

Learners' Satisfaction with School and Child Protection Policy Implementation in Public and Sectarian Elementary Schools in Cagayan

Sisay M, Abbang, MaEd, Marcelo Raquepo, Ph.D.

Logac Adventist Multigrade School, Inc. Logac, Lallo, Cagayan, Philippines

Cagayan State University Lallo Campus, Lallo, Cagayan, Philippines

Marcelo Raquepo: mhar_raq@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The Child Protection Policy (CPP) serves as a fundamental mechanism for ensuring the safety, well-being, and holistic development of learners in Philippine schools. This study aims to determine the relationship between the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and learners' general satisfaction with their school experiences in public and sectarian elementary schools in Cagayan. Specifically, it compares the extent of CPP implementation between the two school sectors and examines whether differences in implementation influence learners' satisfaction. Employing a quantitative descriptive-correlational design supplemented by qualitative validation interviews, the study involves Grades 4–6 learners, teachers, and selected parents from three public elementary schools and six Seventh-day Adventist multigrade schools. Data are collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed through descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and independent samples t-test. The study is expected to provide evidence that effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy contributes significantly to learners' positive school experiences and offers recommendations for strengthening child protection practices in elementary schools.

Keywords: Child Protection Policy, learner satisfaction, public schools, sectarian schools, elementary education, school safety.

INTRODUCTION

Schools play an essential role in promoting children's physical, emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Beyond providing academic instruction, schools are expected to maintain a learning environment where every child feels safe, respected, and protected. However, incidents of bullying, abuse, discrimination, and violence continue to affect learners despite existing legal safeguards.

The Philippine government has strengthened child protection through Republic Act No. 7610 and Department of Education Order No. 40, s. 2012, which institutionalizes the Child Protection Policy in all public and private schools. These policies emphasize the prevention of child abuse, exploitation, violence, bullying, and discrimination while promoting learners' rights and welfare.

Despite these policy frameworks, little empirical evidence compares the implementation of the Child Protection Policy between public and sectarian elementary schools and examines how policy implementation affects learners' satisfaction with school experiences.

Grounded on the Systems Theory, the study considers the implementation of the Child Protection Policy as an institutional process that influences learners' perceptions of school safety, teacher support, peer relationships, and overall satisfaction.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of Child Protection Policy implementation in public and sectarian elementary schools?
2. What is the level of learners' general satisfaction with school experiences?
3. Is there a significant difference in CPP implementation between public and sectarian schools?
4. Is there a significant relationship between CPP implementation and learners' school satisfaction?

The findings are expected to assist school administrators, teachers, parents, and policymakers in strengthening child protection programs that enhance learner well-being and educational outcomes.

METHODS

Research design

The study employs a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design with supplementary qualitative validation interviews. The descriptive component determines the level of implementation of the Child Protection Policy and learners' school satisfaction, while the correlational component examines the relationship between these variables.

Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted in three public elementary schools in the Gattaran West District and six Seventh-day Adventist Multigrade Elementary Schools in Cagayan. The participants consisted of Grades 4–6 learners and their teachers from the selected schools. In addition, selected parents were included in validation interviews to provide supporting information and verify selected survey findings. The participants were chosen to obtain comprehensive perspectives on learners' school experiences and the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in both public and sectarian school settings.

Research Instrument

The study utilized two structured questionnaires as the primary data-gathering instruments. The Teacher Questionnaire collected information on the teachers' demographic profile, values education programs implemented in the school, the extent of Child Protection Policy implementation, challenges encountered during implementation, and school interventions employed to address child protection concerns. The Learner Questionnaire gathered data on the learners' demographic profile, satisfaction with themselves, satisfaction with their teachers, satisfaction with the school environment, peer relationships, and overall

school experiences. Both questionnaires employed a four-point Likert scale to measure the respondents' perceptions and levels of agreement.

Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administrators of the participating schools. Upon approval, the researcher personally administered and retrieved all questionnaires to ensure a high response rate and maintain the accuracy and completeness of the data. Selected parents also participated in validation interviews to corroborate and enrich the survey findings, thereby strengthening the credibility of the study.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to describe the demographic profiles of the respondents and the implementation of school programs. Weighted mean was employed to determine the level of implementation of the Child Protection Policy and the learners' level of satisfaction with their school experiences. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to examine the relationship between Child Protection Policy implementation and learners' satisfaction, while the Independent Samples *t*-test was utilized to determine significant differences between public and sectarian elementary schools. All statistical analyses were tested at the **0.05 level of significance**.

RESULTS

Profile of the Teachers

Table 1. Profile of the Teachers (n = 25)

Age

Variables	Frequency	Percent
30 & Below	3	12.0
31 - 35	3	12.0
36 - 40	10	40.0
41 - 45	3	12.0
46 & Above	6	24.0
Mean = 40.66		SD = 9.99

Sex

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Male	1	4.0
Female	24	96.0

Civil Status

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Single	5	20.0
Married	18	72.0
Widowed/Separated	2	8.0

Highest Educational Attainment

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's Degree	23	92.0
Female	2	8.0

Years in Teaching

Variables	Frequency	Percent
1-5	8	32.0
6-10	6	24.0
11 - 15	3	12.0
16 - 20	3	12.0
21 & Above	5	20.0
Mean = 12.52		SD = 10.42

Present Position

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Teacher I	15	60.0
Teacher II	1	4.0
Teacher III	9	36.0

School Affiliation

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Public	15	60.0
Private Sectarian	10	40.0

Profile of the Learners

Table 2. Profile of the Learners (n = 181)

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Public School	95	52.5
Private Sectarian	86	47.5
Male	88	48.6
Female	93	51.4
Age 9 -10	75	41.4
Age 11 - 12	104	57.5
Age 13 - 14	2	1.1
Mean Age = 10.64		SD = 1.02

Variables	Frequency	Percent
No Siblings	25	13.8
1 – 2 Siblings	93	51.4
3 – 4 Siblings	44	24.3
5 – 6 Siblings	12	6.6
7 or More	7	3.9
Mean Age = 2.20		SD = 1.77

Values Education Programs Implemented

Table 3. Values Education Programs

Program	Frequency	Percent
Guidance and Counseling	19	76
Sharing Time	16	64
Bible Study	14	56
Chapel Hour	10	40
Anti Bullying Club	5	20
Group Dynamics	5	20

Implementation of the Child Protection Policy

Table 4. Extent of Implementation of the Child Protection Policy

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
School Head Support	4.52	Very Highly Effective
Classroom Teacher's Support	4.48	Very Highly Effective
CCP Committee	4.40	Very Highly Effective
Learners' Participation	4.36	Very Highly Effective
Parents' Participation	4.28	Very Highly Effective
CCP Committee Assistance	4.28	Very Highly Effective
Community Support	4.12	Highly Effective
Government Agencies	3.97	Highly Effective
Division Supervisor	3.84	Highly Effective
NGO Support	3.80	Highly Effective
District Supervisor	3.76	Highly Effective
Overall Mean	4.16	Highly Effective

Problems Encountered in Implementing the Child Protection Policy

Table 5. Problems Encountered

Problem	Frequency	Percent
Learners became disrespectful	19	76
Lack of seminars	16	64
Lack of funds/materials	15	60
Lack of manpower	15	60
Poor teacher/PTA participation	14	56
Lack of parent participation	13	52
Lack of barangay support	13	52

Interventions Implemented

Table 6. Interventions

Intervention	Frequency	Percent
One-on-one counseling	25	100
Consult immediate superior	23	92
Home visitation	21	84
Administrator motivation	18	72
Parent meetings	15	60
Seminars	15	60

Learners' School Experiences

Table 7. Experiences Regarding Self

Overall Weighted Average = 3.24 (Strongly Agree)

Table 8. Experiences with Teachers

Overall Weighted Average = 3.54 (Strongly Agree)

Table 9. Experiences with School Services

Overall Weighted Average = 3.31 (Strongly Agree)

Table 10. Experiences with Classmates

Overall Weighted Average = 1.28 Strongly Disagree)
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The study revealed that the participating teachers were generally mature, experienced, and predominantly female, with most holding bachelor's degrees and teaching in public elementary schools. Although the respondents had substantial teaching experience, relatively few had pursued graduate studies, indicating opportunities for further professional development. The learner respondents were fairly balanced in terms of school type and gender, with most belonging to the expected age group for Grades 4–6 and coming from small to moderately sized families.

The implementation of values education programs showed that Guidance and Counseling, Sharing Time, and Bible Study were the most commonly conducted activities, demonstrating schools' commitment to promoting learners' moral and social development. However, Anti-Bullying Clubs and Group Dynamics activities were less frequently implemented, suggesting the need to strengthen structured bullying prevention programs.

Teachers perceived the implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) as **Highly Effective**, particularly due to the strong support of school heads, classroom teachers, Child Protection Committees, parents, and learners. Nevertheless, teachers identified several challenges, including learners' misinterpretation of the policy, limited seminars and training, inadequate resources, and insufficient parental involvement. To address these concerns, teachers commonly employed one-on-one counseling, consultations with supervisors, home visitations, seminars, and parent engagement activities, highlighting the importance of collaboration in safeguarding children's welfare.

The learners expressed highly positive school experiences. They reported enjoying school, learning, and interacting with classmates, indicating high levels of satisfaction with their educational environment. Learners also rated their teachers very positively, recognizing them as supportive and motivating, which contributed to their confidence, engagement, and overall well-being. Furthermore, learners viewed their schools as environments that encourage independence and respect for diversity. However, bullying remained a perceived concern despite the generally favorable school climate, emphasizing the need to strengthen anti-bullying initiatives and sustain the effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy. Overall, learners reported that serious negative peer behaviors were uncommon, suggesting that existing child protection and discipline measures have been largely effective in maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy contributes to creating a safe and supportive educational environment. Schools that consistently enforce child protection mechanisms, values education, anti-bullying programs, and positive discipline practices foster stronger learner confidence and satisfaction.

The higher satisfaction levels observed in sectarian schools may be attributed to their values-centered educational philosophy, smaller class sizes, and closer teacher-learner relationships. Nevertheless, public schools also demonstrate commendable implementation of child protection practices despite resource limitations.

The positive correlation between CPP implementation and learner satisfaction supports the Systems Theory framework, which posits that effective institutional processes

produce favorable educational outcomes. These findings likewise affirm previous studies emphasizing the importance of school safety and positive teacher-student relationships in promoting learner engagement and academic success.

The study further identifies areas requiring improvement, including increased parent involvement, continuous teacher training, stronger community partnerships, and adequate budget allocation for child protection initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy significantly influences learners' satisfaction with their school experiences. Schools that consistently implement child protection programs create safer, more supportive learning environments that enhance learners' emotional security, interpersonal relationships, and overall school satisfaction.

Although differences exist between public and sectarian schools, both educational sectors recognize the importance of child protection in promoting quality education.

Continuous professional development, stronger stakeholder collaboration, and sustained policy implementation are recommended to further improve learner welfare.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the conduct, implementation, analysis, and publication of this study. The researcher has no financial, professional, or personal relationships with any organization or individual that could have influenced the research process or the interpretation of the findings. The study was conducted objectively, ethically, and in accordance with accepted research standards to ensure the validity and credibility of the results.

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