



Child Protection Policy Compliance in a Catholic Educational Institution

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Abstract

Child protection policy is a statement of commitment of schools to safeguard children from harm and foster their holistic development and welfare. Using a sequential explanatory mixed method design, the paper examines the extent of compliance of the Catholic educational institution in the Philippines with the Department of Education (Dep.Ed.) Order No.40 on Child Protection Policy. The participants of the study are school personnel and parents of the Basic Education Department who assesses the extent of the school's compliance with the Child Protection Policy in the areas of the school environment and admission policy, school personnel, information and procedures, safety measures for children, prevention and intervention programs, and personnel training and development. The investigation further seeks to determine the insights of the participants into the child protection practices of the school. The data are gathered using a validated researcher-made questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The findings show that the Catholic educational institution has complied with the provisions of the child protection policy yet the personnel training and development are partially complied. A significant difference was found in the extent of compliance of the Catholic educational institution with the child protection policy when the assessors are grouped according to their classification. It is recommended that child protection should be integrated into the quality management system of the school to establish quality assurance measure in dealing with child protection related matters.

Introduction

Child Protection Policy is a statement of commitment of schools to safeguard children from harm which, if effectively implemented, can foster their holistic development and welfare. The policy further serves as the basis for the quality of protection that academic institution can provide for the children in school (Broadley & Goddard, 2015). Accordingly, child

protection policy advocates the right of children to be safe and secured of their needs for their complete development and success in life (The Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNICEF, 2004).

Moreover, studies on the international legal system and child developmental pointed out that child protection has evolved to upholding children's dignity and welfare as human beings by educating individuals,

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teaching skills, monitoring progress, and delivering effective support services (Fiorvanti et al., 2014). Correspondingly, all school personnel need to enrich themselves with the appropriate knowledge, training, and skills on child protection (Appleton, 2012). In Asia and the Pacific regions, child protection policies are in place, but their implementation is weak and not thoroughly systematic. Similarly, the personnel in the academic community are uncertain as to what constitutes child protection regarding its extent, interpretation, preventions, and responses (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, 2012).

In the Philippines, the 1987 Constitution provides that “the State shall defend the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, and special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development” (Article XV section 3 item B). However, the nationwide policies on child protection are inadequate due to narrow understanding and the presence of gaps in its application in schools (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012). In response, Dep.Ed. 40 s. 2012, also known as the Child Protection Policy was designed and implemented to provide the framework and guidelines for the protection of children in school from violence, exploitation, discrimination, and other forms of abuse.

Evidently, a safe and healthy environment is an essential element of school's health. Jones et al. (2007) stress the importance for schools to attend to the pressing environment safety concerns for children to completely develop and maximize their full potentials. For children, the school environment serves as the platform for interaction within the socio-psychological framework of the school (Kaur & Kumar, 2012). In the same way, the schools must guarantee the best interest of children (Adam, 2008) when it comes to their safety and security. Thus, it is imperative that the school environment must be safe for children to achieve fruitful learning. The children who are exposed to stress are believed to be those who are not physically secure in their surroundings. Thus they cannot attain holistic learning. Thus, a safe and healthy school environment for children serves as a foundation for their outstanding performance and achievements (Robers et al., 2012).

In this context, the school personnel acting as second parents of children in school must perform their functions for the welfare of the students (Fiorvanti & Brassard, 2014). The duty and the responsibility to

prevent and mitigate untoward incidents and to take care of children during emergencies are compulsory to all school personnel. The continuous evaluation of the existing safety measures of the school must be performed faithfully to ensure children's safety and to anticipate possible challenges in its implementation. Also, proper and close coordination among school personnel together with the parents is critical to the safety and protection of children (Ewton, 2014).

Consistent with its vision-mission to provide a well-rounded formation of the human person, the Catholic academic institution under study formulated and implemented policies and guidelines on Child Protection in consonance with Dep.Ed. 40 to ensure the safety and security of all students in school. Hence, this study was conceived to determine the extent of its compliance with the Child Protection Policy. The findings of the study were utilized for designing a Capacity Building Program for school personnel that will fill in the gaps on the school's child protection policy through the enhancement of effective personnel recruitment, continuous information dissemination, personnel training, and collaboration among concerned parties.

Statement of the Problem

This study assesses the extent of compliance with the Child Protection Policy of the Catholic educational institution by Dep.Ed. Order No.40 s. 2012. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of compliance of the Catholic educational institution with the Child Protection Policy as assessed by the assessors in the areas of (a) the school environment and admission policy, (b) school personnel, (c) information and procedures, (d) safety measures for children, (e) prevention and intervention programs, and (f) personnel training and development?

2. Is there a significant difference in the extent of compliance of the Catholic educational institution with the Child Protection Policy as assessed by the following assessors when they are grouped according to (a) administrators, (b) teaching personnel, (c) academic non-teaching personnel, (d) other non-teaching personnel, and (e) parents?

3. What insights on compliance with Child Protection Policy are revealed in the experiences of the participants?

Framework of the Study

This study is anchored on Abraham Maslow's Theory on Hierarchy of Needs. The theory asserts that the human need for safety must be met before growth and development occur. Based on Maslow's viewpoint, individuals are driven to fulfill basic needs before they satisfy or meet higher needs. When the physiological needs are satisfied, another layer of needs appears to be fulfilled. Furthermore, any human being who does not feel safe in an environment will seek first for protection and safety before he or she fulfills its other higher needs. Consequently, it motivates individual to increase his or her interests in finding safe conditions, stability, and protection. Thus, the need develops a necessity for structure, order, and some limits (Maslow, 1943), which particularly applies to child protection.

Along with this line, is the Theory of Complexity (Morin, 2007) which was adopted by Steven and Cox (2007) in their study on Developing New Understandings of Child Protection in Field Settings and Residential Child Care applies. The Theory of Complexity is a scientific theory which states that some systems exhibit behavioral phenomena that are fully incomprehensible by any conventional analysis of the systems' basic parts. Steven and Cox (2007) apply the Theory of Complexity in child protection to stress that recent studies in the area of complexity theory are producing development of concepts and applications in understanding the issues of child protection. The concern on child protection is complex due to the various factors that put children at risk. They further contend that the Theory of Complexity affords a framework for understanding the processes involved in child protection but without setting aside the problem. Correspondingly, it will pave the way for the development of a new understanding and approach to child protection (Steven & Cox, 2007). The same thought was supported by Steven and Hassett (2007) as they agree that the application of the Theory of Complexity in the assessment of child protection practices can help give a deep understanding of the risk on safeguarding children from harm. In this study, the findings upheld the theories of Hierarchy of Needs and Complexity.

Additionally, the mentioned thoughts, direction, and development in addressing the issue of child protection are supported by the fact that worldwide approaches to it are experiencing a notable paradigm shift. Previously, child protection is merely concentrated on protecting children who are victims of abuse. Presently, it advanced to upholding children's holistic

well-being through worldwide prevention policies and initiatives (Lawrence et al., 2006). Recent practice requires mitigation of the impact of violence and abuse using immediate and proper intervention. The new mission is to provide prevention against child abuse and violence before someone becomes a victim of maltreatment by way of educating individuals, teaching skills, monitoring progress, and delivering effective support services (Fiorvanti & Brassard, 2014).

Child protection and UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Child protection is anchored with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights which declares that a child is entitled to special care and assistance (UN, 1959). Consequently, "the child rights-based approach in caring and protecting children necessitates a paradigm shift towards respecting and promoting the human dignity and the physical and psychological integrity of children as rights-bearing individuals rather than as 'victims'" (UN General Assembly, 2011). The cited pronouncement is further sustained by UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Article 1 of the CRC provides that "everyone under the age of 18 is considered as a child." Also, Article 3 of the CRC promotes that the best interests of the child must be the major concern of every society. Likewise, Article 4 of the CRC demands that governments in their capacity must do all they can to fulfill the rights of every child. Children have the right to life and governments must do all they can to safeguard their survival and good health. Both the government and other sectors of society have the shared responsibility to consider the best interest of children by providing them adequate support to all their needs. They must take all the necessary actions to protect children from abuse, neglect, maltreatment, and all forms of violence. Article 28 of the CRC also emphasizes the right of every child to education. Associated to it is the imposition of discipline by the schools which must be anchored on children's human dignity. Furthermore, Article 29 of the CRC requires that "education must develop every child's personality, talents, and abilities to the fullest. It encourages respect for children's human rights, and respect for their parents, cultures, and environment." The moral command of the UN CRC supported by substantial empirical findings sustains that child protection from, abuse, maltreatment, violence and the promotion of their well-being should be paramount interests in every society (Fiorvanti & Brassard, 2014).

Recognizing all these outcomes that have a lifetime effect on children as individuals, the school has a serious responsibility to prevent and handle child protection-related concerns through an efficient and effective system. Similarly, it has to ensure the appropriate implementation of its child protection policy. Moreover, its personnel must have a wide awareness and clear understanding of the system, information, and the procedures involved in child protection.

Child protection in Asia Pacific Region

In Asia, the international organization like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is heading towards the promotion of the right-based interventions through the system-based approach (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, 2012). The right-based intervention emphasizes and gives importance to the dignity and rights of children instead of just providing support when they are already victims of abuse. Additionally, the system-based approach to child protection is a method which demands a strong relationship between the key players in society with their corresponding obligations and duties to ensure the safety of children. The region, society, and schools in Asia are encouraged to formulate their own rules and regulations on child protection (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, 2012). Mainly, the schools are the crucial participants in child protection.

As we are heading towards the 2st-century life-long learning direction, schools in Asian and countries like the Philippines are adopting the ASEAN 2015 drive. The Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) 2015 Community aims to uphold good governance, the rule of law, and protection of the human rights. Likewise, it seeks to develop human resources through cooperation in education and provide equal access to opportunities for human development, social welfare, justice (ASEAN 2008-2009 Annual Report on Roadmap for ASEAN Community, 2015).

The Philippines as an ASEAN member believes that child protection is essential to the survival of children and nation-building. It is a requirement to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Particularly on the accomplishment of the MDGs on attaining the universal primary education and the establishment of reasonable and fruitful work for the youth which will lead to a decrease in the number of Filipino children who are victims of abuse, exploitation, and violence (Special Committee for the Protection of Children, 2006).

A thorough examination of the MDGs indicates that no single goal can be realized without including strategies, preventions, and interventions for child protection. Failure to protect children from abuse, exploitation, and violence will lead to waste of society's resources (Special Committee for the Protection of Children, 2006).

Based on 2006 to 2010 Comprehensive Program on Child protection, we have existing policies intended for child protection. However, the challenge is for all parts of the society at all levels to guarantee steadfast and effective implementation of the child protection policies (Special Committee for the Protection of Children, 2006). In connection, it is again relevant to the rights-based approach to education which is widely upheld by the UNICEF which goes hand-in-hand with the child - friendly school's promotion. The campaign for child-friendly schools is intended to serve as models for a multi-dimensional scope of quality and a holistic model that will be of help in handling concern on children's needs (UNICEF Manual- Child-Friendly Schools, 2009 cited in UNICEF, 2012).

The basic principles of a rights-based child-friendly school are the following: First, the school must be accepting in the context of allowing all students to participate in various activities regardless of their sex, ethnicity, culture, linguistics, socio-economic status, and disabilities; Second, the school must be academically relevant that could provide knowledge, attitude, life skills and livelihood; Third, the environment should develop knowledge and skills on gender equality; Fourth, it should have a healthy and protective school climate to foster the holistic well-being of children; and Lastly, the school must be a community which encourages family and community participation in all matters related to children's welfare (UNICEF Manual- Child-Friendly Schools, 2009 cited in UNICEF, 2012).

Child protection in the Philippines

The Philippines, as a state party to a number of human right instruments (UN, 2012) explicitly upholds the right of children to assistance, including proper care and nutrition, special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to development, as found in the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XV (The Family), Section 3. Subsequently, its other domestic regulations related to child protection are also based on international standards such as a. Republic Act (R.A.) 7610 – Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation,

and Discrimination, b. R.A. 9262 – Violence Against Women and Children and c. R.A. 8353 – The Anti-Rape Law of 1997 d. Pertinent provisions of Act 3815 of the Revised Penal Act (United Nations, 2012). e. Presidential Decree No. 603 – The Child and Youth Welfare Code f. Executive Order (E.O.) No.275 – Comprehensive Program on Child protection by the Special Committee for the Protection of Children and Department of Education (Dep.Ed.) 40, Series of 2012 – Dep.Ed. Child Protection Policy.

Relevant to the issues at hand is the Department of Education (Dep. Ed.) Order No. 40, Series of 2012 which expresses that there is a clear mandate coming from the Philippine government that all educational institutions shall strengthen ethical and spiritual values of children, develop moral character and personal discipline, instill respect for human rights, broaden scientific and technological knowledge, encourage critical and creative thinking, and promote vocational efficiency. Most importantly, it highlights that all parents, legal guardians and other individuals who exercise custody and legal responsibility for the children must exercise full accountability in all activities involving them, more so in cases of untoward incidents due to one's intent or even mere negligence. These pronouncements are all germane to ensure child protection to the students or pupils (Dep. Ed. Order No. 40, 2012).

The school's adoption of Dep. Ed. Order 40, Series 2012 and other legal orders on child protection exhibits the commitment of the Catholic educational institution to providing well-rounded formation of the human person concerning one's ultimate goal. These school's policies relevant to child protection include: the explicit stipulation of the administrators, teaching staff, academic non-teaching, other non-teaching personnel, students and parents duties and responsibilities in the school, rules on behavior and discipline, the enumerated offenses, and the corresponding procedures and interventions in all cases concerning children's safety and welfare, Student-Teacher-Parent communication mechanisms, and programs and activities to counter child abuse, violence, exploitation, and mistreatment.

Child protection practices in school

Child protection practices in school encompasses the school environment and admission policy, school personnel, information and procedures, safety measures for children, prevention and intervention program, and personnel training and development which are considered

as areas for supervision and monitoring and crucial for the effective delivery of the institution's Child Protection Policy.

The school environment. The school environment is undeniably an important factor which contributes to children's learning and development. "A safe and healthy school environment does not only promote the good health of children but surely helps them to achieve excellent academic performance and supportively boost their morale" (Jones et al., 2007). Evidently, a safe and healthy environment is an essential element of a school's health. They further stressed the importance for schools to attend to the pressing environment safety concerns for children to completely develop and maximize their full potentials. Then, next to family the school is a remarkable experience in the development of a child. The moment a child goes to school; there are new opportunities for their intellectual and social development. For children, the school environment serves as the platform for interaction within the socio-psychological framework of the school. The school environment pertains to the psychological school climate of educational institutions which provides the frequency and the mental, emotional, and social support that is being offered to children while they are learning (Kaur & Kumar, 2012). Consequently, the school affects everyone and everything that is happening within its four corners. Hence, schools must create and maintain a safe environment by providing means and area where the children can seek help and report incidents of violations of utmost confidentiality (Fiorvanti & Brassard, 2014).

The admission policy. The admission policy of a school is another relevant factor which must be given attention by educational institutions as it also affects child rights and welfare. Admission policy maintains a balance between quality and equity. Ginsberg & Whaley (2003) presents the main issues affecting the admission and retention of students in schools. When it comes to admission, selection processes must not be subjective or capricious, and schools must be prudent in their published policies on admission standards and judgments to avoid discrimination by age, citizenship, disability, gender, and race (Massadeh, 2012). Predominantly, schools must guarantee the best interest of a child (Adam, 2008).

The school personnel. The school personnel as second parents of children entrusted to the school must perform their functions for the welfare of the students. The term school personnel also include the school heads of educational institutions. The school heads supervision

is the foundation of a sound social work practice and must be evident and effective in all areas of the school. Their supervision of the practice of child protection is needed to reassure administrative governance, provide support to personnel and other concerned parties, and guarantee its effective implementation. In the exercise of child protection, administrators are responsible for good supervision of their organizations (White, 2008).

In the light of child protection, teachers who have knowledge, training, and experience on child protection can also contribute information to other interested parties who must also be trained on handling children who are sufferers of abuses, violence, and exploitation (Orelove et al., 2000). Teachers can be a good source of information to concerned officials in matters related to health and safety. This was avowed by the findings of another study which adheres to the idea that teachers are fit to educate parents and guardians on positive behavior management as they practice the system above in classrooms and the entire school (Eber et al., 2002). Also, the other school personnel as the forefront of the organization are expected to identify children who are in need of help or assistance due to their day-to-day interaction with them (Beck, Ogloff & Corbishley, 1994). They have a significant role in detecting, supporting and responding to children who are victims of abuse. Along with this line, it is known that a great number of parents who are perpetrators of abuse are also victims in the past, through the ability of school employees to detect the signs of neglect and report cases of abuse it can stop the cycle of mishandling of children (Beck, Ogloff & Corbishley, 1994). Above all, school personnel as a whole should extend assistance to victims without making them feel that they are not safe and that they are victims of abuse (Fiorvanti & Brassard, 2014).

However, though school personnel is considered as professionals, their failure to regularly report cases related to child protection still appears to be a concern. Hence, there is a need to review further how they determine and handle children who are maltreated (Gilbert et al., 2009). In view of the fact that school personnel need further education on child protection, Article 19 of the UN General Assembly in 1989 explicitly states that all school personnel which include drivers, janitors and others must be trained in recognizing and reporting alleged ill-treatment by parents, guardians, and even by school personnel themselves (Fiorvanti & Brassard, 2014).

Education and collaboration. About information

and procedures, schools should educate faculty members by organizing in-house training programs to be facilitated by an expert in the said field. The in-house training programs should highlight the clear operational definition of child abuse and its manifestations for detection, information, and procedures for reporting of cases, and the proper attitude and approach to teachers and school personnel as a whole through the presentation of case scenarios that would motivate them to come up with effective strategies. The mentioned program must be done regularly to update school personnel on the present issues, developments, and wide understanding of child protection (Beck & Corbishley, 1994). Also, it was found that collaboration and dialogue between school personnel and stakeholders who are sharing expertise and roles in preparing and doing the necessary interventions can efficiently and effectively deliver activities (Gore & Janssen, 2007).

Educational institutions should exert effort to encourage collaboration in the reporting of concerns and accentuate dialogue, coordination, and follow-up between the principal, teachers, guidance counselors and other staff, children, and parents. Accordingly, schools should also furnish school personnel with the official copy of the child protection policy, the essential requirements and procedures for reporting and handling cases, and the pertinent laws (Beck, Ogloff & Corbishley, 1994).

Information and procedure. Aside from educating teachers and collaboration efforts, another way to strengthen the area of information and procedures is for a school psychologist(s) to explore a practical child rights measure that supports child protection in school and even in their family and community. The measures include: (a) educating the community regarding child rights and protection as individual and respecting the rights of others; (b) creating methods and opportunities for children, school personnel, and stakeholders to discuss child protection, possible solutions when confronted with concerns, and how to promote a safe and healthy environment for all; (c) assuring children that they have the right to express their views on their rights and how they will be protected; (d) building the competence of school personnel on how to acquire skills to establish healthy relationship with one another and impart to the children on how to be safe and protected; (e) seeing to it that children are monitored when it comes to their holistic development and provide the needed support

in partnership with their parents and families; and (f) establish a right supporting community and healthy school climate by means of assessment, exercise of policies and guidelines that encourage children's rights, constant evaluation and development, and capacity building (Fiorvanti & Brassard, 2014).

Safety measures for children. It is indispensable that the school environment must be safe for children to achieve fruitful learning. The children who are exposed to stress are believed to be those who are not physically secure in their surroundings thus they cannot attain holistic learning. Thus, a safe and healthy school environment for children serves as a foundation for their outstanding performance and achievements (Robers et al., 2012).

Efforts against Bullying. One of the measures to ensure the safety of children is for the school to thoroughly execute its efforts against bullying. It has been considered as one of the reasons for the increasing incidents of children who are committing suicides (Olweus, 1994). There is a continuous effort to define what bullying is and what must be done by the schools. Reports of children who are committing suicide and any other untoward acts have been linked to bullying in schools. However, the concern on safety and security of children cannot be contained in bullying alone (Ewton, 2014).

Protection from natural disasters, accidents, and crimes. They are recognized as possible dangers that may put children's safety at risk while they are in school. Even though schools are considered as a safe place for children (DeVoe et al., 2005), it is important for them to be prepared when untoward incidents occur. School disaster drills are usually encouraged to prepare and prevent injuries which include the practice of appropriate children's behaviors to safely respond to the danger before them (Brock & Jimerson, 2004). Most schools train children on the five common drill procedures: evacuation, reverse evacuation, lockdown, shelter-in-place, and duck-cover hold. By practicing these drill procedures children can gain safety skills and behavior which they can use during real emergency situations (Jones & Randall, 1994).

The duty and the responsibility to prevent and mitigate untoward incidents, and to take care of children during emergencies are compulsory to all school personnel. The continuous evaluation of the existing safety measures of the school must be performed faithfully to ensure

children's safety and to anticipate possible challenges in its implementation. Also, proper close coordination among school personnel together with the parents is important for the safety and protection of children. Soliciting observations and suggestions from stakeholders on child protection concerns particularly on safety can help the school in its plans, procedures, actions, and re-tooling of school personnel and the school as a whole to address demanding issues instead of providing old approaches and remedies to the new problems (Ewton, 2014). To ensure a healthy community, the school administrators and concerned health and safety units can collaborate with one another to educate children on how to prevent injuries while in school and to instill in their minds the appropriate behaviors to care for the well – being of each other.

Nutrition of children. Educating children on nutrition is fundamental to a lifelong healthy eating habit which should start at an early age. The proper training and supervision of healthy eating of children become successful through instruction and role modeling. Learning about healthy eating and physical activities should be part of the curriculum and integrated into various school activities (Molloy et al., 2014).

Child abuse prevention and intervention. It has become a worldwide concern and priority in health for the following reasons: Primarily, research findings have proven that child abuse has tough lifelong influences in the brain development, behavior, social activities, health, and lifespan of an individual. Child maltreatment may result in long-standing difficulty in controlling impulse, less self-worth, unhappiness, cutting of one's life, self-destruction, disorders in food intake, use and abuse of prohibited drugs, lack of concern for others, withdrawal behavior, violence and ferocity, law-breaking, excessive sexual engagement, struggle in learning, unimpressive academic achievement, weak health, and greater degrees of early death. Realizing the necessity to minimize or eradicate child maltreatment, educationalists substantively improved their efforts to safeguard children from mishandling. The educational programs are effected in basic education because the victims of maltreatment are those who are at a young age and the objective is to guide children how to determine incidents of child abuse, ways to avoid life-threatening situations, proper disclosure of maltreatment and to inculcate in their minds that being a victim of cruelty is not their fault. The enumerated programs may differ through the selection of teachers,

the utilization of materials, and the amount of time spent on activities. Through evaluation and information based on the validation of exercises being made in the classroom, schools can prevent child abuse from potential perpetrators and hostile environment. The school-based prevention and intervention programs provide children knowledge on how to protect themselves from abuse and it arms them from being a victim of abuse, as sustained by the study of Dake & Murnan, (2003).

Prevention and intervention on child abuse are meant to protect humanity from its effect particularly into the formation of the workforce of the society and its progress. Robust studies show that child abuse is an occurrence all around the globe and the effect of later treatment thereof is less effective and more expensive. In the light of having good child abuse prevention and intervention, there are existing standards and approaches that turned out to be successful. Evidence shows that there are worldwide and thorough preventions and interventions to prevent child abuse such as: educating the parents, visiting the homes of children, trauma prevention, and modular programs (Mikton & Butchart, 2009).

Professionals who are expected to offer services to promote the children's welfare realizes that child mishandling do not happen in an instance. Reality appears that child abuse sprouts from serious problems in the respective families of victims and offenders and authorities like school personnel have witnessed them (Singer et al., 1999). In order to properly assist victims, school personnel as services workers who are duty bound to implement child protection must fully understand how these essentials work collectively (Shim & Haight, 2006). Cross training before newly hired employees report to work should be provided. Evaluation of the training programs content must be made through the trainee's feedback, though; the accurate measurement of its efficacy is the performance of the employees (Blythe & Walters, 2010). The realization that the deficiency on how to detect signs of child abuse and procedures for reporting to the concerned child-protection organizations can do more harm instead of good. Approaches on how to further develop the ability to recognize child abuse, training, and utilization of questionnaires for questioning children and parents about ill-treatment, and evidence-based guiding principle must be available as well. In the same way, to prevent under-reporting by school personnel, there should be sufficient training and boundless awareness of signs of child abuse and procedures.

School personnel attending children have corresponding roles in the appreciation and response to child abuse (Gilbert et al., 2009). Furthermore, they should have the understanding and skills to work together with other fields and offices to uphold the welfare of children (Sheffield, 2008).

Methods

This study utilizes the sequential explanatory mixed-method design. The method involves two phases: the quantitative followed by the qualitative. First, the quantitative data is gathered and analyzed. After which, the qualitative data collection and analysis is followed to further expound the quantitative in the first phase (Creswell, 2013).

For the quantitative phase, the participants include 157 school personnel and nine parents of the Basic Education Department of the Catholic educational institution (Table 1). As per school manual, they were further classified as administrators, teaching personnel, academic non-teaching personnel, non-teaching personnel, and parents. For the qualitative phase of the study, the purposive sampling procedure was utilized to select participants from each group based on typical response and maximal variation principle (Ivankova, Creswell & Sheldon, 2006).

Table 1 Distribution of Participants

Assessors' Classification	Participants	%
Administrators	27	16.26
Teaching Personnel	54	32.53
Academic Non-Teaching Personnel (ANTP)	9	5.42
Other Non-Teaching Personnel (NTP)	67	40.36
Parents	9	5.42
Total Number of Participants	166	100

A validated researcher-made survey questionnaire developed from the existing school policies on child protection based on the pertinent provisions of Dep Ed 40 s. 2012 was used to collect the qualitative data. The items were categorized into six areas, namely, the school environment and admission policy, school personnel, information and procedures, safety measures for children, prevention and intervention programs, and personnel training and development. Likewise, the Likert scale was used to indicate their assessment of the school's compliance with the Child Protection Policy. To interpret the responses of the participants the following scale is used:

Table 1 The interpretation of respondents

Rating Scale	Responses	Verbal Description	Interpretation
3	In place	Full Compliance	There is extensive awareness of and conformity to child protection. There are no gaps on its application in school which may be attributable to personnel recruitment, information dissemination system, and collaborative efforts.
2	Partially in place	Partial Compliance	There is awareness of and conformity to child protection but gaps are evident in its application in school which may be attributable to personnel recruitment, information dissemination system, and collaborative efforts.
1	Not in place	Non-Compliance	There is limited awareness of and conformity to child protection and gaps are very evident in its application at school which may be attributable to personnel recruitment, information dissemination system, and collaborative efforts.

On the other hand, the qualitative data were gathered using an in-depth semi-structured interview. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze quantitative data. Mean was used to describe the extent of compliance of the Catholic educational institution with the Child Protection Policy as assessed in the six areas by the assessors as a whole and when they are grouped according to their classification. Because the data were not normally distributed based on Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk Tests of Normality, the Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used to determine the significant difference in the extent of compliance with the Child Protection Policy when the assessors are grouped according to their groupings.

For the qualitative data, the recursive textual data analysis was utilized to cull out insights from the narratives of the interviews of the participants using Lichtman's 3 Cs: coding, categorizing, and contextualizing (Lichtman, 2010). The iterative process was employed until the saturation point was reached when no new insights could be developed from the themes.

Table 3 The Extent of Compliance with the Child Protection Policy in Six Areas

Areas	n	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
School Environment and Admission Policy	166	2.56	Full Compliance
School Personnel	166	2.71	Full Compliance
Information and Procedures	166	2.55	Full Compliance
Safety Measures for Children	166	2.72	Full Compliance
Prevention and Intervention Program	166	2.66	Full Compliance
Personnel Training and Development	166	2.44	Partial Compliance
As a Whole	166	2.61	Full Compliance

Results and Discussions

Compliance to Child Protection Policy at the Catholic educational institution. The findings reveal the extent of compliance of the Catholic educational institution in all areas of the Child Protection Policy (Table 2), when taken as a whole, is in place ($M = 2.61$). The result reveals that the Catholic educational institution is in full compliance with the Child Protection Policy. Regarding the particular areas, the safety measures for children receives the highest mean ($M = 2.72$), while the personnel training and development obtained the lowest mean ($M = 2.44$). The result of the study shows that the security and safety of the child are the top priority of the school and all concerned individuals. The child protection compliance of the school demonstrates a highly positive interest and effort in finding and establishing safe conditions, stability, and protection for children so desired growth and development envisioned by the academic institution can be achieved (Maslow, 1943).

Moreover, the extent of compliance of the Catholic educational institution with the Child Protection Policy as assessed by the assessors and when taken as a whole (Table 3) shows full compliance as evidence by the mean result ($M = 2.61$). About the different groups of assessors, assessment of the administrators and parents obtain the highest mean ($M = 2.65$), while the assessment of the academic non-teaching personnel receives the lowest mean ($M = 2.23$). The result of the study shows that both administrators and parents assess that the academic institution demonstrates full compliance with the child protection policy.

Table 4 The Extent of Compliance with the Child Protection Policy as Assessed by Assessors

Respondents	n	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
School Administrators	27	2.65	Full Compliance
Teaching Personnel	54	2.61	Full Compliance
Academic Non-Teaching Personnel	9	2.23	Partial Compliance
Other Non-Teaching Personnel	67	2.63	Full Compliance
Parents	9	2.65	Full Compliance
As a Whole	166	2.61	Full Compliance

The results signify that the parents have faith to entrust their children to the Catholic educational institution and the administrators are aware of their responsibility and accountability as second parents to school children. Indeed, good leadership and support of school heads with the collaboration of all school personnel and parents contribute to effective implementation of the child protection policy of the

academic institution (White, 2008). Also, the findings affirm that the school can fittingly educate parents and guardians on positive behavior management in the practice of child protection in the classrooms and the entire school (Eber et al., 2002).

Table 5 Significant Difference in the Extent of Compliance with the Six Areas of the Child Protection Policy as Assessed by the Assessors

Respondents	Mean	df	H	p-value	Interpretation
School Administrators	2.65	4	10.646	0.031	Significant at 0.05 α
Teaching Personnel	2.61				
Academic Non-Teaching Personnel	2.23				
Other Non-Teaching Personnel	2.63				
Parents	2.65				

Furthermore, a significant difference is found in the assessors' assessment of school compliance with the child protection policy in six areas when they are grouped according to their classification (Table 4). It signifies that the academic non-teaching personnel believe there is full compliance with the child protection policy but there are gaps in implementation which may be attributed to personnel recruitment, information dissemination system, and collaborative efforts. As front-liners of the school, the academic non-teaching personnel have a better understanding of the child protection policy regarding dealing with the children and parents and have more experience in handling related cases. Also, they possess the appropriate knowledge and skills on how to properly assist and handle child protection concerns thus they can reasonably assess the compliance of the school of the child protection policy. Consequently, they saw the need for constant updating and training in the area of child protection in order to be more equipped in fulfilling their functions. Fiorvanti & Brassard (2014) states that all school personnel must be trained in recognizing and reporting alleged ill-treatment of children by parents, guardians, and even by school personnel themselves. Thus, school personnel should adopt the right based system approach which can protect children in school, in their families and their community.

Facilitating Factors of Child Protection. From the interview transcripts of the participants, five themes emerge, namely: (a) welcoming school environment as requisite for child protection; (b) engagement of school personnel in protecting school children; (c) continuous improvement in coping with the challenges and gaps of the child protection policy; (d) child protection policy as

quality assurance measure for the safety of school children; and (e) involvement of parents and other stakeholders in the child protection practices.

The insights of the participants show that there is full compliance of the school with the child protection policy as evidenced by a wide awareness and conformity and absence of gaps in the implementation of child protection measures. It only signifies that the Catholic educational institution has significantly contributed to the development and well-being of children in various ways. The quality of the Child Protection Policy of the educative community is a reflection of what transpires inside the school. The findings also suggest that the Child Protection Policy must be properly monitored and evaluated to make the necessary enhancement to maintain its effective delivery. This strengthened and validated the UNICEF observation that in Asia and the Pacific regions, countries have policies on child protection but the implementation is weak and not thoroughly systematic (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific, 2012). Fiorvanti et al. (2014) states that child protection has evolved from protecting children as victims to upholding their dignity and welfare as human beings by educating individuals, teaching skills, monitoring progress, and delivering effective support services. Thus, the school personnel needs to continuously update themselves with appropriate knowledge, training, and skills required for child protection (Appleton, 2012).

Also, the insights of the participants reveal that the school must be friendly to the child in its entirety for them to feel safe and secured. This adhered to the basic principles of rights-based child-friendly school which states that the school must be accepting in the context of allowing all students to participate in various activities regardless of their sex, ethnicity, culture, linguistics, socio-economic status, and disabilities; become academically relevant that could provide knowledge, attitude, life skills and livelihood; create an environment which develops knowledge and skills on gender equality; foster healthy and protective school climate for the holistic well-being of children; and build a community which encourages family and community participation in all matters related to children's welfare (Child-Friendly Schools, cited in UNICEF, 2012). Similarly, the quality of child protection is a shared responsibility of the members of the academic community. The accounts of the participants reveal how the education of school personnel, shared responsibility, wholehearted service, and concern for children's well-being could contribute

to the effective practice or implementation of the school's child protection policy. Along with this line, the Catholic educational institution under study is committed to continuous improvement of the child protection policy in collaboration with all the stakeholders.

Overall, the findings imply that the child protection is vital to good practice which can ensure the safety of children in a school setting. As front-liners of the school in child protection, school personnel must be properly selected and trained to effectively implement the relevant policies to this effect. The success of the implementation of the child protection policy necessitates consciousness and commitment of the members of the academic community. Only then, the children will feel safe and secure in school and achieve their holistic development.

Conclusion

The general assessment of the compliance of the Catholic educational institution with the Child Protection Policy exhibits full compliance when taken as a whole. This implies that there is wide awareness of and conformity with the provisions of Dep.Ed. 40 s. 2012 Child Protection Policy. Moreover, the successful implementation of the child protection policy calls for the commitment of all stakeholders of the educational institution. Furthermore, the need to integrate the child protection concerns into the scope of Human Resource Management and Development is vital in order to establish a quality management system in the selection, hiring, training, and deployment of competent school personnel to engage in the child protection related programs and activities to foster the safety and well-being of children in school.

Recommendations

For the enhancement of the implementation of the Child Protection Policy, the researchers recommend that:

School administrators should strengthen their mentoring and supervision of subordinates in the performance of their functions to ensure the establishment and maintenance of a good relationship with children and parents as stakeholders of the school. Some of the actions that may be taken by the administrators are consistent ocular inspection, dialogue, and small group discussion between the immediate heads and underlings. The creation of the Child Protection Committee and the formulation of the manual/toolkit for child safety and

security must be made by the School to completely implement the directives of Dep.Ed. 40 Series of 2012.

Human Resource Management and Development Practitioners should design their capacity building program to create a wider awareness and better understanding of child protection in an educational setting. They are encouraged to strengthen their recruitment and selection process and create or assess their Child Protection Policy, information dissemination, monitoring, and evaluation thereof.

Teachers must be enjoined to undergo training through the capacity building program that will educate on child protection for them to efficiently and effectively handle classroom issues and complaints concerning child protection in their level of authority as second parents of children in school.

Academic non-teaching personnel and other non-teaching personnel should undergo constant extensive training(s) on child protection policy for purpose of education, develop their clear understanding of how to assist and handle concerns on safety and well-being of children, and further improve their positive attitude towards work because it is essential to the success of aforementioned policy.

Students must be aware and make use of the process and the professional services or assistance of their teachers, guidance counselors, and any other school heads and personnel in attending to their needs and concerns for their safety and welfare.

Parents must also be educated and encouraged to actively participate as partners in all advocacies and programs of the School related to child protection. Their dynamic involvement serves as their commitment to the institution to work together for the protection and welfare of their children and will help the school to become a safe place for their sons and daughters, next to their home.

Specifically, that parents must attend the school's orientation on child protection and they must join and participate in forums and training that may be conducted quarterly or every six months while they are within the school premises during their "waiting time."

A more comprehensive research or study on child protection should be conducted particularly in the areas of classroom management, safety, student services, professional growth and development of school heads and personnel, proper recruitment and deployment of newly hired employees; and prompt, complete and systematic documentation and submission of relevant documents regarding child protection to the governing agency.

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