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AWARENESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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ABSTRACT

In this study, fifty-eight (58) public and private schools in San Jose City were requested to assess the level of awareness and implementation of the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012). The study employed a descriptive-comparative quantitative research design to explore differences between public and private schools and to investigate the relationship between policy awareness and its implementation. Respondents included members of Child Protection Committees (CPCs) and parents from both school types. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires covering demographic profiles, awareness levels, and implementation indicators of the Child Protection Policy. Statistical analyses included weighted means, frequency counts, correlation coefficients, and independent samples t-tests.Findings indicated that stakeholders in private schools had a higher awareness level compared to public schools. Private schools also demonstrated stronger implementation, especially in service delivery, accountability, and policy formalization. Public schools showed lower performance across these domains, with notable challenges in referral systems, coordination with external agencies, and capacity-building activities.A strong positive correlation was found between awareness and implementation in public schools ($r = 0.77$, $p = 0.03$), while private schools showed a moderately strong positive correlation ($r = 0.62$, $p = 0.02$). Significant differences were observed between public and private schools in both awareness ($t = 13.92$) and implementation ($t = 4.09$). The study underscored the need for increased awareness-building, resource allocation, and stakeholder engagement, particularly in public schools.Based on these findings, an action plan was developed emphasizing training, coordination mechanisms, and policy dissemination to enhance the effective protection of children in school settings. These results highlighted the importance of integrated child protection strategies to foster safer and more supportive learning environments.

KEYWORDS: *Child Protection Policy, Awareness, Implementation, Public Schools, Private Schools, School Safety, Stakeholder Engagement*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring the safety and well-being of children amid rapid societal changes is a fundamental responsibility. In the Philippines, children are highly valued and granted rights from birth, including the right to protection. Their developmental vulnerability and dependence on adults necessitate nurturing environments for their emotional and social growth.

Government and non-government agencies, such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Council for the Welfare of Children, and the Department of Education, work to uphold children's rights. The DepEd Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012) and the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013 (RA 10627) are among the key legal frameworks designed to protect students from abuse, violence, and exploitation in schools.

Despite these efforts, studies reveal high rates of violence against children. According to WHO and national data, a significant number of Filipino children face physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, particularly within school environments. The 2022 PISA results further report that bullying affects one in three Filipino students, exceeding international averages.

The researcher, having served as a Child Protection Policy Coordinator, identified key challenges in implementing these policies. These include limited resources, lack of training, and resistance from school personnel. Moreover, a gap remains in awareness and consistent policy application, especially in elementary schools. Most existing studies focus on public high schools, prompting the researcher to investigate the level of awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy among public and private elementary school stakeholders.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is to determine the level of awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy in the
Public and Private Elementary Schools in San Jose City.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer to the following questions;

1. How may the level of awareness of the respondents on DepEd's Child Protection Policy be described?
2. How may the school level implementation of child protection policy be described in terms of:
   - 2.1 policy;
   - 2.2 organization
   - 2.3 coordination
   - 2.4 capabilities
   - 2.5 service delivery
   - 2.6 accountability
3. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' level of awareness and the level of implementation of Child Protection Policy in their respective schools?

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4. Is there a significant difference between the public and private elementary schools' level of awareness and level of implementation of Child Protection Policy?
5. What plan of action may be proposed based on the findings of the study?

3. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational and comparative research design to assess the level of awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy in public and private elementary schools. The descriptive-correlational design aimed to determine the relationship between awareness and implementation, while the comparative design was used to analyze differences between public and private schools. These approaches provided a comprehensive understanding of how school context and stakeholder awareness influence the implementation of child protection measures.

2.1. Sampling Procedure

For data collection, it was assumed that all respondents in this study were able to provide the necessary data to answer the research questions. The nature of data collection was entirely voluntary on the part of the respondents.

To select the representative population, purposive sampling was employed by the researcher, a strategy selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. The goal was to include individuals who were particularly knowledgeable or had experience with the phenomenon of interest. In the words of Memon et al. (2025), purposive sampling involved selecting participants based on their ability to provide specific insights or information relevant to the research question. This method helped ensure that the sample was well-suited to explore the specific problems the study aimed to address.

In this study, purposive sampling was used to focus on particular groups of people who were essential for answering the research questions effectively, ensuring that the data gathered would be both rich and meaningful.

2.2. Respondents

The respondents of this study consisted of the members of the Child Protection Committees (CPCs) and parents from both public and private elementary schools in the Schools Division of San Jose City.

The CPC members were selected as key participants due to their designated roles in overseeing and implementing the Child Protection Policy in their respective schools. A total of six (6) CPCs participated in the study, each composed of the School Head, Child Protection Coordinator, Faculty President, PTA President, SELG President, and Barangay Council Representative. These individuals provided insights into the awareness and implementation of child protection measures through a structured survey.

To support the data gathered from the CPCs, parents from the fifty (50) public and eight (8) private elementary schools were purposively selected. These parents were chosen based on their active involvement in school activities and their capacity to assess the effectiveness of child protection efforts in their children's schools.

Both groups of respondents voluntarily participated in the study, offering critical perspectives that contributed to a comprehensive evaluation of the Child Protection Policy's implementation.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Awareness on the Child Protection Policy

The findings revealed a consistent gap in Child Protection Policy awareness between public and private school stakeholders. While private school respondents were generally "Aware," public school stakeholders were only "Slightly Aware." Both groups recognized the existence of the policy, particularly its anti-abuse provisions, but varied significantly in their understanding of its legal basis and implementation procedures.

This gap reflects the findings of David et al. (2021), who noted that surface-level awareness often lacks depth. Private schools, with stronger communication systems (Llego, 2019) and structured support (Ramos & Francisco, 2020), still showed only moderate understanding of technical aspects like the CRC. Public schools, meanwhile, faced more pronounced barriers in access and training.

Overall, both sectors need strengthened capacity-building initiatives. As Delos Santos & Ganal (2022) and UNICEF (2020) stress, deep policy comprehension and training in positive discipline are vital for effective implementation.

4.2. Implementation Level of the Child Protection Policy

The findings revealed a clear disparity in Child Protection Policy implementation between public and private schools across six key dimensions. Private schools generally demonstrated stronger implementation particularly in policy, organization, coordination, service delivery, and accountability while public schools were mostly rated as "Slightly Implemented."

Private schools showed proactive practices like regular policy reviews and structured accountability, aligning with Becker & Cook (2017) and Jenkins & McPartland (2017), who stress the importance of feedback and transparency. In contrast, public schools lagged, often lacking updated policies, clear coordination, and inclusive accountability systems—some areas were even "Not Implemented at all."

Both sectors shared weaknesses in "Capabilities," particularly in training and referral systems, supporting Cubio & Bagnol (2025) and Save the Children (2016), who call for stronger capacity-building efforts.

Overall, while private schools outperformed public ones, both need improvements in student participation, stakeholder engagement, and policy monitoring to ensure meaningful and inclusive implementation, as emphasized by UNICEF (2021) and Cervancia et al. (2019).

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4.3. Relationship between the level of awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy

There was a statistically significant positive relationship between awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy in both public and private schools. In public schools, this relationship was strong, while in private schools, it was moderately strong. These findings suggest that when Child Protection Committee members and parents are more aware of the policy, its implementation tends to be more effective and consistent.

These findings support Hall and Hord (2015) and Fixsen et al. (2019), who argue that awareness enhances both understanding and commitment, essential for successful implementation. Santos et al. (2020) and Moreno et al. (2021) likewise highlight the role of training and information in improving compliance.

While gaps in implementation remain, particularly in public schools, the results underscore the importance of sustained awareness-building efforts alongside capacity development and continuous monitoring (Zaragoza et al., 2022; Flores & Padilla, 2023).

4.4. Difference between Private and Public Schools' Level of Awareness and Implementation of Child Protection Policy

Significant differences were found in both awareness and implementation levels of the Child Protection Policy between public and private schools. Private school stakeholders demonstrated higher awareness and stronger implementation, likely due to better access to training, resources, and administrative support. This supports findings by Cervancia et al. (2019) and Ramos (2018), who emphasize the role of institutional capacity in effective policy enactment.

These results highlight the need for more equitable resource allocation and capacity-building efforts in public schools affirming the importance of sustained investment in awareness programs and implementation support to ensure child protection across all educational settings.

4.5. Proposed Action Plan to Improve the Awareness and Implementation of Child Protection Policy

The proposed action plan focuses on enhancing stakeholder awareness, improving the capacity of Child Protection Committees, strengthening coordination efforts, and reducing disparities between public and private schools. By fostering a unified, well-informed, and responsive approach to child protection, the goal is to create a safer, more inclusive environment for all students in San Jose City.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Stakeholders in both public and private schools in San Jose City show some awareness of the Child Protection Policy, but their understanding remains limited. While they know the policy exists, many lack knowledge of its legal basis, processes, and specific provisions indicating that awareness efforts have not fully conveyed its key details, which may hinder proper implementation.
2. Both public and private schools in San Jose City face challenges in implementing the Child Protection Policy. While private schools show stronger implementation, both sectors struggle with coordination and supporting students with special needs due to limited resources and weak stakeholder collaboration.
3. There is a significant positive correlation between awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy in both public and private schools. Higher awareness among stakeholders leads to better policy enforcement, underscoring the need for ongoing education and training.
4. There is a significant difference in awareness and implementation of the Child Protection Policy between public and private schools. Private schools perform better due to greater resources and training opportunities, while public schools face limitations that hinder effective implementation.
5. In response to the findings of this study, an action plan has been developed to address four main areas: increasing awareness of the CPP, improving its implementation, strengthening stakeholder coordination, and reducing the disparity between public and private schools. The ultimate goal is to build a safer, more inclusive, and effectively protected educational environment for all students in San Jose City.

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