

# A Transcendental Study Exploring Lived Experiences of Selected Stakeholders on Child Protection Policy

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## ABSTRACT

The study is a qualitative research approach utilizing the Transcendental Phenomenological Analysis which aimed to describe the stakeholders' experiences of child protection policy implementation in schools in District II, DepEd, Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City, Leyte. The result of the study produced the following themes: rewarding experiences, adverse experiences and values gained. Rewarding Experiences of the participants were described as fulfilling needs, coaction, and human connection. Adverse Experiences of the participants were described as despondent, obscured facts and unaltered behavior. Values acquired by the participants on the child protection policy were sense of duty and sense of empathy. The study concluded that the existence of child protection policy in schools has gained both positive and negative experiences to the stakeholders. While there are negative experiences, the positive experiences such as teamwork, rapport and satisfaction may help minimize the adverse experiences. Therefore, with the diverse experiences of stakeholders on Child Protection Policy implementation in schools, appropriate child protection policy information dissemination is a must. A School Based Child Protection Policy Action Plan was crafted as a guide to stakeholders to address areas of concern or the adverse experiences of child protection policy in schools. Thus, the author recommends the use of the proposed School Based CPP Action Plan with the consent from District Supervisor and School Heads of District II, DepEd Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City. Once effective, it must be presented to the Department of Education Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City for approval and implementation in the Division Level.

**Keywords:** *Child Protection Policy, Stakeholders' Lived Experiences*

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## INTRODUCTION

Violence is defined as activity that is hurtful, unwelcome, unnecessary, and purposeful. To fully include all acts that fall under the category and to properly exclude acts that are similarly violent but not violent, such as self-defense (a type of aggressiveness but not a form of violence), accidents, and horseplay, all four criteria must be met (Hamby, 2017). Results from the 2015 National Baseline Study on Violence Against Children (NBS-VAC) were published in the Philippines in 2018. They show that children and youth aged 13 to 24 years' experience high levels of physical violence (64.2%), psychological violence (61.5%), sexual violence (22.4%), and peer violence (65%).

In schools, violence is a problem that need immediate attention from educators. Individuals surrounding the school have a great responsibility on addressing it. According to Yurtal (2014) the teacher is expected to be more responsible, provide more appropriate actions, and become part of the solution to the problem. Education stakeholders have the power to take actions that can prevent and reduce the act of violence within the school premises.

In the Philippines, there are reported cases where the perpetrator of violence and abuse are the teachers. In 2021, a report on a certain teacher where he posted a video online depicting on how he would react when a student will pass by (PNA). Another incident in 2016, a teacher was convicted for lascivious acts to 3 male students (Manila Bulletin, 2021). Also, in 2022, almost 9000 child abuse cases were reported (The Philippine Star, 2023). This includes sexual abuse, bullying and even those dealing with mental health concerns. With this, the Department of Education reminded all teachers to be always to their highest degree of ethical and professional standards.

The Constitution of 1987 states that "the State will protect children's rights to assistance, including proper treatment and nutrition, as well as special protection from all forms of neglect, violence, brutality, coercion, and other factors detrimental to their development" (Article XV Section 3 B). However, the national child security policies are ineffective due to a lack of comprehension and implementation in schools (High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012). In response, Dep. Ed. Order # 40 s. 2012, also known as the child safety program, was developed and introduced the structure and recommendations for protecting children from crime, exploitation, discrimination, and other types of abuse in school. Broadley & Goddard (2015) emphasized that the Child Protection Policy is a declaration of the school's commitment to protecting children from harm, which, if successfully implemented, will foster their holistic development and well-being. In addition, the strategy serves as a guideline for the level of school safety provided to students by academic institutions. The CPP was developed by the DepEd in collaboration with members of civil society groups, teacher groups, representatives from private and public-school systems, foreign agencies, and other advocates for the protection of children. The full title of the CPP, which runs to 30 pages, is "Policies and Guidelines for Protecting Children in School from Abuse, Violence, Exploitation, Discrimination, Bullying, and Other Forms of Abuse."

Schools in DepEd District II of Ormoc City Division is one of the implementers of Child Protection Policies with the aim of safeguarding children and promoting their rights. Thus, this research is interested to explore the lived experiences of the stakeholders about the Child Protection Policy in Ormoc City District II, Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City, Leyte.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of selected stakeholders on Child Protection Policy in DepEd District II, Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City, Leyte. This transcendental phenomenological study interpreted the diverse lived experiences of stakeholders and generated meanings from the shared experiences. Transcendental Phenomenology developed by Husserl (1931) is a philosophical approach in qualitative study seeking to understand human experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This qualitative study employed a transcendental phenomenological research design and explored the lived experiences of selected stakeholders on the child protection policy in the school. Transcendental phenomenology sought to discover the deeper understanding of the participants and provide rich descriptive narrative on their lived experiences.

### **Sampling**

The study was conducted in the three selected schools in DepEd Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City District II, Ormoc City, Leyte that runs from Brgy. Can-adieng to Brgy. Macabug, Ormoc City. Schools in District II comprises 13 schools of which seven of them are located along the highway and six of them are located in a far-flung area. There were 14 selected participants in the study and utilized nonprobability sampling, in particular purposive sampling.

Schools in District II have been implementing the Child Protection Policy of DepEd Order #40 series of 2012 since the start of its implementation. The DepEd Division Office of Ormoc City has been monitoring its implementation in the district with series of reports of cases of bullying and violence, action plans and feedback required to be submitted. There are 220 teachers currently employed in District II, 13 of them are school heads and one district supervisor. Three of the schools were the subject of the study, among them were seven teachers and seven parents.

## **Instrumentation**

This study utilized semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions for a fluid conversation and allow participants to express their own thoughts and feelings on the child protection policy in the school. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) by Smith et al., 2009 which was enhanced by Charlick, McKellar, Fielder, and Pincombe, 2015 was utilized to analyze and interpret raw data gathered as a result of the interview with the participants.

## **Data Collection**

A letter of communication was sent to FCIC Dean of the Graduate School and to the Schools Division Superintendent of Ormoc City Division asking permission to conduct the study. After securing the permits, consent form was given to the participants who were invited via phone call, texts, and Facebook messenger.

Following the approval of the conduct of the study, an interview was conducted in person with time and location determined by the participants. Audio and video recording using an android phone mounted with microphone were utilized to gain best voice quality and accurate responses.

A develop and evaluated open-ended questions were used during the interview. The participants were allowed to speak on their comfortable language in expressing their experiences. After the interview both parties agreed that all information will be stored in a password protected file and treated as confidential.

A transcription of recorded data immediately followed after all the information was collected. It was transcribed in Microsoft Word and sent copies of the transcribed data to the participants to check the accuracy of their statements. A debriefing was also conducted after the interview. Finally, after presenting the data to the committee the raw data was deleted as agreed on the consent form.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis started by listening to the interview following the transcript and followed by making initial coding of the data. After which, emergent themes were developed by extracting relevant phrases and statements in the transcriptions and in the notes and made them into themes. The fourth step was searching connections across the emergent themes and interpreted into one theme and bracketing them into the previous theme to identify the individuality of each new case. Next was identifying pattern across cases and noting distinctive instances and the last step was taking interpretations into a deeper level and generated one main theme. A dendrogram of the participants' responses was constructed showing the main themes and sub themes generated.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results from the study established three major themes which were interpreted from the exploration of the experiences of selected stakeholders on child protection policy. These themes are the following: first is the Rewarding Experiences which has three sub-themes namely Fulfilling Needs, Coaction and Human Connection, second is the Adverse Experiences which has three major themes namely Despondent, Obscured Facts and Unaltered Behavior, lastly is the Values Developed which has two sub-themes namely Sense of Duty and Sense of Empathy.

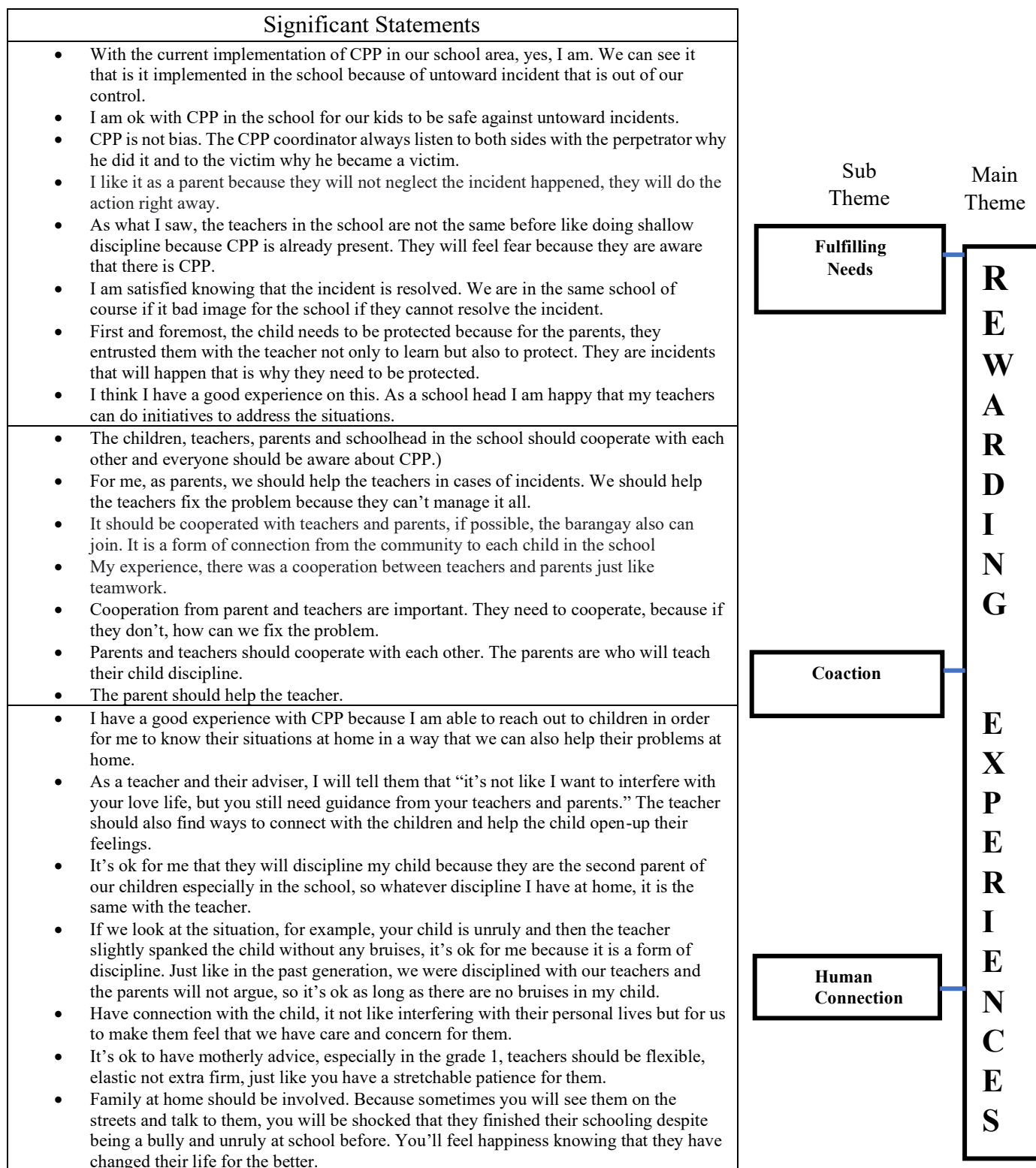
### Rewarding Experiences

Rewarding Experiences are experiences that are pleasing and offer satisfaction and benefits. Stakeholders who were the participants in the study have rewarding and beneficial experiences on the child protection policy in the school.

Participants' responses from the exploration on their experiences on child protection policy in the school under this theme unveiled three sub-themes: Fulfilling Needs, Coaction, and Human Connection.

***Fulfilling Needs.*** Based on the experiences of the participants, they shared that knowing the children in the school are safe against any form of violence, harm, and malicious incidents is a rewarding feeling for them, and it is the best form of satisfaction they can have with child protection policy. Chang et al. (2015) states that basic need fulfillment such as safety, security and comfortable living situations can contribute to positive well-being and mindfulness. The participants also expressed that they have positive feedback on CPP because their desire and need from it was fulfilled.

Sabino & Pulhin (2021) pointed out that meeting the human basic needs such as education, clothing, sanitation, safety, and security is prerequisite and essential for human well-being. Failure to fulfill them is unfair and a grave denial of security and basic human rights. Child Protection Policy contains one of the major basic needs that a school stakeholder requires: safety and security for their children in schools. Stakeholders are happy as well as satisfied that the Child Protection Policy fulfilled these needs and therefore will serve the clientele, the learners, much better.



*Figure 1. Rewarding Experiences of Stakeholders on Child Protection Policy*

**Coaction.** Being able to have teamwork, cooperation, support, and rapport is beneficial for them to execute child protection policy appropriately in the school. Their experiences of having unity in doing certain things, in this regard, the child protection policy and achieving its goals and purpose is a rewarding feeling. In the study conducted by Price-Robertson et al. (2020), they concluded that protecting children from abuse and neglect requires collaborative effort.

Moreover, Middleton (2023) states that collaborative actions lead to better outcomes, promote satisfaction and positive experience. This means that stakeholders must possess coordinated initiatives and efforts in implementing, managing, and addressing concerns related to child protection policy in schools. Knowing that their children are safe and secure because these stakeholders are working together to apprehend and correct wrong doings and continue things that are beneficial and significant. Stakeholders considered child protection policy as one of their avenues to promote teamwork and collaboration. It offers a chance to work together and collaborate on ideas on implementing child protection policy in schools that is positive and learner centered.

**Human Connection.** The participants acknowledged the feeling of connection towards each other in child protection policy. They shared that despite the fact that discipline comes in many forms, there is a feeling of satisfaction in which they can comprehend and connect with their lives. Parents connect their lives to the teachers and children in school and teachers connect their lives to their learners not only in the school but also at home. Stakeholders build healthy relationships with the learners by extending support and encouragement from school to their own homes.

In the study by Rumsey (2018) he concluded that children in schools are less likely to remember the curricular approach or instructional strategy than their impactful connections to their parents, schools' staffs, and other stakeholders. This means that learners as well as stakeholders in schools gain rewarding experience by having meaningful human connections from one another. The need to be attached to one another gives satisfaction knowing that they have done something rewarding and beneficial to the children and to the school in relation to child protection policy.

Child Protection Policy in schools provides an approach wherein stakeholders promote significant human experience such rapport, social and family bonds, friendship and a sense of community which are vital in learners' growth and development in schools. Stakeholders provide support to the learners not only in schools but will extend to their own homes. They can connect to their clientele by listening to their stories, providing care and support as well as imparting knowledge and meaningful advice.

## **Adverse Experiences**

Experience comes in a two-way form. Positive and Negative (Kaufman, 2019). It is natural to experience something adverse because not all things are meant to always have a pleasing result.



Results gathered from the study on the experiences of stakeholders on child protection policy under this theme unveiled three sub-themes: Despondent, Obscured Facts and Unaltered Behavior.

**Despondent.** With the existence of child protection policy, children became more abusive and having no fear in doing unharmful things because in their mind there is CPP to protect them. Some participants shared that they are unsatisfied with child protection policy because some incidents in the school were not handled properly as resulted to discrimination and more bullying. Additionally, some participants also revealed that child protection policy in school is useless because incidents were sugar coated and were not reported truthfully.

Buckley et al. (2019) states that although child protection shows an importance in children's welfare, the stakeholders experienced it as unsupportive to the learners, unreliable and unjust in dealing with cases and sometimes almost too harsh. The finding implies that although child protection is beneficial and has its significant importance to the learners, stakeholders still feel dubious to its implementation, processes, and protocols in schools.

**Obscured Facts.** Based on the responses of the participants, some of them elaborated that they have limited knowledge regarding child protection policy despite its existence in the school. Some expressed that due to this obscured information they could not act properly in unwanted situations such as bullying and to any form of violence. Though they know that child protection policy is, in context, for protection of the children, their knowledge on its protocols and processes are vague and inadequate. Some also expressed that though child protection is present in the school, they still commit violation because they lack orientation on it.

On the study conducted by Ruelo et al. (2020), the findings concluded that students as well as the stakeholders are not completely knowledgeable on welfare and safety, moreover, they lack awareness on a child protection act. This implies that with the implementation of child protection policy in schools, some stakeholders are not fully equipped with the factual information regarding child protection policy that will aid them to formulate wise, fair, and prompt decisions on child protection related cases in schools.

**Unaltered Behavior.** They honestly shared that with the existence of child protection policy in the school, children's bad and inappropriate behavior remain unchanged. Some expressed that because of the unresolved conflict in the school, these behaviors were not corrected and apprehended. They also elaborated that though they are satisfied with child protection being active and responsive in the school, they were uncertain of its purpose of behavioral development to the children.

This finding is related to the study of DeLucas (2018), that children tend to mimic parent's gesture and peers' lifestyle that might contribute to their unchanged behavior like bullying, abuse and inability to follow school rules.

Gomez (2022) contends that the people they interact with throughout their lives have a positive or negative influence on their behavior and that is something that cannot be controlled. Instead, as parents and stakeholders we allow them to explore the world and learn new things with the sense of self and trust so they can make better choices.



This implies that though child protection services in schools are being exercised in resolving child protection cases, some children retain their bad behaviors due to some uncontrollable factors e.g., technology, environment, and teacher factor.

Significant Statements	Sub Theme	Main Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other parents will just ignore the teacher. The teacher will call them up to fix the problem, but they will not come. That is very difficult for the teachers because they are doing their best to address the situation, but they will not come. Some parents will come to school because their child has been hurt, but only to disrespect the teacher by shouting at them right away.</li> <li>CPP is being abused or something like that. I want all parents, teachers and especially the children should be oriented properly what is CPP.</li> <li>My bad experience is that the teacher will not tell the truth about what happened, I think he/she don't want to hurt the feeling of the child and of the parent. No action done by the teacher about the bullies.</li> <li>I'm not satisfied with it. Just like that, they did not investigate what really happened or the reason behind why my child punched his classmate.</li> <li>(There are children who don't care because in their mind there is CPP.</li> <li>Not so sir. I'm slightly not satisfied of the implementation because I think it might be incomplete in terms of budget, I don't know, second, I think it needs more support.</li> <li>I think the children will become dependent because they knew there is CPP and what is CPP.</li> </ul>	<b>Despondent</b>	<b>A D V E R S E  E X P E R I E N C E S</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since I was a former a CPP Coordinator and thru our studies, I cannot say I have a full knowledge on it, just enough to help our children.</li> <li>I'm not knowledgeable on it. I think it is about disciplining the child, in my idea.</li> <li>As a teacher, my knowledge on it is vague. I cannot say I am knowledgeable enough in detail, that is why for me it is vague. I never attended seminars and orientation on CPP. Just in my mind it is about the protection of the children. It is vague and I am not familiar with the whole of it.</li> <li>I just have a little knowledge on CPP.</li> <li>My knowledge, I think it is not enough. I am not familiar with the rules of CPP. Like I just know that there are so many things to avoid doing to our children, even verbal and I don't know what actions to do after doing those harmful things, I don't know what the punishment is.</li> <li>I only have a little knowledge of CPP. But for me I think it is for the protection of the children.</li> <li>My knowledge about CPP is limited but I am thankful that I have a few background on it that can help me and can help me inform my child about the good and bad things on CPP.</li> <li>As I said before, I am not well-rounded with the information about CPP. Limited only, based on my knowledge and experience from 26 years in the service. But still, I am groping about the exact words because even I can violate the CPP.</li> <li>But I am not knowledgeable about it because I am not always in school.</li> <li>Ah CPP? Is it Child Protection Policy, right? For me, I am not knowledgeable and expert on it. But I know that it is for protection of the children against bullying or any squabble.</li> </ul>	<b>Obscured Facts</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Still, they will not listen, just passed through from ear to ear and then back to the same attitude. No use. For example, the teacher will discipline them and later on, they are still they same. For me, CPP is useless.</li> <li>So far, my experience is good with CPP because after talking to the teacher, it will come out ok but how many days after they will go back to their bad behavior.</li> <li>In the following year, the child has done something bad again to the other child and the father's attention and me was called to talk about the matter. But the father never showed</li> </ul>	<b>Unaltered Behavior</b>	

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| <p>up so until grade 4, grade 5 and grade 6, the kid is still a bully and always causes trouble to other.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The child is still in school but with the same bad attitude, like he is well known but he never brought dangerous things anymore.</li> </ul> |
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*Figure 2. Adverse Experiences of Stakeholders on Child Protection Policy*

## VALUES ACQUIRED

Values are a fundamental part of life which includes our aims, ideals, manner of thinking and principles by which guide our behavior (Lehner et al., 1955). They are conscious and unconscious motivators of our actions and judgement. Ideas of values differ from one person to another due to some factors such as culture, way of thinking or purpose. People act in a way that they can express their significant values and achieve goals underlying it (Sagiv et al., 2017).

Responses from the study on the exploration on the experiences of the selected stakeholders on the child protection policy under this theme exposed two sub-themes: Sense of Duty and Sense of Empathy.

***Sense of Duty.*** They revealed that part of the existence of child protection policy in the school is the formation of sense of responsibility and duty of the stakeholders. It is innate for the teachers and parents to become responsible to the children in the school for them to become safe, secure, and happy. Some participants expressed that aside from teaching them, it is also their duty to listen, observe, monitor, correct unruly behaviors, and protect their rights as children. Additionally, some participants revealed that they, parents, and teachers, should be a positive motivator for the children to do their best in school and become a good citizen of the country in the future. Members of the community, teachers, and other stakeholders also have the professional duties to protect children from harm.

Referring to the study of Ulhaq (2021), children are the most vulnerable beings in society and parents have the innate sense of responsibility to nurture and protect their children. Members of the community, teachers, and other stakeholders also have the professional duties to protect children from harm. This implies that with the child protection policy in the school, the sense of duty and responsibility of protecting children is everybody's concern and it becomes stronger with the collective effort of the members of society and professionals.

***Sense of Empathy.*** Parents and teachers should understand and explore the feelings of every child because some of them may be going through some hardships and difficulties in life that we do not know. Rapport, motherly advice, and prayers can also help learners in difficult situations. Some of the participants shared that as parents and teachers, judging our children just because they are unruly is a big mistake. Additionally, being empathic to our learners is one of the underlying values of child protection policy in the school.

In the study of Hodgkins (2022), participants were asked to keep diaries of their empathic interactions with their children and findings conclude that having empathic interactions can help

lessen stress in children and can minimize suppression of feelings. Empathic approach can create positive results and can transform various conflicts such as dissipation of others' anger, discharging others' emotion to enable them to listen, expressing regret and apologizing, and willingness to cooperate.

This implies that as a stakeholder, having a sense of empathy is one of the significant values a stakeholder can have in addressing child protection related cases in school. It is beneficial in understanding children, can build rapport, can lessen stress both in children and stakeholders as well as can transform children into making good and wise choices that will help them become better individuals.

Significant Statements	Sub Theme	Main Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a role of the teacher to know, report, address, and monitor the cases of child abuse that you need to know within the school and in your own classroom.</li> <li>Yes. The teacher now a days are prioritizing the children; they're not neglecting them.</li> <li>When there was no CPP yet, it is a common sense to us teachers that we must protect our children, our learners because they will be our future generation that will build up our country so they should be protected holistically.</li> <li>Teachers should be a light and lifting the learners' mood and encourage them to do better in school and soon to be a good citizen of our country.</li> <li>CPP is good so that the children will know that everything they do is correct. They should be aware of the consequences of their actions even if they are still a child.</li> <li>For me as a parent, the children should feel secure in the school. As parents, we can help the teachers of our children in monitoring or reporting.</li> <li>They need to be monitored because they are still children and as a parent, I feel worried if something will happen to them.</li> <li>What I can do as a parent, I will always tell my child that do not bully others, Be careful with your actions and words towards her classmates.</li> <li>As a teacher, as much as possible, I'll guide them. I'll teach them all the things that I know, my learnings and information about CPP. I always integrate it not only on my lessons, but also, I'll give them values so that they will know the difference of what is right and what is wrong.</li> <li>They really need to be protected because they are still children in the school, they can be abused.</li> <li>Teaching them is one of our responsibilities but in terms of protection for them to be safe, I think they should be monitored every day on what they saw or observed out of the ordinary, it will be noted and do follow-up.</li> <li>They need to be protected because they are especially vulnerable, they are still children, they can't help themselves on their own.</li> <li>As parents, if our children are telling something to us, we should listen, because if they can't say it to their teachers, they will share it with us but it depends on the family. In my side I always tell my child that he should share everything what happened in school.</li> </ul>	<b>Sense of Duty</b>	<b>V A L U E S  A C Q U I R E D</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rapport is important as part of our relationship towards our children in the school. That is why as teachers we should know them well, not to the point of interfering in their personal lives. It is for our children; we shouldn't judge them just because they have bad attitude.</li> <li>In my side, I will tell my child to not start a fight. If one of his classmates starts a fight, he should tell his teacher so that the teacher will know right away what happened.</li> <li>As much as possible, our patience should be stretched to not cause any physical touch in disciplining the child. We can do it by saying in a low tone voice, ask and explain things to them slowly. They will feel it through guidance and daily monitoring to them.</li> </ul>	<b>Sense of Empathy</b>	

- For me, just a reminder, I always give advice. Reminding them what and what not to do. I also pray for them to change because if we cannot fix through casual taking maybe prayer can.

*Figure 3. Values Acquired of Stakeholders on Child Protection Policy*

## CONCLUSION

The Child Protection Policy in schools is a platform for the stakeholders to satisfy their needs for safety, protection, and security of the children in schools. Fulfilling needs, coactions and human connections depicted the significant component of child protection policy. The sense of duty and empathy must be incorporated in every action of the stakeholders in addressing cases on schools relating to child protection policy because it contributed to the development of children and their protection in schools so that they can study and learn without having the fear to go to school. These rewarding experiences and values discovered provide insights and ideas in addressing the adverse experiences of the stakeholders, such as despondent, obscured facts and unaltered behavior that needed considerable undertaking to achieve the central goal of child protection policy.

The results and conclusions in the study served as a foundation to transpire with some recommendations. First, strengthen the implementation of the Child Protection Policy in schools through massive conduct of orientation, benchmarking, lectures, trainings, and workshops to stakeholders to be managed by School and District CPP Coordinators, Division CPP Coordinator and as well as any organizations promoting safety to children. Second, create strong linkages to other agencies in charge on the protection of children and other non-government organizations whose advocacies are on the safety of children. Third, present the proposed School Based Action Plan to the school heads of the schools in District II, DepEd Ormoc City Division, Ormoc City, Leyte for adoption. Finally, conduct further study of a similar nature using other variables not included in this study.

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