

Child Protection Policy Awareness of Teachers and Responsiveness of the School: Their Relationship and Implications

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John Mark R. Asio

Gordon College, Olongapo, Philippines

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6096-4595>

Shallimar A. Bayucca

Department of Education, Philippines

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7601-6653>

Edward C. Jimenez

Department of Education, Philippines

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6876-7935>

Abstract

In every institution in the country, there are countless stories of children being bullied, abused, or maltreated. This can happen inside a school or outside its premises. A child protection policy is a must to protect these children. This study assesses the child protection policy awareness of teachers and the responsiveness of the schools. It also wanted to know the relationship and program implications. The researchers used a descriptive-correlation research design with the survey as the primary data-gathering tool. 146 teachers from seven different schools in a city in Bulacan, Philippines took part in the survey. The study also adopted an instrument from Macatimpag (2018). To analyze the data, the proponents used mean, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson-r. The results showed that teachers were aware of the Child Protection Policy program of the Department of Education. However, the responsiveness of the schools is not very high. There were significant differences in the results observed in the awareness of teachers and the responsiveness of the schools. In addition, there is a moderate relationship between the awareness of teachers in the Child Protection policy with the responsiveness of the school about the program. Based on the aforementioned findings of the study, the researchers have provided some implications of the study for future references.

Keywords: Child protection policy, Awareness, Responsiveness, Relationship, Implications

Introduction

The 21st century offered different perspectives and policies that benefit students. Since the context of learning today is student-centered, teachers become facilitators. Gone are the days that teachers are the center of the students' learning experience. Child protection refers to programs, services, procedures and structures intended for prevention and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination and violence (Department of Education, 2012). Dealing with child protection policies for victims is still a great challenge (Rahman & Sarip, 2020). This is the same challenge that educational institutions face. We cannot deny the fact protecting our children is the primary concern of everyone. This includes the parents, teachers, community, and government. A study showed that child protection could be interpreted based on a different context like family, school, & community (Hermino, 2017). Yet, on a particular paper, the challenges of child protection became politicized (Parton, 2016).

Thus, the government is very particular and keen on child protection. Cossar, Brandon, and Jordan (2016) also argued that most respondents in their study were least aware of the child protection policy process. The above-mentioned pieces of literature provided contrasting results, thus prompting researchers to do this research to clarify the gap that exists in implementing the Child Protection Policy to schools and the awareness of teachers towards it. This study assesses the awareness of teachers and the responsiveness of the schools and their underlying relationships and implications.

This study deems to be beneficial to teachers, school administrators, and the Department of Education in providing a better implementation of the said policy.

Review of Literature

Researches in the international arena showed interesting perspectives. With child protection policy, there are a variety of relevant results that come up in the review. For example, Al-Qaysi (2018) showed a significant difference among staff members' attitudes towards adopting the child protection policy. To add, the group of Drake et al. (2019) focused their study on the significant child protection policy and practice and related them to the people and places. In an article by Heiman and Gupta (2020), they presented a critical framework for child protection policy and practice. Their article provided a clear, practical, and applicable link between critical theories and everyday child protection practice. A study about national reform of child protection practices from Israel showed little participation from children having them less- cooperative in implementing the practice (Alfandri, 2017). However, Munger and Markstrom (2019) found that professionals in school lack knowledge of domestic violence (for example, child abuse). Finally, a research paper concluded that students and practitioners need to cross the complex relationship between family support and child protection. (Devaney & Mc Gregor, 2016)

For institutional response regarding the Child Protection Policy, Mustikasari and Rostyaningsih (2020) narrated that implementing child protection policy is well but constrained. Every child is born with an innate basic right stipulated by laws. However,

adults disregard these basic rights of children and continue to abuse children. That is why Shewchuk (2016) showed in her review that most school boards documented their child protection policies and procedures. However, the amount of information provided by each board varies. In relation, Smyth and Katz (2016) discussed the concept of child protection which encompassed school-based education materials. This includes child sexual abuse prevention, education, and other forms of abuse and neglect. But the company of Robles (2019) found an association between negative school outcomes, higher ACE scores, and lower PF scores. Burr and Fay (2019) also suggested that school-focused child protection programs are often limited or create unexpected outcomes. Another study also showed the potential scope for reducing absenteeism of students relative to the type and timing of child protection system involvement (Armfield, Gnanamanickam, Nguyen, Doidge, Brown, Preen & Segal, 2020). But, since there have been remarkable changes in the school setting, our children are still at risk. At the risk of being abused, bullied, or terrorized. This will cause too much trauma for the child. Policies and practices relative to children and family engagement in regular school attendance are necessary. Also, there is a need for strategies to prevent maltreatment and the disadvantage of children (Maclean, Taylor & O'Donnell, 2016).

Local literature that substantiates the importance, implementation and perception of all stakeholders about the Child Protection Policy provided contrasting views and results. A study by Segundo and Guia (2019) showed that implementing the child protection policy was moderate among public high schools. However, this perception conflicts with Baronía (2020), who reported that the views of the two groups of respondents were indifferent. These groups stated an observance of involvement in the school's executive manager's duties and responsibilities. The research paper by Estremera (2018) revealed that all child protection committee members are aware of identifying cases involving child abuse exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying. A similar study by Bayucca (2020) further emphasized that teachers were aware of the child protection policy program of the Department of

Education and the schools implement the program. A literature review by Roche in 2017 also provided important details about child maltreatment and child protection arrangements in the Philippines. He further recommends further research into policy and programs focusing on social, cultural, and structural influences.

Materials and Method

Research Design

This study used a descriptive-correlation research design with the survey as the primary data gathering tool. With a descriptive study, researchers try to describe a certain characteristic or phenomena. The correlation design, this intends to discover if a variable has some relationship with another variable(s). This study intends to analyze the relationship between the teachers’ awareness of child protection policy and the responsiveness of the school. Thus, the mentioned design is appropriate for this study.

Respondents

148 elementary school teachers took part in the survey. The sample came from seven (7) different schools in the Division of City of Meycauayan, Bulacan, Philippines. This study used a simple random technique to select participants. For inclusion, one must be a teacher in each of the seven (7) selected schools for the study.

Instrument

The study adopted an instrument from Macatimpag (2018). The said instrument has three (3) portions. The first part of the instrument is the demographic profile. Next is the teachers’ awareness of the Child Protection Policy. And last is the responsiveness of the school towards implementing the policy. To validate the instrument, the researchers used Cronbach Alpha. It yielded an overall coefficient of .969. For the teachers’ awareness, it produced a coefficient of .968. For the school responsiveness, it generated a coefficient of .968. All the mentioned coefficients are higher than the benchmark score of .70 for the reliability rate.

Statistical Analysis

In this study, the researchers used Microsoft Excel to tabulate the data. On the other hand, the study used SPSS 20 to calculate the statistical inferences. The statistics used for this study include weighted mean, t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson-r. This study also used a Five-point Likert scale to measure the awareness and school responsiveness of the teachers.

Results

The purpose of this study is to assess the awareness of teachers and the responsiveness of the schools and their underlying relationships. The following tables provided the results of the study.

Table 1: Awareness of Teachers on Child Protection Policy

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
1) There is a DepEd Order on Protecting Children in School from Abuse, Violence, Exploitation, Discrimination, Bullying, and other forms of abuse.	4.36	Aware
2) I have read and understood the DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012.	3.40	Moderately Aware
3) According to the 1987 Constitution, the State shall defend the right of children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, and abuse, neglect treatment, maltreatment and exploitation, including sexual abuse.	4.03	Aware
4) The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) aims to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment and exploitation, including sexual abuse.	3.49	Moderately Aware
5) This DepEd aims to ensure that all schools are conducive to the education of children.	4.23	Aware
6) Teachers and learning facilitators especially in learning centers are their substitute parents and are expected to discharge their functions and duties with this in mind.	4.17	Aware

7) This policy aims to provide special protection to children who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances that affect their normal development and over which they have control and to assist the concerned agencies in their rehabilitation.	4.01	Aware
8) 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.	4.04	Aware
9) This DepEd Order has a zero-tolerance policy for any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse.	3.90	Aware
10) There are different forms of bullying.	4.23	Aware
11) 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.	4.23	Aware
12) Corporal punishment is a penalty imposed for an alleged or actual offense, which is carried out, for discipline, training by a teacher, school administrator, an adult, or any other child who has been given or has assumed authority for punishment or discipline.	4.03	Aware
13) Positive and Non-violent discipline of children is a way of thinking and a holistic, constructive, and pro-active approach to teaching that helps children develop appropriate thinking and behavior in the short and long-term and foster discipline.	4.12	Aware
14) This DepEd Order aims to prevent violence against children in schools and make these available to all schools.	4.01	Aware
15) Violence against children committed in schools is an act or series of acts committed by school administrators, academic and non-academic personnel against a child.	4.00	Aware
Average Weighted Mean	4.02	Aware

Legend: 1.00-1.49 = Not Aware; 1.50-2.49 = Slightly Aware; 2.50-3.49 = Moderately Aware; 3.50-4.49 = Aware; 4.50-5.00 = Very Aware

Table 1 displays the awareness of teachers in the child protection policy. As seen, statement 1 got the highest mean score. The score corresponds to "aware" in the Likert Scale. However, statement 2 got the lowest mean score. This is parallel to the Likert Scale interpretation of "moderately aware".

The overall weighted mean pegged at 4.02, which matches to "aware" the scale. The table further shows that teachers are familiar with such a policy. This is to protect them from untoward incidents that may arise related to this context.

Table 2: The Responsiveness of the School towards Child Protection Policy

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
1) The school adopts a child protection policy.	4.34	Implemented
2) Ensures all pupils, school personnel, parents, guardians, or custodians, and visitors are made aware of child protection policy.	4.21	Implemented
3) Organize and convene the Child Protection Committee for the School.	4.12	Implemented
4) Conduct disciplinary proceedings in cases of offenses committed by pupils.	3.39	Moderately Implemented
5) Conduct the appropriate training and capability building activities on child protection measures and protocols.	3.48	Moderately Implemented

6) Information-dissemination activities and in-service training for teachers on the protection of children in school from abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying or peer abuse, and other related cases.	4.08	Implemented
7) Ensure that the school adopts a Student Code of Conduct to be followed by every pupil while on school grounds, or when traveling to and from school, or during a school-sponsored activity and during lunch period, whether on or off-campus.	4.02	Implemented
8) Coordinate with the Department of Social Welfare and Development or the appropriate government agencies or non-government organizations on a Child Protection Hotline for reporting abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other similar acts and counseling.	4.02	Implemented
9) The school administrator, teachers, academic and non-academic and other personnel practice positive and non-violent discipline as may be required under the circumstances; provided that in no case shall corporal punishment be inflicted upon them.	4.10	Implemented
10) The school child protection committee initiates information dissemination programs and organizes activities for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying or peer abuse.	4.05	Implemented
11) Training modules that include positive and non-violent discipline in classroom management, anger and stress management, and gender sensitivity are used.	3.32	Moderately Implemented
12) Employ means which enhance the skills and pedagogy in integrating and teaching children's rights in the classroom.	3.42	Moderately Implemented
13) Any incidents of bullying are filed and reported immediately to the School Head.	3.47	Moderately Implemented
14) The school child protection committee has a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm based on any physical, emotional, or behavioral signs.	3.37	Moderately Implemented
15) 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.	3.43	Moderately Implemented
Average Weighted Mean	3.79	Implemented

Legend: 1.00-1.49 = Not Implemented; 1.51-2.50 = Slightly Implemented; 2.51-3.50 = Moderately Implemented; 3.51-4.50 = Implemented; 4.51-5.00 = Highly Implemented.

Table 2 shows the responsiveness of the school towards implementing the child protection policy. We deduced that statement 1 got the highest mean score, which comprises “implemented” on the Likert scale. But statement 11 got the lowest mean score with an equivalent interpretation of “moderately implemented” in the scale. The average weighted

mean is 3.79, which corresponds to “implemented” on the Likert scale. The table also showed that there is an implementation of the child protection policy. However, we also observe that almost half of the statements were “moderate” in response. This could mean that some features of the policy are less prominent.

Table 3: Significant Differences in the Responses of the Teachers

Demographic Profiles	n	Awareness of Teachers		Responsiveness of the School	
		M(SD)	Computed Values	M(SD)	Computed Values
School					
School A	20	3.82 (0.71)		3.79 (0.72)	
School B	26	4.12 (0.72)		4.16 (0.82)	
School C	26	4.10 (0.60)	0.641	3.64(0.44)	2.951*
School D	26	4.09 (0.68)	(.697)	3.73 (0.55)	(.010)
School E	10	4.03 (0.69)		3.87 (0.48)	
School F	15	3.88 (0.54)		3.88 (0.38)	
School G	25	3.97 (0.48)		3.53 (0.50)	
Sex					
Male	10	3.91 (0.48)	-0.539	3.77 (0.72)	-0.106
Female	138	4.02 (0.64)	(.591)	3.79 (0.61)	(.916)
Age					
20-29 years old	12	4.08 (0.66)		3.86 (0.62)	
30-39 years old	58	4.02 (0.64)	1.670	3.78 (0.62)	1.760
40-49 years old	47	4.02 (0.63)	(.160)	3.82 (0.61)	(.140)
50-59 years old	26	4.02 (0.63)		3.79 (0.62)	
60 years old above	5	4.02 (0.66)		3.85 (0.63)	
Years in Service					
1-10 years	90	4.02 (0.63)	3.557*	3.79 (0.62)	5.668*
11-20 years	29	4.01 (0.63)	(.016)	3.79 (0.62)	(.001)
21-30 years	22	4.03 (0.63)		3.80 (0.62)	
31-40 years	7	4.02 (0.64)		3.82 (0.61)	

*p< .05

Table 3 displays the significant differences in the responses of the teachers when grouped according to profile variables. As seen, there is a significant difference in the awareness of teachers when grouped according to years in service. Since $F(3, 144)=3.557$, $p=.016$, the p-value is lower than the Alpha .05 significance level. The rest of the profile variables did not yield significant results, which account for a difference in the opinion of the teachers. In

terms of the responsiveness of the school, we observed significant differences in years of service and school. The variables involved produced the following results: $F(3, 144)=5.668$, $p=.001$ for years in service, and $F(6, 141)=2.951$, $p=.010$ for school. Both of their probability values are lower than the alpha significance .05 levels. Again, the rest of the variables did not produce a substantial result for a significant difference.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix between the awareness of Teachers and Responsiveness of the School on Child Protection Policy

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1) School	1					
2) Sex	.073 (.380)	1				
3) Age	.024 (.774)	.081 (.330)	1			
4) Years in Service	.010 (.907)	.010 (.899)	.693* (.000)	1		
5) Awareness of Teachers	-.013 (.872)	.045 (.591)	.014 (.863)	-.040 (.626)	1	
6) Responsiveness of the School	-.174* (.035)	.009 (.916)	-.045 (.583)	-.087 (.294)	.535* (.000)	1

Note: N=148; *p< .05

Table 5 shows the correlation matrix between the profile variables, awareness of teachers, and responsiveness of the school on child protection policy. We deduce that only the school has a low indirect relationship with responsiveness, since $r = -.174, p = .035$. Other profile variables might have a relationship also in the study, but not to a significant extent. Also, we observed a moderate direct relationship between the awareness of teachers and the responsiveness of the school. The study produced a result of $r = .535, p = .000$ which shows a moderate relationship between the two variables.

Discussion

This study aimed to describe the awareness of teachers and responsiveness of the school to the Child Protection Policy of the Department of Education. It also delved into discovering any relationship between the two variables.

Based on the study results, the teachers responded affirmatively in the awareness of the Child Protection Policy by the Department of Education. This is important since they also want to be protected to some extent. If an untoward event happens and it involves a child, they reprimand the teacher. However, a review of Shewchuk (2016) revealed that some school board procedures need to be updated. Munger and Markstrom (2019) also pointed out a gap between the school and child protection service domains and found confidentiality as an obstacle to collaborating. On the other hand, Treacy and Nohilly (2020) mentioned an over-reliance on online child protection training for primary school teachers.

In the school's responsiveness to implementing the Child Protection Policy, their responses are unexpected. Since almost half of the item got a "moderately implemented" response from the teachers. This means that some salient features of the Child Protection Policy program lack active observation from the institutions. Relative to the study, Segundo and Guia (2019) showed different perceptions in implementing the child protection policy in public high schools. Also, Mustikasari and Rostyaningsih (2020) mentioned some constraints to handle implementing child protection policy. Besides, Treacy and Nohilly (2020) suggest a compliance culture in which schools strive to comply

with requirements about child protection policy. From the study of Bunting et al. (2017) there was an increase in the orientation towards child protection as evidenced by rising rates of investigation and children subjected to child protection planning. Finally, Baginsky, Driscoll, Manthorpe & Purcell (2019) identified key factors in safeguarding and child protection and increasing school autonomy.

There were significant differences observed in the opinion of the teachers. This includes differences in the school and years in service of the teachers involved. Although the Department of Education promotes and emphasizes the policy to all schools, differences in the implementation are noticeable. Parallel to the study result, Al Qaysi (2018) divulged that a significant difference in the staff members' perceptions in terms of their positions. To add, Jalal, O'Reilly, Bhakta, and Vostanis (2019) stated that implementing child protection training programs can be influenced by a range of societal, policy, service, and practice-related factors.

There is a moderate and direct relationship between the awareness of teachers and the responsiveness of the school to a child protection policy. The result is obvious since the Department promotes such a program to all schools. This means that since the teacher is aware of such a policy, the school complies. However, Baronia (2020) contradicted the result of the current study and shared that there was no shared agreement between the head of the school and teachers about the school manager's roles and responsibilities in enforcing child protection policy. An in depth-analysis from China on related legislation provided findings for impact on child protection Zhao, Hamalanen, and Chen (2017) offered a general in depth-analysis of related legislation that has had an impact on child protection and other issues. One major finding was that Confucianism highly influence policies concerning child protection.

Conclusion

Based on the gathered data & result of statistical analysis of the study, the researchers concluded that:

1. The teachers are aware of the Child Protection Policy as mandated by the Department of Education.

2. The school implements the Child Protection Policy as directed by the Dept. of Education.
3. There was a significant difference found in the awareness of teachers when grouped according to years in service. There was also a significant difference found in the responsiveness of school when grouped according to school and years in service of the teachers.
4. There is a moderate and direct relationship between the awareness of teachers in the Child Protection Policy and responsiveness of the school in implementing the Child Protection Policy.

Implications

Based on the aforementioned findings of the study, the researchers at this moment present the following important points:

1. For teachers, provide a seminar or revisit for Child Protection Policy, wherein a representative from the Department of Education can be invited as a speaker (most preferably, with legal background). Also, include in the topics some essential and critical points and salient features of the policy.
2. For the institution, the head of the school (principal or any equivalent) should strictly monitor, evaluate, and assess the salient features of the policy continuously. The institution can develop an executive committee in dealing with the implementation of the said policy.
3. Include the parents in the discussion of the Child Protection Policy. The teachers of the institution can have a general assembly wherein the parents and guardians are educated and provided substantial understanding regarding the policy.
4. Child protection is not only done in schools. That is why it is also equally important to include the community / society in educating everyone about the Child Protection Policy.

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Author Details

John Mark R. Asio, *Gordon College, Olongapo, Philippines, Email ID: asio.johnmark@gmail.com*

Shallimar A. Bayucca, *Department of Education, Philippines, Email ID: shallimar.bayucca@deped.gov.ph*

Edward C. Jimenez, *Department of Education, Philippines, Email ID: edward.jimenez@deped.gov.ph*