

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY: A BOON OR BANE?

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examined whether the Department of Education's Child Protection Policy (CPP), under DepEd Order No. 40, Series of 2012, serves as a boon or a bane for veteran public secondary school teachers in the Division of Kidapawan City in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16). Using Colaizzi's (1978) method, seven purposively selected educators with 15 to 35 years of service participated in in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed through systematic extraction of significant statements, formulation of meanings, and clustering into emergent themes, validated through member checking. Twenty emergent themes revealed that the CPP operates simultaneously as a boon—offering child protection framework, promoting restorative discipline, and clarifying professional responsibilities—and as a bane, through the erosion of disciplinary authority, student misuse of rights, weak home-school support, and increased emotional labor. Educators adapted by employing preventive discipline, private handling of misconduct, systematic documentation, peer collaboration, and technology-based accountability measures. Over time, most participants grew from initial hesitancy toward a more confident and rights-informed professional identity. The study concludes that the CPP is inherently dual in nature—neither purely enabling nor purely restrictive—and recommends sustained scenario-based professional development, stronger Child Protection Committees, and more proactive family engagement to maximize the policy's positive impact.

Keywords: *Child Protection Policy, Boon or Bane, Veteran Educators, Classroom Discipline, Phenomenology, SDG16, Kidapawan City Division*

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Aligned: *SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions*

INTRODUCTION

The protection of children in school settings has emerged as a pressing global concern, with educational institutions increasingly recognized as critical sites where the rights, safety, and dignity of learners must be actively upheld. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2014), millions of children around the world experience various forms of violence within educational environments, compromising their right to quality education and holistic development. A global status report by the World Health Organization identified school-based violence—including physical punishment, psychological harm, and exploitation—as a major public health and human rights issue requiring comprehensive and sustained institutional responses (WHO, 2014). These findings underscore the responsibility of schools not only to deliver academic instruction but to function as safe, protective, and rights-affirming spaces for all learners (Pinheiro, 2006).

In the Philippines, the imperative to protect children in schools is enshrined in the country's highest legal instruments. Article XV, Section 3(2) of the 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates the State to protect children from abuse, exploitation, and conditions detrimental to their development, while Article XIV, Section 3(2) directs educational institutions to promote respect for human rights and dignity. The Family Code further grants teachers in loco parentis authority during school hours (Articles 218, 220, 233), and Presidential Decree No. 603 provides additional legal protection for minors from harm. Translating these constitutional mandates into school-level practice, the Department of Education issued Order No. 40, Series of 2012, establishing the Child Protection Policy (CPP) for all public and private basic education institutions. The CPP explicitly prohibits corporal punishment, psychological harm, neglect, and all forms of exploitation, and requires every school to establish a Child Protection Committee (CPC) to lead prevention, awareness, and response efforts (DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012).

Despite the strength of this policy framework, a growing body of evidence points to a persistent gap between the CPP's protective intent and the realities experienced by teachers in Philippine classrooms. Estremera's (2018) investigation found that CPC members held inconsistent understandings of their roles, and school administrators self-assessed their own policy dissemination and capacity-building efforts as merely adequate. Studies by Raro (2013) and Roco and Roco (2013) similarly documented chronic difficulties in sustaining school-community partnerships, while Asio, Bayucca, and Jimenez (2020) found that despite high conceptual awareness among teachers, actual school responsiveness to CPP mandates remained only moderate. These implementation challenges place educators—particularly veterans—in a uniquely difficult professional position, as the policy simultaneously introduces constraints on the disciplinary practices they have long relied upon to maintain classroom order (Estremera, 2018; Asio et al., 2020).

This study holds significant potential to contribute to the field of education by examining whether the CPP functions as a 'boon' that strengthens educators' capacity to create safe and rights-affirming learning environments, or as a 'bane' that undermines their professional effectiveness and confidence. Understanding this duality is particularly important in the context of SDG16, which calls for peaceful, just, and inclusive societies

with strong and accountable institutions (United Nations, 2015). By centering the lived experiences of veteran public secondary school teachers with 15 to 35 years of service in the Division of Kidapawan City, this phenomenological study aimed to generate practical insights that can inform professional development programs, clarify policy implementation guidelines, and strengthen Child Protection Committee effectiveness. Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions: (1) What are the impacts of the Child Protection Policy on the professional role as perceived by educators? (2) What strategies can be employed to help implement the Child Protection Policy? and (3) What practical insights emerged from educators' experiences on the impact of the Child Protection Policy?

The study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks: Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. TPB posits that teachers' implementation of disciplinary actions under CPP is affected by their attitudes toward the policy, subjective norms from school leaders and peers, and perceived behavioral control as influenced by training and resources. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory situates teachers' experiences in nested environmental layers—the microsystem (classroom interactions), mesosystem (CPC-school linkages), exosystem (DepEd guidelines), macrosystem (cultural child rights norms), and chronosystem (policy evolution after 2012)—reflecting the multi-level impacts of CPP on both strength-building and strain at institutional levels.

METHODS

Research Design

This study examined the impact of the Child Protection Policy (CPP) on educators—whether it served as a boon or bane in addressing SDG16 goals of peaceful, inclusive, and accountable educational learning environments. A qualitative research design through phenomenology was deemed most appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of educators' experiences and the significance they ascribe to the CPP in the context of SDG16 (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data were gathered using seven in-depth interviews (IDIs) with individual participants, providing rich and in-depth accounts of each educator's experiences, perceptions, and thoughts about the policy as a boon or a bane to SDG16-aligned practices (Colaizzi, 1978). The study was conducted over ten months, from July 2025 to April 2026, spanning planning, ethical clearance, recruitment, data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Research Participants

This study included a total of seven (7) permanent public secondary school teachers purposively selected from three schools in the Division of Kidapawan City: Singao Integrated School, Sanial Cruz National High School, and Kalaisan National High School. Participants were required to have 15 to 35 years of service in the Department of Education and to have direct, hands-on experience with classroom management and the implementation of disciplinary measures within the CPP framework. Teachers with substitute, contractual, or temporary employment status were excluded to ensure that participants possessed substantial classroom management experience and deep familiarity with institutional policies (Palinkas et al., 2015). Six of the seven participants

were female and one was male, with positions ranging from Teacher III to Master Teacher.

Research Materials

The primary data collection tool was a semi-structured in-depth interview (IDI) guide questionnaire composed of three core research questions with corresponding probing questions. The IDI protocol was designed to ensure consistent coverage of key areas including disciplinary practices, CPP interpretation, limitations on teacher authority, and support for SDG16 objectives, while allowing participants to elaborate on personally significant experiences. Audio recording equipment and field notes were used to capture verbal and non-verbal data. All data were stored in password-protected digital files and locked physical storage accessible only to the researcher and the research adviser.

Data Gathering Procedure

Formal permission was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent of Kidapawan City Division and school principals prior to the conduct of the study. Participants were identified and invited using purposive sampling based on pre-established inclusion criteria. Seven individual in-depth interviews were arranged at convenient times and locations to ensure a comfortable and confidential environment. Each IDI was audio-recorded with the informed consent of participants, and field notes were taken to record non-verbal cues and contextual details. Transcriptions were completed as soon as possible following each interview to facilitate timely analysis.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the seven IDIs were analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method. The analysis began with a thorough review of transcripts to gain a holistic understanding of participants' experiences, followed by the extraction of significant statements related to CPP dilemmas, strategies, perceptions, and SDG16 alignment. Extracted meanings were then organized into themes and clusters to identify patterns across participants. Member checking was conducted to ensure that interpretations resonated with participants, and reflexive journaling was maintained throughout to enhance credibility and minimize researcher bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the study's findings and explains their meanings in relation to the research objectives. It also discusses how the results support or differ from previous studies.

Research Question 1: Perceived Impacts of Child Protection Policy on the Professional Role of Educators

The first research question explored how veteran educators distinguish between the beneficial and problematic dimensions of the CPP and how these perceptions shape their day-to-day professional practice. The table below presents a summary of participants' significant statements, emergent themes, and corresponding meanings. Analysis yielded seven emergent themes.

Table 1. Impact of Child Protection Policy on the Professional Role of Educators (RQ1)

Issues Probe	Codes / Category	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings
Child abuse and learner welfare	IDI 1; IDI 2; IDI 3; IDI 4; IDI 5; IDI 6; IDI 7	protects from physical and verbal abuse; reminds teachers to be mindful; promotes respect and safety for vulnerable learners	Protection from Abuse and Promotion of Learner Welfare (Boon)	CPP anchors teachers' professional conduct in child rights, fostering a culture of respect and providing clear mechanisms for detecting and responding to abuse.
Disciplinary approach	IDI 2; IDI 3; IDI 4; IDI 6; IDI 7	approachable but firm; restorative conversations; dialogue-based discipline; investing in expectations at year start	Positive and Restorative Discipline (Boon)	CPP has shifted educators away from punitive methods toward restorative, empathy-based approaches that preserve student dignity while maintaining classroom order.
Professional procedures	IDI 2; IDI 3; IDI 6; IDI 7	knew exactly what steps to take; documented observations; referred to CPC; confident and within boundaries	Clear Professional Boundaries and Procedures (Boon)	CPP functions as a procedural guide that clarifies professional responsibilities and protects teachers who follow due process when handling sensitive or abuse-related cases.
Disciplinary authority	IDI 1; IDI 5; IDI 4; IDI 3	cannot impose discipline properly; afraid of CPP restrictions; carefully	Restriction of Traditional Disciplinary Authority (Bane)	CPP is perceived as constraining established disciplinary practices, leaving teachers hesitant and uncertain about applying correction,

		considering every word; fear of complaint		particularly for veteran educators.
Student rights and behavior	IDI 1; IDI 4; IDI 5; IDI 3	students use policy to avoid accountability; misuse of rights; less respectful; student fought back; kept silent out of fear	Perceived Over-Empowerment and Misuse of Rights by Students (Bane)	When rights education is not balanced with responsibility, some students invoke CPP provisions to resist legitimate discipline, diminishing teacher authority and classroom order.
External support systems	IDI 1; IDI 3; IDI 4; IDI 6; IDI 7	hard to discipline when home does otherwise; family gave up; useless to make things right; support system outside school lacking	Weak or Inconsistent External Support System (Bane)	CPP's effectiveness is critically undermined when family environments fail to reinforce protective values, leaving teachers as the sole bearers of a systemic gap.
Emotional regulation	IDI 1; IDI 3; IDI 5; IDI 6; IDI 7	go out and count 1 to 100; more patient and understanding; humane influence; manage own emotions; emotionally burdened	Increased Emotional Labor and Self-Regulation (Boon/Bane)	CPP intensifies the emotional demands of teaching but also cultivates greater empathy and professional maturity in educators who navigate its requirements over time.

Theme 1: Protection from Abuse and Promotion of Learner Welfare

All seven participants acknowledged the CPP's fundamental contribution to child safety as its most valued dimension. They described the policy as a safeguard that anchors professional actions in child rights, effectively redirecting focus toward the emotional well-being, psychological protection, and dignity of every learner. Participants specifically highlighted the CPP's value in providing clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse and protecting vulnerable students.

“The boon of the CPP is that it clearly protects learners from physical, emotional, and verbal abuse. It reminds teachers like me to be more conscious of how we speak to learners, how we discipline them, and how we respond to sensitive situations. It also promotes a safer and more respectful classroom environment, especially for vulnerable and struggling learners.” (Crisanto, IDI 5)

Felicidad, a Master Teacher at Saniel Cruz National High School with 22 years of service, echoed this, noting that the provision protecting children from physical and verbal abuse reminds educators to always be mindful of how they communicate with students and promotes a culture of respect inside the classroom. These accounts reflect the CPP's role as an institutional mechanism for detection and response as described by Estremera (2018).

Theme 2: Positive and Restorative Discipline

Participants described a meaningful transformation in how they approach discipline as a direct consequence of the CPP's emphasis on positive discipline. Rather than relying on punitive or fear-based methods, educators reported adopting restorative, dialogue-based approaches involving private conversations and empathetic engagement.

“These boons and banes guide me to balance care and control. They shape my approach by helping me become a teacher who is approachable but firm, supportive but consistent, and authoritative without being overly strict.” (Irisrio, IDI 2)

Felicidad similarly described a fundamental change from a traditional, authority-centered style to a more restorative and dialogue-based approach. This aligns with Treacy and Nohilly's (2020) argument that genuinely protective policies must move beyond surface-level compliance and foster authentic behavioral change in educators.

Theme 3: Clear Professional Boundaries and Procedures

A recurring perception among participants was that the CPP functions as a procedural guide that clarifies professional responsibilities and offers protection to teachers who follow due process. Several educators expressed that having a defined framework of documentation, referral, and reporting gives them a clearer sense of what is expected of them when handling sensitive cases.

“One situation where the CPP felt very supportive was when I noticed a learner who was visibly withdrawn and had unexplained bruises. Because of the CPP, I knew exactly what steps to take — I documented my observations, referred the case to our Child Protection Committee, and coordinated with the guidance counselor. The policy gave me the confidence and the procedure to act without overstepping my boundaries.” (Felicidad, IDI 6)

This finding reflects Asio et al.'s (2020) observation that teachers demonstrate high conceptual awareness of CPP's protective goals, underscoring the policy's value as an orienting framework.

Theme 4: Restriction of Traditional Disciplinary Authority

The most prominently voiced concern was the perceived erosion of disciplinary authority. Several educators described feeling constrained by the CPP, noting that even firm reminders or raising one's voice could be misinterpreted as a policy violation.

"I feel that this CPP is more restrictive than supportive because I cannot impose my discipline properly because I am afraid of some policies stated in CPP Act. Unlike before my elementary grade that almost of my teachers were very strict when it comes to discipline which I am thankful enough."

(Ma. Luisa, IDI 1)

Crisanto described a similar concern, noting that CPP felt restrictive when he had to address repeated disruptive behavior and had to carefully consider every word and action, fearing that a learner might complain even if the intention was purely corrective. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory helps frame this dynamic: when institutional policy constrains long-standing professional practices, teachers experience a conflict that can undermine their sense of professional efficacy.

Theme 5: Perceived Over-Empowerment and Misuse of Rights by Students

Several participants described an imbalance in how student rights are exercised in practice, where some students invoke CPP provisions to resist correction or avoid accountability even in minor disciplinary situations.

"In some cases, the policy gives students too much comfort, which may lead them to misuse or take advantage of their rights. Some students may interpret the policy in a way that allows them to avoid accountability for their behavior, which can make classroom management more difficult."

(Remedios, IDI 4)

Ma. Luisa shared a more personal account, recalling that one of her students got angry and physically fought back, after which she kept silent out of fear. This reflects an unintended consequence of rights awareness without commensurate emphasis on corresponding responsibilities, consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior's concept of perceived behavioral control.

Theme 6: Weak or Inconsistent External Support System

Participants across all seven interviews expressed a shared frustration: the CPP's effectiveness is critically dependent on the quality of support outside the school, particularly the family.

"It's hard to discipline a student in the school if the support system outside the school does otherwise. When home cannot even control the child, then it would be useless for a teacher to make things right for the child. It takes two to tango. Before there was a CPP, there is already a home. Before the child goes to school, they were first taught at home. Before there was a teacher, there was a parent." (Ligaya, IDI 3)

Ligaya further shared having had to let a learner transfer to another school when the family's support system had entirely given up. These accounts align with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework: when school and family environments are misaligned, teachers are left bearing the consequences of a systemic gap.

Theme 7: Increased Emotional Labor and Self-Regulation

Participants described how CPP has significantly increased the emotional work of teaching. They must simultaneously manage their own emotional responses, remain attuned to students' emotional states, and exercise careful judgment in every disciplinary encounter.

"If you are upset, go out from the classroom, look at the trees and count 1 to 100." (Ma. Luisa, IDI 1)

Ligaya described becoming more patient, understanding, and considerate as a direct result of navigating the demands of the policy, noting that it influences her to be more humane. The dual character of this theme—simultaneously a boon and a bane—mirrors the complexity at the heart of this study. While CPP demands more emotionally, the long-term effect appears to be the cultivation of more empathetic and professionally mature teachers.

Research Question 2: Strategies Employed by Educators in Implementing Child Protection Policy

The second research question sought to understand how educators actively navigate the tensions introduced by the CPP and what strategies have proven effective in helping them fulfill both their protective and disciplinary mandates. Analysis yielded seven additional emergent themes representing adaptive strategies.

Table 2. Strategies Employed by Educators in Implementing Child Protection Policy (RQ2)

Issues Probe	Codes / Category	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings
Classroom expectations	IDI 3; IDI 5; IDI 6; IDI 7	integrating values into daily lessons; discussing classroom rules at year start; framing discipline as two-way; reminding students of responsibilities	Preventive and Proactive Discipline Strategies	Educators invest in front-loading expectations and embedding values education to reduce reliance on reactive discipline that may conflict with CPP provisions.
Handling misconduct	IDI 1; IDI 2; IDI 3; IDI 6; IDI 7	speak privately after lesson; avoid scolding in front of class; quiet note during exam;	Private, Respectful Handling of Misbehavior	Private one-on-one conversations have replaced public correction as the standard CPP-compliant strategy for addressing

		protect dignity; correct behavior calmly		misconduct while preserving student dignity.
Documentation	IDI 4; IDI 7	observe, talk, document; five-step routine; written record protects both student and teacher; evidence- based action	Observation- Conversation- Documentation Routines	Systematic documentation serves a dual protective function, safeguarding students through evidence-based accountability and protecting teachers by demonstrating due process.
Peer support	IDI 2; IDI 3; IDI 6; IDI 7	sharing experiences with colleagues; LAC sessions more practical; new ideas from team discussions; less stressed through peer support	Collaborative Support from Colleagues and Learning Action Cells	School-based LAC sessions and peer collaboration normalize CPP challenges, share adaptive strategies, and build consistency in policy interpretation across classrooms.
Institutional support	IDI 2; IDI 4; IDI 6; IDI 7	guidance counselor accessible; school head gives practical advice; CPC as referral point; less stressful with institutional support	Reliance on Guidance Counselors, the CPC, and School Administrators	Formal institutional structures — particularly guidance offices, CPCs, and the school head — are indispensable in managing cases beyond a classroom teacher's scope.
Technology and transparency	IDI 4	installed CCTV camera; review footage before action; interview witnesses; speak	Use of Technological and Procedural Tools for Transparency	Technology such as CCTV is used creatively to ensure objectivity and fairness in disciplinary decisions, protecting both teachers and

		privately; ensure fairness		students from unfounded accusations.
Empathy and context	IDI 2; IDI 4; IDI 5; IDI 6	reach out to parents; understand home situation; respond with empathy not punishment; careful assessment and consultation	Shift to Empathetic, Context- Sensitive Responses	Educators now adopt a holistic approach that prioritizes understanding the root causes of student behavior before determining an appropriate, rights- aligned disciplinary response.

Theme 8: Preventive and Proactive Discipline Strategies

The most consistently reported adaptive strategy was the deliberate shift toward preventive discipline. Rather than waiting for misconduct to occur, participants described investing heavily in establishing clear expectations, values agreements, and classroom norms at the start of each school year.

“Another strategy is integrating values education into my daily lessons. Instead of waiting for misbehavior to occur before addressing it, I weave discussions about respect, responsibility, and rights into my subject matter. This creates a classroom culture where students are constantly reminded of what is expected of them and why it matters.” (Esperanza, IDI 7)

Ligaya similarly described always discussing classroom rules and school policy at the start of the year and framing learning and discipline as a two-way action. By front-loading expectations, educators reduce reliance on reactive sanctions that may fall into legal gray areas under the CPP.

Theme 9: Private, Respectful Handling of Misbehavior

Across all seven IDIs, participants described abandoning public correction in favor of private, one-on-one conversations. This strategy was consistently described as the most effective means of preserving student dignity while addressing misconduct in a CPP-compliant manner.

“If a student misbehaves, I avoid scolding them in front of the class. Instead, I speak to them privately. This protects the child's dignity while still correcting the behavior. The class sees that rules are followed, but the student is not embarrassed.” (Irisio, IDI 2)

Esperanza applied this principle even to examination violations—quietly noting the incident during the exam, speaking to the student privately after, and then imposing consequences in accordance with the student handbook. This strategy represents genuine internalization of CPP values rather than mere procedural compliance (Treacy & Nohilly, 2020).

Theme 10: Observation-Conversation-Documentation Routines

Systematic documentation emerged as a cornerstone strategy. Esperanza articulated a structured three-step approach that has become her standard procedure for all disciplinary incidents, regardless of severity.

“One of the most effective strategies I have developed is what I call the ‘three-step approach’ — observe, talk, and document. Whenever I notice concerning behavior, I first observe without immediately reacting. Then I talk to the student privately to understand the situation from their perspective. Finally, I document the incident regardless of how minor it may seem, because I have learned that having a written record protects both the student and myself.” (Esperanza, IDI 7)

Felicidad described a similarly structured five-step routine: observe, document, consult, refer, and follow up. Written records serve a dual protective function—protecting students through evidence-based consequences and protecting teachers by demonstrating that due process was followed, in direct alignment with SDG16's emphasis on transparent and accountable institutions.

Theme 11: Collaborative Support from Colleagues and Learning Action Cells

Participants consistently identified peer collaboration as a critical source of professional support. Faculty meetings, informal consultations, and school-based Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions were cited as spaces where educators share experiences, exchange strategies, and make sense of policy requirements together.

“The most meaningful support I have received comes from our school-based learning action cell sessions where teachers share real experiences and discuss how they handled specific cases involving the CPP. These sessions are more practical and relatable than formal seminars because they are grounded in actual situations that happen in our own school context.” (Esperanza, IDI 7)

Irisio noted that sharing experiences and advice among colleagues gives her new ideas on how to handle difficult behavior and helps her feel supported and less stressed. This collegial support normalizes challenges and creates consistency in how the policy is interpreted across classrooms (Raro, 2013).

Theme 12: Reliance on Guidance Counselors, the Child Protection Committee, and School Administrators

Formal institutional support structures were identified by all participants as indispensable in handling cases that exceed the scope of a single classroom teacher.

“The support I receive from my school head and colleagues has been invaluable. We regularly share experiences and strategies during faculty meetings, which helps me learn from the experiences of others. Our guidance counselor is also very accessible and always willing to assist when I encounter cases that are beyond my capacity as a classroom teacher.” (Felicidad, IDI 6)

Esperanza added that knowing she can approach the school head and receive practical advice rather than criticism has made navigating CPP-related challenges significantly less stressful. These accounts reflect the successful functioning of CPP's

multi-tiered institutional mechanisms, though they also underscore Asio et al.'s (2020) finding that the effectiveness of such structures varies across schools.

Theme 13: Use of Technological and Procedural Tools for Transparency

Several participants described utilizing CCTV footage to verify disputed incidents, framing it as a means of ensuring fairness and objectivity rather than as a punitive tool.

“Three years ago, I decided to install a CCTV camera in my classroom with the support of our HPTA project. This has been very helpful in addressing disciplinary concerns while ensuring fairness and transparency. Before taking any disciplinary action, I first review the CCTV footage and gather information by interviewing classmates who witnessed the incident. After that, I speak privately with the student involved and allow them to explain their side of the story.” (Remedios, IDI 4)

This technological adaptation reflects educators' creative problem-solving in response to CPP's accountability demands, ensuring that disciplinary actions are grounded in verifiable evidence.

Theme 14: Shift to Empathetic, Context-Sensitive Responses

Several educators described adopting a more holistic, contextually aware approach to student behavior, one that prioritizes understanding the circumstances behind misconduct before determining an appropriate response.

“One concrete example is how I handle tardiness and absenteeism. Instead of shaming a student who is frequently late or absent, I reach out to the parents or guardians to understand the situation. In many cases, I discover that the student is dealing with a difficult home situation, and this allows me to respond with empathy rather than punishment. This approach is fully aligned with the CPP while still maintaining the academic standards of the classroom.” (Felicidad, IDI 6)

Crisanto similarly described a decision-making process that now involves careful assessment, consultation with school authorities, and proper reporting. This represents a significant evolution in how veteran educators conceptualize their professional role, consistent with the positive discipline literature and the child-rights framework embedded in the CPP.

Research Question 3: Practical Insights Emerging from Educators' Experiences on the Impact of Child Protection Policy

The third research question examined how CPP has shaped the internal professional landscape of veteran educators—their confidence in making disciplinary decisions, the processes through which those decisions are reached, and their sense of themselves as advocates for the children in their care. Analysis yielded six additional emergent themes.

Table 3. Practical Insights Emerging from Educators' Experiences on the Impact of Child Protection Policy (RQ3)

Issues Probe	Codes / Category	Significant Statements	Themes	Meanings
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Professional confidence trajectory	IDI 2; IDI 4; IDI 6; IDI 7	hesitant at first; over-thinking every action; confidence restored over time; CPP not the enemy; long as actions are in best interest	Initial Decrease, Followed by Growth in Professional Confidence	Teachers move from early destabilization and fear of false complaints toward restored confidence grounded in a deeper understanding of CPP's protective purpose.
Professional identity	IDI 2; IDI 4; IDI 5; IDI 6; IDI 7	disciplinarian and protector; more sensitive to signs of abuse; one-on-one conversation for root cause; role reshaped by CPP	Dual Role — Disciplinarian and Child Advocate	CPP has reconceptualized educators' professional identity to encompass both disciplinarian and child advocate, integrating child rights awareness into every disciplinary encounter.
Decision-making process	IDI 2; IDI 5; IDI 6; IDI 7	documentation made me more careful; think carefully before consequences; consider well-being not just behavior; deliberate and lawful process	Reflective and Evidence-Based Decision-Making	CPP has transformed disciplinary decisions from immediate reactive responses to deliberate, multi-step processes grounded in documentation, consultation, and child-centered reasoning.
Policy versus judgment	IDI 2; IDI 6	policies cannot cover every situation; need professional judgment; frustrating to follow procedures in urgent cases; built relationships to navigate limits	Tension Between Policy Requirements and Professional Judgment	Teachers acknowledge that CPP cannot anticipate every classroom scenario, underscoring the continuing importance of professional judgment as a complement to policy compliance.

Character transformation	IDI 1; IDI 3; IDI 6; IDI 7	became different because of students; learned to be patient; more humane; more ethical and child-centered; shaped into a thoughtful teacher	Humanizing Effect on Teacher Character	Sustained engagement with CPP principles has produced genuine professional and moral transformation, cultivating more empathetic, reflective, and rights-aware educators over time.
External support dependence	IDI 1; IDI 3	discuss policies with parents at HRPTA; communicate well and be transparent; family giving up leaves teacher asking what more can be done	Dependence on External Support Systems	Teachers' confidence and CPP effectiveness are directly tied to the strength of both school-based and family support structures, reinforcing the need for whole-ecosystem alignment.

Theme 15: Initial Decrease, Followed by Growth in Professional Confidence

A compelling and consistent narrative across participants was one of initial destabilization followed by eventual growth. In the early stages of CPP enforcement, most educators described feeling hesitant, afraid of being reported, and preoccupied with self-protection rather than genuine student welfare.

“Honestly, my confidence went through different phases because of the CPP. When it was first strictly enforced, I became very hesitant. I started to over-think every disciplinary action and worried constantly about how my decisions would be perceived by students, parents, and administrators. There were moments when I felt that being a teacher had become more about self-protection than about genuinely helping students grow. But over time, as I deepened my understanding of the policy and saw its positive outcomes in actual cases, my confidence was restored. I realized that the CPP is not the enemy of discipline — it is a guide toward better, more humane discipline.” (Esperanza, IDI 7)

This trajectory is consistent with Asio et al.'s (2020) finding that teachers with greater years of service report more positive perceptions of CPP responsiveness.

Theme 16: Dual Role — Disciplinarian and Child Advocate

One of the most significant identity-level shifts was the reconceptualization of professional role to encompass both disciplinarian and child advocate.

“As a disciplinarian, I still maintain firm and consistent classroom rules, but I now enforce them in ways that are respectful, private, and constructive. Instead of humiliating a student in front of the class, I schedule a one-on-one conversation to understand the root cause of the behavior, because more often than not, there are underlying issues such as poverty, family problems, or learning difficulties that require support rather than punishment. As a child advocate, the CPP has made me significantly more sensitive to signs of abuse, neglect, and emotional distress among my learners.” (Esperanza, IDI 7)

Felicidad reflected that before the CPP, she saw herself primarily as a disciplinarian, but now sees herself as both a disciplinarian and a child advocate more attuned to the emotional and psychological needs of her students. This dual-role identity is central to the vision of SDG16-aligned education.

Theme 17: Reflective and Evidence-Based Decision-Making

CPP has fundamentally altered how participants approach disciplinary decisions, moving them from immediate reactive responses toward a more deliberate, multi-step process.

“The requirement for proper documentation has made me more careful and objective in every disciplinary action I take. I make sure to record what happened, who was involved, and what steps I took so that my actions are transparent and justified. The referral process has also taught me to recognize the limits of my role as a classroom teacher. For serious cases, I no longer try to handle everything on my own. I now coordinate with the guidance counselor or the Child Protection Committee to ensure that the student receives the proper support.” (Esperanza, IDI 7)

Irisrio echoed this, noting that the need to document incidents makes her think carefully about what happened before deciding on consequences, and that CPP also reminds her to consider the student's well-being, not just the behavior itself.

Theme 18: Tension Between Policy Requirements and Professional Judgment

While participants broadly accepted the value of structured decision-making, they also described experiencing tension in situations that demand immediate response but require procedural compliance.

“However, one limitation is that policies cannot cover every situation. Sometimes I need to use professional judgment to balance discipline with understanding a child's personal circumstances.” (Irisrio, IDI 2)

Felicidad noted that the requirement to follow proper procedures before acting can be frustrating in cases that demand immediate intervention, but that she has learned to work within these limitations by building strong relationships with students and by involving the guidance office early. This tension underscores the continuing importance of professional judgment as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, policy compliance.

Theme 19: Humanizing Effect on Teacher Character

Perhaps the most personally significant finding was the transformative effect that CPP implementation has had on the character of veteran educators.

“It is really very hard to become a model to your students, but because of them also, I became different as the day goes by. I have to handle different issues and absorb and solve different problems. It influences me by learning how to become patient, understandable and even considerate in things that is needed. It influences me to be more humane.” (Ligaya, IDI 3)

Felicidad similarly described being shaped into a more ethical, careful, and child-centered educator over her 22 years of service. Esperanza concluded that overall, the CPP has made her a more thoughtful and responsible teacher. For these veteran educators, engaging seriously with child protection demands has not only changed what they do in the classroom but who they are as teachers—representing the deepest form of policy impact: genuine professional and moral transformation.

Theme 20: Dependence on External Support Systems

Participants reinforced the centrality of external support systems by emphasizing that their confidence and effectiveness in CPP-aligned decision-making is directly tied to the strength of both school-based and family support structures.

“To have smooth relation with the pupils and parents, during the HRPTA meeting I will discuss to them my policies, my wants and my dreams for my pupils to become responsible citizens as they grow up. I believe that if you communicate well, just and fair and transparent to pupils and parents, maybe they will behave and cooperate whatever activities done in school.” (Ma. Luisa, IDI 1)

This finding underscores the importance of viewing CPP not as a standalone school policy but as one component of a larger, interconnected child protection ecosystem requiring alignment across home, school, and community—a conclusion that resonates with both the ecological systems perspective and the collaborative vision articulated in SDG16.

Synthesis

This phenomenological study, using Colaizzi's (1978) method and anchored in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory and Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior, generated twenty emergent themes across three research questions. Research Question 1 revealed the CPP's dual impact: as a boon, it strengthened child welfare practices, shifted disciplinary approaches from punitive to restorative, and clarified professional boundaries; as a bane, it created hesitancy among veteran teachers, enabled some students to resist legitimate discipline, weakened support from disengaged families, and produced emotional exhaustion. Research Question 2 identified seven adaptive strategies: proactive classroom norm-setting, private and respectful handling of misbehavior, systematic documentation, peer learning through LAC sessions, utilization of institutional support structures, technology-assisted objectivity, and empathetic context-sensitive responses. Research Question 3 traced a developmental

arc from initial professional destabilization to gradual transformation, with teachers evolving from viewing themselves primarily as disciplinarians to embracing a dual identity as both disciplinarian and child advocate. Taken together, the findings confirm that the CPP is inherently dual in nature—enabling and constraining, protective and burdensome—its impact shaped by the degree of alignment across Bronfenbrenner's ecological levels.

CONCLUSION

In the light of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The CPP functions simultaneously as a boon and a bane for veteran educators in the Division of Kidapawan City. As a boon, it provides a protective framework for learner welfare, promotes restorative discipline over punitive approaches, and clarifies professional boundaries and procedures. As a bane, it erodes traditional disciplinary authority, enables some students to misuse their rights, exposes gaps in home-school support systems, and intensifies the emotional labor demands on educators.
2. Veteran educators have developed a repertoire of seven adaptive strategies to navigate the tensions introduced by CPP implementation, including preventive and proactive discipline, private and respectful handling of misbehavior, systematic observation-conversation-documentation routines, peer collaboration through Learning Action Cells, reliance on institutional support structures, the use of technology for transparency, and empathetic context-sensitive responses to student behavior.
3. The CPP has produced a developmental trajectory in veteran educators characterized by initial professional destabilization followed by gradual growth in confidence, a reconceptualization of professional identity to encompass both disciplinarian and child advocate, more reflective and evidence-based decision-making, and a humanizing effect on teacher character that represents genuine professional and moral transformation aligned with the values of SDG16.
4. The CPP's effectiveness in advancing SDG16's vision of peaceful, just, and inclusive educational institutions is fundamentally dependent on the degree of alignment across ecological levels—particularly between the school and the family—and on the availability of accessible and responsive institutional support structures including functional Child Protection Committees, school administrators, and guidance counselors.
5. The study recommends sustained scenario-based professional development programs, empowered Child Protection Committees, structured parent engagement orientations, and balanced student rights education that equally emphasizes corresponding responsibilities as conditions necessary for the CPP to fulfill its potential as a catalyst for a more humane, rights-affirming educational culture in Philippine public secondary schools.

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