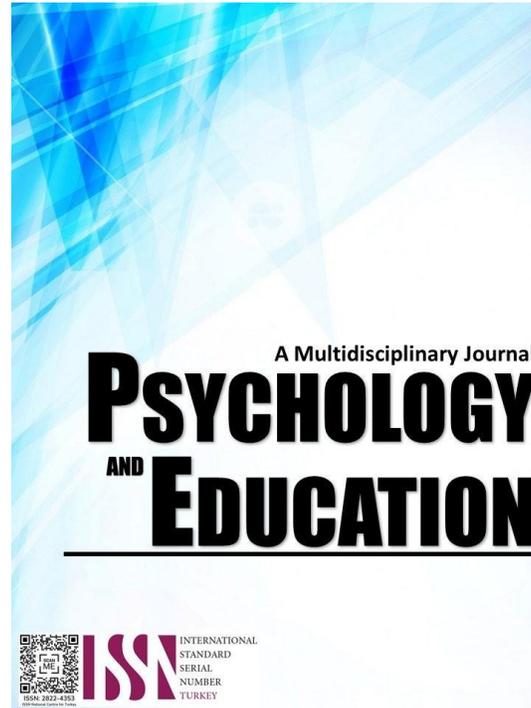


# ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR AT MAGHANOY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



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## Assessing the Impact of Child Protection Policy on Student Behavior at Maghanoy Elementary School

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### Abstract

This mixed-methods study examined how the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy (CPP) shapes student behavior in Maghanoy Elementary School, Philippines. Surveys and focus group discussions were conducted with teachers, parents, pupils, and school personnel. Overall perceptions of CPP implementation were positive: parents were most favorable ( $M \approx 4.55$ ), followed by teachers and pupils (both  $\approx 4.1$ ). Teachers reported frequent use of reinforcement strategies (e.g., praise, verbal reminders; means up to  $\approx 4.9$ ), which supported positive behavior. The school climate was generally perceived as supportive, although pupils reported lower levels of peer respect and safety than teachers. Correlational analyses indicated moderate positive associations between CPP implementation and student behavior ( $r = .68$ ), and between school environment and behavior ( $r = .55$ ). A positive but weaker association was observed between teachers' reinforcement strategies and behavior ( $r = .45$ ). Qualitative findings underscored challenges in policy enforcement, reporting, and misalignment of adult and student views. The study concludes that the CPP contributes to better student behavior but highlights the need for stronger training, more precise reporting mechanisms, and deeper collaboration among stakeholders to address gaps and sustain safer, more supportive learning environments.

**Keywords:** *child protection policy, student behavior, reinforcement strategies, school environment, Philippines*

### Introduction

Every child has the right to feel safe, respected, and protected within the school environment. A supportive and secure learning atmosphere not only fosters academic achievement but also contributes significantly to a child's holistic development emotionally, mentally, and socially. According to UNICEF (2019), when schools implement protective measures and promote positive discipline, students are more likely to thrive across all areas of development.

Recognizing issues of abuse and violence in schools, the Department of Education (DepEd) promulgated DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, otherwise referred to as the Child Protection Policy (CPP) (DepEd, 2012). This policy aims to establish and sustain child-friendly schools by preventing all forms of abuse, harassment, and exploitation. It promotes non-violent, positive discipline in classrooms and sets clear responsibilities for teachers, school administrators, and parents in safeguarding children's rights (Save the Children Philippines, 2018).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the potential of the CPP to improve school culture and student behavior. For instance, Plan International (2020) reported that schools implementing the CPP consistently experience a decline in bullying incidents, better peer relationships, and an overall improvement in student conduct. Similarly, Bautista and Reyes (2023) concluded that the proper enforcement of policy fosters an environment where inclusivity and respect are prioritized.

However, the impact of the policy is not uniform across all schools. Torres (2022) observed that while many students are aware of the policy, awareness alone does not guarantee behavioral transformation. Villanueva (2021) stressed that evaluating policy implementation is essential, as schools may claim compliance even when deeper issues persist. Additionally, Reyes (2021) noted recurring challenges in public schools, such as limited teacher training, insufficient resources, and inconsistent policy enforcement that hinder the full realization of child protection efforts.

Despite these insights, research on CPP implementation remains scarce, particularly in rural or underserved areas like Maghanoy, where contextual factors may shape outcomes differently. This gap is especially evident in terms of how the policy interacts with broader theories of child development, such as Behaviorism and Ecological Systems Theory. These frameworks suggest that student behavior is influenced not only by direct reinforcement but also by the environment and the interactions within it, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to policy evaluation.

At Maghanoy Elementary School, initiatives have been introduced to operationalize the CPP. Teachers have undergone training in positive discipline techniques and child safeguarding. While progress has been observed in some areas, behavioral concerns such as defiance, disrespect, and peer conflicts continue to arise among students. These realities raise critical questions: Is the policy truly effective at the school level? Are the strategies being used impactful in shaping student behavior?

More than a decade since the policy's inception, its relevance remains pronounced, especially as students today face increasing mental health issues, emotional stressors, and social pressures. Despite national and regional efforts to enforce the CPP, research remains limited, particularly in rural areas where unique local challenges might affect implementation.

To resolve this gap, this research explores the influence of the Child Protection Policy on student behavior at Maghanoy Elementary

School, aiming to provide insights into its successes and challenges. By aligning findings with Behaviorism and Ecological Systems Theory, the study aims to guide future improvements in child protection efforts, particularly in similar rural contexts.

## Research Questions

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of implementing the Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012) at Maghanoy Elementary School for the 2025–2026 school year. Grounded in educational theory and legal mandates, the research sought to assess how the policy influenced student behavior and contributed to creating a safe, supportive learning environment. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. How do teachers, parents, and pupils perceive the implementation of the Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012)?
2. What impacts does the policy have on students' behavior in the school setting?
3. To what extent do teachers use reinforcement strategies in managing student behavior?
4. How does the school environment influence student behavior and overall well-being?
5. Is there a relationship between school personnel's views on the Child Protection Policy and students' behavioral outcomes?
6. How are student behavior and teachers' reinforcement strategies related in the classroom?
7. What is the relationship between the school environment and students' behavior and well-being?
8. What capacity development strategies can improve the enforcement of the Child Protection Policy based on the study's findings?

## Literature Review

### *Theoretical Frameworks*

This study is grounded in two foundational educational theories that provide a lens through which to examine student behavior: B.F. Skinner's and [Theory Name]. Skinner's Behaviorist Theory and Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

B.F. Skinner's Behaviorist Theory posits that behavior is primarily shaped through reinforcement and punishment. According to Skinner (1953), positive reinforcement, such as praise, rewards, and encouragement, strengthens desirable behavior, while consistent and fair consequences reduce negative behavior. In the classroom setting, this translates into strategies like reward systems, verbal affirmations, and clear behavioral expectations. These principles align closely with the DepEd Child Protection Policy, which prohibits corporal punishment and promotes positive, non-violent discipline. This study examines how behaviorist strategies are applied at Maghanoy Elementary School and their effectiveness in fostering improved student conduct in line with the policy's objectives.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory offers a holistic framework for understanding child development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains that a network of interacting environmental systems influences a child's growth and behavior. At the microsystem level, immediate settings like the family, classroom, and peer group have the most direct impact on development. Schools play a central role in shaping behavior through daily interactions with teachers, staff, and classmates. When these environments are safe, inclusive, and respectful, children are more likely to develop socially appropriate behavior. The Child Protection Policy supports this ecological perspective by advocating for a collaborative school environment where all stakeholders are responsible for upholding the security and best interests of children.

### *Legal Frameworks*

This study is also grounded in key national laws and Department of Education (DepEd) orders that provide the legal framework for child protection in Philippine schools.

DepEd Order No. 40, s. In 2012, DepEd formally established the Child Protection Policy to safeguard learners against harmful practices such as violent acts, maltreatment, exploitation, discrimination, and bullying (DepEd, 2012). The policy requires the formation of Child Protection Committees, the development of reporting systems, and the promotion of positive disciplinary strategies.

In addition to this order, several national laws provide the legal basis for child protection in educational settings:

Republic Act No. 7610 (Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act) mandates that children be safeguarded from abuse and that schools be recognized as zones of peace (Congress of the Philippines, 1992).

Republic Act 10627 (Anti-Bullying Act) requires schools to implement measures against bullying. This directive is further outlined in DepEd Order No. 55, s. 2013. The document from 2013 specifies intervention and disciplinary procedures (DepEd, 2013).

Republic Act No. 9344 (Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act) promotes restorative approaches to discipline, encouraging guidance and rehabilitation over punitive measures (Congress of the Philippines, 2006).

Republic Act No. 11036 (Mental Health Act of 2018) emphasizes the importance of protecting students' psychological and emotional well-being, which is essential for creating a secure learning environment (Congress of the Philippines, 2018).

Together, these theories and laws provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay between psychological principles, environmental systems, and legal responsibilities in shaping student behavior.

### ***Empirical Studies (Local & International)***

Recent evaluations of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) in the Philippines further inform this study's context. Notably, local research has focused on how CPP has been implemented and its impact on school environments and student behavior.

A 2022 study by Santos & Dizon evaluated the impact of CPP on school culture in rural areas. They found that while the policy led to improvements in student safety, challenges remained in consistent policy enforcement and teacher training.

Bautista and Reyes (2023) concluded that proper enforcement of the CPP significantly improved inclusivity and respect within school communities. However, the study identified gaps in communication between school staff and parents, particularly regarding the policy's detailed implementation.

Torres (2024) observed that in some regions, despite policy awareness, behavior change was minimal, emphasizing the need for more targeted strategies that take into account local community dynamics.

A 2025 study by Villanueva et al. highlighted ongoing challenges in public schools, including insufficient resources and inconsistent policy implementation, which hinder the full realization of CPP's potential. They recommended increasing training for school personnel and improving reporting systems for more effective child protection.

These theoretical frameworks, legal foundations, and recent empirical findings collectively provide a robust foundation for understanding the influence of the Child Protection Policy on student behavior. By examining both the psychological and ecological factors, alongside the legal obligations of schools, this study aims to assess how effectively the CPP is being implemented at Maghanoy Elementary School.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study utilized a mixed-methods research design to evaluate the effectiveness of the Child Protection Policy comprehensively (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012) in shaping student behavior at Maghanoy Elementary School. The concurrent mixed-methods design involved administering structured surveys to gather measurable data on key variables, such as the extent of policy implementation, the use of reinforcement strategies by teachers, and the overall perception of the school environment. These data helped establish patterns and correlations related to student behavior and well-being.

The qualitative component complemented the numerical findings by exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of stakeholders through interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Specifically, FGDs were conducted with groups of 5 to 8 students from Grades 4 to 6, chosen for their developmental appropriateness in reflecting on their feelings of safety, disciplinary experiences, and interactions with peers. Grades 4–6 were selected because students in these grades are at a developmental stage where they can more clearly articulate their experiences and perceptions.

Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents delved into their insights regarding policy implementation, behavioral trends, and the impact of reinforcement strategies both in school and at home. Interview guides were carefully crafted to maintain consistency while allowing for flexibility and natural dialogue.

All qualitative sessions were held in safe, private spaces within the school or community, and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Field notes were also taken to document non-verbal cues and contextual observations. Data collected from these sessions were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring themes and distinct perspectives. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, this analysis helped link individual experiences with broader environmental influences such as classroom dynamics, peer relationships, and perceptions of policy enforcement.

By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, this concurrent mixed-methods approach offered a holistic perspective on how the Child Protection Policy was perceived, implemented, and experienced within the school community. It enabled the researcher to examine not only statistical relationships but also the underlying social, emotional, and institutional factors that affected the policy's effectiveness in promoting positive student behavior.

### **Respondents**

Respondents were selected from Maghanoy Elementary School in Barangay Maghanoy, Barili, Cebu. A total of 74 participants were involved, comprising 30 Grade 4 to 6 pupils (40.54%), 14 teachers (18.92%), and 30 parents (40.54%). This is detailed in Table 1, which presents the distribution by group and gender. Grade 4 to 6 pupils were selected for their capacity to articulate experiences and behaviors relevant to the execution of the Child Protection Policy (CPP). All teachers across grade levels and subject areas participated, given their vital role in applying reinforcement strategies aligned with B.F. Skinner's Behaviorist Theory. Parents offered insights into the home-based impacts of school policies, while the school administrator provided contextual information on institutional support and

policy enforcement. The sampling method used for this study was purposive sampling, targeting specific groups that could provide the most relevant insights into the CPP's effectiveness. Additionally, stratified sampling was applied to ensure balanced representation across gender and respondent groups (pupils, teachers, and parents).

The inclusion criteria for the pupils were those in Grades 4 to 6, as they were considered developmentally appropriate to articulate their experiences and perceptions of school policies. Teachers from all grade levels and subject areas were included, as they were directly involved in applying reinforcement strategies. Parents were selected for their ability to provide valuable insights into the effects of the CPP at home. Exclusion criteria included pupils from Grades 1–3, as they were less likely to provide articulate reflections on the policy's impact due to their developmental stage. Teachers not directly involved in classroom management or reinforcement strategies were excluded, as their input was less relevant to the study's focus. Parents of students not currently enrolled or with limited interaction with the school were excluded to ensure the sample remained relevant to the school's environment. This inclusive respondent profile ensured a comprehensive perspective on how the CPP influenced student behavior within the school environment.

### **Instrument**

The primary research instrument for this study was a researcher-made survey questionnaire, designed based on the research objectives and anchored on the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012), B.F. Skinner's Behaviorist Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The questionnaire was administered to selected pupils, teachers, and parents, featuring both closed-ended questions rated on a 5-point Likert scale and open-ended items to capture detailed insights. It aimed to measure students' perceptions of safety and behavioral reinforcement, as well as the level of awareness, implementation practices, and lived experiences of teachers and parents in relation to the policy. Demographic data, such as age and gender, were also collected while ensuring respondent anonymity when preferred.

To ensure the robustness of the instrument, its development followed best practices in questionnaire construction, emphasizing clarity, construct relevance, and neutrality of phrasing. The questionnaire underwent content validation by three experts in education and behavioral studies, who evaluated the items for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study's objectives. Their feedback was incorporated to refine ambiguous items. The internal consistency of the Likert-scale items was examined using Cronbach's alpha, which has an expected reliability coefficient of at least 0.87, indicating strong reliability.

Prior to full implementation, the instrument was pilot-tested with a small representative group to assess clarity, comprehensibility, and item reliability. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the school administrator and members of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) to obtain in-depth perspectives on policy implementation, stakeholder roles, and reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, all survey and interview protocols were reviewed and approved by the research advisory committee and the school administration to ensure ethical and procedural compliance.

### **Procedure**

The researcher first obtained formal consent to implement the study from the District Supervisor, Dr. Paterno P. Dandan, and the School Principal of Maghanoy Elementary School, Mrs. Carmelita B. Luna, prior to collecting data. A data collection schedule was coordinated with the school administration to ensure that the research activities did not interfere with regular classes or academic operations. Data collection took place over a period of three weeks, with surveys administered to selected Grade 4 to 6 pupils, teachers, and parents.

Before distribution, the researcher provided a brief orientation to all participants, clearly explaining the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. For the pupils, the researcher gave guided instructions and assistance when needed to ensure they could complete the questionnaire with ease and understanding.

After completing and retrieving the questionnaires, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the school administrator and members of the Child Protection Committee (CPC). These interviews were conducted in a quiet and private space to ensure participant comfort and confidentiality. With informed consent, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in transcription and data analysis.

To reduce researcher bias, measures such as triangulation were employed, incorporating multiple data sources (surveys and interviews) to enhance the validity of the findings. Peer debriefing was also conducted, where colleagues reviewed the research process and initial findings to provide critical feedback and ensure that the interpretations were objective and grounded in the data.

All gathered data were securely stored and systematically organized. Throughout the process, the researcher upheld ethical research standards, particularly in protecting participants' rights, privacy, and dignity, in compliance with institutional and academic ethical guidelines.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher used the R program to analyze the data collected in this study. R is a free and powerful software used for statistical analysis. The following tools and statistical techniques were applied based on the study's questions. To answer Problems 1 to 4, the researcher used frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. These were used to describe how teachers, parents, and pupils perceived the Child Protection Policy, its effects on student behavior, how often teachers used reinforcement strategies, and how the

school environment influenced student behavior and well-being. The R functions to be used were `summary()`, `mean()`, `sd()`, and `table()`. Before analyzing the survey results, the researcher checked if the questionnaire was consistent and reliable using Cronbach's alpha. A score above 0.80 indicated that the instrument had acceptable consistency, and the R function to be used was `psych::alpha()`. For correlation analysis, the researcher examined teachers' and school personnel's perceptions of student behavior, teachers' reinforcement strategies, and the impact of the school environment on student behavior and well-being. This helped determine if these variables are connected or influence each other, using the R function `cor.test()`. If there were many factors affecting student behavior, multiple regression analysis was used to show how strongly each factor contributed, using the R function `lm()`. For interviews with the school head and the Child Protection Committee, the answers were grouped by theme (called thematic analysis) to help suggest programs or interventions to improve the policy implementation. The researcher also created simple graphs or charts to help present the data clearly using bar graphs, tables, or correlation plots, with the R package `ggplot2`. All tests followed a 5% level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), meaning the researcher only considered the results significant if there was less than a 5% chance the result was due to random error. The quantitative findings were complemented by qualitative insights gathered from the thematic analysis of interviews. The combination of these findings allowed the researcher to interpret the data from multiple perspectives, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how the Child Protection Policy influences student behavior and well-being. While the quantitative analysis provided statistical evidence on the relationships between various factors, the qualitative data highlighted themes that might not have been captured by numerical methods, such as specific challenges and opportunities for improving policy implementation.

### Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with the utmost respect for the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants. Prior to the commencement of the research, formal approval was secured from the appropriate authorities, including the District Supervisor, Dr. Paterno P. Dandan, and the School Principal, Mrs. Carmelita B. Luna. The nature, objectives, and procedures of the research were fully explained to all participants. Involvement in the study was entirely voluntary, with no coercion or undue influence.

For pupil participants, informed consent was obtained from their mothers/fathers or lawful guardians through a signed permission slip. In addition, child assent was sought to ensure that the pupils themselves willingly agreed to participate. All survey questions were designed to be age-appropriate, easily understandable, and sensitive to the developmental levels of the children. When needed, assistance was provided in answering the questionnaires, without influencing or directing their responses.

Throughout the conduct of the study, participants' confidentiality and anonymity were fully protected. No names or identifying information appeared on any of the survey forms, and all responses were treated with strict confidentiality. All gathered data were securely stored and used strictly for academic purposes. Participants were informed of their right to decline answering any question or to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or negative consequence.

Interviews with the school head and members of the Child Protection Committee were conducted in a respectful and quiet setting. Audio recordings were only made with the explicit consent of the interviewees. To ensure the ethical soundness of the research tools, all instruments—including survey forms and interview guides—underwent review and validation by experts in the fields of education and child protection.

Data collected during the study will be securely stored in password-protected files and kept for a minimum of five years for future reference or auditing. After this period, the data will be permanently deleted and disposed of in a manner that ensures confidentiality, including shredding paper records and securely deleting electronic files.

Throughout the study, the researcher strictly adhered to established ethical standards in research involving human participants, guided by principles of respect, beneficence, and justice, to ensure that every participant feels safe, respected, and valued.

### Results and Discussion

This section summarizes the responses obtained from the participants, analyzes the results, and interprets the data in relation to the objectives of the study on the implementation of the Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012) at Maghanoy Elementary School for School Year 2025 – 2026. The data were obtained through validated survey questionnaires and interviews administered to teachers, parents, and pupils. Both quantitative and qualitative responses were processed using appropriate statistical tools and thematic analysis, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perceptions, the effects of policy on student behavior, and the role of reinforcement strategies and the school environment.

Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means, were used to summarize the quantitative data. In contrast, inferential statistics, such as Pearson's correlation, were applied to determine significant relationships among variables. Qualitative data from open-ended responses and interviews were thematically coded to identify recurring patterns and insights that support or enrich the quantitative findings.

The discussion in this section is organized based on the specific research questions outlined. Through an organized presentation of findings, the study seeks to contribute evidence-based insights that may guide future enhancements in the application of the Child Protection Policy and related school practices.

### Perceptions of the Child Protection Policy

The perceptions of teachers, pupils, and parents regarding the Child Protection Policy at Maghanoy Elementary School are generally positive. Table 1 and Figure 1 show that teachers (mean = 4.09), pupils (mean = 4.08), and parents (mean = 4.55) acknowledge the policy's presence and effectiveness, with parents exhibiting the highest level of confidence in the policy's impact.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Teachers', Pupils', and Parents' Perceptions of the Child Protection Policy

Respondents	Item No.	Mean ± SD	Interpretation
Teachers	Q1	4.38 ± 0.51	Strongly Agree
	Q2	3.85 ± 0.55	Agree
	Q3	4.31 ± 0.48	Strongly Agree
	Q4	4.38 ± 0.51	Strongly Agree
	Q5	4.08 ± 0.64	Agree
	Q6	3.54 ± 0.78	Agree
	Average	4.09 ± 0.58	Agree
Pupils	Q1	3.83 ± 0.83	Agree
	Q2	4.80 ± 0.41	Strongly Agree
	Q3	4.43 ± 0.68	Strongly Agree
	Q4	4.27 ± 0.83	Strongly Agree
	Q5	3.07 ± 0.52	Moderately Agree
	Average	4.08 ± 0.65	Agree
Parents	Q1	4.52 ± 0.51	Strongly Agree
	Q2	4.45 ± 0.57	Strongly Agree
	Q3	4.52 ± 0.63	Strongly Agree
	Q4	4.68 ± 0.48	Strongly Agree
	Q5	4.61 ± 0.50	Strongly Agree
	Average	4.55 ± 0.53	Strongly Agree

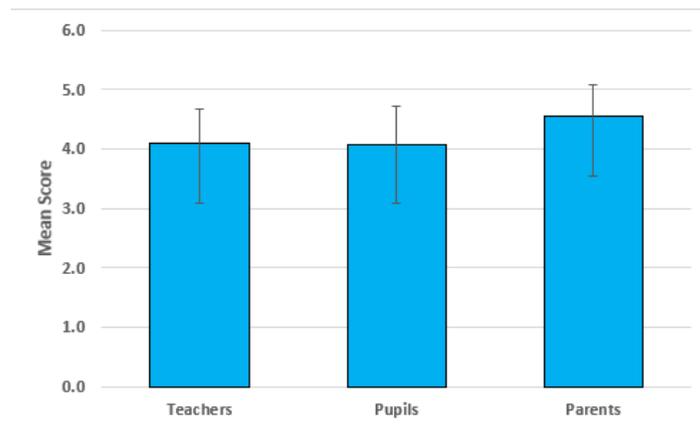


Figure 1. Mean Perceptions of Teachers, Pupils, and Parents on the Child Protection Policy

Teachers reported a positive perception of the policy, particularly in areas of awareness and dissemination, although some gaps in enforcement were identified. Pupils, while generally feeling safe, expressed concerns about the effectiveness of reporting mechanisms, highlighting the need for stronger systems to build trust and improve access to support. Parents showed the most favorable responses, aligning with previous research that suggests strong parental involvement and transparency contribute to positive perceptions of school policies (Estacio & Tadeo, 2019).

Strengthening the enforcement of the policy and improving students' understanding of reporting mechanisms could enhance its overall impact. Schools should focus on building awareness among pupils and maintaining transparency in policy application to foster a safer environment.

### Perceived Effects of the Child Protection Policy on Student Behavior

Both teachers (mean = 3.88) and parents (mean = 4.23) generally agree that the Child Protection Policy positively influences student behavior. Teachers rated the effectiveness of the policy in fostering respect and discipline, with a notably high mean for the item related to promoting respect (mean = 4.38).

While teachers and parents agree on the policy's effectiveness, the perception of its impact on student behavior is stronger among parents. The lower rating for specific items, such as behavior management (Q3 mean = 3.46), suggests that there is room for improvement in how the policy influences student behavior, particularly in terms of sustained behavior change.

Table 2. *Perceived Effects of the Child Protection Policy on Student Behavior*

Respondents	Item No.	Mean ± SD	Interpretation
Teachers	Q1	4.00 ± 0.71	Agree
	Q2	3.92 ± 0.86	Agree
	Q3	3.46 ± 0.88	Agree
	Q4	3.69 ± 1.03	Agree
	Q5	4.00 ± 0.91	Agree
	Q6	4.38 ± 0.51	Strongly Agree
	Q7	3.54 ± 0.88	Agree
	Q8	4.00 ± 0.71	Agree
	Average	3.88 ± 0.81	Agree
Parents	Q1	4.26 ± 0.86	Strongly Agree
	Q2	3.94 ± 0.81	Agree
	Q3	4.23 ± 0.76	Strongly Agree
	Q4	4.55 ± 0.51	Strongly Agree
	Q5	4.19 ± 0.65	Agree
	Average	4.23 ± 0.72	Strongly Agree

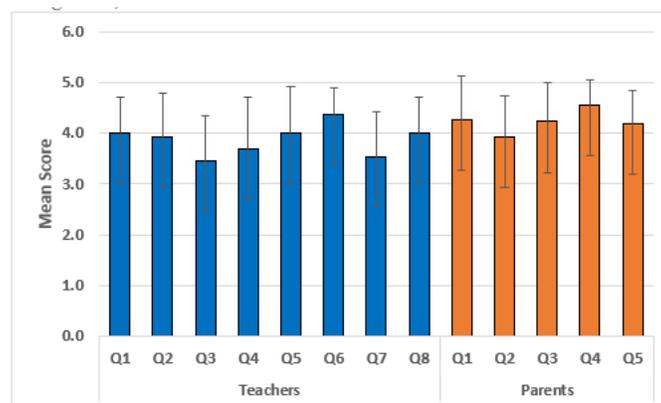


Figure 2. *Mean and Standard Deviation of Perceived Effects of the Child Protection Policy on Student Behavior*

The policy's positive effects on behavior can be amplified by focusing on consistent implementation and enhancing teachers' capacity to manage challenging behaviors. Additionally, increased parental involvement in reinforcing positive behaviors at home could further support the policy's goals.

**Teachers' Use of Reinforcement Strategies**

Table 3. *Mean and Standard Deviation on Teachers' Use of Reinforcement Strategies*

Respondents	Item No.	Mean ± SD	Interpretation
Teachers	Q1	4.92 ± 0.28	Strongly Agree
	Q2	4.46 ± 0.52	Strongly Agree
	Q3	4.92 ± 0.28	Strongly Agree
	Q4	4.08 ± 1.12	Agree
	Q5	3.77 ± 1.17	Agree
	Average	4.43 ± 0.67	Strongly Agree

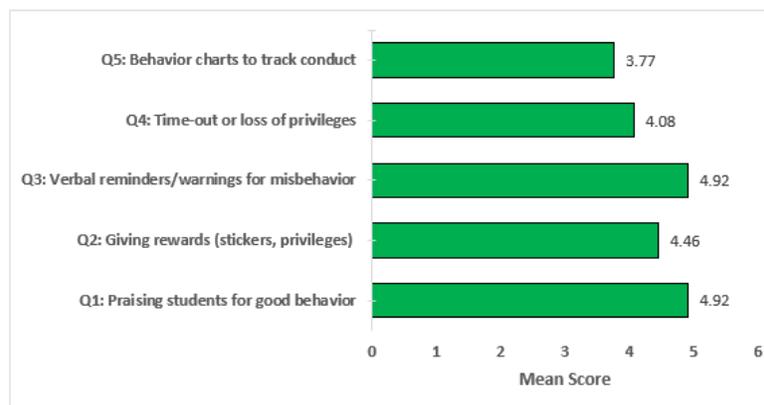


Figure 3. *Mean of Teachers' Use of Reinforcement Strategies*

As shown in Table 3 and Figure 3, the teachers' responses indicate a high level of agreement with the use of reinforcement strategies in the classroom. Teachers overwhelmingly support the use of reinforcement strategies, with an average score of 4.43. Praise, rewards, and verbal reminders were particularly favored strategies (Q1 and Q3 mean = 4.92)

The strong agreement among teachers regarding reinforcement strategies suggests that they recognize the importance of positive reinforcement in shaping student behavior. However, strategies like time-outs (mean = 4.08) and behavior charts (mean = 3.77) were less frequently used, pointing to areas where teacher approaches could be more consistent.

To further align with positive reinforcement principles, schools should encourage consistent use of a variety of reinforcement strategies, including non-punitive approaches such as praise and rewards, while ensuring that other strategies, like time-outs, are applied appropriately.

**Influence of the School Environment on Student Behavior and Well-being**

Table 4. Mean and Standard Deviation on the Influence of the School Environment on Student Behavior and Well-being

Respondents	Item No.	Mean ± SD	Interpretation
Teachers	Q1	4.69 ± 0.48	Strongly Agree
	Q2	4.69 ± 0.48	Strongly Agree
	Q3	4.92 ± 0.28	Strongly Agree
	Q4	4.38 ± 0.51	Strongly Agree
	Q5	4.77 ± 0.44	Strongly Agree
	Average	4.69 ± 0.44	Strongly Agree
Pupils	Q1	3.83 ± 0.83	Agree
	Q2	4.80 ± 0.41	Strongly Agree
	Q3	4.43 ± 0.68	Strongly Agree
	Q4	4.27 ± 0.83	Strongly Agree
	Q5	3.07 ± 0.52	Moderately Agree
	Average	4.08 ± 0.65	Agree

Legend: Strongly Agree (4.21 – 5.00), Agree (3.41 – 4.20), Moderately Agree (2.61 – 3.40), Disagree (1.81 – 2.60), Strongly Disagree (1.00 – 1.80)

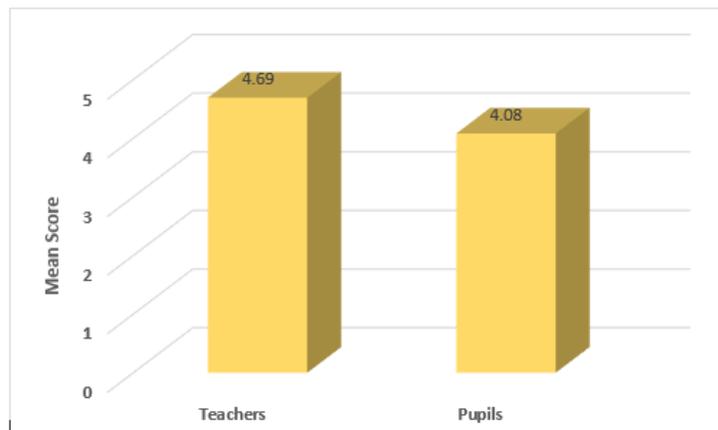


Figure 4. Mean Scores of Pupils and Teachers on the School Environment's Influence on Student Behavior and Well-being

As shown in Table 4 and Figure 4, teachers and pupils generally perceive the school environment as supportive of student behavior and well-being, but their ratings reveal some differences in emphasis.

Teachers rated all items in the Strongly Agree range (Means: 4.38–4.92), resulting in an overall average of 4.69 ± 0.44. This indicates a consistently high confidence in the school's ability to provide safety, inclusivity, and well-being support. These high ratings suggest teachers view both structural and relational aspects of the school environment as effectively promoting safety and positive conduct.

Teachers rated the school environment very positively (mean = 4.69), while pupils rated it slightly lower (mean = 4.08). A significant gap between teachers' and pupils' perceptions was observed, particularly regarding peer respect (Q5 mean = 3.07 for pupils).

Teachers perceive the school environment as highly supportive, possibly due to their position and role in enforcing safety. However, pupils report mixed feelings, especially regarding peer interactions, indicating that while the environment is supportive, it still needs attention to peer relationships and students' personal safety.

To bridge the perception gap, the school should implement interventions focusing on improving peer respect and inclusivity. Addressing issues of peer interaction and strengthening students' sense of safety will ensure a more supportive and nurturing school environment.

### Relationship Between Policy Perception and Student Behavior

A significant, positive correlation ( $r = 0.68$ ) was found between teachers' perceptions of policy implementation and observed student behavior, as shown in Table 5.

This relationship indicates that when teachers perceive the policy as effective, they tend to observe better student behavior. This highlights the role that teacher perceptions play in shaping behavior outcomes, reinforcing the importance of clear and consistent policy implementation.

Fostering positive teacher perceptions through regular training, policy updates, and engagement could improve the policy's effectiveness in shaping student behavior. Schools should also ensure that teachers feel supported and equipped to enforce the policy consistently.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Perceptions on Policy Implementation and Student Behavioral

Teacher Respondent	Perception Score	Behavioral Outcome Score
T1	4.00 ± 0.00	4.50 ± 0.53
T2	5.00 ± 0.00	5.00 ± 0.00
T3	4.00 ± 0.00	4.50 ± 0.53
T4	3.50 ± 0.55	3.63 ± 0.52
T5	3.50 ± 0.55	3.63 ± 0.52
T6	4.00 ± 0.63	3.13 ± 0.35
T7	4.33 ± 0.52	4.00 ± 0.53
T8	3.67 ± 0.82	3.25 ± 1.04
T9	4.50 ± 0.55	3.88 ± 0.64
T10	4.67 ± 0.52	4.75 ± 0.46
T11	3.67 ± 0.52	2.63 ± 0.74
T12	4.00 ± 0.00	4.00 ± 0.00
T13	4.33 ± 0.82	3.50 ± 0.53
Average	4.09 ± 0.42	3.88 ± 0.49

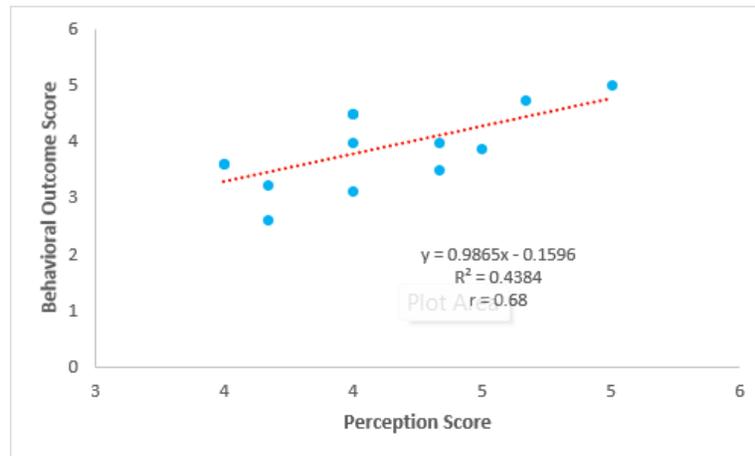


Figure 5. Relationship Between Teachers' Perceptions and Student Behavioral Outcomes

Moreover, Figure 5 illustrates the relationship between teachers' perceptions of policy implementation and student behavioral outcomes through a scatter plot with a fitted regression line. The regression equation,  $y = 0.9865x - 0.1596$ , indicates a strong positive linear relationship, suggesting that higher teacher perception scores on policy implementation correspond to improved student behavioral outcomes.

Specifically, the slope of approximately 0.99 implies that for every one-unit increase in policy perception, the student behavioral outcome score increases by nearly one unit. The coefficient of determination,  $R^2 = 0.4384$ , shows that approximately 43.8% of the variation in student behavior can be explained by teachers' perceptions of policy implementation. Although this represents a moderate association, it highlights the important role that positive policy perception among teachers plays in fostering better student behavior, while also acknowledging that other factors influence student outcomes.

Table 6. Correlation Between Teachers' Perceptions and Student Behavioral Outcomes

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Perception vs Behavioral Outcome	0.68	0.011	Significant, strong positive relationship

Legend: p-value < .05 (significant), p-value < .001 (highly significant), r-value = ±0.60 - ±0.79 (Strong), r-value = ±0.80 - ±1.00 (Very Strong)

Furthermore, the computed correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.682, p < 0.05$ ) indicates a moderately strong positive relationship between teachers' perceptions of policy implementation and student behavioral outcomes. This means that as teachers rate the implementation of the policy more positively, they also tend to observe better student behavior.

This result implies that effective policy implementation, when perceived positively by school personnel, may contribute to improving student behavior. Teachers who view policies as clear, consistent, and well-enforced are more likely to observe desirable behaviors in students, such as respect, compliance, and engagement (Hansen, 2014; Brown, 2022; Zhang et al., 2024).

**Relationship Between Teachers' Reinforcement and Student Behavior**

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics for teachers' reinforcement strategies and student behavioral outcomes. The mean score for teachers' reinforcement strategies was  $4.43 \pm 0.83$ , indicating that practices such as praise, rewards, and behavior charts were employed frequently. The mean score for student behavioral outcomes was  $3.88 \pm 0.49$ , suggesting that teachers generally observed positive behavioral improvements among their students. The mean and standard deviation values summarize the central tendency and variability of scores, providing foundational insight into the variation and distribution of reinforcement strategies and student behaviors within the sample.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Reinforcement Strategies and Student Behavioral Outcomes

Teacher Respondent	Reinforcement Strategies Score	Student Behavioral Outcomes Score
T1	4.80 ± 0.45	4.50 ± 0.53
T2	4.20 ± 1.79	5.00 ± 0.00
T3	4.60 ± 0.55	4.50 ± 0.53
T4	4.60 ± 0.89	3.63 ± 0.52
T5	4.60 ± 0.89	3.63 ± 0.52
T6	4.40 ± 0.55	3.13 ± 0.35
T7	4.00 ± 1.00	4.00 ± 0.53
T8	3.80 ± 1.10	3.25 ± 1.04
T9	4.80 ± 0.45	3.88 ± 0.64
T10	4.80 ± 0.45	4.75 ± 0.46
T11	4.40 ± 1.34	2.63 ± 0.74
T12	4.20 ± 0.84	4.00 ± 0.00
T13	4.40 ± 0.55	3.50 ± 0.53
Average	4.43 ± 0.83	3.88 ± 0.49

To visualize the relationship, Figure 6 shows a scatter plot with a regression line representing the relationship between teachers' reinforcement strategies and student behavioral outcomes. The regression equation,  $y = 0.5894x + 1.2636$ , and the coefficient of determination  $R^2 = 0.0733$  suggest a positive but weak relationship, where higher reinforcement strategy scores tend to be associated with better student behavioral outcomes. The low  $R^2$  indicates that reinforcement strategies explain only about 7.33% of the variation in student behavior, implying that other factors also influence student outcomes.

This positive association aligns with reinforcement theory, which assumes that behaviors followed by rewarding stimuli are more likely to be repeated (Skinner, 1953; Maag, 2001; Zimmerman, 2022). The weak but positive relationship observed is consistent with educational research findings that multiple variables affect student behavior, and even small effect sizes can be meaningful (Hattie, 2009; Cohen et al., 2013; Kraft, 2019).

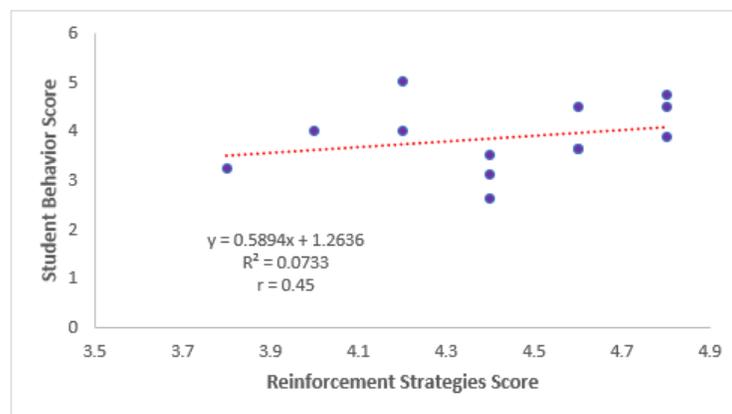


Figure 6. Relationship Between Teachers' Reinforcement Strategies and Student Behavior

Complementing these findings, Pearson's  $r$  was computed to assess the relationship between teachers' reinforcement strategies and student behavioral outcomes. Results indicated a statistically significant moderately positive correlation,  $r = 0.45, p < .01$ , suggesting that higher use of reinforcement strategies was associated with better student behavioral outcomes.

Table 8. Correlation Between Teachers' Reinforcement Strategies and Student Behavioral Outcomes

Variables	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Reinforcement Strategies vs. Student Behavior	0.45	0.015	Significant, moderate positive relationship

Legend: p-value < .05 (significant), p-value < .001 (highly significant), r-value = ±0.60 – ±0.79 (Strong), r-value = ±0.80 – ±1.00 (Very Strong)

In summary, the results from these tables and figures collectively indicate a positive but relatively weak association between teachers' reinforcement strategies and student behavioral outcomes. This supports the principles of reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1953) and highlights that while reinforcement contributes to improved student behavior, numerous other factors also play important roles in shaping student outcomes within educational settings (Hattie, 2009; Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2020).

**Relationship Between School Environment and Student Behavior and Well-being**

Table 9 presents the descriptive statistics of the key variables involved in the study. Teachers' perception of the school environment received a notable score of 4.69 (SD = 0.29), revealing that, on average, teachers perceive the school environment positively and as supportive. The teachers' rating of student behavioral outcomes showed a moderate mean of 3.88 (SD = 0.49), indicating generally favorable student behavior, though with more variability compared to the perception of the school environment. Pupils' perception of school safety had an average value of 4.08 (SD = 0.92), reflecting that students mostly feel safe at school. However, there is greater variation in their responses relative to teachers' perceptions. These descriptive statistics provide a foundational understanding of the overall positive perception of the school environment and safety, as well as generally good behavioral outcomes among students, setting the stage for further analysis of their relationships.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	SD
Teachers' Perception of School Environment	4.69	0.29
Teachers' Rating of Student Behavioral Outcomes	3.88	0.49
Pupils' Perception of School Safety	4.08	0.92

Table 10 further details the correlations among these variables. Teachers' perception of the school environment was moderately and significantly correlated with their ratings of student behavior ( $r = 0.556$ ,  $R^2 = 0.3087$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that a more favorable view of the environment is consistently linked to more positive evaluations of student conduct. This suggests that teachers' perceptions are internally coherent, as their assessment of the school environment translates into judgments of student behavioral outcomes.

Table 10. Correlations Among School Environment, Student Behavior, and Perceived School Safety

Variable Pair	R2	r	p-value	Interpretation
Teachers' Perception of School Environment × Student Behavioral Outcomes	0.3087	0.556	0.015	Moderate positive, statistically significant
Teachers' Perception of School Environment × Pupils' Perception of School Safety	0.0844	-0.290	0.336	Weak negative, non-significant
Teachers' Ratings of Student Behavioral Outcomes × Pupils' Perception of School Safety	0.0164	0.128	0.673	Very Weak positive, non-significant

Legend: p-value < .05 (significant), p-value < .001 (highly significant), r-value = ±0.20 – ±0.39 (Weak), r-value = ±0.40 – ±0.59 (Moderate), r-value = ±0.60 – ±0.79 (Strong), r-value = ±0.80 – ±1.00 (Very Strong)

In contrast, the associations involving pupils' perception of safety were weak and statistically non-significant. Teachers' perception of the school environment was negatively but weakly correlated with pupils' sense of safety ( $r = -0.290$ ,  $R^2 = 0.0844$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). In contrast, the relationship between teachers' behavioral ratings and pupils' perception of safety was negligible ( $r = 0.128$ ,  $R^2 = 0.0164$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). These weak correlations suggest that students' experiences of safety are shaped by factors other than teachers' evaluations of the environment or behavior, such as peer interactions, bullying, or inconsistencies in disciplinary practices.

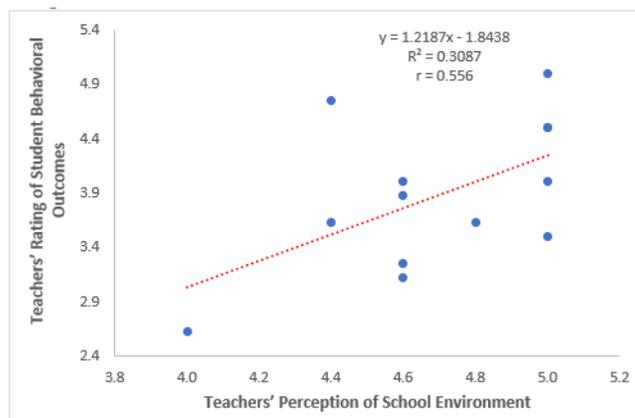


Figure 7. Scatter plot and regression line showing the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school environment and their ratings of student behavioral outcomes

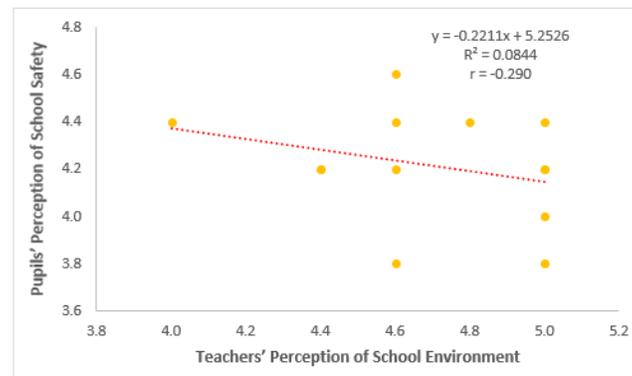


Figure 8. Scatter plot and regression line showing the relationship between teachers' perceptions of the school environment and pupils' perceptions of school safety

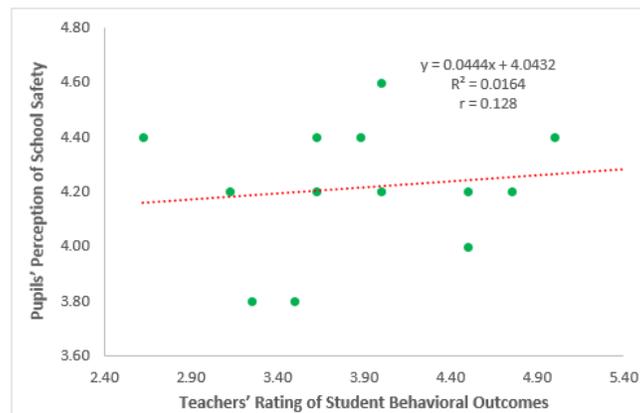


Figure 9. Scatter plot and regression line showing the relationship between teachers' ratings of student behavioral outcomes and pupils' perceptions of school safety

### Teachers' Perspectives on the Implementation and Impact of the DepEd Child Protection Policy: A Qualitative Analysis

This section presents the qualitative findings from the focus group discussions conducted with teachers regarding their awareness, experiences, and challenges related to the implementation of the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012). Three major themes emerged: (1) understanding and implementation of the policy, (2) strategies and effectiveness in managing student behavior, and (3) challenges and support needs.

#### Theme 1: Understanding and Implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP)

Teachers generally expressed a foundational understanding of the CPP, viewing it as a safeguard for children against various forms of abuse and neglect. Their accounts highlighted the importance of policy awareness and the different ways it is introduced in classroom practices.

"For me, it is a policy that protects children" (T1).

"Reporting any signs of abuse" (T4).

"Positive discipline lang kanunay" (T1).

"Uy, kana diay pagsugod natos klase di ba, atua man na sila i-orient?" (T4).

"Kanang, kuan depende pod uroy sa kaso" (T6).

These narratives show that teachers are aware of the CPP's role in protecting children and apply it mainly through positive discipline and orientation activities. However, variability in responses suggests inconsistent implementation depending on individual cases. This aligns with recent findings that while policies are in place, school-based implementation often depends on teachers' capacity and contextual factors (Alvarez, 2021; Estacio et al., 2023).

#### Theme 2: Strategies and Effectiveness in Managing Student Behavior

Teachers described using various reinforcement strategies to encourage positive behavior, highlighting both tangible and intangible methods.

“Hatagan stars, usahay gaan candy, lipay na kaayo sila” (T7).

"Integration of values diay sa atua klase, di ba pirmi man na" (T3).

"Also kanang i commend nato ilaha maayo buhat, kanang daygon nato sila" (T5).

“Ako sila gipahibawo unsay akoo expectations sa ilaha nya, unsay akoo ganahan ug dili ganahan” (T6).

"I walk my talk, Ma'am" (T1).

“Karon no ug magkita mi, malipay ka kay kadako nas kausaban successful na” (T2).

The teachers' accounts illustrate that rewards, praises, values integration, and role modeling are key behavioral management strategies. These approaches not only strengthen student motivation but also reflect the CPP's emphasis on positive discipline. The success stories, such as the transformation of a bullying student, highlight the effectiveness of consistent and values-driven interventions. Similar findings are reported in Philippine and international studies, which show that reinforcement and teacher modeling significantly shape students' social and behavioral outcomes (Flores & Subia, 2021; Santos, 2022).

### **Theme 3: Challenges and Support Needs**

Despite their efforts, teachers encounter barriers that hinder effective CPP implementation. These include limited capacity to handle sensitive cases, inconsistent parental involvement, and weak institutional support.

“Morag di kaayo ta capable mohandle labi nag dinagko nga kaso na, labi na mga bata, sensitibo nga kaso” (T1).

“Naa poy mga parents nga walay tagad sa mga anak” (T8).

“Naa sad tay parents nga mga konsintidor” (T3).

“Dili functional atua committee about ani no? Unsaon nagkalanrakas man ni atua trabaho” (T5).

"Enhanced training siguro" (T1).

“Ako kay workshop” (T5).

“Kanang paghandle ug sensitibo nga kaso Ma'am kay di baya ta pwede pataka lang” (T7).

The teachers' reflections reveal gaps in professional preparation and institutional support. They often feel unprepared to handle complex cases and identify the lack of functional school-level committees as a barrier. Moreover, parental roles vary, with some parents neglecting responsibilities while others encourage negative behavior. Teachers expressed a strong need for more training, workshops, and protective measures to build their competence in child protection. This supports recent evidence that teacher capacity-building and institutional mechanisms are crucial to sustaining adequate child protection in schools (Malipot, 2023; UNICEF, 2022).

Overall, the focus group discussions reveal that teachers have a foundational awareness of the Child Protection Policy and employ positive discipline strategies to foster student welfare. However, implementation challenges—particularly in handling sensitive cases and mobilizing institutional support—highlight the need for enhanced teacher training and stronger school systems. Strengthening these areas is essential for ensuring that the CPP effectively promotes a safe and supportive learning environment for Filipino students.

### **Conclusions**

The DepEd Child Protection Policy at Maghanoy Elementary School positively influences student behavior. It contributes to a safer learning environment, as reflected by significant correlations between policy perception, reinforcement strategies, and behavioral outcomes. The moderate correlation ( $r = 0.68$ ) and 44% explanatory power of teacher perceptions on student behavior emphasize the critical role of teacher engagement and positive policy implementation. Reinforcement strategies also contribute to improved behavior, albeit with a smaller effect size ( $r = 0.45$ ,  $R^2 = 0.073$ ). The school environment significantly affects behavior and well-being ( $r = 0.55$ ), but discrepancies between teachers' and pupils' perceptions of safety suggest the need for targeted interventions to align stakeholder experiences better. Effective CPP implementation requires strengthened collaboration, consistent enforcement, improved reporting, and inclusive participation of students, parents, and school personnel.

To enhance the impact of the DepEd Child Protection Policy, DepEd should mandate regular CPP monitoring in rural schools, ensuring that the policy is not only implemented but also continually assessed for effectiveness. Schools should establish routine monitoring systems that include teacher and student feedback to track the ongoing impact of the policy. In addition, training for teachers and school staff should be enhanced to equip them with the skills necessary to reinforce positive behavior and address challenges related to child protection. A focus on aligning the perceptions of safety between teachers and pupils is critical to fostering a more cohesive school environment and ensuring that all stakeholders feel secure and supported.

While this study provides valuable insights, further research could help to deepen our understanding of CPP implementation and its outcomes. Longitudinal studies could track the effects of the Child Protection Policy over several years, offering insights into its long-

term impact on student behavior and school safety. Furthermore, cross-school comparisons could be conducted to assess the policy's effectiveness in different settings, such as comparing rural and urban schools or schools with varying levels of resources and support. Future studies could also examine the role of community involvement in supporting the policy, as well as the barriers to effective implementation at the local level.

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