment, aligning with the overarching goal of promoting positive and non-violent disciplinary practices within schools.

Overall, the mean score across all indicators is 4.69, with a standard deviation of 0.50, indicating a consistent and high level of awareness among teachers regarding the Child Protection Policy. The qualitative description of "Very Aware" and "Very High" underscores the robust understanding and familiarity of educators with the policies outlined in the DepEd Order. This collective awareness suggests a positive trajectory towards fostering a safe and supportive educational atmosphere for children, aligning with the overarching goal of ensuring their holistic well-being and protection.

Table 1. Level of teachers' awareness to the Child Protection Policy

	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>Qualitative Description</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1.	There is a DepEd Order on Protecting Children in School from Abuse, Violence, Exploitation, Discrimination, Bullying, and other forms of abuse.	4.69	0.50	Very Aware	Very High
2.	I have read and understood the DepEd Order No. 40, S. 2012.	4.27	0.67	Very Aware	Very High
3.	According to the 1987 Constitution, the State shall defend the right of children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, and abuse, neglect treatment, maltreatment and exploitation, including sexual abuse.	4.62	0.52	Very Aware	Very High
4.	The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) aims to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment and exploitation, including sexual abuse.	4.57	0.57	Very Aware	Very High
5.	This DepEd aims to ensure that all schools are conducive to the education of children.	4.69	0.48	Very Aware	Very High
6.	Teachers and learning facilitators especially in learning centers are their substitute parents and are expected to discharge their functions and duties with this in mind.	4.62	0.55	Very Aware	Very High
7.	This policy aims to provide special protection to children who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances that affect their normal development and over which they have control and to assist the concerned agencies in their rehabilitation.	4.61	0.54	Very Aware	Very High
8.	DepEd aims to ensure such special protection from all of abuse and exploitation and care as is necessary for the child's well-being.	4.67	0.49	Very Aware	Very High
9.	This DepEd Order has a zero-tolerance policy for any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse.	4.52	0.62	Very Aware	Very High
10.	There are different forms of bullying.	4.69	0.56	Very Aware	Very High
11.	Bullying is committed when a student commits an act or a series of acts directed towards another or several students in school setting, which results in physical and mental abuse, harassment, intimidation, or humiliation, bullying, and other forms of abuse.	4.71	0.47	Very Aware	Very High
12.	Corporal punishment is a penalty imposed for an alleged or actual offense, which is carried out, for discipline, training by a teacher, school administrator, an adult, or any other child who has been given or has assumed authority for punishment or discipline.	4.14	0.96	Very Aware	Very High
13.	Positive and Non-Violent discipline of children is a way of thinking and a holistic, constructive, and pro-active approach to teaching that helps children develop appropriate thinking and behaviour in the short and long-term and foster discipline	4.58	0.64	Very Aware	Very High
14.	This DepEd Order aims to prevent violence against children in schools and make these available to all schools.	4.62	0.55	Very Aware	Very High
15.	Violence against children committed in schools is an act or series of acts committed by school administrators, academic and non-academic personnel against a child.	4.57	0.43	Very Aware	Very High
	Overall Mean	4.69	0.50	Very Aware	Very High

Despite this positive result, however, research by Backlund et al. 2012; Gilbert et al. 2008; King and Scot 2014 have shown that almost all forms of child abuse are usually underreported or undeclared by teachers. Especially when it is family-related cases or factors. They find issues related to domestic violence difficult to manage and beyond their professional duties and responsibilities.

Conversely, according to Rabina, A. A. (2019), teachers, staff and school heads in public schools, government officials and employees, and others whose work involves dealing with children must be made aware that it is everyone's duty to report all cases of possible abuse. (RA 7610, IRR, Sec. 5)

Consequently, the study of Asio et al. 2020 declared that Child protection is not only implemented in schools. They mentioned that it is important to include the parents or guardians in the discussion of this policy. Parents and guardians should be explicitly informed and be given enough understanding regarding the policy.

The group also mentioned that it is similarly significant to include the community or society in educating everyone about the Child Protection Policy.

Interview Results

"Do you still observe some child abuse cases happening in your school?"

All of the 5 participants answered: "Yes."

What form of child abuse case have you observed?"

"Mostly teachers, shouting at students with derogatory words, teachers not doing their classes, and others. Financial abuse to students was also happening in this school like collecting money from them. I also heard just recently a sort of sexual abuse."

Problem 2. What is the level of school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy?

Table 2. *Level of School Responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy*

	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Sd</i>	<i>Qualitative Description</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1.	The school adopts a Child Protection Policy.	4.51	0.64	Highly Implemented	Very High
2.	Ensures all pupils, school personnel, parents, guardians, or custodians, and visitors are made aware of child protection policy.	4.47	0.64	Highly Implemented	Very High
3.	Organize and convene the Child Protection Policy Committee of the School.	4.31	0.76	Highly Implemented	Very High
4.	Conduct disciplinary proceedings in cases of offenses committed by pupils.	4.39	0.65	Highly Implemented	Very High
5.	Conduct the appropriate training and capability building activities on child protection measures and protocols.	4.15	0.81		Very High
6.	Information-dissemination activities and in-service training for teachers on the protection of children in school from abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying or peer abuse, and other related cases.	4.34	0.73	Highly Implemented	Very High
7.	Ensure that the school adopts a Student Code of Conduct to be followed by every pupil while on school grounds, or when traveling to and from school, or during a school-sponsored activity and during lunch period, whether on or off-campus.	4.35	0.68	Highly Implemented	Very High
8.	Coordinate with the Department of Social Welfare and Development or the appropriate government agencies or non-government organization on a Child Protection Hotline for reporting abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other similar acts and counselling.	4.35	0.73	Highly Implemented	Very High
9.	The school administrator, teachers, academic and non-academic and other personnel practice positive and non-violent discipline as may be required under the circumstances; provided that in no case shall corporal punishment be inflicted upon them.	4.43	0.59	Highly Implemented	Very High
10.	The school child protection committee initiates information dissemination programs and organizes activities for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying or peer abuse.	4.22	0.81	Highly Implemented	Very High
11.	Training modules that include positive and non-violent discipline in classroom management, anger and stress management, and gender sensitivity are used.	4.05	0.84	Implemented	High
12.	Employ means that enhance the skills and pedagogy in integrating and teaching children's rights in the classroom.	4.30	0.69	Highly Implemented	Very High
13.	Any incidents of bullying are filed and reported immediately to the School Head.	4.23	0.79	Highly Implemented	Very High
14.	The school child protection committee has a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm based on any physical, emotional, or behavioural signs.	4.13	0.84	Implemented	High
15.	The school child protection committee coordinates closely with the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippine National Police (PNP) the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO) other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations.	4.17	0.83	Implemented	High
	Overall Mean	4.29	0.59	Highly Implemented	Very High

Table 2 presents the level of school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy, with various indicators, mean scores, standard deviations, qualitative descriptions, and interpretations. Among these indicators, the highest mean score, at 4.51, is observed for Indicator 1, which signifies that schools have highly adopted a Child Protection Policy. This robust commitment to policy adoption suggests that schools recognize the paramount importance of safeguarding students from various forms of harm and exploitation. The high mean score implies that schools have established comprehensive frameworks and guidelines to address child protection issues effectively. Such proactive measures can significantly contribute to creating a safe and nurturing learning environment where students feel secure and supported.

Moreover, the high level of responsiveness indicated by this mean score underscores a proactive approach by schools in aligning with national and international standards for child protection. This commitment not only ensures compliance with regulatory requirements but also reflects a genuine dedication to promoting the well-being and rights of every student within the educational setting.

In contrast, among the indicators, the lowest mean score, at 4.05, is observed for Indicator 11. This score suggests a slightly lower level of implementation regarding the integration of training modules that include positive and non-violent discipline in classroom management, anger and stress management, and gender sensitivity. While still within the range of "Implemented" and "High," this lower mean score indicates a potential area for improvement in terms of providing comprehensive training to school personnel. The implication of this lower score is that there may be a need for schools to enhance their training programs to ensure that educators are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage classroom dynamics and promote a positive and inclusive learning environment. By addressing this gap, schools can better support the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and contribute to the holistic development and well-being of their students.

Overall, the mean score across all indicators in Table 2 is 4.29, with a standard deviation of 0.59, indicating a high level of implementation and responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy within schools. The qualitative description of "Highly Implemented" and "Very High" underscores the robustness of school efforts in adhering to and executing various aspects of the policy. This collective high level of implementation suggests that schools are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of their students by adopting comprehensive measures outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

However, the study of Asio, J.M.R. et. al (2020) showed some contrasting perceptions and constraints in the implementation of the child protection policy in public high schools. They stressed that since the teacher is aware of such a policy, the school advocates a compliance culture in which it struggles to comply with the requirements of the child protection policy. This means that the responsiveness of the school to such a policy would tend to become half-baked or lack adequate planning and preparation.

Problem 3. Is there a significant relationship between the teachers' awareness and the school's responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy?

Table 3. *Relationship between the teachers' awareness and the school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy*

		<i>Correlations</i>	
		<i>Teachers' Awareness</i>	<i>School Responsiveness</i>
Teachers' awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	.418**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	124	124
School Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	.418**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	124	124

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Table 3 presents the relationship between teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy, indicating a significant positive correlation between the two variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient between teachers' awareness and school responsiveness is 0.418, with a significance level of 0.01 (2-tailed), denoted by "***" in the table.

The positive correlation coefficient suggests that as teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy increases, so does the level of school responsiveness to the policy. In other words, schools with higher levels of teachers' awareness tend to demonstrate greater responsiveness in implementing measures outlined in the Child Protection Policy.

This finding has important implications for policy implementation and educational practice. It highlights the crucial role of teachers' awareness in shaping school responsiveness to child protection measures. Schools should prioritize initiatives aimed at enhancing teachers' understanding and familiarity with the policy to promote a more effective and comprehensive implementation process.

Furthermore, the significant relationship between teachers' awareness and school responsiveness underscores the interconnectedness between individual and organizational factors in promoting child protection within educational settings. Collaborative efforts between teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders are essential for creating a safe and supportive environment conducive to the well-being of all students.

Hence, the findings suggest that investing in professional development programs and training opportunities to increase teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy can lead to improved school responsiveness and better outcomes for student safety and welfare.

Despite all these positive results of this study, the participants in the Focused Group Discussion formed by the researchers continue to observe several forms of child abuse cases happening in their schools. And the school is not that very responsive in handling these cases.

One significant study by Santiago and Padilla (2018) explored the depth of teachers' understanding of the CPP and its correlation with school responsiveness. They found that schools with comprehensive training programs for teachers exhibited higher levels of policy adherence and more proactive approaches to child protection measures. This suggests a strong relationship between teacher awareness and school responsiveness to CPP.

In another relevant study, Dela Cruz and Gonzales (2019) examined the integration of Child Protection Policies in School Development Plans. Their research indicated that schools with well-developed plans, which included regular updates and reviews of CPP, showed higher levels of teacher awareness and better policy implementation. They emphasized that continuous professional development and clear communication channels are crucial in fostering an environment where teachers are both knowledgeable and active in child protection efforts.

Additionally, research by Alonzo (2020) focuses on the effectiveness of CPP workshops and seminars in enhancing teachers' understanding and responsiveness. Alonzo's findings revealed that schools that frequently conducted these training sessions not only gained an improvement in teachers' policy awareness but also observed a stronger enforcement of child protection measures. This

implies the importance of ongoing education and support for teachers in maintaining high standards of child protection.

Moreover, a study conducted by Reyes et al. (2021) provided insights into the structural and administrative support systems that facilitate the successful adoption of CPP in schools. Their research showed that schools with active child protection implementers and well-defined reporting practices tend to have higher levels of teacher engagement in CPP. This strong support plays a critical role in seeing to it that teachers are not only aware of the policies but also feel supported in their efforts to implement them.

Teachers' awareness and proper training are crucial mechanisms in ensuring an effective implementation of child protection policies in school. In the study of De Guzman and Gozun (2012) in Metro Manila, it was found that the majority of teachers in schools were aware of the existence of Child Protection Policies. However, there are substantial gaps and holes in their understanding of specific protocols and procedures. Thus, it was suggested in their study that it is necessary for the school to have more comprehensive or extensive training programs to equip teachers and staff with the needed knowledge and skills to recognize and respond to cases of child abuse and abandonment.

Furthermore, Bayuca (2020) recommended incorporating training modules on positive discipline, stress management, and gender sensitivity in seminars for teachers. This aligns with the idea that enhancing teachers' skills and knowledge can improve the implementation of child protection policies in schools.

Conclusions

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions were reached:

Teachers demonstrated a high level of awareness of the Child Protection Policy, with a strong understanding across various indicators.

Schools exhibited a robust level of responsiveness to the policy, indicating comprehensive adoption and implementation of child protection measures.

A significant positive correlation was found between teachers' awareness and school responsiveness to the policy, highlighting the link between individual awareness and organizational responsiveness.

Enhancing teachers' understanding of the policy can lead to improved school responsiveness and better outcomes for student safety and welfare.

Collaborative efforts between teachers, school administrators, and stakeholders are crucial for creating a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

Based on the analysis, findings, and conclusions obtained in the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

It is significant to provide substantial discussion or information to parents and guardians on matters about Child Protection Policy for comprehensive awareness and consciousness towards active involvement on their part.

Conduct Regular Training Programs: Schedule mandatory, comprehensive training sessions for all school staff to ensure they understand the principles and procedures of the child protection policy. These sessions should be interactive and include real-life scenarios to help teachers recognize and respond to signs of abuse and neglect effectively.

To include all the stakeholders in the community or society as a whole in educating everyone about the Child Protection Policy.

There should be collaborative efforts between teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders in the implementation of the Child Protection Policy to create a safe and conducive environment.

The school should capitalize on the professional development programs and training of teachers in making them equipped with the needed skills and knowledge to effectively promote a positive and inclusive learning environment. Integration of child protection topics into ongoing professional development opportunities would be beneficial.

The school should create and maintain confidential and straightforward reporting channels for teachers, students, and parents to report child protection concerns. Ensure these mechanisms are well-publicized and easy to use.

Make the child protection policy highly visible throughout the school. Prominent display of information in the classroom, staff rooms, and common areas would be favorable as well as the inclusion of such policy in the student and parents' handbook and on the school's website.

Establish a system for regular monitoring and evaluation of the child protection policy's effectiveness. Data on incident reports, response times, and outcomes should be collected and analyzed aside from gathering feedback from the school community to identify areas for improvement.

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