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Research Article

Behavioral Strategies and Policy Frameworks for Promoting Discipline in Child-Friendly School Environments

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of behavioral strategies and their relationship with child-friendly school practices in public high schools within the Cabangan District. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the study surveyed teacher-respondents to assess their descriptions of behavioral strategies, including monitoring and evaluation, appropriateness, frequency, and consistency, as well as child-friendliness indicators such as teacher-student relationships, student engagement, and safety and orderliness. The collected data were analyzed using statistical tools such as percentage, weighted mean, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation. Findings indicate that teachers generally perceived behavioral strategies and child-friendliness positively, with active monitoring and appropriate strategies being the strongest areas, while frequency, consistency, and safety measures were identified as areas needing improvement. No significant differences were found in descriptions based on teacher profile variables, suggesting uniformity in understanding and implementation of policies. Pearson correlation revealed a weak positive but non-significant relationship between behavioral strategies and child-friendliness, implying that additional factors, such as leadership, resources, and parental involvement, also influence child-friendly practices. The study proposed a School-Based Behavioral Support Program to strengthen discipline and child-friendly practices. The program includes policy alignment, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, restorative practices, and parent-community involvement, aiming to address areas of improvement and promote an inclusive, safe, and supportive school environment.

Keywords: *Behavioral strategies, Child-friendly school environment, Teacher descriptions, Cabangan District, School discipline*

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Background

The early years of schooling play a critical role in shaping learners' social and emotional development, which directly influences their academic success and overall well-being. Discipline, when implemented through positive and developmentally appropriate strategies, serves as a foundation for creating a safe and supportive school environment. A child-friendly school fosters not only cognitive growth but also emotional security, respect, and inclusion—factors that significantly affect student engagement and learning outcomes (Defoe & Wang, 2021).

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (2023), a child-friendly school environment is one that is safe, inclusive, and responsive to the needs and rights of learners. Rather than punitive measures, behavior management must focus on preventive and corrective strategies that promote responsibility, empathy, and respect for others. Research indicates that positive behavioral support systems significantly reduce disruptive conduct, increase on-task behavior, and strengthen student-teacher relationships (Sugai & Horner, 2020).

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education upholds child protection and positive discipline as essential components of the learning environment. DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, or the Child Protection Policy, prohibits corporal punishment and emphasizes the adoption of positive, non-violent disciplinary strategies (Department of Education [DepEd], 2012). Similarly, the Basic Education Development Plan 2030 underscores the importance of school climate and well-being as key drivers of quality education (DepEd, 2022). These initiatives aim to create schools that safeguard children's rights while fostering self-discipline and mutual respect.

Despite these policies, behavioral challenges remain prevalent in many schools. Issues such as bullying, classroom disruptions, and defiance toward authority hinder effective teaching and learning (Cabardo & Berame, 2021). Studies reveal that teachers often resort to traditional disciplinary methods due to limited training in evidence-based behavioral interventions (Labrador & Mendoza, 2020). This gap underscores the need for structured

behavioral strategies that are preventive, restorative, and aligned with child-friendly principles.

Behavioral strategies refer to planned, research-based interventions designed to shape positive behavior and minimize disruptive conduct. These include preventive strategies such as clear classroom rules and routines, corrective measures like restorative conversations, and reinforcement techniques such as positive feedback and reward systems. The effectiveness of these strategies depends on consistency, cultural relevance, and integration within a whole-school approach such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Defoe & Wang, 2021).

Creating a child-friendly school environment requires collaborative efforts among teachers, school leaders, parents, and learners. Strategies should prioritize respect, inclusivity, and active participation of students in setting behavioral norms. Evidence shows that when students perceive their school as caring and respectful, incidents of aggression and misconduct significantly decline (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2021).

This research aims to assess the implementation of behavioral strategies that promote discipline while maintaining a child-friendly environment in schools. Specifically, it seeks to examine teachers' perceptions of these strategies, their frequency and consistency of use, and the extent to which they influence school climate and learner behavior. The findings will serve as the basis for developing a comprehensive school-based behavioral support program that enhances discipline, upholds child protection principles, and strengthens the overall learning

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of implementing behavioral strategies in promoting discipline and fostering a child-friendly school environment. The findings were utilized to develop a school-based behavioral support program that reinforced positive student behavior, ensured a safe and respectful learning atmosphere, and strengthened the overall school climate.

Specifically, the study will answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the teacher respondents in terms of the following:
 - 1.1. Sex;
 - 1.2. Age;
 - 1.3. Grade level taught;
 - 1.4. Length of service; and
 - 1.5. Highest educational attainment?
2. How may the teachers describe the implementation of behavioral strategies in terms of its key components and processes?
3. How may the school's child-friendly environment be described?
4. Is there a significant difference in the teachers' perception of the implementation of behavioral strategies when grouped according to profile variables?
5. Is there a significant difference in the child-friendly school environment when grouped according to the teachers' profile variables?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the perceived implementation of behavioral strategies and the level of child-friendliness in the school environment?
7. What school-based behavioral program may be proposed to strengthen discipline and support a child-friendly environment based on the findings of the study?

Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive research design to systematically collect information describing existing conditions. This approach enabled the researcher to gather respondents' perceptions regarding the implementation of behavioral strategies and their influence on promoting discipline and maintaining a child-friendly school environment in Cabangan District. Descriptive research aims to obtain quantifiable information for statistical analysis of a target population through data interpretation (Bonilla-Elegado, 2021). It is appropriate when the objective is to identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, and relationships without manipulating variables.

Survey research was employed to facilitate the collection of substantial data that could be analyzed for patterns and trends. In educational settings, surveys are commonly used to

examine how school programs, behavioral interventions, and policy frameworks influence teacher practices, school climate, and student outcomes. Through structured questionnaires, this study gathered data from teachers to determine how behavioral strategies were implemented and how these contributed to creating safe, inclusive, and child-friendly environments.

According to McCombes (2020), descriptive research is widely used when the purpose is to present an accurate profile of situations, events, or groups. It does not involve experimental manipulation but instead focuses on describing relationships and drawing insights from naturally occurring conditions. In this study, no experimental treatment was applied. Rather, the researcher described existing practices and teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of behavioral strategies aligned with policy frameworks such as the Child Protection Policy and the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030 of the Department of Education.

Furthermore, McCombes (2020) emphasized that descriptive research may employ various quantitative methods to investigate one or more variables as they naturally occur. This flexibility made the design suitable for the present study, which examined implementation practices and school climate indicators without altering existing systems. Specifically, the study explored the level of behavioral strategy implementation in terms of appropriateness, frequency and consistency, responsiveness, and monitoring. These were examined in relation to measures of child-friendliness, including safety, inclusivity, student engagement, and teacher-student relationships. The findings served as the basis for developing a school-based behavioral support program consistent with the Child Protection Policy and child-friendly school initiatives of the Department of Education.

Respondents and Location

The respondents of this study will be 77 public high school teachers from schools within the Cabangan District, Division of Zambales. These teachers will be selected through purposive sampling, as they are directly involved

in the implementation of classroom-based and school-wide behavioral strategies during School Year 2025–2026. Their participation

ensures that the data reflect actual practices aligned with existing policy guidelines of the Department of Education.

Table 1. below presents the distribution of respondents:

Schools in the District of Cabangan	Population of Teacher-Respondents
Cabangan National High School	56
Longus Integrated School	15
San Isidro Integrated School	6
Total	77

Data Collection

The research instrument was carefully designed and reviewed by content and technical experts, including school heads and experienced research practitioners. After revisions, the researcher sought formal approval from the Schools Division Superintendent of Zambales and the school heads of the participating schools to conduct the study and administer the survey questionnaires.

Upon approval, the researcher personally distributed the survey questionnaires to the teacher-respondents. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to all participants to ensure informed and voluntary participation. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion. Coordination was made with grade-level coordinators and school program focal persons to facilitate smooth distribution and retrieval, achieving a 100% return rate.

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to ethical standards regarding privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality. These principles ensured that respondents' identities and personal information were protected throughout the research process. Anonymity was maintained by using codes instead of names, and confidentiality guaranteed that collected data would be used exclusively for academic purposes. Access to raw data was restricted to the researcher and authorized data analysts.

Prior to the conduct of the study, formal written permission was obtained from the Schools Division Office and the principals of the Public High Schools. This complied with DepEd

research protocols and ethical requirements, promoting trust among participants and safeguarding institutional integrity.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the survey were encoded, tallied, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistics, as outlined below:

1. Percentage – Used to describe the distribution of respondents by demographic variables such as sex, age, grade level taught, length of service, and highest educational attainment.
2. Weighted Mean – Calculated to determine the average perception of teachers on the implementation of behavioral strategies and the level of child-friendliness of the school environment.
3. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) – Employed to determine if there were significant differences in respondents' perceptions when grouped according to profile variables.
 - Decision Rule:
 - If Sig. \leq 0.05: Reject the null hypothesis (significant difference exists).
 - If Sig. $>$ 0.05: Accept the null hypothesis (no significant difference).
4. Pearson r Correlation Coefficient – Used to assess the relationship between the implementation of behavioral strategies and the level of child-friendliness in the school environment.
 - Decision Rule:
 - If Sig. $<$ 0.05: Reject the null hypothesis (significant relationship).
 - If Sig. $>$ 0.05: Accept the null hypothesis (no significant relationship).

Interpretation of Pearson r Values:

r Value	Interpretation
+0.00 to +0.20	Negligible correlation
+0.21 to +0.40	Weak or slight correlation
+0.41 to +0.70	Moderate correlation
+0.71 to +0.90	High correlation
+0.91 to +1.00	Very high to perfect correlation

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the data gathered, analyzed, and interpreted in relation to the specific problems of the study. It discusses the teacher respondents' profiles, their

perceptions of the implementation of behavioral strategies, the level of child-friendliness in the school environment, tests of significant differences according to profile variables, and the correlation between the two major variables.

1. Profile of the Teacher Respondents

Table 2. Distribution of Teacher Respondents According to Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	23	29.87
Female	54	70.13
Total	77	100

Table 2 shows that 70.13% of the teacher respondents are female, while 29.87% are male, indicating that the majority of teachers in the Cabangan District are women. This

distribution reflects the broader national pattern in the Philippines, where basic education teaching is a female-dominated profession (Canonizado, 2020).

Table 3. Distribution of Teacher Respondents According to Age

Age (Years)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
26-30	6	7.79
31-35	21	27.27
36-40	31	40.26
41 and above	19	24.68

Table 3 reveals that the largest group of teacher respondents (40.26%) falls within the 36-40 age range. This indicates that the majority of participants are in their mid-career stage,

a phase commonly associated with professional stability, accumulated teaching experience, and more refined classroom management practices (Allen, 2018)

Table 4. Distribution of Teacher Respondents According to Grade Level Taught

Grade Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Grade 7	11	14.29
Grade 8	11	14.29
Grade 9	17	22.08
Grade 10	14	18.18
Grade 11	13	16.88
Grade 12	11	14.29
Total	77	100

Table 4 shows that 22.08% of the respondents are teaching Grade 9, representing the highest proportion. This implies that teachers across junior and senior high school levels participated, allowing for diverse perspectives on behavioral strategies and child-friendly practices.

Table 5. Distribution of Teacher Respondents According to Length of Service

Length of Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	6	7.79
1-5 years	18	23.38
6-10 years	40	51.95
11 years and above	13	16.88
Total	77	100

Most respondents (51.95%) have been in service for 6-10 years. This indicates that more than half of the participants possess moderate teaching experience, positioning them beyond the induction phase yet still within a period of continued professional growth. Length of service is often associated with increased instructional competence, improved classroom management skills, and greater confidence in implementing behavioral strategies (McLeod, 2018).

Table 6. Distribution of Teacher Respondents According to Highest Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bachelor's Degree	9	11.69
With Master's Units	42	54.55
Master's Degree	20	25.97
Doctorate	6	7.79
Total	77	100

Table 6 shows that 54.55% of the teachers hold master's units, indicating that a majority are pursuing or have partially completed graduate studies. This suggests a well-qualified teaching force, reflecting DepEd's commitment to professional advancement and continuing education (Department of Education [DepEd], 2023).

2. Implementation of Behavioral Strategies

Table 7. Teachers' Perception of the Implementation of Behavioral Strategies

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description	Rank
Appropriateness of Strategies	2.98	Agree	2
Frequency and Consistency	2.63	Agree	4
Responsiveness to Student Behavior	2.92	Agree	3
Monitoring and Evaluation	2.95	Agree	1
Overall Mean	2.87	Agree	

Table 7 indicates that **Appropriateness of Strategies** obtained the highest weighted mean (WM = 2.98), followed closely by **Monitoring and Evaluation** (WM = 2.95). These results suggest that teachers generally apply suitable behavioral techniques and actively monitor student conduct to maintain classroom discipline.

However, **Frequency and Consistency** received the lowest weighted mean (WM = 2.63), implying that while strategies are appropriate and monitored, they may not always be

implemented uniformly or sustained over time. This variability could affect the long-term effectiveness of behavioral interventions.

The overall mean of 2.87 signifies that respondents generally agree that behavioral strategies are well-implemented in their schools. This finding is consistent with the School-Based Management framework of the

Department of Education (2012), which emphasizes structured monitoring systems and consistent implementation of programs to improve school discipline and performance. Structured behavioral programs are most effective when clearly defined, regularly evaluated, and consistently enforced across classrooms

3. Level of Child-Friendliness in the School Environment

Table 8. Teachers' Perception of the Child-Friendly School Environment

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Description	Rank
Safety and Orderliness	2.86	Agree	4
Respectful and Inclusive Practices	3.04	Agree	3
Student Engagement and Participation	3.11	Agree	2
Teacher-Student Relationships	3.25	Agree	1
Overall Mean	3.07	Agree	

As shown in Table 8, **Teacher-Student Relationships** ranked highest (WM = 3.25), followed by **Student Engagement** (WM = 3.11). These results suggest that teachers foster warm, respectful, and supportive interactions with learners—core characteristics of a child-friendly school environment. Positive teacher-student relationships are widely recognized as foundational to creating safe and inclusive learning spaces (Wright & So, 2022).

1. Significant Differences in Perceptions of Behavioral Strategies

The teachers' perception of behavioral strategies was analyzed according to sex, age, grade level taught, length of service, and highest educational attainment. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test were used to determine whether significant differences exist among the groups.

Table 9. ANOVA Results on Teachers' Perceptions of Behavioral Strategies

Profile Variable	F-Value	p-Value	Interpretation
Sex	0.98	0.328	Not Significant(Do not reject)
Age	1.45	0.210	Not Significant(Do not reject)
Grade Level Taught	2.10	0.112	Not Significant(Do not reject)
Length of Service	1.32	0.271	Not Significant(Do not reject)
Educational Attainment	1.78	0.148	Not Significant(Do not reject)

The results in Table 9 reveal that there are no significant differences in teachers' perceptions of behavioral strategies when grouped according to their profile variables. This means that teachers, regardless of their sex, age, grade level taught, length of service, and educational attainment, share a consistent perception regarding the implementation of behavioral strategies in the school setting.

This finding implies that behavioral strategies are uniformly implemented and perceived by teachers, likely due to standardized disciplinary policies and shared institutional practices.

Teachers may have undergone similar training or adhered to the same behavioral frameworks, resulting in comparable perspectives.

This result supports the findings of Verger, Fontdevila, and Zancajo (2017), who reported that demographic variables such as age, gender, and years of service tend to have limited influence on teachers' perceptions of classroom management practices. Their work suggests that institutional structures and shared professional norms often shape practices more strongly than personal characteristics.

Similarly, Malangsa (2013) emphasized that sustained professional development initiatives and consistent adherence to policy frameworks help cultivate shared understandings among teachers regarding student behavior management. When educators operate within clearly defined guidelines and receive ongoing training, variations in perception and implementation are minimized, leading to

more coherent and aligned disciplinary practices across schools.

2. Significant Differences in Perceptions of Child-Friendly School Environment

The perception of the child-friendly school environment was examined based on sex, age, grade level taught, length of service, and highest educational attainment, using ANOVA and t-test to test for significant differences.

Table 10. ANOVA Results on Teachers' Perceptions of the Child-Friendly School Environment

Profile Variable	F-Value	p-Value	Interpretation
Sex	1.12	0.294	Not Significant (Do not reject)
Age	1.65	0.183	Not Significant (Do not reject)
Grade Level Taught	2.01	0.127	Not Significant (Do not reject)
Length of Service	1.28	0.284	Not Significant (Do not reject)
Educational Attainment	1.55	0.197	Not Significant (Do not reject)

As shown in Table 10, there are no significant differences in teachers' perceptions of the child-friendly school environment when grouped according to profile variables. This indicates a uniform perception among teachers regarding the level of child-friendliness in their respective schools.

This uniformity suggests that school policies and programs promoting a child-friendly environment are consistently implemented and understood by teachers across demographic groups. The absence of perceptual gaps

implies that the principles of child protection, inclusivity, and learner-centeredness are well-internalized among teaching staff.

The finding supports (Tan, 2021) who noted that shared exposure to institutional training and advocacy programs on child-friendly education results in consistent perceptions among teachers. Furthermore, (Reyes & Bautista, 2020) found that teachers' understanding of child-friendly practices tends to converge in schools with strong leadership and consistent program implementation.

6. Relationship Between Behavioral Strategies and Child-Friendly Environment

Table 11. Correlation Between Implementation of Behavioral Strategies and Child-Friendliness

Variables Correlated	r-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Behavioral Strategies vs. Child-Friendliness	0.190	0.098	Accept H_0	No significant relationship

The computed r-value of 0.190 indicates a weak positive correlation between the implementation of behavioral strategies and perceptions of child-friendliness. However, the relationship is not statistically significant ($p = 0.098$), suggesting that the observed association is insufficient to establish a meaningful or direct link between the two variables. While higher levels of behavioral strategy implementation may coincide with improved perceptions of child-friendliness, the strength of the relationship is limited.

This finding aligns with the work of Karmila and Wijaya (2020), who emphasized that the development of a child-friendly and high-performing school environment is influenced by multiple interrelated factors, including leadership practices, resource allocation, stakeholder participation, and governance structures. Their study highlights that behavioral practices alone are not sole determinants of school climate outcomes; rather, a comprehensive and

7. Proposed School-Based Behavioral Support Program STUDENT POLICE PROGRAM: Promoting Discipline and Safety in Schools (PROTECT Initiative)

I. Program Objectives

1. Promote adherence to school rules and behavioral standards among students.
2. Encourage student participation in monitoring safety, cleanliness, and respectful interactions.
3. Develop leadership, accountability, and teamwork among student leaders.

II. Target Participants

- Students from Grades 7–10 (or appropriate grade levels) interested in leadership roles.
- Student Police will be selected based on good behavior, responsibility, and willingness to serve.
- Teacher-advisers will mentor and supervise Student Police teams.

III. Program Components

Component	Activities	Expected Outcomes
1. Recruitment and Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Call for volunteers - Teacher and peer nominations - Screening based on behavior and academics 	Formation of a responsible and motivated Student Police group
2. Training and Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshops on school rules, conflict resolution, and peer mediation - Training in patrol duties and reporting procedures - Leadership and teamwork exercises 	Student Police understand their roles, responsibilities, and proper conduct
3. Patrol and Monitoring Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor classrooms, corridors, and school grounds - Ensure adherence to school rules (uniform, discipline, behavior) - Report unsafe or disruptive activities to teachers 	Safer, more orderly, and disciplined school environment
4. Student-Led Safety and Discipline Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize awareness drives on cleanliness, discipline, and anti-bullying - Peer counseling sessions - Reward campaigns for students following rules 	Promotion of positive behavior and student engagement in school safety
5. Reflection and Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monthly reflection meetings to discuss challenges and successes - Recognition of exemplary Student Police members and patrol units 	Motivation for sustained participation and improvement in leadership skills

IV. Program Implementation Timeline

Quarter	Activities
Q1	Selection of Student Police, orientation, and training sessions
Q2	Active patrol duties, monitoring, and first evaluation
Q3	Safety and discipline campaigns, mid-year reflection, and feedback
Q4	Year-end evaluation, recognition ceremony, and program report

The proposed **Student Police Program** seeks to strengthen the consistency of behavioral strategy implementation and improve overall school safety by empowering students to take an active role in maintaining discipline and promoting a child-friendly environment. By training selected learners as peer leaders responsible for monitoring safety practices and encouraging adherence to school rules, the program fosters leadership, accountability, cooperation, and teamwork among students.

Under the supervision of teachers and with the support of the wider school community, the initiative promotes shared responsibility in maintaining order and respect within the school setting. This approach reflects the collaborative governance principles emphasized in School-Based Management and aligns with the child-friendly school framework supported by the Department of Education.

By encouraging student participation in promoting safety, inclusivity, and positive behavior, the program contributes to building a more structured, participatory, and nurturing learning environment. Moreover, it reinforces positive school culture and enhances students' social skills, civic awareness, and sense of belonging—key components of a sustainable child-friendly school system.

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