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## Teachers' Awareness and Compliance on the Implementation of the Child Protection Policy in Public Elementary Schools

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This study determined the level of awareness of teachers and the extent of compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy in public elementary schools of Goa district.

**Methodology:** This study used a descriptive-correlational-evaluative design using a modified survey questionnaire to determine the relationship between the variables. This study was conducted at the twenty-one (21) public elementary schools in Goa district with 286 respondents. Total enumeration was employed with the criteria that they must be actively employed public elementary teachers and with at least five (5) years of teaching experience during the school year 2023-2024.

**Results:** With ( $r$ ) value of 0.7186, there is a significant relationship between bullying or peer pressure and teachers' level of awareness. Furthermore, there is no significant difference among the aspects of awareness of teachers, as indicated by the ( $f$ ) value of 0.8543. Moreover, there is also no significant differences among the aspects of the extent of compliance on the implementation, indicated by the ( $f$ ) value of 0.5485)

**Conclusion:** Teachers exhibit a relatively consistent level of awareness in several key areas related to child protection and that factors influencing adherence to the policy do not vary significantly among the groups examined

**Keywords:** relationship, differences, child protection policy, awareness, compliance

### INTRODUCTION

At present, the well-being of children and their educational experiences are still of paramount concern. Therefore, it is imperative to evaluate the awareness of teachers and the extent to which public elementary schools are implementing Child Protection Policy towards the establishment of Child-Friendly Schools. For any society that aspires to provide a nurturing and equitable environment for its youngest members, the safety and well-being of children must be a priority. The pursuit of quality education intertwines intimately with the imperative of child protection (The Importance of Quality Education in the World - Action Education, 2024).

The Department of Education (DepEd) has released the Child Protection Policy (CPP) guidelines to address disciplinary actions against students and to emphasize the importance in preventing bullying and child abuse in both public and private schools (May 14, 2012 DO 40, S. 2012 – DepEd Child Protection Policy | Department of Education, 2012).

Despite the efforts of the department to protect children from abuse, an increasing number of child abuse cases were reported in the country. In 2022, a report from the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) revealed that the Philippines recorded nearly 9,000 child abuse cases and some of these cases are happening within the household (Rita, 2023).

There is also a problem when it comes to the reporting of the child abuse cases in schools. Vice President Sara Duterte revealed in her speech last 2022 for the celebration of National Children's Month that over 1,800 cases of abuse against children have been reported to the department's Learner Rights and Protection Office. She emphasized that it is only the tip of the iceberg for it does not include figures from 10 regions that "have yet to submit their reports" (Hernando-Malipot, 2022b).



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From January 1 to October 6, 2023, the Women and Children Protection Unit (WCPU) conveyed a significant rise in violence against children. There were 3,779 cases of violence against children reported by various hospitals, including the Bicol Medical Center. The Bicol Medical Center, a healthcare facility located in Naga City, Camarines Sur that provides various medical services, including emergency care, inpatient and outpatient services and specialized treatments, reported a total of 218 cases of Violence against Children (VAC) (Child Protection Network, 2024).

Investigating the relationship between teachers' awareness of child protection policy and the degree of compliance to which schools effectively put this policy into practice will not only contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics between teacher awareness and school implementation but also provides insights into how improvements in policy dissemination, teacher training and school practices can better safeguard children and create a more secure and nurturing learning environment. The findings will have far-reaching implications for educational institutions, policymakers and child-protection advocates working to enhance the safety and well-being of children within schools.

Educators play a vital role in safeguarding children from abuse by establishing student support, promoting safety, and implementing preventative policies within the school environment (Walsh et al., 2023). Awareness in child protection policy and its aspects of implementing rules and guidelines, duties and responsibilities of the school and preventive measures to avoid child maltreatment is vital for safeguarding students' well-being in schools for it enables educators to identify signs of abuse or neglect, take immediate action, and fulfil legal (Sprague & Walker, 2021).

Implementing rules fill this void by defining specific procedures, actions, and responsibilities and specificity in translating policy intentions into actionable steps (Adewale & Potokri, 2023). Child Protection Posters in schools are crucial for enhancing teachers' awareness of child protection policies. This is supported by the study of Li et al. (2023) where they emphasized the importance of children's public welfare posters as source of information to promote healthy development and foster positive social environment. They also added that the poster's creation and dissemination requires special attention.

The DepEd Child Protection Policy outlines the duties and responsibilities that schools must uphold to safeguard children from harm, abuse, and neglect. Educational institutions should be committed in preventing child abuse and recognizes the valuable contributions of all employees interacting with children (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019). Thus, educational institutions should be committed in preventing child abuse and recognizing the valuable contributions of all employees interacting with children (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019). The study of Tutty et al. (2019) supports this wherein schools should offer an optimal environment for advancing the prevention of child abuse. They should also establish a trustworthy atmosphere where children feel comfortable disclosing any instances of abuse and foster a secure context that involves the entire community.

Preventive measures are crucial components of this policy which aimed at creating a protective barrier around children and reducing the risk of abuse or neglect before it occurs (Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, 2024). School administrators should also communicate to the teachers the different duties and responsibilities that the schools will perform in the implementation of child protection policy.

The primary purpose of the child protection policy is to shield children from various forms of mistreatment, including abuse, bullying, harassment, and discrimination (Scourfield, 2018). By establishing clear protocols and guidelines, the policy helps schools, educators, and caregivers to recognize the signs of mistreatment and to intervene promptly to protect the child. The analysis of the data on the study of Oladimeji and Oseni (2023) revealed that deficiencies in communication skills contribute to various issues such as lower educational standards, challenges in implementing educational policies, misunderstandings, and discord in school objectives.

The compliance on the implementation of child protection measures at school is vital for creating a safe, nurturing, and supportive learning environment. Creating and putting into action a strong Child Protection Policy (CPP) is a highly effective means to contribute to the objective of reducing child abuse (Madan, 2020). This is supported by the study of Chilangilo (2022) that primary school inspections lead to enhancements in student academic performance, increased accountability among teachers in their teaching responsibilities, improved teacher-student academic interactions, resolution of issues in teacher-student relations, and better utilization of teaching and learning resources. Teachers have a vital role in safeguarding children's safety and well-being at school. High level of compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy in schools is crucial for ensuring children's safety and well-being. Teachers' understanding of the extent of compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy in their schools and its aspects of discrimination against children, child abuse, child exploitation and bullying or peer abuse is essential for effective safeguarding practices, creating a secure and nurturing learning environment, and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders involved in ensuring children's welfare (Briggs & Hawkins, 2020).



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Child protection policy plays a crucial role in addressing and preventing discrimination to ensure that all children receive equal protection, support, and opportunities within educational settings and beyond (Pecora et al., 2018). By understanding, promoting, and actively participating in discrimination prevention efforts, teachers contribute to creating a school community where diversity is celebrated, and every student feels safe, valued, and empowered to succeed (Desai & Goel, 2018). The study by Gubbels et al. (2021) highlights the effectiveness of school-based programs designed to prevent child abuse. These programs play a significant role in educating children about what constitutes abuse and how to recognize potentially harmful situations.

Prioritizing prevention of child abuse through comprehensive policies is essential to shield children from physical, emotional, and psychological harm. A well-implemented Child Protection Policy (CPP) helps identify and mitigate potential risks related to child protection (Cerulli et al., 2021). By having clear protocols, organizations can reduce the likelihood of incidents and their associated negative consequences. A research by Ungar et al. (2019) emphasizes the critical role schools can play in preventing child abuse by fostering resilience in children, particularly those facing significant disadvantages.

Protecting children from exploitation through effective child protection policies is vital for ensuring their safety, well-being, and development. By prioritizing prevention, it will prioritize in creating environments where children can thrive free from the threat of exploitation and abuse. Early intervention plays a critical role in averting additional harm to the child (Little & Mount, 2018). The study of Franchino-Olsen (2019) supports this claim where he emphasized the necessity for advocacy and policy development to enhance safety measure for vulnerable children and adolescents. By advocating for systemic changes and implementing protective policies, we can create a safer and more supportive environment where all children can thrive and realize their full potential.

Anti-bullying policies support the well-being and mental health of students. Bullying can have long-term psychological effects, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. The Department of Education (DepED) is actively advocating for the reduction of bullying in schools by urging stakeholders to engage in events, promote awareness, and actively address the issue (Hernando-Malipot, 2022a). They initiated discussions on preventing bullying and ensuring child welfare and which focused on the four key categories of children's rights: survival, development, participation, and protection rights. Teachers' awareness of the implementation of anti-bullying campaigns in schools is crucial for creating a conducive environment for learning and personal growth (International Day Against Violence and Bullying at School Including Cyberbullying, 2024). The study by Noboru et al. (2020) strongly supports the importance of incorporating a school-based bullying prevention program into the curriculum. By embedding such a program directly into the educational framework, schools can proactively address bullying behaviors and foster a positive, inclusive environment for students.

Research conducted internationally has provided valuable insights into the implementation of child protection policies, revealing a range of findings. One key discovery, highlighted by Al-Qaysi (2018), is the significant variation in staff attitudes toward adopting these policies. The study shows that not all staff members approach child protection with the same level of commitment or understanding, suggesting that attitudes can vary based on factors such as training, awareness, and personal beliefs. Additionally, Drake et al. (2019) focused their investigation on key child protection policies and practices, exploring how these are linked to specific individuals and locations. Their research highlights the varying ways in which child protection measures are applied and perceived in different contexts, emphasizing that the effectiveness of these policies can be influenced by local conditions, cultural norms, and the individuals responsible for their enforcement. Saar-Heiman and Gupta (2019) introduced a critical framework for child protection policy and practice, aiming to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and real-world application. Their work establishes a clear and practical connection between critical theories—such as those relating to power, inequality, and social justice—and the everyday practices involved in child protection.

Local studies offering perspectives on the importance, implementation, and perception of stakeholders regarding Child Protection Policies presents contrasting views and results. These very high findings from the different aspects under the extent of implementation of the child protection policy are supported by the results of the research conducted by Matulac and Zamora (2020) indicated that the public high school demonstrated a notably high degree of adherence to the Child Protection Policy. The same results were given by The research conducted by Labaria et al. (2022) yielded similar findings, revealing that teachers have a strong understanding of the Child Protection Policy and that schools generally comply with its implementation as required. The study by Bayucca (2020) emphasizes that teachers are well aware of the child protection policy program established by the Department of Education, and that schools actively implement this program. Bayucca's research highlights that teachers understand the importance of the policy and its objectives, ensuring that they are prepared to uphold and enforce the necessary measures. However, the research by Adewale and Potokri (2023) on the assessment of child protection policy awareness in

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secondary schools presents a different perspective, revealing that not all teachers are fully aware of the child protection policy. The study of Asio et al. (2020) explored the awareness of teachers regarding child protection policies in the Philippines and the responsiveness of schools found that although teachers generally showed knowledge of the policies, the research noted gaps in deeper areas, such as nuanced legal frameworks and complex issues like child maltreatment detection. Furthermore, the research of Adewale and Potokri (2023) highlightings that even with high compliance in implementing child protection policies, there is still a crucial need for ongoing professional development and assessments.

The implementation of a Child Protection Policy is not a one-time task but an ongoing process. Regular reviews and updates ensure that the policy remains effective and relevant in addressing emerging challenges and changing circumstances Thomas et al. (2020). As societal dynamics, legal requirements, and potential risks change, the policy must be updated to reflect these shifts and remain relevant.

### Objectives

This study determined teachers' awareness and compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy in public elementary schools.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of teachers on the child protection policy along the following aspects:
  - a. Implementing Rules and Guidelines
  - b. Duties and Responsibilities of School
  - c. Preventive Measures to Address Child Maltreatment
2. What is the extent of compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy along:
  - a. Discrimination against children
  - b. Child Abuse
  - c. Child Exploitation
  - d. Bullying or Peer Abuse
3. Is there a significant relationship between the level of awareness of teachers and extent of compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy?
4. Are there significant differences among the aspect of awareness and extent of compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy?
5. What sustainable plan may be proposed based from the results of the study?

### Hypothesis

Given the stated research problem, the following hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference among the aspects of awareness and extent of compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between the level of awareness of teachers and extent of compliance of implementation of the child protection policy.

### METHODS

#### Research Design

This study used a descriptive-evaluative-correlational design well-suited for examining relationships between variables, describing their associations, and evaluating the effectiveness of the policy. It combines elements of a descriptive research, to examine relationships, correlation research, to examine relationship, and evaluative research, to assess outcomes of a policy. This research design aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation, assess the strength and direction of relationships, and evaluate the impact of interventions on the variables of interest.



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## Population and Sampling

The study involved 286 public elementary teachers from 21 schools in the Goa District. To ensure relevant participation, only teachers with at least five years of experience in the 2023-2024 school year were included. Non-teaching staff, temporary or casual teachers, volunteer teachers, and those with less than five years of experience were excluded. The target population was 337 teachers, with a high retrieval rate of 84.9%. This careful selection ensured a well-defined and meaningful sample for examining the child protection policy.

## Instrument

The study utilized a modified survey questionnaire based on the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy to ensure the data accurately reflected key policy components. To enhance reliability, the researcher conducted pilot testing and a reliability test, with Cronbach's alpha confirming strong internal consistency. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section gathered demographic information, including sex, age, and years of service, to provide context for variations in teachers' responses. The second section assessed teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy using a 4-point Likert scale, covering areas such as implementing rules, school responsibilities, and preventive measures. High reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha: 0.851–0.954) confirmed the section's consistency. The third section examined the extent of compliance with the policy, focusing on issues like discrimination, child abuse, exploitation, and bullying, with reliability scores ranging from 0.899 to 0.964, indicating excellent internal consistency. These results validated the effectiveness of the questionnaire in assessing both teachers' awareness and schools' compliance with child protection guidelines.

## Data Collection

The data gathering process followed a structured approach, beginning with securing permission from the Dean of the Graduate School, followed by approvals from the Schools' Division Superintendent, Public Schools District Supervisors, and individual school heads in the Goa district. To ensure ethical compliance, an Informed Consent Form was prepared, informing participants about the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires at designated times to minimize disruptions, with assistance from school administrative officers and teachers-in-charge. A brief overview of the questionnaire was provided to encourage honest responses. Completed questionnaires were collected securely, with follow-ups conducted to ensure timely submissions. This systematic process facilitated smooth data collection, ensured transparency, and enhanced the reliability of the study's findings.

## Treatment of Data

The researcher made use the mean of the data to calculate the awareness and implementation scores separately. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was computed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between teachers' awareness and implementation scores. Analysis of Variance was also computed to explore the potential difference in teachers' awareness and implementation scores among the respondents.

## Ethical Considerations

The research strictly followed ethical principles to protect respondents' rights and well-being. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, their voluntary participation, and the absence of any negative consequences for non-participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were prioritized by securely storing data, excluding identifying information from questionnaires, and restricting access to the researcher only. No personal or sensitive information was disclosed, ensuring privacy throughout the study. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, the research maintained integrity, fostered trust, and safeguarded respondents' rights.

## RESULTS and DISCUSSION

### Level of awareness of teachers on the Child Protection Policy

The level of awareness of teachers on the child protection policy is necessary to know and implement the program effectively and efficiently to safeguard the well-being of the learners. Table 1 shows the level of awareness of teachers on the implementing rules and regulations of the Child Protection Policy.



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Table 1  
Level of awareness of teachers on the Child Protection Policy

Aspects	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Implementing Rules and Guidelines	3.68	Very High
Duties and Responsibilities of Schools	3.46	Very High
Preventive Measures to address Child Maltreatment	3.56	Very High
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>	<b>3.57</b>	<b>Very High</b>

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low (VL); 1.76 – 2.50 – Low (L); 2.51 – 3.25 – High (H); 3.26 – 4.00 – Very High (VH)

The results specified that the overall level of awareness of teachers were rated “very high” with an overall mean of 3.57. The different aspects have the following results, Implementing Rules and Guidelines with a mean of 3.68 interpreted as “very high”; Duties and Responsibilities of the School with a mean of 3.46 interpreted as “very high”; and Preventive Measures to Address Child Maltreatment with a mean of 3.56 interpreted as “very high”. This table also shows that the aspect with the highest mean is the implementing rules and guidelines. On the other hand, the aspect with the lowest mean is the duties and responsibilities of schools.

The aspect where teachers have the highest level of awareness is the implementing rules and guidelines. Teachers have a very high level of awareness in this aspect for ensuring the safety and well-being of their learners is one of the responsibilities that need to fulfil. Additionally, schools also make sure that they provide the teachers with seminars, trainings and workshops that will enhance their knowledge in creating a safe and secure learning environment for their learners.

Thus, based on the results, it can be implied that teachers' familiarity with the implementing rules and regulations of child protection policies is paramount for ensuring the safety, well-being, and rights of children within educational settings. By adhering to these rules, teachers contribute to legal compliance, early identification and intervention, the creation of safe and supportive environments, effective collaboration and communication, and continuous professional development. The research of Fitzpatrick et al (2019) supported the findings on how Educators play a crucial role in identifying and addressing cases of child maltreatment. In numerous regions, they are eligible to report any instances of known or suspected child maltreatment. While teachers cannot and should not take on the role of counselors or therapists, Townsend et al. (2020) study showed that they are well-positioned to help and support maltreated children like how they can refer those requiring specialized care and how they can help in implementing trauma-informed approaches.

The aspect with the lowest level of awareness is the duties and responsibilities of the school. This may have the lowest mean for school administrators may have not clearly communicated to teachers the role that the school plays in the implementation of the child protection policy. Thus, the teachers tend to focus more on their roles as advisers or subject teachers that will contribute to the effective and efficient implementation of the said policy.

Thus, based on the result of this study, it is implied that the school administrators should communicate to the teachers different duties and responsibilities that the schools will perform in the implementation of child protection policy. This will allow the teacher and the principal to work harmoniously on what they can do to improve their implementation of the said policy. The analysis of the data on the study of Oladimeji and Oseni (2023) revealed that deficiencies in communication skills contribute to various issues such as lower educational standards, challenges in implementing educational policies, misunderstandings, and discord in school objectives. Based on these findings, several suggestions were proposed, including the adoption of clear and concise language by principals, regular in-person communication, and active listening by school leaders.

### Extent of compliance on the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in school

The extent of compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy is necessary to identify the areas that are in need of further focus to enhance its implementation. Table 2 determines the extent of implementation of child protection policy in schools.



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Table 2  
Extent of compliance on the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in school

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Discrimination Against Children	3.74	VH
Child Abuse	3.86	VH
Child Exploitation	3.88	VH
Bullying or Peer Abuse	3.68	VH
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>VH</b>

Legend: 1.00 – 1.75 Very Low (VL); 1.76 – 2.50 – Low (L); 2.51 – 3.25 – High (H); 3.26 – 4.00 – Very High (VH)

Table 2 indicates the distribution of mean scores across the aspects of extent of implementation: discrimination against children, child abuse, child exploitation and bullying or peer abuse. The results specified that the overall extent of implementation was rated “very high” with an overall mean of 3.79. The different aspects have the following results, discrimination against children with a mean of 3.74 interpreted as “very high”, child abuse with a mean of 3.86 interpreted as “very high”, child exploitation with a mean of 3.88 interpreted as “very high” and bullying or peer abuse with a mean of 3.68 interpreted as “very high.” This table also shows that the aspect with the highest mean is child exploitation. On the other hand, the aspect with the lowest mean is bullying or peer abuse.

The aspect with the highest mean in extent of implementation is on child exploitation for schools are legally mandated and have an ethical responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of the students and avoiding exploitation is a fundamental aspect of fulfilling this obligation. Schools may have prioritized measures to prevent exploitation in order to promote a safe and conducive learning environment and uphold and strengthen parents and guardians trust.

However, the aspect with the lowest mean in extent of implementation is on Bullying or Peer Abuse for schools may have experience challenges to effectively address these incidents. Schools may have not allocated enough funds and resources that can impact their ability to implement comprehensive anti-bullying programs. Some schools may have inconsistent policies that can lead to confusion about how to address these types of incident.

Thus, based on the results of the study, it is implied that the extent of compliance on the implementation of child protection policies in schools is of paramount importance in safeguarding the rights and well-being of children. It reflects a commitment to prioritizing child safety, allows for the assessment of effectiveness, holds schools accountable, and informs decision-making and resource allocation. These very high findings from the different aspects under the extent of implementation of the child protection policy are supported by the results of the research conducted by Matulac and Zamora (2020) indicated that the public high school demonstrated a notably high degree of adherence to the Child Protection Policy. This was prominently evidenced by widespread compliance, with no discernible gaps in the implementation of child protection protocols.

**Significant Difference among Aspect of Awareness of Teachers on Child Protection Policy**

Understanding the varying level of awareness among the aspect of awareness of teachers regarding child protection policy is essential to implement effective interventions aimed at promoting the safety and well-being of children within the educational settings. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine the differences among level of awareness of teachers on child protection policy in Table 3.

Table 3  
Significant Difference among Aspect of Awareness of Teachers on Child Protection Policy

Sources of Variation	Degree of freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F. value
Among Aspects	2	125.94	41.98	0.8543 <sup>ns</sup>
Error	81	3979.97	49.1354	
TOTAL	84	4105.9		



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F<sub>01</sub> (20, 40) 2.37    F<sub>01</sub> (2, 40) 5.18  
<sup>ns</sup> not significant

The results revealed an *f.* value of 0.8543 indicating that the differences in teachers' awareness across these aspects are not statistically significant. This *f.* value suggests that teachers' awareness is generally consistent among the identified three aspects of the child protection policy. This non-significant result implies that teachers, on average, possess a similar understanding of the rules and guidelines, the responsibilities of the school, and the preventive measures against child maltreatment. Although there may be slight variations in individual scores, the overall pattern shows no meaningful difference in awareness across these areas. The finding can be interpreted as evidence of a balanced level of knowledge about child protection policy among teachers. However, while the result indicates no significant differences, it is important to consider that similarity in awareness does not necessarily imply adequacy. Teachers may have a comparable level of knowledge across these aspects, but it remains crucial to assess whether their awareness is sufficient for effectively implementing child protection measures.

The lack of significant differences in teachers' awareness across the three dimensions of child protection policy may result from several factors. One important factor is uniform information dissemination. Schools and education departments may have implemented comprehensive and consistent training programs across all aspects of child protection policy. This approach ensures that teachers receive equal exposure to implementing rules, school responsibilities, and preventive strategies, preventing any one area from being emphasized over others. When information is delivered uniformly, it fosters a balanced level of awareness among teachers, reducing the likelihood of significant differences between policy dimensions.

Another factor is the standardization of training programs for teachers. Many teacher education programs incorporate child protection frameworks into their curricula, providing future educators with a well-rounded understanding of these policies. By integrating child protection holistically, these programs encourage teachers to develop similar levels of knowledge in all areas. Consequently, teachers may not view any aspect of child protection as more important or complex than others, contributing to the uniformity in awareness observed in the study's findings.

Lastly, the overlap among policy aspects plays a role in the balanced awareness. The dimensions of implementing rules, school responsibilities, and preventive measures are closely interconnected, making it difficult for teachers to view them as distinct areas. For example, understanding the school's duties often involves recognizing appropriate preventive strategies to protect students from harm. Similarly, implementing rules and guidelines requires awareness of both responsibilities and preventive measures. Since the successful application of one aspect reinforces the others, teachers may naturally develop a holistic understanding that contributes to consistent awareness across all dimensions.

It is implied that although the non-significant result suggests a balanced awareness, it is essential to avoid complacency. A lack of significant differences does not mean that teachers have mastered each area. Periodic assessments of knowledge and practice are necessary to ensure that awareness remains high and that teachers are prepared to respond to child protection issues effectively.

Furthermore, targeted interventions might still be required. For example, teachers might be comfortable with the general rules and responsibilities but could struggle with more complex aspects, such as identifying subtle signs of child maltreatment. Deeper specialization within each area could enhance their effectiveness. Schools could develop training modules that focus on real-world applications of the policy to help teachers apply their knowledge with greater confidence.

On-going professional development is also vital. Child protection policies are dynamic and may what study evolve in response to new societal challenges. Regular refresher courses and workshops will help teachers stay updated and prevent a decline in awareness over time. These sessions could include case studies, simulations, and collaborative discussions to strengthen practical application.

This is supported by the study of Asio et al. (2020) that explored the awareness of teachers regarding child protection policies in the Philippines and the responsiveness of schools. Although teachers generally showed knowledge of the policies, the research noted gaps in deeper areas, such as nuanced legal frameworks (e.g., DepEd Orders) and complex issues like child maltreatment detection. The study highlighted the importance of continuous professional development and suggested that periodic assessments, simulations, and targeted interventions could strengthen teachers' practical applications of these policies



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**Significant Difference among Aspect of Extent of Compliance on the Implementation of the Child Protection Policy**

Table 4  
 Significant Difference among Aspect of Awareness of Teachers on Child Protection Policy

Sources of Variables	Degree of freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F. value
Among Aspects	3	20.62	6.87	0.5485 <sup>ns</sup>
Error	78	977.53	12.53	
TOTAL	81	998.15		

$F_{05} (20, 60) 1.53$  \*\* - highly significant  
 $F_{01} (20, 60) 1.84$  ns – not significant  
 $F_{05} (3, 60) 2.76$

The results revealed an f. value of 0.5485 interpreted as not significant, implies that there are no statistically meaningful differences among the four aspects of extent of compliance—discrimination against children, child abuse, child exploitation, and bullying or peer abuse—in the implementation of child protection policies. These aspects being implemented at a high level, suggests that schools are performing consistently well across these domains. This consistency reflects a well-rounded and standardized approach to child protection, ensuring that each area receives adequate attention and is integrated effectively into school policies. However, the uniformity in high-level compliance can also signal potential areas for further improvement.

Even when the implementation is strong across all aspects, it is still essential to maintain regular assessments to identify whether there are subtle gaps or emerging challenges that could undermine long-term effectiveness. For instance, while schools may excel at preventing overt issues such as bullying, they might still encounter difficulties in addressing more complex or less visible forms of child abuse, such as emotional neglect or exploitation. A high level of compliance also does not guarantee that all staff members are equally skilled at recognizing nuanced issues, which underscores the importance of ongoing professional development and periodic evaluations to sustain these high standards.

The non-significant result, therefore, emphasizes that high compliance in all areas does not eliminate the need for vigilance. Schools should continue refining their practices, incorporating advanced training methods like real-world case studies and simulations, to maintain and enhance this level of implementation. Additionally, since child protection policies are dynamic and must evolve with changing societal conditions, regular monitoring ensures that compliance remains meaningful and responsive to new challenges.

The research of Adewale, S., & Potokri, O. C. (2023) supports this result highlighting that even with high compliance in implementing child protection policies, there is still a crucial need for ongoing professional development and assessments. The study underscores that awareness among staff is essential not only to recognize overt issues but also to identify and address more subtle forms of abuse that may not be as visible. It suggests that schools should continuously refine their training programs and provide more advanced methods, such as real-world case studies, to enhance teachers' understanding and responsiveness to child protection issues.

**Relationship between level of awareness and extent of compliance of the implementation of Child Protection Policy**

Pearson Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r value) was used to determine the relationship among level of awareness and extent of implementation of child protection policy as shown in Table 3.

Table 5  
 Relationship between level of awareness and extent of compliance of the implementation of Child Protection Policy



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Independent Variable (X)	Dependent Variables (Y)	Pearson's r – value	Statistical Significance
Level of Awareness of Teachers on Child Protection Policy	1. Discrimination Against Children	0.1044	Not Significant
	2. Child Abuse	0.1302	Significant
	3. Child Exploitation	0.0409	Not Significant
	4. Bullying or Peer Abuse	0.7186	Significant

$$r_{05} = 0.113$$

Table 5 presented the r-value of level of awareness of teachers to the extent of compliance on the implementation of the child protection policy along discrimination against children, child abuse, child exploitation and bullying or peer abuse.

The results showed that the registered r-value for level of awareness of teachers and discrimination against children was 0.1044, and the critical value at 0.5 level of significance was 0.113. This can mean that the extent of implementation of child protection policy along discrimination against children has no significant relationship with the level of awareness of teachers. Thus, this implies that schools efforts on discrimination against children such as to create conflict resolution mechanism that respects the rights of indigenous people, implement activities like symposium and/or distribution of IEC materials on non-discrimination to children, conduct inspection to ensure that all facilities are safe, adequate, sanitary, gender and culture sensitive and accessible to PWDs, acknowledge and accommodate major religious holidays and create and interagency coordination with both national and local agencies and the like have a little to no effect to the level of awareness of teachers on child protection policy.

Additionally, the registered r-value for level of awareness of teachers and child abuse was 0.1302 and the critical value at 0.5 level of significance was 0.113. This can mean that the extent of implementation of child protection policy along discrimination against children has a significant relationship with the level of awareness of teachers. Thus, this implies that schools efforts on prevention of child abuse such as to implement the code of conduct which has a specific provision to address using green jokes, conduct seminar/training to school personnel, parents and other stakeholders to recognize signs of abuse, properly respond to disclosures and understand the standard reporting procedures, conduct information dissemination programs and organize activities for protection of children, create written procedures guidelines in conducting disciplinary proceedings in cases of offenses and conduct age-appropriate activities to teach children about body safety, boundaries and how to recognize and report abuse and the like was a critical factor that positively affected the level of awareness of teachers on child protection policy.

Moreover, the registered r-value for level of awareness of teachers and child exploitation was 0.0409, and the critical value at 0.5 level of significance was 0.113. This can mean that the extent of implementation of child protection policy along child exploitation has no significant relationship with the level of awareness of teachers. Thus, this implies that schools efforts on discrimination against children such as to implement the code of conduct which has a specific provision to address employing children as house helper or asking students to care for teachers' children while in school, presence of campus security, conduct of school-initiated information dissemination to learners, teachers and parents/guardians regarding potential dangers of online environment and how to stay safe online, conduct training and provide resources on the risk factors and indicators of child exploitation to teachers and school staff and create clearly defined procedures to follow if case of child exploitation are suspected or disclosed and the like have a little to no effect to the level of awareness of teachers on child protection policy.

In addition, the registered r-value for level of awareness of teachers and bullying or peer abuse was 0.7186 and the critical value at 0.5 level of significance was 0.113. This can mean that the extent of implementation of child protection policy along bullying or peer abuse has a significant relationship with the level of awareness of teachers. Thus, this implies that schools efforts on strong student participation in the promotion of anti-bullying policies of the school, create a feedback mechanism in the school to monitor the implementation of the anti-bullying policies, conduct awareness-raising programs with school stakeholders in preventing and addressing bullying, submit consolidated report on all relevant information and statistics on acts of bullying or retaliation and distribute copy of



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the anti-bullying policies being adopted by the school and the like was a critical factor that positively affected the level of awareness of teachers on child protection policy.

The figures revealed that child abuse ( $r = 0.1302$ ) and bullying or peer abuse ( $r = 0.7186$ ) have a significant relationship with the level of awareness of teachers. Their value shows a strong positive correlation between the variables. This suggests that as awareness levels increase, so does the extent of implementation along child abuse and bullying or peer abuse. The strong positive correlation between awareness and implementation underscores the importance of raising awareness as a precursor to effective implementation of child protection policies and practices. The remaining aspects; discrimination against children ( $r = 0.1044$ ) and child exploitation ( $r = 0.7186$ ) have no significant relationship with the level of awareness of teachers. This finding showed the complexity of implementation of the child protection policy and highlights the need for continued research in this area.

These findings have several practical implications for policymakers, practitioners, and advocates in the field of child protection. Firstly, efforts to raise awareness about child protection issues should be prioritized and supported through targeted education, advocacy campaigns, and community engagement initiatives. Additionally, resources should be allocated to strengthen implementation mechanisms, including training programs, infrastructure development, and policy enforcement measures. These significant results finding are supported by the research of Bayucca (2020) that emphasized that teachers are aware of the Department of Education's child protection policy program, and schools actively implement the said program.

## Conclusion

The study reveals that teachers are highly aware of the child protection policy, especially in key areas such as understanding the rules and regulations, their duties and responsibilities, and measures to prevent child abuse. This strong awareness is crucial for the policy's effectiveness, as it directly influences how well the policy is implemented in schools.

Notably, the study found that the extent of implementation of the policy was significantly related to teachers' awareness of child abuse and bullying, meaning that when teachers are more aware, they are more likely to effectively apply the policy in these areas. Moreover, It can be established that extent of implementation the child protection policy along Child Abuse and Bullying or Peer Abuse were evident determinants of an increased or decreased level of awareness among teachers.

However, the study also indicated that there were no significant differences in awareness or implementation across different aspects, suggesting that teachers have a fairly consistent understanding of the policy and its application in various contexts, such as dealing with discrimination, child abuse, or bullying.

## Recommendations

To further strengthen the policy's impact, the study recommends a number of actions. First, continuous professional development is crucial for teachers, as regular training, workshops, and seminars will help ensure that teachers are always up to date with the latest developments in child protection laws and practices. This would enhance their ability to recognize the signs of abuse, respond appropriately, and implement the policy effectively. Additionally, increasing the visibility of child protection policies throughout the school through posters, pamphlets, and digital media will help remind not just teachers, but also students, parents, and other stakeholders about the importance of protecting children. The school should also collaborate with local communities, child protection experts, and other partners to create a more robust support system for implementing the policy, making sure it is well integrated into the school culture.

Regular monitoring and evaluation are also vital. By establishing systems to assess how well the policy is being implemented, schools can identify gaps, gather feedback from teachers, students, and parents, and make necessary adjustments. This will ensure that the policy is not just a set of guidelines, but a living part of school operations. Furthermore, peer engagement and student education are critical in fostering a supportive, child-safe environment. Teaching students about body safety, setting boundaries, and how to report abuse can empower them to protect themselves and others. Lastly, promoting a culture of child protection involves not just the school staff but the entire community, including parents, local authorities, and social workers, who can work together to ensure that the policy is fully realized and that children are safeguarded from abuse and neglect.



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