

Child Protection Policy in School: A Case Study on Implementers

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the capacity of Child Protection Policy (CPP) implementers at Sabang National High School and proposed strategies for improved implementation. Using a qualitative case study approach, guided by Diffusion of Innovation Theory and the Theory of Change, interviews were conducted with members of the school's Child Protection Committee. Findings revealed that while implementers possess a foundational understanding of the CPP and a strong moral commitment to student welfare, their effectiveness is limited by systemic and contextual barriers—such as insufficient training, inadequate legal guidance, weak inter-agency coordination, cultural resistance, and lack of localized materials. Viewed through the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 2003), most implementers exhibit traits of early adopters or early majority, showing willingness to adopt new practices but needing structural support, clear protocols, and peer reinforcement to fully integrate the policy into routine practice. In contrast, resistant community members reflect late majority or laggard behaviors, delaying institutional change due to entrenched cultural norms and lack of trust in formal systems. Simultaneously, from a Theory of Change perspective, the causal pathway between awareness and effective implementation remains weak. While moral intent and basic understanding exist (inputs), these are not supported by key enabling factors—such as legal literacy programs, accountability mechanisms, and collaborative platforms—resulting in disrupted outputs and inconsistent outcomes. The study concludes that capacity-building efforts must be institutionalized and strategically designed to activate critical points in the causal pathway. It recommends targeted interventions focused on confidentiality, accountability, teamwork, and structured support, along with improved legal literacy and inter-agency coordination, to ensure that the CPP is not only understood but consistently and confidently implemented within a functional, system-driven framework.

Keywords: Child Protection Policy, Policy Implementation, Student Welfare

INTRODUCTION

At Sabang National High School, implementing the Child Protection Policy (CPP) is a shared effort among teachers, school leaders, parents, students, and community members. While the Child Protection Committee is well-structured, consistent implementation remains a challenge due to time, capacity, and resource constraints. Similar concerns were noted by Roche and Flynn (2021), who emphasized gaps between national policy and local practice. Bayucca (2020) and Estremera (2017) highlighted the need for continuous training and stronger monitoring. Meanwhile, Dardo and Vistal (2019) found that despite seminars, student understanding of CPP remains limited, often due to school schedules. Cervancia et al. (2019) also noted the burden placed solely on principals. Scholars like Matulac and Zamora (2020) recommend a more holistic approach, involving all stakeholders. Guided by these studies and a local literatures, this study aimed to assess the capacity of child protection policy implementers at Sabang National High School and to provide recommendations for improving its implementation.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative case study design to examine the implementation of the Child Protection Policy at Sabang National High School, focusing on the experiences of key implementers. Through purposive sampling, participants included the school head, guidance counselor designate, a teacher, the SPTA president, four barangay representatives, and the SSG president. Data were collected via guided, face-to-face interviews.

Using a semi-structured interview guide, responses were transcribed and analyzed through an inductive thematic approach. Ethical standards were upheld. While findings are not generalizable, they offer meaningful insights for improving child protection practices in schools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Capacity or capability of the child protection policy implementers of Sabang National High School. The responses indicate that the child protection policy (CPP) implementers at Sabang National High School demonstrate a foundational capacity to fulfill their roles. This is evident in their functional understanding of the CPP, their awareness of the complexities in balancing child protection and discipline, their moral commitment and responsiveness, and their efforts to promote preventive values through education. Notably, many implementers act out of moral obligation and lived experience rather than from a structured or institutionalized framework. According to the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 2003), these implementers may be positioned primarily within the early majority category—those who adopt innovations once a clear precedent or framework is visible, but who require assurance before confidently implementing change. Their proactive responses—such as *“Tiyak na tutulong sila at gagawa ng personal na hakbang”* [“They will undoubtedly assist and take personal actions”]—demonstrate a willingness to act. However, statements like *“Dahil sa batas 9262, mas natatakot na ngayon ang mga guro sa mga estudyante”* [“Because of the RA 9262, teachers are more afraid of their students”] reveal hesitancy and lack of clarity, typical of adopters who are still navigating the uncertainties of a new system. From a Theory of Change perspective, the current implementation shows a weak or informal causal pathway. While the desired long-term outcome is a safe and protective school environment, the essential inputs—such as structured legal guidance, regular training, and clear protocols—are lacking. The causal chain is disrupted, resulting in a reliance on personal discretion rather than institutional processes. Strengthening this pathway would require targeted capacity-building interventions (inputs) that lead to improved confidence and consistency in implementation (intermediate outcomes), ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness of the CPP (long-term outcome). These insights align with the findings of OECD (2020), which emphasized that knowledge alone is insufficient; effective policy implementation hinges on continuous training, legal reinforcement, and institutional support to bridge the gap between understanding and confident, systematic action.

Capacity or Capability of the Child Protection Policy Implementers of

Sabang National High School

Emerging Theme	Verbatim Statements
Functional Understanding of CPP	"Isang batas na nagpoprotekta at nag-aalaga sa mga bata sa paaralan." ["A law that protects and cares for children in schools."]
	"Ang CPP ay para matiyak na walang batang mapapabayaang o maaabuso sa paaralan." ["The CPP is meant to ensure that no child is neglected or abused in school."]
Balancing Protection and Discipline	"Ang mga estudyanteng nasa pangangalaga ng guro ay isang malaking responsibilidad... pero nagiging hadlang din sa pagpapatupad ng disiplina." ["Students under the care of a teacher become a great responsibility... but also a hindrance to discipline."]
	"Kahit gusto mong disiplinahin, natatakot kang baka magreklamo ang bata o ang magulang." ["Even if you want to discipline, you're afraid the child or parent might file a complaint."]
Moral Commitment and Responsiveness	"Tiyak na tutulong sila at gagawa ng personal na hakbang, gaya ng pakikipag-ugnayan sa DSWD at DILG." ["They will undoubtedly assist and take personal

	actions by contacting authorities such as the DSWD and DILG."]
	"Hindi kami nagdadalawang-isip na tumulong kapag may problema sa bata." ["We never hesitate to help when there's a problem with a child."]
Preventive Orientation through Values Education	"Mas mabuting isama sa aralin ang relihiyon o mga moral na aral para matutong kumilos nang tama ang mga bata." ["A better approach would be to integrate religion or moral lessons in class so children learn to behave properly."]
	"Kung may moral foundation ang bata, hindi na kailangang palaging pagalitan o bantayan." ["If a child has a strong moral foundation, there's less need for constant scolding or supervision."]

Areas for Improvement in Policy Implementation. The data revealed several systemic and contextual barriers that hinder the effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) at Sabang National High School, clustered into key themes: community-initiated preventive action, cultural resistance and informal settlements, geographic isolation, lack of family cooperation, gaps in legal knowledge, poor communication and coordination, and the absence of localized support materials. While grassroots efforts such as curfew enforcement by barangay leaders reflect commendable initiative, these actions remain largely disconnected from formal CPP structures. At the same time, practices like informal settlements of abuse cases and avoidance of legal action highlight entrenched cultural resistance, especially in informal communities where shame outweighs justice. Children in remote areas face limited access to information about their rights, and some parents show disengagement or even hostility when school authorities discipline their children. Many implementers also expressed uncertainty in interpreting legal procedures and reported delays in receiving information from higher offices. Additionally, participants called for child-friendly materials to contextualize CPP concepts and promote awareness. Interpreted through the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 2003), most stakeholders appear to fall within the late majority or laggards—those hesitant to adopt institutional change unless there is broad acceptance or external pressure—while isolated early adopters operate without systemic reinforcement. From the perspective of the Theory of Change, the causal pathway from community awareness to effective policy enforcement remains weak due to missing inputs such as legal literacy programs, collaborative mechanisms, and operational guidelines. These findings echo Zamora's (2021) observations in Panabo City, regarding CPP implementation, highlighting issues such as limited resources and the importance of stakeholder engagement and effective communication strategies.

Areas for Improvement in Policy Implementation

Emerging Theme	Verbatim Statement with Translation
Community-Initiated Preventive Action	"Nagpatupad kami ng curfew sa barangay para maiwasan na maulit ang kaso dito kung saan isang menor de edad ang naabuso sa labas ng bahay sa dis-oras ng gabi." ["We have imposed curfew hours in the barangay in order to prevent young people from becoming involved in the same case that occurred here, in which a minor was molested outside of their home at night."]
Cultural Resistance and Informal Settlements	"Mahalaga sana na ang lider ay may tamang paninindigan sa ganitong mga usapin... pero hindi na namin alam ang nangyari dahil nagkasundo ang pamilya na huwag nang ituloy sa korte." ["It is also necessary that the leader has the correct conviction in these matters... but sadly, we do not know what happened because they decided within their family not to take the case to court due to the settlement agreement that was reached."]
	"Minsan mas iniisip pa ng pamilya ang kahihiyan kaysa ang hustisya para sa bata." ["Sometimes the family is more concerned about shame than about justice for the

	child.”]
Geographic Isolation	“May mga bata sa liblib na lugar na hindi umaabot ang impormasyon tungkol sa kanilang karapatan.” [“There are children in remote areas who do not receive information about their rights.”]
Lack of Family Cooperation	“Hindi lahat ng magulang ay nakikiisa sa mga meeting o orientation tungkol sa CPP.” [“Not all parents participate in meetings or orientations about the CPP.”]
	“May mga magulang na kapag napagsabihan ang anak, sila pa ang galit.” [“Some parents get angry when their child is disciplined, even if it’s for a valid reason.”]
Gaps in Legal Knowledge	“Kailangan pa talaga naming maintindihan ang batas... minsan hindi namin alam kung ano ang susunod na hakbang.” [“We really need to understand the law better... sometimes we don’t know the next step.”]
Gaps in Communication and Coordination	“Minsan matagal bago makarating sa amin ang impormasyon mula sa district o division office.” [“Sometimes information from the district or division office takes too long to reach us.”]
Need for Localized Support Materials	“Gumawa ng libro na nagpapakita ng totoong buhay ng mga bata... may cartoons para interesado silang magbasa.” [“Create a book that depicts life’s realities... cartooned so students will enjoy reading it.”]

Recommendations for Capacity Building. Participants identified four key areas requiring urgent capacity-building interventions for more effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP): confidentiality, accountability, teamwork, and structured support. They stressed the importance of upholding confidentiality in abuse-related cases, ethical handling of sensitive information, and enhancing collaboration among committee members through organized training and development activities. These findings suggest that while implementers exhibit a strong ethical foundation and a willingness to act, their efforts remain constrained by the absence of institutional systems that formalize these practices and ensure accountability. Interpreted through the lens of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (Rogers, 2003), these implementers reflect characteristics of early adopters—those who are proactive and receptive to change but require structural support and enabling conditions to sustain innovative practices. Similarly, the Theory of Change framework reveals a disrupted causal pathway; although the inputs such as ethical commitment and collaborative intent are present, the lack of structured protocols and ongoing training prevents these from translating into consistent, system-wide outcomes. This aligns with Casipe and Bete’s (2023) findings that underscore the role of institutionalized, context-sensitive interventions—such as psychosocial support and team-based learning—in enhancing the effectiveness of child protection efforts.

Recommendations for Capacity Building

Emerging Theme	Verbatim Statement with Translation
Confidentiality	“Lahat kami ay sang-ayon na ang mga dokumento ng mga kaso ng pang-aabuso ay dapat manatiling kumpidensyal at tanging ang miyembro lang ng komite ang may access dito.” [“All respondents agreed that the confidentiality of records in cases of abuse should be well maintained and only accessed by the committee.”]
	“Nilalagay namin sa drawer ang mga record at ang may susi lang ay ang miyembro ng committee.” [“We locked it in a drawer that only the committee has access to.”]
	“Hindi dapat basta-basta napag-uusapan ang mga kaso kahit sa loob ng faculty room.” [“Cases should not be casually discussed even inside the faculty room.”]

Accountability	“Dapat may parusa sa mga gurong naglalabas ng sensitibong impormasyon.” [“Teachers should be sanctioned if information was leaked.”]
	“Kaya naman ng mga guro na magtago ng sikreto ng estudyante, pero hindi maiwasang napag-uusapan sa kapwa guro.” [“Teachers can keep students’ secrets, but they often end up talking about it with fellow teachers.”]
Teamwork	“Mahalaga ang cooperation, team building, at focus group discussion para sa mas epektibong pag-implement ng CPP.” [“Cooperation, team building, and focus group discussion are important for more effective CPP implementation.”]
	“Mas gumagaan ang trabaho kapag buo ang support ng buong team, hindi lang ng head.” [“Work becomes lighter when the whole team—not just the head—gives full support.”]
Structured Support	“Hindi sapat ang orientation lang—kailangan may follow-up at team effort.” [“Orientation alone is not enough—we need follow-up and team effort.”]
	“Mas mainam kung regular ang training, hindi lang once.” [“It would be better if the training is regular, not just once.”]

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the obtained results, the researcher formulated the following conclusions.

The implementers of the Child Protection Policy at Sabang National High School demonstrate a strong moral commitment and foundational understanding of child protection, but their effectiveness is limited by the absence of structured systems, regular training, and institutional support. Their readiness to act is evident, yet they rely heavily on personal values and discretion due to unclear procedures and lack of consistent capacity development.

Systemic and contextual barriers—such as cultural resistance, geographic isolation, limited family cooperation, and poor coordination among stakeholders—undermine the consistent and effective enforcement of the CPP. While there are promising community-led initiatives, these efforts are often disconnected from formal mechanisms and require alignment through policy integration and collaboration.

To ensure sustained and effective implementation of the CPP, targeted capacity-building interventions must be institutionalized, focusing on confidentiality, accountability, teamwork, and structured support. Strengthening these areas will help close the gap between awareness and action, as outlined in the Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Theory of Change, and will empower implementers to perform their roles with confidence, consistency, and systemic backing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions lead to the following proposed recommendations:

The school may institutionalize a comprehensive capacity-building program that includes regular legal orientation, case-handling simulations, and practical training on documentation and reporting procedures to shift implementation from experience-based to policy-guided practice.

The school may develop and implement community-responsive strategies to address contextual barriers by conducting localized information drives, organizing mobile orientation sessions, and fostering stronger partnerships with barangays and parent groups to promote inclusive child protection efforts.

The school may strengthen confidentiality protocols and collaborative systems by enforcing secure information management practices, conducting regular team-building activities, and institutionalizing a school-based CPP manual to promote ethical implementation and shared accountability.

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