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### Research Article

## Navigating Implementation and Management of CPC in Buguias, Benguet, Philippines

\*<sup>1</sup>Daiseryl C. Aniban

### About Article

#### Article History

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#### About Author

<sup>1</sup> Hagat Management Consultancy Services, Ifugao State University, Philippines

Contact @ Daiseryl C. Aniban  
[andraisabeldumao@gmail.com](mailto:andraisabeldumao@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Bullying remains a major issue on a global scale, making it a crucial subject for empirical research and successful intervention. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of CPC members and sixth-grade learners in Buguias with regard to the implementation and management practices addressing bullying incidents and their effects on learners' mental well-being. Thirty purposely selected participants provided the data, fifteen of them were CPC members and fifteen were learners of Buguias. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to obtain data, which was then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The study strictly adhered to all ethical guidelines prior to and during its conduct. Findings revealed that while schools in Buguias District have implemented Child Protection Committee (CPC) policies and anti-bullying management practices, challenges persist in ensuring their effectiveness. Schools have adopted preventive measures such as awareness programs and supervision, intervention strategies like reporting systems and counseling, and disciplinary actions for offenders. These efforts have contributed to fostering a safer environment, reducing anxiety, improving academic focus, and strengthening peer relationships. However, issues such as parental resistance, gaps in teacher training, and inconsistent policy enforcement hinder the full realization of these initiatives. Some students also experience lingering emotional effects, emphasizing the need for continuous support and reinforcement. To address these concerns, recommendations include strengthening teacher training, improving parent-teacher collaboration, enhancing reporting mechanisms, and sustaining awareness through student-led initiatives. This study is the first to examine the role of CPCs in safeguarding learners' mental well-being in Buguias, offering new insights that can guide schools in further enhancing anti-bullying strategies toward a safer and more inclusive learning environment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying remains a ubiquitous problem internationally and is an important topic for effective intervention and empirical research. Bullying frequently targets a large number of learners. Bullying is seen as a serious public health issue, and its victims have both immediate and long-term repercussions. According to research, young people who have experienced bullying are more likely to experience behavioral, emotional, mental, and physical issues in addition to low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression (Menestrel, 2020). O'Higgins *et al.* (2022) states bullying at school affects one in three children worldwide, making bullying prevention imperative. Increased professional development for educators on bullying tactics, school-wide bullying prevention initiatives, or the expansion of anti-bullying legislation are some examples of prevention.

Bullying is characterized by three core elements, namely (1) an intention to harm; (2) repetitive in nature; and (3) a clear power imbalance between perpetrator and victim (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Moreover, bullying can include relational, verbal, or physical behaviors. Most recently, online aggressive behaviors that are consistent with definitions of school bullying have been defined as cyberbullying (Betts, 2016; Carrera-Fernández *et al.*, 2021). The present review, however, is concerned only with school-bullying, specifically, bullying that occurs in schools involving children. School bullying is a complex social phenomenon and can commonly involve the whole peer group. Bullying in school concerns parents, teachers, school administrators, guidance counselors in most Philippine schools (Panopio & Tan, 2019). It is undoubtedly one of the challenging problems faced by schools and even communities worldwide because of its adverse effect on the victim and also to the bully (Horton, 2021).

The scientific literature has extensively established the detrimental effects of both perpetrating and being the victim of school bullying. In order to decrease school bullying among children and teenagers worldwide, these results emphasize the necessity of efficient intervention and prevention initiatives (Gaffney *et al.*, 2019). In order to effectively prevent and address bullying among learners, it is crucial that schools develop anti-bullying policies and that all parties involved are knowledgeable of the preventive and intervention programs. Any attempt to prevent or stop bullying by the government, educational institutions, organizations, and/or individuals is referred to as anti-bullying. Laws, regulations, movements, initiatives, and/or projects could all be examples of this (Daguasi, 2020).

The school district is in charge of anti-bullying policies and initiatives. Promoting positive conduct across the entire school is necessary to create a pleasant school climate. It is imperative that school staff, administrators, learners, parents, and other community members participate in effective anti-bullying initiatives. Programming must therefore be incorporated into the regular educational environment rather than being offered as an add-on (Pritt, 2024).

The enforcement of ABLs is also evidenced by research findings. State anti-bullying laws have reduced victimization from bullying, depression, and suicidal thoughts among females and youth, as per research conducted by Rees *et al.* (2020). Enforcement of ABLs reduces the suicide rate among females

aged 14–18 by 13–16%. There is evidence supporting the concept of developing a positive school climate. Positive school climate has been associated with fewer cases of physical, emotional, and cyberbullying (Acosta *et al.*, 2019). The commonality among these studies is that greater academic achievement, reduced victimization by bullying, and significantly higher attendance rates are associated with a positive school climate and relationship (Cuellar *et al.*, 2021).

ABLs are also supported by Rees *et al.* (2022). In their research, ABLs correlate with a 13–16% decrease in the female suicide rate for the 14 to 18-year-olds. Ramirez *et al.* (2022) concluded that the rate of bullying first rose because more people were reporting since the law had passed. They continue to add that subsequent rates of bullying fell as the law developed. Precisely, laws and policies need to be specifically tailored to fit youths.

With a 30–50% decrease rate, the Olweus Anti-Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) was highlighted as one of the most effective programs for decreasing bullying (Borgen *et al.*, 2021). According to Washington-Nortey *et al.* (2023), OBPP fosters relationships between learners and staff by fostering trust and offering clear education regarding bullying. Opportunities for collaborative participation and addressing student issues are provided by the program.

Researchers emphasize the value of teacher professional development to ensure faithful implementation (Rawlings *et al.*, 2019). Designing these activities must consider the building and district demographics, including socioeconomic, political, and social standing. Political conservatism may be linked to increased bullying and worse mental health outcomes for children (Hobaica *et al.*, 2021). Since districts vary in size and culture, primary contacts should be appointed to encourage allied teachers and reaffirm youth. Teachers, as classroom administrators and socialization facilitators, are essential in preventing bullying (Chen *et al.*, 2020), having a unique opportunity to observe social dynamics and promote prosocial participation, thus influencing anti-bullying efforts (Burger *et al.*, 2022).

Gaffney *et al.* (2019) identified effective anti-bullying programs, including KiVa, NoTrap!, Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP), and Viennese Social Competence Program. In Greece, programs were most effective in reducing perpetration; in Italy, most effective in reducing victimization. In North America, perpetration reduction was highest, while Scandinavia excelled in victimization reduction. OBPP had the largest effect on perpetration, while NoTrap! excelled in reducing victimization. In the U.S., Zaremba (2017) found policies often required reactive rather than proactive measures, lacked top-down communication, and had ineffective training materials, prompting a shift toward proactive approaches. Hall (2017) noted that policy effectiveness depends on evidence-based content and high-fidelity implementation. Panfilova *et al.* (2021) showed that their approach to program design and promotion increased awareness, reduced bullying frequency, and improved school climate. Kalis (2019) reported OBPP's delivery with fidelity, moderate decreases in incidents, and strong support from stakeholders. Gregory (2016) suggested forgiveness education to improve climate, empathy, and offender reintegration.

Tokarick (2015) found prevention programs did not alter perceptions, indicating implementation issues. Lanigan (2015)



and Fox *et al.* (2012) confirmed program effectiveness, especially with greater duration, intensity, and inclusion of parent and teacher training. Fox *et al.* also found certain features less effective, such as randomized experiments and total number of components. Panopio and Tan (2019) cited home visitation and student orientation as main interventions, with classroom management training and policy briefings for late enrollees. Abagao *et al.* (2018) noted high awareness of the Anti-Bullying Law, which grants reporting rights and requires comprehensive interventions involving all stakeholders. Daguasi (2020) recommended monitoring tools, student alliances, budget allocation, and reviewing OBPP mechanics. Marces *et al.* (2019) found parents, teachers, and students equally aware of disciplinary actions, recommending whole-school approaches, “Anti-Bullying Week,” and community collaboration under RA 10627.

Despite teachers’ critical role, little research examines their responses to bullying or the barriers they face, such as difficulty identifying incidents and limited time (Marshall, 2012). Barriers occur at student, teacher, school, and sociocultural levels, with no direct link between perceived barriers and responses. Salmivalli *et al.* (2021) highlighted weak program effects, complex bullying-status links, possible iatrogenic effects of peer defending, and the “healthy context paradox,” suggesting future research directions. Cunningham *et al.* (2015) noted added complexity from cyberbullying, time constraints, lack of principal support, uncooperative parents, and program discontinuity, leading to educator frustration.

Smith *et al.* (2019) stressed empowering bystanders, improving victim coping, and teacher leadership in programs. Bullying cannot be eliminated, but actions can reduce prevalence, help victims, support bystanders, reform perpetrators, and improve school climate (Villarejo-Carbillad *et al.*, 2019; Astor, 2019). Panopio and Tan (2019) further examined barriers: student-, teacher-, school-, and community-based, all significantly affecting programs and strategies. Recommendations include comprehensive training, empowering staff, strengthening home visitation, values formation, orientations, forming a bullying committee, and increasing reporting, monitoring, and problem assessment.

There are numerous barriers to the implementation of bullying interventions programs in elementary schools. This includes the lack of funding, lack of resources, and the need for trained personnel. Additionally, without the necessary training and resources, it will be difficult for school members to effectively implement a bullying prevention program in elementary schools. Thus, to further implement the bullying prevention programs effectively, it should be designed according to the needs of each school. It should also aim at reducing or eliminating all forms of violence and verbal harassment among students by providing a safe learning environment for children (Obregón-Cuesta *et al.*, 2022).

In the Philippines, DepEd reported that 80% of the 1,456 child abuse cases involved bullying (Daguasi, 2020). This is despite the passing of RA 10627 and the creation of DepEd’s Child Protection Policy.

Although there have been many previous attempts to establish what works in bullying intervention and prevention (Rees *et*

*al.*, 2020; Borgen *et al.*, 2021; Washington-Nortey *et al.*, 2023; Gaffney *et al.*, 2019; Zaremba, 2017; Hall, 2017; Panfilova *et al.*, 2021; Kalis, 2019; Abagao *et al.*, 2018), there are still remainders that aren’t addressed enough (Salmivalli *et al.*, 2021; Smith *et al.*, 2019; Panopio & Tan, 2019; Obregón-Cuesta *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the implementation and management practices in compliance with the provisions of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Anti-Bullying Act (RA 10627) in addressing bullying in schools and communities. This aims also to identify its underlying impact on the learners’ well-being at Buguias, Benguet. In addition, the researcher’s school frequently experiences incidents of bullying. Challenges related to anti-bullying interventions include relationships with students, lack of training, and lack of implementation consistency (weak enforcement and inadequate reporting mechanisms). Moreover, this also alerts with the increasing suicidal of bullying victims (learners).

Exploring the lived experiences of CPC members and grade 6 learners in the implementation and management practices in addressing bullying incidents: their effect on learners’ mental well-being in Buguias is significant for promoting a safe learning environment, identifying effective strategies, addressing barriers to implementation, encouraging inclusivity and equity, enhancing stakeholder collaboration, improving mental health outcomes, guiding policy and program development, and contributing to research and advocacy. This paper is crucial as it impacts various stakeholders, including learners, teachers, administrators, and policymakers. For learners’ well-being and safety, academic performance, social development, and long-term effects; for teachers’ classroom environment, professional growth, role modeling, administrators, school climate, policy implementation, and reputation and accountability; and for policymakers’ evidence-based decisions, resource allocation, compliance and monitoring.

While previous studies have examined laws, school-wide programs, and policy enforcement, little is known about the lived practices of Child Protection Committees (CPCs) in rural Philippine contexts. Addressing this gap provides fresh insights into how CPC implementation directly influences learners’ mental well-being.

### 1.1. Conceptual framework

Bullying in schools has become a widespread problem that can have life-long negative consequences for both the bully and the victim. Because of the long lasting effect it has on those involved, bullying is a hot topic and a definite area of concern for both parents and educators alike (Panopio & Tan, 2019). With the enactment of Republic Act 10627 or the “*AntiBullying Act of 2013*”, it required all elementary and secondary schools to adopt policies to prevent and address bullying in their institutions. This law compliments the Department of Education (DepEd)’s existing Child Protection Policy. DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, entitled “*DepEd Child Protection Policy*” mandates concerned individuals the policy and guidelines on the protection of school-children abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying and other forms of abuse. The issuance of this policy aims to safeguard the welfare of school children from all forms of violence.



Bullying refers to any severe, or repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at another student that has the effect of actually causing or placing the latter in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm or damage to his property; creating a hostile environment at school; or materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school (IRR, RA 10627 December 13, 2013).

Consequently, this qualitative phenomenological research design was carried out to explore the lived experiences of CPC members and grade 6 learners in the implementation and management practices in addressing bullying incidents: their effect on learners' mental well-being. As Alhazmi and Kaufmann (2022) asserted, a qualitative phenomenological approach offers a theoretical tool for educational research because it enables the researcher to participate in adaptable activities that can characterize and aid in the understanding of complex phenomena, such as different facets of the human social experience. Whereas, the phenomena lies in the context of implementation and management practices in addressing bullying incidents at Buguias.

The lived experiences of CPC members (educators, committee members, or members) are crucial in implementing anti-bullying programs and management practices in bullying incidents because they provide firsthand insights into the realities and challenges faced by both learners and school personnel. These experiences enable CPC members to develop more practical, compassionate, and contextually responsive strategies that are more than theory. Having first-hand experience with cases of bullying, CPC members are able to identify patterns, causes, and most effective interventions appropriate to the unique needs of their school communities. Their experience ensures that anti-bullying programs are not just policy-driven but evidence-driven, and therefore implementation would be more responsive and effective. Their shared experiences also forge a stronger sense of commitment and cooperation among school stakeholders to establish a safer and more supportive learning community.

In the lens of the students, the efforts of the anti-bullying interventions and management by the Child Protection Committee (CPC) can make a big difference in their emotional well-being and overall well-being. If the students are aware that their school tackles bullying through: a) watchful measures and support systems, b) they feel safer, c) more respected, and d) more at ease being themselves. This sense of security can reduce anxiety, depression, and fear that normally dominate due to bullying. Moreover, when the students are aware that bullying episodes are dealt with justly and in a timely manner, it makes them more confident in the system and builds a culture of respect and acceptance. Being certain of the presence of responsible people who hear their grievances and protect their rights can increase their emotional strength and help build a positive attitude towards school life.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, emphasizes how a child's development is influenced by different levels of the child's surroundings, i.e., the direct school setting (microsystem), interaction with teachers and peers (mesosystem), and policies or programs mandated by

institutions (exosystem). The anti-bullying implementation and management practices of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) members directly affect learners at multiple levels of this ecosystem. By exploring how the CPC and grade 6 learners' lived experiences (exosystem) and the resulting anti-bullying movements influence the school environment (microsystem) and, in turn, impact the learners' mental health and emotional well-being (individual development). This theory provides a strong framework to examine not only the direct effects of these practices on learners but also the broader systemic interactions that shape school culture and student experiences.

As a result, the paper culminated in an action or intervention plan (proposed model to promote mental well-being of learners) aimed at addressing the study's findings.

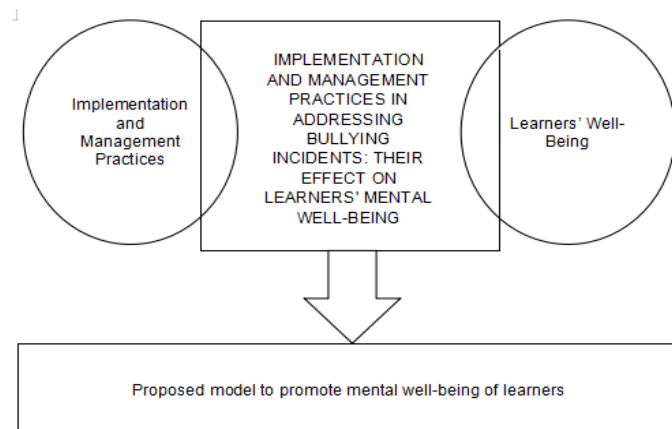


Figure 1. Paradigm of the study

## 1.2. Research questions

The following questions answered the implementation and management practices in addressing bullying incidents: their effect on learners' mental well-being at Buguias.

- i. How is the CPC implementation in the school?
- ii. What are the CPC management practices?
- iii. What is the effect of CPC management on the mental well-being of learners?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Global anti-bullying programs

International studies confirm that bullying has long-term psychological and behavioral impacts, highlighting the need for strong prevention programs (Gaffney *et al.*, 2019; Ttofi *et al.*, 2016). Programs such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program (OBPP) show significant reductions in bullying and improved student-staff trust (Borgen *et al.*, 2021; Washington-Nortey *et al.*, 2023). Other initiatives like KiVa in Finland and NoTrap! in Italy have proven effective in reducing perpetration and victimization (Gaffney *et al.*, 2019). Family involvement and forgiveness education also strengthen school climate (Gregory, 2016; Lester *et al.*, 2017). However, some programs fall short due to weak implementation or insufficient intensity (Tokarick, 2015; Fox *et al.*, 2012). Overall, global evidence supports comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approaches to reduce bullying (Villarejo-Carbillado *et al.*, 2019; Astor & Benbenishty, 2019).





## 2.2. Philippine policy context

In the Philippines, Republic Act 10627 or the “Anti-Bullying Act of 2013,” together with DepEd’s Child Protection Policy (DO 40, s. 2012), mandates schools to adopt anti-bullying measures. Studies show mixed results: students are highly aware of the law (Abagao *et al.*, 2018), but schools often rely on limited interventions such as home visitation or policy briefings (Panopio & Tan, 2019). Parents, teachers, and students recognize disciplinary actions but call for localized guidelines and stronger collaboration (Marces *et al.*, 2019). Daguasi (2020) stressed the need for better monitoring tools, budget support, and student alliances, while Mag-atas and Carmona (2023) examined how the policy shapes teachers’ discipline strategies in practice.

## 2.3. Implementation barriers

Despite strong policies, implementation remains uneven. Teachers report inadequate preparation, outdated procedures, and over-reliance on online training (Shewchuk, 2016; Treacy & Nohilly, 2020). Enforcement gaps are noted, with weak policy compliance (Bayucca, 2020) and teacher hesitation to discipline due to fear of violating CPC rules (Quinto & Santos, 2021; Castino, 2023). Parents sometimes resist or misinterpret CPC measures, complicating school efforts (Asio, 2020). Broader barriers include limited resources, confidentiality issues, and cultural differences in discipline (Münger & Markström, 2019; Obregón-Cuesta *et al.*, 2022). Program-level challenges such as complex peer dynamics and weak effects further limit impact (Salmivalli *et al.*, 2021).

## 2.4. Synthesis and research gap

The literature shows that while global programs and Philippine laws provide strong foundations, implementation challenges persist, especially in rural settings. Weak teacher preparation, inconsistent enforcement, and parental resistance undermine effectiveness. Previous studies focus on laws and program outcomes, but little attention has been given to the lived practices of Child Protection Committees (CPCs) in rural schools. This study addresses that gap by examining how CPC implementation in Buguias District influences learners’ mental well-being and promotes a safe, inclusive, and disciplined school environment.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Research design

The study sought to collect the firsthand accounts of CPC members and grade 6 learners in the implementation and management practices in addressing bullying incidents: their effect on learners’ mental well-being. Consequently, a qualitative phenomenological research design was employed. According to Alhazmi and Kaufmann (2022), who claimed that a qualitative phenomenological approach offers a theoretical tool for educational research because it enables the researcher to participate in adaptable activities that can characterize and aid in the understanding of complex phenomena, such as different facets of the human social experience. Whereas, the phenomena lies in the context of implementation and management practices in addressing bullying incidents at Buguias.

### 3.2. Research environment

Buguias, a municipality in the Benguet province of the Philippines, is a first-class Local Government Unit (LGU). It is a farming community that produces a lot of highland veggies, particularly carrots. The municipality is home to Apo Anno’s mummy, one of the most important and beloved folk heroes in Benguet before the Spanish conquest. Politically, Buguias is separated into 14 barangays, namely Abatan, Amgaleyguey, Amlimay, Baculongan Norte, Bangao, Buyacaoan, Calamagan, Catlubong, Loo, Natubleng, Poblacion (Central), Baculongan Sur, Lengaoan, and Sebang. There are puroks in every barangay, and some also have sitios.

Moreover, the district has 43 public elementary schools spread throughout the 14 barangays. There were four (4) school classifications. In particular, school classification 1 involved the four barangays: Buyacaoan, Abatan, Bangao, and Calamagan, which catered to kindergarten through grade 6. Within this cluster were nine (9) public elementary schools. School classification 2 encompassed nine (9) public elementary schools located in the three (3) barangays, namely Natubleng, Amgaleyguey, and Lengaoan. Moreover, school classification includes 3 enclosed barangays Loo, Buyacaoan, Baculongan Sur, and Baculongan Norte. Within these barangays were twelve (12) public elementary schools. Lastly, school classification 4 has thirteen (13) public elementary schools located in four (4) barangays.

### 3.3. Participants of the study

The data came from 30 participants, 15 of whom were CPC members and 15 of whom were learners. To specifically address research questions 1 and 2, this included any educators, committee members, or members of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) from the four clusters of Buguias who had served for at least three years. To respond to research question 3, this involved sixth-grade learners engaged victims of bullying. Interviews were conducted with participants exclusively at the schools where bullying incidents occurred. The data collection process excluded all those who were not previously specified in the criteria. Additionally, a saturation of data was observed. In qualitative research, the quantity of interviews is related to the idea of saturation. When the researcher gathers enough information to make the required deductions and gathering any more won’t yield any new insights, the research process is said to be at data saturation. In addition, the identification of these respondents was made via quota sampling. Quota sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that involves the non-random selection of a set number or proportion of units (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

### 3.4. Data gathering procedures

Data collection was carried out using an interview. The researcher first sought approval from the relevant authorities, including the School Division Superintendent Benguet, Public School District Supervisor Buguias, and school administrators, to proceed with the data gathering. After obtaining the required authorization, the researcher gathered information about the schools where bullying incidents occur. Then, she scheduled interviews with those who were available and



willing to share about their experiences. Each participant had a one-on-one interview for fifteen minutes. Both audio recording and note-taking were used. The study's ethical considerations and the guarantee that their personal identities would be kept private were explained to the participants. All information gathered through recordings was handled with the highest confidentiality. After that, the researcher organized, documented, and examined the answers. The data collection took place between February and April of 2025.

### 3.5. Data gathering tool

The researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol to collect data on the firsthand accounts of CPC members and grade 6 learners in the implementation and management practices in addressing bullying incidents: their effect on learners' mental well-being. It was classified into two components. The first part included the interviewee's profile and an introduction from the researcher to prepare the participants comfortably and explain the purpose and methodology of the data collection. In Part 2, it involved a series of open-ended semi-structured questions asked to the participants about the CPC implementation in their school, the anti-bullying incident management practices, and the effect of instilling anti-bullying incident management on the mental well-being of learners. In this part, the researcher also concluded and expressed gratitude to the participants for their contribution to the study.

### 3.6. Data analysis

The researcher used a thematic analysis approach to analyze the data, which included the following steps: a) familiarization: to become fully immersed in the data and develop a basic understanding of the content, the researcher read and reread the interview transcripts; b) coding: important phrases and segments related to the research questions were systematically identified to generate initial codes. To guarantee a thorough interaction with the data, this procedure was carried out by hand; c) theme development: codes were subsequently categorized into more general themes that encapsulated the participants' experiences. To make sure the themes appropriately reflected the facts, the research team discussed and improved them; d) looking over themes: the themes that were found were compared to the data to make sure they were consistent and encompassed all important facets of the participants' experiences; e) defining and naming themes: the final themes were precisely defined and given names that appropriately reflected their content.

In order to identify and lessen any potential biases, the researcher kept reflexive notebooks throughout the investigation to document their ideas and reflections. The data was arranged and managed using NVivo software, which made the analysis process more methodical and thorough.

### 3.7. Ethical considerations

All ethical protocols were followed by the researcher both before and during the study. The researcher sought permission from the School Division Superintendent Benguet and Public School District Supervisor Buguias for the conduct of the study. She conducted a one-on-one interview with the selected participants for confidentiality purposes. Confidentiality

and informed consent rules were followed. The names of the participants were treated with utmost confidentiality by using other names assigned to them. The following participants in this study utilized the following pseudo-name: P1-P15 (participant). Participants were not forced to answer the questions if they did not like it.

The researcher applied the principles of ethical considerations developed by Bryman and Bell (2007). In regard to the involvement of this study, the participants were not subjected to harm in any ways. Prior to the study, full consent was obtained from the participants, the CPC members and grade 6 learners of Buguias, Benguet. In addition, the protection of the privacy of research participants was ensured. The chosen participants were assured that the data would be used exclusively for study. Voluntary participation of respondents in the research was treated very important. Moreover, they had rights to withdraw from the study at any stage if they wished to do so. In handling the data, an adequate level of confidentiality was ensured.

Any form of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings in a biased way was avoided. On the other hand, maintaining the highest level of objectivity in discussions and analyses throughout the research was considered. Furthermore, affiliations in any forms, sources of funding, as well as possible conflicts of interest were declared. Lastly, any type of communication to this action research was done with honesty and transparency.

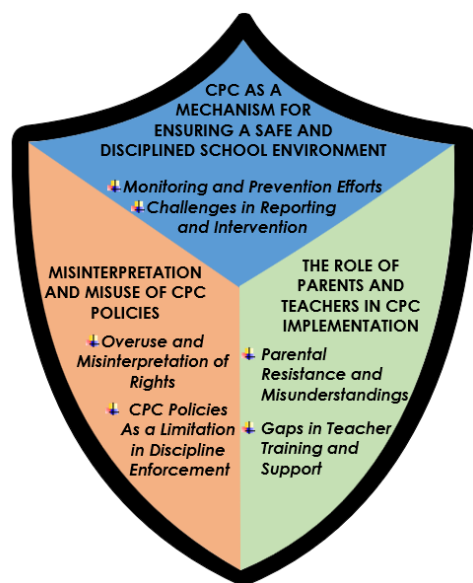
## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. CPC Implementation in the school

The Child Protection Committee (CPC) is a schoolwide body tasked with safeguarding children's welfare, instilling discipline, and ensuring safety in the learning environment through the prevention of bullying, handling of misconduct, and collaboration among teachers, administrators, parents, and students. In the Buguias District, the CPC serves as the channel for implementing child protection measures aimed at creating a secure, supportive space where learners develop socially and mentally. Its effectiveness is reflected in three themes: (1) CPC as a vehicle for a disciplined and safe school climate, (2) misinterpretation and abuse of CPC policies, and (3) the involvement of parents and teachers in implementation. These themes highlight both the strengths of CPC initiatives and the challenges caused by misconceptions, inconsistent enforcement, and limited coordination, underscoring the need for uniform application, stronger collaboration, and greater awareness to effectively protect learners and maintain discipline.

The shield pattern illustrates the implementation of the Comprehensive Policy on Child Protection (CPC), symbolizing its role in safeguarding students while upholding discipline. Its three colors represent the key themes: (1) CPC as a mechanism for a safe and disciplined environment, (2) misinterpretation and misuse of policies, and (3) the role of parents and teachers in implementation. The shield reflects protection of students' rights and well-being, with the first section focusing on monitoring and intervention, the second on policy misinterpretation risks, and the third on partnerships with parents and teachers. Together, these themes underscore CPC's





**Figure 2.** The shield of responsibility: safeguarding schools through CPC implementation

dual mandate of ensuring safety and enforcing policies fairly and effectively.

### Theme 1: CPC as a Mechanism for ensuring a safe and disciplined school environment

A well-organized and disciplined school life is essential for students' social, academic, and emotional success, yet bullying threatens their safety and well-being. The Child Protection Committee (CPC) addresses this by establishing guidelines and interventions that foster a safe, respectful, and disciplined environment through collaboration among administrators, teachers, parents, and students. In the Buguias District, teachers implement CPC policies by monitoring interactions, reporting misbehavior, and guiding learners toward positive conduct, but challenges remain as some students fear retaliation, others misinterpret disciplinary measures, and teachers vary in confidence when handling sensitive cases, resulting in inconsistent application. To explore CPC's role in creating a secure environment, this theme focuses on two subthemes: Monitoring and Prevention Efforts, and Reporting and Intervention Challenges.

#### Subtheme 1.1: Monitoring and prevention efforts

Prevention and monitoring are essential to maintaining school safety, especially in bullying cases. Buguias schools implement CPC policies, conduct regular monitoring, and involve PTAs in resolving minor conflicts before escalation. These efforts aim to ensure a safer environment and reduce bullying incidents. However, inconsistencies remain as teachers struggle with delicate cases, and the quality of training affects policy application. Strengthening monitoring through teacher capacity building and proactive detection of early signs of bullying can improve prevention efforts.

As shared by teacher participants,

*"The CPC helps create a safe school environment by addressing bullying and child protection concerns through collaboration*

*among teachers, administrators, parents, and students."* - P1

*"CPC implementation is observed, and class advisers monitor students' activities, with PTA officers assisting in resolving minor incidents before escalating them."* - P2

*"CPC policies are strictly observed to ensure student protection."* - P5

*"CPC policies are discussed in school meetings, but many teachers lack confidence in handling sensitive cases, making intervention inconsistent."* - P9

Teachers in Buguias District actively enforce CPC policies and work with parents, particularly through PTAs, to maintain a safe environment and resolve minor disputes, reflecting a collective commitment to student protection. However, inconsistencies remain, as teachers differ in preparedness and confidence when handling sensitive bullying cases, making consistent implementation crucial. Al-Qaysi (2018) emphasized the importance of child protection in professional practice, while studies by Riego de Dios (2020), Asio & Jimenez (2020), Asio and Riego de Dios (2019), and Asio *et al.* (2019) provided related perspectives. Teacher motivation (Jimenez, 2020) and the economic impact of child protection (Aizer & Doyle, 2018) also influence policy outcomes, while Asio & Gadia (2018; 2019) noted challenges teachers face in bullying contexts. Roche (2019) identified policy gaps in the Philippines, and Munro (2019) suggested adopting a "positive error" culture to strengthen decision-making and risk management.

#### Subtheme 1.2: Challenges in reporting and intervention

Reporting and intervention are vital in addressing bullying, yet several challenges remain. In Buguias District, students often hesitate to report due to fear of retaliation, peer pressure, or mistrust, leaving cases unreported and harming mental well-being. Teachers struggle to intervene promptly when students remain silent. Disciplinary actions are also difficult to enforce, as some students misuse CPC policies to resist authority. Educators fear being misinterpreted, while lack of parental support further hinders interventions. Strengthening trust, support systems, and school-parent communication is essential to improve reporting and intervention strategies.

Teacher participants mentioned,

*"Some students hesitate to report bullying due to fear, and responses to incidents are sometimes delayed."* - P1

*"We follow CPC policies, and students are aware of them. However, many students hesitate to report bullying for fear of retaliation from their classmates."* - P7

*"Peer pressure discourages students from reporting bullying, as they fear being labeled a "snitch.""* - P14

*"The CPC guidelines are being implemented, but there are times when we feel powerless in handling student misbehavior. When we call parents for support, some react negatively and blame the school instead of addressing their child's actions."* - P15

*"One of the biggest challenges is the way some students misinterpret CPC guidelines. When we enforce rules, they sometimes say, "I will report you," even when we are simply reminding them about proper behavior."* - P10

*"Many students fear retaliation from classmates, making it difficult to intervene before the situation worsens."* - P7

The claims indicate that despite having anti-bullying policies





and CPC rules in Buguias District to ease reporting and intervention, their effectiveness is significantly impaired by fear, peer pressure, and misinterpretation of punishments. The majority of students continue to be afraid of reporting bullying for fear of being retaliated against or ostracized, and thus the incidents continue to go undetected and unresolved. Such reticence not only extends victims' emotional agony but also constrains intervention by teachers to effectively correct a situation. To add, a few students abuse CPC policies as a means to defy authority, such that teachers end up finding corrective measures challenging in fear of a false accusation against them. This is also hampered by parents' non-support, where defensive reactions lead to collaborative problem-solving being thwarted in the resolution of student misbehavior. These are problems that demonstrate the gap between policy and practice, indicating that the intervention framework exists, but its success depends on building trust among students, improving school-community relations, and policies being well known and enforced by all.

## **Theme 2: Misinterpretation and misuse of CPC policies**

Child Protection Committee (CPC) policies protect students from bullying, harassment, and abuse while promoting a safe and supportive learning environment. In Buguias District, these policies have strengthened student welfare, yet misuse and misinterpretation pose challenges to discipline and authority. Some students exploit CPC provisions to avoid corrective measures, making it difficult for teachers to instill proper behavior. This section examines these unintended consequences, focusing on: (1) Overuse and Misuse of Rights how learners misuse CPC policies to resist discipline, and (2) CPC Policies as a Restraint to Discipline Enforcement the limitations teachers face in managing behavior within child protection rules.

### **Subtheme 2.1: Overuse and misinterpretation of rights**

Overuse and misinterpretation occur when students invoke CPC policies to evade correction or challenge legitimate disciplinary measures. While designed to safeguard learners, some students in Buguias District misinterpret disciplinary actions or constructive feedback as violations of their rights. This undermines teacher authority, weakens classroom discipline, and hinders efforts to instill good behavior. Teachers, wary of being accused of violations, often withdraw from enforcing rules, creating loopholes that encourage students to believe they are beyond correction. Though CPC policies remain vital in protecting children, their misuse results in unintended consequences that disrupt learning and impede both academic and personal development.

Teacher participants uttered,

*"Students are very aware of their rights but sometimes misinterpret them, making it difficult for teachers to discipline them."* - P4

*"Some students take advantage of CPC policies by claiming that corrective feedback is verbal abuse."* - P6

*"Some students misuse CPC guidelines, threatening to report teachers even when they are simply being reminded about proper behavior."* - P10

*"The school conducts CPC orientations, but some students still refuse to follow simple instructions. They know that disciplinary actions are limited, so they sometimes talk back or ignore teachers' corrections."* - P8

*"While CPC policies have made schools safer, they have also created a gap in discipline. Some students do not follow rules because they know that teachers have limited options when addressing misconduct."* - P12

While CPC policies in Buguias District aim to protect students' rights and provide a safe environment, their misinterpretation has led to discipline issues. Some students use these policies to defy intervention, viewing corrective feedback as a violation of their rights. This undermines teacher authority, weakens classroom order, and fosters a sense of entitlement that hinders behavior, academic performance, and personal growth. Teachers, wary of being accused of misconduct, often hesitate to enforce discipline. Thus, although CPC policies enhance student protection, they also create gaps in discipline that affect the learning environment and teachers' ability to maintain standards.

Segundo and Guia (2019) found differing perceptions in implementing child protection policies in public schools. Mustikasari and Rostyaningsih (2020) noted constraints in their enforcement, while Treacy and Nohilly (2020) pointed to a compliance-driven culture. Bunting *et al.* (2017) observed rising investigations and child protection planning, and Baginsky *et al.* (2019) highlighted factors influencing safeguarding and increased school autonomy

### **Subtheme 2.2: CPC policies as a limitation in discipline enforcement**

CPC policies restrict teachers from firmly addressing misbehavior due to their protective nature. In Buguias District, educators struggle to balance student rights with effective discipline, as policies constrain their authority to impose consequences. While positive discipline is encouraged, some students dismiss corrective measures, knowing teachers have limited options. Parental resistance to discipline further complicates rule enforcement. As a result, CPC policies, though intended to protect students, also pose challenges in maintaining discipline and sustaining a structured learning environment.

As quoted by Teacher participants,

*"CPC policies are strictly observed, which ensures student protection. However, this also limits teachers' ability to address misbehavior."* - P5

*"We try to reinforce positive discipline, but not all students respond well. Some ignore our advice, while others even act disrespectfully when we try to talk to them calmly about their behavior."* - P13

*"Some students refuse to follow instructions, knowing that teachers have limited disciplinary actions."* - P8

*"Based on my experience, different batches of learners have varying levels of discipline. Some students are more manageable, while others use the school as an outlet for their struggles at home. This makes child protection policies even more critical, but also more challenging to enforce consistently."* - P3

While CPC policies in Buguias District promote students'





welfare and rights, they also make discipline difficult to uphold. Restrictions on penalties weaken teachers' authority, allowing some students to disregard corrections and fostering a culture of indiscipline. The lack of parental support further complicates efforts, as some parents respond defensively instead of cooperating. Thus, although CPC policies protect learners, they have unintentionally reduced teacher control, creating an imbalance between protection and discipline that challenges the overall learning environment.

Quinto and Samson (2021) noted that student misbehavior is a major school issue, with teachers hesitant to enforce discipline for fear of violating child protection laws. Castino (2023) likewise reported that unruly behavior, combined with limits on teacher authority, is one of the most pressing problems in Philippine education. Many schools remain ill-equipped to handle behavioral issues, leaving teachers unprepared for the challenges students present.

### Theme 3: the role of parents and teachers in CPC implementation

The successful implementation of Child Protection Committee (CPC) policies in schools depends on the active involvement of both parents and teachers. In Buguias District, schools have the function of providing a safe and nurturing climate of learning by following CPC guidelines. The success of the policies, however, is often tainted by misunderstandings between parents and teachers and inadequate training of teachers. Although the CPC policies were intended to provide protection to children and establish discipline, there can be problems when parents do not interpret the guidelines or teachers are inadequately trained to implement the guidelines as well.

This theme highlights the important responsibility that parents and teachers have in implementing CPC, with two of its subthemes being parental resistance and myths, and teacher support and training deficits. There are parents who resist corrective actions for their children, usually defending their misconduct rather than cooperating with teachers. At the same time, most educators encounter challenges in implementing CPC policies because they lack adequate training, resulting in inconsistent discipline practices. These challenges must be tackled in making sure that CPC policies work as planned to safeguard the links while keeping the school disciplined.

#### Subtheme 3.1: parental resistance and misunderstandings

Parental resistance and misconceptions arise when CPC policies are misinterpreted, creating tension between educators and families. Instead of working with teachers to address misconduct, some parents view discipline as unfair and use CPC policies to shield their children from consequences. In Buguias District, this defensiveness hinders effective discipline and weakens school-family collaboration. At times, parents even blame schools for misbehavior rather than acknowledging their role in shaping conduct. Such misperceptions undermine CPC implementation, making communication between parents and teachers essential to align expectations and share responsibility for student discipline.

The Teacher participants shared,

*"Misunderstandings arise between teachers and parents when*

*CPC policies are used to justify a child's misbehavior."* - P5

*"There are cases where parents use CPC policies against teachers. Instead of working with us to correct their child's misbehavior, they immediately defend them, making it harder for us to address the issue effectively."* - P11

*"The CPC guidelines are being implemented, but there are times when we feel powerless in handling student misbehavior. When we call parents for support, some react negatively and blame the school instead of addressing their child's actions."* - P15

Parental resistance and misinterpretation of CPC policies in Buguias District create major challenges in enforcing discipline. Some parents view these policies as protection from consequences, reacting defensively to corrective measures and weakening school-home collaboration. This undermines teacher authority, reduces student accountability, and strains teacher-parent relationships. Without aligned expectations and parental support, CPC policies risk contributing to indiscipline rather than preventing it. Asio (2020) emphasized the need to involve parents through meetings that clarify policy provisions, as interpretations vary across families, schools, and communities.

#### Subtheme 3.2: Gaps in teacher training and support.

Inadequate teacher preparation hinders consistent CPC policy enforcement. Despite clear guidelines, many Buguias teachers struggle with implementation due to limited training and support, resulting in inconsistent discipline and mixed messages for students. Managing learners with varying backgrounds further complicates enforcement, leaving teachers feeling powerless. Strengthening professional training and continuous consultation is essential to equip educators with the skills and confidence needed to uphold child protection policies while maintaining order in the classroom.

As shared by Teacher participants,

*"Not all teachers have received adequate training on CPC guidelines, leading to inconsistent implementation."* - P1

*"CPC policies are discussed in meetings, but many teachers lack confidence in handling sensitive cases."* - P9

*"Based on my experience, different batches of learners have varying levels of discipline. Some students are more manageable, while others use the school as an outlet for their struggles at home. This makes child protection policies even more critical, but also more challenging to enforce consistently."* - P3

Deficiencies in teacher training and support in Buguias District weaken CPC policy implementation, as many teachers struggle to enforce rules consistently, manage diverse behaviors, and handle sensitive cases. Studies show similar gaps: outdated procedures (Shewchuk, 2016), confidentiality barriers (Munger & Markstrom, 2019), over-reliance on online training (Treacy & Nohilly, 2020), and weak policy enforcement (Bayuca, 2020). While CPC members are aware of abuse and bullying (Estremera, 2018; Roche, 2017), effective implementation requires stronger monitoring and teacher preparation. Research confirms that comprehensive, high-quality training improves teachers' confidence and ability to manage ethical and behavioral challenges (Barni *et al.*, 2019; Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sawyer, 2021). Strengthening professional development is therefore essential to ensure CPC policies both safeguard students and promote disciplined learning environments.



#### 4.2. Anti-bullying incident management practices

Anti-bullying incident management procedures are organized processes schools use to handle bullying cases by ensuring incidents are identified, reported, investigated, and resolved with student safety and well-being as priorities. In Buguias District, these involve teachers, counselors, administrators, and parents working together to deliver justice to victims, rehabilitate offenders, and prevent recurrence. The framework has three components: (1) Preventive Practices such as awareness and monitoring, (2) Intervention and Resolution Practices including investigation and parent involvement, and (3) Disciplinary and Support Practices that impose consequences on offenders while providing counseling for both parties. Together, these measures foster accountability, respect, and a safer school environment.



**Figure 3.** The interconnected framework of anti-bullying incident management practices

The illustration shows the Anti-Bullying Incident Management Practices by three grasping hands converging, focusing on unity, team work, and collective responsibility in handling cases of bullying. Each hand depicts a primary theme: Preventive Anti-Bullying Practices, Intervention and Resolution Practices, and Disciplinary and Support Practices. The grasped hands illustrate the fact that all these practices don't exist as separate entities but are interconnected for developing an holistic approach to management of bullying. The initial hand, which symbolizes preventive actions, emphasizes proactive approaches to prevent bullying in advance. The second hand, symbolizing intervention and resolution, signifies the need for immediate and organized reactions to bullying acts. The third hand, symbolizing disciplinary and support practices, represents the equilibrium between punishment and rehabilitation of victims and perpetrators. The overall imagery reflects the collaborative effort of teachers, students, and school community in creating a safe and hospitable environment where bullying is addressed and prevented effectively.

##### Theme 1: Preventive anti-bullying practices

Prevention strategies are proactive school interventions that deter bullying by raising awareness among students, parents, and staff, and by fostering respect and inclusion. In Buguias District, schools implement measures to build awareness and

accountability, discouraging bullying at all levels.

This theme includes two subthemes: (1) Awareness and Education Initiatives, which equip students with knowledge about bullying and its effects, and (2) Student Supervision and Monitoring, which ensure close observation of student interactions, especially in high-risk areas, while protecting vulnerable learners.

##### Subtheme 1.1: Awareness and education initiatives

Educational and awareness interventions incorporate school-staged activities designed to acquaint pupils, teachers, and parents with the facts on bullying, as well as bully impacts, alongside acquaintance with the roles and responsibilities of all the interested stakeholder groups toward their avoidance. They aim at developing values for respect, understanding, and gentleness in the learners, as well as ensuring they are aware of regulations and bylaws alongside their resulting punishment attributed to bullying. Schools in the Buguias District regularly discuss, have school meetings, and conduct information campaigns to inform the school community about the need to have a safe and positive environment. By these frequent reminders, students are motivated to maintain respectful relationships and report any type of bullying they see.

As mentioned by Teacher participants,

*"To prevent bullying, we conduct school meetings and information dissemination activities. We discuss the causes, effects, and penalties of bullying with students, parents, and school staff." - P2*

*"We regularly remind students about the school's anti-bullying policies to ensure they understand the consequences of their actions." - P3*

*"We conduct regular classroom discussions on anti-bullying to reinforce the importance of respect and kindness." - P9*

Education and advocacy in Buguias District are vital to fostering a school climate that discourages bullying by promoting awareness, kindness, and respect among students, parents, and teachers. Regular campaigns and activities reinforce compliance, but their success depends on consistent implementation and stakeholder engagement, ensuring long-term behavioral change beyond rule-following. Awareness of child protection policies also strengthens teachers' confidence in addressing ethical challenges, as noted by Barni *et al.* (2019), while targeted and regular training has been shown to raise sensitivity and readiness (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2017). Initiatives such as the Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (2024), which prioritizes safeguarding training and monitoring tools, highlight the importance of structured professional development. Consistent with these findings, this study underscores that sustained education and training unify policy understanding, build teacher confidence, and cultivate safer, more supportive schools (Waseem & Nickerson, 2023; Roche, 2017).

##### Subtheme 1.2: Student supervision and monitoring

Student supervision and monitoring involve the active observation and guidance of students to prevent bullying behaviors from escalating. This includes teachers closely watching interactions, especially in areas where bullying is more likely to occur, and implementing structured support



systems for students who may feel unsafe. Schools in Buguias District employ various strategies, such as the “Buddy System” and anonymous reporting mechanisms, to ensure that students feel protected and have safe avenues to report bullying incidents discreetly. By fostering an environment where students are continuously monitored and supported, schools work to minimize opportunities for bullying and ensure immediate intervention when necessary.

As uttered by Teacher participants,

*“Teachers monitor students’ interactions, especially in areas where bullying commonly occurs, such as hallways, playgrounds, and restrooms.”* - P11

*“We implement a “Buddy System” to help students who feel unsafe.”* - P12

*“The school provides anonymous reporting boxes to encourage students to report bullying discreetly.”* - P13

The words indicate that monitoring and supervising students in Buguias District are preventive acts of preventing bullying and creating a safe school environment. Teachers can identify early indications of bullying through observing students’ interaction in risk areas closely and thus intervene before cases have been established. The implementation of organized support systems, such as the “Buddy System” and anonymous reporting systems, provides the students with safe avenues to seek help without fear of intimidation. These programs provide a culture of vigilance as well as one of accountability so that students can feel safe knowing they are being taken seriously and their safety is addressed. In addition, ongoing monitoring not only discourages possible bullying activity but also promotes positive interactions among students, and in turn, a respectful and respectful school culture. The efficacy of these steps relies on ongoing and active engagement by teachers so that monitoring can remain a stable and integral element of the anti-bullying plan of the school.

## Theme 2: Intervention and resolution practices

Intervention and resolution practices are organized procedures schools use to address bullying by supporting victims and offenders while preventing future incidents. These include policies on reporting, investigation, and remedies that promote accountability and behavior improvement, creating a secure and supportive environment. In Buguias District, schools have adopted such strategies, but consistent, timely, and coordinated implementation among students, teachers, and parents remains a challenge. Some cases go unreported due to fear of reprisal, while others are unresolved because of procedural lapses. Two subthemes emerge: (1) Reporting and Investigation Procedures, which cover how schools respond to bullying cases and apply interventions, and (2) Parent Involvement in Conflict Resolution, which highlights the role of families in collaborating with schools to instill discipline. Together, these practices are vital in mitigating bullying and sustaining a safe and conducive learning environment.

### Subtheme 2.1: Reporting and investigation procedures

Reporting and investigation protocols are official procedures schools use to document, assess, and address bullying, ensuring cases are properly recorded, substantiated, and resolved

through interventions such as counseling or mediation. In Buguias District, students may report incidents to teachers, counselors, or administrators, with response teams tasked to act on complaints. However, challenges remain, as some students fear reprisals, others lack knowledge on how to report, and inconsistencies sometimes delay interventions. Strengthening these mechanisms and providing clear guidance to both students and staff are essential to improve the resolution of bullying cases.

As mentioned by Teacher participants,

*“Our school follows a structured approach to handling bullying incidents, but there are areas that need improvement, especially in execution and consistency. We have a reporting system where students can report bullying through teachers, guidance counselors, or parents.”* - P1

*“We report bullying cases to the guidance office, where students undergo counseling.”* - P7

*“The school has a designated bullying response team that investigates reports of bullying and mediates between students involved.”* - P10

The statements indicate that while Buguias District schools have institutionalized reporting and investigating mechanisms, whether these mechanisms will work or not is subject to many factors, which include the active participation of the students, regular application, and prompt intervention. Having formalized mechanisms for reporting allows students to seek help through teachers, counselors, or school administrators. However, fear of retaliation and lack of knowledge about the correct procedures for reporting prevent such systems from being utilized to capacity. Moreover, discrepancies in case handling cause delays in intervention, which may perpetuate bullying incidents. The involvement of guidance offices and bullying response teams in investigating and facilitating cases serves to demonstrate the school’s intent in addressing bullying, but the challenges in implementation signal the need for more streamlined and transparent procedures. Ensuring all stakeholders know and trust the reporting process is vital in creating a school environment in which students can feel safe and supported in approaching help.

### Subtheme 2.2: parent involvement in conflict resolution

Parent engagement in conflict resolution refers to parents’ active role in addressing bullying cases involving their children, affirming proper behavior, and ensuring issues are resolved. In Buguias District, schools encourage this through meetings and discussions to report incidents, plan interventions, and gain parental cooperation. While some parents collaborate and support disciplinary measures, others become defensive, deny their child’s involvement, or even blame the school, making conflict resolution more difficult. These challenges highlight the need for stronger communication, awareness, and cooperation between schools and parents to ensure effective handling of bullying cases.

Teacher participants expressed,

*“When a bullying case is reported, we call the parents of the students involved to inform them and seek their cooperation in addressing the issue.”* - P3

*“One of our key anti-bullying practices is calling the parents of*





*the students involved in a bullying case. We set up a conference where both sides can be heard, and a resolution can be reached.”* - P5

*“We hold dialogues with the parents of students involved in bullying cases.”* - P8

Schools in the Buguias District recognize the vital role of parents in managing bullying cases and involve them in conflict resolution through meetings and conferences that consider both victim and perpetrator perspectives. However, parental responses vary some cooperate while others react defensively or blame the school hindering consistent corrective measures and long-term solutions. Success depends on parents' willingness to acknowledge their child's behavior and work with teachers, supported by open communication to maintain a unified approach against bullying. As Lester *et al.* (2017) note, family involvement is crucial in prevention and management, as parents can influence children's behavior by modeling positive conduct, advising on responses to bullying, and encouraging help-seeking.

### **Theme 3: Disciplinary and support practices**

Disciplinary and support practices are measures schools use to hold offenders accountable while providing interventions for both victims and perpetrators, aiming to resolve bullying effectively and prevent recurrence. In the Buguias District, schools employ disciplinary actions to maintain order and deter harmful behavior, alongside counseling and mediation to promote correction and healing. This theme has two subthemes: (1) Disciplinary Actions for Offenders, which include warnings, behavior tracking, and corrective tasks, and (2) Counseling for Victims and Offenders, which offers support through counseling, peer mediation, and parental involvement. Together, these practices foster a safer and more supportive school environment.

#### **Subtheme 3.1: Disciplinary actions for offenders**

Disciplinary measures against perpetrators are punishments and remedial actions designed to discourage bullying and instill responsibility among students. In the Buguias District, schools document incidents through anecdotal reports to monitor repeat offenses and behavioral improvements, while offenders may be required to sign promissory notes, receive formal warnings, or perform corrective tasks such as cleaning or reading. These measures help manage conduct but depend on strict enforcement and student responsiveness, as some comply readily while others need closer monitoring. To be effective, disciplinary actions must remain fair, equitable, and consistent with child protection policies.

Teacher participants shared,

*“We keep anecdotal records of bullying cases to track repeated offenses and monitor improvements in student behavior.”* - P3

*“In some cases, students are asked to write a promissory note, promising that they will not engage in bullying again.”* - P5

*“Our school gives warnings and imposes penalties on repeat offenders (cleaning, reading).”* - P14

The statements mean that disciplinary measures taken against bullying culprits in schools in Buguias District are documented and systematic to facilitate accountability and

behavior change. Schools use different types of corrective measures, such as written assurance, warnings, and assigned work, to deter repetition. These interventions are, however, effective in varying levels as some learners accept corrective measures but others need to be monitored continuously. The use of documentation, e.g., anecdotal records, emphasizes the requirement for consistency in monitoring behavioral trends and imposing sanctions. The execution of disciplinary measures must weigh responsibility against child protection policies to meet equitable and fitting penalties for culprits and promote a sense of responsibility and behavioral change.

#### **Subtheme 3.2: Counseling for victims and offenders**

Victim-offender counseling involves psychological and behavioral interventions that support victims in coping with the effects of bullying while guiding offenders toward positive change. In the Buguias District, schools implement peer mediation and counseling sessions led by guidance counselors, allowing both victims and offenders to express concerns, reflect on their actions, and work toward conflict resolution. Parenting workshops further extend these efforts by promoting respect and healthy relationships at home, ensuring that interventions go beyond the classroom. Regular counseling and coaching remain essential to prevent recurrence of bullying and to foster a culture of empathy, accountability, and positive behavior within the school community.

Teacher participants expressed,

*“The school implements interventions such as peer mediation and counseling.”* - P6

*“Guidance counselors conduct intervention programs for both the bully and the victim.”* - P15

*“We conduct parenting seminars to educate parents on how to guide their children in promoting respect and kindness.”* - P3

Schools in the Buguias District recognize counseling as a vital intervention for both victims and offenders, using peer mediation, counseling sessions, and parenting seminars to address emotional and behavioral responses to bullying. These efforts aim to create safer, more compassionate schools but rely on consistent follow-up, parental involvement, and the capacity of guidance counselors to meet diverse needs. Yandri *et al.* (2023) highlighted counselors' critical role in identifying, reporting, and addressing bullying through individual counseling, advocacy, and prevention programs, while Ortiz-Bush and Schultz (2016) emphasized collaborative approaches involving students, teachers, staff, and parents. Similarly, Hannon *et al.* (2019) and Rawlings & Stoddard (2019) stressed that professional school counselors must design, implement, and evaluate initiatives such as anti-bullying, anti-harassment, and conflict-resolution programs, integrating stakeholders' roles to foster safe and supportive learning environments.

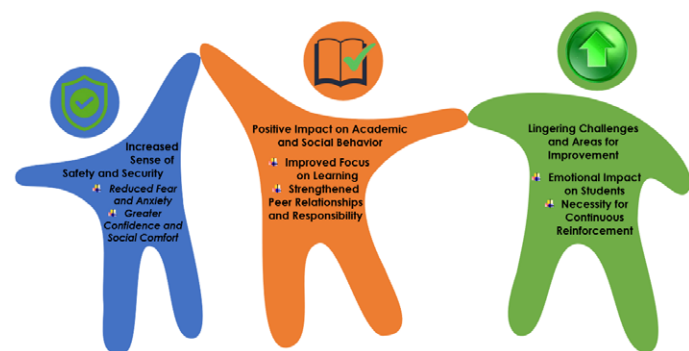
#### **4.3. Effect of instilling anti-bullying incident management practices on the mental well-being of learners**

Anti-bullying incident management practices are structured policies, interventions, and support systems designed to prevent, address, and resolve bullying, creating a safe and inclusive learning environment that promotes students' emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Their impact can be seen





in three themes: (1) Increased Sense of Safety and Security, where policies reduce fear and anxiety and allow students to participate confidently; (2) Positive Impact on Academic and Social Behavior, where supportive environments enhance focus and peer relationships; and (3) Lingering Challenges and Areas for Improvement, which highlight the lasting effects on victims and the need for ongoing reinforcement. Together, these practices demonstrate how anti-bullying initiatives strengthen student well-being while pointing to areas needing further development.



**Figure 4.** Strengthening young minds: the effect of anti-bullying practices on learners' well-being

The two child figures serve as a powerful representation of the impact of Instilling Anti-Bullying Incident Management Practices on Learners' Mental Well-Being, each marked with a distinct symbol to illustrate the core themes. The first child figure, adorned with a shield, embodies the increased sense of safety and security, emphasizing how anti-bullying measures help reduce fear and anxiety while fostering confidence in social interactions. The second child figure, featuring an open book with a checkmark, signifies the positive impact on academic and social behavior, highlighting how a secure learning environment enhances focus, strengthens peer relationships, and cultivates a sense of responsibility. Together, these symbols present a holistic visualization of how anti-bullying initiatives contribute to a safer, more inclusive, and emotionally supportive school environment, ultimately fostering student growth and well-being.

### Theme 1: Increased sense of safety and security

An increased sense of safety and security reflects the improvement in students' well-being brought by anti-bullying policies, which allow them to focus on learning, participate without fear, and build positive peer relationships. In the Buguias District, strict enforcement of these measures has fostered a more inclusive, child-friendly atmosphere, though challenges like fear of retaliation remain. This theme includes two subthemes: (1) Reduced Fear and Anxiety, showing how policies lessen student worries and promote safety, and (2) Greater Confidence and Social Comfort, highlighting how these measures empower learners to engage more confidently in academic and social activities. Together, these outcomes illustrate the positive impact of anti-bullying management on student well-being.

#### Subtheme 1.1: Reduced fear and anxiety

Reduced fear and anxiety refer to the decrease in students' emotional distress caused by bullying. When schools implement strong anti-bullying policies, students feel more protected from harm, allowing them to focus on their studies and social interactions without constant worry. In the Buguias District, the enforcement of these policies has helped create a safer and more supportive learning environment. While some students still hesitate to report incidents due to fear of retaliation, the overall school atmosphere has become more secure and reassuring for learners.

Teacher and Learner participants mentioned,

*"The implementation of anti-bullying incident management has made students feel safer and happier. They no longer worry as much about being hurt or embarrassed, allowing them to focus on learning and making friends."* - P1

*"Having anti-bullying policies in place has created a more child-friendly and inclusive school environment. Students feel more at ease, knowing they are protected from bullying."* - P2

*"Learners feel more secure because of the strict measures against bullying. However, some students still hesitate to report incidents due to fear of retaliation from their peers."* - P8

*"Anti-bullying initiatives have reduced students' anxiety and fear of coming to school. Knowing that bullying is taken seriously, they feel more comfortable expressing themselves and participating in activities."* - P7

*"Before, I was afraid to go to school because of bullying, but now I feel safer, and I can focus more on my studies."* - L1

*"I feel safer at school because I know that if someone bullies me, I can tell my teacher, and they will do something about it."* - L6

The claims show that the implementation of anti-bullying procedures in the Buguias District has been satisfactory to the emotional welfare of the students, more so in eliminating the fear and anxiety of being bullied. In providing a safer school environment, the interventions have allowed students to focus more on studies and socialization without ever having to live in fear of harassment. But the perpetuity of inhibition on reporting of offenses due to intimidation is testaments to sustained commitment in engendering the nexus of mutual confidence between scholars and school governments. The universal perception of increasing student security indicates a lot goes to the efficacy of anti-bullying endeavors aimed at securing more inclusive child-friendlier classrooms.

#### Subtheme 1.2: Greater confidence and social comfort

Greater confidence and social comfort refer to students' increased self-assurance and ease in social situations as a result of anti-bullying initiatives. With clear policies in place, learners feel empowered to express themselves without fear of being bullied. In Buguias District, students who were once hesitant to participate in class or interact with peers have become more engaged and comfortable. The assurance that teachers and school staff will intervene when needed has fostered a more inclusive and supportive school environment, encouraging students to build positive relationships and actively take part in school activities.

Teacher and Learner participants mentioned,

*"Learners feel protected under the school's anti-bullying*



policies. They know that teachers and staff are ready to step in when needed.” - P3

“Students who were previously bullied have become more confident and active in class. They feel supported by the school’s policies and know that their concerns will be addressed.” - P6

“I feel less scared knowing that teachers will help if someone bullies me. I don’t have to keep my problems to myself anymore.” - L2

“The anti-bullying policy helped me because I don’t have to worry about being laughed at in class anymore.” - L10

Anti-bullying interventions in the Buguias District have boosted students’ confidence and social ease, as they trust teachers and staff to respond when needed. Learners who were once reserved have become more expressive and interactive, supported by a safe and friendly environment that encourages healthy relationships and active participation. To sustain these gains, constant policy reinforcement, vigilant monitoring, and strong student-teacher-parent communication are essential. Child protection policies further strengthen students’ sense of belonging and security, with studies showing higher well-being and engagement in schools with well-functioning protection programs compared to those without (Castle, 2023).

## **Theme 2: Positive impact on academic and social behavior**

The passage of anti-bullying legislation has significantly influenced the academic engagement and social interactions of students, encouraging a school environment that upholds respect, inclusivity, and emotional safety. When students feel safe from bullying, they are more self-assured and can focus better on their studies and participate more constructively in school activities. The statements mention that such implementation encourages good peer relations through making students responsible since it builds a culture of responsibility and kindness. The article also discusses how anti-bullying policies have two effects on students: how it improves their academic concentration and how they develop peer relationships and social responsibility.

### **Subtheme 2.1: Improved focus on learning**

Enhanced learning focus refers to students’ ability to concentrate on studies without the fear or anxiety caused by bullying, supported by an orderly and secure school environment that boosts motivation and confidence. In the Buguias District, organized anti-bullying programs have created a calmer, more welcoming atmosphere where learners are attentive, engaged, and more willing to participate. By reducing intimidation, schools have enabled students to learn free from distress, leading to better academic performance and fostering a positive attitude toward learning.

As shared by Teacher and Learner participants,

“The implementation of anti-bullying policies has allowed students to focus more on their studies instead of being preoccupied with fear of being bullied. This has led to a more positive and inclusive learning environment.” - P9

“The presence of anti-bullying measures helps control the occurrence of bullying in school. It discourages aggressive behavior and promotes respect among students.” - P5

“The school environment has become more peaceful and friendly. Students are now more willing to participate in class discussions and school activities without fear of being laughed at or ridiculed.” - P13

“I feel more excited to go to school now because I don’t have to worry about someone making fun of me.” - L11

The responses suggest that anti-bullying policies greatly enhance students’ academic engagement and school experience by reducing fear and anxiety, allowing them to focus on studies and participate more actively. These measures also promote respect and inclusivity, discouraging aggression and fostering positive peer interactions, as shown by students’ increased willingness to express themselves and collaborate. Maintaining a consistent, well-enforced framework is therefore crucial to sustaining a productive learning environment, which schools can achieve by reinforcing teacher training, parental involvement, and student awareness programs to secure lasting improvements in both academic performance and well-being.

### **Subtheme 2.2: Strengthened peer relationships and responsibility**

Strengthened peer relationships and responsibility emerge when anti-bullying interventions foster respect, empathy, and accountability among students. In the Buguias District, measures such as counseling, peer mediation, and awareness programs have promoted open communication, conflict resolution, and behavioral change, with former bullies recognizing the emotional impact of their actions and becoming more responsible in their interactions. These efforts have built a culture of kindness, cooperation, and inclusivity, allowing students to form friendships more confidently, strengthen peer bonds, and develop a greater sense of belonging within the school community.

Teacher and Learner participants uttered,

“Seeing that bullying is not tolerated has helped students develop a greater sense of responsibility and respect toward their peers. This has improved relationships among classmates and reduced conflicts.” - P11

“Some students who were once bullies have changed their behavior after attending interventions. This not only benefits the victims but also helps the bullies improve their social skills and mental well-being.” - P12

“Now that we have rules about bullying, my classmates and I are kinder to each other. We know that if we say mean things, there will be consequences.” - L4

“I used to tease my classmates a lot, but after the guidance counselor talked to me, I realized that I was hurting their feelings. Now, I try to be nicer.” - L5

The responses indicate that anti-bullying interventions are vital in fostering positive peer relationships and responsibility by reinforcing that bullying is unacceptable and carries consequences, thus cultivating a school culture of respect, kindness, and cooperation. Targeted programs like counseling and peer mediation help both victims and offenders, with former bullies showing personal growth and positive behavioral change that benefit the wider community through reduced conflict and greater inclusivity. A well-structured framework



also strengthens students' confidence in social interactions, as the reduced fear of bullying allows them to build stronger connections, a sense of belonging, and emotional security. Sustaining and enhancing these initiatives ensures that students feel safe, valued, and empowered to form meaningful relationships.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) in schools within the Buguias District has established a structured approach to addressing bullying incidents. By enforcing policies, facilitating intervention programs, and promoting collaboration among teachers, parents, and students, the CPC ensures that learners are protected from harmful behaviors. However, challenges such as parental resistance and gaps in teacher training highlight the need for continuous improvement. This implies that regular training, strengthened communication between stakeholders, and stricter policy enforcement are essential to sustaining a safe and supportive school environment.

Anti-bullying incident management practices in Buguias District schools include preventive, intervention, and disciplinary measures designed to reduce bullying and mitigate its effects. Schools implement awareness campaigns, structured reporting systems, counseling programs, and disciplinary actions to uphold a culture of respect and accountability. Despite these efforts, some students hesitate to report bullying due to fear of retaliation, and inconsistencies in policy enforcement persist. This suggests that schools should enhance reporting mechanisms, ensure consistent policy application, and strengthen support systems for both victims and offenders to maximize the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs.

The effect of anti-bullying incident management on learners' mental well-being is evident in their increased sense of safety, improved academic engagement, and strengthened peer relationships. Students feel more secure, experience reduced anxiety, and develop greater confidence knowing that bullying is actively addressed. To sustain these positive outcomes, schools must continue integrating mental health support and reinforcing anti-bullying policies to ensure lasting benefits for student well-being across the district.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen CPC implementation and anti-bullying incident management practices in Buguias District. Schools should enhance teacher training through regular sessions focused on CPC policies, intervention strategies, and managing parental resistance, ensuring that all educators are well-prepared to enforce anti-bullying measures. Strengthening parent-teacher collaboration through structured orientations and open communication can foster shared responsibility in addressing bullying. Improving reporting and support mechanisms such as anonymous reporting systems and regular student check-ins can encourage learners to speak up without fear of retaliation. Consistent policy implementation and monitoring should also be prioritized by developing a standardized tool to assess anti-

bullying efforts and identify areas for improvement. Sustaining awareness through integration into school activities, peer-led campaigns, and visual reminders will further reinforce a safe and respectful school environment. By implementing these achievable recommendations, teachers, schools, and the Buguias District can better protect and support learners, ensuring that anti-bullying measures remain effective, inclusive, and sustainable.

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