

Implementation status and compliance level on school child protection policy in Magsaysay Elementary Schools

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Abstract

This study explored the implementation status and compliance level on the school's Child Protection Policy with RA 7610 in Magsaysay Elementary Schools using an exploratory sequential design. The researcher employed complete enumeration to identify 198 participants who are members of the School Child Protection Committee across the 33 public elementary schools. The qualitative aspect of the study was analyzed through a thematic analysis. For the quantitative part, the weighted mean was computed to analyze the descriptive problems using WarpPLS version 7.0. Based on the interview, five main themes emerged, such as awareness and trainings, enforcement, reporting mechanisms, resources, and involvement of stakeholders. The study reveals that schools consistently align their practices with the legal framework, ensuring that child protection policies remain central to day-to-day operations. Also, schools provide appropriate interventions for affected learners. This highlights that compliance extends beyond prevention to include responsive care and recovery measures. Moreover, this study found a generally significant relationship between the implementation status of RA 7610 and school-level compliance. These indicate that the implementation strategies have a consistent, reliable, and visible impact on compliance with the child protection policy, confirming that strong implementation drives effective compliance. Thus, the proposed action plan aligns implementation strategies with compliance requirements. It is recommended that DepEd shift its focus from issuing directives to providing structural support, such as capacity building, legal support, and resource provision. DepEd may introduce digitized reporting to equip schools to respond in real time. Also, schools may shift from basic awareness to functional localized action.

Keywords: Child Protection Policy (CPP), child abuse, children rights, DepEd Order No. 40. s. 2012, Implementation of RA 7610, reporting mechanisms

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1. Introduction

Child abuse is a social problem prevalent in schools that hinders the opportunity of the child to express and socialize with others and limits learning opportunities in school. It slows down the child's development (Rabina, 2019). The 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees the protection of children's rights. Later, in 1990, the government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), making it one of the first countries to ratify it, which led to the enactment of RA 7610, also known as the Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act of 1992, which mandates the government and community with the responsibility of child protection. This law provides the legal framework for identifying, reporting, and prosecuting individuals who violate children's rights. The school, considered a second home and a critical environment for human development, bears the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety and well-being of its learners. (Stuart et al., 1995 as cited in Rabina, 2019).

Since its institutionalization, the Child Protection Policy (CPP) has served as the official protocol for case management, the referral system, and the provision of intervention services to victims. However, the existing child protection system in the Philippines is regarded as "top-down," with specific regulations and policies perceived as weak, and its features are being called into question (Roche & Flynn, 2021). Reports from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the news media often highlight issues in the proper handling of child protection cases in schools, including delays in reporting, a culture of under- or non-reporting, lapses in investigation, and a lack of trained personnel. Despite the safety nets and reforms, the uncomfortable truth and painful narratives of child abuse victims continue. While the policy is robust on paper, its effectiveness is contingent upon rigorous compliance by school personnel, its practical functionality in real-world scenarios, and schools' capacity to overcome inherent implementation challenges. There must be a policy shift in Child Protection Policy in the schools by addressing the alleged unreported cases of child abuse to reverse the failing performance and noncompliance of the Department of Education (DepEd) in implementing the mandated provisions in RA 7610.

Data from 2023 to 2025 reveals two reported child abuse cases in the Magsaysay District in the form of physical abuse; one remains active, and the other one is already dismissed. It can be concluded from the report that the 2023 child abuse case is still pending resolution, implying that the complexity of the case can hinder the speedy disposition of child abuse cases (P.P. Yumol, personal communication, March 21, 2026). At the very end, the researcher hopes to offer a set of solutions regarding the implementation and compliance of schools with child protection policy under RA 7610, to address child abuse cases in the Magsaysay District.

Statement of the Problem - This study aimed to determine the implementation status and compliance level of the School Child Protection Policy with RA 7610. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the implementation status of RA 7610 in Magsaysay Elementary Schools? (2) What is the extent of RA 7610 implementation by the respondent schools in terms of awareness and trainings, enforcement, reporting mechanisms, resources, and involvement of stakeholders? (3) What is the schools' level of compliance with RA 7610 in terms of Policy Relevance, Information Dissemination, Prevention and Protection, Reporting and Referral, Support and Rehabilitation? (4) Is there a significant relationship between the implementation status and the compliance level with RA 7610? (5) What action plan may be proposed for Magsaysay Elementary Schools to further comply with RA 7610 efficiently?

Significance of the Study - The researcher believes that the results of this study will be beneficial to the following: the learners, who will be assured of a safe school where they can freely enjoy learning without fear, and an environment in which they can thrive. To school administrators and principals, the results of the study will

provide school heads with significant information crucial to planning, formulating school policies, and designing appropriate localized interventions to address issues and concerns related to child protection policy. To teachers and school personnel, this study will equip teachers in the performance of their role as duty bearers so that they can confidently attend to and address the challenges of implementing child protection policies at the school level and will enhance their awareness of their roles and responsibilities under the CPP and RA 7610, fostering a proactive approach to child protection. For parents and guardians, this study will make them aware of their vital role as partners with the school in establishing a safer school environment and promoting trust in the system to protect their children. To DepEd and policymakers, the results of the study will help the division offices introduce policy recommendations and develop an immediate intervention and catch-up plan, a strategic technical assistance plan, and a human resource learning and development plan, all designed for short-, medium-, and long-term ranges. For Child Protection Committees (CPCs), the study will highlight specific areas of non-compliance, enabling them to address challenges immediately and improve their compliance. To the Local Government Unit of Magsaysay, the results of this study will guide the LGU in crafting a localized child protection policy to strengthen the strategic intervention and mitigation plan. To the Sangguniang Bayan/Barangay Council, this study will help the Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) Desk to develop a localized plan to prevent and address violence against women and children. For future researchers, this study can serve as a foundational reference for further academic inquiry into educational law, policy implementation, and child welfare in the Philippines.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study - This study focuses on the implementation status and compliance level of school child protection policies with RA 7610 in public elementary schools in the Magsaysay District, Division of Occidental Mindoro. The scope includes the extent to which the respondent schools have implemented RA 7610 in the following focus areas: awareness and training, enforcement, reporting mechanisms, resources, and stakeholder involvement. Further, this study covered the level of compliance of schools with policy relevance, information dissemination, prevention and protection, reporting and referral, and support and rehabilitation, as stipulated in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of RA 7610 and DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012. Furthermore, the study focuses on the correlations between implementation status and compliance levels of the Child Protection Policy among schools in the Magsaysay District. This study is limited to the perspective of the 198 members of the School Child Protection Committee from the 33 public elementary schools in Magsaysay. The perspective of external agencies was not included in the study, and there is no discussion of basic information on child abuse cases, as this is governed by the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The study also excluded legal analysis or review of specific closed court cases related to RA 7610. The study covered the School Year 2025-2026.

2. Methodology

Research Design - This study used an exploratory sequential research design. Basically, the study had two phases: a qualitative phase and a quantitative phase, with the qualitative phase involving the collection and analysis of qualitative data first, followed by the collection and analysis of quantitative data. This exploratory sequential design was used to help the researcher explore a phenomenon or generate hypotheses before testing them with quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The gathering of information and interpretation of data guided the researcher in the early qualitative stage. This helped the researcher design a tailored survey and select appropriate existing measures for the project's quantitative stage. It also makes clear which variables must be investigated quantitatively in subsequent research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, the research design helped the researcher assess the implementation status and compliance levels of schools in the Magsaysay District with RA 7610 in implementing child protection policies.

Respondents of the Study - For the qualitative phase of the study, after the proper offices approved the request, an interview was conducted with 15 randomly selected respondents from the San Jose North and South Districts. The participants of the study were the 198 members of the School Child Protection Committees from 33 elementary schools in the Magsaysay East and West Districts. The researcher employed complete enumeration. Each committee is composed of the School Head, Guidance Counselor/Guidance Designate, Teacher Representative, Parent Representative, Student Representative, and Community/Barangay Representative. Each committee

comprises 6 members, selected from the 198 participants in this study.

Research Instrument - The first instrument used in this study was the interview guide. The interview was conducted with targeted elementary schools in the San Jose South and North Districts, which were asked to share the implementation status of the child protection policy under RA 7610 in their respective schools. The researcher designed the Implementation and Compliance Survey Questionnaire, which is divided into two parts and consists of five variables, with six questions per variable. The terms found in the provisions of RA 7610, the readings from other related literature, and the results of the interview served as the basis for crafting the Implementation and Compliance Survey Questionnaire. This researcher-made questionnaire, consisting of 10 scales with 6 items, was used to assess the implementation status and compliance level with the child protection policy under RA 7610.

The created instrument underwent expert validation. The researcher sought the expertise and insights of three professors from the Divine Word College of San Jose Graduate School to ensure the clarity and appropriateness of the questionnaire statements. Also, the researcher asked the DepEd Supervisor in charge, in Filipino, to look into translating the statements into the local language. The feedback and recommendations they provided were incorporated into the draft questionnaire to enhance its potential to generate valuable data for the research. The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha for standardized items. Thirty (30) respondents were asked to answer the 60-item questionnaire. The results were divided into two main parts: the implementation status and the compliance level of the School Child Protection Policy.

Table 1 presents the results of the reliability analysis for the 10 scales, each with 6 items.

Table 1

Result of Reliability Analysis

Items	Number of Items	Reliability Coefficients*	Analysis
I. Implementation Status of School on Child Protection Policy (6 items each)			
1. Awareness and Trainings	6	0.833	High Reliability
2. Enforcement	6	0.741	High Reliability
3. Reporting Mechanisms	6	0.730	High Reliability
4. Resources	6	0.706	High Reliability
5. Involvement of Stakeholders	6	0.907	Very High Reliability
II. Level of Compliance of the School on Child Protection Policy (6 items each)			
1. Relevance	6	0.944	Very High Reliability
2. Information Dissemination	6	0.866	High Reliability
3. Prevention and Protection	6	0.907	Very High Reliability
4. Reporting and Referral	6	0.967	Very High Reliability
5. Support and Rehabilitation	6	0.945	Very High Reliability

*Based on standardized items

The reliability coefficients from 0.706 to 0.967 indicate that all 10 scales have met and exceeded the generally accepted threshold of 0.70 for internal consistency. In the first part, the involvement of stakeholders had the highest coefficient (0.907), indicating a very high degree of internal consistency among the items measuring the implementation status construct. The lowest coefficient is for resources (0.706), which is at the lower end of the acceptable range, yet it remains statistically reliable. In the second part, reporting and referral show the strongest internal consistency (0.967), indicating that the six descriptors in this scale are highly interrelated and accurately measure the construct. The high coefficients across all compliance variables, ranging from 0.866 to 0.967, suggest that the instrument is highly stable and dependable for assessing the school's adherence to child protection policy. In summary, the instruments for both implementation status and level of compliance demonstrate consistency and accurately measure their intended constructs. This result ensures that the data collected from these scales are reliable for further statistical analysis.

Data Gathering Procedure - The researcher sought permission to conduct the study from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent, the Public Schools District Supervisors, and the School Heads of the sample schools. Approval and recommendation from the graduate school's panel of examiners were secured before the

administration. The researcher used a single question and collected responses online for the qualitative phase. The qualitative data were gathered through interviews with members of the child protection committee and subjected to thematic analysis. Recording, transcription, tabulation, and coding were done to extract the themes. The initial, developing, and final thematic maps were illustrated to identify the final themes. The qualitative data collection was conducted over a period of two weeks. Letters of request to conduct the study were forwarded to the Schools Division Superintendent of Occidental Mindoro and Public Schools District Supervisors of Magsaysay East and West Districts. Upon approval, permission from the school heads in the Magsaysay District was secured before the data collection. To gather the data, the survey questionnaire checklist was circulated through an online platform. The responses were compiled, organized, and statistically analyzed to support the study's findings. The quantitative data collection was also conducted over a period of two weeks.

Statistical Treatment of the Data - The qualitative data gathered through interviews with the participants underwent thematic analysis. Recording, transcription, tabulation, and coding were done to extract the themes. The initial, developing, and final thematic maps were used to identify the final themes. The researcher used descriptive statistics, such as the weighted mean, to summarize the schools' implementation status of the Child Protection Policy. To test the hypothesis, a correlational analysis was used to assess implementation status and compliance with RA 7610 using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in WarpPLS version 7.0.

Ethical Considerations - This study strictly adhered to the ethical standards in research. Proper citations were used correctly. The permit to conduct the study was obtained from the appropriate authorities prior to this research. The respondents' voluntary involvement in the study was valued and treated with utmost confidentiality, and strict adherence to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 was observed. The respondents have the right, at any time, to withdraw from this study and are not obligated to disclose the reason(s) for their withdrawal. The researcher ensured anonymity for all participants, especially students, and managed the data with the utmost confidentiality to prevent any harm arising from their participation. The researcher was aware that in any case during the interview, it was his obligation to report any disclosed case of ongoing child abuse or neglect, which superseded the promise of confidentiality as provided for in RA 7610. A disclaimer was included in the questionnaires that clearly states that particular provision.

3. Results and Discussions

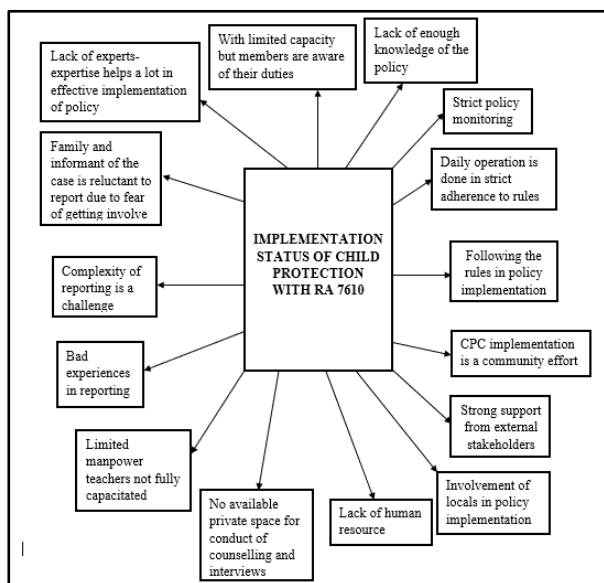


Figure 1. Initial Thematic Map of Implementation Status of RA 7610

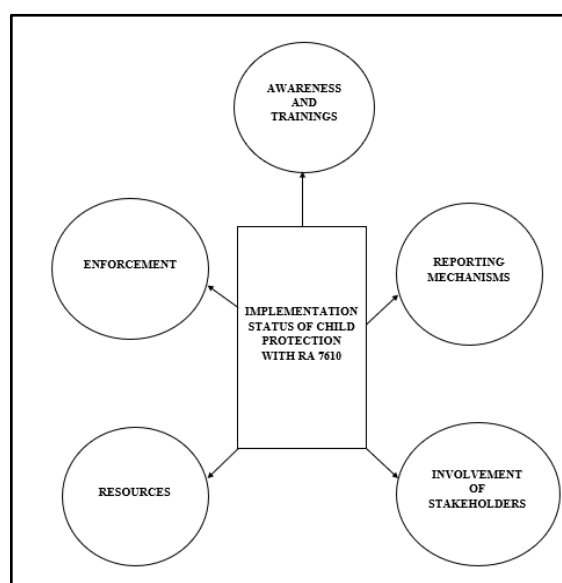


Figure 1. Final Thematic Map of the Implementation Status of RA 7610

Figure 1 summarizes the implementation status of the school child protection policy with RA 7610. It reports on the implementation status of the child protection policy in each school. The map outlines the reasons for assessing participants' implementation status. This is supported by a study by Galanza (2025), who noted that while most schools have established Child Protection Committees, challenges such as inadequate training, limited resources, and lack of awareness hinder effective implementation. Further, cultural factors, societal norms, and bureaucratic constraints were identified as additional barriers to compliance. Moreover, the final thematic map for implementation status is an updated version that reflects the analysis and refinement of the initial thematic diagram. It presents the five final themes derived from the analysis of the implementation status of schools' Child Protection Policy with RA 7610. These final themes, namely awareness and training, enforcement, reporting mechanisms, resources, and the involvement of stakeholders, represent the implementation status of schools' Child Protection Policy in Magsaysay Districts. The final thematic map serves as the summary of the analysis and provides a clear visual representation of the implementation status. The extracted final themes summarize the implementation status in public schools. This aligns with the findings of Cervancia et al. (2019), who reported that many institutions struggle to establish effective reporting and monitoring systems.

Additionally, literature emphasizes the role of information systems and monitoring mechanisms in strengthening referral processes. Data systems allow institutions to track reported cases, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes, ensuring that no case is overlooked. Effective child protection systems integrate reporting, referral, and data management processes to enhance service delivery and accountability (Fegert & Stötzel, 2016).

Table 2 shows the mean extent of RA 7610 implementation by the respondent schools. It could be noted from the given table that four indicators such as awareness and trainings, enforcement, reporting mechanisms, and involvement of stakeholders gained a composite mean of 4.35, Very High, implying that the majority of the school respondents in Magsaysay Districts, strictly enforcing rules, consistently conducting awareness and training program and with a functional reporting mechanisms relative to RA 7610 that involves internal and external stakeholders as partners within and outside the academic community. The Bottom-Up Approach Theory supports this finding. Effective and sustainable policy implementation emerges from the active participation of local actors, rather than being imposed solely through hierarchical directives. In other words, grassroots involvement and community empowerment are fundamental to sustainable development, as policies gain legitimacy when they are co-owned by those directly affected. It highlights that compliance is not merely a matter of institutional enforcement but also of community effort, in which teachers, parents, and learners collectively shape the implementation process (Isidiho et al., 2016).

Table 2
Mean Extent of the RA 7610 Implementation in Terms of Awareness and Trainings, Enforcement, Reporting Mechanisms, Resources, and Involvement of Stakeholders

Awareness and Trainings	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The school conducts an annual orientation for learners regarding the child protection policy.	4.53	Very High
2. The school personnel regularly attend/participate in specialized child protection seminars.	4.37	Very High
3. There is available Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) material on child protection that is accessible to all.	4.22	Very High
4. "No to Bullying" posters are posted in conspicuous places on the school campus.	4.35	Very High
5. The school observes integration of child protection topics (e.g., body safety, online safety) into the curriculum.	4.56	Very High
6. School personnel can mentally recall the specific steps for handling cases of abuse.	4.39	Very High
Composite Mean	4.40	Very High
Enforcement		
1. School personnel consistently observe the Code of Conduct for School Personnel regarding learners' interaction.	4.66	Very High
2. The designated watchman regularly conducts monitoring of high-risk areas such as secluded corners and vacant rooms.	4.31	Very High

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3. The school is regularly reviewing the functionality of the child-protection protocols.	4.35	Very High
4. The school imposes immediate administrative action against personnel who violate the child protection protocol.	4.44	Very High
5. The school strictly implements the “No Corporal Punishment” policy.	4.57	Very High
6. The school implements monitoring systems such as the wearing of IDs and a Visitor’s logbook for all campus entrants.	4.31	Very High
Composite Mean	4.44	Very High
Reporting Mechanisms		
1. The school has a clear process flow for reporting of incidents of abuse.	4.41	Very High
2. The school has a functional “Suggestion/Report Box” that is accessible to all.	3.96	High
3. The school uses prescribed intake forms to document reported incidents of child abuse.	4.36	Very High
4. The school personnel observe immediate reporting of cases of violations to the proper authorities.	4.52	Very High
5. The school personnel observe the confidentiality of the names of the parties involved.	4.52	Very High
6. The school has a designated Child Protection Focal Person to handle reported cases of abuse.	4.51	Very High
Composite Mean	4.38	Very High
Students’ Engagement		
1. The teacher clearly explains learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson	4.82	Very High
2. Classroom rules and procedures are consistently enforced	4.77	Very High
3. The teacher uses various teaching methods to keep students interested	4.85	Very High
4. Students receive timely and helpful feedback on their work	4.90	Very High
5. Students actively participate in class discussions that enhance their overall development.	4.81	Very High
6. Students demonstrate passion, curiosity, eagerness for acquiring new knowledge, enthusiasm, and interest in learning	4.91	Very High
7. Students ask questions and seek help when they do not understand	4.83	Very High
8. Students seek clarification whenever concepts are not clear to me.	4.93	Very High
9. The classroom environment supports collaborative learning among students	4.89	Very High
10. Students demonstrate persistence when working on challenging tasks	4.82	Very High
Composite Mean	4.85	Very High
Resources		
1. The school has a dedicated Guidance Office for counseling.	3.95	High
2. There is an updated referral directory for local police and social workers (DSWD).	4.11	High
3. The school allocates funds to support psychological first aid services.	4.01	High
4. The learner who shows signs of distress has access to psychological first aid or counseling services.	4.05	High
5. Professional development materials, such as manuals and legal guides, are made accessible for staff reference.	4.06	High
6. The school has gender-segregated and lockable comfort rooms to ensure privacy.	4.36	Very High
Composite Mean	4.09	High
Involvement of Stakeholders		
1. The Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) actively participates in child protection efforts of the school.	4.55	Very High
2. The school collaborates with the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) for off-campus safety.	4.53	Very High
3. The school involves local elders/tribal leaders in child protection policy-making.	4.32	Very High
4. The school regularly conducts consultations with parents regarding the school’s safety performance and policy updates.	4.47	Very High
5. The school has a partnership agreement with health units in cases of medical emergencies.	4.30	Very High
6. The school includes community members in community-led implementation of child protection policy.	4.40	Very High
Composite Mean	4.43	Very High
Overall Mean	4.35	Very High

Scale: 4.20-5.00 Very High; 3.40 -4.19 High; 2.60-3.39 Moderate; 1.80-2.59 Low; 1.00-1.79 Very Low

It could be noted that enforcement obtained the highest composite mean score of 4.44 (Very High). This implies that schools are successful in enforcing the child protection policy. Regulatory enforcement actions are

agency responses to violations aimed at ensuring compliance. As these actions are among the most visible forms of regulatory intervention, they can influence citizens' trust in regulatory agencies (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the lowest composite mean score is 4.09 (High), implying that the schools have effectively managed their resources. The result is consistent with the study by Shigali et al. (2023), which found that in the policy implementation process, the role of resources cannot be ignored. Resource allocation is a key component of strategic implementation in organizations, involving the distribution of available physical, financial, and technological resources to support organizational goals. In public-sector contexts, studies have shown that effective resource allocation is associated with improved service delivery, particularly when governments invest in infrastructure, equipment, and technology. Additionally, Nyadeje's (2014) study found no correlation between strategic plan implementation and resource availability. Additionally, the same results were found in the study by Shigali et al. (2023), which showed that resource allocation in the implementation of a strategic plan is significantly related to effective administration.

Table 3 shows the mean level of Compliance with RA 7610. It could be noted from the given table that all five indicators, such as relevance, information dissemination, prevention and protection, reporting and referral, and support and rehabilitation, yielded a composite mean of 4.43, interpreted as Very High, implying that all respondent schools in Magsaysay District are highly compliant with the mandates of RA 7610 and DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, relative to five variables: relevance, information dissemination, prevention and protection, reporting and referral, and support and rehabilitation. This is revealed in Ojo et al. (2025), which reports a significant positive relationship between administrative strategies and the implementation of child protection policies. The findings provided compelling evidence of the vital role that administrative leadership and legal awareness play in child protection within schools. These administrative strategies, such as proactive supervision, staff training, and clear reporting procedures, were strongly associated with better implementation of protection policies.

Table 3

Mean Level of Compliance with RA 7610 in terms of Policy Relevance, Information Dissemination, Prevention and Protection, Reporting and Referral, and Support and Rehabilitation

Policy Relevance	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The school has a formulated School Child Protection Policy (CPP).	4.42	Very High
2. The school's Child Protection Policy (CPP) is formally adopted and reviewed regularly as required every three years.	4.39	Very High
3. There is a clear provision in the School Child Protection Policy that states a ZERO TOLERANCE policy against all forms of abuse, exploitation, discrimination, and violence against children.	4.46	Very High
4. The school has a Child Protection Committee (CPC), clearly stating the roles and responsibilities of members, which are defined in the policy.	4.48	Very High
5. The school's CPP provides specific acts of abuse or exploitation against children, including those acts not covered in DepEd issuances and state laws.	4.37	Very High
6. The school integrates community culture and traditions in the policy as required by law.	4.43	Very High
Composite Mean	4.43	Very High
Information Dissemination		
1. All teaching and non-teaching personnel receive mandatory annual training/orientation on the DepEd's CPP.	4.24	Very High
2. Learners, especially new enrollees, receive an orientation on the rights and privileges related to child protection.	4.38	High
3. CPP posters/visuals displaying the reporting mechanisms (e.g., CPC contact, Police Hotline, DSWD Hotline) are visibly displayed in conspicuous places accessible to learners and school personnel.	4.28	Very High
4. The school conducts orientation for visitors or individuals not affiliated with the school about the child protection policy of the school.	4.12	High
5. Parents/Guardians/School Personnel receive orientation on the provisions of the CPP.	4.36	Very High
6. The school and the LGU maintain close coordination as regards the existing school child protection policy.	4.42	Very High
Composite Mean	4.30	Very High

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Prevention and Protection		
1. The school employs a positive discipline program.	4.59	Very High
2. Teachers are capacitated to determine the physical, behavioral, and emotional signs of child abuse or neglect as defined in DepEd Orders and other state laws.	4.49	Very High
3. The school enforces strict measures to prevent unsupervised interaction between staff and learners during official school activities within and outside of the school premises.	4.48	Very High
4. The school has a functional system for identifying and monitoring learners who are at high risk of abuse, such as children with disabilities and children in armed conflict areas.	4.32	Very High
5. The school ensures all personnel, regardless of their employment status, receive orientation and strictly adhere to the child protection policy of the school.	4.50	Very High
6. The school has safety protocols that guide the teachers in the proper handling of actual cases.	4.37	Very High
Composite Mean	4.46	Very High
Reporting and Referral		
1. The CPC ensures that all reports of abuse are documented and handled with strict confidentiality.	4.49	Very High
2. The school observes proper protocol for mandatory and immediate reporting of suspected or actual child abuse cases to the appropriate external agency (PNP, DSWD) within the required timeframe.	4.57	Very High
3. The child victim's right to be heard is respected and facilitated in all investigations and proceedings.	4.57	Very High
4. The school employs a child-based rights approach during coordination with the local police (WCPD) and DSWD during the investigation of abuse cases.	4.49	Very High
5. The school immediately refers the alleged perpetrator (staff/teacher) for placement on preventive suspension/leave pending investigation.	4.46	Very High
6. The school ensures the application of due process of law and exercises extraordinary diligence when reporting and referring cases.	4.48	Very High
Composite Mean	4.51	Very High
Support and Rehabilitation		
1. The school ensures immediate access to psychological and counseling services for the child-victim-survivor and their family.	4.44	Very High
2. The school implements measures to ensure the continuation of the education of the child-victim and the perpetrator in case of peer-to-peer abuse.	4.45	High
3. The school implements restorative justice principles, focusing on reconciliation without compromising the safety of the victim.	4.42	Very High
4. There are clear procedures for the rehabilitation and intervention for child perpetrators in case of peer-to-peer abuse/bullying.	4.41	Very High
5. The school consistently monitors the well-being of the victim/survivor to prevent retaliation.	4.42	Very High
6. The school ensures the reintegration of the victim-survivor and perpetrator in case of peer-to-peer abuse into the school environment with minimal disruption.	4.41	Very High
Composite Mean	4.43	Very High
Overall Mean	4.43	Very High

Scale: 4.20-5.00 Very High; 3.40 -4.19 High; 2.60-3.39 Moderate; 1.80-2.59 Low; 1.00-1.79 Very Low

The highest composite mean could be attributed to the reporting and referral indicators, with a mean score of 4.51, interpreted as Very High. Literature emphasizes the role of information systems and monitoring mechanisms in strengthening referral processes. Data systems allow institutions to track reported cases, monitor progress, and evaluate outcomes, ensuring that no case is overlooked. Effective child protection systems integrate reporting, referral, and data management processes to enhance service delivery and accountability (Fegert & Stötzel, 2016). The lowest composite mean could be attributed to the "information dissemination" indicator, with a mean score of 4.30, interpreted as Very High. Studies show that effective communication and dissemination of the Child Protection Policy elevate stakeholders' awareness, thereby improving compliance and school responsiveness (Asio et al., 2020). Communication strategies are central to child protection implementation, as they enhance awareness, accountability, and the translation of policy into practice at the institutional and community levels (Save the Children, 2015).

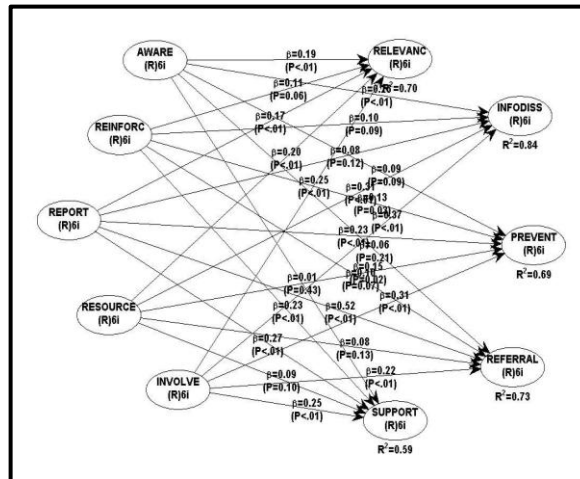


Figure 3. Structural Model of the Relationship Between Implementation Status of RA 7610 and Level of Compliance

The structural equation model (SEM) in Figure 3, generated using WarpPLS version 7.0, illustrates the relationship between the exogenous variable, implementation status of RA 7610, and the endogenous variable, level of compliance with RA 7610. The five predictor variables include awareness and training (AWARE), enforcement (REINFORC), reporting mechanisms (REPORT), resources, and stakeholder involvement (INVOLVE). A total of 25 paths connect to the compliance variables: relevance (RELEVANC), information dissemination (INFODISS), prevention and protection (PREVENT), reporting and referral, and support and rehabilitation (SUPPORT). The results provide the path coefficients indicating the strength of the relationship and the p-values, which determine if that relationship is statistically significant ($p < .05$). The beta () values range from 0.012 to 0.517. The R2 values represent the proportion of variance in each outcome explained by the predictors, and they ranged from .59 to .84, indicating the model's high explanatory power. However, several paths show $p > 0.05$, meaning the relationships are not statistically significant in this specific model.

Table 4
Beta Coefficients of the Paths and p-values for H_0

Paths	Beta (β) Coefficient	p-value*	Interpretation
Ho: Implementation Status of RA 7610 → Level of Compliance			
AWARE→RELEVANC	0.193	.003	Significant
AWARE→INFODISS	0.259	<.001	Highly Significant
AWARE→PREVENT	0.095	.088	Not Significant
AWARE→REFERRAL	0.057	.211	Not Significant
AWARE→SUPPORT	0.012	.433	Not Significant
REINFORC→RELEVANC	0.106	.064	Not Significant
REINFORC→INFODISS	0.096	.085	Not Significant
REINFORC→PREVENT	0.134	.027	Significant
REINFORC→REFERRAL	0.102	.072	Not Significant
REINFORC→SUPPORT	0.232	<.001	Highly Significant
REPORT→RELEVANC	0.173	.006	Significant
REPORT→INFODISS	0.084	.115	Not Significant
REPORT→PREVENT	0.229	<.001	Highly Significant
REPORT→REFERRAL	0.517	<.001	Highly Significant
REPORT→SUPPORT	0.266	<.001	Highly Significant
RESOURCE→RELEVANC	0.201	.002	Significant
RESOURCE→INFODISS	0.308	<.001	Highly Significant
RESOURCE→PREVENT	0.146	.018	Significant
RESOURCE→REFERRAL	0.081	.126	Not Significant
RESOURCE→SUPPORT	0.090	.099	Not Significant
INVOLVE→RELEVANC	0.254	<.001	Highly Significant
INVOLVE→INFODISS	0.373	<.001	Highly Significant
INVOLVE→PREVENT	0.312	<.001	Highly Significant
INVOLVE→REFERRAL	0.220	<.001	Highly Significant
INVOLVE→SUPPORT	0.248	<.001	Highly Significant

*Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 4 presents the path coefficients and p-values for testing the null hypothesis that the implementation status of RA 7610 does not affect schools' compliance levels across various indicators. Stakeholders' involvement is the most consistent and powerful predictor, as all paths to compliance indicators are highly significant ($p < .001$). The strong relationship is with information dissemination, suggesting that when stakeholders are actively involved, the spread of policy information is most effective. Another driver of functional compliance is the reporting mechanism, which has a moderate path coefficient for referral. This implies that the existence and implementation of clear reporting channels are the primary reason referral systems for child protection actually work. Resource allocation also significantly impacts information dissemination, relevance, and prevention and protection. This proves that financial and material support are essential to making the policy feel relevant and to ensuring it is properly publicized.

However, the implementation of RA 7610 in terms of awareness falls short in prevention, referral, and support, all with $p > .05$. This suggests that simply knowing about RA 7610 does not mean the school will actually support victims or refer cases. Awareness must be paired with action-oriented variables like reporting and involvement. Enforcement is seen as a weak predictor, as it does not significantly affect relevance, information dissemination, or referral ($p > .05$). However, it shows strength in providing support. Any gap in awareness raises concerns about how effectively government agencies disseminate updates and how organizations ensure employees are well informed (Tan, 2023, as cited in Capillan et al., 2025). Insufficient knowledge of policies often leads to confusion and misinformation. (Capillan et al., 2025). To address the awareness gap, policy implementation must include employee training to yield better organizational results. The impact of training and development on employee performance has been extensively studied in various organizational contexts, shedding light on its significant influence on individual proficiency and organizational effectiveness, training and development initiatives play a crucial role in enhancing employee performance by equipping individuals with essential skills, knowledge, attitudes, and talents necessary for their roles (Wulnye et al., 2018) Because more than half of the tested paths, 16 out of 25 total paths, show a p-value below 0.05, the statistical decision leads to the partial rejection of the null hypothesis.

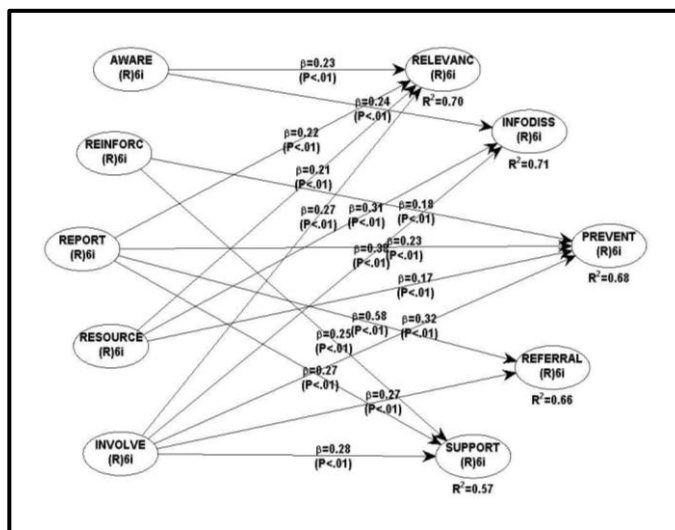


Figure 4. The Emerging Model of the Finalized Structural Relationship Between the Implementation Variables and the Compliance Outcomes

The emerging model in Figure 4 demonstrates the finalized structural relationship between the implementation variables and the compliance outcomes. In this new model, all paths are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), indicating a refined and highly reliable framework for school policy compliance. The coefficients of determination (R^2 values) represent the explanatory power of the model. The values slightly decreased from the initial .59 to .84 to the emerging model's results, with R^2 of .57 to .71. The path coefficients range from 0.183 to 0.578, indicating the strength of the influence of implementation status on compliance level. Thirteen paths show $p < .01$, indicating

the strength of implementation's influence on compliance.

Table 5*Standardized Estimates of the Path in the Emerging Model*

Hypothesis	Standardized Estimates (β)	Standard Error	p-value*	Effect Coefficient**	Effect Size
Ho: Implementation Status of RA 7610 → Level of Compliance					
AWARE→RELEVANC	0.225	.068	<.001	.169	Medium
AWARE→INFODISS	0.238	.068	<.001	.175	Medium
REINFORC→PREVENT	0.183	.069	.004	.139	Small
REINFORC→SUPPORT	0.252	.068	<.001	.178	Medium
REPORT→RELEVANC	0.222	.068	<.001	.167	Medium
REPORT→PREVENT	0.232	.068	<.001	.176	Medium
REPORT→REFERRAL	0.578	.064	<.001	.460	Large
REPORT→SUPPORT	0.275	.067	<.001	.197	Medium
RESOURCE→RELEVANC	0.207	.068	.001	.149	Medium
RESOURCE→INFODISS	0.308	.067	<.001	.234	Medium
RESOURCE→PREVENT	0.166	.069	.008	.114	Small
INVOLVE→RELEVANC	0.273	.067	<.001	.212	Medium
INVOLVE→INFODISS	0.378	.066	<.001	.297	Large
INVOLVE→PREVENT	0.325	.067	<.001	.253	Medium
INVOLVE→REFERRAL	0.270	.067	<.001	.199	Medium
INVOLVE→SUPPORT	0.282	.067	<.001	.198	Medium

*Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

** Effect size coefficient: 0.02 – small, 0.15 – medium, 0.30 – large

Table 5 summarizes the standardized estimates of the paths in the emerging model, representing the refined relationships in which all paths are statistically significant. It shows the beta values, which indicate the strength and direction of the relationships. Higher values signify a more dominant influence. The effect coefficient indicates the significance of the predictor's contribution to the outcome. The most dominant relationship in the emerging model is between the reporting mechanism and referral. The effect is large with a coefficient of .460. It confirms that the reporting mechanism is the single most significant driver for a functioning referral system, suggesting that if the reporting process is clear, referrals happen. Reporting mechanisms also reveal medium effects on relevance (.167), prevention (.176), and on support and rehabilitation (.197). Nearly reaching the .30 large threshold (0.297), stakeholders' involvement correlates significantly with information dissemination. This shows that stakeholder involvement is the most effective way to disseminate information. Stakeholder involvement is also considered a consistent predictor, with medium to large effect sizes (.198 to .297), of the school's level of compliance with RA 7610.

Twelve (12) paths fall in the .15 to .25 effect range. These indicate that these implementation strategies have a consistent, reliable, and visible impact on compliance. Enforcement shows a positive effect on support and rehabilitation (.178), suggesting that consistent follow-up is necessary to sustain help for affected students. While statistically significant, the paths from enforcement to prevention (.139) and from resources to prevention (.114) have a smaller practical impact on prevention than the medium effects of reporting (.176) and stakeholders' involvement (.253). Stakeholder involvement is the primary driver of both active prevention and victim support, showing that people's concerns are more effective than policy rules alone. Resources contribute a medium effect on information dissemination (.234) and relevance (.149), indicating that information dissemination is heavily dependent on material and financial resources, such as printing materials, internet access, and training funds. Awareness shows consistent, moderate influence and medium effect across relevance and information dissemination. It serves as the foundation but is rarely the strongest driver of action-oriented outcomes such as support or referrals.

The p-values are very low, concluding that the correlations are highly stable across the population of schools studied. The recorded standard error values, ranging from .064 to .069, are consistently low and very similar across all paths, which is a very good sign for this research study. It indicates high precision in the estimates, as small standard errors suggest that, if the study were repeated, the results would likely be very similar, thereby enhancing

the credibility of the emerging model.

Based on the standardized estimates and p-values, the results support rejecting the null hypothesis. There is generally a significant relationship between the implementation status of RA 7610 and the level of its compliance in schools. These indicate that the implementation strategies have a consistent, reliable, and visible impact on compliance with the child protection policy. The Governance Network Theory, as applied in policy implementation, will help policy implementers to understand the complexity of child protection. The theory views policy implementation as a complex web of interdependent and interconnected networks. Since it is based on the premise that no single organization can address common governance challenges, education leaders must shift from being in control to being the network manager who brings the right people together to form collaborative governance (Kapucu et al., 2020).

Table 6

Proposed Action Plan to further comply efficiently with RA 7610

Action/ Intervention	Description	Timeline (SY 2026–2027)	Focal Persons	Resources Needed	Budget Allocation	Monitoring & Evaluation	Expected Outputs
Orientation & Re-orientation on RA 7610 and DepEd Child Protection Policy	Quarterly awareness sessions for teachers, parents, and learners	June-July	School Heads, Guidance Counselors, CPC	IEC materials, projector, venue	₱15,000/year	Attendance sheets, pre/post-tests, feedback forms	Stakeholders oriented on child protection
Strengthening Child Protection Committees (CPC)	Formal designation, activation, and monitoring of CPCs	July	School Heads, Teachers, PTA Officers	DepEd forms, designation materials	₱5,000/year	CPC reports, minutes of meetings	Active CPCs in all schools
Teacher Training Workshops	Capacity-building on handling child abuse cases and reporting	July- August	Division Child Protection Officers, School Heads	Resource speakers, modules	₱20,000/year	Post-training evaluation, classroom observation	Teachers trained in case handling
Homeroom Guidance Integration	Monthly sessions on child rights and protection	August–April	Class Advisers, Guidance Counselors	Lesson guides, activity sheets	₱5,000/year	Learner outputs, teacher reports	Learners demonstrate child protection awareness
Parent Education Sessions	Seminars on positive discipline and RA 7610	September–April	CPC, PTA, Guidance Counselors	IEC materials, venue, speakers	₱15,000/year	Parent feedback, monitoring of discipline practices	Parents adopt positive discipline
Partnerships & Linkages	Coordination with LGU, Barangay Council, PNP Women & Children Desk	September–April	School Heads, CPC, and LGU officials	MOUs, referral documentation	5,000/ per year	Documentation of referrals, signed MOUs	Strengthened community partnerships
Resource Mobilization	Conduct of strategic resource allocation training & workshops	April-May	School Heads, CPC	Training Resource Package	15,000/year	Post-training evaluation, classroom observation	Capacitated School Heads and CPC members
Confidential Reporting Mechanisms	Drop boxes, hotline posters, referral pathways	September–April	CPC, Guidance Counselors	Hotline posters, drop boxes	10,000/ per year	Number of reports received, follow-up actions	Secure and confidential reporting
Annual Compliance Audit	End-of-year audit of RA 7610 implementation	March–April	School Heads, Division Office	Audit tools, reports	5,000/ per year	Audit results, recommendations implemented	Compliance gaps identified and addressed

Source: (DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2015). Guidelines on the preparation of the school improvement plan (SIP) and the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP)

The consolidated action plan provides a holistic framework that integrates interventions, timelines, focal persons, resources, budget allocations, and monitoring mechanisms into one unified structure. By merging the three tables, the plan ensures that activities are not only well-defined but also systematically scheduled and evaluated. This integration reflects the principles of DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2015, which emphasizes that school improvement plans must align interventions with clear timelines, resource allocation, and monitoring strategies. The plan begins with awareness and training activities, such as quarterly orientations and the integration of homeroom guidance. These interventions ensure that teachers, parents, and learners are continuously informed about RA 7610 and child protection policies. A study by Kumar et al. (2016), as cited in Ojo et al. (2024), found that staff trained in child protection were more confident and effective at creating safe learning environments.

Meanwhile, enforcement and monitoring are operationalized by strengthening Child Protection Committees (CPCs) and conducting annual compliance audits. These mechanisms ensure accountability and adherence to DepEd Orders. Rande (2025) suggested that the success of policy implementation is influenced not only by the existence of regulations but also by stakeholder synergy, implementers' commitment, and effective communication strategies. Further, resource allocation and support are embedded in training workshops, IEC materials, and audit tools. Adequate resources are critical for policy implementation. Resource availability and allocation are significant predictors of performance in the devolution of public-sector services. However, this important aspect was not taken seriously; the resource allocation strategies employed were inappropriate, and the most disturbing finding was that resources were not always available when needed (Korir & Bett, 2018).

Furthermore, Stakeholder involvement is addressed through parent education sessions and partnership linkages with LGUs, Barangay Councils, and the PNP Women & Children Desk. This collaborative approach ensures that child protection is not confined to the school but extends to the community. Further, Khayatzaadeh et al. (2020) proposed that stakeholder involvement is highly context-dependent and must be tailored to the needs and goals of specific projects. Stakeholders' dialogue highlighted the inherent challenges of co-framing and knowledge co-production through the meaningful engagement of multiple stakeholders with different ideas and interests. The study further highlighted the importance of dialogue in addressing differences among stakeholders and facilitating the co-production of knowledge, especially when stakeholders have diverse interests and perspectives (Khayatzaadeh et al., 2020). Finally, confidential reporting mechanisms guarantee accountability and protection through drop boxes, hotlines, and referral pathways. This aligns with UNICEF's (2023) study, which highlighted that accessible and confidential reporting systems are vital for safeguarding children in the educational system. Additionally, anonymous reporting systems have been widely used in schools to promote the safe reporting of sensitive issues, further highlighting the importance of anonymity in encouraging disclosures (Messman et al., 2022).

4. Conclusions

Based on the summary of the findings presented, the following are the conclusions of the study. The final themes regarding the implementation status of RA 7610 were: awareness and training, enforcement, reporting mechanisms, resources, and stakeholder involvement. The respondent schools highly adhere to the mandates of RA 7610 and DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012; thus, implementation is in functional status, with strong partnerships with internal and external stakeholders. Child Protection Committees are capacitated to handle cases of child abuse. Child Protection Committees are functional, DepEd Orders are strictly observed, and coordination with LGUs and law enforcement is active. Reporting channels and the confidential documentation process are readily accessible. Although financial resources are available, additional funding is still needed to build spaces for counseling and related psychological services and to hire dedicated personnel to expand child protection initiatives. Collaboration and collective actions were evident, reinforcing the idea that child protection is a shared duty across important sectors.

Magsaysay Elementary Schools are highly compliant relative to the mandates of RA 7610 and DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012. Schools consistently align their practices with the legal framework, ensuring that child protection

policies remain central to day-to-day operations. Stakeholders are regularly informed, thus making communication strategies effective in maintaining awareness and accountability. Schools actively implement early preventive measures to increase protection and ensure the safety and welfare of learners. Schools provide clear, easy-to-access, and reliable mechanisms for addressing child protection concerns. If the reporting process is clear, referral can happen. Schools provide appropriate interventions for affected learners. This highlights that compliance extends beyond prevention to include responsive care and recovery measures. A statistically significant relationship exists between implementation status and compliance level. The path coefficients and p-values show p-values below 0.05; the statistical decision leads to the partial rejection of the null hypothesis. The standardized estimates and p-value results confirm the rejection of the null hypothesis. This concludes that the Child Protection Committee members have a good knowledge of the provisions of RA 7610 and DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012. The proposed action plan aligns implementation strategies with compliance requirements. It serves as a roadmap for Magsaysay Elementary Schools to strengthen awareness, enforcement, and reporting, and to guide stakeholder involvement in securing needed resources, thereby reinforcing a culture of child protection.

Recommendations - The following recommendations are proposed for implementation by the Schools Division Office (SDO), Office of the Public Schools District Supervisor, School Heads, and Child Protection Committee members. Schools may actively engage stakeholders under the whole-community approach and continuous improvement framework at the school and district levels to address emerging issues in child protection. DepEd Central Office and the schools may conduct the following: review and update D.O. No. 40, s. 2012 or the DepEd Child Protection Policy, integrate newly passed national laws relative to child protection to guarantee vertical and horizontal alignment and ensure that policy is responsive to current emerging needs in child protection; DepEd Central Office and Philippine Regulatory Commission (PRC) may impose capacity building on child protection as mandatory training for school personnel; Schools Division Offices and the schools may formalize partnerships with local partners through memoranda of agreements to ensure shared responsibility and increase accountability; DepEd may amend Section 18 of DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, adopting Section 7 of the Protection of Good Samaritan provision of R.A. 11930, otherwise known as Anti-Online Sexual Abuse or Exploitation of Children (OSAEC) and Anti-Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation Materials (CSAEM) Act of 2022 to guarantee the anonymity of the informant in case reporting and DepEd policymakers are encouraged to amend existing guidelines to mandate 5% allocation of school MOOE specifically for child protection programs and allow of learner formation officers to perform child protection duties.

Sangguniang Bayan and Sangguniang Barangay may perform programmatic and governance oversight to ensure that child protection policy implementation practices in the lowest level of school governance remain aligned and compliant with the requirements of RA 7610 and other similar laws that governs child protection and DepEd Orders; DepEd may review the curriculum, and it is recommended that child protection concepts be integrated into the curriculum and be developed at an early stage of education to increase preventive and protection measures, and the Municipal LSWDO may provide capacity building on rehabilitation programs, specifically on disciplinary and diversion programs as stipulated in RA 9344 or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, which include psychosocial support, reintegration activities, and collaboration with health and social welfare agencies to ensure holistic recovery for the victims and render restorative justice for the child-perpetrators. Given the significant relationship that confirms strong implementation drives effective compliance, it is recommended that DepEd transition its focus from issuing directives to providing structural support such as ICT infrastructures where all laws relative to child protection implementation are integrated into one system of operation that will allow digitized and real-time reporting and may further strengthen implementation of policy at the school level, shifting from basic awareness to functional, localized action. The proposed action plan may be adopted by the Local Government Unit of Magsaysay and be institutionalized across Magsaysay Elementary Schools. It is recommended that the plan be monitored annually through program implementation reviews and adjustments, including safety audit reviews. In conducting reviews, LGUs may adopt Section 44 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 11313, or the Safe Spaces Act of 2019, to ensure that legal mechanisms operate effectively and efficiently and that policies serve their intended purpose. It is recommended that future researchers conduct a

parallel study at a province-wide level to determine whether other municipal districts in this division have the same implementation status and compliance level as those in Magsaysay.

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