



INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AMONG PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN MAINLAND PALAWAN

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in 11 municipalities with 43 public high schools and 258 respondents who were members of the child protection committee including school heads, guidance counselors, faculty representatives, parent representatives, student representatives and community representatives. This study assessed the implementation level of the child protection policy among public high schools in mainland Palawan and significant differences among the respondents' perception as to the child protection policy implementation level. Quantitative design; quantitative-descriptive-evaluative methods; likert scale, and adapted instrument from guia and guia (2019); random- quota-purposive sampling procedures were used in this study. The result showed that the child protection policy was implemented to a moderate extent (ime) among public high schools in mainland Palawan as perceived by the respondents. They also perceived differently on the implementation of the child protection policy concerning *written school child protection policy, policies and procedures in handling any suspected or alleged cases of child abuse, policies and procedures in protecting children from harm, and a variety of ways to communicate the child protection policy*. On the whole, the child protection policy among public high schools in mainland Palawan was implemented to a moderate extent (ime) with a grand mean of 3.02.

Keywords: *child protection, child protection policy, child abuse, child protection committee*

1. INTRODUCTION

How much concern do parents have as to their child's safety in school? Have they tried scrutinizing the school's concrete plans and programs for their child's protection? Teachers and other school personnel, being the surrogate parents, are partners in ensuring child's safety in school. However, schools are not spared from any forms of violence against children. The United Nations Children's Fund (2006) pinpointed that violence against children in schools put children at most risk.

PLAN Philippines, as cited by Rico & Rodriguez (2012), reported that violence in schools is rampant usually committed by fellow students, teachers and other non-teaching personnel. Hence, based on the result of the Study on Violence Against Children in Public Schools covered by PLAN programs in 2009, DepEd launched its Child Protection Policy through DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 on May 3, 2012. Subsequently, DepEd No. 68, s. 2014 or the School-Based Child Protection and Anti-Bullying Policies was enacted.

Ospina & Roser (2019) stated that bullying among school children is still prevalent across all countries. They also cited from Sherr, et.al. that children who were exposed to psychological and physical violence were more likely to have dropped out of school upon follow-up and; from Boden & Duncan that violence against children correlates with poor educational outcomes in the long run.

In the Philippines, citing the continuous growth in the number of Filipino children being bullied today, Sylwander, as cited by Montemayor (2018), urged parents and teachers to be actively involved in the



prevention of violence against children nationwide. As Bryce (2017) emphasized, schools are on the front line, holding a front row seat to the detection and reporting of child maltreatment.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study used quantitative-descriptive-evaluative research methods. The quantitative method was used to interpret the numerical value obtained in this study. The evaluative method checked the leadership or decision making style of the child protection committee members. The descriptive method emphasized on the kind of participation each committee member showed. This study used the questionnaire adapted from Guia and Guia (2019) as research instrument. Prior to adapting the instrument, the researcher asked permission from the instrument developers for the use of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is composed of two parts: Part I comprises the profile of the respondents, and Part II, the survey questionnaire for the respondents which is composed of eight (8) areas with a total of fifty-three (53) combined indicators. After the experts have validated the instrument, it was administered to a sub-sample of seventy-five (75) participants from the different non-respondent public high schools both in Puerto Princesa City and Palawan for the reliability test with an interval of three weeks. Using the scale analysis in SPSS, the computed Cronbach alpha coefficient values of .97 and .98 for the test-retest reliability test, respectively, demonstrated high internal consistency.

Using random-quota-purposive sampling procedures, forty-three (43) public high schools in the eleven (11) municipalities in mainland Palawan were picked as respondent schools. Random sampling was used to get the 43 school respondents out of 49. Quota sampling was used in getting only the six members of the child protection committee per school. Purposive sampling was used in getting respondent schools from mainland Palawan. The six members of the Child Protection Committee for the school year 2018-2019 were composed of the school head as chair, guidance counselor as vice chair, and faculty, student, community and, parent representatives, as members. Specifically, there were 258 respondents to this study comprising the six members of the child protection committee in each participating school.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Summary of findings on the level of implementation of the child protection policy among public high schools in mainland Palawan as perceived by the respondents

Indicators	Weighted mean	Level of Implementation
1. Children and the School	3.46	Implemented to a high extent (IHE)
2. There is a written child protection policy in the school	3.06	Implemented to a moderate extent (IME)
3. Policies and procedures showing how to report and respond to any suspected or alleged cases of abuse	3.135	Implemented to a moderate extent (IME)
4. Policies and procedures to protect children from harm	3.06	Implemented to a moderate extent (IME)
5. Implementation and Training	2.85	Implemented to a moderate extent (IME)
6. A variety of methods/ways to communicate the child protection policy	2.92	Implemented to a moderate extent (IME)
7. Advice and support are available to those who need it	2.916	Implemented to a moderate extent (IME)
8. Standards are made to work and regularly checked to see if they are working	2.732	Implemented to a moderate extent (IME)
Overall Rating	3.02	Implemented to a moderate extent (IME)



Table 2 shows that the indicator *children and the school* was implemented to high extent (IHE) with a weighted mean of 3.46. The indicator with the lowest mean of 2.732 or implemented to a moderate extent (IME) was *standards are made to work and regularly checked to see if they are working*. The overall rating was 3.02 or implemented to a moderate extent (IME).

The mandate is clear under DepEd Order No. 68, s. 2014 or the School-Based Child Protection and Anti-Bullying Policies that every school must have a written Child Protection Policy which embodies the roles of the administrator, non-teaching personnel, parents, child protection committee and the process in handling child protection issues in school. The Committee for Children (2014) recommends effective implementation of school policies and procedures, training for staff, integration of safety lessons in class and education of the family. Further, ensuring the full implementation of the child protection policy in school is in the hands (Nohilly, 2018) or strong role (Hermino, 2017) of the school head. Moreover, there is also a need for improved training for teacher on child abuse and neglect, better support for teachers and a more holistic approach to child well-being and welfare (Beddoe, Haan & Joy, 2018).

Table 2 Summary of the significance of the difference in the implementation level of the child protection policy among public high schools in mainland Palawan as perceived by the respondents

Indicators/Sub-indicators	p-values	Interpretation
1. Children and the school		
a. The school is very clear about its responsibility to protect children and makes this known to all who come into contact with it	0.034	Significant
b. The way the staff and other members of the school community behave towards children suggests that they are committed to protecting children from abuse	0.007	Significant
c. There is good awareness of the rights of children and these are seen as a basis for child protection	0.030	Significant
d. The school manages children’s behavior in ways which are non-violent and do not degrade or humiliate children	0.024	Significant
2. There is a written child protection policy in the school		
a. All aspects and contexts of child protection works are addressed	0.045	Significant
b. There is a clear understanding of definitions of abuse	0.024	Significant
3. Policies and procedures showing how to report and respond to any suspected or alleged cases of child abuse	0.017	Significant
a. Clear written step-by-step procedures on action to take are in place		
4. Policies and procedures to protect children from harm are in place	0.008	Significant
a. Clear codes of conduct are in place for school staff and learners		
5. A variety of methods/ways to communicate the child protection policy is in place		
a. Everyone in the school knows which named staff (members) have special responsibilities for keeping children safe and how to contact them	0.010	Significant

Table 2 shows that the significance of the difference in the assessment of the implementation level of the child protection policy among public high schools in mainland Palawan was reflected in five indicators and nine sub-indicators with p-values ranging from 0.007 to 0.045. It can be deduced from the results that the ineffective implementation of child protection in schools are affected by inconsistent and inadequate



knowledge and attitudes about child abuse, and other general topics of child protection (Naeem, 2014); inadequate communication between the school and the social service institution and the school staff's lack of knowledge about children in care, and labeling behavioral problems of children (Elmaci, 2017), and; lack of knowledge of girls' rights to protection from violence, of consequences of violence against women and girls and of reporting mechanisms, lack of resources at the family and government levels, traditional values of family, community and religion, and social perceptions of both gender hierarchies and violence against women and girls (Proulx 2012); persistent lack of regard for children among adults and traditional legal constructs that disadvantage children (Todres, 2018); insufficient attack surveillance and response (Bennouna, et al., 2017); lack of institutional arrangements and adequate child protection services (Bibou, & Markos, 2017); defective school reporting system on violence, and ineffective legal action for non-compliance due to weak legal regulation, lack of legal knowledge, psychological, social and other factors determined by specific activities of schools (Jackstiene & Ruraite, 2018); schools are less sensitive to children's rights and children show discipline problems in school due to limitless freeness provided for them (Faiz & Kamer, 2017).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings clearly showed that the child protection policy was implemented to a moderate extent (IME) among public high schools in mainland Palawan. Significant difference in the level of policy implementation level as perceived by the respondents was also reflected among five indicators and nine sub-indicators. Therefore, the child protection committee in each school must be strengthened.

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