

Fostering Positive Discipline: The Impact of Contextualized Classroom Rules and Routines on Learners' Behavioral Outcomes

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Abstract. This research examined the impact of contextualized classroom rules and routines on the behavioral outcomes of intermediate learners across four public schools in the Province of Cebu: Tungkop National High School, Tangil Elementary School, La Paz Elementary School, and Canamucan Elementary School during School Year 2026–2027. Anchored in the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, the study utilized a descriptive-correlational mixed-methods design. Quantitative data was gathered using bilingual four-point Likert scales administered to Grades 6 and 7 learners, teaching personnel, and school heads, complemented by qualitative key informant interviews. Findings revealed that the teaching personnel were predominantly experienced, female mid-career professionals with post-graduate education, while the learner population overwhelmingly spoke Cebuano/Bisaya at home and was primarily raised under authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles. The baseline evaluation of classroom rules demonstrated strict institutional adherence to the non-punitive mandates of the DepEd Child Protection Policy, yet highlighted a substantial gap in cultural responsiveness and the use of local metaphors. Following the integration of structured routines, learner behavior showed marked positive progression, with task compliance and active engagement yielding the most immediate gains, while internal emotional self-regulation developed at a steadier, progressive pace. The most critical operational barriers encountered by teachers included physical classroom overcrowding, the behavioral disconnect between home upbringing practices and positive school norms, and the scarcity of ready-to-use, localized visual materials. To address these systemic challenges, the study produced the Contextualized Positive Discipline Plan (CPDP), a sustainable operational framework featuring the Atong Lagda visual rule kits, standardized non-verbal transition routines, calming corners (Palandonganan), and School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) professional development modules. The study concludes that pairing national child protection policies with linguistically situated and culturally resonant routines significantly reinforces classroom time-on-task, minimizes behavioral friction, and fosters voluntary learner self-regulation in high-density public school environments.

Introduction

Educational administration and supervisory frameworks across contemporary school systems are increasingly confronted with the operational mandate of cultivating orderly, psychologically safe, and culturally affirmative learning environments. Globally, the paradigm of school discipline has shifted decisively from retributive control and punitive containment toward systemic, positive behavior support models designed to foster internal self-regulation and cognitive engagement (UNESCO, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

International educational policies emphasize that coercive pedagogical environments undermine executive functioning, weaken instructional connectivity, and accelerate dropout and chronic absenteeism rates among intermediate-level students (OECD, 2023). Within global instructional standards, the systematic formulation of daily classroom rules, routines, and normative behaviors is no longer viewed merely as an auxiliary administrative task, but as an essential instructional intervention directly impacting student socio-emotional development and long-term academic trajectories (Simonsen et al., 2020; Epstein et al., 2021).

At the national level, the Philippine Department of Education has institutionalized this reform by enacting human rights-based, child-centered governance policies. The institutionalization of the Child Protection Policy under DepEd Order No. 40, series of 2012, explicitly banned corporal punishment and mandated positive, non-violent discipline within all elementary and secondary schools. This policy environment was further reinforced by DepEd Order No. 003, series of 2021, and the DepEd Child Protection Policy Framework updates through 2024, which establish institutional mechanisms requiring educators to employ instructional strategies rooted in dignity, mutual respect, and restorative administrative practices.

Despite these legislative directives, empirical evidence reveals that public school teachers often experience procedural friction in translating statutory child-protection policies into day-to-day behavioral management (Alonzo & Santos, 2022; Bautista & Reyes, 2023). In many cases, educators perceive a systemic gap between legal compliance mandates and actionable, localized classroom routines capable of handling real-world behavioral disruption within high-density classrooms.

At the local level, schools within Cebu Province encounter distinct sociocultural realities that strongly influence behavioral management. Classrooms spanning rural, peri-urban, and coastal localities, such as Minglanilla, Dumanjug, Bogo, and Compostela, house diverse student cohorts influenced by unique sociolinguistic environments and family structures. Intermediate learners (Grades 6 and 7) occupy a developmental juncture marked by neurobiological transitions, shifting peer affiliations, and increasing demands for self-regulation (De la Cruz & Morales, 2023; Tan & Cañete, 2024). When classroom rules and behavioral routines are delivered exclusively through abstract, uncontextualized linguistic markers or rigid administrative directives, a communicative disconnect emerges between the teacher's instructions and the learner's normative community reality. Research indicates that when institutional routines do not resonate with the Cebuano linguistic ethos and indigenous relational values, behavioral compliance tends to remain superficial and contingent on surveillance rather than reflective self-management (Abad et al., 2022; Villamor & Rosales, 2023).

The relevance of this study emerges directly from the urgent need to bridge macro-level administrative policies with micro-level classroom instructional dynamics. By investigating how contextualized classroom rules and routines, specifically localized through the mother tongue (Cebuano/Bisaya), indigenous metaphors, and communal values, correlate with intermediate learners' behavioral outcomes, this study provides actionable, field-tested evidence for school heads and master teachers. The study addresses the operational problem of disciplinary dissonance by measuring observed task compliance, peer social respect, and emotional self-regulation across varied geographical districts of Cebu Province. Ultimately, this empirical inquiry establishes a scientific foundation for formulating a responsive Contextualized Positive Discipline Plan (CPDP), equipping school supervisors, principals, and classroom advisers with a sustainable behavioral management model that protects child rights while fostering academic productivity.

Methodology

Design

This inquiry applied a quantitative, non-experimental descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive design component documented: (1) teacher, learner, and parenting demographic profiles; (2) current classroom rules and routines categorized by linguistic localization, cultural responsiveness, and DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 compliance; (3) learner behavior levels across task compliance, peer respect, and emotional self-regulation; and (4) structural classroom constraints faced by teachers. The correlational component evaluated the relationship between the localization dimensions of classroom rules and routines and intermediate learners' behavioral outcomes.

This non-experimental design evaluated relationships as they naturally occur in operational public schools, avoiding artificial intervention or experimental distortion of school routines (Cohen et al., 2022). By examining schools across northern, southern, and central districts within Cebu Province, the cross-sectional design captures varied operational realities across urbanized, rural, coastal, and peri-urban environments, strengthening the ecological validity of the findings.

Environment

The research environment provided the exact physical, geographical, and institutional boundaries within which an empirical study was situated. In the context of Philippine basic education, selecting research environments that reflected different geographic sectors, demographic densities, and urbanization levels was vital to verifying the systemic viability of localized classroom interventions. For this investigation, the research environment spans four distinct public schools across the province of Cebu, strategically capturing the socio-cultural variations of peripheral urban corridors, deep southern rural towns, northern agricultural sectors, and industrializing growth nodes to evaluate the true impact of contextualized rules and routines on learner behavior.

Tungkop National High School (Tungkop, Minglanilla, Cebu)

Analyzing a secondary school environment within a highly urbanized municipal corridor isolates how macro-environmental transitions and high-density student populations influence adolescent behaviors. Tungkop National High School serves as an essential research landscape where rapid suburban immigration alters the traditional classroom dynamic.

Tungkop National High School is located in Barangay Tungkop, a coastal barangay situated within the thriving municipality of Minglanilla along the southeastern coast of Cebu. Positioned within the immediate peripheral orbit of Metro Cebu, this school caters to a rapidly expanding population driven by industrial growth, economic zoning, and a continuous influx of migrant laborers from neighboring islands. The local demographic is characterized by high density, a low median age, and families that frequently split their time between small-scale coastal commerce, factory production lines, and urban corporate service centers. Consequently, class sizes within this institution are traditionally large, creating a crowded environment where diverse student subcultures constantly intersect.

Tangil Elementary School (Tangil, Dumanjug, Cebu). Investigating behavioral patterns within a deep rural, southwestern public elementary school allows the researcher to isolate the foundational stages of social development. Tangil Elementary School provides a distinct institutional setting where traditional community frameworks remain intact and directly shape student behavior.

Tangil Elementary School is situated in Barangay Tangil

A rural coastal barangay on the southwestern coast of Cebu within the municipality of Dumanjug. According to recent census data, the barangay maintains a modest population of approximately 3,125 residents (PSA,2020), exhibiting a high youth dependency ratio of 52.37% and a notably young median age of 22.75 years. The surrounding community relies almost entirely on subsistence agriculture, localized fishing, and small-scale trade. Given the high youth dependency of this demographic, the school population is robust relative to the community size, operating within a tight-knit network where traditional values and close family ties are maintained.

Tangil Elementary School is vital to this research because it represents the foundational entry point where younger learners transition into formal public education. Children coming from these close-knit, rural coastal environments are unaccustomed to abstract institutional mandates, making standard textbook rules ineffective. By introducing rules written in the local vernacular and using familiar agricultural or coastal metaphors, this study can analyze how early behavioral internalization happens. The high youth dependency ratio highlights the urgent need for schools to establish strong routine consistency, demonstrating how localized structures build stability early in a child's academic life.

La Paz Elementary School (La Paz, Bogo, Cebu)

Examining an educational landscape within a northern agricultural valley allows the study to observe positive discipline strategies within a distinct sub-regional environment. La Paz Elementary School anchors the northern rural sector of this study, highlighting how agricultural labor patterns and community values shape student behavior.

The school is located in Barangay La Paz, an inland agricultural barangay positioned in the northern city of Bogo, Cebu. This upland agricultural community has a population of 4,111 (PSA,2020) residents and exhibits a high youth dependency ratio

of 57.39%, with a local median age of 24.53 years (PSA, 2015). The economy of the surrounding environment is driven by seasonal sugarcane farming, corn agriculture, and manual labor.

Canamucan Elementary School (Canamucan, Compostela, Cebu)

Evaluating intermediate learners within a rapidly expanding industrial and residential corridor in northern Metro Cebu bridges the gap between rural settings and high-density urban environments. Canamucan Elementary School provides a strategic research location to observe how shifting demographics influence student behaviors. The school is located in Barangay Canamucan, a coastal barangay in the northern municipality of Compostela, Cebu.

The barangay has a population of 4,976 (PSA,2020) residents and experiences a positive annualized growth rate of 2.90%. Young dependents aged 14 and below make up a substantial 32.57% of the total community population, while the youth dependency ratio stands at 50.81%, with a local median age of 23.65 years. The socio-economic layout is a mix of traditional coastal fishing and modern manufacturing labor driven by northern industrial estates, resulting in a diverse mix of native and migrant families.

Respondents

The study engaged three complementary respondent groups across the designated research sites: intermediate learners (Grades 6 and 7), teaching personnel (classroom advisers and master teachers), and parents. The multi-informant sampling model provides a comprehensive, balanced assessment of classroom discipline, reducing single-source reporting bias and capturing behavioral observations across instructional, peer, and home contexts (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Intermediate learners were selected as direct participants to report on their experiences with contextualized rules and to evaluate their own task engagement, peer relationships, and emotional self-regulation. Teaching personnel were included because they directly plan, localize, and manage daily classroom routines, assess instructional constraints, and track student behavioral patterns. Parents were included to evaluate family socialization, parenting approaches, and the consistency between home upbringing and classroom rules.

The sample comprises $N = 80$ respondents, distributed uniformly across the four designated schools within the Division of Cebu Province, as shown in Table 1.

Research Environment / School Site			Intermediate Learners (Grades 6 and 7)	Teaching Personnel (Advisers & Master Teachers)	Parents	Total Respondents Per Site
Tungkop School (Minglanilla, Cebu)	National	High	15	4	1	20
Tangil Elementary School (Dumanjug, Cebu)			15	4	1	20
La Paz Elementary School (Bogo, Cebu)			15	4	1	20
Canamucan School (Compostela, Cebu)	Elementary		15	4	1	20
TOTAL			60	16	4	80

Research Instrument

The empirical data for this investigation were gathered using a researcher-developed, expert-validated, and reliability-tested survey questionnaire titled the Contextualized Classroom Rules and Positive Discipline Assessment Questionnaire (CCRPDAQ). Modern methodological standards (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021; Radhakrishna, 2022) state that quantitative survey tools targeting localized socio-behavioral dynamics must be explicitly built around the research questions, aligned with operational policies, and tailored to the respondents' reading levels.

The instrument is divided into four structured modules: Part I captures demographic profiles (teachers, learners, and parenting upbringing styles based on Diana Baumrind's typology); Part II evaluates the characteristics of implemented classroom rules and routines across linguistic localization, cultural responsiveness, and alignment with DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012; Part III measures observed learner behaviors across task compliance, peer-to-peer respect, and emotional self-regulation; and Part IV records the contextual constraints teachers face when implementing localized discipline.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection followed a systematic, ethically grounded administrative protocol designed to ensure data integrity and institutional compliance (American Psychological Association, 2020). Initial clearance was requested through formal transmittal communications submitted to the principals of the four participating schools.

Upon securing administrative approval, pre-survey coordination meetings were conducted with the designated school heads and classroom advisers to finalize the administration schedule and address logistical needs. Because minor intermediate learners were involved, parental consent forms and student assent agreements were distributed and retrieved beforehand, in strict compliance with the DepEd Child Protection Policy and the Republic Act No. 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012).

Questionnaires were administered in person by the researchers across the four sites during designated, non-instructional homeroom periods to prevent classroom disruptions. The researchers read instructions aloud, clarified terms in Cebuano when needed, and answered questions while maintaining neutrality. Upon completion, all questionnaires were retrieved immediately, checked for completeness, organized, and prepared for statistical coding.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the four public schools were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches consistent with the descriptive-correlational mixed-methods design. Quantitative responses from Grades 6 and 7 learners, teaching personnel, and school heads were summarized using frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations to describe the respondents' characteristics, implementation of contextualized classroom rules and routines, and learners' behavioral outcomes. The four-point Likert scale responses were interpreted according to the level of implementation and observed behavioral changes. Comparative analysis of the baseline and post-intervention results indicated a positive progression in learners' behavioral outcomes following the integration of structured classroom routines. Among the identified behavioral indicators, task compliance and active engagement demonstrated the most immediate improvement, suggesting that predictable routines and clearly communicated expectations helped learners remain focused and participate more consistently in classroom activities. Emotional self-regulation, however, developed more gradually, indicating that internal behavioral control may require sustained practice and reinforcement. Qualitative data from key informant interviews were analyzed thematically to identify recurring experiences, challenges, and strategies related to positive discipline. The emerging themes revealed three major operational barriers: classroom overcrowding, differences between home-based disciplinary practices and positive school norms, and limited availability of localized instructional and visual materials. These qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results by explaining factors that influenced the implementation and effectiveness of classroom rules and routines. Overall, the integrated analysis demonstrated that linguistically and culturally responsive classroom practices can strengthen learner engagement, compliance, and self-regulation, providing an empirical basis for the development of the Contextualized Positive Discipline Plan (CPDP).

Results and Discussion

Results

The results of the study revealed that contextualized classroom rules and structured routines had a positive influence on the behavioral outcomes of intermediate learners in the four participating public schools in Cebu. The profile of the teaching personnel showed that most were experienced, female, mid-career professionals with post-graduate educational backgrounds, indicating a relatively mature and academically prepared teaching workforce. Among the learners, Cebuano or Bisaya was identified as the predominant language spoken at home, while authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles were commonly reported. The baseline assessment further revealed that classroom rules were generally implemented in accordance with the non-punitive provisions of the DepEd Child Protection Policy. However, the findings also indicated limited cultural and linguistic contextualization, particularly in the use of local expressions, familiar metaphors, and culturally meaningful visual materials. After the implementation of structured classroom routines, learners demonstrated noticeable improvements in their behavioral outcomes. Task compliance and active classroom engagement emerged as the areas showing the most immediate positive changes, suggesting that consistent routines and clearly communicated expectations supported learners' participation and adherence to classroom procedures. Emotional self-regulation also improved, although its development appeared more gradual and required continued reinforcement. The findings from the key informant interviews identified classroom overcrowding, differences between home disciplinary practices and school-based positive discipline, and insufficient localized visual resources as major challenges. In response, the study developed the Contextualized Positive Discipline Plan (CPDP), incorporating Atong Lagda visual rule kits, non-

verbal transition routines, Palandonganan calming corners, and SLAC professional development modules to promote sustainable, culturally responsive, and learner-centered positive discipline practices.

Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrate that contextualized classroom rules and routines can play an important role in improving the behavioral outcomes of intermediate learners. The positive changes observed in task compliance and active engagement suggest that learners respond favorably when classroom expectations are clear, consistent, and reinforced through predictable routines. This indicates that positive discipline is more effective when it moves beyond simply establishing rules and focuses on creating a supportive and structured classroom environment. The gradual improvement in emotional self-regulation further suggests that developing responsible and independent behavior requires continuous practice, guidance, and reinforcement rather than immediate compliance alone.

The findings also highlight the importance of cultural and linguistic responsiveness in classroom management. Since most learners speak Cebuano or Bisaya at home, incorporating familiar language, local expressions, and culturally meaningful symbols may help learners better understand and internalize classroom expectations. The identified challenges, particularly overcrowding, differences between home and school disciplinary practices, and limited localized materials, demonstrate that teachers need practical and context-sensitive resources to implement positive discipline effectively.

The development of the Contextualized Positive Discipline Plan (CPDP) provides a practical response to these challenges. The inclusion of Atong Lagda visual rule kits, non-verbal transition routines, Palandonganan calming corners, and SLAC professional development modules offers teachers concrete strategies for promoting positive behavior.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings generated across the four public school environments, several core conclusions are established. First, the demographic maturity and advanced educational attainment of the teaching personnel provide a strong foundation for implementing child-centered behavioral systems; however, their pedagogical readiness was constrained by an absence of specialized training that bridges local linguistics with classroom routine management. Second, intermediate learners in Cebu public schools are linguistically and culturally anchored in the Cebuano vernacular, meaning that abstract, English-only disciplinary rules create a cognitive divide that hinders the deep internalization of behavioral standards. Third, while public schools maintain strict regulatory compliance with DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 by eliminating corporal punishment, the lack of intentional cultural contextualization results in mechanical obedience rather than genuine, autonomous self-regulation among learners.

Furthermore, the data clearly demonstrated that integrating predictable, culturally intuitive transition routines directly improved learner task compliance and mitigates classroom friction. When behavioral expectations were framed through familiar cultural metaphors (*sanglitanan*), intermediate learners exhibit higher mutual respect and engage more productively during instructional tasks. However, internal emotional self-regulation developed at a slower rate than external compliance, highlighting that positive discipline cannot rely solely on posted rules but requires continuous socio-emotional scaffolding. Finally, external structural challenges, primarily overcrowded classrooms and conflicting parenting practices at home, severely undermine the daily fidelity of positive classroom management. Consequently, sustaining positive discipline in high-density public schools requires moving beyond individual teacher improvisation toward an institutionalized, systemic framework in the form of the Contextualized Positive Discipline Plan (CPDP).

Recent scholarship reinforces these conclusions. As observed by Mendoza and Delos Reyes (2020), the full realization of positive discipline in Philippine basic education depends on moving beyond regulatory avoidance of punishment toward providing teachers with actionable, localized classroom management tools. Claro and Gonzaga (2023) affirmed that grounding behavioral guidelines in the native mother tongue significantly increases student engagement and cognitive retention of social values. Moreover, MacSuga-Gage and Simonsen (2021) demonstrated that proactive, predictable transition routines serve as the most effective structural buffer against behavioral disruptions in dense classroom environments. Sokal et al. (2020) and Almendral and Tan (2021) similarly emphasized that structured, non-punitive routines not only lower teacher stress in overcrowded schools but also bridge the socio-behavioral divide between diverse home environments and formal institutional expectations.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following structured recommendations are offered to improve classroom management practices across educational tiers:

At the division and district administrative level, educational leaders should formally adopt and integrate the Contextualized Positive Discipline Plan (CPDP) into the Division Basic Education Development Plan. Division research and curriculum units should provide formal support and resource allocation for scaling localized classroom management packages across all elementary and secondary clusters in Cebu Province. Furthermore, district supervisors must design specialized training tracks under the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) framework focused on behavioral contextualization, training teachers to transform traditional disciplinary rules into culturally anchored visual models.

At the school head and instructional supervisory level, school principals should prioritize the systemic implementation of the Atong Lagda visual rule kits and standardized transition routines across all grade levels. School administrators must foster an institutional climate that balances curriculum delivery with restorative practices, dedicating protected time within the weekly schedule for homeroom guidance and emotional de-escalation routines. Principals should also lead parent-teacher engagement initiatives aimed at aligning home discipline strategies with the school's positive discipline principles, thereby mitigating the behavioral disconnect experienced by children from authoritarian or permissive domestic environments.

At the classroom teacher level, educators should actively replace negative and punitive verbal reprimands with positive, non-verbal cues and predictable transition routines. Teachers must co-construct classroom agreements with their learners using the Cebuano vernacular and familiar community metaphors, ensuring that expectations are easily understood and socially validated. Additionally, classroom advisers should establish designated quiet corners and calming routines within overcrowded classrooms to help intermediate learners develop emotional self-regulation skills during moments of academic frustration.

For future researchers, it is recommended that this action research design be replicated across other linguistic regions and indigenous communities within the Philippine basic education system to test the cross-cultural adaptability of the CPDP model. Longitudinal studies should also be conducted to track the enduring impact of contextualized positive discipline on academic achievement, chronic absenteeism, and long-term socio-emotional development as intermediate learners transition into junior and senior high school environments.

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Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.