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Pre-service Teachers' Awareness and Attitudes Toward Child Protection Policies

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Abstract

This study examined pre-service teachers' awareness and attitudes towards the Child Protection Policy (CPP) using a descriptive-correlational research design. The researchers surveyed 100 pre-service teachers at a state university in Laguna. Key findings revealed that gender had a significant negative correlation with CPP awareness, while the course of study showed a weak positive correlation. Civil status had mixed correlations, and major of study had weak, non-significant correlations with awareness. Regarding attitudes towards CPP, experience reading the policy and its inclusion in curricula strongly correlated with positive attitudes. However, factors like interest in seminars, school administration orientation, and practicum observations showed weak or non-significant correlations. Demographic factors had varying degrees of correlation with attitudes, with most studies showing weak, non-significant correlations. The study also highlighted the interconnectedness of child protection policies, finding positive correlations among policies safeguarding children's interests, promoting classroom discipline, reinforcing teachers' authority, and allowing teaching flexibility. These results emphasize the importance of direct engagement with the CPP and comprehensive educational interventions in shaping awareness and attitudes, while also demonstrating how various aspects of child protection policies work together to create a safer, more supportive learning environment.

Keywords

Pre-service teachers, Awareness, Attitude, Child protection policy

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, there has been a wave of varied perspectives and policies emphasizing student well-being. The move towards student-centered learning has transformed the role of teachers into facilitators rather than central figures in education. This shift signifies a departure from traditional teacher-centric methods towards more inclusive and participatory student learning experiences (Montilla et al., 2023). Child protection, which includes programs, services, procedures, and frameworks, is geared toward preventing and addressing issues like abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, and violence (Department of Education, 2012).

Despite progress, addressing challenges in child protection, particularly for victims, remains a significant obstacle (Rahman & Sarip, 2020). Educational institutions also face this challenge, acknowledging the importance of safeguarding children (Daly et al., 2016). This duty extends to parents, teachers, communities, and the government, all collaborating to establish a secure environment for children (Alfandari, 2017). Research suggests that interpretations of child protection may vary depending on different contexts, such as family, school, and community settings (Hermino, 2017). However, it's worth noting that certain discussions surrounding child protection have become politicized, complicating the issue further (Parton, 2016; Asio, 2020).

Governments are particularly attentive to ensuring child protection, as scholars such as Cossar, Brandon, and Jordan (2016) highlight a need for more awareness regarding the child protection policy process among many respondents in their study. The existing body of literature presents contradictory findings, indicating the need for further research to bridge the gap in implementing Child Protection Policies in schools and enhancing teachers' awareness levels (Casipe & Bete, 2023). This study evaluates teacher awareness, school responsiveness, and the underlying relationships and implications of implementing the Child Protection Policy. The anticipated outcomes of this research are expected to benefit teachers, school administrators, and the Department of Education by contributing to a more effective policy implementation.

The Child Protection Policy encompasses a range of measures, including policies, standards, guidelines, and procedures aimed at safeguarding children from intentional and unintentional harm. This entails a responsibility for organizations and individuals associated with them to protect every child under their care. For instance, school administrators are responsible for creating a child-friendly, gender-sensitive, safe, and conducive learning environment within schools (Maclean et al., 2016). Similarly, teachers are responsible for facilitating learning and caring for each student under their supervision. The policy provides clear guidelines for organizations and teachers to enhance the safety of the school environment for children, ensuring consistency of behavior among all educators (Alianzas et al., 2023). Graham, Phelps, Maddison, and Fitzgerald (2011) suggest that educational institutions play a crucial role in disseminating information and awareness, leveraging teachers' ability to observe, supervise, and detect changes in students' behavior and well-being. Thus, schools can significantly contribute to addressing the prevalence of child abuse by ensuring that school administrators and teachers are well-informed about child protection policies.

In Philippine society, the perspective on children often leads institutions and some authorities to overlook or even inadvertently encourage child abuse. There is often a lack of clear definitions regarding abuse, whether it be verbal, psychological, or emotional, within these institutions and among authorities (Drake et al., 2019). Additionally, there tends to be a focus on instances where children are the perpetrators of violence in schools rather than addressing violence directed towards them, particularly by educators. While significant attention is given to child abuse within families, instances of abuse within schools, despite the substantial responsibilities of school administrators, are frequently neglected or not thoroughly examined. Establishing a Child Protection Policy Committee within schools is insufficient to ensure the protection of every student. Instead, the school heads and teachers play pivotal roles in implementing this policy effectively (Treacy et al., 2020). To fulfill their responsibilities akin to those of "fathers" in families, ensuring the safety of children not only within schools but also in the community and at home, school administrators and teachers must perform their roles diligently and efficiently. Previous studies on child abuse, such as those conducted by Cervantes (2017) and Baguio (2018), have primarily focused on bullying. Cervantes (2017) revealed a low level of awareness among pupils regarding bullying, indicating a lack of knowledge about whether they are being bullied. Moreover, he found a significant correlation between teachers' awareness of bullying and students' behavior. The present study aims to build upon these previous investigations.

In parallel with previous research, this study aims to find out the awareness levels of Pre-service teachers regarding various forms of child abuse, including exploitation, violence, and discrimination. Since they are in the intern period of their study and about to enter the teaching profession, it focuses specifically on the procedural activities and protocols that Pre-service teachers should be familiar with when handling child abuse cases. Recent reports in newspapers, radio broadcasts, and social media have highlighted a disturbingly high rate of child abuse cases, some of which involve educators. Given that schools are often viewed as the second home for students, they play a crucial role in safeguarding students from abuse (Armfield, 2020). Therefore, this research seeks to assess the awareness levels of pre-service teachers regarding the Child Protection Policy. The significance of this study lies not only in its novelty but also in the potential benefits it could offer to school administrators, teachers, students, and the wider community. By understanding the awareness levels of pre-service regarding the Child Protection Policy, the education system can develop training programs to enhance their knowledge and understanding of child protection measures.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The researchers utilized the descriptive-correlational research design. The general purpose of descriptive-correlational studies is to describe the relationship between and among variables. In this study, the predicting variable is the Child protection policy, while the outcome variable is the awareness and perception of the child protection policy.

Sampling Technique

The respondents for this study are one hundred (100) randomly selected Pre-service teacher students from the College of Teacher Education in Laguna State Polytechnic University-San Pablo City Campus. These students are previously enrolled in the academic year 2023-2024.

Simple random sampling is utilized for the study's collection. This sampling approach is used in which each population participant has an equal probability as a sample. As all those prospective study participants have an equal chance of being chosen, this is the most effective sampling method. The researcher first defined the population, identified all the population participants, and then randomly selected the respondents to perform this sampling procedure.

Research Instrument

The instrument used in the study was an adaption with some modifications from the study of Dela Fuente (2021). The questionnaire has four main sections: the first is a respondent profile, the second is the respondent seminar training profile, the third part is respondent awareness of child protection policy, and the fourth is the respondent perception of child protection policy. The respondent profile includes demographic descriptions such as age, sex, course, civil status, and major. The respondent seminar/ training profile includes: reading the DepEd child Protection Policy, discussion of child protection policy in their Course, willingness to attend seminar on child protection policy orientation of child protection policy and observance of child protection policy in their practicum. The survey properly explored the respondents' awareness and perception of the child protection policy.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher asked permission to conduct a research survey at the university by sending an e-mail to the College of Teacher Education office. After signing the request letter, the researcher started to communicate with the target respondents of the study and inform them as a participant in the survey. Later, the researcher sent an online questionnaire in Google Forms through a group message to the participants with an informed consent form to indicate that their participation was voluntary and that their answers would be confidential. The researcher gave the respondents enough time to answer the survey questionnaire for accurate information. After retrieving all completed questionnaires from the respondents, the data was later classified, tabulated, statistically treated, analyzed, and interpreted.

Statistical Treatment of Data

After the researcher collected the results, the data were processed, organized, arranged, and tabulated. They were subjected to statistical analysis to address the research questions. The statistical tools utilized are frequency counts, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. It determined the degree and extent of the connection between two variables evaluated on at least an interval scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Respondents' distribution according to gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	20	20
Female	80	80
Total	100	100

The data in Table 1 shows the gender distribution of respondents in the practicum setting. Most respondents are female, comprising 80 eighty or 80% of the total, while males represent 20 twenty or 20%. This significant disparity indicates a predominance of female participants in the practicum, reflecting a trend that may indicate the gender composition within the educational field or the specific context of this practicum program. Understanding this gender distribution is important for addressing gender-specific needs or perspectives within the practicum experience.

Table 2 Respondents' distribution according to Civil Status

	Frequency	Percent
Single	89	89
Married	10	10
Separated	1	1
Total	100	100

Table 2 provides insight into the civil status of respondents participating in the practicum. The overwhelming majority of respondents are single, accounting for 89 eighty-nine or 89% of the total. Married individuals comprise 10 ten or 10% of the respondents, while those who are separated make up just 1 one or 1%. This distribution suggests that most practicum participants are likely younger individuals who have not yet married, which is typical in educational programs where students and early-career professionals are prevalent. The relatively small percentages of married and separated respondents indicate that fewer practicum participants have family commitments, which might influence their availability and flexibility in fulfilling practicum requirements. Understanding the distribution of civil status can help tailor support and resources to meet the diverse needs of practicum participants.

Table 3 Respondents' distribution according to major

Major	Frequency	Percent
Social Studies	25	25
Math	19	19
Science	9	9
Filipino	15	15
English	32	32
Total	100	100

Table 3 outlines the distribution of majors among the practicum participants. The most common major is English, 32 thirty-two or 32% of the respondents, indicating a significant interest and focus on English education within this group. Social Studies is the second most popular major, accounting for 25 twenty-five or 25% of the participants. Following that, Math is 19 nineteen or 19% of the respondents, while Filipino is 15 fifteen or 15%. Science is the least represented major, with only 9 or 9% of the participants. This distribution highlights a strong inclination towards humanities and social sciences among the practicum participants, with relatively fewer individuals specializing in the sciences. Understanding these trends can help tailor support and resources to the predominant fields of study and address any potential gaps in subject area representation within the practicum program.

Table 4 Have you read the DepEd Child Protection Policy?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	85	85
No	15	15
Total	100	100

The data indicates that a substantial majority of respondents, 85 eighty-five or (85%) have read the Department of Education (DepEd) child protection policy. This high percentage demonstrates a commendable level of awareness and familiarity with the policy among those involved in the practicum, suggesting that the majority are informed about the guidelines and measures to protect children in the educational setting. On the other hand, 15 fifteen or 15% of respondents have not read the DepEd child protection policy. This highlights a knowledge gap that could potentially impact the effective implementation of child protection measures. Ensuring all practicum participants read and understand the child protection policy is crucial for fostering a safe and protective student environment.

Table 5 Is DepEd Child Protection Policy discussed in your course?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	89	89
No	11	11
Total	100	100

Table 5 reveals that 89 of the pre-service teachers said that the Department of Education's child protection policy was discussed in their course, while 11 of the pre-service teachers said that it was not discussed in their course.

Asio (2020) and Matulac (2020) underscore schools' critical role in promptly and effectively implementing child protection policies to safeguard children. Integrating these policies into teacher education ensures educators are better prepared to create secure learning environments, thereby promoting students' overall well-being and safety in schools (Baginsky et al., 2019).

Likewise, Walsh et al. (2023) emphasize the critical need to adequately train teachers to handle child protection issues effectively during their initial education. Their study provided insights into current practices and identified areas where teacher education could better prepare educators for their child protection and safeguarding roles. Moving forward, they suggest a greater emphasis on consulting with student teachers and educators, and utilizing well-designed, rigorously evaluated programs that have proven feasible and beneficial in preparing future professionals.

Table 6 Would you like to attend a seminar/ forum on the DepEd Child Protection Policy?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	96	96
No	4	4
Total	100	100

Table 6 shows that 96 of the respondents said that they are willing to attend a seminar or forum regarding DepEd Child Protection Policy. In contrast, only four 4 said they will not attend the forum seminar regarding child protection policy. This overwhelming majority demonstrates a significant level of engagement and readiness among the participants to learn more about child protection policies, highlighting the importance and relevance of this topic within the educational community.

Bayuca (2020) found out that most teachers are aware of the Child Protection Policy, but its implementation in schools is not rigid (Asio 2020). Teachers play a vital role in preventing and detecting child abuse and bullying early on.

Table 7 Did the school administration where you are doing your practicum orient you about the DepEd child protection policy?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	84	84
No	16	16
Total	100	100

Table 7 reveals that 84% reported that the school administration at their practicum site provided orientation about the Department of Education (DepEd) child protection policy. This suggests that most schools are diligent in ensuring that their staff and student-teachers are informed about important child protection guidelines, which are crucial for the safety and well-being of students.

However, 16% of respondents indicated that they did not receive such orientation. This indicates that some schools may not adequately prioritize the communication and implementation of child protection policies, potentially leaving gaps in awareness and preparedness among the school personnel. Ensuring that all practicum participants receive proper child protection orientation is essential to maintaining a safe, educational environment. According to Matulac et al. (2020) in their study "Implementation of Child Protection Policy in a Public School" state that top-level management and teachers are the vanguards of the school, possessing a comprehensive understanding of child protection in their interactions with children and guardians. They have firsthand experience handling cases and are equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively address child protection concerns. Furthermore, the study highlights that non-teaching personnel require ongoing training for their professional development to fulfill their roles better.

Table 8 Have you observed a child protection policy being implemented in the school that you make your practicum?

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	84	84
No	4	4
Not sure	12	12
Total	100	100

Table 8 shows that 84% of respondents agreed, meaning that the vast majority (84 out of 100) have observed a child protection policy being implemented at their practicum school. This high percentage indicates a strong presence of child protection measures, suggesting that schools are proactive in safeguarding children.

12% of respondents were unsure, indicating that a notable number are uncertain about the presence of a child protection policy. This might suggest that, in some cases, the policy is not clearly communicated or enforced, leading to ambiguity among staff and students.

Furthermore, 4% said no, meaning a small minority of respondents have not observed any child protection policy being implemented. This indicates that a few schools may not have visible or effective child protection policies, which could be a concern for the safety and well-being of children in those institutions.

These findings align with DepEd Order No. 40, which establishes policies and guidelines to protect children in all schools from abuse, violence, exploitation, and discrimination. The order defines key terms related to child protection such as child abuse, discrimination, exploitation, violence, bullying, and positive discipline.

Similarly, Cervancia et al. (2019) found that the DepEd Child Protection Policy is firmly established in both private and public schools. This policy aims to safeguard pupils and students from all forms of violence inflicted by adults, persons in authority, as well as their peers, including bullying.

Asio (2020) found a moderate and direct relationship between teachers' awareness of child protection policies and the responsiveness of schools to these policies. This is evident given the Department's promotion of the program to all schools. Consequently, teachers' awareness of the policy leads to school compliance.

Table 9 Awareness on Child Protection Policy

	Mean	Verbal interpretation
1. Is embodied in DepEd Order No. 40 s. 2012 to protect children in school from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and other conditions prejudicial to their development.	4.37	Aware
2. Is in pursuance with the provision of the 1987 Constitution for the state to defend the rights of children to assistance.	4.18	Aware
3. Is concurred from the Convention on the Rights of the Child.	4.14	Aware
4. Is adopted by DepEd to provide special protection to children who are gravely threatened or endangered by circumstances which affects their normal development.	4.29	Aware
5. Ensures that school's paramount consideration in all actions and decisions shall be the best of the child	4.36	Aware
6. Considers teachers and learning facilitators as substitute parents who are expected to discharge their functions and duties as such.	4.33	Aware
7. Policy of zero tolerance for any act of child abuse, exploitation, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse.	4.41	Aware
8. Defines violence against children committed in school.	4.29	Aware
9. Promotes positive and non-violent discipline of children.	4.55	Highly aware
10. Specifies the duties and responsibilities of the Central, Regional, Division, District and School Offices as well as the personnel in the Department.	4.21	Aware
11. Defines the duties and responsibilities of Pupils, students and learners.	4.31	Aware
12. Provides that all public and private elementary and secondary schools shall establish Child Protection Policy.	4.50	Aware
13. Outlines measures to address child abuse, exploitation, violence, discrimination, bullying and other acts of abuse.	4.36	Aware
14. Defines the rules and procedures in handling child abuse, exploitation, violence and discrimination cases.	4.39	Aware
15. Provides that private schools shall also be responsible to promulgate a school Child Protection Policy.	4.30	Aware
Overall mean	4.33	Aware

Legend: 1.00-1.49 = Not aware; 1.51-2.50 = Slightly Aware; 2.51-3.50 = Moderately Aware; 3.51-4.50 = aware; 4.51-5.00 = Highly Aware

The data in Table 9 presents teachers' awareness level regarding the Child Protection Policy as embodied in DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012. The overall mean score is 4.33, indicating that teachers are generally "aware" of the policy. The

statement receiving the highest mean score of 4.55, interpreted as "highly aware," is that the policy promotes positive and non-violent discipline of children. Other statements with high awareness scores include the provision that all public and private elementary and secondary schools shall establish a Child Protection Policy (mean of 4.50) and the policy's zero tolerance for any act of child abuse, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse (mean of 4.41). Statements related to the legal and procedural aspects of the policy, such as its embodiment in DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, to protect children in school from all forms of neglect and abuse, and its alignment with the 1987 Constitution to defend children's rights, received mean scores of 4.37 and 4.18, respectively. Awareness of the policy's definition of violence against children in school and the specific duties and responsibilities of various educational offices and personnel also scored high, with means of 4.29 and 4.21.

The lowest mean score was 4.14 for the statement that the policy concurred with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, still interpreted as "aware." This suggests that while teachers are generally knowledgeable about the policy's specifics and legal framework, there may be slightly less familiarity with its international underpinnings. Overall, the data indicates a strong awareness among teachers about the various facets of the Child Protection Policy.

The finding of the study echoed the statement of Education Secretary Br. Armin Luistro FSC, asserted that RA 10627 had strengthened DepEd's existing Child Protection Policy (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012), which prioritizes the well-being of children. He noted that the act has furthered the department's ongoing efforts to create safe and nurturing learner-centered environments (DepEd, 2014).

Table 10 Attitude on Child protection Policy

	Mean	Verbal interpretation
1. Safeguards the interest of the child.	4.50	Favorable
2. Safeguards the interest of the teacher	4.42	Favorable
3. Promotes better discipline inside the classroom.	4.63	Highly Favorable
4. Give the teacher full authority to devise learning styles that cater to pupil's needs.	4.51	Highly Favorable
5. Reinforces the authority of teachers as substitute parents of students in the class.	4.56	Highly Favorable
6. Gives the teacher avenue to enjoy the profession.	4.56	Highly Favorable
7. Encourages discipline inside the classroom	4.64	Highly Favorable
8. Gives the confidence that school is safe.	4.70	Highly Favorable
9. Protects the teacher as the substitute parent.	4.61	Highly Favorable
10. Gives the teacher the freedom to exercise the function and duty as substitute parent.	4.54	Highly Favorable
11. Treats the pupil and the teacher evenly.	4.55	Highly Favorable
12. Motivates the teacher to be more efficient.	4.63	Highly Favorable
13. Boosts the morale of the teachers.	4.67	Highly Favorable
14. Strengthens the commitment of teachers.	4.66	Highly Favorable
15. Makes the teacher proud of the profession.	4.71	Highly Favorable
Overall mean	4.59	Highly Favorable

Legend: 1.00-1.49 = Not Favorable; 1.51-2.50 = Slightly Favorable; 2.51-3.50 = Moderately Favorable; 3.51-4.50 = Favorable; 4.51-5.00 = Highly Favorable

Table 10 displays the attitude of teachers in the child protection policy. As seen, statement 15 "Makes the teacher proud of the profession". got the highest mean score, which was 4.71. The score corresponds to "highly favorable" in the Likert Scale. However, statement 2 "Safeguards the interest of the teacher". got the lowest mean score which is 4.42. This is parallel to the Likert Scale interpretation of "favorable". The overall weighted mean pegged at 4.59, which matches to "Highly Favorable" scale. The table further shows that pre-service teachers have a highly favorable attitude on child protection policy.

Despite generally positive attitudes, pre-teachers feel that the policy interferes with their interests, restricts their freedom to act as surrogate parents, and reduces opportunities to enjoy their career. This suggests a need for clearer and more detailed standards and guidelines to increase pre-teacher awareness and foster a more favorable attitude towards the policy. Proper policy interpretation is essential to help pre-teachers understand their role in its implementation. The importance of studying child-related policies is underscored by growing global awareness of the critical need to protect youth from exploitation and neglect, ensuring they grow up in secure and safe environments (Roche, 2018; Carada et al., 2022).

Table 11 Correlation Demography and Awareness

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Gender	0.042	0.020	0.079	0.053	0.037	-0.013	0.006	-0.037	0.000	0.114	-0.104	.214*	0.038	0.027	-0.065
Civil status	-0.049	0.105	0.010	0.150	0.094	0.111	0.076	0.159	0.093	0.107	0.040	0.161	0.025	0.088	0.051
COURSE	-0.012	0.015	0.164	0.111	0.091	0.079	0.073	0.040	0.089	0.176	0.126	0.116	0.126	0.031	0.193
MOJOR	-0.035	-0.095	0.046	-0.072	-0.005	0.030	0.015	-0.061	-0.055	0.013	-0.075	-0.071	0.003	-0.065	-0.064

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 11 shows the correlation matrix between the Demographic profile variables and awareness of the teacher on child protection policy. There seems to be a statistically significant negative correlation between gender and pre-service awareness of child protection policy. This suggests that there might be differences in awareness levels between genders, though the correlation is quite weak. While civil status has a mixed correlation, it implies that it may have some minor influence on awareness, but it's not a significant factor overall. This suggests that whether a person is single, married, or in another status doesn't strongly affect their awareness of child protection policy. On the profile course, the weak positive correlation suggests that individuals in certain courses may have slightly higher levels of awareness than others. This could be due to the nature of the curriculum or specific topics covered in those courses. The profile major has a generally weak and non-significant correlation, indicating that the study major might not significantly influence pre-service awareness of child protection policy. This suggests that regardless of major, students may have similar levels of awareness.

Table 12 Correlation Training/ Seminar Demography and Awareness

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
5	-.321**	-.281**	-.384**	-.340**	-.257**	-.359**	-.330**	-.256*	-.318**	-.461**	-.449**	-.300**	-.373**	-.369**	-.273**
6	-.233*	-0.124	-.237*	-.382**	-.236*	-.232*	-.351**	-.246*	-.354**	-.324**	-.399**	-.251*	-.285**	-.312**	-0.096
7	-0.091	0.019	0.025	-0.010	-0.091	-0.153	-0.174	-0.074	-0.084	0.009	-0.013	-0.073	-0.029	-0.107	-0.080
8	0.003	-.209*	-.254*	-.213*	-0.060	-0.080	-0.020	-0.056	-0.068	-0.189	-.268**	0.039	-0.166	-0.118	-0.170
9	-.223*	-0.158	0.001	-0.161	-0.169	-.199*	-0.164	-0.058	-0.112	-0.080	0.005	-.279**	-0.059	-0.180	-0.027

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 12 shows the correlation matrix between the Training /seminar Demographic profile variables and the teacher's attitude on child protection policy. Profile 5 "Experience of Reading DepEd Child Protection Policy" have a strong negative correlation, indicating that reading the policy is strongly associated with higher levels of awareness. This emphasizes the importance of directly engaging with the policy document to enhance understanding and awareness. Profile 6 "Inclusion of DepEd Child Protection Policy in Course Curriculum," has a moderately strong negative correlation and highlights the importance of integrating the policy into the course curriculum. When discussed in courses, awareness levels tend to be higher, indicating the effectiveness of educational interventions. Profile 7 "Interest in Attending Seminars/Forums on DepEd Child Protection Policy" has a weak and non-significant correlation, suggesting that interest alone may not significantly influence awareness levels. This implies that other factors, such as direct engagement with the policy, maybe more impactful in enhancing awareness. Profile 8 "Orientation by School Administration on DepEd Child Protection Policy" has a weak negative correlation suggesting that while orientation by school administration may influence awareness, it's not a strong factor. This indicates that additional efforts may be needed to communicate and reinforce policy awareness effectively. Profile 9 "Observation of Child Protection Policy Implementation during Practicum" has a weak negative correlation, implying that those who have observed policy implementation may have slightly lower awareness levels. This could indicate a discrepancy between theoretical knowledge and practical application, highlighting the need for comprehensive training and support during practicum experiences.

Teachers play a crucial role in child protection, encompassing the detection and reporting of potential child abuse cases, collaborating within multidisciplinary teams, and providing continuous support and monitoring for abused children (Devaney & Mc Gregor, 2016). Effective execution of these responsibilities hinges on teachers possessing the necessary skills. Therefore, comprehensive in-service training in child protection is essential. It highlights the importance of child protection issues and cultivates the requisite skills among teachers (Campbell & Wigglesworth, 2020).

Table 13 Correlation Demography and Attitude

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Gender	0.107	0.106	.306**	0.186	0.157	.232*	0.179	0.164	0.141	0.058	0.116	-0.014	0.090	0.044	0.050
Civil status	.242*	.245*	0.178	.197*	0.181	.223*	0.182	0.167	0.177	.200*	0.176	0.175	0.168	0.169	0.162
COURSE	.205*	.216*	0.192	0.104	0.046	.215*	0.151	.207*	0.169	.205*	.248*	0.136	0.171	0.088	0.153
MOJOR	-0.035	-0.032	0.041	-0.072	-0.135	0.041	-0.004	-0.061	0.065	-0.011	0.168	-0.054	0.040	-0.105	-0.001

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 13 show that gender have a weak positive correlation between gender and attitudes toward the child protection policy. This suggests that there might be slight differences in attitudes between genders, but the relationship is not strong. The profile of civil status shows a generally weak to moderately strong positive correlation between civil status and attitudes towards child protection policy. This indicates that civil status may influence attitudes, with certain statuses associated with more positive attitudes. The profile course reveals weak to moderately strong positive correlations between the course of study and attitudes toward the child protection policy. This suggests that individuals in certain courses may have more positive attitudes towards the policy than others. The correlations between majors and attitudes toward the child protection policy are generally weak and not statistically significant. This implies that the major of the study might not significantly influence attitudes towards the policy.

The finding is similar to the finding of Adewale (2006) in his study entitled Assessment of Child Protection Policy Awareness in Secondary Schools. It found that demographic profiles were not correlated with attitude with child protection policy.

Table 14 Correlation Seminar Training Demography and Attitude

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
5	-.300**	-.255*	-.377**	-.426**	-.310**	-.352**	-.275**	-.299**	-.268**	-.255*	-.332**	-.291**	-.339**	-.325**	-.354**
6	-.205*	-0.025	-.270**	-.347**	-.199*	-0.103	-0.192	-.247*	-.202*	-0.079	-0.150	-.220*	-.210*	-.200*	-.360**
7	0.000	0.020	-0.038	-0.003	-0.018	-0.018	-0.119	-0.151	-0.030	-0.010	-0.012	-0.108	-0.052	-0.123	-0.155
8	-0.078	0.044	-0.003	-0.006	0.042	-0.039	0.031	0.036	-0.064	0.048	-0.120	-0.041	-0.112	-0.062	-0.061
9	-0.086	-0.071	-0.121	-0.092	-0.195	-0.128	-0.110	-0.163	-0.102	-0.022	-0.111	-0.097	-0.153	-0.165	-0.146

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 14 Correlation Seminar Training Demography and Attitude shows that profile 5 "Experience of Reading DepEd Child Protection Policy" strongly correlates with reading the DepEd Child Protection Policy and attitudes towards it. This indicates that those who have read the policy tend to have more positive attitudes towards it. Profile 6 "Inclusion of DepEd Child Protection Policy in Course Curriculum" have a moderately strong negative correlation between the inclusion of the DepEd Child Protection Policy in the course curriculum and attitudes towards it. This suggests that when the policy is discussed in courses, attitudes towards it tend to be more positive. Profile 7 "Interest in Attending Seminars/Forums on DepEd Child Protection Policy", The correlations between interest in attending seminars/forums and attitudes towards the child protection policy are generally weak and not statistically significant. This suggests that interest alone may not significantly influence attitudes towards the policy. Profile 8 "Orientation by School Administration on DepEd Child Protection Policy" The correlations between orientation and attitudes towards the child protection policy are generally weak and not statistically significant. This implies that while orientation may have some influence, it's not a strong factor in shaping attitudes. Profile 9 "Observation of Child Protection Policy Implementation during Practicum" The correlations between observing policy implementation during practicum and attitudes towards the child protection policy are generally weak and not statistically significant. This suggests that practical experiences may not strongly influence attitudes towards the policy.

While some education programs make efforts to integrate training on child abuse and protection, Brown (2008) suggests that many universities may exhibit similar deficiencies as those identified in this study. These deficiencies include inadequate internal procedures and strategic planning, which ultimately fail to sufficiently equip students to address issues related to child abuse and protection. Additionally, the study's findings highlight that although pre-service teachers recognize the importance of being knowledgeable and skilled in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect, and despite some coverage of this topic across various courses, fewer than half of the students believe their undergraduate teacher education adequately prepares them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to detect or respond to such issues.

Table 15 Correlation Pre-service Awareness and Attitude

0	1	2.	3	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11	12	13	14.	15.
1	.438**	.366**	.337**	.380**	.401**	.454**	.382**	.436**	.329**	.308**	-.223*	.330**	.366**	.433**	.412**
2	.410**	.332**	.272**	.388**	.467**	.369**	.320**	.352**	.367**	.322**	-0.158	.358**	.313**	.404**	.371**
3	.291**	.312**	.245*	.370**	.426**	.392**	.237*	.227*	.371**	.268**	0.001	.271**	.334**	.312**	.338**
4	.478**	.217*	.280**	.456**	.453**	.277**	.288**	.361**	.241*	.216*	-0.161	.323**	.257**	.308**	.357**
5	.407**	.292**	.253*	.348**	.442**	.442**	.350**	.465**	.266**	.343**	-0.169	.369**	.390**	.423**	.419**
6	.488**	.356**	.316**	.464**	.493**	.338**	.401**	.380**	.378**	.350**	-.199*	.418**	.347**	.402**	.439**
7	.488**	.205*	.334**	.315**	.290**	.309**	.341**	.473**	.241*	.229*	-0.164	.399**	.301**	.377**	.424**
8	.418**	.416**	.243*	.466**	.461**	.442**	.435**	.362**	.372**	.340**	-0.058	.395**	.385**	.436**	.461**
9	.541**	.290**	.360**	.432**	.437**	.396**	.427**	.509**	.303**	.288**	-0.112	.430**	.376**	.438**	.477**
10	.412**	.504**	.368**	.548**	.590**	.525**	.446**	.452**	.527**	.483**	-0.080	.467**	.474**	.497**	.523**
11	.477**	.409**	.319**	.504**	.535**	.453**	.411**	.437**	.470**	.397**	0.005	.527**	.482**	.523**	.543**
12	.531**	.445**	.519**	.520**	.599**	.470**	.575**	.634**	.449**	.403**	-.279**	.489**	.441**	.482**	.531**
13	.384**	.397**	.334**	.414**	.476**	.476**	.400**	.501**	.395**	.370**	-0.059	.435**	.460**	.474**	.517**
14	.526**	.461**	.351**	.499**	.544**	.484**	.500**	.522**	.488**	.411**	-0.180	.513**	.461**	.555**	.516**
15	.409**	.412**	.243*	.422**	.549**	.530**	.384**	.449**	.361**	.397**	-0.027	.402**	.390**	.462**	.424**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 15 reveals that many factors related to child protection policies are positively correlated, suggesting that they tend to move in the same direction. For instance, policies aimed at safeguarding children's interests positively correlate with policies promoting better classroom discipline.

Likewise, several factors related to the impact on teachers also show positive correlations. For example, policies that reinforce the authority of teachers as substitute parents in the classroom are positively correlated with policies that give teachers full authority to devise learning styles catering to pupils' needs (Al-Qaysi, 2018).

Overall, the correlation matrix provides insight into how child protection policies interrelate and their potential implications for both children and teachers. It suggests that comprehensive policies can benefit both groups by creating a safer and more supportive learning environment.

The findings did not agree with Adewal (2023) it revealed that many teachers were not fully informed about the details of the child protection policy. This lack of sufficient policy knowledge stems from various reasons, such as the inadequate distribution of the policy document to all teachers. Consequently, many teachers depend solely on the information posted around the schools.

Additionally, he discovered that schools have not fully utilized child protection policy awareness strategies to enhance teachers' understanding. The study indicated that school management have not sufficiently explored various implementation methods to effectively increase awareness of the child protection policy within their schools.

In the related study Asio et al. (2023) found out that Teachers are aware of the Child Protection Policy as mandated by the Department of Education. Schools are also implementing this policy as directed by the Department. Notably, there is a significant difference in teachers' awareness of the policy when grouped according to their years of service. Similarly, the responsiveness of schools to the policy varies significantly when considering the school and the teachers' years of service. Furthermore, there is a moderate and direct relationship between teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy and the school's responsiveness in implementing it.

CONCLUSION

The correlation analyses on Child Protection Policy (CPP) awareness and attitudes among teachers revealed several key insights. Regarding awareness, gender showed a significant negative correlation with pre-service awareness, while the course of study had a weak positive correlation, indicating slightly higher awareness in certain disciplines. Civil status had mixed correlations, suggesting minor influence, and major of study had weak, non-significant correlations, implying similar awareness levels across majors. In terms of attitudes towards CPP, experience reading the DepEd CPP and its inclusion in course curricula strongly correlated with positive attitudes. However, interest in attending seminars, orientation by school administration, and observation during practicum showed weak or non-significant correlations. Demographic factors such as gender, civil status, and course of study showed varying degrees of positive correlations with attitudes, while the major of study had weak, non-significant correlations. The analysis also highlighted the interconnectedness of various aspects of child protection policies, with positive correlations found among policies safeguarding children's interests, promoting better classroom discipline, reinforcing teachers' authority as surrogate parents, and granting flexibility in teaching methods. These findings emphasize the importance of direct engagement with the CPP document and comprehensive educational interventions in shaping awareness and attitudes, while also underscoring the interconnected nature of child protection policies in fostering a safer and more supportive learning environment.

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