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Schools as Shared Spaces: Stakeholder Accountability, Reporting Readiness, and Coordinated Protection in Diffun District I

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ABSTRACT

School safety required a distribution of responsibilities across teachers, school heads, families, and community partners. The study examined the alignment of preventive practices, reporting pathways, response coordination, and participatory governance in a district-level school-safety framework. A descriptive-comparative research demonstration used an internally consistent item-level matrix corresponding to 240 stakeholder records across four groups. Four 4-item, five-point scales were summarized using means, standard deviations, coefficient alpha, group comparisons, and an association test for knowledge of the reporting contact. Reporting clarity was the lowest-rated domain ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.66$); overall stakeholder ratings differed across groups, $F(3, 236) = 19.12$, $p < .001$. Knowledge of the reporting contact also varied by group, $\chi^2(3) = 24.55$, $p < .001$. The analysis identified the need to distinguish the existence of a safety policy from stakeholders' operational knowledge of whom to contact, what to record, and how follow-up responsibilities were discharged.

1. Introduction

A school was more than a location for classroom instruction. It was an interdependent social setting in which learner protection depended on decisions made by school leaders, teaching personnel, parents, community representatives, and local responders. School safety consequently required attention to the routine functioning of governance arrangements rather than reliance on a single policy document. The shared-governance obligations under Republic Act No. 9155 created a normative basis for examining accountability across those roles.[1]

DepEd Order No. 026, s. 2022 established school governance councils as mechanisms for representative participation, while DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2024 strengthened school-based management and continuous improvement. Read together, these policies suggested that stakeholder inclusion should be reflected in observable decision processes: representation at meetings, accessible reporting mechanisms, documented responses, and monitoring of corrective action.[2,3]

Safety did not consist solely of infrastructure, fire drills, and classroom supervision. Learners could encounter violence, discrimination, harassment, bullying, psychological distress, online harm, unsafe travel, and disruptions during emergencies. UNESCO treated violence in and around school as a multidimensional phenomenon extending beyond the classroom, and DepEd's updated safe-and-motivating-learning-environment guidance emphasized prevention and protection. An accountability assessment therefore needed to include relational and procedural protection as well as physical readiness.[8,4]

The Child Protection Policy and the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Promotion Act added specific obligations related to preventing abuse, receiving concerns, responding appropriately, and connecting students with support services. The practical difficulty was that stakeholders could agree that school safety mattered while holding different understandings of the proper first reporting recipient or the boundary between school-level response and external referral. Such divergence could create delay or make a valid concern appear to have disappeared between institutional units.[5,7]

Emergency planning represented a further test of governance because rapid decisions often involved a school head, disaster risk reduction personnel, local government, classroom teachers, parents, and learners. Policies on suspension of classes during natural disasters made protection an operational question: who interpreted the advisory, how families were informed, and who ensured continuity after disruption? Reviewing those sequences alongside everyday child-protection procedures helped prevent the school-safety construct from becoming an abstract attitude scale.[6]

In Diffun District I, the district was selected as a bounded administrative context for examining how shared responsibilities could be measured consistently. The study did not treat a rating of "often" as proof that a procedure had occurred. It distinguished perceived procedural readiness from documented compliance, and deliberately separated stakeholder perception from actual case incidence. This distinction was important because high approval of a policy might coexist with weak confidence about confidential reporting and timely escalation.

The study was anchored in a governance-and-protection pathway. Stakeholder participation created opportunities to clarify roles; reporting clarity determined whether concerns reached an authorized recipient; response coordination shaped referral and follow-up; and prevention readiness covered the actions intended to reduce foreseeable harm. These domains were related but not interchangeable. For example, a school could conduct regular safety drills and still lack a simple procedure for a parent to report a safeguarding concern without approaching the alleged offender.

The inquiry addressed four questions: (1) How were prevention readiness, reporting clarity, response coordination, and shared participation characterized? (2) Did overall accountability ratings differ by stakeholder group? (3) Was awareness of the designated reporting contact associated with stakeholder classification? (4) What operational reforms emerged from the pattern across the four domains? The null hypotheses stated

that there were no between-group mean differences and no association between stakeholder group and knowledge of the reporting contact.

2. Methods

2.1 Design and scope

A cross-sectional descriptive-comparative design was specified because the central questions concerned differences in perceptions and access to procedures rather than causal treatment effects. It treated school safety as a multicomponent accountability process and used item-level ordinal responses summarized into four-item domain indices. Comparative analyses evaluated group patterns without classifying a lower mean as misconduct or noncompliance.

The analytic unit was the stakeholder record, while the substantive unit of interpretation was the responsibility pathway linking school, home, and community. Four groups were specified: teachers, parents or guardians, school heads, and community partners. The group sizes were 100, 80, 30, and 30, respectively. These were analytical strata rather than an asserted census of actual personnel or households; no population margin of error was attributed to the matrix.

2.2 Measurement and scoring

Sixteen items were organized into prevention readiness, reporting clarity, response coordination, and shared participation, with four statements per domain. Every item used a five-category agreement response ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Each domain score was computed as the arithmetic mean of its four items and therefore retained a theoretical range from 1 to 5. The overall accountability index was the unweighted mean of four domains; a high score represented favorable perceptions of preparedness, not independently verified effectiveness.

Reporting-contact knowledge was recorded as a separate dichotomous indicator to avoid hiding an operational problem inside general satisfaction ratings. The item asked whether the respondent could identify the appropriate first point of contact for a child-protection or safety concern. Unlike subjective domain ratings, this binary measure corresponded to a concrete communication objective that schools could validate in an actual audit.

2.3 Analytic strategy and safeguards

Means and sample standard deviations summarized domain indices; Cronbach's coefficient alpha described internal consistency for the four items in each domain. Alpha was interpreted as a sample property rather than automatic evidence of validity. A conventional one-way analysis of variance compared overall accountability across stakeholder categories, with Levene's median-based test reported as a variance-diagnostic. Pearson chi-square examined the 4 × 2 contingency table of stakeholder classification and knowledge of the designated contact. Cramér's V represented association magnitude.

Likert categories were ordinal, but averaging four items produced bounded composite indices that were treated as approximately continuous for the planned group comparison. This decision was pragmatic, not a statement that the original item categories possessed interval-scale precision. Non-normality, unequal group sizes, and clustering by school would require sensitivity analysis in an empirical replication. All significance results were computed directly from the complete working matrix with no hand-adjusted test statistics.

3. Results

Table 1. Stakeholder composition and analytic denominators

Stakeholder group	n	Share of matrix
Teachers	100	41.7%
Parents/guardians	80	33.3%
School heads	30	12.5%
Community partners	30	12.5%
Total	240	100.0%

The four strata provided representation of governance actors with different relationships to school safety. Classroom teachers formed the largest group, followed by parents and guardians; smaller groups represented formal school management and community partners. This distribution supported comparison of distinct viewpoints, although the unequal strata prevented the pooled mean from being interpreted as a proportionate district-wide estimate.

An accountability matrix required denominators to be visible. The 240 rows formed the basis of every scale analysis, and there were no missing item values in the generated dataset. In an actual survey, response rate and exclusions would be reported separately because a complete analytic table alone could conceal selective nonresponse.

The school-head and partner groups were large enough for broad descriptive contrasts but remained substantially smaller than the parent and teacher categories. Any apparent differences were therefore read with uncertainty and substantive context in mind. The group composition was a feature of the analytic demonstration, not a factual description of personnel allocations within the district.

Table 2. Four domains of stakeholder accountability

Domain	Mean	SD	Cronbach α	n
Prevention readiness	3.63	0.62	0.719	240
Reporting clarity	3.25	0.66	0.720	240
Response coordination	3.37	0.59	0.679	240
Shared participation	3.42	0.65	0.703	240

Reporting clarity registered the lowest pooled average, making it the most immediate operational concern within the illustration. A school community might publicly endorse child protection yet remain uncertain about reporting order, confidentiality, or the person authorized to receive a complaint. This gap mattered because the effectiveness of a safeguarding policy began with access to a trustworthy entry point.

Prevention readiness was comparatively stronger, suggesting that visible preventive practices might be easier for stakeholders to recognize than behind-the-scenes case-management processes. Safety drills, reminders, and routines were observable, whereas private reporting and referral were often intentionally less visible. The difference between these domains was therefore plausible without treating one type of duty as more valuable than another.

Internal consistency coefficients described whether the four statements in each domain moved together within the working matrix. They did not establish content validity, response honesty, or compliance with DepEd regulations. The full item bank in Appendix A provides a starting point for expert review and pilot evaluation, including checking whether parents interpreted specialized safeguarding terminology differently from school personnel.

Table 3. Domain means and overall index by stakeholder category

Group	n	Prevention	Reporting	Response	Participation	Overall
Teachers	100	3.76	3.38	3.46	3.50	3.53
Parents/guardians	80	3.39	2.90	3.16	3.24	3.17
School heads	30	3.94	3.67	3.68	3.80	3.77
Community partners	30	3.53	3.35	3.31	3.21	3.35

The highest overall mean was associated with the school-head stratum, which reflected the advantage of direct involvement in formal monitoring processes. Management personnel had more opportunities to encounter policy language, school action plans, and committee structures. Their favorable self-assessment did not in itself indicate that other stakeholders experienced those arrangements with equal clarity.

Parents and guardians reported weaker perceptions of reporting pathways. The substantive interpretation was not that parents had failed to cooperate, but that governance mechanisms could have communicated procedures in professional language inaccessible to households. A usable safety process needed to work for someone with no direct knowledge of committee membership, reporting forms, or office routing.

The contrast across groups illustrated why a single pooled satisfaction score was insufficient for shared-accountability monitoring. Aggregation could obscure the very difference that needed improvement: those charged with designing systems might consider them clear, whereas intended users might not know how to activate them. A response strategy should therefore prioritize closing the experience gap between internal and external participants.

Table 4. Planned tests of differences and reporting-contact awareness

Statistical analysis	Statistic	Degrees of freedom	p-value	Interpretation
One-way ANOVA, overall index	$F = 19.12$	3, 236	<.0001	Group mean comparison
Levene variance diagnostic	$F = 0.53$	3, 236	0.6619	Equal-variance check
Contact-awareness chi-square	$\chi^2 = 24.55$	3	<.0001	Group × known/unknown
Cramér V	0.320	—	—	Nominal association magnitude

The omnibus comparison showed variation in overall index means among stakeholder categories. The F statistic tested the joint hypothesis that the four group population means were equal within the analytical model. It did not identify which pair differed or prove the cause of any difference. A field study would pre-register follow-up contrasts, account for school-level clustering, and examine distributional sensitivity before making programmatic claims.

Levene's test was included because group sizes differed and equality of variance was not automatically warranted. Reporting a diagnostic next to the primary statistic made the analysis more transparent than treating a significant F value as sufficient proof of a robust result. In a setting with strong heteroscedasticity, a Welch-type omnibus procedure and suitable post-hoc method would be more appropriate.

The chi-square analysis directly addressed communication access rather than general attitude. Its degrees of freedom followed the formula $(4 - 1)(2 - 1) = 3$. Cramér's V supplemented the p-value with an association measure, because a detectable association in a given sample did not reveal whether the size of the operational gap was educationally meaningful.

Table 5. Knowledge of first reporting contact by stakeholder group

Stakeholder category	No, n	Yes, n	Yes, %
Teachers	20	80	80.0%
Parents/guardians	36	44	55.0%
School heads	1	29	96.7%
Community partners	7	23	76.7%

Knowledge of a designated reporting contact was more common among school heads and teachers than among parents. In a genuine child-protection system, this imbalance would warrant action even if the majority of parents stated that they could identify someone to approach. The relevant benchmark was whether every person, including a learner, could find a safe reporting route quickly.

A yes/no item was deliberately narrower than a general perception scale. It offered an actionable communication outcome: schools could post a named first contact, maintain backup contacts, explain after-hours routes, and verify through brief parent and learner checks that the information was understood. Such verification would avoid substituting policy circulation for actual access.

The variable also had limits. Recognizing a contact name did not guarantee that the person was trained, reachable, or able to protect confidentiality. In future fieldwork, a scenario-based follow-up should ask respondents to identify the correct first action when the concern involved a peer, an adult employee, or an external offender.

Table 6. Rank associations between each domain and the mean of the other three

Focal domain	Spearman ρ	p-value
Prevention readiness	0.418	<.0001
Reporting clarity	0.528	<.0001
Response coordination	0.533	<.0001
Shared participation	0.452	<.0001

Positive associations among accountability domains were consistent with a governance process in which participation, prevention, reporting, and coordinated response reinforced one another. The correlations remained descriptive. They did not demonstrate that increasing one variable would automatically raise the others, because common response tendencies and organizational context could influence all four domains.

To reduce a common technical problem, each focal domain was correlated with the mean of the other three domains rather than with an overall index containing itself. Part-whole overlap can inflate the appearance of a relationship; excluding the focal domain gave the statistic a more interpretable meaning.

A future multilevel study could determine whether between-school differences explained the relationships. In this demonstration, individual records were not linked to actual schools and the study therefore did not estimate a school-level intraclass correlation or assert a district effect.

Table 7. Operational accountability pathway

Stage	Principal accountable actor	Expected evidence	Escalation/feedback safeguard
Prevention	School head + designated school teams	Risk register; orientation attendance	Published roles; periodic review
Intake	Designated confidential contact	Dated intake record; protected access	Alternative route if conflict exists
Assessment	Authorized child-protection personnel	Screening and documented decision	Priority handling of urgent risk
Referral	Relevant qualified service or agency	Referral acknowledgement where lawful	Minimum-necessary data sharing
Closure / follow-up	Authorized case manager	Action tracker; safe follow-up	Feedback without compromising privacy

The pathway translated broad accountability into verifiable responsibilities. A functioning system needed an authorized owner at each stage and a record suitable for confidential review. The existence of a committee should not make accountability diffuse: the responsibility to refer or follow up could be assigned without exposing private case details to the whole school council.

The explicit alternative reporting route mattered when the person normally receiving complaints had a conflict of interest or was implicated. Parents and learners needed confidence that reporting was possible without retaliation. Procedures also had to distinguish routine concerns from urgent child protection or emergency incidents that required immediate escalation.

Feedback was an important but frequently neglected stage. It would not be appropriate to disclose case details to all stakeholders, yet the individual who raised a concern often needed to know that the report was received and routed. A carefully bounded acknowledgment could improve trust while preserving the interests and confidentiality of affected children.

4. Discussion

4.1 Governance was a system of observable decisions

Shared school governance acquired meaning only when participation changed procedures, monitoring, or allocation of responsibility. School governance councils offered a formal platform for feedback, but attendance lists alone could not establish whether families could influence relevant decisions. The study treated stakeholder accountability as a process with measurable inputs, decision points, and evidence of corrective action. This interpretation was consistent with DepEd's school-governance and school-based-management framework.[2,3]

For a school district, the practical implication was to move beyond a single annual compliance check. A short quarterly review might ask which safety risks were raised, whether the contact route functioned, what corrective steps were assigned, and whether responsibilities were completed. Aggregated monitoring results could be shared with school communities without releasing case-level personal information.

4.2 Reporting pathways required user-centered design

Procedures written for trained administrators could be difficult for a parent or learner to interpret. Clear reporting required plain-language instructions, visible but discreet access points, a backup for unavailable personnel, an accessible channel for people with disabilities, and a transparent explanation of the next step. Translation into locally understood language would be part of quality, not an optional communication flourish.

Communication should be evaluated through task completion rather than recollection of the policy title. A useful pilot could ask a parent how to report bullying during school hours, how to report an incident involving an adult, and whom to contact when school is closed. Results could guide improvements without exposing respondents to real case materials.

4.3 Child protection and psychosocial support were connected

Safeguarding and mental health were analytically distinct but operationally linked. A disclosure could reveal immediate safety concerns and longer-term emotional needs. The Child Protection Policy provided one regulatory basis for handling reported harm,

while Republic Act No. 12080 strengthened the framework for school-based mental health support and referral. Coordination was therefore not equivalent to assigning all concerns to the same committee.[5,7]

The boundary between supportive first response and specialist intervention should be established in advance. School personnel needed to know when to listen and document, when not to investigate independently, and how to seek appropriate assistance. This reduced the risk of repeated retelling, accidental disclosure, or delays caused by unclear mandates.

4.4 Visible safety programs could conceal process weaknesses

Preventive posters, assemblies, and drills were useful but highly visible activities. Their frequency could raise survey ratings even when complaint-response procedures remained unfamiliar. The difference between prevention and reporting scores supported maintaining independent domains rather than collapsing all practices into an undifferentiated composite.

Monitoring should combine a perception survey with bounded administrative indicators such as proportion of school notices displaying the designated contact, proportion of designated personnel trained, and timeliness of referral acknowledgments. These measures would be more resistant to an overly positive self-assessment, provided that private case details were protected.

4.5 School safety depended on external coordination

Schools could mitigate many foreseeable risks but could not single-handedly provide emergency services, specialized health care, or every protective service. Written agreements with appropriate local partners could clarify the circumstances, contact points, and lawful information-sharing channels for referral. The governance objective would be reliable coordination, not transferring accountability away from the school.

Preparedness also depended on families understanding how the school would communicate during class suspension, displacement, or loss of connectivity. DepEd guidance on calamity-related suspension provided a useful policy frame; the implementation task was to make that guidance intelligible for households with different access to phones, data services, and transportation.[6]

4.6 An accountability score was not a district compliance finding

The scale values showed what the selected indicators would look like under a coherent numerical demonstration. They did not identify actual safety failures, rates of bullying, complaints received, or compliance scores of particular schools. Such assertions would require traceable records, a defensible sampling design, and safeguards around sensitive information.

Statistically significant group differences, when derived from an illustration, were useful for demonstrating analysis and decision thresholds but provided no empirical warrant to label an administrative district high or low performing. This separation between analytical validity and empirical truth was essential for responsible reporting.

4.7 Priorities for implementation and monitoring

The immediate improvement sequence would begin with a stakeholder-friendly mapping of safety contacts and mandated responsibilities. A second step would validate the information through short scenario tasks. A third step would review tracking and acknowledgment requirements so that concerns did not stagnate between receipt and referral.

A school governance council could oversee aggregated implementation indicators without becoming the repository for confidential case files. Monthly operational review by authorized personnel and less frequent school-community reporting would balance accountability with privacy. This division of oversight and case management would make safer participation possible.

5. Conclusion

The study organized safe-school accountability around four linked but separable responsibilities: prevention, understandable reporting, coordinated response, and shared participation. The analytical results placed special attention on the gap between formally assigned responsibilities and stakeholders' ability to navigate the corresponding procedures. This distinction improved the usefulness of a safety assessment because the route from concern to action was a testable organizational function.

School governance councils, administrators, families, and community partners could use the proposed monitoring matrix to identify unclear duties and select practical remedies. Appropriate priorities included a current contact directory, conflict-free alternatives for reporting, confidential documentation, appropriate referral, accessible parent and learner orientation, and regular follow-up of corrective action.

The proposed measures were suitable for piloting, not for asserting actual district conditions. The next step toward publication was an approved, well-documented field study with valid sampling, genuine respondent consent, school-sensitive statistical treatment, and traceable evidence supporting each reported result.

6. Decision thresholds, equity, and practical monitoring design

A functioning monitoring system required decision thresholds chosen before results were known. A school might set the expectation that every official public notice contained an up-to-date safeguarding contact, that every designated responder had completed appropriate orientation, and that urgent cases followed the prescribed referral timetable. These were examples of process standards, not fabricated district compliance rates. The choice of a threshold should follow controlling policy and risk assessment rather than a desire to generate favorable performance rankings.

A perception survey served a different purpose. Its score could signal where additional discussion was needed but should not automatically trigger disciplinary review of an individual school or staff member. For example, a relatively low reporting-clarity mean might arise from inconsistent translation, limited parent attendance at meetings, frequent changes in contact personnel, or fear about confidentiality. A brief follow-up assessment would distinguish these possible mechanisms before corrective action was chosen.

Equity review was necessary because reporting access was not identical for all stakeholders. A learner with a disability, a family without reliable mobile data, a parent who worked during office hours, and a child who feared retaliation could all face different barriers even when the same contact notice was available. Schools should therefore assess usability under several access conditions

rather than rely on a single communication channel. Protective arrangements needed to be confidential, child-sensitive, and consistent with the responsibilities of authorized personnel.

Small groups created a statistical disclosure problem. Public reporting of a rare stakeholder category or a school-specific incident could enable identification even when names were absent. A future reporting plan should specify minimum cell sizes, suppression rules, and access permissions. Accountability reports could show aggregated counts of completed orientations or response-process timeliness without presenting details of individual complaints, allegations, or children.

The proposed process also required independent verification. School self-assessment could be valuable but would be stronger when complemented by bounded review of public notices, role assignments, training records, and scenario performance. Independent review should remain supportive and improvement-oriented while preserving legal responsibilities for formal child-protection action. An external assessor should never access sensitive records solely to increase the apparent completeness of an academic manuscript.

One useful improvement cycle would have four steps. First, map current duties and compare them with controlling policies. Second, test whether teachers, parents, and learners understood the reporting route. Third, correct any documented gap with a named owner and a completion date. Fourth, verify the revised process using the same task-based measure rather than a less demanding replacement indicator. This sequence supported defensible before-and-after monitoring without claiming causal impact from one measurement cycle.

The strongest interpretation of shared responsibility was therefore neither that all stakeholders performed identical work nor that responsibility was diffuse. The school head remained accountable for leadership and coordination within the applicable framework; authorized personnel carried out protected case-management tasks; families and learners required safe opportunities to communicate; and appropriate local partners supported services beyond the school's mandate. Clear differentiation of duties made genuine collaboration possible.

Publication of a district-level empirical article would require an additional ethical review of how findings might affect identifiable schools, staff, and communities. Neutral presentation, uncertainty statements, proportionate conclusions, and an opportunity for contextual explanation would reduce reputational harm from premature performance labels. The article should favor specific, verifiable process improvements over sweeping claims that a district was safe or unsafe.

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