



Reinforcing Safety Nets for a Secure Learning Sphere: The Case of Child Protection Policy in Aroroy, Masbate

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Abstract - Amidst the different child protection laws and policies, there are still prevalent cases of child abuse in school which greatly affect learner's growth in a safe environment. This study employed a mixed-method approach to assess the awareness and implementation of child protection policies among school heads and teachers in the public schools of Aroroy, aiming to fill existing gaps. It also sought to identify prevalent cases of child abuse and propose interventions to enhance policy implementation. Quantitative data were gathered via a survey administered to clustered, simple random, and stratified sampled 54 school heads and 294 teachers, while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with seven purposively selected victims. For the findings, the school heads and teachers are knowledgeable about the Child Protection Policy. The policy has been implemented to a great extent, showing that while there is a significant level of implementation of the policy, there is still a necessity to enhance its execution to fully incorporate all its aspects. Sexual abuse, corporal punishment, and bullying are prevalent in various schools of Aroroy. The research discovered 15 interventions that will enhance its implementation in schools. Hence, the researcher concluded that it is crucial to reinforce safety nets with necessary interventions to strengthen the enforcement of the Child Protection Policy. The study recommends that educational institutions should adopt and utilize the identified interventions, which include the pamphlet, video campaign, and training program to raise awareness and enhance the implementation of the policy, ensuring a safe learning environment for the learners.

Keywords: Aroroy, child protection policy, child abuse, safe learning environment

I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Commission on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the importance of protecting the rights of children by alleviating all forms of child abuse, including the right to education in a safe learning environment. It is clearly stated in Target Number 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goal of the United Nations that the world must end abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence and torture against children. From these ideals, the Child Protection Policy was conceptualized to ensure a safe environment that is free from any form of child abuse.

Consequently, in the Philippine Educational System, a safe learning environment is very important to achieve its goal of providing quality education. This is so because having such things makes learners feel secure and confident in school, and it encourages learners to share their opinions, beliefs, and attitudes without worrying about getting negative responses from their classmates. In addition, teachers can deliver the lesson well and handle talks on delicate topics with more assurance when the classroom is a safe place.

To ensure that the school becomes a safe place where the learners stayed for five days in a week and eight hours in a day, the Department of Education implemented child protection policies. In fact, based on their official website they released three important DepEd Order pertaining to it. One is DO No. 42 S. 2012 which is entitled Child Protection Policy; two is DO No. 55 S. 2013 also known as Implementing Rules and Regulation of Republic Act No. 10627 otherwise known as Anti-Bullying Act of 2013; and three is DO No. 3 s. 2021: Creation of Child Protection Unit and the Child Rights Education Desk in the Department of Education. All of these aims to ensure that the learners won't experience any form of child abuse in the school for better teaching-learning experiences. It also targeted the parents and other stakeholders to be educated on protecting their child in school, at home, and in the community.

However, amidst the different efforts made by the government and school to ensure a child abuse free environment for a safe and effective educational system in the Philippines still, there are cases of physical, mental, and sexual abuse in the country. It happened not just inside the school but also within the family and community where the victims live in. As what Roche & Flynn (2021) found out in their research, physical abuse and corporal punishment, neglect and abandonment, and child sexual abuse were still present in the Philippines which happened in school, at home, and in the community of the young learners.

Moreso, in the report made by Aroroy-Municipal Social Welfare and Development child abuse cases in Aroroy are continuously increasing by 1-2% every year. Cases such as physical, financial, and sexual abuse were experienced by the victims from their parents, relatives, teachers, and other people in the community. Furthermore, there are also increasing reported and unreported cases of child abuse in both school districts of Aroroy as reported by the different assigned guidance counselors of each school in the Municipality.

This has been the reason for the researcher to conduct a study that assessed the implementation of Child Protection Policy in both elementary and secondary schools of Aroroy. Which includes the identification of the level of awareness and level of implementation of DepEd's Child Protection programs, projects, and activities of teachers and school heads in Aroroy, as well as, in conducting interview to the victim of child abuse about their experience and how it was handled and solved to come-up with an intervention to reinforce safety nets of the learners towards a safer and secure learning sphere.

Furthermore, the Policy on Child Protection refers to a broad range of regulations, rules, guidelines, and practices designed to protect children from damage, both deliberate and inadvertent. It provides organizations and educators with recommendations on how to provide a safe and secure learning environment for learners by outlining the necessary measures and maintaining uniformity in behavior to ensure that school administrators and teachers follow the same protocol. As such, these has been learner's safety nets to ensure that their rights are not violated by any perpetrators where the role of the school leaders is very important to ensure its proper implementation.

In support, Graham, Phelps, Maddision, and Fitzgerald (2011) stated that because teachers are able to monitor, record, and recognize changes in their students' behavior and overall wellbeing, educational institutions have long been seen as powerful agents for disseminating knowledge and awareness. Therefore, by educating school leaders and teachers about child protection policies and how should it be implemented, the school may make an equal contribution to eliminating the occurrence of child abuse.

Conversely, some authorities and organizations in school tend to ignore and even condone child abuse. Just like what Rabina & Writes (2019) stated in their study, most of the school leaders lacks awareness on how to consistently implement the Child Protection Policy in school. And due to the extensive duties and responsibilities that school administrators bear, child abuse in schools is frequently disregarded or not given enough attention. Likewise, according to UNICEF (2016), the child protection system in the Philippines is currently characterized as "top-down," with legislation and national policy that are clearly defined but poorly implemented, casting doubt on the system's "systemic" qualities.

This entails that the importance of implementing Child Protection Policy is sometimes overlooked and is not much observed. On that note, the aim of this research is to help educational leaders in the Municipality of Aroroy to evaluate the implementation of Child Protection Policy and to reinforce safety nets in improving its implementation or creating new policies on having a more secure learning sphere where children are protected from any form of child abuse. Moreover, this study was conducted to help the DepEd and DSWD alleviate the increasing case of child abuse both in school and in the community. It will be also a way to come-up with a program or project that will help and encourage learners to report and solve their case, as well as help the parents and other stake holders to be educated about the importance of such Policy.

Also, although there has been considerable research undertaken the implementation of Child Protection Policy specifically on the awareness of school leaders and teacher on it, still there is a need for further research on a particular issues and additional data such as the extent of school heads and teacher's implementation of CPP, the interventions that will improve its implementation in school, and the narratives of prevalent child abuse cases in the different schools of Aroroy.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

In view of the fact that the study is a mix of qualitative and quantitative types of research, a mixed-methods design known as the convergent parallel design was used to obtain a thorough grasp of the subject, wherein two datasets were acquired, examined independently, and compared during the research process. A convergent parallel design was used by the researcher, who conducted both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the research process, weighing the methods equally, analyzing the two components independently, and interpreting the results jointly (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

For the qualitative part, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the willing victims of child abuse following the integral inquiry approach. For the quantitative part, a survey questionnaire was used to know the teachers' and school heads' level of awareness of child protection

policies, the extent of their implementation, and the interventions to improve the child protection policies in the different schools in Aroroy Masbate.

To gather quantitative data, the researcher employed a survey checklist questionnaire crafted in English, taking into account that the respondents are school heads and teachers from randomly selected schools.

Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted in the public elementary and secondary schools of Aroroy, Masbate, which are divided into Aroroy East and Aroroy West districts. The quantitative survey targeted school heads (principals or teachers-in-charge) and teachers from these schools. A total of 54 school heads and 294 teachers participated, for a combined sample of 348 respondents. Participants were selected using a combination of cluster sampling and stratified random sampling to ensure representation across various school sizes and locations. First, schools were grouped by district (East/West) and level (elementary/secondary); then within each cluster, individuals were randomly chosen, with stratification to include both administrators and teaching staff.

For the qualitative component, seven students who had experienced some form of child abuse were identified and invited to participate in in-depth interviews. These student participants (four from secondary and three from elementary level) were selected through purposive sampling in coordination with school guidance counselors and child protection committee members, ensuring they were cases where the student and their guardians were willing to share their story. Pseudonyms (Learner A, B, C, etc.) were used to protect their identities.

Instrument

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part included a list of child protection policies outlined in DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, which aimed to determine the level of awareness among teachers and school heads. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of awareness from "Not Aware" to "Very Aware." The second part of the questionnaire utilized the same list to identify the extent of child protection program implementation in each secondary school, with respondents indicating whether each practice was implemented "To a maximum extent" to "No Extent" in their respective schools. Finally, part 3 included a checklist of interventions designed to reinforce safety nets and strengthen the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in schools. Respondents were asked to check the box of any suggested intervention they agreed with, based on the Child Protection Theory of Change by World Vision International in 2014.

For the qualitative data, the researcher used an interview guide following the integral inquiry approach to identify the experience of the abused learners by identifying how the abuse started, what happened, and how it was handled and solved. The questionnaire was crafted in both English and Filipino languages to account for the individual differences of the learners, ensuring that language barriers do not impede the researcher's data-gathering efforts. Furthermore, experts in both languages were consulted to verify the questionnaire's accuracy and ensure the study produced valid results.

The researcher carefully reviewed the literature and existing research on the topic to identify gaps, challenges, and best practices for the study's question and design to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. Furthermore, the researcher selected appropriate and rigorous

research methods and techniques that are appropriate for the research purpose and context, as well as carefully designed and tested the research instruments. Furthermore, the researcher collected and analyzed the collected data systematically and objectively, adhering to the ethical and professional standards and guidelines for his field of discipline. Finally, the researcher accurately and transparently reported and interpreted the findings, acknowledging the research's limitations and challenges and discussing the implications and recommendations for future research and practice.

Likewise, the indicators used by the researcher in the survey checklist questionnaire are excerpts from the DepED Order No. 42 S. 2012 and Child Protection Theory of Change of World View International, 2014. The researcher asked experts to assess whether each item of the research questionnaire targets characteristics that the instrument is designed to cover to ensure the validity of the proposed study.

As to the reliability of the study conducted, the researcher presented the results and findings of the study, and the narratives made accordingly to the victims of child abuse for verification and approval.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher asked for the consent of the victims of child abuse in school to divulge their narratives. A confidentiality agreement letter was signed by the researcher, parents, and victims of child abuse where the purpose of conducting the interview was stated and that all information gathered would be merely used for the success of the study. That, the identity of the learners who experienced child abuse and of their perpetrators won't be disclosed to other people. The researcher also complied with Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012 to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the victims of child abuse.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

School Heads' and Teachers' Awareness of Child Protection Policy

Table 1 displays the level of awareness of school administrators and educators on child protection practices as stated in DepEd's Child Protection Policy. A Likert scale adopted from Rabina & She's (2019) study was employed, with qualitative descriptions corresponding to Weighted Mean values. The findings show that school heads and teachers in Aroroy have a strong level of awareness, with a Weighted Mean of 4.43 for school heads and 4.33 for teachers, placing them in the "aware" category of the Likert scale. It indicates that they have a thorough knowledge and a steady comprehension of the child protection policies outlined in DepEd Order No. 42, S. 2012.

This result could be attributed to the government's effort in legislating policies, programs, and projects that protect children from any form of child abuse for a secure learning environment. As reported, to escalate the increasing cases of child abuse in the Philippines, the government should implement child protection policies and practices. One of these is the provision of DepEd order No.42 S.2012 also known as DepEd's Child Protection Policy which includes the different ways of ensuring that the learners are protected from any form of abuse in school (UNICEF. 2016).

Among the school heads, there is a very high level of awareness of "the school adopts a child protection policy" for a safe learning sphere based on the result of the study with the highest weighted

mean of 4.78 as seen in Table 1. However, item number 5 (The school conducts the appropriate child protection training and capability building activities) got the lowest mean of 4.11 which has a descriptive value of “aware”.

This further shows that although the school heads are aware of the existing child protection policy, there is a need for them to be mindful of conducting appropriate child protection training and capability-building activities for the school personnel especially the teachers to be capacitated in implementing child protection practices since the teachers are the one who directly deals with the learners. According to Eikerman (2011), teachers should be aware of what is going on inside the classroom for they are responsible and accountable for every child under their custody. They should keep track of students and ensure that they are safe and protected against abuse or any form of harm.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights that there are specific areas where further training and campaign awareness may be beneficial, such as child protection against all forms of abuse in school. It is attributed that the school heads need to revisit and equip themselves with enough knowledge about the provision of the policy. Addressing these lower areas of awareness could contribute to the improvement of the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in schools. Likewise, Rabina & Writes (2019) explained that school heads need to be more knowledgeable and aware of the policy as its effectiveness depends on them.

As for the teacher’s survey result, it reveals that only two of the child protection practices got a verbal description of very aware as follows, one is “The school adopts a child protection policy” with a weighted mean of 4.65 and two is “The school practices positive and non-violent discipline” with a weighted mean of 4.64. It implies that the teachers have a significant level of awareness of CPP and for the learners to have a safe learning sphere, the school should adopt a child protection policy where positive and non-violent discipline is observed. While in the other child protection practices, teachers are only aware. More so, based on the result of the survey conducted as seen in Table 1, teachers have lower awareness of the child protection practice that “training modules that include positive and non-violent discipline in classroom management, anger, and stress management, and gender sensitivity should be used in school” since it garnered a result of 4.06 (aware) which is very near to moderately aware.

It means that although the teacher knows the different child protection practices, there is a need to raise awareness of child protection policy. In support of that, Asio, Bayucca, & Jimenez (2020) found that teachers responded affirmatively to the awareness of the Child Protection Policy by the Department of Education but still need further information and updates on other child protection practices which help them to become fully aware of it to ensure that the school is a safe learning sphere for learners.

Table 1
Level of Awareness of School Heads and Teachers on Child Protection Policy

Indicators	School Heads (n=54)		Teachers (n=294)	
	WM	Description	WM	Description
Child Protection Practices				
1. The school adopts a child protection policy.	4.78	Very Aware	4.65	Very Aware
2. The school ensures that learners and all stakeholders are made aware of the policy.	4.56	Very Aware	4.39	Aware

3. The school organizes and convene a Child Protection Committee.	4.61	Very Aware	4.43	Aware
4. The school conducts disciplinary proceedings in cases of offenses committed.	4.37	Aware	4.28	Aware
5. The school conducts the appropriate child protection training and capability building activities.	4.11	Aware	4.07	Aware
6. The school provides information-dissemination activities and in-service training for teachers.	4.44	Aware	4.33	Aware
7. The school ensures that the school adopts a Student Code of Conduct to be followed.	4.54	Very Aware	4.41	Aware
8. The school coordinates with the Department of Social Welfare and Development or the appropriate government agencies or non-government organizations on a Child Protection Hotline for reporting abuse.	4.3	Aware	4.15	Aware
9. The school practices positive and non-violent discipline.	4.7	Very Aware	4.64	Very Aware
10. The school child protection committee initiates information dissemination programs and organizes activities for the protection of children.	4.41	Aware	4.36	Aware
11. Training modules that include positive and non-violent discipline in classroom management, anger and stress management, and gender sensitivity are used.	4.15	Aware	4.06	Aware
12. The school employs means in integrating and teaching children's rights in the classroom.	4.54	Aware	4.47	Aware
13. Any incidents of bullying are filed and reported immediately to the School Head.	4.5	Aware	4.39	Aware
14. The school child protection committee has a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm.	4.31	Aware	4.17	Aware
15. The school child protection committee coordinates closely with the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippine National Police (PNP) the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO), other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations.	4.13	Aware	4.12	Aware
Weighted Average Mean	4.43	Aware	4.33	Aware

The Extent of Implementation of Child Protection Policy

Table 2 presents the results of the survey to school heads and teachers on what is the extent of implementation of the child protection policies in the Public Schools of Aroroy. It consists of the computed mean of each 15 child protection practices stipulated in DepEd Order No.42 S. 2012, with its corresponding verbal description using a 5-point Likert scale. It reveals that the extent of implementation of child protection policy in the public schools of Aroroy is to a great extent with a general computed average mean of 4.03 as seen in Table 2. In addition, it shows that the public schools in Aroroy have already fully implemented the adoption of a child protection policy considering that this child protection practice got the highest computed mean of 4.56 which is under the Likert scale equivalent of "to a maximum extent". The other 14 practices were categorized under the Likert scale of "to a great extent" where item number 11 (training modules that include positive

and non-violent discipline in classroom management, anger and stress management, and gender sensitivity should be used in school) was the lowest computed mean of 3.71.

It means that although there is a commendable extent of child protection policy in the public schools of Aroroy, still there is a need to strengthen its implementation. There is still work to be done to fully implement other components of the CPP by strengthening their efforts to enhance the implementation of CPP in their respective schools through various programs and activities (Estremera, 2018).

This could also mean that most of the features of the policy need to be implemented to a maximum extent to eradicate any form of child abuse for the school to become a safe learning sphere for learners. In support of that, Rabina & Writes (2019) stated in their study that most school leaders and teachers cannot consistently implement the Child Protection Policy in school for its full implementation. To justify, UNICEF EAPRO, Bangkok (2012) mentioned that according to the mapping initiative, child protection policies and laws exist in the Philippines, but they are very limited in application where schools are struggling to fully implement child protection prevention and response. Relatively, Matulac & Zamora (2020) explained that the school's Child Protection Policy should be firmly implemented to secure children's holistic growth and welfare.

Furthermore, it indicates that the public schools in Aroroy acknowledge the importance of adopting the policy, practicing positive and non-violent discipline, ensuring the child protection awareness of learners and all stakeholders, and employing means of integrating and teaching children's rights in the classroom. These findings suggest a consistent commitment among teachers to prioritize the well-being and safety of students within the school environment.

However, the analysis also identifies areas for improvement, as evidenced by the lower mean scores associated with the use of modules and other child protection materials, coordination and referral to child protection authorities, and conducting appropriate child protection training and capability-building activities. While these measures are still rated positively, there is room for enhancement to ensure that all preventive measures are fully implemented and adhered to by the Child Protection Policy for a safe learning sphere.

In support, Berger, Chionh, & Miko (2022) stated that the school should include more child protection-specific training and more sensitive training delivery methods in dealing with child abuse in school which includes proper referral or reporting to authorities. Also, to fully implement the directives of DepEd Order No. 40 Series of 2012, the school must develop a manual/toolkit for child safety and security (Zamora & Madrigal, 2018).

Table 2

The Extent of Implementation of Child Protection Policy

Child Protection Practices	WM	Description
1. The school adopts a child protection policy.	4.56	To a maximum Extent
2. The school ensures that learners and all stakeholders are made aware of the policy.	4.41	To a great Extent
3. The school organizes and convene a Child Protection Committee.	4.05	To a great Extent

4. The school conducts disciplinary proceedings in cases of offenses committed.	3.95	To a great Extent
5. The school conducts the appropriate child protection training and capability building activities.	3.76	To a great Extent
6. The school provides information-dissemination activities and in-service training for teachers.	4.01	To a great Extent
7. The school ensures that the school adopts a Student Code of Conduct to be followed.	4.06	To a great Extent
8. The school coordinates with the Department of Social Welfare and Development or the appropriate government agencies or non-government organizations on a Child Protection Hotline for reporting abuse.	3.81	To a great Extent
9. The school practices positive and non-violent discipline.	4.47	To a great Extent
10. The school child protection committee initiates information dissemination programs and organizes activities for the protection of children.	3.97	To a great Extent
11. Training modules that include positive and non-violent discipline in classroom management, anger and stress management, and gender sensitivity are used.	3.71	To a great Extent
12. The school employs means in integrating and teaching children's rights in the classroom.	4.1	To a great Extent
13. Any incidents of bullying are filed and reported immediately to the School Head.	4	To a great Extent
14. The school child protection committee has a system for identifying students who may be suffering from significant harm.	3.81	To a great Extent
15. The school child protection committee coordinates closely with the Women and Child Protection Desks of the Philippine National Police (PNP) the Local Social Welfare and Development Office (LSWDO), other government agencies, and non-governmental organizations.	3.75	To a great Extent
Weighted Average Mean		4.03 To a great Extent

The Prevalent Cases of Child Abuse in Aroroy

For the qualitative part of the study, table 3 shows the list of the victims of child abuse who willingly divulged themselves in an in-depth interview which includes the prevalent cases of reported child abuse in the different schools of Aroroy.

Although the Child Protection Policy has been put in place at the public school in Aroroy, instances of child abuse continue to persist. These incidents include cases of sexual abuse such as sexual harassment and rape, as well as instances of corporal punishment inflicted by teachers upon their students. Additionally, bullying in the form of teasing, physical aggression, and cyberbullying have also been reported within the school.

These cases were reported by the victim or the teacher and mostly handled by a designated guidance counselor. The reported child abuse cases were solved through an agreement and settlement. Furthermore, these reported cases were narrated based on the results gathered from the conducted in-depth interview and incident report given by the designated guidance counselor as follows:

Sexual Abuse

Learner A is A 16-year-old Grade 11 student living in barangay Jaboyaan, Aroroy, Masbate experienced sexual harassment in school. The student's teacher began sending inappropriate messages after a normal conversation about a missed class activity. The messages became increasingly malicious, including comments like "You're so sexy and I like you." One day, while the student was cleaning the classroom with classmates, the teacher approached and put his hand on her back, asking her to stay after everyone else had left. The student was frightened and quickly left. The next day, the student's mother noticed she was upset and she eventually told her about the harassment. They reported it to the school's guidance coordinator, who organized a meeting with the teacher and the student's parents. The teacher apologized for his actions, but the parents still wanted him to face the consequences. The guidance coordinator explained what might happen if they pursued a case, and the parents ultimately agreed to settle the matter within the school. They decided to transfer their child to another school.

As she disclosed, *"Ginhipuan ako sa likod kag inkupkupan san akon adviser tapos insabihan na magpabilin ako pag tapos maglinis san room..."* (My adviser touched and hugged me and told me not to leave after I cleaned the classroom...). She continued, *"San nagsumat na ako kan mama nagpa eskwelahan kami agod mag report sa guidance office..."* (When I reported to mom, we immediately went to the school to report to the guidance office...)

Learner B is a Grade 9 learner and was raped by his teacher at home at the age of 15. The incident began in school when the learner noticed her teacher's liking and ignored it. Until one evening her brother invited her teacher to drink in their house. At that moment the learner was inside the house. Around 2 in the morning, the session ended. The teacher stayed and slept at the victim's house because he was so drunk and his friend insisted on it to avoid a motor accident. Around 3 in the morning, the victim was awakened when her teacher lay down in her bed. She was about to shout until the perpetrator covered her mouth. The victim starts crying as the perpetrator rape her. She did not fight back because she was so afraid that the perpetrator might kill her. After the incident, she never spoke about the incident, missing classes, and eventually discovered she was pregnant. Initially, she decided to have an abortion, but a friend encouraged her to report the incident to her parents and the principal's office. The principal then contacted the guidance counselor, who facilitated a visit to the Women's Desk at the local police station for an initial investigation and proper legal action. A case was filed against the perpetrator, but he pleaded with the victim's parents and promised to marry her. The parents felt sympathy for the perpetrator and their child's situation, and they discussed the matter with her. She agreed to marry her teacher, believing that raising a child alone would be too difficult, especially given their family's financial situation.

As she said, *"Gin-rape ako ni sir sa amon balay pagtapos ninda mag-inom ni kuya kay didto siya inpakaturog kay hubog na..."* (My teacher raped me. This happened after my brother and my teacher got drunk and my teacher went to sleep at home because he was already drunk...). She continued, *"San naaraman ko na ako*

nabudos ni sir, amo ako nagsumat sa akon ginikanan kag sa principal. Gin-upudan kami pa police station kag nagsampa kaso pero wara namon indayon kay nakiusap kag nag-istoryahan si sir kag sinda mama na magpakasal na la kami...” (When I found out that I was pregnant, I immediately reported to my parents and the principal. they accompanied us to the police station and filed a case but we didn't proceed because sir and mom agreed to get us married...)

Corporal Punishment

Learner C is a 10-year-old boy and a grade 5 pupil in a school in Aroroy, was caught teasing his classmate during class by his teacher, who then asked him to stop. Despite this, Learner C continued to tease his classmate. The teacher lost her temper and slapped Learner C in the face. When he went home, his father noticed the redness on his face and asked him what had happened. The child told his parents what had occurred, and the next day, they reported the case to the school principal. Following this, the principal called a meeting with the guidance coordinator and the teacher, where the teacher admitted her actions and apologized. The principal and the guidance coordinator asked the parents to accept the apology and understand the teacher's perspective. However, the parents were not convinced and reported the case to the DSWD. The teacher and the guidance coordinator visited the child and the parent in their house the next day to apologize again and offer financial assistance for the child's medication. The parent accepted the offer, and the case was settled and closed.

He said, “Ginsampadong ako ni ma’am sa pamayhon...” (Ma’am slapped me in the face...). He continued, “Nagreklamo si mama sa eskwelahan... nagreport kami sa DSWD... ginpabulong na la ako ni ma’am agod maging ok na...” (Mom complained to the school... We reported to the DSWD... Ma’am just paid for my treatment so that everything will be okay...)

Bullying

Learner D is a 9-year-old child who was bullied by one of his classmates in school. It all started with verbal insults, but one day the bully punched him and their teacher saw it happening. The teacher stopped the fight and tried to resolve the issue with the two students, but the bully refused to apologize. Since the victim and his parents were afraid that the bullying would continue, the teacher called for a meeting with both students and their parents in the guidance office. In the guidance office, they talked about what happened, and the bully finally apologized and promised to stop bullying his classmates. The guidance coordinator explained to the bully what would happen if he continued to bully others. The issue was resolved with an agreement between the two students and their parents.

As he disclosed, “Ginaparasunlog po ako san akon kaklase sa eskwelahan hasta sa insuntok ako sa bayhon. Nag-ato ako...” (My classmate teased me in school until he punched me in my face. I fight back...). He continued, “San nakita kami ni ma’am ginsaway kami kag indara sa guidance office kun diin inpatawag an mama namon. Tapos nag-ayo’n sorry an akon kaklase kag inbaton ko agod dili na po mautro...” (When ma’am saw us, we were separated and taken to the guidance office where our mothers were called. After my classmate apologized, I accepted it so it wouldn't happen again...).

Learner E is a grade 8 student who lives in Barangay Panique, Aroroy Masbate. He was cyberbullied by one of his classmates after he teased her. She retaliated by posting false and harmful things about him on social media. He tried to talk to her and asked her to stop, but she didn't listen and continued to spread lies that could ruin his reputation. The situation became unbearable for Learner E when it started to affect him in school. He decided to report the incident to his adviser, who then took him to the guidance office. The guidance coordinator intervened by facilitating a dialogue between the two learners. They listened to both sides and explained the consequences of cyberbullying in school. The guidance coordinator emphasized the importance of settling the case and making things right. The perpetrator apologized to the victim and promised to stop her harmful actions. To resolve the case, the parents of both students were informed, and an agreement form was signed by the perpetrator and her parents.

As he mentioned, (Guin langasan ko manla an akon kaklase na babae tapos naurit siya kag tuna sadto ga para post na siya san dili maayo tungkol saakon sa FB na dili man matood...) (I joked with my classmate and then she got angry and since then she always posts bad things about me on FB which are not true...); (San ga karibok na sa classroom namon about san iya post saakon nag sumat ako sa amon adviser kag in dara kami sa guidance office kun diin wara anay idto maayos. Naayos namon idto sa sunod na adlaw san in patawag an amon ginikan kag nagiristoryahan kami...) (When there was an uproar in our classroom about what she was posting about me, I reported it to our adviser and we were taken to the guidance office where it was not resolved. We fixed it the next day when our parents were called and we talked...)

Learner F was bullied and threatened with death while at school. The situation began when Learner F and his friends were playing and he kept winning, which made the perpetrator angry. The next day, the perpetrator approached Learner F and asked him to fight. Learner F refused and tried to leave, but the perpetrator pulled out a knife and threatened him. Learner F was frightened and ran to a teacher to report the incident. The teacher took him to the guidance office, where Learner F explained what had happened. The guidance counselor was alarmed and called the school guard to help locate the perpetrator. The guard found the perpetrator and confiscated his weapon. The guidance counselor interrogated the perpetrator, explained the severity of his actions, and warned him of the consequences. The perpetrator apologized and promised not to repeat his mistake. As part of the agreement, the guidance counselor had the perpetrator sign a written agreement stating that he would never do it again, and if he did, he would face legal consequences.

He said, "Gakaranam kami tapos san napiyerde ko siya ginlangasan la siya san kaklase namon tapos naurit na siya kag didto nagtuna an pagbanta niya sa akon na sakitan kag patayon niya ako..." (We were playing after I beat him, our classmate made fun of him then he got angry and then he started threatening to hurt me and kill me...). He continued, "Insumat ko siya sa amon teacher kaya inatawag siya sa guidance office kun diin ginkaistorya siya kag naghimo san kasuratan na dili na mauutro an iya himo..." (I reported him to our teacher so he was then called to the guidance office where he was spoken to and made a written statement not to repeat what he did...)

Learner G is a 10th-grade student who lives in Barangay Poblacion, Aroroy, Masbate. At the age of 15, he was bullied and got involved in several fights at school. The bullying incident occurred when a classmate bullied him, and instead of reporting it to the guidance office, he chose to ask the bully for a fight. When he was told to report to the guidance office, he felt it was better to defend himself. Hence, he pursued his plan and had a fistfight with the bully on January 15, 2024, at 12:15 pm, outside the school campus. The incident escalated quickly with a crowd gathering, goading the two students to fight physically while recording the scene on their mobile devices and posting it on Facebook. The school adviser learned about the incident and summoned both parties and their guardians into the principal's office to discuss the matter and understand the consequences of their actions. Consequently, the school principal suspended classes for both students. The victim accepted the punishment, even though he only defended himself from the bully, as he had agreed with the designated guidance counselor to stop fighting before the incident.

As he disclosed, “Ginpara-bully ako san akon kaklase. Kaya gin-agda ko sa iya magsuntukan sa labas san eskwelahan...” (My classmate bullied me. So, I invited him to fight outside the school...) “Nakita san amon adviser an video san amon pagsuntukan kaya inpatawag kami kaupod an amon giniklanan sa principal’s office kun diin gin-ayos an amon kaso kag insuspende kami sa klase bilang parusa san amon inhimo...” (Our teacher saw the video of our fight so she called us and our parents to the principal's office where our case was settled, and we were suspended from class as punishment for what we did...)

Table 3
Prevalent Reported Child Abuse Cases in Aroroy

Case #	Type of Child Abuse Occurs in School
1	Learner A is 16-year-old and a Grade 11 learner who experienced Sexual harassment in school.
2	Learner B is a 15-year-old Grade 9 learner was raped by her teacher.
3	Learner C is a 10-year-old boy victim of corporal punishment in school.
4	Learner D is a 9-year-old child who was a victim of bullying in school.
5	Learner E is a grade 8 learner who experienced cyber bullying.
6	Learner F was a victim of bullying and death threat in school at the age of 16.
7	Learner G is a 15-year-old learner who experienced bullying in school.

The narratives show that seven victims willingly shared their stories with the approval of their parents and help from the designated guidance counselor. Their names were not mentioned as well as the school where they are enrolled to protect their identity in compliance with R.A. 10137 also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

This means child abuse is still happening amidst the existence and implementation of DepEd Order No. 42 S. 2012 in all schools of Aroroy, as well as, of the different Philippine laws like RA No. 8353: Anti Rape Law of 1997, RA No. 11648: An Act Promoting For Stronger Protection Against Rape and Sexual Exploitation And Abuse, RA No. 7877: Anti Sexual Harassment Act of 1995, RA No. 10627: Anti Bullying Act of 2013, RA No. 10175: The Cyber Crime Prevention Act of 2012, and RA No. 7610: Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation, and Discrimination Act. Thus, the school is not a safe learning sphere as it should be with the existence of these cases as also mentioned in the provisions of the above-mentioned DepEd order and Philippine laws that protect children.

Likewise, in the report of Aroroy MSWD, cases of rape, child molestation, physical abuse, family negligence, and other child abuse are present in the municipality and continuously increasing every year. According to Coram International 2018, the result of the National Baseline Study on Violence against Children (NBS-VAC) reveals that the prevalent form of abuse in the Philippines includes corporal punishment, bullying, sexual exploitation, and cyberbullying that happened in society. This situation poses a threat to ensuring children and adolescents grow up in a safe and protective learning environment.

Additionally, it is evident that educators, designated advisors, and school administrators may not have a comprehensive understanding of DepEd's Child Protection Policy, as indicated in their handling of reported incidents. Furthermore, they may not be fully utilizing various child protection measures, which have led to the occurrence of reported cases of child abuse within school premises. As Learner A said, "*Gusto namon magsampa san kaso pero ginsabihan kami na dili na kay ayuson na sa eskwelahan...*" (We want to file a case but we were told not to and to fix it at the school...) These findings are correlated with the results of the survey conducted among school heads and teachers, indicating that both groups are only aware of the various child protection practices outlined in DepEd Order No. 42, S. 2012, as depicted in Table 1. Consequently, they have mostly implemented these practices rather than to the maximum extent, as illustrated in Table 2.

It means that it is essential to reinforce safety nets to raise awareness and fully implement child protection practices in schools, ultimately eliminating child abuse and ensuring a safe learning environment. It aligns with the interventions necessary to improve the implementation of child protection policies in schools, where mobilizing and raising awareness ranked first among the fifteen identified interventions. As recommended by Roche & Flynn (2021) in their study, school leaders should strictly implement a Child Protection policy to address child abuse issues. Seminars, training, and related activities that raise awareness about protecting children from abuse must be provided in schools to achieve this goal.

The narratives of the cases in Table 3 also show that most reported cases were solved without imposing the child protection law on the perpetrator. Instead, they settled things with the victims rather than facing the consequences of their actions by the law. As Learner B said, "*Wara na la inpadayon an kaso kay nagsugot ako na ipakasal nala kami ni sir*" (We did not continue the case because I agreed to marry sir). Learner C also disclosed, "*Nagkaso sinda mama pero in pabulong nalang ako ni ma'am agod maging ok na*" (My parents filed a case, but Ma'am just paid for my treatment so that everything will be okay...) There is only one

incident where the perpetrators were punished in adherence to school policies. *As Learner G mentioned, “Nakita san amon adviser an video san amon pagsuntukan kaya inpatawag kami kaupod an amon guinakanan sa principal office kun diin gin-ayos an amon kaso kag insuspende kami sa klase bilang parusa san amon inhimo”.* (Our teacher saw the video of our fight so she called us and our parents to the principal's office where our case was settled, and we were suspended from class as punishment for what we did.) This means that there is a need for strict and fair implementation of child protection laws in schools to avoid any incident of child abuse. Seemingly, the result of the survey revealed that strict and fair implementation of child protection law ranked 2 in the list of interventions that will reinforce safety nets to make the school a safe place for learners as seen in Table 4.

Also, this entails that most participants believe that the most effective way to prevent child abuse is to hold the perpetrator accountable under DepEd Order No. 42 S. 2012 and other laws in the Philippines that safeguard the welfare and well-being of children. The school, which is seen as a second home by students, plays a crucial role in promoting anti-bullying initiatives and enforcing rules to protect the well-being of the learners (Clores, 2023).

Furthermore, it was very evident that there are no hired guidance counselors to handle cases of child abuse in school. *As Learner D said, “Gindara kami sa guidance office”* (We were taken to the guidance office) and *as Learner F disclosed, “Ginpagkasundo kami san amon guidance coordinator”* (We were settled by our guidance coordinator). *Also, Learner E said, “Ginpapirma na dili na mautro pagkatapos wara na* (They made us sign an agreement not to repeat what we did, then nothing follows). Similar to the findings presented in Table 4 of the survey, educational institutions must employ qualified guidance counselors who can effectively address cases of trauma and offer victims trauma-informed care. This approach can assist victims in navigating their experiences and progressing positively in life. Alternatively, schools should ensure that their designated guidance professionals receive comprehensive training and possess the necessary skills to handle such cases, including appropriate referrals to authorities. Guidance counselors or designated guidance counselors, teachers, and school leaders must be well-informed and trained in identifying, handling, reporting, and referring cases of child abuse (Berger, Chionh, & Miko 2022).

These narratives underscore the significance of improving students' life skills and resilience to avoid child abuse. Parents need to be aware of the child protection policy to avoid additional incidents being reported, as shown in Table 2, which are strongly associated with the survey findings outlined in Table 4. Hence, the school should involve parents and other invested parties in their initiatives to raise awareness, provide training, conduct seminars and symposiums, and organize capacity-building activities to support the adoption of a strong child protection policy for creating a secure learning atmosphere. According to dela Fuente (2021), providing training to all individuals in the school, including students and parents, on child protection will help prevent child abuse and maintain a safe environment at the school.

The Interventions that will Reinforce Safety Nets in Implementing CPP

Table 4 presents the interventions to reinforce safety nets to improve the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in schools for a safe learning sphere which are ranked according to its frequency.

It reveals that there are 15 interventions that could strengthen the implementation of child protection policy that includes: 1. Mobilizing and raising awareness, 2. Strict and fair implementation of child protection law, 3. Strengthening children's life skills and resilience, 4. Addressing other root causes of protection issues, 5. Facilitating dialogue and partnership between all child protection actors, 6. Strengthening reporting and referral mechanisms, 7. Increasing access to social protection, supports and services, and 8. Supporting vulnerable households, 9. Posting of advocacy campaign materials on school premises, 10. Providing regular training for safety nets, 11. Conducting symposium in the community, 12. Hiring guidance counselors, 13. Providing trauma-informed-care for victims, 14. Alignment of school protocol to child protection, and 15. Regular review and evaluation of Child Protection Policy.

Table 4

Interventions in Improving the Implementation of Child Protection Policy

Indicators	N=348	
	F	Rank
Possible interventions in improving the implementation child protection practices		
1. Mobilizing and raising awareness.	290	1
2. Strict and fair implementation of child protection law.	264	2
3. Strengthening children's life skills and resilience.	252	3
4. Addressing other root causes to protection issues.	233	4
5. Facilitating dialogue and partnership between all child protection actors.	226	5.5
6. Strengthening reporting and referral mechanisms.	226	5.5
7. Increasing access to social protection, supports and services.	213	7
8. Supporting vulnerable households.	158	8
Others as mentioned by the respondents		
9. Posting of Advocacy Campaign materials in school premises.	6	9
10. Provide regular training for safety nets.	3	10
11. Conduct symposium in the community.	1	13
12. Hire Guidance Counselors.	1	13
13. Provide Trauma-Informed-Care for victims.	1	13
14. Alignment of school protocol to child protection.	1	13
15. Regular review and evaluation of Child Protection Policy	1	13

Among these interventions, mobilizing and raising awareness ranked 1 with a total frequency of 290 as seen in Table 3. It entails that to protect the children from any form of child abuse in a safe learning environment, the safety nets which include the school heads, teachers, non-teaching staff, and other stakeholders of the school must increase their level of awareness. Thus, seminars, training, or other related activities must be conducted. The use of campaign videos and pamphlets could also be a means to mobilize and raise awareness about child protection policy.

In support of that, Akbar & Hameed (2019) emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts among stakeholders, such as the government, school administration, and line departments, in securing a promising future for our children as the future of our nation. It

is necessary to organize seminars, workshops, and symposiums to raise awareness and educate all relevant parties on the importance of providing, protecting, and promoting children's rights. Furthermore, Atilano-Tang (2023) detailed that the school must offer necessary resources and utilize various campaign methods to raise awareness among all students.

The study suggests that sharing advocacy campaign materials focused on safeguarding children from child abuse can increase awareness among students and staff in schools. Seemingly, Rabina, & Writes (2019) recommend displaying posters on child abuse recognition and prevention in prominent areas of schools as an effective way to raise awareness. To achieve zero cases of violence against children and create a safe learning environment, it is crucial to have ongoing programs or orientations on children's protection and the support and collaboration of local officials, residents per barangay, and schools. These efforts will strengthen the implementation of existing policies that protect children. (Mobo, 2021).

Furthermore, it means that the school administration should rethink policy and decision-making to strictly impose child protection law, and the teachers should instill child rights protection and protect the children entrusted to their care (Balido, 2019). Also, schools need to develop strategies to promote positive behavior, encourage pupils and learners to report encounters with abuse, and allow students to know their rights and responsibilities to be protected from any form of child abuse (Castino, 2023).

In addition, there is a need for appropriate training, seminars, symposiums, and other related activities as an intervention that could improve the implementation of child protection policy in schools. According to de la Fuente (2021), conducting seminars that will comprehensively expound the duties and responsibilities of all in the implementation of child protection policy, and will capacitate the schoolteachers on providing special protection to children is needed to fully implement the said policy.

Moreover, the findings tell us that there is a need for proper reporting, preventing, and assisting learners who are victims of child abuse by hiring guidance counselors, providing trauma-informed care for victims, and alignment of school protocol to child protection. Similarly, Cervinia et.al. (2019) revealed that schools should establish a code of conduct or prefects of discipline to assist the schools in effectively reporting and handling cases and, to support and assist students who are victims of bullying and abuse in school.

Recent findings suggest that consistent review and assessment of the Child Protection Policy can enhance its effectiveness in creating a secure learning environment within schools. Essentially, ongoing monitoring and evaluation can equip school leaders with valuable insights on how to bolster their child protection practices, thereby shielding children from all forms of abuse. Asio, Bayucca, & Jimenez (2020) explained that the head of the school (principal or any equivalent) should strictly monitor, evaluate, and assess the salient features of the policy. Similarly, Bayucca and Shallimar (2020) cited that regular monitoring of its implementation in schools should be done to ensure its realization which will help in improving the implementation of the policy for a safe learning environment.

Hence, the implementation of the Child Protection Policy requires multifaceted intervention strategies to ensure its efficacy in safeguarding children from abuse. To this end, the researcher recommends three intervention outputs to reinforce safety nets aimed at bolstering the enforcement of the Child Protection Policy, thereby safeguarding children against various forms of abuse.



Fig. 4. Pamphlet About Implementing Child Protection Policy for a Safe Learning Sphere

The first intervention entails the creation of a bilingual pamphlet, encompassing both English and Filipino languages, tailored for utilization within educational institutions. This pamphlet will serve as a pivotal tool for mobilization efforts and the dissemination of awareness regarding the significance of the policy. Moreover, it educates stakeholders on pertinent aspects such as the identified reported cases of child abuse, proper reporting procedures, referral mechanisms, adept handling of prevalent cases, and strategies for enhancing the policy's implementation within the school setting.

The second intervention output comprises a comprehensive video campaign aimed at shedding light on the prevailing instances of child abuse in Aroroy while concurrently proposing strategies for eradication and prevention. Integral to the narrative is the presentation of the provisions outlined in DepEd Order No. 42, S. 2012.

The video campaign could augment awareness regarding the significance of the Child Protection Policy. Its primary objective is to empower educational institutions and their stakeholders to assume proactive roles as agents of change in shielding children from abuse and cultivating a secure learning environment. Through its compelling depiction of real-world scenarios and informative content, the video aims to inspire action and foster a collective commitment towards safeguarding the welfare of children within the community.

The third proposed intervention is a training program designed for schools in Aroroy and other educational institutions in the Division of Masbate Province. It aims to ensure that school staff, stakeholders, and student leaders fully comprehend the Child Protection Policy to facilitate its improved implementation in the school environment. In addition, the training program's goal is to enhance awareness of various forms of abuse frequently found in academic settings, including bullying, physical discipline, sexual misconduct, and rape. In this program, the participants will learn efficient strategies for safeguarding students' well-being and developing essential skills in recognizing, referring, and handling child abuse cases. The researcher developed this proposal following the DepEd's format provided below. The proposal includes a program matrix and evaluation tool.

PROGRAM PROPOSAL

Name of the program	:	Reinforcing Safety Nets for a Safe Learning Sphere
Project Duration	:	4 days (One week before the start of class)
Location	:	Aroroy National High School Convention Center
Target Beneficiaries	:	School heads, teaching and non-teaching personnel, PTA officer, SGC members, and student leaders.
Description	:	

In the Philippine Educational System, having a secure learning environment is necessary for delivering high-quality education, because when the classroom is a safe environment for students, the

teaching and learning experience will be smooth, significant, and effective. Nevertheless, despite the various laws and policies put into place by the government, such as DepEd Order No. 42 S. 2012 or DepEd's Child Protection Policy, Filipino children still suffer various forms of abuse at home, in their communities, and at school, impacting their personal development. Research has shown that child abuse is widespread in elementary and secondary schools. The study also found that school administrators and educators lack full awareness and execution of child protection practices in schools, calling for intervention to enhance their understanding and application of child protection policy to safeguard children and maintain a safe learning environment.

To address the identified concerns, a training program lasting for four days has been designed for both the Aroroy East District (2 days) and Aroroy West District (2 days) as outlined in the research results. This program seeks to increase understanding of the guidelines specified in the Child Protection Policy among school staff, stakeholders, and student leaders to promote its full implementation in the school setting. Furthermore, its objective is to provide participants with the necessary skills to protect learners from different types of abuse such as bullying, corporal punishment, sexual harassment, and rape, among others. The training will also give learners practical advice on how to protect themselves from abuse and will cover how to report, refer, and handle cases of child abuse effectively.

This program is in support to the mandate of R.A. 7610, IRR, Sec. 5, that it shall be the duty of all teachers and administrators in public schools and other government officials whose work involves dealing with children, to report all incidents of possible child abuse. And to DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 which stated that all school personnel with their stakeholders shall ensure that all schools are conducive to the education of the children. That, the best interest of the child shall be paramount consideration in all the decisions and actions concerning children.

It is a municipal activity, featuring breakout sessions tailored for school heads, teachers, non-teaching personnel, PTA officers, SGC members, and representatives of student leaders from all schools within Aroroy. The flow of activities is delineated in the attached program matrix, providing participants with clear guidance and reference throughout the training.

Travel expenses and other incidental costs incurred by participants will be covered by the respective school's Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE), adhering to standard accounting and auditing protocols. Additional expenses may be allocated from the Municipal Coordinating Principals Council (MCPC) 1% budget or the Special Education Fund (SEF) as deemed necessary.

Objectives

At the end of this training, the school heads, teaching and non-teaching personnel, school stakeholders, and learners may have gained sufficient knowledge and skills on the implementation of Child Protection Policy to eradicate child abuse cases and ensure a safe learning sphere. Specifically, it aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To discuss the legal basis and provision of DepEd Order No.42 S. 2012 also known as DepEd's Child Protection Policy;
- To identify different forms of child abuse;

- To familiarize oneself on the proper protocol in reporting, referring, responding, and solving child abuse cases.
- To develop learner's life skills and resilience to child abuse;
- To define the duties and responsibilities of school heads, teacher, guidance counselors, CPP staff coordinator and other stakeholders whose work involves dealing with children;
- To increase awareness and improve the implementation of child protection policy in school; and
- To eradicate child abuse cases in school for a safe learning sphere.

Expected Outcome

Target participants can attend in all sessions of the program and able to increase their awareness and skills on the implementation of Child Protection Policy to eradicate child abuse cases and ensure a safe learning sphere.

Budgetary Requirement

Communication Letter and Certificate-	Php. 1,000.00
Token to the Speakers and staffs-	Php. 4,000.00
Snacks of the Participant (200 x- 300 participants)	Php. 60, 000.00
Food of the Speaker (500 x 4)-	<u>Php. 2, 000.00</u>
TOTAL-	Php. 67, 000.00

Monitoring and Evaluation

To monitor the progress and success of the implementation of this program, the proponent will secure an accomplishment report/progress report. The conduct of a post conference meeting with the proponent, speakers, staff, and selected participants regarding the implementation of the project is also important to monitor the progress and to discuss the needs for changes or enhancements in its implementation. Furthermore, an evaluation tool will be administered to the participants.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the school leaders and teachers are aware of the Child Protection Policy, causing them to put it into practice to a considerable extent rather than to the maximum level. It highlights the necessity of re-examining the policy's implementation and focusing on improving awareness in underdeveloped areas.

Thus, the child protection practices outlined in DepEd Order No. 42 S.2012 are implemented in schools to a great extent, indicating that although there is a commendable extent of child protection policy in the public schools of Aroroy, still there is a need for full implementation of certain child protection practices.

In addition, there are numerous instances of sexual abuse, corporal punishment, and bullying have been reported in both elementary and secondary schools in Aroroy. These incidents are resolved through agreements between the parties involved, creating an unsafe learning environment for

students. As a result, educational institutions in Aroroy must enhance their practices and policies to safeguard children from all forms of abuse.

Also, there is a great need to strengthen safety measures in Aroroy's secondary and elementary schools by implementing interventions which include distributing pamphlets, launching video campaigns, and organizing training programs to improve the implementation of the Child Protection Policy and create a safe learning environment.

With that, it is recommended for the educational institutions to mobilize and raise awareness by conducting re-orientation programs and utilizing the study's pamphlet and video campaign for a safe learning environment. The educational institutions may implement the Child Protection Policy to a maximum extent by adopting the recommended outlined training program of the study for a safe learning environment.

The educational institutions can eradicate the prevalent child abuse cases by fully implementing a comprehensive Child Protection Policy with strict adherence to safeguarding measures per DepEd Order No. 42 S.2012 and Philippine child protection laws. Reinforcing safety nets by utilizing the fifteen interventions revealed in the study including the pamphlet, video campaign, and training program within educational setting is also highly deemed recommended.

Future researchers may also conduct further studies to enhance learner safety in schools and explore other aspects of the Child Protection Policy in education to provide research-based recommendations for improving its implementation in educational institutions.

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