

Disciplinary Problems as Perceived by the Teachers in Batuhan East and Nicolas Danao Elementary Schools

Rosanna T. Verano

Teacher I, Batuhan East Elementary School

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Email of Corresponding Author: rosanna.verano@deped.gov.ph

Abstract

This study assessed the disciplinary problems perceived by teachers in Batuhan East Elementary School and Nicolas Danao Elementary School in Barangay Batuhan, Masbate City. It aimed to determine the causes of disciplinary problems, the assertive discipline strategies used by teachers, the effective ways of dealing with behavioral concerns, the disciplinary interventions implemented, and whether teachers' perceptions differed across the two schools. The study was anchored on Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, and Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory. A descriptive research design was employed. Data were gathered through a survey questionnaire with a rating scale, supported by informal interviews and observations. The respondents consisted of 18 teaching and non-teaching personnel from the two selected public elementary schools, and total enumeration was used. Findings showed that the causes of disciplinary problems were generally perceived as less serious, with unfavorable physical learning environment, students' varied backgrounds, and poor lighting and ventilation identified as the leading concerns. Teachers agreed on the use of assertive discipline strategies, particularly cooperative learning, team learning, peer tutoring, and group projects. Effective ways of dealing with disciplinary problems included merits and demerits, private conferences, dialogue, verbal reinforcement, and other supportive approaches. Disciplinary interventions such as tangible recognition, home contingency or parental involvement, teacher reactions, and group contingency were generally perceived as effective. The study further revealed no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents from the two schools. The study concluded that disciplinary problems were manageable and that teachers commonly applied positive and constructive strategies aligned with child protection policies. It recommended continuous policy review, sustained use of varied discipline strategies, reinforcement of good manners and right conduct, wider dissemination of findings, and further related studies. The study is relevant to SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) because it supports safe, inclusive, and rights-based school discipline. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening educational and institutional sustainability through improved classroom management, policy compliance, and school-community cooperation.

Keywords: Assertive Discipline, Classroom Management, Disciplinary Interventions, Disciplinary Problems, Elementary Schools, Teachers' Perceptions

1. Introduction

Classroom discipline is essential for maintaining a productive learning environment and promoting responsible student behavior. In contemporary educational settings, teachers are expected to manage classroom discipline while respecting learners' rights and complying with child protection policies. The increasing awareness of children's rights and the implementation of legal frameworks regulating disciplinary practices have significantly influenced how teachers address behavioral problems in schools. Teachers are responsible for guiding learners toward responsible conduct while maintaining order within the classroom. However, misunderstandings regarding disciplinary practices may lead to hesitation among teachers when implementing corrective measures. This situation highlights the need to examine the causes of disciplinary problems and the strategies used by educators to address them effectively. This study focuses on the disciplinary problems perceived by teachers in Batuhan East Elementary School and Nicolas Danao Elementary School in Barangay Batuhan, Masbate City. Specifically, it examines the causes of disciplinary problems, the assertive discipline strategies used by teachers, the effective ways of dealing with behavioral concerns, and the disciplinary interventions implemented in managing student behavior.

1.1 Discipline and Child Protection Policies Influencing Classroom Management in Batuhan Elementary Schools

The implementation of child protection laws and educational policies has transformed classroom management practices. Teachers must maintain discipline while ensuring that learners' rights and welfare are protected. In a lecture delivered by Sarmiento III (2018), teachers were reminded about the responsibilities and limitations associated with their special parental authority over students. While teachers are required to supervise and discipline learners responsibly, they must also comply with laws that restrict corporal punishment. Historically, disciplinary practices often involved strict corrective

measures, including physical punishment, which were widely accepted as part of character formation. However, evolving educational policies emphasize positive discipline approaches that respect children's dignity and promote constructive behavioral management. The Family Code of the Philippines grants teachers and school administrators special parental authority over students under their supervision. This authority requires educators to exercise due diligence in supervising and disciplining learners while safeguarding their welfare. The Department of Education reinforced these principles through DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, also known as the Child Protection Policy, which strictly prohibits corporal punishment, psychological abuse, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of child abuse in schools. Consequently, teachers are required to adopt positive and nonviolent disciplinary approaches.

1.2 Themes and Insights from Related Literature on Student Discipline and Behavioral Management

Existing literature highlights the importance of discipline in maintaining classroom order and promoting students' social and moral development. According to Bear (2010), school discipline serves two major purposes: maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment and developing students' self-discipline and responsible behavior. Effective discipline should therefore balance control and character development. Recent discussions in education emphasize the shift from punitive discipline toward restorative and supportive approaches. Gonzalez (2022) explained that educational systems are reconsidering zero-tolerance policies and exploring restorative justice practices that focus on repairing harm and strengthening relationships. Similarly, Curran (2022) argued that harsher punishment alone is ineffective in addressing student misconduct and that preventive and supportive interventions are more sustainable. Behavioral concerns in schools have also evolved in response to social changes. Nawaz (2022) noted that after the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers observed increased behavioral challenges such as emotional distress, classroom disruptions, and difficulties in social adjustment. Likewise, Jones (2020) observed that student misconduct persisted even during distance learning, where digital disruptions and disengagement became new disciplinary challenges. Empirical studies further highlight the complexity of disciplinary practices. Mumthas et al. (2014) found that undesirable disciplinary practices may negatively affect students' emotional well-being, resulting in feelings of shame, anger, and decreased self-esteem. Cetincaya and Kocyigit (2020) identified patterns in disciplinary cases, indicating that disciplinary actions are often influenced by gender, grade level, and school type. Other research emphasizes teachers' perceptions and practices in managing discipline. Robinson (2021) found that teachers' confidence and peer practices influence their use of discipline strategies. Shelton (2018) identified common behavioral problems such as talking out of turn and classroom disruptions, while effective strategies included positive behavioral interventions and structured classroom management approaches. Collectively, these studies suggest that effective discipline requires a balanced approach that integrates authority, positive reinforcement, restorative practices, and supportive interventions.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of Student Discipline in Elementary Education

The issue of student discipline is widely recognized both globally and locally. Internationally, educational systems continue to debate the effectiveness of disciplinary policies and interventions. The shift toward restorative and positive discipline approaches reflects a global effort to ensure that disciplinary practices support both behavioral improvement and students' rights. In the Philippine context, strict child protection policies govern disciplinary practices in schools. Rivera (2015) reported a case in Baguio City where a teacher was suspended for striking students with a broom, demonstrating the strict enforcement of DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012. This policy reinforces the prohibition of corporal punishment and emphasizes the use of non-violent disciplinary approaches. Educational institutions in the Philippines also promote positive discipline strategies. Leicester (2016) discussed initiatives that encourage non-violent classroom management practices through partnerships with child welfare organizations. Likewise, Muyot (2016) emphasized that discipline should be developmentally appropriate and must prioritize the best interests of the child. Local studies also highlight the importance of understanding behavioral problems in schools. Amado and Guerra (2018) identified absenteeism, laziness, and misbehavior as common issues among intermediate pupils. Similarly, Librojo et al. (2018) found that harsh disciplinary practices may contribute to bullying and negative perceptions of teacher support. These studies indicate that disciplinary problems remain a significant concern in schools and that effective interventions require collaboration among teachers, parents, and school administrators.

1.4 Theoretical or Conceptual Basis: Developmental Theories and Classroom Discipline

This study is anchored on three major developmental theories that explain student behavior and disciplinary outcomes: Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, and Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory. Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory explains that learners develop logical reasoning and problem-solving abilities as they mature cognitively. As students progress to more advanced stages of cognitive development, they become capable of understanding rules, consequences, and logical relationships between actions and outcomes. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory emphasizes identity formation during adolescence. According to Erikson, educational environments play a crucial role in guiding learners toward responsible behavior and helping them develop a clear sense of identity and social responsibility. Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory focuses on the development of moral reasoning and values that guide behavior. According to Kohlberg, individuals progress through stages of moral development, gradually acquiring the ability to make ethical decisions based on principles of fairness and

responsibility. Together, these theories explain how cognitive development, psychosocial growth, and moral reasoning influence students' behavior and their responses to disciplinary interventions.

1.5 Research Gap on Teachers' Perceptions of Disciplinary Problems and Interventions in Batuhan Elementary Schools

Previous studies have explored various aspects of student discipline, including disciplinary practices, behavioral problems, and intervention strategies. However, most of these studies focus on broader educational contexts or different school levels. The literature review indicates limited research examining disciplinary problems and interventions specifically in public elementary schools in Barangay Batuhan, Masbate City. Differences in school context, community characteristics, and teaching practices may influence how disciplinary problems are perceived and addressed. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by assessing the causes of disciplinary problems, the assertive discipline strategies used by teachers, the effective methods of managing behavioral issues, and the disciplinary interventions implemented in Batuhan East Elementary School and Nicolas Danao Elementary School.

1.6 Alignment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that promote safe, inclusive, and effective learning environments. Primarily, it supports SDG 4 – Quality Education, which emphasizes the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities. By examining disciplinary problems, assertive discipline strategies, and behavioral interventions implemented by teachers, the study contributes to improving classroom management practices that foster productive and supportive learning environments. The study also relates to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, as it highlights the importance of implementing child protection policies such as DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 and ensuring that disciplinary practices respect children's rights and dignity within educational institutions. In addition, the research indirectly supports SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being, since positive and nonviolent disciplinary approaches help protect students' emotional and psychological well-being. Through the promotion of constructive discipline strategies and safe school environments, the study contributes to the broader goals of educational development, child protection, and institutional accountability in schools.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Educational and Community Sustainability in Batuhan, Masbate

This study contributes to educational sustainability by providing insights into effective disciplinary practices that support positive learning environments in public elementary schools. By identifying the causes of disciplinary problems and evaluating the interventions used by teachers, the study supports improvements in classroom management practices. The research also contributes to community sustainability by promoting collaboration among teachers, parents, and local stakeholders in addressing student behavioral concerns. Strong partnerships between schools and families reinforce positive behavioral expectations and encourage responsible citizenship among learners. Furthermore, the study supports institutional sustainability by strengthening the implementation of national education policies such as DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 on child protection. Understanding teachers' perceptions of disciplinary problems and interventions can help policymakers and school administrators improve programs that ensure safe and supportive educational environments.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to examine the prevailing practices related to the causes and interventions of disciplinary problems in the selected public elementary schools. Descriptive research allows the researcher to systematically collect, analyze, and interpret information regarding existing conditions without manipulating variables. This design was appropriate for the study because it aimed to describe teachers' perceptions of disciplinary problems, the strategies they use in managing classroom behavior, and the interventions implemented in addressing these issues. The primary data collection method was a survey questionnaire with a rating scale, which enabled the researcher to gather quantitative information regarding teachers' perceptions. The collected data were later organized and analyzed to determine patterns and trends related to disciplinary problems and interventions.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Barangay Batuhan, one of the urban barangays of Masbate City located in Masbate Province, which is part of Region V or the Bicol Region. Masbate Province is composed of three major islands Masbate, Ticao, and Burias and Masbate City serves as the provincial capital and commercial center. The province has a land area of approximately 11,970 hectares and is composed of thirty barangays, nine of which are classified as urban areas. Barangay Batuhan is situated in a coastal area facing the pier site of Masbate City, where most residents are engaged in fishing and farming. Two public elementary schools operate within the barangay: Batuhan East Elementary School and Nicolas Danao Elementary School. These schools served as the research sites for the present study. Figure 1 presents the map of Masbate Province showing its municipalities, while Figure 2 highlights the location of Barangay Batuhan within Masbate City, indicating the geographical setting of the research area.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of teaching and non-teaching personnel from Batuhan East Elementary School and Nicolas Danao Elementary School. These personnel were selected because they are directly involved in the school environment and are capable of observing and addressing disciplinary problems among students. From Batuhan East Elementary School, the respondents included twelve teaching personnel and one non-teaching personnel, with a total of thirteen participants. From Nicolas Danao Elementary School, three teaching personnel and two non-teaching personnel participated in the study. In total, the research involved eighteen respondents who provided information regarding disciplinary problems, classroom management strategies, and interventions implemented in the schools.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study utilized total enumeration in selecting the respondents. Since the population of teaching and non-teaching personnel in the selected schools was small and manageable, all qualified individuals were included in the study. This approach ensured that the data collected represented the entire population of personnel within the two schools. By including all available respondents, the researcher minimized sampling bias and obtained comprehensive insights into the perceptions of school personnel regarding disciplinary problems and interventions.

2.5 Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in the study was a survey questionnaire with a rating scale designed to measure teachers' perceptions regarding disciplinary problems and intervention strategies. The questionnaire consisted of four main components: causes of disciplinary problems, assertive discipline strategies, effective ways of dealing with disciplinary problems, and disciplinary interventions used by teachers. Each section contained indicators that respondents evaluated using a structured rating scale to determine the seriousness of disciplinary problems and the effectiveness of various disciplinary strategies. To ensure the validity and clarity of the instrument, the questionnaire underwent a validation process involving two groups of jurors. The first group consisted of teachers who reviewed the questionnaire and provided recommendations regarding the clarity and relevance of the indicators. Their suggestions were incorporated into the initial revision of the instrument. The second group of jurors consisted of school heads who further evaluated the questionnaire to ensure that the indicators were appropriate and aligned with the objectives of the study. After incorporating their suggestions, the final version of the questionnaire was prepared for distribution to the respondents.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process began with an extensive review of related literature and studies to develop a deeper understanding of the research problem. Books, theses, dissertations, journal articles, newspapers, and online sources were examined to support the development of the research framework. After completing the Statement of the Problem and finalizing the survey questionnaire with the guidance of the thesis adviser, the manuscript was submitted to the Thesis Committee for approval. Following the approval of the research proposal, a formal letter of permission was submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent requesting authorization to conduct the study. Once permission was granted, the researcher personally distributed the survey questionnaires to the respondents in the selected schools. The respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire to ensure accurate and thoughtful responses. After the questionnaires were retrieved, the researcher carefully checked each response for completeness and accuracy. The data were then organized, tabulated, and prepared for statistical analysis. The analyzed data were interpreted and presented to identify patterns and insights related to disciplinary problems and the effectiveness of various intervention strategies.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

To analyze the collected data, several statistical techniques were employed. Frequency count was used to determine the number of responses corresponding to each indicator in the questionnaire. This method allowed the researcher to identify how often particular perceptions or responses occurred among the respondents. The weighted mean was also used to determine the average perception of respondents regarding disciplinary problems and interventions. This statistical measure enabled the researcher to evaluate the level of seriousness of disciplinary problems and the effectiveness of various strategies based on the ratings provided by the respondents. In addition, the Kruskal–Wallis One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents. This statistical test is appropriate for analyzing ordinal data and comparing responses across groups. The Kruskal–Wallis test allowed the researcher to examine whether differences existed in the perceptions of respondents from the two schools regarding disciplinary problems and the interventions used in addressing them.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Disciplinary Problems and Classroom Management Practices

3.1.1 Causes of Disciplinary Problems in the Classroom Environment

The findings revealed that the respondents generally perceived the identified causes of disciplinary problems as less serious. Among the indicators, unfavorable physical learning environment obtained the highest rating, followed by students' varied backgrounds and poor lighting facilities with inadequate ventilation. Other contributing factors included lack of discipline, poor teacher management skills, overcrowded classrooms, disorganized furniture and storage cabinets, noise sources near the classroom, and inappropriate seating arrangements. Overall, the average rating indicated that these factors were considered minor concerns in the two schools. These findings suggest that although disciplinary problems exist, they are not perceived as severe in the selected schools. The relatively favorable physical learning environment and classroom conditions may explain why teachers reported fewer disciplinary concerns. The presence of diverse student backgrounds, however, remains a contributing factor to behavioral issues, especially in communities where families originate from different regions. The results also imply that teachers in the schools are aware of DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012, also known as the Child Protection Policy, and implement appropriate disciplinary measures consistent with legal and ethical standards. This awareness likely contributes to the effective management of classroom behavior.

3.1.2 Assertive Discipline Strategies Used by Teachers

The results showed that teachers in both schools agreed that assertive discipline strategies are applied in their classrooms. Cooperative learning received the highest rating, followed by team learning, peer tutoring, and group projects. Teachers from Batuhan East Elementary School strongly agreed with the implementation of these strategies, while teachers from Nicolas Danao Elementary School generally agreed with their use. Overall, the results indicated a high level of agreement regarding the use of collaborative learning strategies as disciplinary approaches. These findings indicate that teachers actively use constructive instructional strategies to manage classroom behavior and encourage student participation. Cooperative learning and group-based activities allow students to interact positively with peers while developing responsibility and accountability. Such strategies help minimize disruptive behavior by engaging students in meaningful learning tasks. The results also highlight the important role of teachers in shaping student behavior through structured classroom activities and supportive interactions. As educators and role models, teachers contribute significantly to maintaining a positive and orderly learning environment.

3.1.3 Effective Ways of Dealing with Disciplinary Problems

The findings indicated that teachers considered several strategies effective in managing disciplinary problems. The highest-rated strategy involved awarding merits for good behavior and giving demerits for lapses, followed by conducting private one-on-one conferences with students. Other effective strategies included engaging in dialogue to identify problems and reach mutually beneficial solutions, using verbal reinforcement to encourage positive behavior, focusing attention on disruptive students to prevent further disturbance, allowing students to express their feelings, and using non-verbal gestures such as facial expressions or eye contact to discourage misbehavior. Overall, these approaches were rated as effective methods for addressing classroom discipline issues. The results suggest that teachers prefer constructive and supportive approaches when addressing student behavior. Reinforcement systems, dialogue, and individualized conferences provide opportunities for students to reflect on their behavior while maintaining their dignity and self-esteem. These strategies also demonstrate teachers' awareness of students' emotional conditions, including feelings of frustration, anger, or insecurity. By focusing on communication and encouragement rather than punishment, teachers create a more supportive classroom environment that promotes positive behavioral change.

3.2 Disciplinary Interventions Implemented by Teachers

The results showed that the disciplinary interventions implemented by teachers were generally perceived as effective. The most highly rated intervention involved tangible recognition or token rewards for positive behavior. Home contingency or parental involvement was also highly rated, indicating that communication with parents is an important strategy in addressing student behavior. Teacher reactions, including verbal or physical cues indicating appropriate or inappropriate behavior, were also considered effective. Group contingency strategies and direct cost interventions, such as removing disruptive students from the classroom, were rated moderately effective. Overall, the findings indicated that teachers consistently apply a range of interventions to manage classroom discipline. These findings highlight the importance of positive reinforcement and collaboration between schools and families in managing student behavior. Tangible rewards motivate students to maintain appropriate conduct, while parental involvement strengthens behavioral support outside the classroom. Teacher reactions and group-based strategies further reinforce behavioral expectations and encourage collective responsibility among students. The results also indicate that teachers establish classroom rules at the beginning of the school year and consistently communicate expectations to learners. Through these approaches, teachers play a critical role in promoting discipline and maintaining an organized learning environment.

3.3 Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Disciplinary Problems and Interventions

The analysis revealed that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents regarding disciplinary problems and interventions between the two schools. The computed Kruskal-Wallis value was lower than the tabular value at the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. This result indicates that teachers from Batuhan East Elementary School and Nicolas Danao Elementary School share similar perceptions regarding the causes of

disciplinary problems and the effectiveness of disciplinary strategies. The absence of significant differences suggests that teachers in both schools experience similar classroom management conditions and implement comparable disciplinary practices. This consistency may be attributed to the uniform implementation of national education policies and child protection guidelines across public schools. The shared perceptions among teachers also indicate that disciplinary practices in the two schools are aligned with established educational standards and professional practices in classroom management.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study assessed the disciplinary problems perceived by teachers in Batuhan East Elementary School and Nicolas Danao Elementary School, focusing on their causes, the assertive discipline strategies used by teachers, the effective ways of managing behavioral problems, and the disciplinary interventions implemented in the classroom. The findings revealed that the causes of disciplinary problems were generally perceived as less serious, indicating that classroom environments in the selected schools are relatively well managed. Teachers were found to commonly apply assertive discipline strategies such as cooperative learning, team learning, peer tutoring, and group activities. The results also showed that teachers employ effective approaches in dealing with disciplinary problems, including reinforcement strategies, dialogue, and individual conferences with students. Disciplinary interventions such as tangible recognition, parental involvement, teacher reactions, and group-based behavioral strategies were also perceived as effective. Furthermore, the analysis indicated that there was no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents from the two schools regarding disciplinary problems and interventions.

Based on the findings of the study, teachers are encouraged to continuously review and adhere to existing policies related to student discipline and child protection to ensure the consistent implementation of appropriate disciplinary practices. Educators should continue applying varied and constructive strategies in managing classroom behavior to maintain an orderly and supportive learning environment. The integration of good manners and right conduct across different subject areas should also be strengthened to reinforce positive student behavior. The results of the study may be disseminated among relevant educational stakeholders to increase awareness of effective classroom management strategies. Furthermore, future researchers may conduct similar or parallel studies to further validate and strengthen the findings of this research.

The study was limited to the teaching and non-teaching personnel of Batuhan East Elementary School and Nicolas Danao Elementary School in Barangay Batuhan, Masbate City. The number of respondents was relatively small, consisting only of personnel from the two selected schools, and the findings were based primarily on their perceptions gathered through survey questionnaires, supported by informal interviews and observations. The study did not include students, parents, or personnel from other schools as respondents, and it did not measure academic performance, psychological outcomes, or behavioral changes through experimental methods. Consequently, the results are limited to the context of the selected schools and may not be generalized to other educational institutions or regions.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to standard academic research practices in the conduct of survey-based research involving school personnel. Participation was voluntary, and the data were collected through questionnaires, informal interviews, and observations without manipulating variables or conducting experimental procedures. Responses were handled with care to ensure confidentiality and were used solely for research purposes.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that there are no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest related to this study.

Statement of ethical approval

The study employed non-invasive survey methods involving voluntary participation of school personnel. As the research relied on questionnaires, informal interviews, and observations without experimental procedures, formal ethics committee approval was not sought.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the administration of the survey questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and the identities of the respondents were not disclosed, ensuring that no personal identifiers were included in the reported results.

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