

# **Awareness and Practices on Child Protection Policy among Teachers in Libona Districts, Bukidnon**

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## **Abstract**

DepEd Order no. 40, series of 2012, or Child Protection Policy provides the guidelines on safeguarding children from prohibited acts in schools. However, a gap exists on the teachers' awareness and practices on this policy, resulting to its weak implementation. This study aimed to determine the Child Protection Policy Awareness and Practices among teachers in Libona Districts, Division of Bukidnon. Specifically, it provided information on the respondent's profile, the level of teachers' awareness and practices, the relationship of awareness and practices and the significant difference on the teacher's profile and their practices on Child Protection Policy. The 173 public school elementary teachers of Libona Districts were identified as respondents using purposive sampling technique. Survey questionnaire serves as the main instrument in gathering the data. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and SD were used to describe the variables of this study, with Pearson (r) and t-test to analyze data.

Findings revealed that majority of the teachers are 31-40 years old, Teacher I, teaching for 21 years and above, teach Grade II learners, and earned Master's degree units. They have high awareness and have highly practiced the Child Protection Policy. The significant relationship between the variables clearly indicates that teachers' awareness on Child Protection Policy contributes to the teachers' level of application in schools. This study concludes that both the awareness and practices of CPP contribute to a safe learning environment. It is recommended that school heads of Libona Districts should sustain the awareness of teachers on Child Protection Policy.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Practices, Child Protection Policy

## **1.Introduction**

A safe school environment fosters learners' physical, emotional, and psychological security, contributing to academic success. Teachers, as second parents, are expected to apply the Child Protection Policy (D.O. 40, s. 2012) to prevent prohibited acts, yet cases of bullying, violence, and abuse remain prevalent. The 2022 PISA reported that one in three Filipino students experienced bullying, with higher cases among boys, while Ramiro (2022) found that most children have encountered violence, including sexual abuse. In Libona, Bukidnon, the MSWDO recorded several cases of sexual and physical abuse involving school-aged children from 2023 to 2024. DepEd orders emphasize the mission to safeguard learners and require teachers to demonstrate knowledge and practice of protection policies, but gaps remain in their awareness

and implementation. This study, therefore, seeks to examine teachers' awareness and practices on the Child Protection Policy to enhance knowledge and strengthen measures in addressing prohibited acts.

### **Research Questions**

This study intended to determine the level of Child Protection Policy Awareness and Practices among Teachers in Libona I and II Districts, Division of Bukidnon for the School Year 2024-2025.

It specifically sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age, position, teaching experience, grade level taught, and highest educational qualification?
2. What is the respondents' level of Child Protection Policy Awareness based on General Provisions, Duties and Responsibilities of School Personnel and Preventive Measures?
3. What is the respondents' level of Child Protection Policy practices with regard to Antibullying and discrimination, Abuse, and Violence and exploitation?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' Child Protection Policy awareness and their practices?
5. Is there a significant difference in the respondents' Child Protection Policy practices when grouped according to their profile?

### **Significance**

This study on teachers' awareness and practices of the Child Protection Policy is valuable for Libona Districts I and II, as it can guide school heads in prioritizing continuous professional development and improving policy implementation. By examining how teachers' awareness relates to their practices, the findings can highlight areas for strengthening child protection measures, ensuring safer and more supportive learning environments. The study also benefits learners by promoting awareness of their rights, empathy, and respect for others, while involving parents and the local government in addressing school issues. Moreover, its insights may serve as a reference for future researchers exploring child protection in schools.

### **Scope and Limitations**

This study examined Child Protection Policy awareness and practices among 173 public elementary teachers in Libona, Bukidnon for SY 2024–2025, excluding schools with combination classes. Variables included teachers' profiles (age, position, experience, grade level, and educational qualification), awareness of the policy (general provisions, duties of school personnel, and preventive measures), and practices related to anti-bullying, abuse, violence, and exploitation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *Respondent's Characteristics*

The respondents' profile in this study included age, position, teaching experience, grade level taught, and highest educational qualification. Most teachers were aged 30–39, a group found to be at their professional peak, though age was not a determinant of awareness or practices on Child Protection Policy (Rabina, 2019). In terms of position, a majority held Teacher I ranks, indicating direct classroom interaction where the policy is applied, though findings vary on whether position significantly affects awareness (Dela Fuente, 2021). Teaching experience ranged from novice to seasoned educators, with some studies noting differences in awareness based on years of service, while others found minimal impact. Teachers handled

various grade levels, with most assigned in intermediate classes, were classroom management influences policy application. Regarding educational attainment, many teachers had earned Master's units, and higher qualifications were generally linked to stronger awareness of child protection, although some studies reported only weak correlations. Overall, these profiles provide insight into the factors that may or may not influence teachers' awareness and practices on Child Protection Policy.

#### *Awareness on Child Protection Policy*

The Child Protection Policy is a government initiative designed to safeguard children's rights in and out of school, protecting them from bullying, abuse, discrimination, and other unlawful acts (Adewale, 2022). Anchored on DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, it aligns with national and international laws to ensure safe learning environments. Teachers, as key implementers, are expected to know their duties, identify and respond to cases of abuse, and model positive behavior in classrooms (Dela Fuente, 2021). Preventive measures include training, seminars, and structured reporting systems that strengthen awareness and responsiveness, which studies show help reduce cases of violence and improve school safety. However, gaps remain in training and dissemination, suggesting the need for stronger capacity-building to enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and overall implementation of the policy.

#### *Child Protection Policy Practices*

Castino (2023) examined Child Protection Policy practices in Rizal, focusing on antibullying, abuse, violence, and exploitation as outlined in DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012. Bullying and discrimination negatively affect students' well-being and performance, requiring schools to promote inclusivity, establish safe spaces, and strengthen support systems for victims. Abuse, including physical, emotional, and sexual maltreatment, harms children's dignity and development, highlighting the need for awareness, training, and vigilance among teachers, parents, and communities (Kennedy, 2021). Violence and exploitation also pose serious risks, causing trauma and long-term harm, which can be addressed through systematic reporting, teacher training, and integrating child protection into the curriculum. Overall, studies emphasize that while teachers are generally aware of the policy, strengthening their capacity, improving coordination with stakeholders, and ensuring immediate reporting and intervention remain crucial for effective implementation.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to examine Child Protection Policy awareness and practices among teachers in Libona I and II Districts, Division of Bukidnon. A survey questionnaire served as the main tool, with responses rated numerically for statistical analysis. As Ghanad (2023) notes, quantitative research helps establish relationships among variables, making this design appropriate to analyze the link between teachers' awareness and practices, as well as the association of their profile with policy implementation.

#### **Participants**

The respondents of this study were the 173 public elementary school teachers handling Kindergarten to Grade VI in Libona I and II Districts, Division of Bukidnon namely Capehan Elementary School, Doña

Pilar Elementary School, Gango Elementary School, Kiliog Elementary School, Laturan Elementary School, Libona Central, Elementary School, Pongol Elementary School, Crossing Central Elementary School, Maambong Elementary School, San Isidro Elementary School, San Jose Elementary School, Santa Fe Elementary School, Sil-ipon Integrated School, and Tigbao Elementary School. These teachers represent the focal group for evaluating the relationship between Child Protection Policy and Practices.

### Data Collection

The study used a three-part questionnaire as the main instrument. Part I covered the respondents' profile (age, position, teaching experience, grade level taught, and highest educational qualification). Part II measured Child Protection Policy awareness based on general provisions, duties of school personnel, and preventive measures, patterned from Tenorio (2024) and DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012. Part III assessed practices on antibullying, abuse, and violence, adapted from Castino (2023), DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, and UNESCO's School-Based Violence Prevention (2019), with added indicators to balance the variables.

Data	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	Age	50 years old and above	44	25.43
		41-49 years old	51	29.48
		31-40 years old	56	32.37
		25-30 years old	20	11.56
		below 25 years old	2	1.16
	Total		173	100.00%

### Analysis

The study used purposive sampling, selecting schools with a 1:1 teacher-class ratio to ensure respondents were directly handling Kindergarten to Grade 6 learners. This approach focused on teachers most involved in child protection policy awareness and practices. This also employed descriptive statistics (percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation) to describe the variables, Pearson's  $r$  to determine the relationship between teachers' awareness and practices on child protection policy, and t-test to assess differences in practices when grouped by profile.

## 4. Results and Discussions

**Problem 1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of age, position, teaching experience, grade level taught, and highest educational qualification?**

**Table 1**

Distribution of Respondents in terms of Age

Table 1 presents the respondents' profile in terms of age. Most teachers from Libona I and II are aged 31–40 years old with a frequency of 56 (32.3%). This indicates that many are in their early middle adulthood, equipped with extensive teaching experience, strong pedagogical skills, and refined classroom management strategies. At this stage, teachers are more motivated, competent in classroom organization, and committed to their profession. Many are also parents, giving them deeper personal involvement in ensuring children's safety and well-being. Meanwhile, the least represented are those below 25 years old with only 2 teachers (1.16%). This shows that new teachers have limited presence in the district, possibly due to fewer entry-level vacancies and small teacher populations per school. While they may lack experience, their openness and enthusiasm bring fresh perspectives on Child Protection Policy implementation.

**Table 2**  
Distribution of Respondents in terms of Position

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Teaching Experience	21 years and above	51	29.48
	16-20 years	24	13.87
	10-15 years	46	26.59
	3-9 years	38	21.97
	1-2 years	8	4.62
	less than 1 year	6	3.47
<b>Total</b>		<b>173</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table 2 shows that most teachers in Libona I and II Districts hold the position of Teacher I, with a frequency of 102 or 58.96%. This indicates that the majority are still in entry-level positions, suggesting they are in the process of gaining competence and professional growth needed for promotion. Teachers at this stage are more engaged in classroom teaching and the implementation of educational policies at the grassroots level. Meanwhile, the Master Teacher I position has the lowest frequency with only 9 or 5.20%, reflecting the challenges of moving up the career ladder due to strict qualifications, limited plantilla, and a competitive selection process. This highlights the reality that while many teachers start at entry-level positions, only a few manage to progress to higher ranks.

**Table 3**  
Distribution of Respondents in terms of Teaching Experience

Table 3 shows that most teachers in Libona I and II Districts have been teaching for 21 years and above, with 51 or 29.48%. This indicates that experienced teachers dominate the population, having spent decades managing classrooms, adapting to educational reforms, and refining their practices across traditional and modern settings. Their long service reflects commitment to shaping learners' futures and allows them to provide valuable insights in addressing school issues. On the other hand, only 6 or 3.47% of teachers are new in service, showing that few are still adjusting to the teaching environment. This suggests that schools rarely hire neophyte teachers unless there are retirements, resignations, or increases in learner population, making their representation in this study very minimal.

**Table 4**  
Distribution of Respondents in terms of Grade Level Taught

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents by grade level taught. Most teachers (29 or 16.76%) handle

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Position	Master Teacher II	12	6.94
	Master Teacher I	9	5.20
	Teacher III	28	16.18
	Teacher II	22	12.72
	Teacher I	102	58.96
<b>Total</b>		<b>173</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Grade II, showing that the teacher population is concentrated in the lower elementary years (ages 6–9), where foundational literacy, numeracy, values, and socio-emotional skills are emphasized. This reflects schools' practice of assigning more teachers in early grades to strengthen basic learning. Kindergarten has the fewest teachers (18 or 10.40%) since learners only attend three hours daily, allowing teachers to handle

two sessions. With focus on socio-emotional development rather than core subjects, fewer teachers are allocated to kindergarten, consistent with the 1:25 teacher-pupil ratio policy.

**Table 5**  
Distribution of Respondents in terms of Highest Educational Qualification

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Grade Level Taught	Grade VI	26	15.03
	Grade V	27	15.61
	Grade IV	22	12.72
	Grade III	26	15.03
	Grade II	29	16.76
	Grade I	25	14.45
	Kindergarten	18	10.40
Total		<b>173</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Variables	Mean	SD	Interpretation
General Provisions	3.72	0.37	Highly Aware
Duties and Responsibilities of School Personnel	3.72	0.37	Highly Aware
Preventive Measures	3.69	0.38	Highly Aware
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>Highly Aware</b>

Table 5 shows the distribution of respondents by highest educational qualification. Most teachers (84 or 48.55%) were Master's degree unit earners, indicating that many are pursuing continuing education to enhance professional skills and career advancement. Having at least 18 units allows teachers to qualify for higher positions, while others continue earning units to complete their master's degree. On the other hand, only 4 teachers (2.31%) were Doctorate degree unit earners, reflecting that few have pursued studies beyond the master's level. While this is the highest qualification attainable, its low number suggests limited pursuit, though those who advance to this level are often more equipped in lesson planning, learner assessment, and addressing diverse needs, thereby contributing positively to learner outcomes.

## **Problem 2. What is the respondents' level of child protection policy based on General Provision, Duties and Responsibilities of School Personnel and Preventive Measures?**

**Table 6**  
Summary of the Respondents' level of Child Protection Policy Awareness

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Highest Educational Qualification	Doctorate Degree	5	2.89
	With Doctorate Degree units	4	2.31
	Master's Degree	20	11.56
	With Master's Degree units	84	48.55
	Bachelor's Degree	60	34.68
Total		<b>173</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



Table 6 shows the level of teachers' Child Protection Policy Awareness across General Provisions, Duties and Responsibilities, and Preventive Measures. The overall mean of 3.71 (SD=0.37) indicates that teachers are Highly Aware of the policy, demonstrating competence in its guidelines and best practices to reduce unlawful acts in schools. Both General Provisions and Duties and Responsibilities obtained a mean of 3.72, reflecting strong awareness of the policy's legal basis and school personnel's responsibilities. Preventive Measures, with the lowest mean of 3.69, suggest that while teachers understand proactive steps to address prohibited acts, there are gaps in applying preventive strategies. The low standard deviations across variables show consistent awareness among teachers, emphasizing the need for stronger focus on preventive practices to ensure learner safety.

**Problem 3. What is the respondents' level of child protection policy practices with regard to antibullying and discrimination, abuse, violence and exploitation?**

**Table 7**  
Summary of the Respondents' level of Child Protection Policy Practices

Variables	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Antibullying and Discrimination	3.70	0.40	Highly Aware
Abuse	3.60	0.63	Highly Aware
Violence and Exploitation	3.61	0.43	Highly Aware
Overall	3.64	0.49	<b>Highly Aware</b>

Table 7 presents the level of teachers' Child Protection Policy awareness across three variables, General Provisions, Duties and Responsibilities of School Personnel, and Preventive Measures. The overall mean of 3.71 (SD=0.37) indicates that teachers are Highly Aware of the policy, showing substantial understanding of its guidelines and their responsibilities. Both General Provisions and Duties and Responsibilities obtained a mean of 3.72, reflecting strong awareness of the legal basis and roles of school personnel. Preventive Measures, with the lowest mean of 3.69 (SD=0.38), also showed high awareness but highlighted the need for stronger emphasis on proactive strategies to address prohibited acts and ensure learner safety.

**Problem 4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' child protection policy awareness and their practices?**

**Table 8**  
Result of the test on relationship between the Respondents'  
Child Protection Awareness and their Practices

Table 8 presents the relationship between Child Protection Policy awareness and practices, showing a strong positive correlation with significant r-values ( $p < 0.001$ ). This means that as teachers' awareness increases, their practices on anti-bullying, abuse, and violence prevention also improve. General Provisions showed moderate correlations ( $r = 0.52-0.53$ ), implying that foundational policies support reduction of prohibited acts. Duties and Responsibilities had stronger correlations ( $r = 0.63-0.66$ ), highlighting the crucial role of clearly defined responsibilities in ensuring policy effectiveness. Preventive

Child Protection Policy Awareness	Child Protection Policy Practices					
	Antibullying and Discrimination		Abuse		Violence and Exploitation	
	R-value	P-value	R-value	P-value	R value	P value
	Interpretation		Interpretation		Interpretation	
General Provisions	0.53	<.001*	0.50	<.001*	0.53	<.001*
	S		S		S	
Duties and Responsibilities of School Personnel	0.66	<.001*	0.63	<.001*	0.66	<.001*
	S		S		S	
Preventive Measures	0.68	<.001*	0.70	<.001*	0.65	<.001*
	S		S		S	

Measures obtained the highest correlations ( $r = 0.65-0.70$ ), stressing those proactive strategies such as monitoring, reporting, and intervention are most effective in mitigating bullying, abuse, and exploitation. Overall, the findings affirm that higher awareness leads to stronger implementation of child protection practices in schools.

**Problem 5. Is there a significant difference in the respondent's practices on child protection policy when grouped according to their profile?**

**Table 9**  
Difference in the Respondents' Practices on Child Protection Policy  
when grouped according to their Profile

Respondents' Profile	Child Protection Policy Practices								
	Antibullying and Discrimination			Abuse			Violence and Exploitation		
	F	P	Interpretation	F	P	Interpretation	F	P	Interpretation
Age	1.23	0.26	NS	0.37	0.98	NS	1.63	0.10	NS
Position	1.16	0.32	NS	0.71	0.75	NS	0.62	0.83	NS
Teaching Experience	0.88	0.60	NS	0.61	0.83	NS	1.84	0.06	NS
Grade Taught	0.77	0.72	NS	0.67	0.79	NS	0.80	0.65	NS
Highest educational qualification	0.89	0.59	NS	1.34	0.22	NS	1.04	0.43	NS
<b>Overall</b>	<b>0.99</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>NS</b>	<b>1.19</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>NS</b>



Table 9 shows the difference in teachers' Child Protection Policy practices when grouped by profile (age, position, teaching experience, grade level taught, and highest educational qualification). The f- and p-values indicate that all differences are not significant, meaning teachers generally implement the policy similarly regardless of their profile. Slight trends were noted for age ( $p=0.10$ ) and teaching experience ( $p=0.06$ ) under Violence and Exploitation, but these were not statistically significant. This implies that factors such as age, position, experience, grade level, or education do not determine teachers' practices in child protection, as all follow the same DepEd guidelines consistently across different groups.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

The study concludes that the majority of the respondents belong to ages 31-40 years old with a Teacher I Position, have been teaching for 20 years and above, handles Grade II level and earned Master's degree units. Teachers have shown high awareness on Child Protection Policy based on General Provisions and Duties and Responsibilities of School Personnel. Also, the teachers have highly practiced Antibullying and discrimination. Both the awareness and practices of teachers on Child Protection Policy contributes to promoting a positive, safe and secure learning environment in schools. As the awareness of teachers increases, the practices of teacher on child protection policy tends to improve. The teachers' profile does not have a significant difference with their Child Protection Policy practices, showing that teachers have collective understanding on the background of the policy and its implementation. Teachers are actively engaged in ensuring that schools are safe places for quality education to happen as shown by their high awareness and practices.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that school heads continually capacitate teachers to strengthen their awareness of the Child Protection Policy, particularly on Preventive Measures, to ensure they have adequate knowledge to respond effectively to cases and apply proactive strategies in protecting children's rights. Additionally, teachers should enhance their practices regarding Abuse, as reinforcing these practices supports early intervention, systematic application of policies, and the overall protection of children within the school setting.

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