

Positive School Climate: Scrutinizing Roles of Elementary Child Protection Policy Coordinators

KATHLEEN MAY S. CEDEÑO

Teacher - II

kathleenmay.cedeno001@deped.gov.ph

Abstract — The school climate and student well-being significantly impact academic achievement and personal development. The quality of relationships among students, teachers, and staff, along with supportive policies and a sense of safety and inclusivity, shape students' experiences and outcomes. Elementary Child Protection Program (CPP) coordinators play a crucial role in fostering a positive school climate. This study involved eight elementary school CPP coordinators from Piedad District, Division of Davao City, selected based on their having at least five years of service, being elementary school teachers, and serving as CPP coordinators. It explored their experiences in fostering a positive school climate, examining how they navigate and overcome challenges. The research also uncovered valuable educational management insights from their experiences. The analysis revealed several key findings about the experiences of elementary CPP Coordinators in creating a positive school climate. The interviews identified three main themes: implementing the Child Protection Policy, providing student support and resources, and fostering a positive school culture and relationships. Regarding coping mechanisms, coordinators emphasized the importance of building supportive networks, developing effective communication strategies, and practicing self-care. Additionally, the study highlighted educational insights such as the need for proactive prevention strategies, collaborative problem-solving, and student engagement and empowerment. Cultivating a positive and safe school environment is essential for students' holistic development, making the role of child protection policy coordinators a key area of investigation. Future research should comprehensively examine the specific roles and responsibilities of CPP coordinators in promoting a positive school climate.

Keywords — Child protection policy, positive school climate, elementary child protection policy

I. Introduction

The school climate and overall well-being of students were critical factors that significantly impacted their academic achievement and personal development. The quality of the school environment, including the relationships between students, teachers, and staff, the presence of supportive policies and programs, and the overall sense of safety and inclusivity, played a vital role in shaping students' experiences and outcomes. Within the school community, various stakeholders assumed important roles in fostering a positive climate, and one such stakeholder is the elementary Child Protection Program (CPP) coordinator. The elementary CPP coordinator was entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the safety, security, and well-being of students within the school setting. They play a crucial role in implementing and monitoring child protection

policies, coordinating prevention programs, and responding to incidents related to child safety and welfare. Through their diligent efforts, CPP coordinators contributed to creating a safe and supportive environment that fosters positive student experiences and well-being

In the United States, elementary CPP coordinators, also known as Child Protection or Student Support Coordinators, play a crucial role in fostering a positive school environment and safeguarding student well-being. They implement and oversee child protection policies, working with administrators, teachers, and staff to promote social-emotional development and overall student welfare (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). In the Philippines, elementary CPP coordinators, also called Child Protection and Anti-Bullying Coordinators, are essential in shaping the school climate and promoting student well-being. They ensure the implementation of child protection policies, collaborating with administrators, teachers, parents, and the community to create a safe and nurturing environment that supports students' holistic development (Department of Education, 2019). In the Philippines, CPP coordinators have multifaceted roles, including developing and implementing child protection policies and protocols for addressing abuse and bullying (Department of Education, 2019). They conduct training for staff to raise awareness and equip them with skills to address child protection issues effectively (Unicef Philippines, 2015). Additionally, they provide guidance and support to students, promoting positive peer relationships and conflict resolution skills (Unicef Philippines, 2015).

In Piedad District, elementary CPP coordinators face diverse challenges in fostering a positive school climate. This study aims to explore their experiences, strategies, and insights gained while addressing these challenges (Citation).

School Climate in Elementary Schools

The atmosphere within elementary schools, known as school climate, is fundamental in influencing students' overall well-being. It encompasses the environment's quality and dynamics, involving interactions among students, teachers, and administrators, along with the prevailing atmosphere and ethos. A positive school climate fosters feelings of safety, belonging, and inclusivity, where students are esteemed and encouraged in both their academic pursuits and social-emotional development (Cohen et al., 2009). Research indicates that a positive school climate correlates with better student well-being. When students feel their school is safe, supportive, and respectful, they tend to experience greater happiness and mental health (Osher et al., 2018). Additionally, a positive climate cultivates a sense of belonging and connection, vital for students' social and emotional growth (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Students who feel connected are more engaged, motivated, and exhibit fewer behavioral issues (Wang et al., 2017). Thus, nurturing a positive school climate is crucial for elementary students' overall well-being and success. To foster a positive school climate and improve student well-being, several strategies are effective. These include encouraging positive relationships among students and staff, implementing anti-bullying programs, offering social-emotional learning, ensuring a safe environment, and involving students in decision-making (Thapa et al., 2013; Osher et al., 2018). Clear policies addressing

discipline, conflict resolution, and promoting respect are also crucial (Thapa et al., 2013). Prioritizing school climate fosters a supportive environment, enhancing students' overall well-being and success.

Experiences of elementary CPP coordinators in developing a positive school climate

Elementary Child Protection Policy (CPP) coordinators play a crucial role in promoting student well-being and fostering a positive school climate. Their experiences offer valuable insights into the strategies used to create a safe and supportive environment. By examining their experiences, we gain practical knowledge about the initiatives implemented to ensure child protection and promote well-being. CPP coordinators navigate various challenges, including addressing bullying, providing mental health support, and facilitating conflict resolution, offering valuable lessons for enhancing school policies and practices to support student well-being and improve school climate.

Developing and implementing child protection policies. Developing and implementing child protection policies was a critical aspect of the role of elementary CPP coordinators in fostering a safe and secure school environment. These coordinators collaborate closely with school administrators, staff, and relevant stakeholders to establish comprehensive guidelines and protocols that address child protection issues within the school context. Their primary responsibility is to identify potential risks such as bullying, harassment, and abuse, and develop policies that effectively prevent and respond to such incidents (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). By implementing these policies, CPP coordinators create a protective framework that ensures the well-being of students. CPP coordinators play a vital role in effectively communicating child protection policies to students, parents, and other stakeholders, ensuring everyone understands their roles in maintaining a safe environment. They collaborate with teachers to integrate child protection education into the curriculum, promoting awareness and responsible reporting (Cefai & Cooper, 2010). Additionally, they establish clear reporting mechanisms for concerns or incidents related to child protection, ensuring prompt and appropriate responses (Puhk et al., 2020).

Providing Support and Resources for Student. Providing support and resources for students was a crucial experience for elementary CPP coordinators in their role of promoting a positive school climate. CPP coordinators recognize the diverse needs of students and work diligently to ensure that appropriate support systems are in place to address those needs effectively. They play a pivotal role in identifying students who may require additional assistance, whether it be academic, social, emotional, or behavioral support (Lieberman, 2019). CPP coordinators collaborate with teachers, counselors, and other professionals to develop individualized plans and strategies to meet students' unique needs (Puhk et al., 2020). CPP coordinators play a crucial role in providing support by connecting students and families with community resources and offering guidance and counseling. They create a network of support by collaborating with external agencies and offering counseling sessions to address various concerns such as bullying and stress

(Lieberman, 2019; Puhk et al., 2020). Additionally, they work with teachers to implement interventions and professional development programs that promote a positive school climate and support students' social-emotional needs (Kachgal et al., 2018). Through these efforts, CPP coordinators contribute to students' overall well-being and success.

Promoting Positive School Culture and Relationship. Promoting a positive school culture and fostering healthy relationships was a significant experience for elementary CPP coordinators in their efforts to enhance school climate. CPP coordinators recognize the importance of cultivating a supportive and inclusive environment where students feel valued, respected, and connected to their peers and teachers (Lieberman, 2019). They play an instrumental role in promoting positive school culture and relationships by implementing various strategies and initiatives. CPP coordinators collaborate with teachers to organize activities promoting positive student interactions, such as peer mentoring and cooperative learning (Cefai & Cooper, 2010). They also facilitate restorative practices like peer mediation to resolve conflicts and build relationships (González, 2018). Additionally, CPP coordinators assist teachers in creating supportive classroom environments by providing guidance on behavior management and social-emotional learning (Lieberman, 2019; Puhk et al., 2020). These efforts foster a positive school culture where students feel valued and engaged (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Lieberman, 2019).

Mechanisms of elementary CPP coordinators in developing a positive school climate

Elementary CPP coordinators play a crucial role in fostering a positive school climate, yet they often encounter challenges in their efforts. These challenges, including complex social issues and competing demands, can impact their effectiveness. To overcome these obstacles, CPP coordinators employ coping mechanisms such as ongoing training, building supportive networks, and prioritizing self-care. These strategies help them navigate challenges and fulfill their responsibility of creating safe and supportive environments for students.

Building a Supportive Network. Building a supportive network was a vital coping mechanism for elementary CPP coordinators. These coordinators recognized the value of connecting with fellow professionals, administrators, and stakeholders who share their dedication to student well-being. By establishing a supportive network, CPP coordinators can access a wealth of knowledge, resources, and emotional support, which can help them navigate the challenges they face (Beltman et al., 2015). Collaboration and networking provide opportunities for sharing experiences, exchanging ideas, and seeking guidance from others who understand the unique demands of their role. Engaging in professional learning communities (PLCs) offers CPP coordinators a valuable way to build supportive networks. These communities provide a collaborative space for ongoing development and sharing of best practices (Vescio et al., 2008). Additionally, attending conferences and workshops on positive school climates allows coordinators to connect with professionals, share ideas, and access resources (Russell, 2016). Seeking mentorship from experienced professionals can also provide guidance and support in

navigating challenges (Henke et al., 2012). These strategies help coordinators expand their knowledge and confidence in their role.

Developing effective Communication Strategies. Developing effective communication strategies was a crucial coping mechanism for elementary CPP coordinators. Clear and open communication is essential in fostering a positive school climate and ensuring the well-being of students. CPP coordinators must engage in effective communication with various stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, and community members. To enhance communication, CPP coordinators can start by actively listening to stakeholders' concerns and perspectives, fostering trust and gaining valuable insights (Gordon, 2017). They should then use clear and simple language to convey important information through newsletters, emails, or online platforms, ensuring everyone understands (American School Counselor Association, 2020). Leveraging technology, such as school websites and social media, can facilitate real-time communication and engagement (Russell, 2016). Organizing regular meetings and forums promotes open dialogue and collaboration, creating a sense of belonging within the school community (American School Counselor Association, 2020).

Practicing Self-Care. Practicing self-care was a vital coping mechanism for elementary CPP coordinators to maintain their well-being and effectively navigate the challenges they encounter in promoting a positive school climate. CPP coordinators played a crucial role in supporting students and addressing sensitive issues, which can be emotionally demanding. By prioritizing self-care, they can ensure their own well-being, resilience, and ability to provide the necessary support to others (McCoy & Iwanicki, 2019). For CPP coordinators, self-care starts with setting boundaries and realistic expectations to prevent burnout and manage workload effectively (American School Counselor Association, 2020). Engaging in activities like exercise, hobbies, and mindfulness practices promotes physical and mental well-being (McCoy & Iwanicki, 2019). Seeking peer support and networking with colleagues in similar roles provides a sense of community and understanding (American School Counselor Association, 2020). Prioritizing leisure activities that bring joy and relaxation, such as spending time with loved ones or pursuing hobbies, helps maintain a positive mindset (McCoy & Iwanicki, 2019).

Insights gained from the experiences of elementary CPP coordinators in regards to school climate

As leaders in education, CPP coordinators provide insightful management techniques for fostering good school environments (Lisonbee, 2020). Their experiences emphasize the value of cooperation between many stakeholders, such as educators, administrators, parents, and members of the community, and they also stress the necessity of clear communication and group decision-making (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

Emphasizing Proactive Prevention Strategies. Emphasizing proactive prevention strategies was a crucial insight for elementary CPP coordinators in fostering a positive school climate. By focusing on prevention, CPP coordinators aim to create a safe and inclusive environment that

minimizes disruptive behaviors and promotes positive interactions among students. Research supports the effectiveness of proactive prevention strategies in enhancing the school climate. CPP coordinators took proactive measures to prevent problems such as bullying and harassment, support social-emotional learning (SEL), and endorse the use of restorative justice practices (Durlak et al., 2011; Espelage et al., 2015; Morrison et al., 2005). These efforts were focused on promoting a positive atmosphere in school through encouraging students to demonstrate respect, empathy, and accountability. Moreover, CPP coordinators acknowledged the significance of early intervention initiatives to assist students who are at risk academically and behaviorally (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). Their goal was to guarantee that every student had the chance to succeed in a secure and encouraging setting through these endeavors.

Promoting collaborative Problem-Solving. Promoting collaborative problem-solving was an essential insight for elementary CPP coordinators in fostering a positive school climate. By encouraging collaboration among students, teachers, administrators, and parents, CPP coordinators aim to create an inclusive and supportive environment where everyone has a voice and is actively involved in problem-solving processes. Research supports the effectiveness of collaborative problem-solving in enhancing the school climate. CPP coordinators encouraged teamwork by engaging students, teachers, and parents in decision-making procedures (Eisenberger et al., 2008; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Epstein et al., 2009). They gave students power by implementing programs such as peer mentoring and student councils, encouraging ownership and teamwork (Eisenberger et al., 2008). Promoting professional learning communities (PLCs) among teachers motivated collaborative problem-solving and ongoing enhancement (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). Moreover, CPP coordinators actively communicated and involved parents in school activities, placing importance on their input and perspectives (Epstein et al., 2009). Restorative practices were employed to handle conflicts in a cooperative manner, fostering empathy and comprehension among everyone affected (Hopkins et al., 2014). By utilizing these methods, CPP coordinators encouraged a cooperative atmosphere that emphasized shared accountability in upholding a favorable school environment.

Engaging and Empowering Students. When students were actively involved in decision-making processes, their sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning and well-being increases (Fredricks et al., 2004). By providing opportunities for student voice and agency, CPP coordinators foster a sense of belonging and promote a positive school climate. By having students in the development of policies and implementing student-led projects, CPP coordinators gave students more influence (Epstein et al., 2009; Hopkins et al., 2014). To encourage student participation in conversations concerning the school environment, they established committees and student councils (Epstein et al., 2009). Additionally, genuine evaluations and project-based learning were used to motivate students to participate more actively in their education (McCombs & Miller, 2006). CPP coordinators supported student-led initiatives and extracurricular pursuits that allowed students to show off their leadership skills and improve the school community (Hopkins et al., 2014). Furthermore, the incorporation of restorative practices inside educational

institutions enabled students to resolve disagreements in a constructive way and fostered a supportive environment (Hopkins et al., 2014).

II. Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative approach known as phenomenology, as described by Creswell (2012). Phenomenology focuses on understanding the common experiences shared within a specific group. The goal is to describe the nature of the phenomenon being studied. In this approach, interviews were conducted with individuals who had firsthand knowledge of the event or experience. Additionally, data from documents, observations, and art were collected. The data were carefully analyzed to identify recurring themes and meanings. Through this process, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. This study is conducted to explore the experiences of Elementary child protection policy coordinator in fostering a positive school climate, examining how they navigate and overcome challenges and uncover valuable educational management insights from their experiences. For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends five (5) to 25 and Morse (1994) suggests at least six (6). There are no specific rules when determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative sample size may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 1990).

For this study, eight (8) elementary school CPP coordinators from Piedad District, Division of Davao City, were selected as participants. They were chosen based on specific criteria: having at least five years of service, being an elementary school teacher, and serving as a CPP coordinator. The researcher employed purposive sampling, also known as judgmental or selective sampling, to ensure authenticity in the findings (Creswell, 2014; Marshall, 1996). This approach involved purposefully selecting participants based on the study's criteria or objectives.

In qualitative research, interviews were conducted to delve into the meanings behind central themes in the participants' world (McNamara, 1999). According to Quad (2016), the researcher transcribed and stored the interview data electronically for analysis. Interviews proved valuable for uncovering participants' experiences and gathering in-depth information on the topic. Data, often collected through lengthy interviews, was then analyzed using triangulation, extracting significant statements and grouping them into clusters of meanings. These clusters were further examined to form a comprehensive understanding of the experience, incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions. The researcher's personal interpretation of the experiences was also considered. Finally, the findings were presented in a report aimed at elucidating the essential structure of the experience for readers (McNamara, 1999; Quad, 2016).

III. Results and Discussion

The interviews revealed that elementary CPP coordinators play a vital role in developing and implementing child protection policies, which is crucial for creating a safe school environment. This involves collaboration and research, ensuring comprehensive guidelines for student safety. Additionally, CPP coordinators provide support to students and teachers by implementing interventions and programs that promote a positive school climate. They assist in professional development and implement initiatives like positive behavior support and restorative justice practices. Moreover, CPP coordinators work closely with teachers to cultivate a positive classroom environment, offering guidance and resources to address behavioral challenges and promote social-emotional development. Overall, their efforts contribute to creating nurturing environments where students feel safe and motivated to learn.

In their efforts to foster safe and supportive environments, CPP coordinators face various challenges such as managing conflicts and navigating legal considerations. To overcome these obstacles, they employ coping mechanisms like building supportive networks, seeking mentorship, and engaging in effective communication. Mentorship offers guidance and support, while regular meetings promote collaboration among stakeholders. Additionally, practicing self-care is vital for maintaining well-being, involving activities that bring joy and relaxation, like spending time with loved ones or pursuing hobbies. These strategies help CPP coordinators navigate complexities and fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

CPP coordinators offer valuable insights into fostering a positive school environment through collaboration and partnership. They emphasize the importance of involving all stakeholders in promoting school climate, highlighting effective communication and shared decision-making. Additionally, the study reveals key educational insights, such as prioritizing proactive prevention strategies to address academic and behavioral challenges early on. Collaborative problem-solving approaches, like restorative practices, are also emphasized to address conflicts and promote empathy among students. Lastly, empowering students through restorative practices and conflict resolution strategies contributes to a supportive and inclusive school climate.

The study highlighted the crucial role of CCP coordinators in creating a safe school environment through developing and implementing child protection policies, collaborating with others, and providing support to students and teachers. Despite facing challenges like conflicts and legal issues, CPP coordinators use coping strategies like building support networks and practicing self-care. Their insights underscore the significance of teamwork, proactive prevention, and empowering students to foster inclusive and nurturing school environments.

Analysis

The study uncovered key aspects of elementary Child Protection Policy Coordinators' experiences in fostering a positive school climate, including policy development, student support,

and culture promotion. Coping mechanisms identified among coordinators include building networks, enhancing communication, and prioritizing self-care. Participants also highlighted educational management insights, advocating for proactive prevention, collaborative problem-solving, and student empowerment.

The study findings highlighted key themes from the experiences of elementary Child Protection Policy Coordinators in fostering a positive school climate. Firstly, developing and implementing child protection policies emerged as crucial in ensuring a safe environment, addressing risks like bullying and harassment. Secondly, coordinators prioritize providing comprehensive support for students, covering academic, social, and emotional needs. Lastly, they emphasize promoting a positive school culture, fostering inclusive environments through programs like peer mentoring and cooperative learning.

On the coping mechanisms of elementary Child Protection Policy Coordinators in developing a positive school climate, one of the themes that was shown was; building a positive network. Building a supportive network is a vital coping mechanism for elementary CPP coordinators. These coordinators value connecting with fellow professionals, administrators, and stakeholders who share their dedication to student well-being and establish a supportive network where they can access a wealth of knowledge, resources, and emotional support.

The second theme identified was developing effective communication strategies. Clear and open communication is essential in fostering a positive school climate and ensuring the well-being of students. Coordinators can employ strategies like paying attention, showing empathy, seeking clarification in order to build trust, establish rapport, and gain valuable insights. The third theme identified was practicing self-care. Practicing self-care is a vital coping mechanism for elementary CPP coordinators to maintain their well-being and effectively navigate the challenges they encounter in promoting a positive school climate. Self-care involves establishing boundaries and setting realistic expectations. Setting boundaries helped prevent burnout and allowed them to allocate time and energy appropriately.

On the educational management insights gained by the elementary Child Protection Policy Coordinators in developing a positive school climate, the first theme identified was emphasizing proactive prevention strategies. Coordinators recognized the importance of early intervention programs to prevent academic and behavioral difficulties. They implemented comprehensive anti-bullying programs that include clear policies, reporting mechanisms, and prevention initiatives which fostered a culture of respect and empathy, aiming to create a safe and supportive environment where students feel protected from bullying and harassment. The second theme identified was promoting collaborative problem solving. By encouraging collaboration among students, teachers, administrators, and parents, CPP coordinators can create an inclusive and supportive environment where everyone has a voice and is actively involved in problem-solving processes.

The third theme was engaging and empowering students. When students are actively involved in decision-making processes, their sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning and well-being increases. This collaborative approach not only allowed students to have a say in shaping their educational environment but also encouraged their active participation and leadership skills.

Discussion

Exploring the pivotal role of child protection policy coordinators in fostering a positive and secure school environment presents a captivating avenue for future inquiry. A comprehensive investigation into the specific duties and obligations undertaken by these coordinators to cultivate a favorable school climate holds promise. Such a study could delve deeply into their involvement in developing, implementing, and monitoring child protection policies and initiatives, as well as their interactions with various stakeholders including teachers, students, parents, and school administrators.

By closely examining their contributions, encountered challenges, and employed strategies for fostering an inclusive, respectful, and safe environment, researchers can illuminate the profound impact of child protection policy coordinators on the overall school climate. As educational institutions increasingly recognize the intricate link between students' well-being and their academic success, future research could further scrutinize the multifaceted responsibilities shouldered by these coordinators.

A thorough exploration could encompass how child protection policy coordinators collaborate with educators, staff, and external entities to devise and enforce policies aimed at preventing bullying, harassment, and other misconduct. Through analyzing their approaches to promoting student awareness, conducting training initiatives, and implementing responsive measures, researchers may uncover the underlying mechanisms driving a positive school climate.

Moreover, such inquiry could delve into potential collaborative efforts between these coordinators and other stakeholders, examining the synergistic relationships that contribute to fostering a nurturing and conducive learning environment. Ultimately, the aim of this study is to provide valuable insights that inform policy refinement, professional development endeavors, and effective practices aimed at bolstering the positive school climate and ensuring the holistic growth and well-being of students.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



KATHLEEN MAY S. CEDEÑO

The author is 34 years old, married, born on May 31, 1990 at Kumalarang, Zamboanga Del Sur, Philippines. She is currently living in Lubogan, Toril, Davao City. She finished her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education at J.H Cerilles State College, Mati, San Miguel, Zamboanga Del Sur, with flying colors. Currently she is a Grade – III adviser at Bankas Heights Elementary School, Piedad District, as a Teacher – II.