



SENTIMENTS OF TEACHERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the sentiments of teachers in the implementation of child protection policy. The researcher used a phenomenological approach method in qualitative research employing 12 teachers from one of the public schools in Davao City, of which six of them were identified for an In-Depth Interview and six for a Focus Group Discussion, with the aid of a semi-structured interview guide. The findings of the thematic analysis of the interview transcription revealed that teachers lack a deep understanding of the policy; there is a tendency for students to abuse the policy; and teachers demand for policy amendments. In addressing such sentiments, it was noted that teachers should observe proper monitoring and coordination, embrace effective strategy to address possible students abuse of the policy, and address teachers' collective sentiments. It was then learned that the insights of teachers in the implementation of child protection policy include being accountable when difficult situations occur; realizing the importance of sharing good values with students, realizing the importance of establishing positive relationships with students and parents; and leading a child centered and policy-based institution. Overall, it is recommended that child protection policies be revisited with the support of DepEd to make recommendations for possible inclusions of protection and rights of teachers to due process in the policy and that schools are encouraged to participate in policy decision-making and implementation and building positive relationships with parents and learners.

KEYWORDS: Child protection policy, positive relationships, rights of teachers, decision-making, monitoring and coordination

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are among the most powerful figures in education. Unfortunately, the existence of the Law on Child Protection, which broadly governs the prohibition of violence, has made it easy to criminalize teachers. On May 14, 2012, the Philippines Department of Education issued Order No. 40, s. 2012, entitled "DepEd Child Protection Policy." The order mandates concerned individuals the policy and guidelines on the protection of school children against abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse. The issuance of this policy aims to safeguard the welfare of school children from all forms of violence.

However, the presence of the Child Protection Policy makes teachers hesitant to impose punishment. Teachers are frequently prevented from enforcing appropriate disciplinary measures against students and are, to some extent, accused of child abuse. Furthermore, teachers expressed their sentiments about the implementation of the Child Protection Policy, which makes it difficult for them to discipline their students because it causes havoc. They also expressed concern about taking disciplinary action against their students because they are accused of inflicting violence on their students Yenny (2019).



In Indonesia, the teacher stays in a dilemma as many cases of the administration of light corporal punishment have gone to criminal litigation and ended up with sentencing of the teacher. Concurrently, often the teacher becomes a victim of a student's disruptive behavior when they only adopt soft measures such as reprimands Remmelink, (2003).

In the Philippines, teachers are not exempted from this issue. The Department of Education, according to Elahe (as cited by Ancho, 2019), provides support to school leaders, teachers, and students in order to improve their competence in the teaching and learning process. However, in the case of discipline, it is clear that the aforementioned department order prioritizes the protection of students from physical, verbal, and sexual violence perpetrated by classmates, teachers, and other school personnel (Philippine Department of Education, 2012). As a result, the expected safe haven for students causes havoc in schools when it comes to correcting students' misbehaviors. Discipline in the classroom has become a problem, and in the worst-case scenarios, it has been equated to child abuse. As a result, the odds are stacked against the teachers. Teachers are now being bullied.

In a June 2019 report, a teacher was attacked verbally, threatened to be hot with stone, and hit with a knife. The incident took place because the teacher confronted the student for not wearing the proper uniform (GMA Public Affairs, video file, 26 June 2019). Furthermore, two teachers in Leyte and Cavite committed suicide in just two months in 2018, and according to their colleagues, they were complaining about their non-teaching related tasks, workloads, and observations (Mateo, 2018).

Disciplining students today is difficult and contentious. As previously stated, the Child Protection Policy prevents teachers from enforcing appropriate disciplinary measures against students, and they are often accused of child abuse to some extent. Furthermore, an analogy can be drawn from the Freudian tripartite personality. The policy serves as the students' id, while the discipline provided by the teachers serves as their super-ego. Because the policy has weakened the super-ego, students' id appears to be powerful and out of control. As a result, it becomes a problem (Journal Psyche, 2018).

School principals and teachers play critical roles in ensuring that the policy is implemented in their respective schools. After nearly four years of teaching in a private school I noticed that teachers have varying sentiments to the Department of Education's new policy. In addition, I also observe broadcast cases of abuse involving teachers and students, parents and children, guardians and wards, and other forms of abuse on television in which these stories are tarnishing teachers' reputations as second parents to students and the school as a second home.

As I browsed the body of literature in various information resources, I found that there were relatively few published qualitative studies about The Sentiments of Teachers on Child Protection Policy specifically in Davao City. Hence, I considered my study as a unique niche to unearth new knowledge; this opportunity enabled me to pursue an in-depth original study.

This study aims to explore the sentiments of teachers in the implementation of Child Protection Policy. It has the following specific objectives:

- To describe the sentiments of teachers in the implementation of Child Protection Policy;
- To explore the coping mechanisms of teachers in the implementation of Child Protection Policy; and
- To draw out insights of teachers in the implementation of Child Protection Policy.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher utilized the qualitative design and a phenomenology approach to better understand teachers' feelings and experiences of the teacher with the Child Protection Policy's implementation. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a research process that follows a clear methodological tradition of research, in which researchers analyze narratives and observations to build a complex and holistic framework. He further discussed that qualitative research design is more appropriate when the study requires a complex, detailed understanding of a phenomenon and when that level of detail can only be established by interviewing or observing people in their natural environment and when the voices and stories of the participants need to be heard.



Participants and Sampling

The participants in this qualitative employing phenomenological inquiry were twelve (12) teachers from one of the public schools in Davao City, which are six (6) for in-depth interview and six (6) for focused group discussion.

In addition, the researcher used purposive sampling, which Yin (2011) considers to be the most important type of non-probability sampling. The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which were best enable you to answer your research questions. Purposive sample is a non-representative subset of some larger population, and is constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose Oliver (2015).

Research Instruments

In gathering data, a semi structured interview guide used as a research tool. Semi-structured interview guide provides greater breadth or richness in data and allow participants freedom to respond to questions and probes, and to narrate their experiences without being tied down to specific answers (Meadows & Morse, 2001).

For the necessity of validation and comprehensive content of the research instrument, the researchers present the aforementioned tool to the expert validators before the researcher administers it to the participants for validity of the research tool. During my interview, I asked the informants to describe their feelings about the Child Protection Policy's implementation

Data Analysis

The following steps and procedures were done to gather the data necessary in this study.

For my in-depth interview and focused group discussion, first I secured a letter of endorsement from the Deans' Office. Second, a letter of permission submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao City Division to seek approval for the conduct of the study, third once the letter from Schools Division

Superintendent of Davao City Division is approved, a letter of permission submitted to the school principal and third, I asked for consent forms from the participants who are willing to be interviewed for the study. I prepared measures for the interview once the consent has been granted. Furthermore, because phenomenological research is focused on the participants' lived experiences, the interview begins with an in-depth interview. In this case, I able to investigate the participants' sentiments and coping mechanisms, as well as their perspectives on the implementation of the Child Protection Policy. Therefore, the data collected through interviews with audio recordings, and was analyzed and then presented thematically.

Moreover, I also conduct a focused group discussion for triangulation. To increase the credibility and validity of research findings, Triangulation method is used. According to Kruger (2003), data triangulation is used to contrast and validate the data and if it yields similar findings, saturation and exhaustion of data are achieved. All of the information gathered from the in-depth interview and focused group discussion was compared and contrasted in order to direct and focus the study's goal. This was accomplished by collecting and analyzing relevant literature and studies, as well as categorizing similarities and differences among the findings. After that, the study's implications were discussed

In establishing the validity and reliability of my study, it was my call as researcher to demonstrate trustworthiness by presenting the accurate sentiments of teachers in the implementation of Child Protection Policy. According to Crabtree (2005), qualitative research is trustworthy when it accurately represents the experiences of the participants. Similarly, when the participants' experiences are accurately presented, the research demonstrates trustworthiness (Tetler, 2007).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the sentiments of teachers on child protection policy. Specifically, the study aimed to describe the sentiments of teachers, to explore the coping mechanisms of teachers, and to draw out insights from teachers in the implementation of the Child Protection Policy. To achieve these objectives, the study employed



qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. Purposive sampling was used to identify the 12 participants for this study. They are public school teachers. To ensure ethical standards were met, informed consent was obtained. Data collection was done with the aid of a researcher-made interview guide. Thematic coding was used in the analysis of the data from the interview transcription.

The in-depth interview allowed me to learn about the teachers' feelings. The participants expressed that they experienced a lack of deep understanding of the policy; a tendency for students to abuse the policy; and teachers demand for the policy amendments. The participants emphasized that the coping mechanisms they observed proper monitoring and coordination, embrace effective strategy, and address teachers' collective sentiments. Based on sentiment and coping mechanisms, teachers draw insights in the implementation of the policy by taking accountability when difficult situations occur, sharing good values with students is important, establishing positive relationships with students and parents, and promoting the welfare of all children and making policy-based decisions.

IMPLICATIONS

Base from the findings of the study, the following implications are obtained: Deep teacher understanding is critical to the success of the policy's implementation. When teachers are unaware and without a thorough understanding of the policy, it leads to confusion and skepticism about enforcing it. This may even lead to a misunderstanding of their roles and responsibilities as direct implementors. Without it, teachers are unable to face the challenge of dealing with diverse behavior. Efficient teacher training and strong information dissemination in the implementation of the Child Protection Policy is one way to achieve the goal of raising teacher awareness. Lack of these can result in teachers failing to understand their roles and being unable to conduct a comprehensive information drive to disseminate the policy's information to the students and parents.

Despite the difficulties that the teachers faced, certain coping mechanisms were used to deal with challenges in implementing the child protection policy. Teachers cope by maintaining proper monitoring and coordination with the CPP committee and their immediate superior. It assists them in improving their ability to deliver policy in an efficient and effective manner. Another coping mechanism implored by the teachers is embracing an effective strategy. Acceptance and increasing patience, communicating with parents, and building a support system.

Acceptance and increasing patience help teachers for smooth execution of the policy. Communicating with parents shows teachers that full support and coordination are essential in shaping the attitudes of students to be more responsible, productive, empowered, and successful. And lastly, by building a support system, teachers learn to overcome their fear through sharing sessions about their experiences, ideas, and sentiments.

The teachers have learned many things because of their experience concerning the implementation of child protection policy. Despite the difficulties that teachers faced, they believed that to avoid complications, you must be accountable when difficult situations arise. Teachers also recognize the importance of sharing good values with students and establishing positive relationships with students and parents to successfully implement policies. Teachers also agree that the implementation of child protection policies should promote the welfare of all children and teacher should make decisions making based in the policy.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Based from the implications, future directions have been identified and are presented in this section.

The Department of Education may provide legal assistance to teachers in lawsuits involving student discipline and classroom management. Researchers hope that this study may propel discussions in the Department of education and law-making bodies to establish a support mechanism for teachers and school personnel, realizing the need to revisit the policy, which can help teachers and implementers to be protected while performing their responsibilities in this program, since child protection is a sensitive and delicate issue. DepEd may also initiate efforts to have direct communication with school heads as the chairpersons of the child protection committee to strictly monitor, evaluate, and initiate efforts to sustain the salient activities of the school relating to CPP implementation.

Teachers may strengthen their understanding of the policy. It is need to have a deep understanding of the policy to be aware of their role and responsibilities in implementing child protection policies. Further, efficient teacher training



about CPP and strong information dissemination should be part of the enforcement of this policy to ensure that teachers are prepared and equipped to face the task ahead of them.

Guidance advocates, as certified professionals employed in schools and academic institutions, may strengthen their assistance to sustain the main goal of the implementation of child protection policies, such as providing private counseling to students, assessing the ability and potential of students, and coordinating with fellow professionals on student matters that can help teachers to implement this policy successfully.

Finally, researchers and future researchers may continue to expand research like this to ensure teachers' well-being and positive relationships with students and parents. By doing so, successful implementation of the policy would be possible.

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