

Exploring the Approaches and Challenges of Schools' Implementation of Child Protection Policy

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the approaches and challenges met by schools in implementing the Child Protection Policy (CCP). The study results are as follows: the participants remarked three (3) approaches based on the results, namely: essence of child protection policy in education setting; handling cases under the child protection policy; and components of an efficient child protection policy; participants recognized four (4) important challenges raised such as challenges in implementing child protection policy; roles and responsibilities in implementing child protection policy; stakeholders' responsibilities in enhancing child safety; and learning and understanding in implementing child protection policy; and a proposed policy framework is being proposed for adaption by the schools for teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Child protection is a global priority, especially in schools where children's safety and welfare must be ensured (UNESCO, 2017; DepEd, 2012). In the Philippines, DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 mandates the CPP to address abuse, raise awareness, and enable reporting through school-community collaborations, including training and partnerships with barangays and parents.

Recent data reveals persistent gaps: over 10,000 public schools lack localized anti-bullying policies, violating the 2013 Anti-Bullying Act (EDCOM 2 Communications, 2024), with bullying harming academic performance in math and science (DepEd, 2025). In one of the Schools Division Offices (SDOs) in Central Luzon, Philippines (2023), 15 bullying cases, 3 suspected physical abuses, and 2 online exploitations were addressed via reporting, counseling, and investigations—yet challenges like inconsistent protocols, stakeholder unawareness, limited resources, and teachers' poor grasp of guidelines persist (Sapul, 2022). In the paper by Asio et al. (2020), they revealed the awareness of teachers and how their schools comply with the implementation of the program. With the advent of technology, there is also a proliferation of cyberbullying (Asio et al., 2022; Costales et al., 2022), which might also affect students online.

In terms of school management, the said program is very relevant and sometimes controversial since it is not only the children that we are talking about here. Teachers, parents, and school administrators are also involved. This might also cause some mental, emotional or stress issues among teachers (Jimenez, 2021a; Riego de Dios, 2020) and which may affect their professional development (Asio & Jimenez, 2020a) and their delivery of effective classroom strategies like mediation activities (Asio & Jimenez, 2020b) or other alternative mode of learning (Obispo et al., 2023; Asio & Jimenez, 2021; Jimenez, 2021b; Jimenez 2021c). Similarly, school heads with their 21st century leadership skills (De Castro & Jimenez, 2022) can also reiterate the context of the program based on their sound decision-making and judgment. On the other hand, parental discipline strategies (Asio, 2023) or parental self-efficacy (Asio, 2025) may also be affected, including family relationships (Riego de Dios & Guevara, 2024).

Despite a strong commitment to safeguarding children from abuse, exploitation, and violence, implementation inconsistencies remain. This study explores these approaches and challenges in Malolos schools, identifying trends to propose a tailored, community-responsive framework. Aligned with local norms, it offers proactive guidelines, accountability, and support systems for sustainable CPP enforcement.

The study enhances practices in Bulacan, provides reference frameworks for organizations, ensures structured policy flow, and positions Malolos as a model for comprehensive child protection in education—benefiting administrators, educators, and learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Social Learning Theory

The theoretical framework for this study was grounded in Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1960), as cited by Firmansyah and Saepuloh (2022) which suggests that individuals acquire behaviors by observing, imitating, and

modeling others within their social environment. Learning is not merely cognitive but occurs within a social context, influenced by interactions with role models such as family, peers, and institutional figures. This theory emphasizes that individuals are more likely to adopt behaviors demonstrated by those they admire or trust, highlighting the role of modeling and reinforcement in shaping behavior.

This theory also emphasized the importance of observational learning, where individuals acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs by watching the actions of others and the consequences that follow, leading to the modeling and adoption of observed behaviors. It highlighted three key processes: observation of a behavior, imitation of that behavior, and reinforcement, whether positive or negative, that solidifies learning. This framework was particularly relevant in environments where individuals, especially children, rely heavily on social cues to navigate norms and values. It stressed the importance of consistent modeling and reinforcement for effective learning and behavioral adoption.

Teacher's behaviors can be learned through observation and interaction with role models, who exemplify acceptable or unacceptable behaviors. These behaviors are the ones people learn by observing and imitating others. In the Philippine educational context, Social Learning Theory provides a lens to understand the implementation challenges and opportunities of the CPP. Schools act as critical social environments where learners observe and emulate behaviors demonstrated by teachers and administrators. Consistent enforcement of CPP provisions, such as addressing child abuse and creating safe spaces, serves as a model for learners to internalize protective behaviors.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature, this study proposes a conceptual framework in which explores the lived experiences of teachers on the approaches and challenges encountered in the implementation of child protection policy in schools.

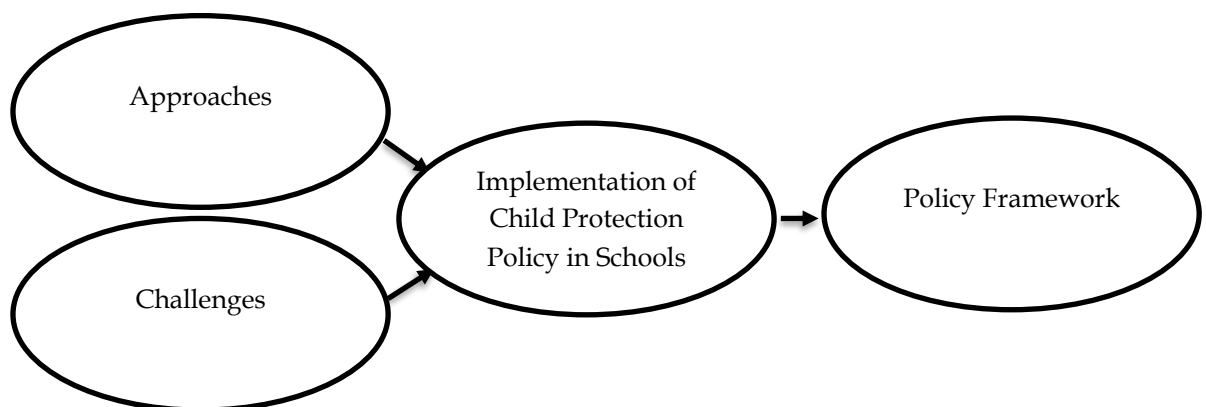


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the Hermeneutic Phenomenology research design to gather lived experiences of teachers as regards approaches and challenges in implementing the Child Protection Policy (CPP). This is a qualitative type of research (Asio, 2021) that delve into understanding phenomenon based on analyzing and interpreting the meaning of an individual's personal experiences. This explored how teachers are effectively addressing the issues met in implementing the CPP in schools. To provide an overall understanding of the current state of CPP, a qualitative group discussion to gather teachers' personal experiences and challenges. This led to the purpose of the research in identifying potential gaps in both approaches and challenges of the teachers relative to CPP implementation by highlighting the areas of improvement that served as the basis for the development of a policy implementation plan. Hence, this approach assured that individual viewpoints or perceptions were important to provide a comprehensive picture of the CPP's impact on education. Van Manen (2014) cited by Dangal (2020) defined hermeneutics as the theory and practice of interpretation. It is a method of textual analysis with an artful form of understanding and a process of exposing hidden meaning.

The participants for this study were 15 public secondary school teachers selected from public schools in Central Luzon, Philippines. The 15 key informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique and based on the set criteria (a) secondary Values Education teachers with a background in the policy; (b) class advisers who have diverse perspectives on the policy; (c) guidance teachers who have varying levels of experiences on the topic. Teachers with a record of violating the CPP and involvement in such violations are excluded.

The researcher developed the interview protocol for the open-ended questions to be used in the semi-structured interviews anchored on the focus of the study. The indicative interview questions allowed the informants to describe and present the approaches and challenges that teachers encountered in implementing CPP in schools. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher asked an open-ended "grand tour question" such as "How long have you been working in the school as a teacher?" This approach encouraged an open environment for informants to discuss their unique experiences relevant to the present study. Toward the end of the interview, the researcher allowed the informants to summarize or conclude the session by asking them about specific policy framework they might have in mind that could best support the improvement of the approaches in implementing CCP in schools by teachers who were also dealing with various challenges related to the implementation of CCP.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Different Approaches that Teachers Used in the Implementation of the Child Protection Policy

The focus on the Child Protection Policy's importance for educational practice underscores its significance in shaping a safe and supportive learning environment. By adhering to the policy, educators can ensure student safety, well-being, and trust, while also upholding legal and moral responsibilities. The policy's role in informing learners about safety measures and promoting a

conducive learning atmosphere highlights its broader impact on creating a culture of respect, protection, and holistic development within schools.

In conclusion, these subthemes collectively emphasize the critical role of the Child Protection Policy in guiding educators, administrators, and school staff in creating a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment for learners. By providing guidelines for addressing abuse, promoting student safety and well-being, and informing educational practice, the policy plays a fundamental role in upholding learners' rights and well-being in educational settings. It is strongly supported by Putri et al. (2019) that child protection in the paradigm of religion and national law is a form of responsibility, and has educational rules, and legal provisions that are inextricably linked to the elements of human rights. Moreover, Roche et al. (2024) pointed out the governance roles of transnational actors in child and family welfare programs, the commodification of children that these transnational dynamics engender, and the Philippines' dependence on international actors to support children's welfare.

Table 1. Importance of Policy in the Institution

Major Theme	Subtheme	Analysis
Essence of Child Protection Policy in Education Setting	Guidelines for Addressing Abuse	Participants emphasize the critical role of the Child Protection Policy in providing guidelines for addressing and responding to cases of abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, and bullying within educational settings. The policy ensures that incidents are handled promptly and confidentially, with involvement from appropriate authorities, to safeguard the welfare of learners.
	Promotion of Student Safety and Well-Being	Educators highlight the significance of the Child Protection Policy in promoting student safety, well-being, and rights within the school environment. The policy acts as a concrete guide to address student needs, protect them from harm, and create a nurturing and supportive educational atmosphere that prioritizes the welfare of learners.
	Importance of Policy in the Educational Practice	Participants underscore the importance of the Child Protection Policy in guiding educational practice and ensuring a safe, supportive, and legally compliant environment for learners, teachers, and parents. The policy promotes student safety, well-being, and trust, while also informing learners about safety measures. It is seen as a crucial element in upholding the rights and well-being of children, fostering a conducive learning environment, and facilitating learners in reaching their full potential.

By documenting facts, following school protocols, and providing emotional support throughout the process, educators aim to ensure that situations are handled appropriately, fostering trust, and making learners feel protected and supported.

To summarize, these subthemes collectively emphasize the critical role of initial strategies in handling cases under the Child Protection Policy, underscoring the importance of assessment, communication, support for learners, collaboration, and intervention planning in safeguarding learners'

rights, safety, and well-being within educational environments. This is because the experiences of violence deeply impact the “whole child” (Ozaki, 2020).

By focusing on initial strategies for handling cases under the CPP, educators acknowledge the pivotal role of assessment, communication, support for learners, collaboration, and intervention planning in ensuring the safety and well-being of learners within the school environment. These strategies serve as the first line of defense in responding to incidents promptly, maintaining confidentiality, and providing necessary assistance to both victims and perpetrators. Because the behavioral and emotional disorders of children and adolescents receiving protection or care exhibit notable variations in the number of children in the family (Kucukkaragoz et al., 2024).

Table 2. Strategies for Learner’s Assistance on the Policy

Major Theme	Subtheme	Analysis
Handling Cases under the Child Protection Policy	Assessment and Reporting Procedures	Educators emphasize the importance of proper assessment and reporting procedures in handling cases under the Child Protection Policy. These strategies involve conducting background checks, assessments, and interviews with learners to gather information, ensuring confidentiality, and informing relevant school committees for further processing. Home visitation, parent education, and family support interventions are also highlighted as essential steps in addressing cases effectively and ensuring the well-being of learners.
	Communication and Support for Learners	Participants highlight the significance of effective communication and support for learners in handling cases under the CPP. Strategies include engaging in conversations with learners to understand the situation, ensuring a safe and private space for discussions, active listening, asking open-ended questions, offering emotional support, and ensuring immediate safety through appropriate actions such as providing written statements, notifying advisers, and accompanying learners to ensure their well-being. These approaches aim to foster trust, maintain confidentiality, and provide a supportive environment for learners during challenging situations.
	Collaboration and Intervention	Educators stress the importance of collaboration and intervention planning in handling cases under the CPP. Seeking insights from guidance advocates or teachers, collaborating with school committees, and following school protocols are essential steps in ensuring appropriate handling of situations. Providing emotional support, seeking advice from colleagues, and documenting facts contribute to fostering trust, ensuring student well-being, and creating a supportive environment for learners in need of assistance.

Conducting orientations, seminars, and aligning with policies and laws are essential for ensuring that the policy remains effective and up to date. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, policy statements, and ongoing training and education are key components

that contribute to the success of the CPP and the overall safety and well-being of learners in educational settings.

In conclusion, these subthemes collectively underscore the critical role of key components in shaping an effective Child Protection Policy within educational environments. By focusing on dissemination, training, implementation, and evaluation, schools can establish a robust framework for safeguarding learners, creating a culture of safety, accountability, and continuous improvement in child protection practices. This complements – that there is a consensus that trauma-informed education offers children connection, and it is beneficial to the child’s emotional well-being to have a relationship with a stable, predictable adult (Viliers, 2022). In trauma-informed education, the teacher would offer the child empathy and connection as well as stability and predictability. However, Homma (2021) immigrant families often struggled when teachers were involved in their family life in the name of welfare.

Table 3. Effective Components of the Child Protection Policy

Major Theme	Subtheme	Analysis
Components of an Efficient Child Protection Policy	Dissemination and Awareness of Policy	Educators emphasize the importance of disseminating the child protection policy effectively and raising awareness among teachers, learners, stakeholders, and parents. Empowerment through education on rights, safety, and procedures is key to ensuring that all involved parties understand and adhere to the policy. By engaging stakeholders and ensuring awareness of policy provisions, schools can create a culture of safety and accountability.
	Training and Implementation Protocols	Participants highlight the importance of training and implementing protocols in ensuring the effectiveness of the child protection policy. Comprehensive training for staff, clear procedures for responding to concerns, and mechanisms for participation enhance the ability of schools to address and prevent issues effectively. Confidentiality, data protection, staff screening, and continuous monitoring and support contribute to creating a safe environment for learners and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency within educational institutions.
	Evaluation and Continuous Improvement	Educators stress the importance of evaluating programs, monitoring services, and seeking continuous improvement in the implementation of the child protection policy. Conducting orientations, seminars, and aligning with policies and laws ensure that the policy remains effective and up to date. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities, policy statements, training, and education are crucial components that contribute to the success of the CPP and the safety and well-being of learners in educational settings.

Different Challenges that Teachers Encountered in the Implementation of the Child Protection Policy

Establishing clear communication channels, reinforcing policy guidelines, and promoting responsible use of rights are essential in addressing these challenges and ensuring the policy's effectiveness in safeguarding children's well-being and safety.

To finalize, these subthemes collectively highlight the critical challenges faced in implementing the Child Protection Policy within educational environments. By addressing issues related to awareness and training, parental and community engagement, and communication consistency and misuse, schools can work towards overcoming these obstacles and creating a safe and supportive environment for learners, ultimately ensuring their protection and well-being.

Castino (2023) revealed that the practices observed by the respondents in child protection in terms of anti-bullying and discrimination are educating learners on how to deal with bullying properly and strictly implementing the anti-bullying campaign. The practices observed in child protection in terms of violence and exploitation are educating learners about their rights as children, informing pupils that different agencies handle issues on violations against the rights of the youth and giving special attention to the misbehaved pupils.

Table 4. Effective Components of the Child Protection Policy

Major Theme	Subtheme	Analysis
Challenges in Implementing Child Protection Policy	Lack of Awareness and Training	Educators highlight the challenge of lack of awareness and training as a significant barrier in effectively implementing the Child Protection Policy. Issues such as complex family situations, insufficient resources, and difficulties in identifying and supporting vulnerable children underscore the need for extensive training, awareness campaigns, increased funding, and collaboration with other agencies to address these challenges. Lack of cooperation from parents and understanding of the policy itself further complicate the implementation process, emphasizing the importance of education and communication in overcoming these obstacles
	Parental and Community Engagement	Educators address the challenges related to parental and community engagement in implementing the Child Protection Policy. Uncooperative parents, lack of understanding or agreement with the policy, and resistance to external involvement pose significant obstacles in ensuring the safety and well-being of learners. Building trust, conducting open communication, awareness campaigns, and fostering engagement with parents and the community are essential to overcoming these challenges and establishing a collaborative environment focused on child protection efforts.
	Consistency of Communication and Misuse	Participants highlight challenges related to consistency of communication and misuse of the Child Protection Policy. Issues such as entitled parents and learners abusing the policy, lack of communication among committee members, and misuse of rights by parents and children pose obstacles to effective implementation. Addressing these challenges

		requires establishing clear communication channels, reinforcing policy guidelines, and promoting responsible use of rights to ensure the policy's effectiveness in protecting children's well-being and safety.
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These subthemes collectively underscore the essential roles and responsibilities that educators and stakeholders have in implementing the Child Protection Policy. By focusing on awareness, education, collaboration, and support, schools can establish a strong foundation for child protection, creating a safe and nurturing environment where the well-being and rights of learners are prioritized and protected. Studies have proven that there were significant differences in the results observed in the awareness of teachers and the responsiveness of the schools (Asio, et.al. 2020). However, Bayucca, (2020) found out that most of the teachers are aware of the Child Protection Policy, but its implementation in the schools is not that rigid. It is recommended that implementing the Child Protection Policy be monitored and a more comprehensive information drive be given to teachers.

Table 5. Stakeholder's Role in Supporting the CPP

Major Theme	Subtheme	Analysis
Roles and Responsibilities in Implementing Child Protection Policy	Awareness and Implementation of Policy	Educators stress the importance of awareness and proper implementation of the Child Protection Policy. By ensuring that all stakeholders understand the policy and their roles in implementing it, schools can create a culture of safety and accountability. Active involvement in committees, dissemination of information, and adherence to guidelines play a crucial role in effectively implementing the policy and safeguarding children in educational settings.
	Educational Role and Reporting Procedures	Participants emphasize the educational role and reporting procedures in implementing the Child Protection Policy. Educators play a crucial role in raising awareness about child abuse, reporting suspected cases of violence, and ensuring a safe environment for learners. Educating learners on their rights, recognizing signs of abuse, following protocols, and collaborating with parents and authorities are integral aspects of creating a protective environment and responding effectively to child protection issues in schools.
	Collaboration and Support	Educators highlight the importance of collaboration and support in implementing the Child Protection Policy. Teachers play a key role in consistently implementing rules, informing learners of the policy's benefits, and fostering partnerships with external stakeholders for accountability. Promoting uniform application of the policy, connecting with learners, offering support services like counseling, and collaborating with the barangay for external assistance are essential components in creating a comprehensive approach to child protection in schools.

In summary, these subthemes collectively underscore the critical responsibilities that stakeholders have in ensuring child safety within the school environment. By aligning with policies and guidelines, providing training and supervision, and actively engaging in the community, stakeholders can work together to create a protective and supportive environment where children can learn and thrive in a safe and nurturing atmosphere.

Table 6. Stakeholder’s Role in Supporting the CPP

Major Theme	Subtheme	Analysis
Stakeholders' Responsibilities in Enhancing Child Safety	Alignment with Policies and Guidelines	Participants emphasize the importance of alignment with policies and guidelines among stakeholders to ensure child safety in the school environment. By communicating and reiterating the importance of the policy, stakeholders can work together to create a safe and protective environment for learners. Active involvement from all stakeholders, including parents, local leaders, and community organizations, is crucial in safeguarding children and promoting a culture of vigilance and protection against abuse within educational settings.
	Training and Supervision	Participants highlight the importance of training, supervision, and collaboration among stakeholders to enhance child safety in the school environment. Familiarizing staff with policies and procedures, promoting open communication between parents and teachers, ensuring staff training, establishing referral systems, advocating for policy change, and providing support to victims are essential components in creating a safe and secure learning environment. Collaboration among administrators, teachers, parents, learners, and the community is vital in upholding child safety and well-being within educational settings.
	Community Engagement and Support	Participants emphasize community engagement and support as crucial elements in enhancing child safety within the school environment. By actively involving parents, local leaders, and community organizations, stakeholders can contribute to safeguarding children and promoting a secure learning environment. Reporting concerns promptly, recognizing signs of abuse or neglect, and upholding principles of care, respect, empathy, and integrity are essential in creating a respectful and supportive atmosphere for children in educational settings.

In conclusion, these subthemes collectively underscore the critical role that learning and understanding play in implementing the Child Protection Policy within educational environments. By continuously improving their knowledge, recognizing the importance of prevention and early intervention, and fostering a culture of safety and respect, stakeholders can create a protective environment that prioritizes the well-being and rights of learners, ensuring a safe and nurturing atmosphere for learning. This is to avoid situations like, when children cannot remain at home due to safety concerns, Child Protection & Permanency

may ask the family court to place the child into foster care and to seek another permanent home for children who cannot be safely reunified with their parent(s) within the timeframes provided by law (Coogan et al., 2024). Because it is the right of every child to have a healthy environment, formal education, and a loving family (Lim, 2022).

Table 7. Stakeholder’s Role in Supporting the CPP

Major Theme	Subtheme	Analysis
Learning and Understanding in Implementing Child Protection Policy	Value of Learning and Understanding	Educators emphasize the value of learning and understanding in implementing the Child Protection Policy. By recognizing the importance of training, development, and understanding the policy's guidelines, stakeholders can improve their ability to recognize signs of abuse, respond effectively, and maintain professional boundaries. Learning about different laws and protocols related to child protection enhances the capacity of educators to safeguard children and address potential risks in educational settings.
	Prevention and Early Intervention	Participants highlight the significance of prevention and early intervention in implementing the Child Protection Policy. By fostering collaboration, ongoing training, and open communication, stakeholders can address child protection concerns effectively and create a safe environment for students. Emphasizing the importance of teamwork, continuous development, and taking early action can help in preventing child abuse and neglect, promoting a culture of safety and well-being within educational institutions.
	Relevance and Continuous Improvement	Educators emphasize the relevance and continuous improvement in implementing the Child Protection Policy. By understanding the policy, taking appropriate actions, focusing on prevention, building trust with students, educating them about their rights and boundaries, and promoting a culture of respect and safety, stakeholders can enhance child safety and well-being in schools. Recognizing the importance of continual learning, building relationships, and prioritizing student safety contributes to creating a supportive and secure learning environment for children.

The researcher's thorough examination outlines the major themes and subthemes related to CCP implementation in educational settings, provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in safeguarding children within the educational environment.

Table 8. Stakeholder’s Role in Supporting the CPP

Major Themes	Subthemes
1) Essence of Child Protection Policy in Education Setting	• Guidelines for Addressing Abuse
	• Promotion of Student Safety and Well-Being
	• Importance of Policy in the Educational Practice

2) Handling Cases under the Child Protection Policy	• Assessment and Reporting Procedures
	• Communication and Support for Students
	• Collaboration and Intervention
3) Components of an Efficient Child Protection Policy	• Dissemination and Awareness of Policy
	• Training and Implementation Protocols
	• Evaluation and Continuous Improvement
4) Challenges in Implementing Child Protection Policy	• Lack of Awareness and Training
	• Parental and Community Engagement
	• Consistency of Communication and Misuse
5) Roles and Responsibilities in Implementing Child Protection Policy	• Awareness and Implementation of Policy
	• Educational Role and Reporting Procedures
	• Collaboration and Support
6) Stakeholders' Responsibilities in Enhancing Child Safety	• Alignment with Policies and Guidelines
	• Training and Supervision
	• Community Engagement and Support
7) Learning and Understanding in Implementing Child Protection Policy	• Value of Learning and Understanding
	• Prevention and Early Intervention
	• Relevance and Continuous Improvement

Proposed Policy Framework

The figure shows the policy framework for teachers which primarily deals with the approaches and challenges encountered by teachers in implementing the CCP. Further, each stakeholder's roles and responsibilities shall be to exercise special parental authority and responsibility over the child, keep them in their company, and support, educate, and instruct them by right precept and good example. These considerable factors all affect child behavior and performance in school. Learners are the center of the schools and the educational landscape of the department so they must be given utmost attention and support where school serves as the safe space for them to collaborate and learn with one another.

Overall, this framework recognizes the importance of teachers' participation and school initiatives and support in implementing the CCP at all costs, coupled with a sound and safe environment for learning free from abuse, exploitation, discrimination, and other forms of violence. It also helps teachers to apply strategically appropriate and meaningful approaches grounded on legal actions and current situations to promote children's well-being.

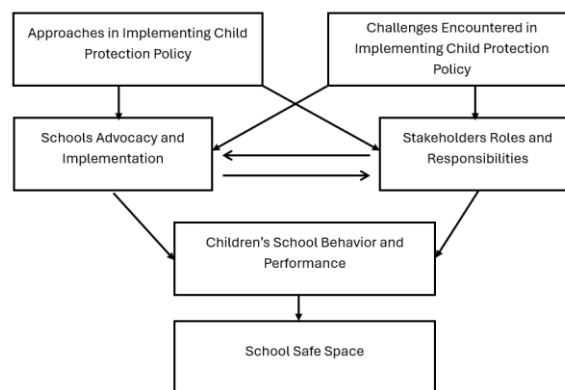


Figure 2. Proposed Policy Framework

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, teachers provide a conceptual understanding of the adoption of strategies in implementing CCP and the different challenges and opportunities about CPP through the demonstrated behavior of their colleagues and administrators wherein they become responsive and aware of the CPP provisions safeguarding the children from abuse and violence by creating safe spaces and becoming models for learners. Furthermore, a policy framework is being proposed for the schools to align the needs of teachers in implementing CCP to support children.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

The results of the study may be used as a springboard to conduct the same ground or similar study pertaining to the current status of teachers on the implementation of CCP in their locale in order to bridge the gap through valuable data analysis and insights from this study into unexplored area of educational research like compatibility of teachers for other levels of governance.

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