



Implementation of Child Protection Policy and Legal Literacy Among Teachers and School Administrators in Selected Public Schools in Quezon City

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Abstract

Child protection is a fundamental responsibility of schools, requiring not only the implementation of established policies but also adequate legal literacy among education personnel. This study examined the implementation of the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy (CPP) and the legal literacy of teachers and school administrators in selected public secondary schools in Quezon City. It also investigated the relationship between CPP implementation and legal literacy. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. Participants consisted of 128 purposively selected respondents from ten public high schools in Congressional District 5, Schools Division Office of Quezon City, including 97 teachers and 31 school administrators. Data were collected through a researcher-developed questionnaire adapted from the Child Protection Policy implementation checklist. Frequency distributions, percentages, weighted means, and Pearson correlation analysis were used to analyze the data. Findings showed that both teachers ($M = 4.42$) and administrators ($M = 4.30$) perceived CPP implementation as highly implemented. Legal literacy was also rated highly literate, with composite means of 4.22 for teachers and 4.36 for administrators. Legal terminologies and relevant laws obtained the highest ratings, while related penalties and the application of legal principles received comparatively lower ratings. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between CPP implementation and legal literacy among teachers ($r = .713, p < .001$), administrators ($r = .508, p = .004$), and the combined sample ($r = .680, p < .001$). The findings indicate that stronger perceived legal literacy is associated with stronger perceived implementation of the Child Protection Policy. While respondents demonstrated substantial awareness of child protection laws, variation in ratings suggests the need to strengthen the practical application of legal knowledge and case-handling procedures. Effective child protection depends not only on individual competence but also on organizational conditions that support policy implementation. The study highlights the interconnected nature of legal literacy and CPP implementation in promoting safe, rights-based, and responsive school environments.

Keywords: child protection policy, legal literacy, teachers, school administrators, policy implementation, public secondary schools.



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INTRODUCTION

Schools are expected to be places where children can learn, participate, develop relationships, and explore their abilities without fear of abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, or other forms of harm. The protection of learners is therefore not a secondary administrative concern; it is a central condition for meaningful education.

In the Philippine educational context, the Department of Education (DepEd) Child

Protection Policy, issued through DepEd Order No. 40, series of 2012, provides an important policy framework for protecting children in schools and in school-related activities. The policy addresses abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of maltreatment. It also establishes expectations for prevention, reporting, response, and the handling of child-protection concerns. The policy is not limited to responding after an incident occurs. The policy operates within a wider rights-based framework. Article XV, Section 3(2) of the 1987 Philippine Constitution

recognizes the State's duty to defend the right of children to assistance and special protection from neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation, and other conditions prejudicial to their development. Article XIV, Section 3(2) also directs educational institutions to inculcate respect for human rights and other ethical and civic values. These constitutional commitments reinforce the idea that child protection and education are connected responsibilities.

Teachers occupy a particularly important position in this framework because they interact with learners frequently and make decisions that directly affect classroom safety, discipline, participation, and well-being. They may be the first adults to notice a change in a learner's behavior, observe possible signs of bullying, receive a disclosure, or encounter a conflict that requires a careful response. Their actions can help a learner access support, or, if handled improperly, can intensify distress and discourage future reporting.

Legal literacy in education refers to the ability to understand relevant legal and policy concepts and apply that understanding appropriately in professional practice. In the context of child protection, legal literacy includes familiarity with the terminology used in policies, awareness of rights and responsibilities, knowledge of procedures for responding to concerns, and an understanding of the possible consequences attached to violations. Legal literacy should not be reduced to memorizing legal terms or penalties.

The need for legal literacy is especially evident in situations involving learner discipline. Teachers must maintain order and support learning, but disciplinary decisions must remain consistent with learners' rights and applicable policies. Practices that are intended to correct behavior can become harmful when they involve humiliation, threats, physical punishment, discriminatory treatment, public disclosure of sensitive information, or other inappropriate responses.

School administrators also have essential responsibilities. They help establish institutional procedures, clarify roles, provide resources, coordinate response mechanisms, monitor implementation, and support staff members who must respond to difficult situations. Administrators are expected to translate policy requirements into workable school systems. However, knowledge alone does not guarantee effective implementation.

Prior studies in the Philippines have examined teachers' awareness of child protection policies, school responsiveness, and the implementation of child protection measures. For example, Asio et al. (2020) found that teachers generally demonstrated awareness of child protection policies and that such awareness was significantly associated with school responsiveness to policy implementation. Similarly, Esmillaren et al. (2024) reported a positive relationship between teachers' awareness of the Child Protection Policy and schools' responsiveness, underscoring the importance of policy knowledge in promoting child-safe educational environments. Recent studies have likewise shown that higher levels of awareness are associated with stronger implementation of child protection measures in schools (Tisara, 2025; Galvez & Villocino, 2025).

Related scholarship has also examined educators' legal literacy and the legal issues encountered in professional practice. Sanchez-Danday and Danday (2019) found that teachers in Philippine state universities exhibited relatively low levels of legal literacy regarding educational laws and jurisprudence, highlighting the need for continuing legal education among educators. Likewise, Abestano (2024) reported limited knowledge of Philippine educational laws among in-service teachers and recommended strengthening legal literacy through professional development initiatives. These studies suggest that both policy awareness and legal literacy are important dimensions of educational governance and professional practice.

Research Gap. Despite these contributions, existing studies have generally examined child protection policy implementation and legal literacy as separate areas of inquiry. There remains limited empirical evidence on whether teachers' and school administrators' assessments of child protection policy implementation are associated with their assessments of legal literacy within the same school context. Furthermore, evidence is needed to identify which dimensions of child protection implementation and legal literacy are perceived as stronger or weaker by teachers and school administrators. Addressing these gaps may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how legal knowledge and policy implementation interact within basic education institutions.

The present study addresses this local empirical gap by examining child-protection policy implementation and legal literacy together among 97 teachers and 31 administrators in ten selected public high schools in Congressional District 5 of the Schools Division Office of Quezon City. Its contribution is contextual rather than nationally representative: it provides a joint profile of the two variables, compares teacher and administrator assessments, and examines reported associations. Because the study uses purposive sampling and self-reported ratings, its results are interpreted as evidence about the participating respondents' assessments, not as independent proof that every school procedure was consistently implemented. Accordingly, the study sought to determine the child-protection policy implementation and legal literacy and test the relationship between these variables.

The central concern of the present study extends beyond determining whether the policy is perceived as implemented. It also seeks to examine how implementation is interpreted, which dimensions of legal literacy are perceived as strongest or weakest, whether the association between legal literacy and policy implementation varies between teachers and school administrators, and which

organizational conditions may influence implementation practices.

Theoretical Framework. According to Ryan and Deci (2017), Self-Determination Theory (SDT) serves as a theoretical foundation that emphasizes the psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. For this study, competence is the most direct connection: teachers and administrators need sufficient knowledge and practical confidence to interpret child-protection requirements and respond appropriately. Relatedness is relevant to coordinated work among teachers, school leaders, families, and referral partners. Autonomy should be discussed cautiously because child-protection decisions are constrained by law and policy; it does not mean discretion to disregard mandatory procedures. SDT provides a lens for designing professional learning that supports staff competence and collaborative practice. It does not, by itself, establish that higher legal-literacy scores cause stronger policy implementation. Descriptive-correlational design can test whether the measured variables are associated, but it cannot establish causal direction.

The discussion is guided by several linked questions. First, what do the reported implementation ratings suggest about the institutional status of child protection in the participating schools? Second, what does the profile of legal-literacy ratings indicate about areas of confidence and areas requiring reinforcement? Third, how should the reported correlation among teachers be interpreted alongside the non-significant result reported for administrators?

The discussion is important for school improvement because child protection depends on both individual competence and institutional capacity. Teachers need accurate, practical knowledge, but they also need time to access guidance and complete required actions. Administrators need to understand the policy, but they must also ensure that the school's

procedures are usable and that staff members know where to seek assistance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Child Protection Policy and the Legal Foundations of Child Protection in Schools. Child protection in educational institutions is anchored on the responsibility of the State and schools to safeguard learners from abuse, violence, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination. In the Philippines, Article XV, Section 3(2) of the 1987 Constitution affirms the State's duty to protect children from conditions detrimental to their development, providing the legal basis for child-protection measures in schools. In support of this mandate, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, or the Child Protection Policy (CPP), which establishes guidelines for protecting learners and addressing abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and related concerns within the school environment. The CPP serves as a key framework for promoting safe, secure, and learner-centered educational settings.

The effectiveness of the CPP, however, depends not only on the existence of formal regulations but also on the extent to which school personnel understand and apply its provisions. Bayuca (2020) emphasized that child-protection measures contribute to safe learning environments and found that teachers generally demonstrated adequate knowledge of CPP requirements. Nonetheless, lower levels of awareness were observed regarding the specific DepEd issuance and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), indicating that familiarity with child-protection principles does not always translate into knowledge of their legal foundations. Similarly, the DepEd Year-End Report (2021) highlighted initiatives supporting learners' rights to education, participation, non-discrimination, identity, and protection from violence. These findings suggest that effective CPP implementation requires not only policy adoption but also legal literacy, clear procedures, and sustained institutional support among school personnel.

Child Protection Policy Implementation and Continuing Challenges. Child protection in educational institutions is grounded in the responsibility of the State and schools to safeguard learners from abuse, violence, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination. In the Philippines, Article XV, Section 3(2) of the 1987 Constitution recognizes the State's duty to protect children from conditions detrimental to their development and provides the legal foundation for child-protection measures in schools. Consistent with this mandate, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, or the Child Protection Policy (CPP), which serves as a framework for preventing and addressing abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and related concerns. The policy reinforces efforts to establish safe, inclusive, and learner-centered school environments where children's rights and welfare are protected.

The effectiveness of the CPP depends not only on its formal adoption but also on the extent to which school personnel understand and implement its provisions. Bayuca (2020) found that teachers generally demonstrated adequate knowledge of child-protection requirements and recognized their importance in promoting safe learning environments. However, lower levels of awareness were reported regarding the specific DepEd issuance and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), suggesting that familiarity with child-protection principles does not always correspond to knowledge of their legal foundations. Likewise, the DepEd Year-End Report (2021) highlighted initiatives that promote learners' rights to education, participation, non-discrimination, identity, and protection from violence. These findings indicate that effective implementation requires legal literacy, clear procedures, and sustained institutional support to ensure that policy provisions are consistently translated into practice.

Legal Literacy of Teachers and School Administrators. Legal literacy is essential because teachers and school administrators make professional decisions within a

framework of legal rights, duties, and institutional policies. In the context of child protection, it includes understanding relevant laws and issuances, recognizing learners' rights, interpreting legal principles in school situations, and knowing when concerns should be referred to appropriate authorities. Decker (2014) emphasized that educators must understand how law affects their professional responsibilities, noting that inadequate legal preparation often results in uncertainty when legal issues arise. Similarly, Kutsyuruba et al. (2019) found that school-law and policy courses helped teacher candidates develop an understanding of appropriate professional conduct and legal issues encountered in practice. Their findings further suggest that exposure to realistic legal situations enhances awareness of the relevance of law to professional responsibilities. These studies indicate that legal literacy extends beyond knowledge of statutes and terminology to the capacity to recognize legal implications and respond appropriately in educational settings.

The importance of legal preparation is also reflected in children's rights education. Jerome et al. (2015) emphasized teacher training in promoting understanding of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), while noting variations in how jurisdictions incorporate children's rights into teacher education. Their discussion suggests that the existence of legal frameworks alone does not guarantee adequate educator preparation. Consequently, professional development must explicitly address the rights and obligations associated with child protection. Likewise, Glouchkow, Weegar, and Romano (2023) highlighted educators' responsibilities in detecting and reporting child maltreatment, emphasizing the need for adequate knowledge and decision-making skills when responding to suspected abuse or neglect, whereas State Government of Victoria (2022) underscored the importance of familiarity with child-safety policies, codes of conduct, and risk-assessment procedures. Together, these sources emphasize that legal literacy requires both individual competence and institutional support through accessible

policies and clear procedures. Together, these sources emphasize that legal literacy requires both individual competence and institutional support through accessible policies and clear procedures.

Wagner (2017) proposed law-related education as a model for strengthening educators' understanding of school law through professional learning and practical application. This view aligns with Kutsyuruba et al. (2019), who emphasized connecting legal concepts with authentic professional situations. However, the literature suggests that legal literacy develops across multiple dimensions. Bayuca (2020) reported lower knowledge levels regarding the specific Child Protection Policy (CPP) issuance and the CRC despite generally adequate awareness of child-protection requirements. These findings indicate that legal literacy encompasses familiarity with legal terminology, knowledge of relevant laws, understanding of legal principles, and the ability to apply them effectively in school practice.

The Relationship Between Legal Literacy and Child Protection Policy Implementation. The relationship between legal literacy and Child Protection Policy (CPP) implementation is grounded in the premise that school personnel must understand the laws, policies, and responsibilities they are expected to enforce. When teachers and administrators possess adequate legal knowledge, they are better equipped to identify child-protection concerns, follow appropriate reporting and referral procedures, and uphold learners' rights. However, legal literacy alone does not automatically ensure effective implementation, as organizational and institutional factors may influence compliance with policy requirements. Asio et al. (2020) reported a relationship between teachers' awareness of child-safety policies and perceived school implementation, suggesting that awareness and implementation may be associated. Bayuca (2020) and Dardo and Vistal (2019) provide complementary evidence supporting this perspective. Bayuca found that teachers may demonstrate understanding of several CPP requirements

while remaining less familiar with specific policy instruments, whereas Dardo and Vistal noted that partial understanding may coexist with limitations in the time and resources available for disseminating child-protection information. Collectively, these studies suggest that implementation depends not only on knowledge but also on opportunities and conditions that support its application. The literature therefore provides a basis for examining whether higher legal literacy is associated with stronger CPP implementation while recognizing that school leadership, resource availability, procedural clarity, professional collaboration, and workload may also shape this relationship (Asio et al., 2020; Bayuca, 2020; Dardo & Vistal, 2019).

Organizational Support, Professional Development, and Policy Implementation. The literature identifies professional development and institutional support as important factors in strengthening child protection efforts in schools. Wagner (2017) discussed collaborative law-related education as a means of enhancing educators' understanding of legal requirements, while Kutsyuruba et al. (2019) emphasized the value of learning school law before and during professional practice, particularly through realistic situations involving legal issues. These studies suggest that professional development is most effective when legal concepts are linked to the decisions educators encounter in their daily responsibilities. Similarly, Zamora (2021) highlighted the importance of school leadership, effective communication, knowledge sharing, and collaboration in Child Protection Policy (CPP) implementation, noting that administrators who understand and clearly communicate policy requirements can better support school personnel. This perspective complements the findings of Dardo and Vistal (2019), who identified limited time and resources as barriers to information dissemination, and aligns with the observations of Asio et al. (2020) regarding variations in implementation and coordination. Collectively, the literature suggests that professional learning should be accompanied by accessible

guidance, clear procedures, referral mechanisms, and organizational arrangements that enable personnel to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. Teachers may need practical support in recognizing child-protection concerns, safeguarding learners' rights, and following appropriate reporting procedures, while administrators may require assistance in coordinating personnel, communicating policy requirements, clarifying institutional processes, and ensuring access to resources. These findings indicate that professional support and capacity-building efforts should address the complementary yet distinct roles of teachers and school administrators in effective CPP implementation (Wagner, 2017; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019; Asio et al., 2020; Dardo & Vistal, 2019; Zamora, 2021).

Synthesis of the Reviewed Literature and Research Gap. The reviewed literature highlights three interconnected themes regarding child protection and legal literacy in schools. First, child protection is both a legal and institutional responsibility requiring schools to safeguard learners from violence, abuse, discrimination, and other harmful conditions. The Philippine constitutional framework and Department of Education policies provide the legal basis for this mandate, while the works of dela Fuente (2021), Hernando-Malipot (2022), Human Rights Watch (2020), and UNICEF (2021) emphasize the continuing importance of ensuring safe and protective learning environments. Second, the literature indicates that awareness and implementation do not always progress uniformly. Bayuca (2020) reported adequate knowledge of several Child Protection Policy (CPP) requirements but lower familiarity with specific legal instruments, whereas Asio et al. (2020) and Dardo and Vistal (2019) identified variations in implementation, partial understanding, and constraints related to time and resources. These findings suggest that legal literacy should be examined across multiple dimensions and considered alongside organizational conditions affecting policy implementation. Third, the literature underscores the value of legal education,

effective leadership, collaboration, and accessible procedures. Decker (2014), Kutsyuruba et al. (2019), Jerome et al. (2015), Glouchkow, Weegar, and Romano (2023), Wagner (2017), and Zamora (2021) collectively emphasize that effective child protection depends on both personnel competence and institutional support.

Despite these contributions, the literature does not adequately explain how perceived CPP implementation and legal literacy are related among both teachers and school administrators within the local context of selected public high schools in Congressional District 5, Schools Division Office of Quezon City. Existing studies focus on different populations, settings, and aspects of child protection, limiting their applicability to the present context. Moreover, while prior research suggests connections among knowledge, implementation, and organizational conditions, it does not determine whether these relationships are similar across professional roles. The present study addresses this gap by examining perceived CPP implementation and legal literacy among teachers and school administrators, while investigating also their relationships.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component summarized respondent profiles and their assessments of child-protection policy implementation and legal literacy. The correlational component examined the association between the two measured variables without manipulating either variable.

Setting, Participants and Sampling Procedure. The study involved 128 respondents from 10 selected public high schools in Congressional District 5, Schools Division Office of Quezon City. The respondents consisted of 97 teachers and 31 school administrators. These participants provided the data used to assess the implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP), and the legal literacy of teachers and administrators.

The study used purposive sampling, as indicated in the original research documentation. The participants were drawn from the selected schools and represented the two respondent groups relevant to the objectives of the study. The original research records did not establish a verified total population for the participating schools or document an a priori statistical sample-size calculation. Accordingly, no sample-size formula is attributed to the study. Purposive sampling can be useful when a study requires participants who are familiar with the phenomenon being investigated.

At the same time, purposive sampling places limits on generalization. The sample was drawn from selected schools in one congressional district and should not automatically be treated as representative of every public school in Quezon City or the Philippines. Respondents may also differ in their opportunities to encounter child-protection issues, their prior training, their school's internal systems, and their willingness to disclose uncertainty.

The number of respondents reported in this study represents the actual sample from which the data were collected and analyzed. Because the study did not document a verified population frame or a formal statistical basis for determining sample size, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the participating schools and respondents. The sample does not, by itself, establish statistical representativeness of all teachers and school administrators in the Schools Division Office of Quezon City.

Research Instrument. The study utilized a researcher-developed survey questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument. The instrument was adapted from the Child Protection Policy (CPP) Implementation Checklist annexed to Department of Education Order No. 44, s. 2013 and was designed to collect data on CPP implementation and legal literacy. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section gathered respondents' demographic characteristics,

including age, sex, highest educational attainment, length of service, and relevant seminars attended during School Year 2022–2023. These variables provided contextual information for describing the respondents and their professional backgrounds. The second section measured the level of CPP implementation and legal literacy among teachers and school administrators using a five-point Likert-type scale. For CPP implementation, the descriptive interpretations were 1.00–1.79 (Not Implemented) to 4.20–5.00 (Highly Implemented). For legal literacy, the corresponding interpretations were 1.00–1.79 (Not Literate) to 4.20–5.00 (Highly Literate). Respondents selected the rating that best reflected their assessment of each indicator, and responses were summarized using weighted means to determine overall ratings for each dimension and construct.

To enhance the instrument's appropriateness, the initial draft underwent adviser review and revision before being evaluated by six validators composed of three public schools district supervisors, one statistician, one guidance counselor, and one school head. Subsequent revisions incorporated their comments and recommendations. The revised questionnaire was pilot-tested among selected teachers and administrators who were not included in the final respondent group, and their feedback informed further refinements in item clarity, wording, and relevance. However, the pilot-testing results were utilized primarily for qualitative refinement rather than for statistical validation. Consequently, measures of internal consistency, such as Cronbach's alpha, were not computed, and empirical evidence of reliability was not established. Likewise, although expert review supported the instrument's content adequacy, its validity was not independently verified through statistical procedures. Given these methodological limitations, the instrument should be regarded as having undergone expert-based and pilot-informed refinement rather than comprehensive psychometric validation. Accordingly, the findings derived from the instrument should be interpreted with appropriate caution,

particularly with respect to measurement precision and the generalizability of the observed results.

Data Gathering Procedure. Formal endorsement and authorization were secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Schools Division Office of Quezon City and the principals of the participating schools. The survey was then administered online through Google Forms.

Because the questionnaire concerned legal literacy and policy implementation, the administration process needed to encourage candid responses. Respondents may be reluctant to acknowledge uncertainty about procedures if they believe their answers could affect professional evaluation or be interpreted as an admission of noncompliance. A supportive and non-judgmental approach was therefore applied in this study.

Data Analysis. The study used frequency and percentage distributions to summarize respondent characteristics, weighted means to describe reported implementation and legal-literacy levels, Pearson's correlation coefficient to examine associations between the two variables, and t-tests and analysis of variance to examine differences between groups or categories. Each technique addresses a different research purpose.

Ethical Considerations. The study adhered to ethical principles designed to protect the rights, privacy, and professional interests of the respondents. Prior to data collection, formal authorization was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Schools Division Office of Quezon City, and permission was obtained from the principals of the participating schools. Data were collected through an online survey questionnaire administered via Google Forms to teachers and school administrators from selected public high schools in Congressional District 5, Quezon City. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, and their participation was limited to providing information relevant to Child

Protection Policy (CPP) implementation and legal literacy. Throughout the research process, participation was treated with respect for the respondents' professional roles and responsibilities.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained in the collection, processing, and presentation of data. Responses were used solely for academic and research purposes and were not disclosed to unauthorized individuals. No identifying information was included in the reporting of results, and all data were presented in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individual respondents or schools. Appropriate care was likewise exercised in handling research records, particularly because the study addressed issues related to child protection within educational settings. These measures ensured the protection of respondents' privacy while promoting the integrity and ethical conduct of the research process.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the study on the implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) and the legal literacy of teachers and school administrators in selected public secondary schools in Congressional District 5, Schools Division Office of Quezon City. The findings are organized according to the study objectives and include the respondents' profile, the reported level of CPP implementation, the level of legal literacy, and the relationship between these two variables. The section also presents the implications of the findings in relation to child protection and legal awareness in the school setting. Tables are used to facilitate the presentation and interpretation of the data, providing a basis for understanding how teachers and school administrators perceive and carry out their child protection responsibilities.

Respondent Characteristics. As reflected in Table 1, the study involved 128 respondents from ten selected public high schools in Congressional District 5, Schools Division Office

of Quezon City, consisting of 97 teachers (75.78%) and 31 school administrators (24.22%). Teachers comprised Teacher I–III positions, while administrators included head teachers, master teachers, and principals. The larger proportion of teachers reflects the composition of the participating schools and provides context for interpreting perceptions of Child Protection Policy (CPP) implementation and legal literacy. Differences between the two groups were considered separately because of their distinct professional roles and responsibilities within the school setting.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Profile.

Profile	Characteristic	Teachers		Administrators	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Age	30 years and below	32	32.99%	8	25.81%
	31–40	30	30.93%	5	16.13%
	41–50	23	23.71%	9	29.03%
	51–60	12	12.37%	9	29.03%
	61 and above	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Gender	Female	56	57.73%	15	48.39%
	Male	35	36.08%	16	51.61%
	Prefer not to say	6	6.19%	0	0.00%
Academic Achievement	Bachelor's degree	21	21.65%	3	9.68%
	Bachelor's degree with MA/MS units	62	63.92%	21	67.74%
	MA/MS degree	11	11.34%	3	9.68%
	MA/MS degree with PhD/EdD units	3	3.09%	3	9.68%
	PhD/EdD degree	0	0.00%	1	3.23%
Length of Service	10 years and below	70	72.16%	15	48.39%
	11–20 years	18	18.56%	8	25.81%
	21–30 years	6	6.19%	5	16.13%
	31 years and above	3	3.09%	3	9.68%

In terms of age, teachers were generally younger, with nearly two-thirds (63.92%) aged 40 years and below, while most administrators (58.06%) were concentrated in the 41–60 age range. The teacher group was predominantly female (57.73%), whereas administrators showed a nearly balanced gender distribution, with a slight male majority (51.61%). Regarding educational attainment, the largest proportion of both teachers (63.92%) and administrators (67.74%) reported having a bachelor's degree with MA/MS units, indicating substantial engagement in graduate-level studies. A small number of administrators had doctoral qualifications or doctoral coursework, while none of the teachers reported a completed doctoral degree. These demographic characteristics describe the composition of the sample and provide background information for understanding the respondents' perspectives;

however, they do not by themselves indicate differences in legal literacy or CPP implementation. Such relationships must be established through the study's statistical analyses.

Differences were also evident in professional experience. Most teachers (72.16%) had ten years of service or less, whereas administrators were more evenly distributed across the higher service categories, with 51.61% having more than ten years of experience. This pattern suggests that administrators generally possessed longer professional exposure to school operations, policies, and institutional procedures. Overall, the profile shows that teachers tended to be younger, predominantly female, and less experienced, while administrators were generally older and more experienced. These characteristics provide important context for interpreting the findings related to CPP implementation and legal literacy. However, because respondents were purposively selected from a limited number of schools, the results should be interpreted within the context of the study and not automatically generalized to all public-school personnel.

Level of Child Protection Policy Implementation.

Both teachers and school administrators viewed the implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) positively as supported by the data presented in Table 2. Teachers obtained a composite mean of 4.42, while administrators obtained 4.30, with both ratings falling within the "Highly Implemented" category. Teachers rated all five domains as highly implemented, with the highest scores recorded for referral and assessment of victims and offenders (4.48) and protective and remedial measures (4.47), followed by duties and responsibilities of concerned entities (4.43), rules and procedures in handling cases (4.40), and preventive measures to address abuse (4.32). Administrator ratings showed a slightly different pattern. The highest ratings were assigned to duties and responsibilities of concerned entities (4.44), referral and assessment of victims and offenders (4.42), and

preventive measures to address abuse (4.31), all categorized as highly implemented. In contrast, protective and remedial measures (4.18) and rules and procedures in handling cases (4.13) were rated one level lower, indicating that administrators perceived some aspects of implementation less favorably than teachers. Overall, the results suggest that both groups recognized a strong level of CPP implementation, although administrators expressed greater variation in their assessments across the domains.

Table 2
Mean Distribution of CPP Implementation by Respondent Group.

Domain / Measure	Teachers		Administrators	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
1. Duties and responsibilities of concerned entities.	4.43	Highly Implemented	4.44	Highly Implemented
2. Preventive measures to address abuse.	4.32	Highly Implemented	4.31	Highly Implemented
3. Protective and remedial measures.	4.47	Highly Implemented	4.18	Implemented
4. Rules and procedures in handling cases.	4.40	Highly Implemented	4.13	Implemented
5. Referral and assessment of victims and offenders.	4.48	Highly Implemented	4.42	Highly Implemented
Composite mean:	4.42	Highly Implemented	4.30	Highly Implemented

Legend. 1.00–1.79 *Not Implemented*; 1.80–2.59 *Slightly Implemented*; 2.60–3.39 *Moderately Implemented*; 3.40–4.19 *Implemented*; 4.20–5.00 *Highly Implemented*.

A closer examination of the ratings reveals areas of agreement and difference between the two respondent groups. Teachers and administrators reported nearly identical assessments of duties and responsibilities of concerned entities and preventive measures to address abuse, indicating shared perceptions regarding institutional roles and preventive practices. Similarly, both groups provided high ratings for referral and assessment procedures, reflecting confidence in the schools' capacity to respond to reported cases. However, larger differences emerged in protective and remedial measures and rules and procedures in handling cases, where administrators gave noticeably lower ratings than teachers. These findings suggest that while the participating schools are perceived to have a strong foundation for child protection, additional attention may be needed to strengthen understanding and implementation of response-related procedures. These findings suggest that additional attention may be given

to clarifying case-handling processes, reinforcing protective and remedial interventions, and ensuring that personnel understand appropriate actions and referral pathways. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted as perceptions of respondents from selected public high schools and not as direct evidence of full compliance with all CPP requirements. Instead, they identify perceived strengths and areas for further review and improvement.

Level of Legal Literacy. The findings in Table 3 indicate that both teachers and school administrators perceived themselves as highly literate regarding legal matters related to the Child Protection Policy (CPP). Teachers obtained a composite mean of 4.22, while administrators recorded a slightly higher mean of 4.36, with both falling within the “Highly Literate” category. Across the five domains, legal terminologies received the highest ratings from both groups (teachers = 4.41; administrators = 4.55), followed by relevant laws and issuances (teachers = 4.26; administrators = 4.31). These results suggest that respondents generally considered themselves familiar with the legal language and regulatory foundations of child protection in schools. However, familiarity with legal terms and laws does not automatically indicate the ability to correctly interpret legal provisions, make appropriate decisions in actual cases, or consistently apply legal requirements in school settings. The findings therefore reflect perceived legal literacy rather than objective legal competence.

Differences between the two groups became more evident in domains that involve applying legal knowledge to real educational situations. Teachers reported lower ratings for contextual legal principles (4.13) and classroom-setting relevance (4.19) compared with administrators, who rated these domains at 4.27 and 4.51, respectively. The largest gap was observed in classroom-setting relevance, suggesting that administrators perceived themselves as more confident in connecting legal concepts to school practices and decision-making. In contrast, ratings for related penalties were similar

across groups and represented the lowest-rated domain for both teachers (4.11) and administrators (4.15). This pattern indicates that respondents were generally more confident in recognizing legal terms and laws than in understanding legal consequences and applying legal principles to specific situations. Because child protection concerns often require school personnel to assess circumstances, follow reporting procedures, and make decisions consistent with legal requirements, these areas remain important for continuous professional learning.

Table 3
Legal-literacy ratings by respondent group.

Domain / Measure	Teachers		Administrators	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
1. Relevant laws and issuances.	4.26	Highly Literate	4.31	Highly Literate
2. Legal terminologies.	4.41	Highly Literate	4.55	Highly Literate
3. Contextual legal principles.	4.13	Literate	4.27	Highly Literate
4. Classroom-setting relevance.	4.19	Literate	4.51	Highly Literate
5. Related penalties.	4.11	Literate	4.15	Literate
Composite mean:	4.22	Highly Literate	4.36	Highly Literate

Legend. 1.00–1.79 Not Literate; 1.80–2.59 Slightly Literate; 2.60–3.39 Moderately Literate; 3.40–4.19 Literate; 4.20–5.00 Highly Literate.

Overall, the results suggest that legal literacy among both respondent groups is relatively strong, particularly in foundational knowledge of legal terminology and child protection regulations. At the same time, the findings highlight the need to strengthen the practical application of legal knowledge, especially in interpreting contextual situations and understanding the consequences of policy violations. These results highlight areas where greater emphasis on the practical application of legal knowledge may be beneficial, particularly in case analysis, reporting procedures, referral processes, and the application of legal principles in school settings. Nevertheless, the findings should be interpreted cautiously because they are based on respondents' self-assessments and do not measure actual legal knowledge or performance in real cases. Consequently, the results are best viewed as indicators of perceived strengths and areas for further professional development rather than definitive measures of legal competence.

Relationship Between CPP Implementation and Legal Literacy. The correlation analysis in Table 4 revealed a significant positive relationship between the implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) and legal literacy among teachers and school administrators. Teachers demonstrated a strong positive relationship between the two variables ($r = .713$, $p < .001$), while administrators showed a moderate positive relationship ($r = .508$, $p = .004$). When all respondents were considered as a single group, the relationship remained strong and positive ($r = .680$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that respondents who reported higher levels of CPP implementation also tended to report higher levels of legal literacy. The stronger association among teachers suggests that knowledge and understanding of legal concepts related to child protection are closely linked to their perceptions of policy implementation. Overall, the results support the view that legal literacy and policy implementation are interconnected aspects of promoting child protection within school environments.

Table 4
Pearson r test analysis between CPP implementation and legal literacy.

Group	n	CPP mean	Literacy mean	Pearson r	Interpretation	df	Computed t	Critical t ($\alpha=.05$)	P-value	r ² (%)	Decision
Teachers	97	4.42	4.22	.713	Strong positive	95	9.911	+1.985	< .001	50.84	Reject H ₀
Administrators	31	4.30	4.36	.508	Moderate positive	29	3.176	+2.045	.004*	25.81	Reject H ₀
Combined sample	128	—	—	.680	Strong positive	126	10.410	+1.979	< .001	46.24	Reject H ₀

Note. Degrees of freedom were calculated as $df = n - 2$. Tests are two-tailed at $\alpha = .05$. The coefficient of determination (r^2) is the percentage of shared variance.

The coefficients of determination further showed that CPP implementation and legal literacy shared approximately 50.84% of variance among teachers, 25.81% among administrators, and 46.24% in the combined sample. These values suggest a substantial degree of association between the two variables, particularly among teachers. However, the findings should be interpreted carefully. The correlations describe how the variables are related but do not establish that one causes the other. Higher legal literacy may be associated with better perceptions of CPP implementation, yet the results do not prove that legal literacy directly improves

implementation, nor that implementation increases legal literacy. Moreover, because the study used self-reported assessments and a correlational design, the findings reflect respondents' perceptions rather than direct measures of actual policy compliance or effectiveness. Nevertheless, the consistent positive relationships across groups underscore the importance of strengthening legal literacy and reinforcing understanding of child protection laws, procedures, and responsibilities.

DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile and Context of the Findings. The study involved 128 purposively selected respondents from ten public high schools in Congressional District 5 of the Schools Division Office of Quezon City, comprising 97 teachers and 31 school administrators. Differences in age, length of service, and professional responsibilities provided important context for understanding the findings. While teachers are more directly involved in classroom interactions with learners, administrators often oversee school-level implementation, coordination, and response mechanisms related to child protection. These distinct roles may shape how respondents perceive both Child Protection Policy (CPP) implementation and legal literacy. However, such characteristics should not be interpreted as direct determinants of the outcomes measured in the study.

The findings should likewise be viewed within the context of the study design. Because purposive sampling and self-reported measures were used, the results reflect the perceptions and experiences of the participating respondents rather than objective measures of practice or competence. Similar educational studies emphasize that demographic characteristics and professional roles provide useful context for interpreting school-based perceptions but do not automatically explain differences in policy implementation or legal understanding (Decker, 2014; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). Therefore, the

results are best understood as indicators of how teachers and administrators perceive CPP implementation and legal literacy within their respective school settings.

Reported Implementation of the Child Protection Policy. Both teachers and administrators reported a high level of CPP implementation, with composite means of 4.42 and 4.30, respectively. These ratings indicate strong perceived implementation of child protection measures across the participating schools. However, favorable ratings should not be interpreted as direct evidence of complete compliance with all policy requirements. Rather, they reflect respondents' assessments of the extent to which CPP provisions are implemented within their schools.

At the domain level, both groups viewed referral and assessment mechanisms as among the strongest aspects of implementation. Teachers assigned their highest ratings to referral and assessment of victims and offenders and protective and remedial measures, while administrators rated duties and responsibilities of concerned entities and referral and assessment most highly. These findings suggest that respondents generally recognized the existence of structures intended to address child protection concerns and support affected learners. The consistency of favorable ratings across domains indicates that child protection practices are perceived to be embedded in school operations.

Notably, administrators reported comparatively lower ratings for rules and procedures in handling cases and for protective and remedial measures. Although these differences do not establish actual implementation gaps, they suggest variation in how the two groups view procedural and response-related aspects of CPP implementation. Similar concerns have been reported in previous studies, which noted that awareness of child protection policies does not always translate into consistent practice or implementation across school personnel (Asio et al., 2020; Bayucca, 2020; Dardo & Vistal, 2019). Consequently, greater attention may be given to

case-handling procedures, referral pathways, and the practical responsibilities of personnel involved in responding to child protection concerns.

Legal Literacy: Perceived Strengths and Areas for Reinforcement. Teachers and administrators both rated themselves as highly literate regarding legal matters related to child protection, obtaining composite means of 4.22 and 4.36, respectively. Legal terminology emerged as the strongest domain for both groups, while related penalties received the lowest ratings. These findings suggest that respondents generally felt confident in recognizing legal concepts, laws, and key provisions associated with child protection. However, stronger familiarity with terminology does not necessarily imply an equal level of confidence in applying legal requirements to real situations or understanding the consequences of policy violations.

Differences between the groups became more apparent in domains requiring practical application of legal knowledge. Teachers reported lower ratings for contextual legal principles and classroom-setting relevance, whereas administrators expressed higher confidence in connecting legal requirements to educational practice. The largest difference was observed in classroom-setting relevance, suggesting that administrators perceived themselves as more able to relate legal concepts to school operations. These findings reinforce an important distinction between knowing legal terms and applying legal principles appropriately in professional settings. Similar observations have been noted by Bayucca (2020), Kutsyuruba et al. (2019), and Decker (2014), who emphasized that legal literacy involves not only awareness of laws but also the capacity to interpret, apply, and act upon legal responsibilities in educational contexts. Accordingly, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening competence in case analysis, interpretation of relevant laws and issuances, reporting procedures, referral mechanisms, and understanding legal consequences related to child protection. At the

same time, the results should be interpreted cautiously because they are based on self-assessments of perceived literacy rather than objective measures of legal knowledge or demonstrated competence.

Association Between CPP Implementation and Legal Literacy. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between perceived Child Protection Policy (CPP) implementation and legal literacy among teachers, administrators, and the combined sample. Teachers demonstrated a strong positive association ($r = .713$), administrators showed a moderate positive association ($r = .508$), and the overall sample exhibited a strong positive association ($r = .680$). These results suggest that respondents who perceived themselves as more legally literate also tended to report higher levels of CPP implementation. The pattern supports the view that familiarity with child protection laws, policies, and procedures is linked to how school personnel understand and carry out child protection responsibilities. Similar observations were reported by Asio et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of policy awareness and responsiveness in strengthening child protection practices within schools.

Despite the strength of these relationships, the findings should be interpreted carefully. Correlation indicates association but does not establish that legal literacy directly causes improved policy implementation. The study employed a descriptive-correlational design and relied on self-reported assessments; therefore, both variables reflect respondents' perceptions rather than objective measures of practice or compliance. Consistent with the perspectives of Dardo and Vistal (2019) and Kutsyuruba et al. (2019), the results suggest that effective child protection depends not only on legal knowledge but also on organizational systems that support its practical application. Accordingly, the findings highlight the value of strengthening legal literacy while simultaneously ensuring that schools provide clear procedures, guidance, and institutional support for CPP implementation.

Theoretical and Practical Implications. The findings may be interpreted through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), particularly its emphasis on competence and relatedness in supporting professional learning and performance. Competence is reflected in the need for teachers and administrators to develop sufficient knowledge and skills to understand and apply child protection laws, policies, and procedures in school settings. Relatedness is evident in the collaborative nature of child protection, which requires coordination among school personnel, families, and appropriate referral partners. The identified strengths and gaps in legal literacy, suggest that effective CPP implementation depends not only on individual knowledge but also on supportive professional and organizational environments. Similar studies have emphasized that strengthening legal literacy and policy awareness can contribute to more informed decision-making and better implementation of child protection measures (Decker, 2014; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019; Asio et al., 2020). However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study did not directly test SDT constructs or establish causal relationships. Rather, SDT serves as a useful framework for understanding how professional learning may support child protection efforts.

From a practical perspective, the results identify areas that may warrant greater attention in school-level child protection efforts. Particular attention may be given to teachers' lower ratings in contextual legal principles and classroom-setting relevance, as well as respondents' lower confidence regarding related penalties. Likewise, administrators' comparatively lower ratings in case-handling procedures and protective measures suggest opportunities for procedural review and clarification. Consistent with the literature, effective child protection depends not only on legal knowledge but also on organizational support, clear procedures, and collaborative practices among school personnel (Dardo & Vistal, 2019; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). Likewise, administrators' comparatively lower ratings in case-handling

procedures and protective measures may inform school-level procedural review and capacity-building initiatives. Consistent with recommendations in the literature, professional development efforts are likely to be more effective when combined with organizational support, practical guidance, and opportunities for collaborative learning (Dardo & Vistal, 2019; Kutsyuruba et al., 2019). Future evaluations using pre- and post-training assessments, scenario-based activities, and measures of procedural knowledge may help determine whether such interventions improve legal literacy and support stronger CPP implementation in schools.

Limitations and Interpretation of the Findings.

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, purposive sampling from ten selected public high schools in one congressional district limits generalizability. The results describe the participating respondents and do not establish that the same patterns apply to all public schools in Quezon City or the Philippines.

Second, the study relied on self-reported questionnaire ratings. These measures describe respondents' perceptions of CPP implementation and legal literacy but do not independently verify compliance, the quality of case handling, or actual legal decision-making competence. Third, the instrument development process included adviser review, consultation, and feedback-based revisions, but the manuscript does not establish formal quantitative validation or reliability testing. This limits the certainty with which the measured constructs and domain-level differences can be interpreted. Therefore, without expert review or statistical validation procedures, the extent to which the instrument accurately measured the intended constructs cannot be fully established. This limitation may influence the precision and generalizability of the findings. Future studies are encouraged to conduct comprehensive validity assessments, including expert validation and pilot testing, before implementing the instrument in larger populations.

Conclusion. This study examined the implementation of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) and the legal literacy of teachers and school administrators in selected public secondary schools in Quezon City. The findings showed that both groups generally perceived CPP implementation and legal literacy to be at a high level, indicating that child protection principles, related laws, and school-based procedures are widely recognized in the participating schools. The results further revealed a significant positive relationship between CPP implementation and legal literacy, suggesting that respondents who reported higher levels of legal literacy also tended to report stronger implementation of child protection measures. These findings highlight the close association between legal knowledge and the effective execution of child protection responsibilities within educational settings.

The study also identified differences in how various aspects of CPP implementation and legal literacy were perceived. Respondents demonstrated stronger confidence in legal terminology, relevant laws, and institutional responsibilities than in areas requiring the application of legal concepts to actual school situations. Likewise, while overall CPP implementation was rated highly, some variation emerged in perceptions regarding case-handling procedures and protective or remedial measures. These results suggest that awareness of laws and policies alone may not be sufficient. Effective child protection also requires the ability to apply legal principles appropriately, follow prescribed procedures, and respond consistently to issues affecting learners. The findings therefore reinforce the importance of viewing legal literacy as both knowledge of legal requirements and the capacity to use that knowledge in professional practice.

Because the study relied on self-reported data from purposively selected respondents in ten public high schools, the findings should be interpreted within the context of the participating schools and should not be generalized without caution. Overall, the study

affirms that legal literacy and CPP implementation are interconnected elements of child protection. Strengthening both can contribute to more informed decision-making, greater adherence to established procedures, and safer, more responsive learning environments that uphold the rights, welfare, and best interests of learners.

DISCLOSURES

Author contributions. Michael F. Villalon: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, & Writing – review & editing.

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Data availability statement. All data supporting the findings of this study are included within the manuscript and its supplementary materials.

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