

Teachers' Awareness and School's Responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy of San Buenaventura Elementary School: A Basis for a Development Plan

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history: Published: May 2026</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords: Teachers' Awareness School's Responsiveness Child Protection Policy Awareness Level</p>	<p>Teachers play a vital role in implementing any policy through being aware of what the said policy is all about. Additionally, the school on how responsive. The purpose of the study is to find out the level of awareness of teachers regarding the child protection policy and the level of its implementation at the school level. This is descriptive research that utilized a total of 14 respondents from San Buenaventura ES, Sto. Angel District-Division of San Pablo City through total enumeration technique. Descriptive statistics was utilized specifically the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that respondents are very knowledgeable of existing policy pertaining to child protection. However, there are some indicators that show that they have only limited ideas needed for improvement and strengthening awareness. In addition, the Child Protection Policy was also highly implemented in the school where they are currently teaching. This research was essential because: First, it supports the MATATAG Agenda of the Department of Education wherein one of the four critical components is to take good care of learners by promoting learner well-being, inclusive education, and a positive learning environment. Second, it focuses on one of the Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA) themes which is the child protection. Lastly, thee result will also help each school in crafting their own development plan that will strengthen the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in the school.</p>

1. Introduction

Children are young people who are usually under the age of 18. They are in a stage of life marked by growth, development, curiosity, and learning. Children are frequently portrayed as energetic, inventive, and fun. To develop and attain their greatest potential, they require guidance, care, and education.

According to Saplala (2007), children are markedly vulnerable to violence, abuse, and exploitation. As they are, prejudice, bullying, and other types of abuse. According to Philippine law, children are defined as persons below eighteen years of age or those over eighteen years of age but incapable of taking care of themselves or safeguarding themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition."

Various Philippine government entities concentrate on children's welfare, including the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The primary role of this department is to establish principles, acknowledge, and offer consultative services to institutions, organizations, and individuals, both public and private, taking part in social welfare initiatives and monitoring the performing bodies, as well as enforcing standard compliance.

The Department of Education recognizes that abuse may occur in a school setting as a result of teachers and other school authorities encountering difficult challenges from both internal and external factors of the school environment. With this, the Department implemented the Child Protection Policy. According to DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, entitled "DepEd Child Protection Policy", the said policy aims to provide exceptional protection to children who are threatened or endangered by conditions that impede their normal development and over which they have no control, as well as to support the relevant agencies in their rehabilitation.

Child protection policies are critical because they attempt to ensure children's safety, well-being, and growth. These rules establish principles and processes for preventing and responding to any type of child abuse, neglect, or damage. Organizations, schools, and communities may provide a safe environment for children to develop and reach their full potential by implementing a strong child protection policy. Such policies define explicit behavioral expectations, create boundaries, and specify suitable methods to interact with youngsters.

Child protection policies are incredibly important because they aim to ensure the safety, well-being, and development of children. These policies outline guidelines and procedures to prevent and respond to any form of abuse, neglect, or harm that children might face. By having a robust child protection policy in place, organizations, schools, and communities can create a safe environment where children can thrive and reach their full potential. Such policies establish clear expectations for behavior, set boundaries, and outline appropriate ways to interact with children.

Child protection policies also serve to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect by encouraging people to detect and report any suspicious behavior or situations. They provide recommendations for handling and addressing issues, ensuring that appropriate steps are made as soon as possible to keep children safe.

Furthermore, these policies help to create trust and confidence among parents and caregivers by assuring them that their children are in a safe and secure setting. It displays a dedication to putting children's well-being first and promoting a culture of safety and protection.

In line with this, the purpose of this study is to find out the level of awareness of teachers regarding the child protection policy and the level of its implementation at the school level. Teachers play a vital role in implementing the said policy through being aware of what the said policy is all about. Additionally, the school on how responsive. Overall, this research is essential because: First, it supports the MATATAG Agenda of the Department of Education wherein one of the four critical components is to take good care of learners by promoting learner well-being, inclusive education, and a positive learning environment. Second, it focuses on one of the Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA) themes which is the child protection. Lastly, it is child protection regulations are critical in providing a supportive and caring environment for children, advocating their rights, and protecting them from harm. The result will also help each school in crafting their own development plan that will strengthen the implementation of Child Protection Policy in the school.

2. Literature Review

Child abuse and neglect are the result of a confluence of forces at work in the individual, family, community, and culture. Such complex reasons necessitate a multi-professional response that takes cultural diversity and other unique requirements into account. As a result, child abuse prevention and treatment have become shared duties among government agencies and services that work with children, families, and the community. The teaching and childcare professions are at the top of the list of human services (Briggs, 2020).

Child welfare systems are by definition multidisciplinary and intersectoral. Although child protection has generally been considered the domain of social welfare ministries and actors such as police and magistrates, other sectors also play an important role in child protection (Child Protection Working Group, 2012). As cited by Wessells (2011), participation in education, for example, frequently protects children from additional ills such as sexual exploitation or drug usage. Children who lack formal, government registration are vulnerable to prejudice and may be unable to access basic health and other services. According to Collier (2003), the economic sector has significant ramifications as well because poverty frequently leads to child protection risks as well as eroding protective elements at numerous levels. For these reasons, enhancing child protection systems necessitates a comprehensive approach that avoids the significant boundaries across sectors that pervade the humanitarian architecture.

According to Roche (2017), there are few empirical studies or assessments of governmental child protection policy or child protection approaches inside and by organizations, institutions, and communities in the Philippines. Furthermore, while residential care is a critical response to child protection, the literature mainly ignores its scope, effects, or procedures, as well as the experiences of children in this form of care. This is a significant research gap. The circumstances of child maltreatment outside the home, particularly in institutions, have received little attention. This is especially true for sexual and physical abuse, which can occur in a number of settings. There is a notable lack of policy analysis in the evaluated literature.

The evaluation of policy approaches and programmatic solutions to child maltreatment is quite limited, and this study recommends that it should be an important aspect of future research in this field. These findings add to the literature on child protection policy, approaches, and Filipino policymaking, and can aid in the creation of future child protection policies in the Philippines.

Child protection is a critical global phenomenon. It underlined the importance of preventing abuse and maltreatment. In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly approved the Child Rights Convention to prevent any harm to children and to ensure that their rights are protected (Mulinge, 2010).

According to Article XV, Section 3 (2) of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, the State shall protect the right of children to help, including appropriate care and nutrition, as well as special safeguards from all forms of abandonment, mistreatment, cruelty, exploitation, and other conditions detrimental to their development. The Philippine government is doing its best to provide national policy and programs in response to child maltreatment. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is the first on the list of these agencies, whose role it is to set standards, accredit, and provide consultative services to public and private institutions, organizations, and individuals engaged in social welfare activities, as well as monitor and enforce compliance with standards (Yacat, 2011).

Similarly, Cervancia et al., (2019) advise in their study to focus on executing the DepEd Child Protection Policy by monitoring the system chosen by schools and exploring the capability of activities offered to teachers in both public and private educational settings.

This study anchored with the System Theory of Karen Healy (2005). In her theory, she emphasized that different systems are inter-related with one another to effectively function. In connection with this study, teachers' awareness to school responsiveness resulting to effective implementation of child protection policy.

3. Methodology

a. Sampling. This research utilized total enumeration technique. Total enumeration sampling, sometimes known as a census, is a means of gathering data from the complete population rather than simply a subset of them. It's like obtaining a complete image rather than just a snapshot. When the population size is modest and manageable, or when precision is critical, this strategy can be highly effective. We can collect extensive and exact information since we are not depending on estimations or extrapolation. The

respondent of this research are all the teachers at San Buenaventura Elementary School, Sto. Angel District – Division of San Pablo City for S.Y. 2023-2024.

b. Data Collection. This research utilize survey questionnaire as an instrument. The questionnaire is usually designed with a specific goal in mind, such as collecting demographic information, measuring attitudes and opinions, or gathering feedback on a product or service. Multiple-choice, rating scales, open-ended questions, or a combination of these can be used to deliver the questions. A survey questionnaire's design is critical to ensuring that the questions are clear, unbiased, and relevant to the study objectives. Respondents should find it simple to comprehend and complete, as this will improve the quality and accuracy of the data obtained. The research instrument in this study is an adapted survey questionnaire entitled “Survey Questionnaire on Awareness and Implementation of the DepEd Child Protection Policy in Schools” by Macatimpag (2018). The instrument includes the following features: Part I includes the respondents' demographic profile in terms of gender, age, and length of service. Part II includes 15 things related to the teacher's expertise, such as the DepEd Order No. 40 series of 2012 or the DepEd Child Protection Policy. Part III consists of a 15-item statement about executing the preceding order in the school where the instructor teaches.

c. Ethical Issues. The research followed research ethics standards such as consent, confidentiality, competence, beneficence, and risks & benefits. Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Selected teachers who indicated in writing their willin gness to engage in this study were chosen. Furthermore, because the data was published in aggregate form only, the participants' confidentiality was preserved. In accordance with the competency principle, the researchers conducted the research in a methodical, logical, empirical, reductive, and repeatable manner. The beneficence principle was also observed. That means none of the respondent will suffer any harm. This research helped the participants in the long run.

d. Plan for Data Analysis. The data for this research are tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics through Microsoft Excel as a medium. The researcher described the demographic profile of the respondents using frequency and percentage; mean to measure the center value/score that stands for the entire group; and standard deviation to measure the variability of the scores. The teachers' replies were graded on a five-point Likert scale.

4. Findings

The purpose of this study was to analyze teachers' knowledge of the Child Protection Policy and the extent to which it was implemented at San Buenaventura Elementary School.

4.1 Results

The data was treated using several statistical tools by the researcher. The following are the study's findings, as presented by the researcher:

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the respondents

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
GENDER		
Male	0	0%
Female	14	100%
TOTAL	14	100%
AGE		
20-29	5	35.71%
30-39	3	21.43%
40-49	3	21.43%
50-59	3	21.43%
TOTAL	14	100%
LENGTH OF SERVICE (in years)		
1-10	6	42.86%
11-20	5	35.71%
21-30	1	7.14%
31-40	2	14.29%
TOTAL	14	100%

Table I shows that out of 14 respondents, 14 or 100% are female and no male. Therefore, it portrays that all respondents are female. When it comes to age, it shows that 5 or 35.71% of the respondents are in the 20-29 range, while in the other range such as 30-39, 40-49 and 50-59 has 3 responses or 21.43% respectively. This depicts that most of the respondents belongs to 20-29 years old. Lastly, for the length of service which is measured in years 1-10 years got 6 responses or 42.86%, 11-20 years got 5 responses or 35.71%, 21-30 years got 1 response or 7.14% and 31-40 years got 2 responses or 14.29%. This means that most of the respondents has one to ten years of teaching experience in public school or new teachers than seasoned teachers who answered the research instrument.

Table 2. Level of Awareness of the respondents on Child Protection Policy

Item	Mean	Sd	Description
There is a DepEd Order on Protecting Children in School from Abuse, Violence, Exploitation, Discrimination, Bullying and other forms of abuse.	4.13	0.48	Knowledgeable
I have read and understood the DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012	5.00	0.50	Very Knowledgeable

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Pursuant 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.	5.00	0.48	Very Knowledgeable
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.	4.80	0.63	Very Knowledgeable
This DepEd aims to ensure that all schools are conducive to the education of children.	4.13	0.59	Knowledgeable
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.	5.00	0.61	Very Knowledgeable
This policy aims to provide special protection to children who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances which affect their normal development and over which they have control, and to assist the concerned agencies in their rehabilitation.	4.40	0.62	Knowledgeable
DepEd aims to ensure such special protection from all forms of abuse and exploitation and care as is necessary for the child's well-being.	4.60	0.61	Very Knowledgeable
This DepEd Order has zero tolerance policy for any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse.	3.27	0.61	Moderately Knowledgeable
There are different forms of bullying.	4.80	0.56	Very Knowledgeable
Bullying is committed when a student commits an act or a series of acts directed towards another or several students in a school setting, which results in physical and mental abuse, harassment, intimidation, or humiliation.	5.00	0.59	Very Knowledgeable
Corporal punishment is a penalty imposed for an alleged or actual offense, which carried out, for the purpose of 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.	5.00	0.61	Very Knowledgeable
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 behavior in the short and long-term and foster discipline.	5.00	0.59	Very Knowledgeable
This DepEd Order aims to prevent violence against children in schools and make these available to all schools.	5.00	0.59	Very Knowledgeable
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.	4.65	0.59	Very Knowledgeable
AWM	4.65	0.58	Very Knowledgeable

Legend: 4.50-5.00 Very Knowledgeable 3.50-4.49 Knowledgeable 2.50-3.49 Moderately Knowledgeable 1.50-2.49 Slightly Knowledgeable 0-1.49 Not Knowledgeable

Table 2 shows the 15 item statements that focused on Child Protection Policy provisions. The computed average mean of these questions is 4.65, with a standard deviation of 0.52 and a descriptive value of very knowledgeable indicating that the respondents are aware of the policy's requirements.

However, it shows that the ninth statement which states that "This DepEd Order has zero tolerance policy for any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse" got the lowest mean score of 3.27 and a standard deviation of 0.61 which as a descriptive indicator of moderately knowledgeable. This demonstrates that, despite respondents' knowledge of existing policy pertaining to child protection, they have no idea why the said DepEd order refuses to accept antisocial behavior when it comes to handling children such as any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse.

It is important that all the staff of the school, especially the teachers, are aware and fully understand the Child Protection Policy and its scope as it helps on proper implementation in the school and the way how children are properly handling with. According to Al Qaysi (2018) the practice of child protection plays a significant role in professional dealing with children.

Table 3. Level of Implementation of the Child Protection Policy in the School

Item	Mean	Sd	Description
School adopts a child protection policy.	4.21	0.26	Implemented
Ensures all pupils, school personnel, parents, guardians or custodians and visitors are made aware of child protection policy.	5.00	0.41	Highly Implemented
Organize and convene the Child Protection Committee for the School.	5.00	0.35	Highly Implemented
Conduct disciplinary proceedings in cases of offenses committed by pupils.	5.00	0.35	Highly Implemented
Conduct the appropriate training and capability building activities on child protection measures and protocols.	4.00	0.35	Implemented
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.	5.00	0.41	Highly Implemented
Ensure that the school adopts a student Code of Conduct to be followed by every pupil	5.00	0.41	Highly Implemented

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while on school grounds, or when travelling to and from school, or during a school sponsored activity and during lunch period, whether on or off campus.			
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 for counselling.	4.93	0.41	Highly Implemented
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.	4.07	0.41	Implemented
The school child protection committee initiate information dissemination programs and organize activities for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination and bullying or peer abuse.	4.93	0.45	Highly Implemented
Training modules which include positive and nonviolent discipline in classroom management, anger and stress management and gender sensitivity are used.	4.93	0.45	Highly Implemented
Employ means which enhance the skills and pedagogy in integrating and teaching children's rights in the classroom.	5.00	0.41	Highly Implemented
Any incidents of bullying are filed and reported immediately to the School Head.	5.00	0.41	Highly Implemented
The school child protection committee has a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm based on any physical, emotional, or behavioral signs.	5.00	0.41	Highly Implemented
The school child protection committee coordinate 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.	5.00	0.41	Highly Implemented
AWM	4.80	0.39	Highly Implemented

Legend: 4.50-5.00 Highly Implemented 3.50-4.49 Implemented 2.50-3.49 Moderately Implemented 1.50-2.49 Slightly Implemented 0-1.49 Not Implemented

Table 3 contains 15 factors related to the level of application of the Child Protection Policy in the school. It has a computed weighted mean of 4.80 and a standard deviation of 0.39, both of which are less than the Likert scale equivalent of Highly Implemented. This clearly shows that Child Protection Policy was fully implemented in the school.

Every organization must have an effective child protection strategy in place. However, such implementation is an additional work for instructors, who will ultimately bear the consequences. However, this should not be taken for granted because the law protects its constituents, and we are dealing with innocent and young people here. They require consistent nurturing and care at all stages of their life. They do not have to suffer because of poor management and mistreatment. The department aims to provide such specific protection against all forms of abuse and exploitation, as well as care, as is necessary for the child's well-being, while respecting the primary rights and duties of parents/legal guardians (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings revealed that respondents are very knowledgeable of existing policy pertaining to child protection. However, there are some indicators that show that they have only limited ideas needed for improvement and strengthening awareness. In addition, the Child Protection Policy was also highly implemented in the school where they are currently teaching.

In the light of the findings and conclusions of the study the following recommendation were set forth:

- Administrations. They may consider conducting relevant training and seminars that focuses on the discussion of awareness and implementation of Child Protection Policy in the school set-up. As well as various strategies, methodologies and other techniques on proper dealing with children.
- School heads. They may be able to help the teachers through School Learning Action Cell (SLAC), Focal Group Discussion (FGD), or any other way to fully understand the DepEd Order No. 40, s.2012.
- Teachers. They may be able to lend extra efforts and time to read and understand the DepEd Order No. 40, s.2012. In addition, they may be able to think and use various strategies that will help in proper dealing with children while sharing their knowledge to the pupils.
- Future Researchers. They may be able to find out ways to help teachers fully aware with Child Protection Policy as well as implementing in the school applicable on their current needs.

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