

Child protection policies and teachers' disciplinary strategies among elementary school teachers in Kabugao District I: A Correlational Study

Paula Azucena Gatan * and Madelyne Tuluan Maslang

Apayao State College, Malama, Conner, Apayao, Philippines, 3807.

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between Child Protection Policy (CPP) awareness and the application of disciplinary strategies among elementary school teachers in Kabuga District I, Apayao. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study assessed the profile of 100 teacher-respondents, their level of awareness of DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, and the extent to which they employ positive, punitive, or aggressive disciplinary measures. Data were collected through a validated survey questionnaire and analyzed using weighted mean, t-tests, ANOVA, and Spearman Rank-Order Correlation. The findings revealed a predominantly female (73%) teaching workforce, with most respondents aged 30–39 and a significant 73% having pursued graduate studies. Respondents demonstrated an "Extremely Aware" level of CPP awareness, particularly in policy compliance and knowledge of provisions (overall mean = 4.74). Teachers reported applying positive disciplinary strategies, such as building warm relationships, to a "Very High Extent" (mean = 4.70). Conversely, punitive and aggressive measures—including shouting or using harsh words—were utilized to a "Low Extent". Statistical analysis indicated that awareness and disciplinary choices were largely uniform across sex, age, and educational attainment. However, civil status was a significant factor; married and widowed teachers showed deeper policy internalization than single teachers. Crucially, the correlational analysis confirmed that as teachers' policy compliance and self-efficacy increase, their reliance on punitive and aggressive measures significantly decreases. Self-efficacy, in particular, showed a strong negative correlation with punitive ($r_s = -0.707$) and aggressive ($r_s = -0.690$) strategies. The study concludes that while the district has successfully mainstreamed positive discipline, a subtle "knowledge-practice gap" remains during high-stress encounters. While teachers know the law, they occasionally resort to emotional reactions like shouting when challenged. Recommendations include sustained professional mentoring to boost teacher self-efficacy and bridge the gap between policy knowledge and practical classroom application.

Keywords: Child Protection Policy; Disciplinary Strategies; Teacher Awareness; Positive Discipline; Kabugao District I; Correlational Study

1. Introduction

Education remains one of the most powerful instruments for personal growth and social transformation, serving as a foundation for knowledge, character formation, and community development. Globally, schools are expected to provide safe, inclusive, and child-centered learning environments where students can grow without fear of violence or abuse. Over the years, educational systems across the world have shifted from authoritarian and punitive forms of discipline toward positive and rights-based approaches that promote respect, self-discipline, and emotional well-being among learners. International organizations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Children's Fund emphasize that schools must protect children's rights while ensuring quality learning experiences. However, despite these global reforms, many educators continue to struggle with balancing classroom discipline and child protection, particularly in contexts where traditional disciplinary practices remain deeply rooted.

* Corresponding author: Paula A. Gatan

In the Philippines, the implementation of the Child Protection Policy through DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 marked a major step toward safeguarding learners from abuse and promoting positive discipline in schools. While the policy strengthened legal and ethical standards in education, studies reveal that many teachers experience confusion, fear of legal consequences, and difficulty applying alternative disciplinary strategies in actual classroom settings. Although awareness of the policy is generally high, gaps remain between policy knowledge and effective classroom management practices, especially in rural and geographically isolated schools. In Apayao, where indigenous values, cultural traditions, and limited educational resources influence school practices, teachers face additional challenges in implementing child-centered discipline while maintaining classroom order. Existing studies in the province focus on policy awareness and compliance, leaving limited understanding of how such awareness influences teachers' actual classroom management behaviors and disciplinary approaches.

Motivated by the growing concern regarding the widening gap between policy implementation and classroom realities, the researcher conducted this study to determine whether awareness of the Child Protection Policy empowers teachers to apply positive disciplinary strategies or contributes to hesitation and fear in managing student behavior. Specifically, this study aimed to examine the relationship between teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy and their classroom management practices in Kabugao District I. Through this research, the study hoped to contribute to the improvement of teacher support systems, policy implementation, and child-friendly disciplinary practices that protect learners while also strengthening teachers' confidence and effectiveness in maintaining classroom discipline.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the relationship between teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy and their application of disciplinary strategies in public elementary schools in Kabugao District I. The descriptive method was used to describe the respondents' profile, level of awareness of the Child Protection Policy, and extent of disciplinary strategies employed by teachers. Meanwhile, the correlational approach was utilized to determine whether a significant relationship exists between Child Protection Policy awareness and disciplinary strategies.

2.2. Locale of the Study

The study was conducted within the municipality of Kabugao, the capital of the province of Apayao, located in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). Specifically, the research focuses on the sixteen (16) public elementary schools comprising Kabugao District 1. This locale was selected due to the researchers' professional involvement in the district and the observed need to address the "culture of silence" regarding disciplinary strategies among local educators. Data collection was completed during the School Year 2025–2026.

2.3. Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were one hundred (100) public elementary teachers selected through stratified random sampling from a total population of 150 teachers across sixteen (16) schools in Kabugao District 1, Apayao, within the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) for the school year 2025–2026. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot test (pre-test) was conducted with 19 elementary teachers who were excluded from the final 100-respondent sample. The final post-test (main study) was then administered to the 100 selected respondents to gather the primary data for analysis.

2.4. Research Instrument

The study utilized a structured survey questionnaire with a hybrid design consisting of self-constructed items and adapted scales from established literature to ensure both contextual relevance and academic reliability. The instrument was subjected for content validation by three Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDS) and divided into three parts. Part I gathered the respondents' demographic and professional profile, including age, sex, civil status, and educational attainment. Part II measured teachers' level of awareness regarding the implementation of the Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012) using a 5-point Likert Scale, covering policy awareness, policy compliance/adherence, and confidence in handling ethical dilemmas. Part III assessed the extent of teachers' application of disciplinary strategies through a 5-point frequency scale, focusing on positive disciplinary strategies, reliance on punitive measures, and aggressive or potentially harmful practices prohibited under the policy.

2.5. Statistical Analysis

This study utilized statistical tools to ensure accuracy and depth in the findings. The profile of the respondents was treated using Frequency and Percentage, providing a clear distribution of the participants' characteristics. To determine the teachers' level of awareness of the Child Protection Policy and the extent of their disciplinary strategies, the Weighted Mean was calculated. Comparative analyses were conducted using the Independent Samples t-test to identify differences based on sex, while One-Way ANOVA was utilized to assess significant differences across age groups, civil status, and educational attainment. Finally, the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation (Spearman rho) was applied to establish the relationship between policy awareness and disciplinary application; this non-parametric test was specifically chosen due to the ordinal nature of the Likert-scale data and the non-normal distribution observed within the selected variables.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Teacher Profile of Respondents

Table 1 Profile of Teacher Respondents (n=100)

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Female	73	73.0%
Male	27	27.0%
Age Group		
20–29 years	11	11.0%
30–39 years	43	43.0%
40–49 years	26	26.0%
50 years and above	20	20.0%
Civil Status		
Married	44	44.0%
Single	33	33.0%
Widowed	23	23.0%
Highest Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	27	27.0%
With Master's Degree Units	35	35.0%
Master's Degree	25	25.0%
With Doctoral Units	13	13.0%

Table 1 presents the profile of the 100 teacher respondents from the Elementary Schools of Kabugao District 1, classified according to sex, age, civil status, and highest educational attainment.

The majority of the respondents were female (73 or 73.0%), while only 27 (27.0%) were male. This finding reflects the predominance of female educators in the elementary school level, which is consistent with the national trend in the Philippines. Most respondents (43 or 43.0%) belonged to the 30-39 age group, followed by 40-49 (26.0%), 50 and above (20.0%), and 20-29 (11.0%). This indicates a predominantly mid-career teaching workforce in the district. Among the respondents, 44 (44.0%) were married, 33 (33.0%) were single, and 23 (23.0%) were widowed. Married teachers formed the largest group. In terms of educational attainment, the largest group was those with master's degree units (35 or 35.0%), followed by bachelor's degree holders (27 or 27.0%), master's degree graduates (25 or 25.0%), and those with doctoral units (13 or 13.0%). This indicates a generally well-educated teaching force with aspirations for advanced degrees.

3.2. Level of Awareness in Child Protection Policy

Table 2 Level of CPP Awareness: Policy Awareness

No.	Statement	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	I know the provisions of DepEd Child Protection Policy (e.g., no corporal punishment).	4.85	Extremely Aware
2	I understand what constitutes child abuse, bullying or discrimination under the policy.	4.91	Extremely Aware
3	I am familiar with the roles of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) in our school.	4.96	Extremely Aware
4	I know how to report child protection incidents to the proper authorities.	4.94	Extremely Aware
5	I recall the training/orientation sessions on CPP provided by DepEd.	4.60	Extremely Aware
6	I stay updated on CPP through school memos or DepEd advisories.	4.20	Moderately Aware
Overall		4.74	Extremely Aware

Note: 4.21–5.00 = Extremely Aware; 3.41–4.20 = Moderately Aware; 2.61–3.40 = Somewhat Aware; 1.81–2.60 = Slightly Aware; 1.00–1.80 = Not Aware

Presented in Table 2 is the level of awareness in the implementation of Child Protection Policy in terms of Policy Awareness. The overall mean for Policy Awareness was 4.74, interpreted as Extremely Aware. Items 3 and 4 recorded the highest means (4.96 and 4.94), suggesting that teachers are very familiar with the roles of the Child Protection Committee and reporting procedures. Item 6, staying updated through memos, had the lowest mean (4.20), suggesting less consistent engagement with policy communications.

The "Extremely Aware" status of the respondents suggests that the Department of Education's efforts to institutionalize child protection are effective. The high scores in roles and reporting protocols (Items 3 and 4) imply that teachers do not only view the policy as a theoretical concept but as a functional administrative process. This finding is consistent with the study of Cabral (2020), which posited that teachers with high awareness levels are more likely to foster school responsiveness and proactive intervention.

Furthermore, the understanding of what constitutes abuse and bullying (Items 1 and 2) aligns with the findings of SciMatic (2021), where it was argued that clear definitions provided in DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, serve as the primary defense against the occurrence of corporal punishment in classrooms.

However, the "Moderately Aware" result for staying updated through memos (Item 6) highlights a potential gap in the communication of policy updates. This reflects a trend identified by ERIC (2020), suggesting that professional development often relies on "one-time" orientation sessions rather than a continuous stream of information.

Table 3 Level of CPP awareness in terms of policy compliance/adherence

No.	Statement	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
7	I follow CPP by using positive discipline instead of punishment.	4.98	Extremely Aware
8	I ensure safe, inclusive classroom free from bullying or harassment.	4.93	Extremely Aware
9	I document and report any child protection violations promptly.	4.51	Extremely Aware
10	I collaborate with parents/CPC on child protection concerns.	5.00	Extremely Aware
11	I avoid actions that could harm a child's physical/emotional well-being.	5.00	Extremely Aware
12	I integrate CPP in lesson plans and classroom rules.	4.76	Extremely Aware
Overall		4.86	Extremely Aware

Table 3 presents the level of awareness in the implementation of Child Protection Policy in terms of Policy Compliance/Adherence. Policy Compliance yielded the highest subscale mean of 4.86 (Extremely Aware). Items 10 and 11 received perfect means of 5.00, indicating unanimous consensus on collaborating with parents/CPC and avoiding harmful actions toward children. Teachers appear to be deeply committed to CPP-aligned behavioral practices.

The perfect scores in Items 10 and 11 signify that teachers have fully internalized their role as guardians of student welfare. The move toward positive discipline highlights a successful transition from traditional punitive measures to more constructive pedagogical approaches. This finding supports the study of Dela Fuente (2021), which observed that high policy awareness is directly linked to a positive shift in classroom climate, where teachers prioritize emotional safety as much as physical safety.

The high level of collaboration with parents and the CPC (Item 10) indicates an understanding that child protection is a shared responsibility. According to Asio and Bayucca (2021), the "village approach"—where teachers, parents, and school committees work in tandem—is the most effective way to ensure the sustainability of child protection initiatives. This result suggests that the respondents do not work in isolation but actively involve the community in safeguarding students.

However, the lower mean in documentation (Item 9) is a finding that warrants attention. Even with high awareness, the prompt reporting and formal documentation of incidents can be hindered by the complexity of forms or the emotional weight of the cases. This mirrors the findings of Casipe (2023), who noted that while teachers are eager to protect children, they often find the "paperwork" of compliance to be the most taxing part of the policy implementation.

Table 4 Level of CPP Awareness in Terms of Confidence in Navigating Ethical Dilemmas (Teacher Self-Efficacy)

No.	Statement	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
13	I feel confident resolving conflict without violating CPP.	4.84	Extremely Aware
14	I can identify and address ethical dilemmas like peer pressure or abuse reports.	4.48	Extremely Aware
15	I trust my ability to protect students during incidents like bullying.	5.00	Extremely Aware
16	I am prepared to defend CPP adherence against pressure from others.	4.45	Extremely Aware
17	I can guide students through moral dilemmas using policy guidelines.	4.48	Extremely Aware
18	I feel empowered to seek help from superiors on complex cases.	4.47	Extremely Aware
Overall		4.62	Extremely Aware

Table 4 presents the level of awareness in the implementation of Child Protection Policy in terms of Confidence in Navigating Ethical Disciplinary Dilemmas. Teacher Self-Efficacy had an overall mean of 4.62 (Extremely Aware), with Item 15 (trusting ability to protect students) receiving a perfect 5.00. Items 14, 16, 17, and 18 ranged from 4.45 to 4.48, suggesting strong but slightly varied confidence in handling complex ethical dilemmas under CPP.

The perfect score in Item 15 reflects a deep sense of professional agency. According to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, as cited in educational research by Dela Fuente (2021), high self-efficacy is a critical predictor of how teachers handle classroom stressors. The fact that teachers "trust their ability to protect students" completely suggests that the CPP training has successfully empowered them to act as the primary defenders of children's rights.

However, the slight variation in scores for Items 16 and 18 reveals the complexity of "Ethical Courage." The mean of 4.45 for defending the policy against external pressure suggests that teachers occasionally encounter conflicting interests—perhaps from parents or peers—that challenge their adherence to the CPP. This aligns with the findings of Casipe (2023), who noted that ethical dilemmas in schools are rarely black-and-white and often involve navigating social relationships within the community.

Furthermore, the mean of 4.47 for seeking help from superiors (Item 18) suggests that while teachers feel empowered, there may still be a slight hesitation to escalate "complex cases," possibly due to a fear of being perceived as incompetent

or a lack of perceived support from the administration. This confirms the assertion by Asio and Bayucca (2021) that for self-efficacy to be fully realized, there must be a strong and visible support system from school leadership.

Table 5 Extent of Teachers' Application of Disciplinary Strategies: Positive Disciplinary Strategies (SLT-Aligned)

No.	Statement	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
19	I praise or reward students verbally when they show good behaviour.	4.42	Very High Extent
20	I let students help set classroom rules or discuss behaviour issues.	4.61	Very High Extent
21	I talk through problems with students to help solve misbehaviour.	4.52	Very High Extent
22	I model respectful and cooperative behaviour for students to follow.	4.85	Very High Extent
23	I give positive feedback on students' efforts and improvement.	4.82	Very High Extent
24	I build warm relationships and set clear goals with students.	5.00	Very High Extent
Overall		4.70	Very High Extent

Presented in Table 5 is the level of extent of Teachers application of disciplinary strategies in terms of Positive disciplinary strategies. Positive Disciplinary Strategies received the highest mean of 4.70 (Very High Extent). Item 24, building warm relationships and setting clear goals, scored a perfect 5.00. These results indicate that teachers in Kabugao strongly practice CPP-aligned, positive behavioral management in their classrooms.

The perfect score for building warm relationships (Item 24) underscores the shift toward a "child-centered" approach in Kabugao. This finding is deeply rooted in Social Learning Theory, which posits that students are more likely to adopt positive behaviors when they have a strong, positive emotional connection with their "model" or teacher. As noted by Dela Fuente (2021), the teacher-student relationship is the foundation upon which all other disciplinary strategies are built; without rapport, even the best strategies fail to gain traction.

The high mean for modeling (Item 22) further supports the SLT framework. According to Bandura (1977), observational learning is a primary mechanism for behavior change. By modeling respect, teachers are providing a "living curriculum" for their students. This aligns with the findings of Asio and Bayucca (2021), who observed that teachers who exemplify the behaviors they expect from their students see a significantly lower incidence of bullying and classroom disruption.

Interestingly, the lower relative mean for verbal praise (Item 19) compared to modeling and relationship-building suggests that teachers in this study may prefer long-term character development over short-term behavioral compliance. While verbal rewards are effective for immediate reinforcement, modeling and inclusive rule-setting (Item 20) foster internal motivation. This is a critical distinction in the Child Protection Policy framework, which aims not just to stop "bad behavior" but to cultivate a culture of mutual respect and democratic participation within the classroom (SciMatic, 2021).

Table 6 Extent of Teachers' Application of Disciplinary Strategies: Reliance on Punitive Strategies

No.	Statement	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
25	I give verbal warnings or threats to stop misbehaviour.	4.64	Very High Extent
26	I assign extra work or detention as punishment.	3.91	High Extent
27	I take away privileges like recess or activities.	3.83	High Extent
28	I send students out of class or to the principal.	3.52	High Extent
29	I call parents mainly to report bad behaviour.	4.32	Very High Extent
30	I deduct points or lower grades for rule-breaking.	4.00	High Extent
Overall		4.04	High Extent

Item 25 (verbal warnings) scored highest at 4.64, while sending students out of class was the least frequent (3.52). While at a high extent, these are considered less ideal compared to positive strategies.

The "High Extent" of punitive strategies presents a complex finding when compared to the "Extremely Aware" status in Table 2. It suggests a pedagogical paradox: teachers are fully aware that the Child Protection Policy (CPP) discourages punitive measures, yet they find these tools necessary in real-time classroom situations. The very high mean for verbal warnings aligns with the findings of Casipe (2023), who noted that verbal redirection is often the first line of defense for teachers who feel pressured by time and large class sizes.

The reliance on parent calls for reporting bad behavior (Item 29) indicates that parent-teacher collaboration is currently more reactive than proactive. While Table 3 showed teachers "collaborate" with parents, Table 6 clarifies that this collaboration is frequently triggered by negative incidents. According to Asio and Bayucca (2021), this can inadvertently create a negative perception of school-home communication, where parents only hear from the school during times of conflict.

Furthermore, the practice of deducting points or assigning extra work (Items 26 and 30) remains a common fallback. Literature suggests that while these are not "corporal punishment," they are still considered "punitive discipline" that may negatively impact student motivation. SciMatic (2021) argues that a high reliance on such measures, even when non-physical, can create a "compliance-based" culture rather than a "value-based" one. The fact that "sending students to the principal" (Item 28) scored the lowest suggests a strong sense of teacher accountability; teachers in Kabugao prefer to solve their own disciplinary problems rather than delegating them, which is a positive sign of professional ownership.

Table 7 Extent of Teachers' Application of Disciplinary Strategies: Aggressive or Potentially Harmful Measures

No.	Statement	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
31	I shout or raise my voice angrily at students.	3.66	High Extent
32	I use sarcasm or criticize students personally.	2.62	Moderate Extent
33	I grab, shake, or pinch students to correct them.	2.09	Low Extent
34	I embarrass students in front of the class.	2.48	Low Extent
35	I swear or use harsh words toward misbehaving students.	3.46	High Extent
36	I use any form of physical punishment like slapping.	2.31	Low Extent
Overall		2.77	Moderate Extent

Table 7 presents the extent of teacher's application of disciplinary strategies in terms of aggressive or potentially harmful measures the Aggressive Measures showed an overall mean of 2.77 (Moderate Extent). Item 31 (shouting) and Item 35 (harsh words) were relatively higher at 3.66 and 3.46 respectively, which remain concerns under DepEd's zero-tolerance policy on corporal punishment. Items 33 and 36 (physical means) had the lowest scores (2.09 and 2.31), suggesting these are rarely used.

The "Low Extent" of physical measures (Items 33 and 36) is a positive reflection of the teachers' high awareness of the legal consequences of corporal punishment. It suggests that the "Zero Tolerance" policy of DepEd has successfully deterred physical violence in schools. This finding is supported by Dela Fuente (2021), who noted that legal literacy among teachers has significantly reduced the prevalence of traditional physical discipline in the Philippine basic education system.

However, the "High Extent" of shouting and harsh words (Items 31 and 35) is a matter of concern. Under the Child Protection Policy, verbal abuse and "any act which debases, degrades, or demeans the intrinsic worth and dignity of a child" are classified as forms of child abuse. The reliance on shouting as a disciplinary tool aligns with the study of Casipe (2023), which found that teachers often view verbal reprimands as a "non-physical" and therefore "safer" alternative, despite their potentially harmful psychological effects.

Furthermore, the "Moderate Extent" of using sarcasm or personal criticism (Item 32) and embarrassing students (Item 34) indicates lingering traditional views on discipline. According to Asio and Bayucca (2021), psychological aggression can be just as damaging to a student's self-esteem and academic performance as physical punishment. The presence of

these behaviors suggests that while the physical hand of the teacher has been stayed by policy awareness, the verbal expression of frustration has not yet been fully regulated by the principles of positive discipline.

3.3. Difference in the Extent of Teacher's Application of Disciplinary When Compared According to Profile

Table 8 Difference in the extent of teachers' application of disciplinary strategies when

Group	Mean	SD	t-computed	p-value	Decision
Female	3.8546	0.2312	1.27 ^{ns}	0.2065	Accept
Male	3.7881	0.2357			

grouped by sex.

Table 8 presents the independent samples t-test results comparing the extent of disciplinary strategy application between female and male teachers. According to the analysis, the computed t-value of 1.2717 with a corresponding p-value of 0.2065 exceeds the 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the extent of teachers' application of disciplinary strategies when grouped by sex is not rejected. This finding implies that sex does not serve as a differentiating factor in how teachers implement disciplinary strategies. Both male and female teachers are guided by the same professional standards, school policies, and DepEd mandates, which may account for the uniformity observed across both groups. This result is consistent with the view that institutional structures tend to equalize professional behaviors regardless of gender.

The finding that sex is not a significant factor in disciplinary application suggests that professional standards and institutional mandates override individual gender socialization in the classroom. This uniformity implies that both male and female teachers in Kabugao are equally integrated into the Department of Education's regulatory framework.

This result is consistent with the findings of Dela Fuente (2021), who argued that the modern educational landscape, characterized by standardized training and the "Zero Tolerance" policy on corporal punishment, creates a "homogenizing effect" on teacher behavior. Regardless of sex, teachers are subject to the same legal liabilities and administrative monitoring, which necessitates a common approach to handling student misbehavior.

Furthermore, the lack of significance challenges traditional stereotypes that often portray female teachers as more "nurturing" or "lenient" and male teachers as more "authoritarian." The data shows that in the context of the Child Protection Policy, both groups demonstrate a statistically similar reliance on the strategies outlined in Tables 5, 6, and 7. This aligns with the study of Asio and Bayucca (2021), which posits that in a highly regulated environment like the Philippine public school system, institutional identity (being a DepEd teacher) takes precedence over gender identity when it comes to policy compliance.

Table 9 Difference in the Extent of Teachers' Application of Disciplinary Strategies When Grouped by Age

Group	Mean	SD	F-computed	p-value	Decision
20–29	3.9957	0.3089	2.6759 ^{ns}	0.0515	Accept
30–39	3.8320	0.2247			
40–49	3.8044	0.1952			
50 and above	3.7807	0.2091			

Table 9 shows the analysis of the extent of teachers' application of disciplinary strategies when compared according to age. According to the analysis, there is no significant difference in the extent of teachers' disciplinary strategy application across age groups (F-value=2.6759, p-value =0.0515). Nevertheless, the near-significant result warrants attention. The slight trend showing younger teachers applying disciplinary strategies more frequently may reflect the influence of more recent teacher education curricula, which tend to emphasize evidence-based behavior management approaches. As teachers advance in age, a degree of routinization may temper the frequency of formally applied strategies, though this difference did not reach statistical significance in the present study.

The lack of a significant difference implies that the Child Protection Policy (CPP) is implemented with relative uniformity across generations. This suggests that the Department of Education's "cascading" of policy through seminars and

mandatory orientations has successfully reached both the veteran educators and the new entrants in the profession. According to Dela Fuente (2021), the standardized nature of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) ensures that all educators, regardless of their age or length of service, adhere to a unified code of ethics and disciplinary conduct.

Despite the statistical insignificance, the higher mean among the 20–29 age group is a finding of interest. This may be attributed to the "freshness" of their pre-service training. Modern teacher education curricula in the Philippines now place a heavy emphasis on Positive Discipline and Social Learning Theory (SLT), as mandated by the enhanced Basic Education Act. Younger teachers may be more inclined to consciously and frequently apply these newly learned "evidence-based" strategies compared to older colleagues who may rely more on established classroom routines.

Conversely, the lower mean in the 50 and Above group does not necessarily indicate a lack of discipline, but rather a potential "routinization" of classroom management. As teachers mature, their disciplinary style often becomes more intuitive and less reliant on the formal, overt application of specific "strategies." This aligns with the findings of Asio and Bayucca (2021), who noted that veteran teachers often develop a "command presence" that requires fewer formal disciplinary interventions to maintain order.

Table 10 Difference in the Extent of Teachers' Application of Disciplinary Strategies When Grouped by Civil Status

Group	Mean	SD	F-computed	p-value	Decision
Single	3.8367	0.2679	3.5483*	0.0326	Reject
Married	3.8902	0.2115			
Widowed	3.7343	0.1902			

Table 10 presents analysis for the extent of disciplinary strategy application by civil status. Analysis revealed an F-value of 3.5483 with a p-value of 0.0326 which is below the 0.05 significance level. The hypothesis is therefore rejected. There is a significant difference in the extent of teachers' application of disciplinary strategies when grouped by civil status. Among the three groups, married teachers demonstrated the most frequent application of disciplinary strategies. This may be attributed to the parenting experience that marriage often entails, which may enhance a teacher's understanding of child behavior, sensitivity to developmental needs, and consistency in applying behavioral guidance. The lower mean observed among widowed teachers may reflect heightened emotional responsibilities that demand attention beyond the classroom, potentially affecting the frequency and rigor of their disciplinary practices.

The significant difference observed in Table 10 suggests that personal life experiences and domestic roles may influence professional pedagogical behavior. The highest mean recorded by married teachers may be attributed to the "spillover effect" of parenting. As noted by Panti (2022), teachers who are also parents often develop an enhanced sensitivity to child developmental needs and a more refined set of behavioral management skills through their lived experiences at home. This dual role—as both a professional educator and a parent—likely reinforces their consistency in applying the Child Protection Policy (CPP) and disciplinary guidelines.

In contrast, the lower mean observed among widowed teachers warrants a more empathetic analysis. In the Philippine cultural context, widowed individuals often carry a heavier burden of domestic and emotional responsibilities as sole heads of their households. According to Asio and Bayucca (2021), heightened emotional labor and personal stressors can sometimes affect a teacher's professional "vigilance" or the frequency with which they engage in formal disciplinary interventions.

The single teachers fell in the middle of the spectrum. While they may lack the specific parenting insights of the married cohort, they often possess more time and energy to focus on the technicalities of policy implementation. However, the data clearly shows that the marital/parental experience provides a unique edge in the active and frequent application of disciplinary strategies. This supports the assertion by Dela Fuente (2021) that a teacher's personal background and social standing are inseparable from their classroom management style.

Table 11 Difference in the Extent of Teachers' Application of Disciplinary Strategies When Grouped by Educational Attainment

Group	Mean	SD	F-computed	p-value	Decision
Bachelor's Degree	3.8416	0.1971	1.2293 ^{ns}	0.3034	Accept
With Master's Degree Units	3.8889	0.2695			
Master's Degree	3.7800	0.2202			
With Doctoral Units	3.7949	0.2120			

Table 11 presents the analysis on disciplinary strategy application when compared by educational attainment. Analysis yielded an F-value of 1.2293 with a p-value of 0.3034 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. The null hypothesis is not rejected. There is no significant difference in the extent of teachers' application of disciplinary strategies when grouped by educational attainment. This finding suggests that disciplinary behavior in the classroom is not substantially shaped by the level of formal academic credentials a teacher holds. Rather, such practices are likely governed by shared professional ethics, institutional guidelines, and in-service training programs uniformly provided by the school and the Department of Education, which appear to produce consistent behavioral standards across all educational levels.

The non-significant finding in Table 11 implies that the application of child protection and disciplinary strategies is a universal professional competency rather than a specialized academic one. It suggests that the core principles of the Child Protection Policy are so effectively integrated into the basic teacher training and school-wide orientations that further graduate education does not significantly change how a teacher manages student behavior.

According to Dela Fuente (2021), the implementation of the CPP is a "mandatory compliance" issue governed by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). Because the PPST applies to all teachers regardless of their degree level, the behavioral expectations remain uniform. This consistency is further explained by Asio and Bayucca (2021), who suggest that classroom management is often more influenced by in-service training (INSET) and practical experience than by the theoretical frameworks studied in post-graduate school.

Interestingly, the fact that teachers with only a Bachelor's Degree perform statistically the same as those with Doctoral Units reinforces the idea that child protection is an "on-the-ground" responsibility. While graduate studies focus on specialized research and administration, the day-to-day discipline of students relies on the foundational ethics and school-level policies that all educators are equally exposed to. This result confirms that the school's internal monitoring and Department of Education (DepEd) mandates act as a "leveling force," ensuring a standard quality of student protection across all educational backgrounds.

Table 12 Difference in the Perceived Level of CPP Awareness When Grouped by Sex

Group	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Female	4.7336	0.1516	-0.9544 ^{ns}	0.3422	Accept
Male	4.7654	0.1372			

Table 12 presents the independent samples t-test comparing the perceived level of CPP awareness between female and male teachers. The computed t-value of -0.9544 with a p-value of 0.3422 exceeds the 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis is therefore not rejected. There is no significant difference in the perceived level of CPP awareness between male and female teachers. This result indicates that CPP implementation efforts have been equally effective across both sexes. The uniform awareness levels observed may reflect the inclusive nature of DepEd's CPP dissemination mechanisms, including school-wide orientations, memoranda, and trainings that are provided to all teaching personnel regardless of sex.

The non-significant finding in Table 12 implies that the dissemination of the Child Protection Policy in Kabugao is gender-neutral and inclusive. This uniform awareness is a direct result of the Department of Education's systematic approach to policy advocacy, which mandates that all personnel, regardless of sex, undergo the same orientation and training modules.

This result aligns with the findings of Dela Fuente (2021), who noted that when a policy is as strictly mandated and legally sensitive as the CPP, institutional compliance mechanisms ensure that information is distributed equally. The lack of a "knowledge gap" between male and female teachers suggests that the school's communication channels—such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and administrative briefings—are reaching the entire faculty with equal efficacy.

Furthermore, this finding reinforces the "homogenizing effect" discussed in Table 8. According to Asio and Bayucca (2021), the professionalization of the teaching workforce in the Philippines has led to a shared "institutional consciousness." In this context, being an "educator" and a "child protector" are professional identities that transcend gendered socialization. The fact that both sexes are equally aware of the policy's provisions—such as the prohibition of corporal punishment and the roles of the Child Protection Committee—demonstrates that the school district has successfully established a universal baseline of legal and ethical literacy.

Table 13 Difference in the Perceived Level of CPP Awareness When Grouped by Age

Group	Mean	SD	F-computed	p-value	Decision
20–29	4.6581	0.1680	2.8305*	0.0425	Reject
30–39	4.7261	0.1395			
40–49	4.7844	0.1401			
50 and above	4.7807	0.1416			

Table 13 presents the difference in CPP awareness when compared according to age group. The analysis produced an F-value of 2.8305 with a p-value of 0., which falls below the 0.05 significance level. The hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant difference in the perceived level of CPP awareness across age groups. The pattern observed suggests that older teachers demonstrate higher CPP awareness, which may be attributed to their longer years of service and repeated exposure to CPP-related trainings, policy updates, and orientations over time. Younger teachers, while demonstrating high awareness, may have had fewer opportunities to attend multiple cycles of CPP programs. This finding highlights the importance of ensuring that newly hired and younger teachers receive targeted and timely CPP orientations at the onset of their careers.

The significant difference observed in Table 13 suggests that CPP awareness is a cumulative professional attribute. Older teachers (40 and above) demonstrate higher awareness levels, which can be attributed to their prolonged tenure within the Department of Education. Over several decades of service, these educators have likely participated in multiple cycles of school-level orientations, Division-led seminars, and regular administrative briefings regarding DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012.

According to Asio and Cayuca (2021), repeated exposure to policy updates and real-world application of guidelines over time lead to a more "nuanced and deeply rooted" understanding of legal mandates. For veteran teachers, the Child Protection Policy is not just a document they recently read, but a framework they have seen evolve and be enforced throughout their careers.

Conversely, the significantly lower mean among the 20–29 age group indicates a need for more intensive induction. While their awareness is still descriptively "Extreme," they lack the years of "institutional memory" that their older colleagues possess. This aligns with the findings of Casie (2023), who noted that newly hired teachers often experience a "steep learning curve" regarding the administrative and legal technicalities of child protection, even if they have a strong theoretical background from their university studies.

Table 14 Difference in the Perceived Level of CPP Awareness When Grouped by Civil Status

Group	Mean	SD	F-computed	p-value	Decision
Single	4.7020	0.1582	5.2877**	0.0066	Reject
Married	4.7298	0.1332			
Widowed	4.8237	0.1326			

Table 14 presents the difference of CPP awareness scores when compared according to civil status. According to the analysis There is a highly significant difference in the perceived level of CPP awareness when grouped by civil status (F -value=5.287, p -value=0.0066). Widowed teachers demonstrated the greatest internalization of CPP principles, possibly because the experience of loss and sole parenthood heightens one's sensitivity to child welfare concerns. Married teachers also exhibited strong awareness, which may similarly be associated with direct caregiving experiences. Single teachers, while highly aware, scored comparatively lower, suggesting that life experiences involving child-rearing may deepen a teacher's understanding and appreciation of child protection policies beyond what formal professional training alone provides.

The highly significant difference observed in Table 14 suggests a strong correlation between domestic experience and professional policy awareness. The superior mean recorded by widowed teachers is particularly noteworthy. As interpreted by researchers like Panti (2022), the unique combination of navigating personal loss and managing the complexities of sole parenthood often results in a "heightened protective instinct." This lived reality may lead widowed educators to view the Child Protection Policy not merely as a set of workplace rules, but as a vital framework for ensuring the emotional and physical safety of children in their care.

Married teachers also showed high awareness, further supporting the idea that caregiving roles outside of school enhance professional sensitivity. According to Asio and Bayucca (2021), the "parent-teacher" identity creates a dual layer of accountability; these educators apply the policy through the lens of their own experiences as parents, leading to a deeper appreciation of the protections afforded by DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012.

In contrast, while single teachers are still "Extremely Aware," their lower relative scores suggest that without the lived context of child-rearing or the sole responsibility of a household, policy awareness may remain more academic and less "internalized." This aligns with the findings of Dela Fuente (2021), who noted that while formal training provides the "what" of a policy, life experience often provides the "why." The data implies that the experience of managing a family—especially under challenging circumstances—deepens a teacher's understanding of child vulnerability and the critical necessity of protective mandates.

Table 15 Difference in the Perceived Level of CPP Awareness When Grouped by Educational Attainment

Group	Mean	SD	F-computed	p-value	Decision
Bachelor's Degree	4.7284	0.1274	2.3494 ^{ns}	0.0773	Accept
With Master's Degree Units	4.7016	0.1683			
Master's Degree	4.7911	0.1401			
With Doctoral Units	4.7863	0.1153			

Table 15 presents the difference of CPP awareness scores when compared according to civil status. According to the analysis, there is no significant difference in the perceived level of CPP awareness when grouped by educational attainment (F -value=2.3494, p -value= 0.0773). This is an encouraging finding, as it indicates that CPP awareness has been successfully mainstreamed across all levels of academic preparation among the teaching workforce in Kabugao. The absence of significant variation reinforces the notion that the school system's CPP dissemination mechanisms including school memoranda, flag ceremony announcements, and regular orientations effectively reach all teachers irrespective of their academic credentials.

The non-significant finding in Table 15 suggests that the mastery of child protection mandates is not a product of advanced academic schooling, but rather a result of systemic institutional integration. This indicates that the Department of Education's strategies for cascading DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, have successfully "mainstreamed" the policy across the entire teaching workforce in Kabugao, regardless of the teachers' postgraduate credentials.

This result is consistent with the findings of Asio and Bayucca (2021), who observed that policy awareness in public schools is driven more by mandated school-level activities—such as Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, school memoranda, and regular administrative briefings—than by formal graduate education. Because these dissemination mechanisms are provided to all teaching personnel indiscriminately, the resulting awareness level remains uniform across the faculty.

Furthermore, the data suggests that the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) serves as an effective "leveling force." According to Dela Fuente (2021), the PPST requires every licensed educator to demonstrate competence in creating safe learning environments. This professional requirement creates a standard baseline of knowledge that remains stable, whether a teacher holds a basic Bachelor's degree or has advanced to Doctoral units. The lack of a "hierarchy of knowledge" in this table is an encouraging sign for the school district, as it confirms that every teacher, regardless of their rank or degree, is equally equipped with the cognitive tools necessary to protect students.

Significant Relationship Between Perceived Level of Awareness in the Implementation of Child Protection Policy (CPP) and the Extent of Teachers Application of Disciplinary Strategies

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) was used to determine the relationship between the perceived level of CPP awareness and the extent of teachers' application of disciplinary strategies. The analysis was conducted at a 0.05 significance level.

Table 16 Spearman rank correlation between CPP awareness and disciplinary strategies

CPP Variable	Disciplinary Strategy	RS	p-value	Strength and Direction	Decision
Policy Awareness	Positive Strategies	0.017	0.8681 ^{ns}	Negligible Positive	Accept
Policy Awareness	Punitive Strategies	-0.399	0.000*	Weak Negative	Reject
Policy Awareness	Aggressive Measures	-0.599	0.000*	Moderate Negative	Reject
Policy Compliance	Positive Strategies	0.473	0.000*	Weak Positive	Reject
Policy Compliance	Punitive Strategies	-0.175	0.0817 ^{ns}	Negligible Negative	Accept
Policy Compliance	Aggressive Measures	-0.076	0.4549 ^{ns}	Negligible Negative	Accept
Teacher Self-Efficacy	Positive Strategies	0.081	0.4204 ^{ns}	Negligible Positive	Accept
Teacher Self-Efficacy	Punitive Strategies	-0.707	0.000*	Strong Negative	Reject
Teacher Self-Efficacy	Aggressive Measures	-0.690	0.000*	Moderate Negative	Reject
CPP Total	Positive Strategies	0.214	0.0323*	Negligible Positive	Reject
CPP Total	Punitive Strategies	-0.665	0.000*	Moderate Negative	Reject
CPP Total	Aggressive Measures	-0.711	0.000*	Strong Negative	Reject
CPP Total	Total Disciplinary	-0.637	0.000*	Moderate Negative	Reject

Table 16 presents the Spearman rank-order correlation (r_s) analysis which examined the relationship between the perceived level of Child Protection Policy (CPP) awareness as measured across three dimensions (Policy Awareness, Policy Compliance/Adherence, and Teacher Self-Efficacy), and the extent of teachers' application of disciplinary strategies comprising Positive Disciplinary Strategies, Reliance on Punitive Strategies, and Aggressive or Potentially Harmful Measures. Spearman's correlation was selected given the ordinal nature of Likert-scale data and the non-normal distribution of some subscales. A significance level of $\alpha=0.05$ was applied throughout the analysis.

The significant negative correlations indicate that as teachers' awareness and internalization of the Child Protection Policy increase, their reliance on punitive and aggressive disciplinary measures significantly decreases. The strong negative correlation between Self-Efficacy and Punitive/Aggressive measures is a critical finding. It suggests that when teachers feel confident in their ability to handle dilemmas (Self-Efficacy), they are less likely to resort to shouting, harsh words, or punishments. According to Panti (2022), psychological empowerment and confidence in one's professional role act as a buffer against impulsive, reactive, or aggressive disciplinary choices.

The weak positive correlation between Policy Compliance and Positive Strategies implies that teachers who perceive themselves as compliant are indeed more likely to use praise, modeling, and relationship-building. This supports the assertion by Dela Fuente (2021) that active adherence to the CPP framework naturally steers educators toward more constructive pedagogical methods.

A striking finding is the non-significant relationship between Policy Awareness and Positive Strategies. This suggests that simply "knowing" the provisions of the law (Policy Awareness) does not automatically lead a teacher to use positive discipline. This "knowledge-action gap" highlights that while knowledge is enough to stop bad behavior (as seen in the negative correlation with aggressive measures), it is not enough to start good behavior. This aligns with the findings of Casipe (2023), who noted that awareness prevents violations but only specific skill-based training fosters the use of alternative, positive strategies.

4. Conclusion

The teachers in Kabugao District I demonstrate high awareness and strong adherence to the Child Protection Policy, reflecting the successful promotion of positive discipline in schools. While constructive and student-centered disciplinary practices have become the norm, a gap between policy knowledge and actual classroom responses still exists during stressful situations. Ultimately, the findings highlight that teacher self-efficacy and commitment to policy implementation are essential in fostering effective, positive, and child-friendly classroom management.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Statement of informed consent

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and voluntarily agreed to participate. Written informed consent was secured from each respondent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

Authors' Contributions

Paula A. Gatan, designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, wrote the first draft of the manuscript and managed the literature searches. Madelyne T. Maslang, managed the analyses of the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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