

## ASSESSMENT OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ON CHILD PROTECTION OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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### ABSTRACT

This study assessed the status of the policy implementation on child protection of public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division. It utilized mixed methods of research involving 53 respondents in total, including 4 school heads, 4 school child protection coordinators, and 45 teachers. Respondents were selected using complete enumeration and stratified random sampling techniques. With an adopted survey questionnaire composed of two parts: a checklist form and open-ended questions, and the use of statistical tools like frequency count, percentage, and weighted mean, along with thematic analysis, results revealed that the policy implementation on child protection is highly implemented as perceived by the respondents. Challenges encountered during and best practices along implementation of the policy were also identified and discussed. It is therefore recommended that schools should further strengthen collaboration with parents and stakeholders, continue conduct information dissemination, enhance referral and monitoring system, allot funds to finance activities and programs, and improve system on identifying children who are at risk of being abused, discriminated, exploited, and bullied to further effectively implement the policy on child protection.

**Keywords:** policy implementation, child protection, public elementary schools, assessment, challenges

### 1. Introduction

Arguably, there are many forms of abuse that continue to abound today. It goes beyond places, cultures, ethnicities, genders, and ages. Among sectors of society who are most likely to fall victims of abuse are children. Children, being one of the sectors most vulnerable to abuse, experience and see violence every day, everywhere.

In 2022 report, World Health Organization says that one (1) in five (5) women and one (1) in thirteen (13) men report having been sexually abused as a child aged 0-17 years. Context in the Philippines - Association CAMELEON (2020) said that about 7,000,000 children are sexually abused every year in the Philippines. More than 70% of sexually abused children are between 10 and 18 years old. Among those victims, 20% are under 6 years old.

In the Philippines, CNN Philippines (2023) reported that nearly 9,000 cases of abuse against children were recorded last year, according to an official from the Council for the Welfare of Children. Citing data from the Women and Children Protection unit, Undersecretary Angelo Tapales said there were 8,948 child abuse cases in 2022.

Children, being the most precious members of our society, embodying innocence, curiosity, and a promising future, need a great deal of safeguarding and protection. People near them ought to be doing this for a variety of reasons. Due to their lack of independence, they find it difficult to leave abusive situations or seek assistance without the help of kind adults or institutions. Babel (2021) said, "Children don't want to defend themselves for various reasons, either because they don't know, because they don't feel capable of dealing with their aggressors, or because they don't have enough tools to do so." Their lack of options makes them more susceptible to abuse.

The school, being the second home to these children, must be safe and secure from any forms of violence and abuse that may harm them and will result to have these children drop-out from school. One study showed the potential scope for reducing absenteeism of students relative to the type and timing of child protection system involvement (Armfield, Gnanamanickam, Nguyen, Doidge, Brown, Preen & Segal, 2020). Understanding the reasons why children are vulnerable to abuse is vital for finding effective solutions to this issue. Aktar (2022) said that child abuse can be avoided. It is something that should not happen, but it happens. That is why the prevention of child abuse and protecting them is so important.

The 1987 Philippine Constitution emphasized that children shall be protected by the state in any forms of abuse as discussed under Article XV, Section 3 [2] which states that “*the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development*”. Further, Republic Act 7610 otherwise known as Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination, serves as the primary law addressing child abuse and providing measures for the protection and rehabilitation of child victims. In consonance, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order 40, series 2012 otherwise known as the DepEd Child Protection Policy. This policy highlights the functions and roles of the different agencies in the department in addressing the issues and concerns along child abuse. Further, the policy also emphasizes the sanctions to be imposed to the perpetrators who will be found guilty of violating its provisions, the referral system, and suggested activities and programs to strengthen the policy implementation in schools. As stated in DepEd Order No. 68, s. 2014, the mandate is clear that every school must have a documented child protection policy that outlines the responsibilities of the administrator, non-teaching staff, parents, child protection committee, and the procedure for managing child protection issues in schools.

Based on the data provided by the Child Protection Focal Person of SDO Masbate City, there were 4 reported cases abused children in 2022; 2 child abuse cases in 2023; and 1 case reported. All reported cases were sexually abused. However, all these children who experienced abused were referred by the division to appropriate intuitions like CSWD and MSWD-Mobo, respectively.

These foregoing facts are the precise reasons that prompted the researcher to conduct the present study to assess the policy implementation on child protection of public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division. Specifically, this aimed to:

1. assess status of policy implementation on child protection of public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division as perceived by school heads, school child protection coordinators, and teachers;
2. identify the challenges encountered by the schools during the policy implementation on child protection as perceived by school heads, school child protection coordinators, and teachers;
3. identify the best practices employed by the schools along policy implementation on child protection as perceived by school heads, school child protection coordinators, and teachers; and,
4. propose recommendations to further enhance the policy implementation on child protection of public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division.

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## 2. Methodology

### *Research Design*

This study utilized mixed methods of research since it attempted to assess the status of policy implementation on child protection, the challenges encountered, and the best practices employed by public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division. According to Creswell (2012), a mixed-method research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem.

This study employed quantitative method, specifically descriptive method of research. Garcia (2010) cited that descriptive research aims to describe systematically, functionally, accurately, and objectively a situation, problem, or phenomena.

On the other hand, qualitative method, specifically phenomenological research, was utilized in the interpretation of the data gathered from the interview answers of the respondents based on the two (2) open-ended questions stated in the second part of the tool in relation to the challenges encountered during and best practices employed along policy implementation on child protection of the four identified schools. A phenomenological case study design permits people to share their experiences of a particular phenomenon (Ohman, 2005). As indicated by Moustakas (1994), phenomenological specialists create vibrant portrayals of the lived encounters of participants.

In addition, the study utilized triangulation technique, a methodological pluralism that involves using a plurality of methods, which is the fusion of quantitative and qualitative research designs. Thus, the use of triangulation will give a greater emphasis on understanding of the issues this study will try to find answers since it will be outsourcing data from various sources as enumerated in the respondents of the study.

### *Locale of the Study*

This study involved four (4) public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division, namely: Florentino C. Versoza Elementary School, Calolod Elementary School, Nicolas Danao Elementary School, and Bantigue Elementary School which served as the locale of this study.

### *Respondents of the Study*

The respondents of this study were composed of 4 school heads and 4 school child protection coordinators and 45 teachers, totaling to 53 respondents.

### *Sampling Technique*

The complete enumeration was utilized for the 4 school heads and 4 school child protection coordinators in the present study. Conversely, a probability sampling method, specifically stratified random sampling, was employed to collect data from the target population, namely the 45 chosen teachers from the four public elementary schools. Stratified sampling is a probability sampling method that is implemented in sample surveys. The target population's elements are divided into distinct groups or strata where within each stratum the elements are similar to each other with respect to select characteristics of importance to the survey (Parsons, V. L., 2017).

### *Data Gathering Instrument*

For this study, an adopted survey questionnaire from the study of Zaragoza (2023) was utilized. It consisted of ten (10) indicators lifted from the issuance of the Department of Education Order No. 40, series 2012, otherwise known as the DepEd Child Protection Policy. It was primarily composed of two (2) main parts: the first part was a checklist form along assessment on the status of policy implementation on child protection with 4-point Likert scaling system corresponding to each indicator and the second part was

composed of two open-ended questions about the challenges encountered during and best practices employed of the schools along policy implementation on child protection. For ethical consideration, respondents were assured that the data they provided will only be used for the purpose of this research and will be given utmost confidentiality.

#### *Data Analysis*

For the present study, the following 4-point Likert scales, interpretation, and descriptions were used in the analysis and interpretation of quantitative data based on the first part of the questionnaire:

#### **Scale in the Policy Implementation on Child Protection of Public Elementary Schools in District 8, Masbate City Division**

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Description</b>
4	3.50 – 4.00	Highly implemented	the indicator is established, well-defined, applied, and sustained
3	2.50 – 3.49	Adequately implemented	the indicator is established, well-defined, and applied
2	1.50 – 2.49	Less implemented	the indicator is established and well-defined
1	1.00 – 1.49	Not implemented	the indicator is established

For the analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data based on the second part of the questionnaire a Thematic Analysis was used. Thematic Analysis emphasizes identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (or “themes”) withing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### *Statistical Treatment of the Data*

To ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the data obtained from the survey questionnaires, the researcher employed the following statistical procedure: the frequency count and percentage were used to determine the occurrences of the indicators relative to the scale provided, and weighted mean was used to measure the extent by which the respondents assessed the given research variables, which include the assessment of the policy implementation on child protection of four public elementary schools.

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 1a Status of policy implementation on child protection of public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division as perceived by school heads**

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The school has drafted a school child protection policy with a code of conduct and a plan to ensure child protection and safety, which shall be reviewed every three (3) years.	3.5	Highly Implemented
2. The school has initiated information dissemination programs and organize activities for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying or peer abuse	3.75	Highly Implemented
3. The school has developed and implemented a school-based referral and monitoring system	3.75	Highly Implemented
4. The school has established a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm based on any physical, emotional, or behavioral signs	3.5	Highly Implemented
5. The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices' cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying	3.25	Adequately Implemented
6. The school gave assistance to parents or guardians, whenever necessary in securing expert guidance counseling from the appropriate offices or institutions	3.75	Highly Implemented
7. The school has coordinated closely with the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO), other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as may be appropriate	3.5	Highly Implemented
8. The school has monitored the implementation of positive measures and effective procedures in providing the necessary support for the child and for those who care for the child	3.5	Highly Implemented
9. The school has ensured that the children's right to be heard are respected and upheld in all matters and procedures affecting their welfare	4.0	Highly Implemented
10. The school has conducted the appropriate training and capability-building activities on child protection measures and protocols	3.5	Highly Implemented
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>Highly Implemented</b>

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 Highly implemented; 2.50 – 3.49 Adequately implemented; 1.50 – 2.49 Less implemented; 1.00 – 1.49 Not implemented*

It can be gleaned from the table above that the policy implementation on child protection in 4 public elementary schools as perceived by school heads obtained a composite mean of 3.6, interpreted as highly implemented. This means that the policies are established, well-defined, applied, and sustained. The result also revealed that among the indicators, “*The school has ensured that the children's right to be heard are respected and upheld in all matters and procedures affecting their welfare*” obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.0, interpreted as highly implemented. This implies that based on their assessment, schools were able to provide programs and activities that promote greater importance on children's rights by emphasizing that every child has rights to exercise and corresponding responsibilities along these rights. Veiga, et al. (2009) highlighted that there should be promotion of children's rights. On the other hand, the fifth indicator “*The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices' cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying*” obtained the lowest weighted of 3.25,

interpreted as adequately implemented. This suggests that schools should intensify their available mechanism in reporting cases involving child abuse to appropriate authorities. Further, this implies that school should prioritize the safety and welfare of its students by actively addressing and involving external authorities when necessary to handle such sensitive matters. Section 3 of RA 7610 provides that “if a person learns facts or circumstances that give rise to the belief that a child has suffered abuse may report the same, either orally or in writing, to the Department, to the police or other law enforcement agency or to a Barangay Council for the Protection of Children.”

**Table 1b Status of policy implementation on child protection of public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division as perceived by school child protection coordinators**

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The school has drafted a school child protection policy with a code of conduct and a plan to ensure child protection and safety, which shall be reviewed every three (3) years.	3.5	Highly implemented
2. The school has initiated information dissemination programs and organize activities for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying or peer abuse	3.75	Highly implemented
3. The school has developed and implemented a school-based referral and monitoring system	3.25	Adequately Implemented
4. The school has established a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm based on any physical, emotional, or behavioral signs	3.5	Highly implemented
5. The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices’ cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying	4.0	Highly implemented
6. The school gave assistance to parents or guardians, whenever necessary in securing expert guidance counseling from the appropriate offices or institutions	3.75	Highly implemented
7. The school has coordinated closely with the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO), other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as may be appropriate	3.75	Highly implemented
8. The school has monitored the implementation of positive measures and effective procedures in providing the necessary support for the child and for those who care for the child	3.5	Highly implemented
9. The school has ensured that the children’s right to be heard are respected and upheld in all matters and procedures affecting their welfare	3.75	Highly implemented
10. The school has conducted the appropriate training and capability-building activities on child protection measures and protocols	3.5	Highly implemented
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.625</b>	<b>Highly implemented</b>

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 Highly implemented; 2.50 – 3.49 Adequately implemented; 1.50 – 2.49 Less implemented; 1.00 – 1.49 Not implemented*

It can be gleaned from the table above that the status of policy implementation on child protection of 4 public elementary schools in District 8 as perceived by school child protection coordinators obtained a composite mean of 3.625, interpreted as highly implemented. This means that the policies are established, well-defined, applied, and sustained. The result also revealed that among the 10 indicators, the fifth indicator

“The school has established a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm based on any physical, emotional, or behavioral signs” obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.0 interpreted as highly implemented. This implies that the schools could identify students experiencing various forms of child abuse based on the exhibited manifestations. Signs of child abuse aren’t always clear as types vary between physical, sexual, emotional, and neglect. The most critical step in any child protection response is how to recognize the different types of child maltreatment (Identification, Screening, and Assessment of Child Abuse & Neglect). While the third indicator obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.25, interpreted as adequately implemented. This implies that schools in District 8 should improve their policies along referral and monitoring system of cases involving child abuse.

**Table 1c Status of policy implementation on child protection of public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division as perceived by teachers**

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The school has drafted a school child protection policy with a code of conduct and a plan to ensure child protection and safety, which shall be reviewed every three (3) years.	3.47	Highly Implemented
2. The school has initiated information dissemination programs and organize activities for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying or peer abuse	3.6	Highly Implemented
3. The school has developed and implemented a school-based referral and monitoring system	3.44	Adequately Implemented
4. The school has established a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm based on any physical, emotional, or behavioral signs	3.13	Adequately Implemented
5. The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices’ cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying	3.13	Adequately Implemented
6. The school gave assistance to parents or guardians, whenever necessary in securing expert guidance counseling from the appropriate offices or institutions	3.53	Highly Implemented
7. The school has coordinated closely with the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO), other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as may be appropriate	3.22	Adequately Implemented
8. The school has monitored the implementation of positive measures and effective procedures in providing the necessary support for the child and for those who care for the child	3.13	Adequately Implemented
9. The school has ensured that the children’s right to be heard are respected and upheld in all matters and procedures affecting their welfare	3.73	Highly Implemented
10. The school has conducted the appropriate training and capability-building activities on child protection measures and protocols	3.53	Highly Implemented
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.391</b>	<b>Adequately Implemented</b>

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 Highly implemented; 2.50 – 3.49 Adequately implemented; 1.50 – 2.49 Less implemented; 1.00 – 1.49 Not implemented

It can be gleaned from the table above that the status of policy implementation on child protection of 4 public elementary schools in District 8 as perceived by teachers obtained a composite mean of 3.391, interpreted as adequately implemented. This means that the indicators are established, well-defined, and applied. “*The school has ensured that the children’s right to be heard are respected and upheld in all matters and procedures affecting their welfare*” is the indicator that obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.73, interpreted as highly implemented. This implies that the schools adhered to and upheld the principle that every child has rights to exercise and appropriately address concerns affecting their rights as children. Without special attention to the opinions of children – as expressed at home and in schools, in local communities and even in governments – children’s views go unheard on the many important issues that affect them now or will affect them in the future (UNICEF, n.d.). Young children who are learning how to express themselves clearly can benefit greatly from the explicit instruction of dispute resolution techniques as well as instructor modeling and coaching. As opposed to relying on others, conflict resolution education gives pupils the ability to address their own problems, which is an important life skill (Heydenberk, 2007). On the other hand, the fourth, fifth, and eighth indicators obtained the lowest rank with a weighted mean of 3.13, indicating that these policies are adequately implemented in public elementary schools in District 8. This implies that schools should review these indicators and come-up with intervention programs to effectively carry-out the objectives of the policy on child protection.

**Table 2 Challenges encountered by the schools during the policy implementation on child protection**

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>as perceived by school heads</b>		
The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices’ cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying	3.25	Challenging
<b>as perceived by school child protection coordinators</b>		
The school has developed and implemented a school-based referral and monitoring system	3.25	Challenging
<b>as perceived by teachers</b>		
The school has established a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm based on any physical, emotional, or behavioral signs	3.13	Challenging
The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices’ cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying	3.13	Challenging
The school has monitored the implementation of positive measures and effective procedures in providing the necessary support for the child and for those who care for the child	3.13	Challenging

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 Very Challenging; 2.50 – 3.49 Challenging; 1.50 – 2.49 Less Challenging; 1.00 – 1.49 Not Challenging at All*

#### **Challenges as perceived by school heads**

Among the indicators presented in Table 2, “*The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices’ cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying*” ranked the lowest with a weighted mean of 3.25, interpreted as challenging. This implies that school heads should come-up with interventions and innovations on strengthening its mechanism on identifying, reporting, and referring children involved in any form of child abuse. Moreover, two challenges emerged from the responses of the school heads: **lack of stakeholders’ support** and **unavailability of resources**.



The first challenge that emerged is the lack of stakeholders' support.

*“lack of parents' support R1, R2”*  
*“poor coordination with the LGU R3”*  
*“inattendance to meetings, assembly, and conferences in the school R4”*

It can be deduced from these responses that schools without support from the parents and other external stakeholders will not be able to realize the objectives of the policy on child protection will be undermined. Hence, these are considered as a challenge. Dealing with child protection policies for victims is still a great challenge (Rahman & Sarip, 2020). A study showed that child protection could be interpreted based on a different context like family, school, & community (Hermino, 2017). Inadequate coordination between the parents and the school can impede the implementation of measures along child protection. Thus, the efforts to ensure that children are safe from any forms of abuse, exploitation, and discrimination is put to a minimum.

The second challenge that emerged is the unavailability of resources.

*“no budget for trainings R3, R4”*  
*“no allocated funds to procure materials R2”*

It can be deduced from these responses that the policy implementation on child protection in schools needs financial resources to carry-out its objectives. Investments on teachers' training and other similar undertaking are crucial in ensuring that child protection-related issues are properly handled and addressed in the school. These empower and equip teachers with indispensable skills as part of their professional development in child protection. Beddoe, Haan & Joy (2018) emphasized that there is 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. Further, 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. In addition, materials such as banners, flyers, and infographics play a significant role in conveying the message of child protection in schools, necessitating fund allocation.

### ***Challenges as perceived by school child protection coordinators***

Among the indicators presented in Table 2, *“The school has developed and implemented a school-based referral and monitoring system”* obtained the lowest rank with a weighted mean of 3.25, interpreted as challenging. This means that school child protection coordinators view this as the least implemented measure along child protection in their respective schools. This further implies that schools should create an effective system of referring and monitoring of children who are abused. In addition, two challenges emerged from the responses of the school child protection coordinators to the open-ended questions: **lack of financial support of the government** and **incapacitated teachers on child protection**.

The first challenge that emerged is lack of financial support of the government.

*“lack of financial support of the government R2”*

It can be deduced from the response that financial support coming from the national government thru the central office of the Department of Education (DepEd) is instrumental for creating a comprehensive and effective child protection framework in the school. It ensures that the necessary resources are available to address the multifaceted aspects of child protection, ultimately contributing to the well-being and safety of children within the school community. Article 15, Section 3 of 1987 Constitution states that the Government must defend *“the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation, and other conditions prejudicial to their development.”* This includes financial assistance given to children thru various sectors, such as schools, to ensure that they are safe, protected, and guarded.

The second challenge that emerged from the responses is incapacitated teachers on child protection.

*“lack of trainings or capacity building for teachers on child protection R1, R3, R4”*

It can be deduced from the responses of school child protection coordinators that inadequate trainings along child protection will limit school child protection coordinators the ability to effectively implement the policy in the school. Further, this deficiency reflects a gap in the preparedness of school child protection coordinators to effectively address and respond to various child protection issues. In the study of Campbell, H. & Wigglesworth A. (1993), it showed that although the knowledge of teachers regarding the signs of child abuse was reasonably good, in practice 40% of teachers did not feel confident in handling these issues. This has important implications for the design of training courses.

### ***Challenges as perceived by teachers***

Among the indicators presented in Table 2, *“The school has established a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm based on any physical, emotional, or behavioral signs”*, *“The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices’ cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying”*, and *“The school has monitored the implementation of positive measures and effective procedures in providing the necessary support for the child and for those who care for the child”* obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.13, interpreted as challenging. This implies that teachers concluded that there is a greater need for schools to create an effective system of determining children who are exhibiting manifestations of potential child abuse whether in physical, emotional, or behavior changes. In addition, this means that schools also need to maximize possible means to identify, refer, and report cases and issues involving child abuse requiring specialized intervention beyond the capacity of the school. Further, the result also suggests that schools should incorporate proactive, inclusive, and child-centered strategies and procedures that will provide support needed by the children and assess the effectiveness of its support systems and make adjustments as needed to address evolving needs or challenges governing child protection. Moreover, two challenges emerged from the responses of teachers to the open-ended questions: **creating a safe and empowering environment** and **lack of stakeholders’ support**.

The first challenge that emerged is creating a safe and empowering environment.

*“lack of discipline among learners R1”*  
*“persistence of bullying among their peers and classmates R5”*

It can be deduced from the responses that in making a school environment a safe and secure place for children, it is important for schools to impart moral conduct and discipline among students. This means that schools should emphasize the importance of values inculcation over competencies and skills. Further, this result implies that schools should develop and implement comprehensive programs against bullying, discrimination, and other forms of abuse in the school. This will help schools produce holistic students. In their synthesis, Sandstrom and Huerta (2013) posited that studies show many children facing instability in their lives. This instability is manifested in their attitudes and behaviors, especially when they are in school, which have contributed to the implementation of CPP in elementary schools.

The second challenge that emerged is lack of stakeholders’ support.

*“lack of cooperation between the barangay and school R5, R15”*  
*“uncooperative parents R10”*  
*“less support of guardians/parents R11, R12, R13”*

It can be deduced from the responses that schools should intensify collaboration with the parents/guardians and stakeholders to effectively translate the objectives of the policy on child protection to fruition. Insufficient collaboration between parents and the school impedes the successful implementation of child protection measures. Hence, a strong collaboration among the school, parents, and stakeholders is imperative. Hermino (2017) conducted a study that showed that child protection could be interpreted based on a different context like family, school, & community.

**Table 3 Best practices employed by the schools along policy implementation on child protection**

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>as perceived by school heads</b>		
The school has initiated information dissemination programs and organize activities for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying or peer abuse	3.75	Highly Implemented
The school has developed and implemented a school-based referral and monitoring system	3.75	Highly Implemented
The school gave assistance to parents or guardians, whenever necessary in securing expert guidance counseling from the appropriate offices or institutions	3.75	Highly Implemented
The school has ensured that the children's right to be heard are respected and upheld in all matters and procedures affecting their welfare	3.75	Highly Implemented
<b>as perceived by school child protection coordinators</b>		
The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices' cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying	4.0	Highly implemented
<b>as perceived by teachers</b>		
The school has ensured that the children's right to be heard are respected and upheld in all matters and procedures affecting their welfare	3.73	Highly Implemented

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 Highly implemented; 2.50 – 3.49 Adequately implemented; 1.50 – 2.49 Less implemented; 1.00 – 1.49 Not implemented*

#### **Best practices as perceived by school heads**

Based on the table presented above, “The school has initiated information dissemination programs and organize activities for the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying or peer abuse”, “The school has developed and implemented a school-based referral and monitoring system”, “The school gave assistance to parents or guardians, whenever necessary in securing expert guidance counseling from the appropriate offices or institutions”, and “The school has ensured that the children's right to be heard are respected and upheld in all matters and procedures affecting their welfare” are viewed by the school heads as their schools' best practices employed along policy implementation on child protection among the ten (10) indicators. These obtained a weighted mean of 3.75, interpreted as highly implemented. This means that, based on their assessment, the schools have developed initiatives that aim to inform students, parents and guardians, and external stakeholders about the policy on child protection which includes its objectives, sanctions, and measures to prevent potential case of child abuse to transpire, among others. In addition, the result also implies that schools have effectively implemented a system of referring and monitoring child abuse cases to appropriate institutions or agencies that have primary duty and responsibility of dealing with such cases. The result also further indicates that parents and guardians are provided by schools with support if there is a need to seek professional counseling from appropriate agencies to resolve cases involving child abuse. On top of these, two best practices emerged from the responses of the school heads to the open-ended question: **support and coordination** and **training and capacity building**.

The first best practice that emerged is support and coordination.

*“attendance to parents’ assembly R1”*  
*“call the assistance of parents or guardians in securing guidance R2”*

It can be deduced from the responses that schools have sought and ensured the attendance of parents and guardians to meetings, assembly, and other formal gatherings which served as avenues to discuss the policy on child protection and the responsibilities of the school in securing the well-being of their children while under the custody of their respective teachers. In this connection, the Family Code of the Philippines empowers the school, its administrators and teachers, or the individual, entity, or institution engaged in childcare to exercise the special parental authority and responsibility over the child, while under their supervision, instruction, or custody (Section 2 [4], DepEd Order No. 40, series 2012). It further indicates that schools have secured the participation of parents and guardians in dealing with issues and concerns on child abuse, discrimination, exploitation, and bullying therefore raising them awareness on such issues. True to this is Section 7, paragraph c, DepEd Order No. 40, series 2012 which states that “schools shall ensure that all pupils, students or learners, school personnel, parents, guardians or custodians, and visitors and guests are made aware of child protection policy.”

The second best practice that emerged is training and capacity building.

*“conducted capacity building R1, R3”*

It can be deduced from the response that schools have conducted capacity building activities on child protection policy. This means that schools followed the mandate of the Department of Education which underscores that: “The school shall conduct appropriate training and capacity building activities on child protection measures and protocols” (Section 7 [i], DepEd Order No. 40, series 2012). This implies that everyone in the school community is given equal opportunity to be capacitated in dealing issues and concerns along child abuse, discrimination, exploitation, and bullying, provide appropriate intervention to children manifesting child abuse behavior, and impose measures to hinder the possible occurrence of such issue in the school. Beddoe, Haan & Joy (2018) emphasized that there is also a need for improved training for teacher on child abuse and neglect. Further, Campbell H, Wigglesworth A. (1993) claimed that appropriate in-service training in child protection for teachers is of key importance in both emphasizing child protection issues and in promoting these skills in teachers.

### ***Best practices as perceived by school child protection coordinators***

Based on the table presented above, “*The school has identified, referred, and, if appropriate, reported to the appropriate offices’ cases involving child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying*” is viewed by school child protection coordinators as the best practice employed along policy implementation on child protection. This indicator obtained a weighted mean of 4.0, interpreted as highly implemented. This implies that, based on their assessment, the schools have determined students who manifested physical, emotional, and behavioral abuse, dealt with their needs and concerns appropriately, and informed agencies and institutions about such case that took place in the school. In addition, two best practices emerged from the responses of the school child protection coordinators to the open-ended questions: information dissemination and orientation activities and support and coordination.

The first best practice that emerged is information dissemination and orientation activities.

*“meeting with children R1”*  
*“conducted a symposium R2”*  
*“initiate information dissemination to parents regarding child protection policy R3”*  
*“conducted orientation to the parents R4”*

It can be deduced from the responses that schools have sustained the conduct of meetings and other formal gatherings to effectively convey the message of the policy on child protection. It also implies that dissemination of true, factual, and with bases information is a paramount consideration in ensuring that everyone is fully aware of the policy implemented. The schools shall ensure that all pupils, students or learners, school personnel, parents, guardians or custodians, and visitors and guests are made aware of child protection policy (Section 7 [c], DepEd Order No. 40, series 2012).

The second best practice that emerged is support and coordination.

*“expressed support of parents and stakeholders R1”*

It can be deduced from the response that schools have received expressed support from the parents and stakeholders in dealing issues involving child abuse, discrimination, exploitation, and bullying. It further implies that the strong coordination among the school, parents, and stakeholders is a manifestation that everyone is seriously involved in ensuring that children are safe, secure, and protected.

#### ***Best practices as perceived by teachers***

Based on the table presented above, *“The school has ensured that the children’s right to be heard are respected and upheld in all matters and procedures affecting their welfare”* is viewed by teachers as the best practice employed along policy implementation on child protection in their schools. This indicator obtained a weighted mean of 3.73, interpreted as highly implemented. This implies that schools implemented measures that allowed students’ voice to be heard thus, empowering them to participate in making decisions that have direct impact on their welfare. This will also have a benefit on their academic and personal development. In addition, two best practices emerged from the responses of the teachers to the open-ended questions: **information dissemination and orientation activities** and **home visitation and monitoring activities**.

The first best practice that emerged is information dissemination and orientation activities.

*“orient the school community, parents, and stakeholders regarding the implementation of child protection R1”*

*“orientation on child protection policy R5”*

*“disseminating information about the policy implementation on child protection R10, R11, R13, R17”*

It can be deduced from the responses that schools have provided parents and stakeholders vital information on the policy on child protection is one paramount consideration to ensure that there will be no possible case involving child abuse that may transpire in the school. This also implies that schools have intensified communication of the provisions of the policy on child protection such as through orientation, symposiums, leaflets, and campaigns. With these, schools have educated pupils, parents, more informed environment. Kolko et.al. (1987) asserted that most of parents who took a part in the educational program are more aware of child protection policy.

The second best practice that emerged is home visitation and monitoring activities.

*“conducted home visitation for pupils R13, R20”*

*“monitored learners who experienced child abuse R2”*

It can be deduced from the responses that schools have initiated home visitation activities to monitor children both along personal and academic aspects. This result also implies that conducting home visitation is one way to connect with children, make them feel that they are valued and important, and give them the assurance that they are safe and secure. In the study of Vlahovicova et al. (2017) it was found that home visiting programs had a significant positive effect on reducing the recurrence of child maltreatment.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, data revealed as regards status of policy implementation on child protection in four public elementary schools in District 8, Masbate City Division, the policy is highly implemented, which means that the indicators are established, well-defined, applied, and sustained. Challenges such as lack of financial support, unavailability of resources, lack of stakeholders' support, referral and monitoring system, and incapacitated teachers on child protection are encountered by the respondents during the policy implementation. Conversely, information dissemination programs, support and coordination, and ensuring children's rights are heard and respected are some of the best practices these schools implemented along child protection. It is therefore recommended that schools should further strengthen collaboration with parents and stakeholders, continue conduct information dissemination, enhance referral and monitoring system, allot funds to finance activities and programs, and improve system on identifying children who are at risk of being abused, discriminated, exploited, and bullied to effectively implement the policy on child protection.

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