

# Child Protection in Educational Settings: A Systematic Review of Teacher Awareness and School-Based Interventions

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## **ABSTRACT**

Child protection policies are essential for keeping children safe and secure rights and well-being in educational settings, addressing issues such as abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This systematic review examined teachers' awareness and schools' responsiveness to child protection, which are vital for ensuring that children are safe and well-supported within public elementary and secondary schools in the Philippines, focusing on policy implementation and teacher awareness. The review employed a systematic methodology, utilizing databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and Scopus, which helped find relevant studies published between 2020 and 2024. Using the PRISMA Flow tool, the selection of research papers involved three stages: (1) identification, (2) screening, and (3) inclusion. During the identification phase, a total of 380 studies were selected for review. All the studies were chosen based on the criteria that articles must be published, must undergo peer-reviewed journals and have citations, must reported in English, must have public Elementary and High School Respondents, must be Quantitative and qualitative method, accessible, and can be found online, must have 5-year recency (2020-2024), must have abstract and must not be duplicated.

Furthermore, thematic analysis is employed to extract and synthesize data on teachers' awareness and schools' responsiveness to these policies. Findings revealed significant variability in teachers' awareness and school responsiveness. Although there is an increased awareness of child protection policies, their practical implementation remains inconsistent. Factors influencing implementation include the adequacy of teacher training, resource availability, and the effectiveness of policy communication. The review identified a need for improved training programs and more robust monitoring mechanisms to ensure the effective enforcing child protection policies. The study provided evidence-based recommendations for enhancing teacher training and policy enforcement, aiming to improve the protection and welfare of children in public elementary and secondary schools in the Philippines.

Keywords: Child Protection Policy, Awareness, Responsiveness, Elementary, Secondary, Implementation

## INTRODUCTION

hild protection policies are essential frameworks designed to ensure the safety and rights of children in educational settings. These policies are designed to prevent and address issues like abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence against children. Research into these policies has been extensive, providing valuable insights and highlighting ongoing challenges. This systematic review examines the awareness of teachers and the responsiveness of schools to these policies, with a particular focus on public elementary schools in the Philippines.

Numerous studies have investigated the effectiveness of child protection policies within schools. For example, Briggs and Hawkins (2006) underscored the significance of teacher training in identifying and addressing signs of child abuse. Likewise, Walsh et al. (2011) emphasized the importance of having detailed school policies and ongoing professional development to ensure robust child protection.

In the context of the Philippines, research by Manalastas et al. (2018) and Cruz and Sarmiento (2020) assessed the implementation of child protection policies in schools. Their findings revealed gaps in teacher awareness



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and training, as well as inconsistencies in the enforcement of policies at the school level. Despite these insights, a comprehensive review is still needed to consolidate existing research and gain a deeper understanding of the current situation. Children International declared ensuring child protection is both essential and a primary focus that keeps children safe from any form of abuse and is working toward their holistic well-being. They observe specific protocols which are based on their policies and guiding principles. These protocols encompass local laws related to child abuse, mandatory procedures dictated by local regulations, and a list of local authorities to whom cases of child abuse have been reported. And others.

In the Philippines, schools are governed by two key laws: the Child Protection Act (RA No. 7610) and the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012). These regulations are designed to safeguard children and ensure their overall well-being. They emphasize the need for special protection against abuse and exploitation and adopt a zero-tolerance stance on any form of harm. Moreover, these policies require both public and private elementary and secondary schools to set up a Child Protection Committee (CPC) to oversee and implement these measures (Republic Act No. 7610, 1992; DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012) represented by all stakeholders who handle the proper implementation and monitoring of the said policy in every locality or school. Despite the existence of these policies, concerns about any forms of abuse persist. Several factors were considered to explain why such problems persist.

Public elementary schools have been selected as the focus of this study because of their crucial role in early childhood education and the foundational stage of children's development. These schools often cater to a diverse and vulnerable student population, making the effective implementation of child protection policies particularly crucial. Additionally, public schools in the Philippines face unique challenges, such as resource constraints and varying levels of policy enforcement, which necessitate targeted research and intervention. While a growing body of research exists on child protection policies, a significant gap remains in understanding the specific awareness and responsiveness of teachers in public elementary schools. Previous studies have often focused on policy implementation at a broader level or within private or secondary school settings. This systematic review aims to fill this gap by providing detailed insights into the public elementary school context, where early intervention and protection can have long-lasting impacts on children's lives.

The primary objective of this study was to systematically review existing research on teachers' awareness and schools' responsiveness to child protection policies in public elementary and high schools, identify gaps in current practices, and suggest improvements. This systematic review contributes to the field of education by providing evidence-based recommendations for improving teacher training and school policies related to child protection. For policymakers, the findings provide valuable insights into the current state of policy implementation and highlight areas that require legislative or administrative action. By pinpointing effective strategies and identifying areas where enhancements are needed, this study aimed to improve the safety and well-being of children in public elementary schools. The systematic review approach was particularly well-suited to this study, as it allows for a comprehensive and methodical examination of the existing literature. Synthesizing findings from various studies, this review provided a robust and nuanced understanding of teachers' perspectives on and schools' responses to child protection policies. This method ensured that the conclusions were grounded in a diverse array of evidence, making the recommendations more trustworthy and practical.

Further, this systematic review aimed to highlight the crucial issue of child protection in public elementary schools in the Philippines. By evaluating teachers' awareness and school responsiveness, identifying gaps, and providing actionable recommendations, this study sought to contribute to the ongoing efforts to create safer and more nurturing learning environments for children.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

International research has uncovered intriguing insights into child protection policies. Notably, Al-Qaysi (2018) identified significant variations in staff opinions regarding the adoption of child protection policies. Similarly, Drake et al. (2019) examined how specific child safety policies and practices are associated with particular individuals and locations.



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Article XV, Section 3(2) of the 1987 Philippine Constitution requires the State to safeguard children's rights by ensuring they receive proper care, nutrition, and protection from neglect, abuse, exploitation, and any harmful situations. The Philippine government is committed to developing and implementing national policies and programs to combat child maltreatment.

The Department of Education is a major government agency responsible for acknowledging the importance of a strong child safety strategy. Working with various partners and stakeholders, the Department strives to make sure that all schools provide a safe and supportive environment for learning. Research on child protection reforms in Israel reveals that children had a minimal role in these reforms, which resulted in lower levels of cooperation and engagement (Alfandri, 2017). Munger and Markstrom (2019) found that educators often lack awareness about domestic violence, including child abuse. A study by Devaney and McGregor (2016) emphasized the importance of understanding the intricate relationship between child safety and family support for both practitioners and students.

Heiman and Gupta (2020) provided a foundational discussion on child protection practices and policies, linking essential theories to standard procedures. In a study by Alfandri (2017), it was highlighted that the limited participation of children in national child protection reforms in Israel reduced the effectiveness of these initiatives. Similarly, Munger and Markstrom (2019) found that educators often lack awareness regarding domestic violence. Devaney and McGregor (2016) emphasized the importance for both practitioners and students to understand the complex relationship between child safety and family support.

Mustikasari and Rostyaningsih (2020) assessed the application of the Child Protection Policy and observed that, although the policy is well-structured, its implementation remains inadequate. Despite the existence of legal safeguards for children, instances of abuse and neglect by adults continue. Shewchuk (2016) reported that many school boards have formalized their child safety policies, though the level of detail provided varies significantly. Smyth and Katz (2016) explored the idea of child protection within educational settings, including resources for education and abuse prevention. In contrast, Robles (2019) found a connection between poor academic performance, high Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) scores, and lower Protective Factors (PF) scores.

Burr and Fay (2019) suggested that steps to ensure child safety should implemented in schools frequently fall short of their goals or lead to unexpected consequences. Armfield et al. (2020) highlighted potential opportunities to lessen student absence by optimizing the timing and nature of interactions with the child protection system. Despite these efforts, children remain at risk of abuse, bullying, and trauma, underscoring the need for laws and procedures that ensure consistent school attendance and prevent abuse (Maclean, Taylor, & O'Donnell, 2016). Local research presents varying perspectives on the implementation and perception of the Child Protection Policy. Segundo and Guia (2019) found mediocre implementation in public high schools, while Baronia (2020) reported no significant differences in opinions between respondent groups. Estremera (2020) indicated that child protection committee members are well-informed about recognizing bullying, discrimination, assault, and exploitation. Bayuca (2020) noted that teachers were familiar with the Department of Education's child protection policy program and its implementation in schools. In a study by Roche (2017), the author reviewed key information on child protection policies and abuse in the Philippines, advocating for further research into laws and initiatives that address structural, social, and cultural factors.

The comprehensive analysis of the literature on children's awareness of and receptivity to child protection programs reveals several essential conclusions. Overall, the currently available data shows that children's knowledge and comprehension of child protection rules vary significantly. Socioeconomic position, geographic location, cultural norms, and the quality of educational interventions are some of the factors that affect this heterogeneity.

In general, children in areas with strong educational initiatives and vibrant community involvement are more aware of child safety legislation. Research highlights the need to integrate child protection education into school curricula and community outreach initiatives to enhance children's understanding and ability to address potential hazards. The support networks that children have at their disposal—including their families, teachers, and the community—have a direct impact on their receptivity to child protection legislation. Fostering a



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supportive environment for children requires educators and caregivers to receive practical training on how to convey and enforce child safety rules effectively.

The evaluation finds considerable gaps in research and practice despite some areas of advancement. To better understand the long-term consequences of child protection education and to determine the most effective approaches for various situations, several studies advocate for more thorough and longitudinal research. Furthermore, legislators must focus on developing frameworks for child safety that are accessible and inclusive, taking into account the varied needs and histories of children.

In conclusion, while strides have been made in raising awareness and responsiveness to child protection policies among children, continuous efforts are necessary to address existing disparities and ensure that all children are equipped with the knowledge and resources to protect themselves. Ongoing research, policy enhancement, and community involvement remain crucial components in achieving a universally effective child protection system.

## **Objectives**

The study aimed to assess teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy and how schools are implementing it. It focused on answering the following questions:

- 1. What is the teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy?
- 2. What is the schools' responsiveness towards the Child Protection Policy?

## **METHODOLOGY**

A comprehensive review was conducted to gather insights into how effectively teachers understand and respond to child protection policies in schools. This approach was inspired by the methodologies used in the studies by Cana et al. (2023) and Sandelowski and Barroso (2007). The process included three main steps: (i) choosing relevant published papers, (ii) assessing the quality of these papers and extracting the necessary data, and (iii) summarizing and synthesizing the findings.

## **Search Strategy**

This selected the published papers for review and utilized the Publish or Perish software, which was accessed through Google Scholar's electronic database, as well as the ERIC and Scopus databases. Studies from 2020 to 2024 were pre-selected using the key terms "child protection policy," "responsiveness," and "awareness." The Results from the Publish and Perish Software were screened using the PRISMA guidelines to ensure that all critical information was covered.

## Selection/Inclusion Criteria

The studies included in this review were selected based on several key criteria. First, the articles had to be published and have undergone peer review, ensuring their credibility. They needed to be cited and reported in the English language. Additionally, the studies should involve respondents from public elementary and high schools. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were considered acceptable. The studies also had to be accessible online and, recently published within the last five years (2020-2024). Each study needed to include an abstract and should not duplicate another included research.

## **Data Analysis**

Cana et al. (2023) employed a thematic analysis to examine and differentiate studies based on the protocol developed by Clark and Barun (2017). This protocol was also used to analyze and evaluate data on teachers' awareness and schools' responsiveness to child protection policies. The analysis was refined using a six-step thematic analysis method, which included (1) reviewing studies or research articles to identify emerging themes, (2) coding social event information related to each theme, (3) gathering relevant data for each theme to define and refine them, (4) creating a thematic map to review and organize themes, (5) categorizing and



explaining themes to highlight the emerging patterns, and (6) developing a report that discusses the review findings and provides recommendations.

## **Findings**

The final set of seven papers included studies that were conducted

### SEARCH RESULT

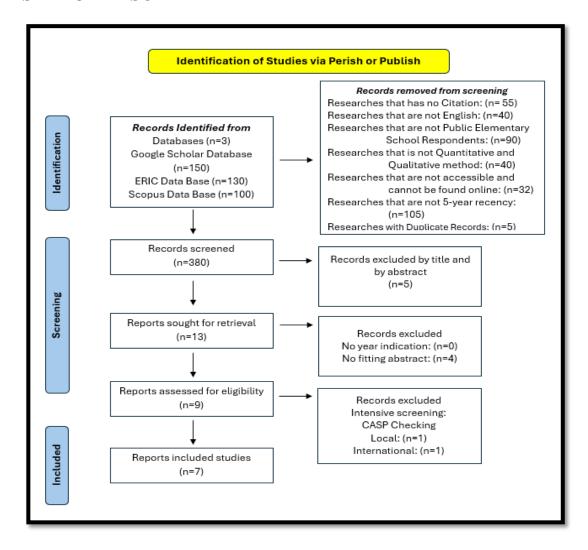


Figure 1. Outcomes of the search process used to select papers for inclusion in the systematic review

Using the PRISMA Flow tool, the selection of research papers involved three stages: (1) identification, (2) screening, and (3) inclusion. During the identification phase, a total of 380 studies were initially selected—150 from the Google Scholar database, 130 from the ERIC database, and 100 from Scopus —as part of the preliminary screening process using Publish or Perish. From these, 55 studies were excluded due to lack of citations, 40 were removed because they had no citations, 90 were not relevant to Public Elementary School respondents, 40 did not use quantitative or qualitative methods, 32 were discarded due to unavailable sources, 105 were outdated beyond a 5-year timeframe, and 5 were duplicates identified by Zotero, leaving 13 studies. In the second stage, five papers were excluded because they lacked abstracts, and four studies were removed because their abstracts did not address the research questions, resulting in 9 studies. In the final stage, two studies were excluded because they did not meet the criteria using the CASP checklist—one local and one international—leaving a final total of 7 studies. This final set included six journal articles and one research article. Of these, six studies were conducted in the Philippines, and one was in Auckland Park, South Africa. The data collected from these studies were analyzed using thematic analysis, revealing seven themes across two categories: teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy and schools' responsiveness to the Child Protection Policy.



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## DISCUSSION

## Theme 1: Awareness of the Child Protection Programs in Elementary Schools

Implementing child protection programs in primary schools is a crucial step in ensuring children have safe and supportive environments that foster optimal growth and development. Additionally, primary schools must have robust processes and effective mechanisms in place to identify, report, and address incidents of abuse or manipulation that occur within or around the school environment. Indeed, teachers and school staff play essential roles as security officers, monitoring the school environment. Regular training on how to recognize symptoms of violence and how to address them is critical to ensure capacity to respond and meet child protection needs. In the study by Bayuca (2020), it is stated that policy also emphasizes the guide, which explains the duties of everyone in the school, from the principal to the students. It includes strategies for preventing and protecting against child abuse, mistreatment, violence, discrimination, bullying, and other harmful behaviors and also provides steps for dealing with these issues if they arise.

Furthermore, by integrating materials on child protection into the school curriculum, it becomes possible to incorporate topics such as children's rights, violence, and child protection. This helps raise children's awareness and understanding of their rights and enhances their ability to protect themselves. The result of raising awareness about child protection in primary schools through public policy is better understanding. The study found an increase in awareness and understanding of children's rights and the signs of violence or abuse among teachers, school staff, parents, and students.

## Theme 1.1. School Responsiveness

When faced with the school's reaction to implementing the child safety policy, their response was surprising. As almost half of the items received moderate implementation feedback from educators, the prominent response to the policy and curriculum lacks a positive study of teacher organizations. Comparison with the research: Segundo and Guia (2019) show different perspectives. In the process of implementing children's safety policies in public secondary schools, Mustikasar and Rostyaningsih (2020) also cited some limitations related to the implementation of child safety rules into practice.

In a study conducted by Adewale and Patokri (2023), they found that schools do not fully implement this approach to maximize awareness-raising strategies on child-related policies, thereby failing to raise teacher awareness. Research results indicate that school principals have not yet fully explored various implementation strategies to enhance their knowledge of child safety policies within their institutions.

The result is consistent with the finding of research conducted in Türkiye that teachers are not adequately trained, which affects their perception of abused and neglected children. This study also revealed that the educational level of the teacher is a determining factor. Views about child abuse and neglect in schools presuppose teachers' professional status. Therefore, to increase their knowledge, schools should support educators who want to pursue further their studies and be regularly updated on policies both on and off campus. They are better able to recognize potential risks and report suspected cases.

## Theme 2: Affirmatively Aware of the Child Protection Policy

Bayuca's (2020) findings found that teachers responded positively to the Education Ministry's awareness of child protection policies. It is significant because they similarly desire a certain level of protection. If a youngster experiences something negative, they will discipline the person in charge. However, Shewchuk's (2016) research revealed the necessity to revise a few school board procedures. Markstrom and Munger (2019) highlighted the difference between schools and the child welfare sector and found that confidentiality is a barrier to collaboration. However, Treacy and Nohilly (2020) cite an overreliance on electronic child safety teaching for elementary teachers.

Technology resources for child protection policy are of great help, but they need to be supplemented by thorough training and engagement plans. These guarantee that educators are adequately prepared to handle



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situations that arise in the actual world. When considered collectively, these studies underscore the importance of ongoing assessment and refinement of child protection policy approaches in educational settings.

## Theme 2.1: Middle level for implementing the School's Protection Policy for Children

In the research conducted by Asio (2020), he found that all school staff consistently and effectively implemented the school's protection policy for children to ensure the comprehensive development and well-being of children. Notably, the results indicate that Batraza District 1's primary schools are vulnerable to the effects of Ministry of Education Decree Number 40 of 2012; this is commonly referred to as the Child Protection Policy.

A study by Bayucca (2020) found that teachers were well-versed in the child protection policies set by both the Department of Education and their schools. Additionally, research by Estremera (2020) showed that everyone on the child protection committee is skilled in identifying instances of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, and bullying. Furthermore, the research recommends that teachers, school principals, parents, and the school community should coordinate closely to ensure complete understanding and effective implementation of the above guidelines, as protecting children is a paramount obligation.

Therefore, as teachers are aware of the conditions outlined in the Policy for Child Protection, the Education Ministry and relevant bureaus need to continue implementing teacher development programs and training related to the outstanding points mentioned in the policy.

## Theme 2.2: Educators were aware fully of the content of the policy

In the study conducted by Adewale and Patokri (2023), it was found that some educators were conversant with the policy's contents. However, for some reason, they lack adequate political knowledge. For example, policy documents on child protection are not fully accessible to all educationalists. Many of them only depend on the data advertised at school.

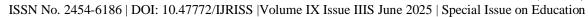
It corresponds to a lack of understanding of information about children, parents, and domestic violence among Irish school teachers, which is among the challenges the officer's liaison faces in performing their task efficiently. Remarkably, a different study by (271) in secondary schools in Kenya found that teachers had a strong awareness of child protection policies. Similarly, this type of school has contributed significantly to raising the knowledge of educators in Nigeria regarding child safety policies. This suggests that every school uniquely implements policies and shares knowledge.

## Theme 2.3: Teachers were aware of the Child Protection Policy

In the study conducted by Alombro et al. (2022), most of the respondents had been working in the field for between 1 and 10 years. It was also revealed that educators were informed about the child safety policy of the Education Ministry, as noted in the full report, which detailed the averages calculated. Nonetheless, eight elements were assessed as applied and seven as partly applied in terms of completeness, indicating that schools are not strictly enforcing the policy. With this awareness, a training module covering stress management, classroom management, gender sensitivity, and non-violent discipline should be included in the workshops to be held. Standard checking of applications in schools should be carried out to ensure success.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study underscore the critical role of awareness and responsiveness in the effective implementation of child protection policies within public elementary schools. Despite notable progress, significant challenges remain that impact the overall effectiveness of these policies. Awareness of Child Protection Programs: The study revealed a general increase in awareness among teachers, school staff, parents, and students regarding child protection. This enhanced awareness is crucial, as it fosters a safe and conducive learning environment. Teachers and school staff are integral to identifying, reporting, and addressing instances of abuse and exploitation.





In addition, regular training and integration of child protection topics into the school curriculum are essential strategies that have been shown to improve awareness and understanding of children's rights and the signs of abuse. School Responsiveness: Despite heightened awareness, the schools' responsiveness to child protection policies shows variability. While some schools have effectively implemented policies, others demonstrate only moderate adherence to them. This gap suggests that, although awareness is increasing, the actual implementation of these policies remains uneven. Issues such as a lack of proper training, poor policy integration, and variations in teaching practices are contributing to this inconsistency in the effective implementation of policies.

Notably, some schools have been reported to lack comprehensive strategies for raising awareness and effectively implementing child protection policies. Challenges and Recommendations: The study highlights several key challenges, including the must for regular monitoring and the enhancement of training programs for teachers. Although many teachers are aware of child protection policies, their implementation is often hindered by gaps in training and accessibility of policies. To address these issues, it is recommended that schools implement more robust monitoring systems and enhance teacher development programs. Regular updates and training should be integrated into professional development to ensure that all staff are well-versed in the most recent child protection strategies and best practices.

Overall, while progress has been made in raising awareness of child protection policies, ongoing efforts are required to ensure consistent and effective implementation across all public elementary schools. By addressing these gaps and reinforcing training and monitoring mechanisms, the protection and welfare of children in the school environment can be significantly improved.

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## **APPENDIX**

Table 1. An overview and features of the 7 counted studies. It contains details on the author, the year the work was published, the study's location research design, teachers' awareness, school responsiveness, and proposed interventions.

The studies are summarized as follows:

Table 1. Summary of the Studies

No	Author	Year	Setting	Design	Teachers'	Schools'	<b>Proposed Intervention</b>
					awareness of the Policy on the Protection of Children	responsiveness towards the Child Protection Policy	
1	Shallimar A. Bayuca	2020	Meycauay an, Meycauay an City, Bulacan, Philippines	Descriptiv e Survey	The educators are knowledgeable about the Protection Policy of DepEd on Children	Despite being aware that a policy exists, schools are not applying it strictly.	● The program's proposed focus is on the elements that have been classified as moderately implemented, as this will increase understanding of the policy and its application to safeguard children and equip educators to deal with a variety of behavioral issues.  ● Together with the school policies, policymakers should examine and develop initiatives that support the comprehensive implementation of the policy.
2	Rafael Christian S. Aguilara, Sonia S. Carbonell, PhD	2024	Daet, Camarines Norte, 4600, Philippines	Descriptiv e Correlatio n	The teachers demonstrate a strong understanding of the policy that protects children	of	<ul> <li>Training program designed for the Child Protection Committee</li> <li>Proposed brochure be distributed to school heads and teachers.</li> </ul>
3	Cleofe L. dela Fuente	2021	Zambales, Philippines		The teacher respondents are aware of the Child Protection Policy	The teacher respondents have a favorable attitude toward the policy	<ul> <li>Recommends sustaining the CPP awareness by conducting seminars</li> <li>Capacitate the schoolteachers on providing special protection to children.</li> </ul>
4	Alombro, Aljim B., Bermejo, Roxanne	2022	Bataraza District 1, Palawan, Philippines				<ul> <li>Child Protection</li> <li>Policy must be routinely observed</li> <li>Training courses on</li> </ul>



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## INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH AND INNOVATION IN SOCIAL SCIENCE (IJRISS) ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume IX Issue IIIS June 2025 | Special Issue on Education

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							instruct and thoroughly explain the policy to parents and guardians.
6	Floro T. del Pilar III, MEM	2024	Guinayang National High School, San Mateo, Rizal, Philippines	Descriptiv e Quantitati ve Research Method		attitude towards integrating child protection policy into their classroom practices was	resources to address their
7	Sulaimon Adewale, Onoriode Collins Potokri	2006	Auckland Park, South Africa	Quantitati ve Research Design: Cross- Sectional Study	Teachers were well-informed about the content of the policy.	Schools did not fully leverage the strategies designed to boost teachers' awareness of the child protection policy.	<ul> <li>Teachers understood every detail there was to know about the policy.</li> <li>To raise teachers' knowledge, schools should</li> </ul>