

Original Article

Awareness and Practices in the Implementation of the Child Protection Policy among Public Elementary School Teachers

Clea Manginlaud ¹, Josephine Baguio ^{1,*}

Received: 05 January 2026; Revised: 15 February 2026;
Accepted: 19 February 2026; Published: 22 February 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66074/HY87GT65>

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy and their practices in implementing it in public elementary schools in Caraga District, Division of Davao Oriental. A descriptive-correlational design used survey data from 125 teachers selected through simple random sampling. Overall awareness was very extensive and overall practices were also very extensive. Awareness and practices showed a moderate positive and significant relationship. Multiple regression indicated that awareness domains explained 33.6% of the variance in practices, with the legal and policy framework and behavioral management as significant predictors, while responsibilities of schools was not. Findings highlight the need for sustained policy-oriented capacity building, school-level support systems, and consistent monitoring to translate awareness into protective classroom practices. Targeted refreshers on reporting pathways and child-friendly routines can strengthen everyday implementation and sustain safe school climate.

Keywords: awareness, child protection policy, descriptive-correlational, education, practices, public elementary schools

¹ Graduate School,
Rizal Memorial
Colleges, Inc., Davao,
Philippines
* Correspondence:
josephinebbaguio@outlook.com

Volume 2, Issue 2,
June 2026

1. Introduction

Schools hold a central role in child safeguarding because daily contact with learners places teachers in a position to notice risk indicators early and to initiate timely support and referral. International standards frame this responsibility as part of

children's rights to protection from violence, abuse, and neglect, and they expect education systems to maintain safe learning environments that prevent harm and respond when harm occurs. In practice, safeguarding depends on the coherence of policy requirements, school level systems, and the competence and confidence of frontline personnel, especially teachers who often serve as first identifiers of maltreatment and bullying concerns. Evidence across settings shows that teachers' knowledge of maltreatment indicators, clarity about reporting duties, and perceived self-efficacy can shape the likelihood of appropriate action, while gaps in training and uncertainty about procedures can weaken response and contribute to under reporting. Studies in the child protection and education literature describe common barriers such as fear of damaging relationships with families, limited confidence in identifying maltreatment, uncertainty about thresholds for reporting, and perceived inadequacy of institutional support, which together reduce reporting intention and follow through (Kenny, 2001; Kenny, 2004). Systematic evidence also indicates that training programs can improve knowledge and attitudes related to reporting duties, although the strength of evidence varies and larger rigorous trials remain needed (Walsh et al., 2022). A complementary evidence base in teacher education highlights that safeguarding content is often limited in initial preparation and that course design benefits from trauma informed approaches and explicit attention to reporting duties and procedures (Walsh et al., 2023).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education institutionalized school based safeguards through DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, which outlines a Child Protection Policy that emphasizes prevention, clear reporting pathways, child friendly procedures, and accountability mechanisms at school and division levels (Department of Education, 2012). The policy aligns with the expectation that schools maintain protective climates through visible information campaigns, structured supervision, appropriate discipline practices, and coordinated case response that involves school heads, teachers, guidance personnel when available, and community partners. However, implementation occurs within real constraints such as large class size, limited access to specialized mental health and social work services, and uneven exposure to training. These conditions make teacher preparedness and school routines critical. Local studies in Philippine public schools commonly report high declared awareness with variation in procedural mastery and in the consistency of implementation actions, which suggests that awareness alone may not guarantee practice quality and that school systems and professional development matter (Bayucca, 2020).

The present study focused on public elementary teachers in Caraga District, Division of Davao Oriental. It examined both the extent of awareness of core policy domains and the extent of practice in implementation domains that reflect daily school operations and case response processes. Beyond describing levels, the study tested the association between awareness and practice and identified which awareness domains predict practice scores. This focus supports improvement efforts that move from policy presence to policy enactment, with attention to the specific knowledge components

that most strongly relate to consistent practice. Such evidence can inform targeted training content, monitoring indicators, and school level support systems that strengthen safe learning environments.

2. Methodology

This study used a quantitative descriptive correlational design to examine the relationship between teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy and their practices in policy implementation in public elementary schools in Caraga District, Division of Davao Oriental, Philippines. The respondents consisted of 125 public elementary school teachers.

Data collection used standardized survey questionnaires with Likert type response options. The awareness instrument covered three domains: legal and policy framework on child protection, responsibilities of schools, and behavioral management. The practices instrument covered four domains: creation of a child friendly environment, monitoring and management of maltreated children, conduct of case conferences, and professional conduct of case conferences. Internal consistency estimates indicated excellent reliability for both scales (Cronbach's alpha = .975 for the awareness instrument with 17 items, and Cronbach's alpha = .972 for the practices instrument with 36 items).

Ethical safeguards included voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality of individual responses, and reporting of aggregated findings only. Data analysis computed mean and standard deviation to describe levels, Pearson product moment correlation to test the association between overall awareness and overall practices, and multiple linear regression to estimate the predictive influence of awareness domains on practices. Statistical decisions used an alpha level of .05.

3. Results

Table 1 summarizes teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy across the three domains. Overall awareness was very extensive ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.76$), with domain means from 4.33 to 4.37.

Table 1. Summary of awareness of the Child Protection Policy.

Domain	Mean	SD	Descriptive level
Legal and Policy Framework on Child Protection	4.33	0.83	Very Extensive
Responsibilities of Schools	4.35	0.78	Very Extensive
Behavioral Management	4.37	0.84	Very Extensive
Overall	4.35	0.76	Very Extensive

Table 2 summarizes teachers' practices in implementing the Child Protection Policy. Overall practice was very extensive ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.73$), with domain means from 4.30 to 4.36.

Table 2. Summary of practices in the implementation of the Child Protection Policy.

Domain	Mean	SD	Descriptive level
Creation of a Child-Friendly Environment	0.81	4.32	Very Extensive
Monitoring and Management of Maltreated Children	0.85	4.34	Very Extensive
Conduct of Case Conferences	0.80	4.30	Very Extensive
Professional Conduct of Case Conferences	0.78	4.36	Very Extensive
Overall	0.73	4.33	Very Extensive

Correlation analysis showed a moderate positive relationship between awareness and practices ($r = 0.56$, $R^2 = 0.31$, $p < .001$), which indicates that higher awareness scores accompanied higher practice scores (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation results.

Variables	r-value	p-value
Awareness and practices	0.56	0.000

Multiple regression identified the awareness domains as significant predictors of practices (Table 4). The fitted model explained about 33.6 percent of the variance in practices ($R = 0.58$, $R^2 = 0.336$, $F = 68.84$, $p < .001$). Standardized effects were largest for behavioral management ($\beta = 0.48$), followed by responsibilities of schools ($\beta = 0.45$) and legal and policy framework ($\beta = 0.40$).

Table 4. Regression results.

Predictor domain	B	SE	Beta	t	p-value	Decision
Constant	2.10	0.60		3.69	< .001	Significant
Legal and policy framework	0.73	0.60	0.40	3.42	< .001	Significant
Responsibilities of schools	0.74	0.64	0.45	3.50	< .001	Significant
Behavioral management	0.76	0.68	0.48	3.55	< .001	Significant

4. Discussion

The results show very extensive awareness and very extensive practices among public elementary teachers, which suggests that core Child Protection Policy concepts and routines have become familiar within the study context. High mean scores for the legal and policy framework domain indicate that teachers recognize the existence of formal safeguards and key policy commitments such as a zero tolerance stance toward

abuse and a requirement for safe learning environments. This pattern is consistent with the intent of DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, which emphasizes policy visibility, prevention, and a structured response system anchored on child rights (Department of Education, 2012). However, high declared awareness does not automatically confirm procedural mastery in real cases, and the international safeguarding literature cautions that teachers may still face uncertainty in thresholds for reporting and in role boundaries even when policy knowledge appears high (Kenny, 2004).

The moderate positive association between awareness and practices supports the argument that knowledge and clarity about policy duties matter for routine enactment. Teachers who understand reporting duties and school responsibilities are more likely to apply consistent classroom practices that reduce risk and to follow expected response pathways when concerns arise. This aligns with evidence that inadequate training and limited clarity about reporting procedures contribute to lower preparedness and weaker response among mandated reporters, including teachers (Kenny, 2001; Beck et al., 1994). At the same time, the association in this study is moderate rather than strong, which implies that additional determinants influence practice. These determinants can include school leadership support, access to guidance and referral partners, time and workload constraints, and perceptions of the effectiveness of external child protection systems. Research syntheses note that professional training can improve knowledge and attitudes toward reporting duties, but evidence gaps remain for sustained effects on actual reporting behavior and for outcomes that reflect system level processes (Walsh et al., 2022).

Regression findings indicate that all awareness domains contributed significantly to practice scores, with behavioral management showing the largest standardized effect. This suggests that teacher understanding of positive behavior management, appropriate discipline, and classroom level preventive strategies may translate most directly into daily protective practice. Behavioral management concepts often connect to immediate decisions about supervision, discipline, and response to bullying or misconduct, which are frequent in school life and which set the tone of a protective climate. A supportive and orderly classroom climate can reduce exposure to peer aggression and increase the likelihood that learners seek adult help, which in turn supports early identification of risk. School climate research shows that teacher perceptions of climate relate to student outcomes and disciplinary patterns, which gives additional rationale for strengthening preventive classroom practices as part of safeguarding work (Bear et al., 2014).

The significant contribution of the responsibilities of schools domain also emphasizes the role of school systems. Teachers' awareness of shared responsibilities across school heads, committees, parents, and community partners may encourage coordinated practice such as documentation, referral, and participation in case conferences. International reviews of teacher preparation highlight that safeguarding content often receives limited time in initial training and that improved preparation benefits from explicit attention to duties, procedures, and trauma informed perspectives that guide response to disclosures and suspected maltreatment (Walsh et

al., 2023). When schools complement policy awareness with routine drills, clear reporting lines, and access to consultation, teachers can translate knowledge into action with less hesitation and less perceived risk.

The findings have practical implications for strengthening implementation quality. First, professional development should focus on applied competence, not only on policy recall. Simulation based activities, case vignettes, and guided documentation exercises can reduce uncertainty in decision making and improve confidence, which training trials have shown to be feasible targets for improvement (Humphreys et al., 2021). Second, monitoring indicators should capture both preventive classroom practice and procedural compliance in case response, since both appear central to implementation. Third, systems support matters in contexts where teachers face heavy workload and limited access to specialized services. In such settings, a strong school level referral network and regular consultation opportunities can help ensure that reporting and response align with policy standards.

This study also offers a localized evidence base for Caraga District, Division of Davao Oriental, and it supports data informed planning for school improvement and division level capacity building. Even with high overall scores, the moderate association and the predictive pattern suggest that targeted strengthening of behavioral management competencies and clarified school responsibility routines may yield practical gains in implementation consistency. Future research can extend this work by examining objective indicators such as documented case timelines, referral completeness, and follow up outcomes, which address known gaps in the training and reporting literature (Walsh et al., 2022). Mixed method designs can also explore how teachers weigh contextual pressures and perceived system responsiveness when deciding on escalation, documentation, and referral.

5. Conclusion

Public elementary teachers in Caraga District reported very extensive awareness and very extensive practices in Child Protection Policy implementation. Awareness related moderately and positively with practice, and awareness domains significantly predicted practice scores, with behavioral management showing the strongest contribution. Sustained professional development that links policy knowledge with routine classroom prevention and procedural case response can support more consistent safeguarding practice in public elementary schools.

Acknowledgment

Sincere appreciation is given to all peer reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions, which helped the author to improve the quality of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Bayucca, S. A. (2020). Teachers' awareness and school's responsiveness to the child protection policy. (ERIC Document No. ED606098).
- Bear, G. G., Yang, C., Pell, M., & Gaskins, C. (2014). Validation of a brief measure of teachers' perceptions of school climate: *Relations to student achievement and suspensions. Learning Environments Research*, 17(3), 339–354. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-014-9162-1>
- Beck, K. A., Ogloff, J. R. P., & Corbishley, A. (1994). Knowledge, compliance, and attitudes of teachers toward mandatory child abuse reporting in British Columbia. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 19(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1495304>
- Department of Education. (2012). DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012: Department of Education child protection policy.
- Humphreys, K. L., Piersiak, H. A., Panlilio, C. C., Lahman, E. B., Vergiglione, N., Dore, S., et al. (2021). A randomized control trial of a child abuse mandated reporter training: Knowledge and attitudes. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 117, 105033. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105033>
- Kenny, M. C. (2001). Child abuse reporting: Teachers' perceived deterrents. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 25(1), 81–92. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134\(00\)00218-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134(00)00218-0)
- Kenny, M. C. (2004). Teachers' attitudes toward and knowledge of child maltreatment. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 28(12), 1311–1319. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2004.06.010>
- Stoltenborgh, M., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., Alink, L. R. A., & Van Ijzendoorn, M. H. (2015). The prevalence of child maltreatment across the globe: Review of a series of meta-analyses. *Child Abuse Review*, 24(1), 37–50. <https://doi.org/10.1002/car.2353>
- Walsh, K., Eggins, E., Hine, L., Mathews, B., Kenny, M. C., Howard, S., Bates, S., & Vagenas, D. (2022). Child protection training for professionals to improve reporting of child abuse and neglect. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2022(7), CD011775. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD011775.pub2>
- Walsh, K., Ey, L. A., Hand, K., Smith, R., Howard, S., Fenton, A., Whiteford, C., Brown, M., Pinnock, R., & Rodier, L. (2023). Child protection and safeguarding in initial teacher education: A systematic scoping review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 151, 106951. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106951>

Author Contributions: Manginlaud, C., Baguio, J.; Study design, method conception, data collection, data analysis and manuscript writing