

Monitoring schemes in child protection policy implementation in an elementary school: Implications for child-friendly schools of future

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Abstract

Across the globe, the fight against forms of child's right violations has strongly advanced leading to the creation and enactment of laws, policies, and orders. In the Philippines, the Child Protection Policy (CPP) has been implemented. Reviewed literature and studies revealed the need to investigate the monitoring schemes of schools in implementing the CPP. In such light, this case study was conceptualized to describe the experiences of the CPP committee in monitoring CPP programs. Through thematic analysis of the interview transcriptions, four monitoring schemes emerged which were dubbed as CARE. CARE stands for creating partnership with the community, asking parent's participation, regularizing CPP committee meeting, and establishing emergency hotline number. With these findings, the study concludes that the school and the CPP committee strictly adhere to the CPP and their functions. Hence, other schools are encouraged to formulate and adopt their contextualized monitoring schemes in implementing the CPP.

Keywords: affective states, asynchronous learning, attitude, industrial technology, new normal education, technical instruction

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1. Introduction

The vital roles of children in every country's society and future have been recognized, promoted, and protected. Over time, Sun and Buys (2012) articulated that the attitudes towards children have changed dramatically and we can understand much about how a society values its children by the laws and services it has to protect them. Accordingly, the child protection system both reflects and shapes community values and expectations; as such, each part of the child protection system—families, the general community, community agencies, professionals working with children, police and government— has a significant role to play to ensure that children are kept safe and well. In spite of the pertinent and prevailing laws and policies on child protection and welfare, children across the world remain at risk. This global issue has been featured in different news and documentaries around the world.

In the Philippines, violation of children's right has been endemic. As a response, laws and policies have been promulgated. On May 3, 2012, the Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 40, s. 2012 launched its Child Protection Policy (CPP). It aims to protect the child from all forms of violence that may be inflicted by adults, persons in authority as well as their fellow students, including bullying. Since the Anti-Bullying Act (Republic Act 10627) was enacted in 2013, the DepEd has progressed its CPP by establishing Child Protection Committees in school divisions. (DepEd, 2014).

In addition, any act of child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying, or other related acts are treated with zero tolerance by the CPP. It also protects children from all forms of violence, including bullying, inflicted by adults, persons in authority, and fellow students; to provide special protection to children who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances that affect their normal development and over which they have no control, and to assist the concerned agencies in their rehabilitation; and to ensure that such special protection from all forms of abuse is provided to children who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances that affect their normal development and over which they have no control (Llego, 2015). Nonetheless, it is based on Article XV, Section 3 [2] of the 1987 Constitution, which states that the State shall defend the right of the children including abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development (Floranza, 2015).

Despite the implementation of CPP and related laws, children are still unsafe. In fact, the DepEd (2013) reported that four out of 10 children in Grades 1-3 and seven out of 10 in higher grade levels revealed that they experienced verbal abuse through their teachers; three out of 10 children in Grades 1-3 and nearly five out of 10 high school learners experienced physical violence committed by teachers; 73.58% of children in Grades 4-6 and 78.36% in high school in urban areas admitted that their peers made them suffer from verbal abuse violence while verbal sexual abuse was experienced by 26.74% of children in Grades 4-6 and 43.71% in high school in urban areas through their peers and 9.65% of Grades 4-6 and 17.71% of high school students experienced inappropriate touching; in rural areas, 37.57% of high school students and 30.17% of children in Grades 4-6 claimed that they experienced physical abuse or violence through their peers; 42.88% of high school students and 36.53 % of children in Grades 4-6 suffered from verbal sexual violence in school and inappropriate touching was experienced by 11.95% of children in Grades 4-6 and 17.60% of high school students.

For the school year 2013-2014, out of the 1,700 reports of child abuse and bullying in schools, 60% of these have already been resolved (DepEd, 2014). Cardona *et al.* (2015) revealed that Filipino students experienced different types of bullying such as direct, verbal, indirect cyber, and social bullying like spreading of hearsays and vandalism. Also, Yap (2016) reported that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) received reports of as many as 2,147 cases of child abuse in which greater than one-fourth of these were of a sexual nature. According to the DSWD's Policy Development and Planning Bureau, the mentioned figure represents over half of

the total 4,374 child abuse incidents documented in 2015. Notably, the DSWD reported that 539 children were victims of sexual abuse in the first three months of 2016, followed by 514 incidents of neglect, 487 cases of abandonment, 233 cases of sexual exploitation, and 214 cases of trafficking.

Clearly, the CPP gives guidelines and rules creating a secured and safe environment for learners. Unfortunately, and as evidenced by prevailing lack of understanding and capacity of government agencies to enforce, implement, and uphold responses to child protection issues and the lack of reliable and official data to inform child protection responses, current legislative, policy, and operational frameworks for child protection may be insufficient, poorly implemented or managed, or lack meaningful congruence with what children and families experience and need (Yacat, 2011). In fact, Madrid *et al.* (2013) indicated that the Philippines has a good number of laws, policies and programs on child protection, albeit with limited funds and trained personnel; a number of these laws and policies impact on the prevention of child maltreatment although very few are directly related to primary prevention; there was a disparity between what is required by national laws and policies; and actual implementation of programs on child protection.

With the emergence and need for CPP implementation, most studies focused on implementation level of CPP and the implementers' and concerned officials' awareness levels of these policies as bases in the formulation of intervention programs, action plans, and frameworks for assessment (Asio *et al.*, 2020; Baronia, 2020; Bayuca, 2020; Segundo & Guia, 2019; Estrenea, 2018). These various studies revealed high level of awareness and satisfactory to very high level of implementation.

Notably, Cervancia *et al.* (2019) mentioned that investigations should focus on the monitoring schemes of DepEd schools in implementing CPP. Accordingly, investigation is needed on the capacity-building opportunities available to teachers in both public and private schools. In addition, Bayuca (2020) underscored that conducting studies on the monitoring schemes of CPP implementation are needed. Meanwhile, Dapit (2018) suggested that case studies are needed to investigate the issues, challenges, or problems in the implementation of the CPP. Interestingly, the literatures clearly revealed that most studies employed quantitative approach.

Moreover, the monitoring scheme is termed globally as child protection monitoring and which is elaborated by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2012). Accordingly, it as the continuing and systematic collection, analysis, and utilization of data and information linked to child protection. It also pertains to the continuing efforts in a given humanitarian setting to monitor child protection risks, violations, concerns, and capacities to produce evidence on child protection risks and existing capacities to support analysis, strategy, and solutions. It also necessitates a coordinated and collaborative that brings together a number of actors with data and information that reflect the threats they face and the diversity of adolescents and children such as age and sex. Defining purpose and establishing the indicators and needed information that will be monitored is the first step in designing monitoring scheme. Ethical considerations should also be incorporated in the scheme. In the case of the DepEd's CPP, the Child Protection Committee is the one in charge of formulating monitoring and referral schemes. As such, this calls for investigation on the monitoring schemes of schools.

With the abovementioned findings and research directions, this study was conceptualized to qualitatively investigate the monitoring schemes of DepEd in the implementation of the CPP. In so doing, the monitoring schemes of in the implementation of CPP shall be identified. With this in mind the study seeks to answer the question, "How do the members of the CPP committee describe their experiences in monitoring the CPP program?" Through this study, implications for policy formulation shall be afforded to concerned stakeholders and officials. Also, this study could fill the knowledge gaps and research areas that need further investigations. Finally, it is hope that this study could provide insights for revisiting monitoring schemes being utilized to ensure the strict implementation of CPP towards creating a child-friendly school that ensures that every child is physically safe, emotionally secure and psychologically enabling.

2. Methodology

Research Participants and Setting. This study was conducted in one public elementary school in Ilocos Sur, Philippines. The participants of the study were chosen using purposive in which three criteria were set. First, they members of the school-based Child Protection Committee composed of school head/administrator, guidance counselor or teacher, faculty club representative, parent representative, representative of pupils, and community representative. Second, they are presently located in the province. Third, they are willing to be interviewed and to participate in this study. With these criteria, six (6) participants were interviewed.

Research Materials/ Tools. In conducting the study, an *aide-memoire* served as the main data gathering instrument which will be constructed after the development of the interview guide matrix. The instrument elicited the school-based monitoring schemes in the implementation of the Child protection Policy (CPP), which aims to protect the child from all forms of violence that may be inflicted by adults, persons in authority as well as their fellow students, including bullying.

Data Gathering Procedures. In conducting this study, the interview guide containing concepts, definitions and a priori codes were constructed first to formulate questions (Azarias & Capistrano, 2019). Then, the questions were lifted to *aide-memoire* which was used to encapsulate the sharing of the participants. After that, permission to conduct the study was sought from concerned school officials. Upon approval to conduct the study, the consents of the participants were sought in which they were orientated also on the nature of the study. Furthermore, the schedules of the interviews were set. During the conduct of the interviews, the participants were asked to permit that an audio recorder shall be used to fully capture the meeting or interview. Every after interview, the audio recording was transcribed. All the transcribed interviews were subjected to spot-checking for accuracy and correctness of data (Azarias, 2022). Member checking procedures were undertaken through follow up interviews, letting the participants comment on their interview transcripts, and by presenting the result of the study to them once the analyses are done (Azarias *et al.*, 2020). Finally, the gathered data were triangulated and substantiated by interviewing other schools' stakeholders and conducting document analysis of pertinent papers on CPP implementation. Last, the data were analyzed qualitatively.

Research Data Analysis. In analyzing the data, open coding and thematic analysis were employed (Francisco, 2022) in which significant data and statements were categorized to create themes that encapsulated the sharing and verbalizations of the participants and other data. Member checking procedures were employed to establish the validity, truthfulness, and trustworthiness of the emerging patterns and data (de Guzman & Tan, 2007).

Research Ethics. In conducting the study, the consents of the participants were sought using a consent form. They were assured also that they can voluntarily withdraw from participating in the study any time they want. Likewise, the results of the study were disseminated to them in which they were allowed to comment on the analyses. Finally, they were assured that all data shall be kept with utmost confidentiality.

3. Findings and Discussion

Monitoring schemes in the implementation of the Child Protection (CPP) of the Department of Education (DepEd) are vital in ensuring that learners are safe and protected. In such context, this aimed to describe the experiences of the participants in monitoring the CPP program. Through thematic analysis of the verbalizations or sharing of the participants, four (4) monitoring schemes in the implementation of CPP emerged. These themes are dubbed as CARE: Creating Partnership with the Community, Asking Parent's Participation, Regularizing CPP Committee Meeting, and Establishing Emergency Hotline Number.

Creating Partnership with the Community. This monitoring scheme accentuates two things: partnering with the barangay officials and establishing strong partnership with the community members. In terms of partnering with the barangay officials the participants shared that these officials have the information that the CPP needs and they know their jurisdiction well. In establishing strong partnership with the community members, the participants

highlighted that collaboration with them involves constant updating or reporting on CPP matters through attending community events like barangay general assemblies. To justify these claims, the verbalizations below justify.

We also get infos ah from the um ah barangay officials because you know they know better the place and the things that happen in their place. After all, you know the barangay officials have the updated records and reports. (P1)

We also collect um information from the barangay officials, because they are the ones that is more knowledgeable about the area and the events that occur in their place. (P2)

My teachers also ask info from ah the officials of the ah um barangay. (P4)

We also obtain information, uhm, from the barangay officials, since they're the ones who are closest to the situation and know what is going on in their sector. After all, the barangay officials are obliged to have the most updated reports and records. (P3)

Uh, aside from those guidelines, the school also sees that the community is involve, community involvement as they say. There are general assemblies which I attend for the matter of uh I guess relating the school matters and campaigning for the CPP programs of the school. (P5)

Ah Aside from having those guidelines that I show to you, um our school notice that the community is involved. We are always attending general assembly um for the matter of relating the school matters and for the CPP programs of the school campaigns. We established the community partnership. (P6)

Clearly, the verbalizations highlight community-based approach as one of the monitoring schemes in CPP implementation. The finding supports the study of Roche and Flynn (2021) that revealed identified a range of community-based actors undertaking informal child protection activities. Their study revealed also that support for further community-driven child protection approaches, linking formal and informal actors [or groups] is an important next step to align child protection mechanisms, and improve coverage and responsiveness. In fact, the International Save the Children Alliance (ISCA) (2006) discussed that community-based child protection groups are essential component of a broader child protection system that functions in a community, district, state and national levels.

Similarly, Cotorcea (2017) revealed that the community-based approach [like what the participants of this study revealed] was promoted as an effective strategy to protect children in the community. Accordingly, participatory risk and resource mapping in the first phase of the community-based child protection program are imperative to identify priority issues in the community as well as resources to build on in the development of action plans. As such, it is vital to involve the community in the CPP implementation.

Finally, the finding accentuates that community involvement in CPP implementation is essential. This is even when proper protection services and mechanisms exist and are running well (International Save the Children Alliance, 2008). The community remains to be one of the eyes that ensures the safety and well-being of every child.

Asking Parent's Participation. As a monitoring scheme, this highlights the need to ask for the help and participation of the parents in reporting any cases of violation of the CPP and other pertinent and related laws to the protection of the rights and welfare of the learners. The participants acknowledged the vital roles of parents in giving information and ensuring that their children are protected. This is realized through constant communication and collaboration with them. As verbalized:

The parents are actually our partners. They help us implement and monitor the CPP. They actually help us in securing that ah um children are safe from any form of harm. So we have to make sure

that we have constant communication with them. (P1)

They [parents] truly truly assist us in ensuring that umm the youngsters are protected from harm in any way. As a result, we must maintain continual communication with them. They are genuinely highly participative, (P2)

one activity is our partnership with them, like ... the Parent's Association, since we all know that their capabilities and experiences on this field, uhm, are something that could surely be helpful. In short, these people of the community help make the implementation more possible as they help us to monitor and execute the CPP properly. (P3)

Our mother and father are also asked to give info to us committee especially to the principal. (P4)

The parents uhm are actually our partners for this matter. I mean CPP implementation. The committee is in constant communication with parents to get information. (P5)

They, the parents, are, in fact, our collaborators. They help us to implement and monitor the CCP. They also help us in securing that um children are safe from any form of harm. As a result, we must ensure that we have constant communication with them. They are actually very interactive. (P6)

The finding supports Mellon (2017) who underscored that encouraging and embracing parent and family-led representation, or involvement, on quality services provided is one method for organizations to be accountable to parents and families. The finding indicates that parents are strong partners in CPP implementation. The vital role that they play cannot be undermined. Notably, parents' involvement should be invigorated and empowered CPP programs are being implemented. In fact, Linley and Richards (2002) underscored that the purpose of parental engagement is to empower parents to participate in the child protection process from a position of knowledge that allows them to speak for themselves whenever possible. Accordingly, this involvement in CPP implementation encourages effective communication and a healthy working relationship between parents and the local authority.

Regularizing CPP Committee Meeting. This theme means scheduling the meeting of the CPP committee on a regular basis that allows them to prepare reports and plan for a better implementation of the CPP. As a vital actor in implementing the CPP, CPP committee is expected also to convene to talk matters related to the policy. The statements below support the claim.

Second, the members of the CPP committee regularly meet to consolidate reports should there be ah cases. If there are none, we just convene to plan for activities. (P1)

The CPP committee meets on a regular basis to consolidate reports in the event of an incident or discuss matters on CPP implementation. (P2)

Second, the CPP committee meets on a constant schedule to compile reports in the event that there are any. And if neither occurs, we basically get together to set objectives. (P3)

The committee also meets for meeting every other month. Sometime two times in a month especially if there are ah reports to finish. We plan also activities for CPP. (P4)

The CPP committee regularly meet to consolidate reports if ah there should be cases. (P5)

We members of the CPP committee will regularly meet to discuss matters and to finish reports if there should be cases. If there are no cases, we would just convene a plan for activities. (P6)

From the above verbalizations, the significance of conducting meetings in CPP implementation is highlighted. The participant' statements indicate that without regular meeting matters related to CPP cannot be discussed, reported, and planned. Most importantly, conducting meetings suggests that the CPP committee is active in

dispensing their duties and responsibilities in accordance to the CPP.

Finally, it should be noted that meetings are a common activity in most organizations, seeking to provide a means for decision-making and goal-setting, scheduling work, solving problems, and disseminating information (McComas *et al.*, 2007). In the case of the CPP committee, these bring together practitioners, parents and children to consider whether a child has experienced significant harm and, if so, what action is required to protect him or her in future (Foster *et al.*, 2021). Clearly, regular meeting is a mechanism that is vital and needed in CPP implementation.

Establishing Emergency Hotline Number. Through the verbalizations of the participants, an emergency hotline through a mobile phone number was established that characterized the theme. As a monitoring scheme, the theme simply means that the school created or established a hotline or contact number that allows any stakeholders of the school to report any violation of the Child Protection Policy and any of the laws related to it. The interview revealed that the parents suggested this is monitoring scheme. Below are the verbalizations of the participants that led to the identification of the monitoring scheme.

First, we have the established cellphone number where they can message or send information about any case of child abuse or about CPP implementation. (P1)

We have a designated cellphone number where they may text or send information regarding any incident of child abuse or the implementation of the CPP. (P2)

On top, we have a designated cellphone number where they may text or transfer information regarding any cases of child abuse or the implementation of the CPP. (P3)

And ah, we have the cellphone number where my classmates or fellow learners can message to report cases of child abuse or about CPP implementation. (P4)

We suggested having a cellphone number wherein we can message or send information about ah any case of child abuse or about CPP implementation. (P5)

We have cp number for reporting immediately the cases or violations. (P6)

With the participants' statements, the school as a government institution adopted the use of modern technology in its pursuits for protecting its learners. This supports Edillo *et al.* (2017) who discovered that different government entities have employed Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to encourage citizen participation. Failure to adopt, or worse, appropriately utilize, this linkage could expose the organization [the school for this study] to significant responsibility (Kusserow, 2013). Nonetheless, hotlines, like the hotline of established by the participants, can be used to support children who are at danger and to determine family violence (Ortiz *et al.*, 2021).

Clearly, emergency contact numbers are essential so that people can seek help as quickly as possible because many unforeseen events develop (di Echos, 2020). The lack of such channels of communication limits management's knowledge of potentially crucial issues (Kusserow, 2013) like CPP violations. In this context, citizens can use incident reporting tools that permit communication with local administration (Edillo *et al.*, 2017).

4. Conclusion

The significance of safeguarding the rights, welfare, and well-being of children or learners have been highlighted and supported by various laws, ordinances, and orders. The Child Protection Policy (CPP) is among them. The CPP provides rules and guidelines to CPP Committee in establishing a safe and secured environment for learners. Unfortunately, studies revealed the need to investigate the monitoring schemes afforded to the CPP implementation (Bayuca, 2020; Cervancia *et al.*, 2019). In such context, this study was conducted to describe the experiences of the CPP committee in monitoring the CPP program. In fact, the thematic analysis of their verbatim

statements yielded four themes which were tagged as CARE: **C**reating Partnership with the Community, **A**sking Parent's Participation, **R**egularizing CPP Committee Meeting, and **E**stablishing Emergency Hotline Number.

In addition, the community's and parents' involvement remains the strong forces in ensuring the safety and protection of children. The parents', local officials' and their constituents' participation in monitoring the CPP implementation provides the CPP committee with enough and first-hand information that they need in writing its reports and in planning for actions that need to be undertaken. As such, the partnership with and involving these identified monitoring actors allows the CPP committee to see blind spots that are vital in the CPP implementation. Furthermore, conducting regular meetings are imperative in sustaining the active role of the CPP committee. Through this, the committee are accorded with opportunities that allow them to consolidate information leading to well-informed decisions and courses of actions. In so doing, the CPP and its related-programs are effectively implemented.

Moreover, the rise of modern technology allows the fast access of imperative information that are pertinent in the CPP implementation. The use of contact or hotline numbers and other accessible and available digital and technology infrastructure by the committee transcends the boundaries of the digital divide. Through these technologies, the committee are assured of the updated, accessible, and available data that are to be verified and that are needed for immediate or speedy actions. As such, the committee is expected to upgrade continuously the use of hotline system as monitoring scheme such that data remain accessible and fast especially that every child's safety, welfare, and well-being remain at risk.

Finally, the identified school-based monitoring schemes accentuate that the CPP committee and the school are serious in their mandates of providing not only safe learning environment but also a safe community to every child or learner. With these in mind, schools are expected also to adopt their own school-based contextualized mechanisms that are guided by the CPP. Meanwhile, the study was limited only into determining these monitoring mechanisms. As such, future studies may be conducted to determine the effectiveness of these schemes and the issues and challenges that associated with the implementation of these schemes. In so doing, these school-based schemes may be improved for a more effective CPP implementation.

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