

Challenges and Strategies of School Heads in Implementing Occupational Health and Safety Programs

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the challenges and strategies of school heads in implementing Occupational Health and Safety Programs (OHSP) among secondary schools in the 4th District of Negros Occidental. The study assessed how school leaders managed safety initiatives amid resource limitations, policy constraints, and diverse stakeholder involvement. The scope covered six public secondary schools utilizing a qualitative narrative exploratory research design. Participants included six school heads, selected through purposive sampling based on their experience implementing safety programs. Six participants were considered sufficient since these were the only school heads who voluntarily agreed to participate in an interview among secondary schools in the 4th District of Negros Occidental. Participation in research must be purely voluntary based on ethical standards. Data were collected using a researcher-developed Key Informant Interview (KII) Question Guide, validated by experts using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) Tool. Data analysis involved systematic organization, coding, thematic identification, and interpretation, following Wa Mbaleka's process. Results revealed themes such as implementation of safety protocols, community engagement, resource constraints, stakeholder involvement, and monitoring efforts. Findings indicated that school heads faced challenges like parental engagement, resource shortages, policy restrictions, and environmental hazards, but effectively employed strategies such as collaborative decision-making, continuous safety orientations, and community partnerships. The study concluded that successful OHSP implementation depended on strong leadership, stakeholder participation, and resource mobilization. It recommended that DepEd enhance training, strengthen monitoring systems, and foster community collaboration to improve safety compliance. Additionally, local government units and school administrators were urged to prioritize resource allocation and policy enforcement to sustain safe learning environments. The findings serve as a basis for policy refinement and future research on school safety management in the Philippines.

Keywords: Challenges, Strategies, Implementing Occupational Health and Safety Programs, Secondary Schools, School Heads

INTRODUCTION

Occupational health and safety (OHS) in educational institutions extends beyond the traditional view of workplaces like offices and factories. Schools are dynamic environments where thousands of individuals—including students, teachers, administrative staff, maintenance workers, and visitors—face a diverse range of health and safety risks. These risks include classroom accidents, laboratory hazards, ergonomic challenges, and psychosocial stressors.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has recognized the necessity of structured occupational health and safety programs in schools. Through various policies and guidelines, Republic Act No. 11058, also known as the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Law, DepEd mandates the implementation of the Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP) across all educational institutions under its jurisdiction. These programs encompass physical infrastructure safety, emergency preparedness, health and wellness initiatives, safety training, and the establishment of safety committees and protocols. Compliance with these guidelines is both a legal requirement and a moral obligation to provide safe environments for teaching, learning, and working.

Despite these policy frameworks, the implementation of OHSP in secondary schools is often inconsistent and insufficient, especially in rural and underserved areas. Many schools face challenges such as limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training, and a lack of awareness of occupational health and safety standards. Teachers and staff frequently work in conditions that expose them to hazards like poorly maintained facilities, inadequate ventilation, insufficient personal protective equipment, and weak emergency response systems. Students also encounter safety risks in laboratories, workshops, sports facilities, and overcrowded classrooms with structural deficiencies.

These challenges were evident among secondary schools in the 4th District of Negros Occidental, which includes both public secondary schools. While some schools have established safety committees and conduct safety and emergency drills, others lack comprehensive safety policies, adequate equipment, and systematic training. Infrastructure issues such as inadequate fire exits, poor electrical systems, insufficient first-aid facilities, insufficient security guards, and sanitation problems are common.

This study aimed to assess the implementation of the Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP). Specifically, it sought to explore the challenges and the strategies in the implementation of Occupational Health and Safety Programs among selected public secondary schools in the 4th District in Negros Occidental.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative approach with a narrative exploratory research design to examine the challenges and strategies of school heads in implementing occupational health and safety programs in public secondary schools in Negros Occidental. This design focused on collecting and analyzing personal stories to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings within their specific context. It allowed for a detailed exploration of individual perspectives, especially on an under-researched topic, providing deep insights into their realities. In presenting the data, starting from identified themes and discussed their implications, supported by data from transcriptions of respondents' stories. The themes were developed through an inductive thematic analysis of the responses, where initial codes/sub-themes were generated from the raw data based on recurring ideas and patterns. Coding was performed manually by the researcher to identify relevant segments and assign codes, ensuring inter-coder reliability. Approximately three analysts participated in the analysis process, following procedures such as peer debriefing, triangulation, and member checking to enhance credibility. To ensure consistency, a coding framework was established, and discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus, maintaining the dependability and validity of the qualitative interpretation.

The subjects and participants of this study were six (6) school heads of public secondary schools in the 4th District in Negros Occidental during School Year 2025-2026. The respondents included principals who were directly involved in the daily operations of OHSP in their school. The participation of the six (6) secondary school heads was purely voluntary, and only these school heads agreed to participate in the interview.

This study utilized researcher-prepared instruments to gather the data needed to explore the challenges and strategies in implementing the Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP) in the selected public secondary schools in the 4th District in Negros Occidental for SY 2025–2026. The instruments were developed based on the statement of the problem. The research made use of the Key Informant Interview (KII) Question Guide. The questionnaire consisted of an open-ended question that helped the participants to share their experiences in a storytelling pattern of response. The first question focused on the challenges experienced by school heads in implementing OHSP in their school. Meanwhile, the second question asked about the strategies school heads used to implement OHSP in their schools.

The panels of experts in their respective fields validated the instrument using Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) tool. The resulting CVR score was 1.00, which is interpreted as the instrument being "Essential." This indicates that the instrument was valid. Additionally, the researcher cross-checked the questionnaire and ensured that the data saturation process was properly followed.

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained approval from the district supervisor, division superintendent, and school authorities by submitting a request letter and research protocol. The researcher

finalized the interview questions and prepared the necessary materials, coordinating with school officials to schedule the data collection without disrupting school activities. Audio recording devices were also prepared to capture responses. During data gathering, the researcher administered interviews to selected school heads, explained the purpose of recording, and added questions if needed for clarity. After the interviews, the researcher expressed gratitude to the participants and adhered to ethical standards by securing informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining confidentiality, and protecting responses through proper coding and secure storage. The data was used solely for research purposes.

For data analysis, Wa Mbeleka (2017) described a systematic process of data analysis that included organizing the data by sorting and categorizing it, reducing the data by summarizing and highlighting key information, displaying the data through visual tools like charts and tables, and finally drawing conclusions and verifying the findings by interpreting the data and cross-checking with other sources. This approach helped ensure thorough and accurate analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, leading to credible research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following were the results and discussion to answer the specific problem statement.

Experiences of School Heads in Implementing OHSP among School Heads in one of the District of Negros Occidental

Implementation of School Safety and Health Programs

The first major theme that emerged from the lived experiences of school heads implementing the Open High School Program (OHSP) centers on school safety and health programs. This theme highlights the critical importance school leaders place on establishing a secure, health-conscious environment for both students and staff. To achieve this, school heads actively enforce strict safety protocols and organize regular emergency drills designed to mitigate accidents and champion overall community well-being.

These findings imply that a sustained focus on institutional safety necessitates continuous professional development, strategic resource allocation, and deeply collaborative stakeholder engagement. Ultimately, this theme accentuates the indispensable role of educational leadership in driving and sustaining a robust culture of safety.

Recent empirical research by Rielander et al. (2024) strongly supported these findings by emphasizing that establishing a functional health and safety environment required school administrators to actively embed safety culture, structured risk management, and formal protocols directly into their long-term institutional strategies. The study demonstrated that while educational settings frequently faced operational hurdles such as limited statutory enforcement and resource constraints, school leaders played a critical role in mitigating workplace hazards by enforcing routine safety measures, conducting disaster preparedness initiatives, and cultivating continuous engagement with relevant stakeholders to ensure the ongoing protection and well-being of both educators and students.

Community Engagement and Collaboration

School heads' experiences on community engagement and collaboration reflect their recognition of the vital role that active involvement and cooperation with parents, local authorities, and community organizations play in successfully implementing OHSP. This theme highlights how building strong partnerships and fostering open communication with the community can enhance the effectiveness of safety initiatives, ensure broader support, and promote a shared responsibility for maintaining a safe and healthy school environment.

It implies that emphasizing community engagement suggests that sustainable safety practices require collective effort and partnership, which could lead to more comprehensive and culturally relevant safety solutions. It also indicated that strong collaboration could facilitate resource sharing and reinforce safety protocols both within and outside the school setting.

Kashyap, Subbaih, and Thakur (Kashyap et al., 2025) add that effective leadership styles, particularly transformational and supportive leadership, promote teamwork, communication, and professional growth, and that workplace culture characterized by respect, collaboration, and opportunities for professional development plays a central role in shaping job satisfaction and retention. In an integrative review of clinical learning environments for nursing students, Martí-Ejarque et al. (Ejarque et al., 2025) found that the relationship between the different organizational levels—from management to clinical staff—is a key element for successful learning, as it facilitates a collaborative culture that enhances teaching and the integration of students into the clinical environment.

Communication, Dissemination, and Awareness

The theme that emerged was centered around the importance of effective communication, dissemination, and raising awareness. It was recognized that sharing information clearly and broadly had played a crucial role in informing stakeholders, fostering understanding, and promoting engagement. The implications of this theme indicated that successful dissemination efforts had led to increased knowledge, influenced attitudes, and supported the achievement of strategic objectives. It was also understood that communication gaps could have hindered progress, underscoring the need for continuous improvement in outreach and awareness.

According to Mubita et al. (2023), establishing effective safety and health protocols in school systems directly reduces staff absenteeism and enhances overall physical and psychological wellbeing, though execution is frequently hindered by constrained funding and inadequate staff training. Expanding on these operational barriers, Rielander et al. (2024) observe that secondary educational settings, particularly in developing contexts, persistently neglect formal OHS administration due to weak statutory regulations, underscoring the imperative for school leaders to proactively embed safety culture, continuous risk assessment, and participatory safety committees into their strategic management plans.

Question 1: Can you describe your experiences as a school head in implementing OHSP in your school?

Primo stated, “Good morning. From my experience as a school head, implementing the OHSP has been a very important and rewarding part of my role, especially in creating a safe and motivating environment for students, in line with DO 6, s. 2026. One of the main challenges we faced was addressing safety concerns related to bullying within the school premises. To tackle this, we have developed and implemented strategies such as conducting regular bag inspections to prevent the entry of harmful objects or substances and ensuring that all students are safe while inside the school. These interventions are part of our ongoing efforts to promote a secure and conducive learning environment for everyone.”

Segunda also stated that “As a school head, I initially found implementing the OHSP challenging because we lacked the necessary tools and instruments, such as metal detectors, for checking students' bags. This was particularly difficult because, according to policy, even teachers are not allowed to open students' bags, which made ensuring safety more complicated. Despite these challenges, I worked through the difficulties to uphold our school safety and health programs, recognizing the importance of maintaining a secure environment for our students.” Thirdy also added that, “As a School Head, my experience in implementing the Occupational Safety and Health Program (OHSP) involved actively coordinating with various stakeholders such as the PTA, local government employees, barangay officials, and other community partners to ensure the safety of both students and teachers. We conducted curriculum mapping to incorporate relevant topics related to occupational health and safety into the teachers' lessons, ensuring proper integration and awareness. Additionally, I worked closely with local government units to disseminate information about the program, fostering a collaborative effort to promote a safe and healthy school environment for everyone.”

Also, Forth added that “As a school head, I have actively implemented the OHSP by organizing seminars to promote resilience among staff and students. I also ensure that the P7,000 insurance fund provided is utilized effectively for health care needs. I make it a point to ensure that everyone complies with the program, as it is a significant help for us. Instead of teachers worrying about where to get their insurance, they can now conveniently access it for consultations and medication purchases. I encourage them to seek preventive care

through consultations and lab tests, before health issues become serious, promoting a proactive approach to health and well-being in our school community.”

Fifth also added that “As a school head, I can confidently say that implementing the Occupational Health and Safety Program, particularly focusing on safety protocols within our school, has not been a struggle for us. With proper delegation to our coordinators, especially in the discipline committee, guidance office, and subject and grade level coordinators, we have successfully maintained a safe environment. The support from external stakeholders such as the PNP, the community, barangay officials, the LGU, and the mayor has been instrumental in fostering peace and safety in our school. I believe that teamwork and collaboration are key, and I often emphasize the importance of Peace—Power, Empathy, Acceptance, and Connection—in our daily interactions. Our strong communication with the community and local officials has helped us create a peaceful and secure environment, making safety a hands-on priority that I am proud of.”

Finally, Sinclair added, “Implementing the Occupational Safety and Health Program (OHSP) has been a challenging yet meaningful experience for me as a school head. Ensuring the safety and well-being of learners, teachers, and staff requires constant monitoring, coordination, and commitment. Despite limited resources and balancing multiple school priorities, I have worked closely with teachers and other stakeholders to strengthen safety practices, emergency preparedness, and health initiatives. These challenges have made me more proactive, resourceful, and collaborative in creating a safer and more secure learning environment. Overall, this experience has reinforced my belief that maintaining a culture of safety is a shared responsibility that requires active participation from everyone.”

Challenges Encountered by School Heads in Implementing OHSP in the 4th District in Negros Occidental

Family, Student Behavior and Parental Engagement

The theme that emerged from the challenges encountered by school heads in implementing OHSP in one of the District in Negros Occidental discussion was the interconnectedness between family involvement, student behavior, and parental engagement. It was observed that active parental engagement positively influenced student behavior, leading to improved academic performance and social interactions. Conversely, a lack of parental involvement was linked to challenges in student conduct and reduced motivation.

The implications highlighted that fostering stronger family and parental engagement could have contributed in creating a more supportive learning environment, ultimately enhancing student success and well-being.

Recent literature confirms that active parental engagement directly influences positive student behavior, academic motivation, and overall well-being, while a lack of family involvement creates behavioral and administrative challenges within the educational ecosystem (Hyder & Anbar, 2025). When school heads implement Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) programs, these dynamics become particularly pronounced: establishing a secure physical and social environment requires enforced protocols and consistent community cooperation, yet school leaders frequently face operational hurdles when parents remain detached from school-wide health and safety measures (Chatzoglou et al., 2025; Hyder & Anbar, 2025). Consequently, the interplay between home guidance and school leadership underscores that fostering robust family-school partnerships is indispensable for mitigating behavioral risks, streamlining safety protocol compliance, and sustaining a protective, high-performing learning space (Hyder & Anbar, 2025).

Resource Limitations, Financial Challenges and LGU Support

The next theme, resource limitations, financial challenges, and LGU support, described the difficulties school heads faced when trying to implement Occupational Health and Safety Programs. They often lacked enough resources, such as safety equipment and materials, which made it hard to fully carry out safety measures. Financial constraints also limited their ability to fund necessary safety activities and improvements.

Additionally, the level of support from the Local Government Unit (LGU) varied, and in some cases, it was not enough to meet the safety needs of the school.

This theme implied that without sufficient resources and strong support from the LGU, it was challenging for school heads to ensure a safe and healthy environment for everyone.

Implementing Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) programs in schools is often constrained by severe resource limitations, persistent financial bottlenecks, and inconsistent Local Government Unit (LGU) support, which directly impede school heads from establishing comprehensive safety measures (Chatzoglou et al., 2025). When local authorities and funding streams fail to allocate adequate budgetary provisions for fundamental infrastructure and safety equipment, school administrators face substantial operational hurdles in organizing emergency training, maintaining compliant facilities, and sustaining proactive hazard controls (Chatzoglou et al., 2025).

School Safety Facility Monitoring and Self-Preparedness

The theme of school safety facility monitoring and self-preparedness emerged because school heads observed the importance of regularly checking safety facilities and preparing the school community for emergencies. They believed that consistent monitoring helped identify and address safety hazards promptly, while self-preparedness ensured that everyone knew what to do in case of an emergency.

This theme implied that ongoing vigilance and readiness were crucial for maintaining a safe school environment and reducing risks. It also highlighted the need for continuous training and proactive measures to protect students and staff effectively.

Widowati, Koesyanto, Istiono, et al. (Widowati et al., 2023) identified 23 key indicators of minimum standards for Disaster Preparedness and Safety School programs, of which nine functioned as disaster management pillars—including planning, budgeting, risk assessment, teamwork, coordination, standard operating procedures, technical guidelines, and monitoring and evaluation—five indicators covered safe school facilities, and nine supported risk reduction education, providing schools with a comprehensive framework for school-wide preparedness. Complementing this, Dela Cruz and Ormilla (Cruz & Ormilla, 2022) reported that the Department of Education envisions providing a child-friendly, gender-sensitive, safe, and motivating environment for effective learning; however, with more than 20 million students in Philippine schools affected by numerous catastrophes each year and the Philippines ranking third globally in disaster risk, the role of the School DRRM Team in coordinating policies, plans, and programs becomes critical for institutional safety.

Record-Keeping, Documentation and Monitoring of Safety Personnel

The last theme, Record-Keeping, Documentation, and Monitoring, emerged from the experiences of school heads as a crucial part of implementing Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) programs. School heads explained that maintaining accurate records and documenting safety activities helped them track progress, identify hazards, and ensure compliance with safety policies. Monitoring these records regularly allowed them to see what worked well and where improvements were needed.

This theme implied that proper record-keeping and consistent monitoring made safety efforts more organized and effective. It also helped school heads demonstrate accountability and provided useful information for making informed decisions to improve the safety environment in schools.

Moss (Moss, 2023) explains that timely and thorough documentation allows for student safety, risk reduction, continuity of care, and the availability of data for work process analysis, particularly noting that in school settings "nursing documentation encompasses a record of student treatment in the health office as well as communication with parents, school team members, and healthcare providers," and clarifying that student health records are intersected by educational and health privacy laws, requiring careful record management.

Follow-up Question 1: Are there any challenges you encountered in implementing OHSP in your school?

About the challenges encountered by the school heads during OHSP implementation, Primo stated that, “In implementing OHSP in our school, I haven't encountered significant challenges regarding student discipline so far. However, one major challenge stems from dysfunctional family backgrounds, which results in students being misguided and lacking proper guidance from their parents. This often leads to students violating school rules and regulations. At first, the main difficulty was engaging parents and encouraging them to foster discipline in their children, as parental involvement and guidance are crucial for student development. The subthemes related to this are Family, Student Behavior, and Parental Engagement. Additionally, ensuring school safety, monitoring facilities, and self-preparedness are ongoing considerations to maintain a conducive learning environment.”

Segunda also stated, “One of the main challenges I encounter in implementing the OHSP in our school is the lack of proper tools and instruments, such as metal detectors, for checking students' bags. This limitation makes it difficult to effectively ensure safety and security. Additionally, we are not allowed to open or inspect students' bags ourselves, as even teachers are prohibited from doing so. This restriction hampers our ability to thoroughly screen for prohibited items and maintain a secure environment, posing a significant challenge in our security procedures.”

Then Thirdy also, stated that “So far, we have not encountered any recorded challenges in implementing OHSP in our school. However, we focus on educating our learners about the importance of maintaining health and safety protocols. We teach them what to do to ensure their well-being, such as using alcohol for hand and face sanitation and wearing face masks, especially when they are not feeling well. This way, we aim to promote a safe and healthy learning environment for everyone.”

Moreover, forth added that “One of the challenges I encountered in implementing OHSP in my school was ensuring that we had prompt and effective support in case of emergencies. To address this, I tapped into our LGU, my health center, and the municipal health program, which allows us to conduct health programs and bring in doctors and nurses. They not only provide services for the students but also for the teachers, such as taking blood pressure and handling DRRM and rescue operations. We have established a strong partnership with these agencies, so whenever there is a problem in the school, help arrives quickly—often within 10 minutes, and an ambulance is readily available to respond immediately in case of accidents.”

Furthermore, fifth added that “Challenges? I think one of the main challenges is not only what happened in Tacloban but also the general implementation of peace and safety protocols in our school. Sometimes, there are students at the gate or inside the school who cause disturbances, but we've managed to address this by implementing bag inspections, which I believe helps ensure safety. However, our school lacks certain equipment like metal detectors, and our CCTV camera is currently broken, which poses a challenge in monitoring. Despite these issues, I am grateful for the strong support we receive from the PNP, which greatly helps us in maintaining safety and order.”

Finally, Sinclair stated that “One of the main challenges I faced in implementing the Occupational Safety and Health Program was ensuring consistent compliance with safety protocols among students and staff while managing other school responsibilities. Limited resources and the ongoing need for monitoring our facilities made the process even more demanding. Additionally, strengthening campus security and promoting emergency preparedness required close coordination with teachers, school personnel, and other stakeholders. Despite these obstacles, our collective efforts helped improve safety awareness and created a safer, healthier, and more secure learning environment for everyone.”

Strategies Applied by School Heads in Implementing OHSP among Schools in 4th District in Negros Occidental

Governance, Engagement, and Community Involvement in Safety Initiatives

The theme of Governance, Engagement, and Community Involvement in Safety Initiatives emerged as a vital

focus due to the recognition that effective safety programs require collaborative efforts among school leaders, staff, students, and the community. This theme underscored how strong governance structures, active participation, and community support are essential in successfully implementing the OHSP (Operational Health and Safety Program) in schools.

This theme implied that schools with better governance, higher levels of stakeholder engagement, and active community involvement tended to have more effective and sustainable safety initiatives. Past observations indicated that schools that prioritized collaborative decision-making and community participation experienced improved safety outcomes and greater compliance with safety protocols.

School safety is strengthened when leadership is shared and stakeholders participate in planning and implementation. This is strongly reinforced by recent field data showing that when school safety frameworks are co-designed directly with local community organizations and stakeholders, they significantly enhance institutional trust, promote restorative practices, and create more sustainable safety ecosystems than isolated policies (Johnson, 2026).

Training, Communication, and Program Monitoring

The theme of training, communication, and program monitoring emerged because school heads consistently highlighted the critical necessity of equipping teachers and students with practical safety skills through first-aid, Red Cross, and disaster preparedness drills. They also emphasized establishing open, continuous, and proactive communication channels with parents, local government units, and barangay officials to align all stakeholders on risk mitigation and health guidelines. Furthermore, regular monitoring practices, such as bag inspections and environmental hazard scanning, proved vital for maintaining daily campus vigilance and ensuring strict compliance with safety rules.

The implication of this emergence was that successful school safety implementation relied heavily on building a highly collaborative community ecosystem rather than enforcing isolated administrative policies. By prioritizing active information dissemination and shared responsibility, school heads transformed basic safety protocols into a sustained collective effort, which ultimately enhanced emergency responsiveness and fostered a secure learning environment.

For school safety measures to succeed, operational rules must be actively supplemented by continuous stakeholders' training and proactive communication. Qualitative studies within developing school systems demonstrate that teachers highly value multi-level training programs that simultaneously educate staff, parents, students, and community units (like the barangay or local police) (Sahijuan, 2025). Open communication pathways transform basic compliance checklists into shared cultural expectations, improving the efficiency of hazard monitoring and emergency responses (Sahijuan, 2025).

Implementation of Safety Measures and Policy Reinforcement

The theme that emerged was the implementation of safety measures and policy reinforcements because the respondents consistently highlighted structured actions and physical protocols executed to institutionalize security and health standards within their respective school environments. They reported various operational measures, such as organizing discipline committees, conducting routine bag inspections with the assistance of local law enforcement, enacting disaster preparedness protocols, and mandating face mask compliance during environmental crises. These concrete efforts reflected a deliberate shift from passive awareness to the active enforcement of existing institutional rules.

This theme implied that the systematic reinforcement of policies and targeted safety measures served as the operational backbone for effective risk mitigation. By embedding strict compliance routines and collaborative monitoring into daily functions, school administrators successfully transformed standard handbook rules into practical, life-saving habits. Ultimately, this structured approach ensured that safety frameworks remained highly responsive, predictable, and fully integrated into the daily school culture.

Moving safety guidelines from a passive student handbook into active daily routines requires combining behavioral supervision with supportive frameworks. Contemporary scholarship notes that an over-reliance on harsh "zero-tolerance" rules or physical security reinforcement alone fails to optimize safety; instead,

administrators must blend structural monitoring with social-emotional supports to lower behavioral incidents and enforce rule compliance effectively (Mayer et al., 2021).

Resource, Financial, and Facility Preparedness

This theme emerged because multiple respondents consistently highlighted systemic constraints involving the lack of physical safety tools, limited operational budgets, and the difficulty of managing facilities during geographical hazards. While school heads established strong communication channels and protocols, they frequently struggled with the tangible requirements of safety implementation, such as securing equipment for bag inspections, funding localized training programs, and procuring safety gear.

Consequently, this implied that the successful execution of any school safety framework, such as the Occupational Safety and Health Program, remained heavily dependent on structural and financial support rather than administrative willingness alone. Without adequate funding and robust resource pathways, schools faced significant operational gaps that left their facilities vulnerable during emergencies, proving that stakeholder cooperation and policy compliance required physical and financial mobilization to translate into actual, sustainable campus-wide preparedness.

Even the most structurally sound safety policies are severely limited without robust logistical, material, and financial backing. Modern structural assessments reveal that resource gaps—such as insufficient safety tools, lack of funding for specialized drills, and inadequate facility budgets—directly hinder the operational execution of safety programs. True institutional readiness requires bridging the gap between an administrative willingness to enforce rules and the physical mobilization of financial resources (Sahijuan, 2025).

School Safety, Record-Keeping, and Environmental Mapping

The themes of School Safety, Record-Keeping, and Environmental Mapping emerged because school administrators recognized the critical need to transition from reactive measures to systemic, data-driven frameworks that protected the school community. Facing diverse structural hazards, localized emergency risks like volcanic ashfall, and behavioral infractions, leaders realized that safeguarding learners required more than isolated interventions. Consequently, they established collaborative committees, formal protocols, and rigorous tracking tools to systematically document compliance and monitor school premises.

The implication of these emerging themes was a profound shift toward proactive risk management and shared accountability across all levels of the institution. School heads successfully leveraged localized environmental scans and structured records to secure immediate resources from local government units and external stakeholders. Ultimately, integrating these three pillars fostered a more resilient, highly prepared school environment where hazards were promptly mitigated, and compliance with institutional safety standards was significantly elevated.

Modern safety governance relies heavily on data-driven planning and environmental documentation to proactively address risks. When academic institutions establish formal tracking systems, strict protocols, and safety mapping, it directly correlates with a lower incidence of behavioral risks and external environmental vulnerabilities (Cruz, 2026). Keeping precise records allows administrators to objectively track compliance, target weak spots, and securely justify their facility needs to broader governing structures.

Collaboration with LGUs and Environmental Safety Measures

The theme of collaboration with Local Government Units (LGUs) and environmental safety measures emerged because school leaders recognized that academic institutions could not isolate themselves from external geographical and systemic risks. School heads frequently encountered direct environmental hazards, such as volcanic ashfalls and structural vulnerabilities, which necessitated immediate environmental scanning, hazard mapping, and protective protocols. Because the schools faced strict budget limitations and required broader community authority to execute safety programs, tapping into the resources and political will of the LGUs, disaster risk management teams, and local mayors became essential for comprehensive protection.

This theme implied that it successfully shifted school safety from an isolated internal struggle to a shared public priority. By aligning closely with local governments, schools bridged critical resource gaps, secured swift institutional interventions from municipal leaders, and fostered a highly prepared community culture that actively shielded both learners and teachers from unpredictable external threats.

Schools cannot isolate themselves from localized geographical risks or structural challenges. Recent case analyses indicate that bridging critical operational gaps requires an active partnership between the school administration, Local Government Units (LGUs), and community protection groups (Sahijuan, 2025). Tapping into external municipal resources and civic political will elevates school safety from a localized institutional struggle to a well-funded, coordinated community priority (Johnson, 2026) Follow-up Question 2: Can you share an example of a strategy that worked well and why you think it was successful?

Primo stated that “One strategy that has worked well for us is maintaining open communication through dialogue and conferences with parents. We start by calling the attention of students who frequently violate school rules and regulations, especially those who are causing disruptions or misbehavior. After addressing these students, we hold conferences with their parents and then have them sign an agreement to commit to stopping their misbehavior. If they violate the student code of ethics again, we follow up through our guidance and counseling programs, implementing interventions as needed. This approach falls under the subthemes of Governance, Engagement, and Community Involvement, as well as Implementation of Safety Measures and Policy Enforcement, ensuring that we actively involve parents and students in creating a safe and disciplined school environment.”

Segunda stated that “One strategy that has worked well for us is the formation of a discipline committee, which I created to monitor the arrival of students every morning. Additionally, we seek the help of barangay tanods and kagawads, who are present here daily, especially every Monday morning, to assist in checking the students' bags. I believe this approach has been successful because it creates a structured system for discipline and security, ensuring that students arrive safely and adhere to our rules. The collaboration with local community helpers like the tanods and kagawads has also strengthened our monitoring efforts and fostered a sense of shared responsibility. Thirdy also stated that “One strategy that I believe worked particularly well was our collaboration with the Local Government Unit and other stakeholders to disseminate information about the safety of our learners. I think this approach was successful because it ensured that accurate and timely information regarding both their physical and mental health was effectively communicated. By working together, we were able to create a more comprehensive support system for our students, which helped to promote a safer and healthier learning environment. This collaboration fostered trust and allowed us to address the concerns of the community more effectively.”

Forth also added that “One strategy that has worked well for us is ensuring that the school gates are closed promptly at 7:45 every morning, preventing late or absent students from entering unless they have a letter from their parents indicating they were visited or given permission to enter. This helps us maintain discipline and safety, as most students arrive early and do not go outside the school premises. Teachers also follow the same rule, arriving early and not going outside, which contributes to a secure environment. We allow two hours of contact time for students to do homework at home, and most teachers, students, and non-teaching staff remain inside the school for safety reasons. Our canteen offers affordable and nutritious food, deterring everyone from going outside. Additionally, outside visitors are only allowed in through designated entry points, which helps us manage and prevent any unauthorized access. Overall, these measures have made our school environment safer and more manageable.”

Fifth also stated that “One strategy that I believe worked well is open communication. For me, open

communication means freely sharing our problems at school, especially when it comes to safety concerns that need to be addressed for everyone's protection. It's important to be able to talk to the mayor, barangay captain, parents, and even the students about these issues. I think this approach is effective because it prevents us from feeling overwhelmed, as it allows us to lay down all our concerns clearly. With open communication, we can

identify the specific problems we face at school and work together to find solutions, making it a very specific and practical strategy for addressing issues effectively.”

Lastly, Sinclair also added that “One strategy that I found to be particularly effective was conducting regular safety orientations and consistently reminding teachers and students to follow safety protocols. I also focused on strengthening coordination among teachers, school personnel, and the School DRRM Team to ensure everyone understood their roles during emergencies and school activities. Additionally, I emphasized frequent monitoring and immediate reporting of safety concerns so hazards could be addressed promptly. I believe this approach was successful because it fostered a sense of shared responsibility and increased awareness of the importance of safety among everyone in the school community. As a result, compliance with safety measures improved, and the school became more prepared and responsive to potential risks.”

Follow-up Question 3: How do you involve teachers, students and other stakeholders in these strategies?

Primo stated that “Involving teachers, students, and other stakeholders in these strategies is actually functional and essential. I make sure they are engaged through collaborative decision-making, particularly when addressing issues related to the safety and health of our students within the school premises. This is done through the Child Protection Committee and the School Governing Council. Additionally, we issue a school memorandum to ensure that all teachers, students, and stakeholders are informed and actively participate. We also conduct symposiums and dialogues with parents to foster open communication and collective involvement.”

Segunada also stated that “To involve teachers, students, and other stakeholders in these strategies, we established a discipline committee that is responsible for monitoring student attendance every morning. Teachers also play a crucial role by following up with students in their respective classrooms to ensure active participation and discipline. This collaborative approach helps create a cohesive environment where everyone is engaged in maintaining discipline and supporting student success.”

Thirty stated that “As a School Head, I believe that involving teachers, students, and other stakeholders in the implementation of our Occupational Health and Safety Program is crucial because they are the frontliners who are directly engaged at the grassroots level. Teachers and students play a vital role in disseminating information about the importance of health and safety, which can have a macro impact on everyone’s well-being. We conduct environmental mapping and scanning within the school to identify and address hazards, ensuring a safe environment for both learners and staff. Our goal is to prioritize the safety of our learners and teachers by actively engaging all stakeholders in creating a safe and healthy school environment.”

Forth also added that “We involve teachers, students, and other stakeholders in our safety and discipline strategies through a collaborative approach. Our discipline committee, which includes teachers and members from the safety team, actively monitors any unusual or problematic behavior, including outsiders who might cause trouble. Teachers are all members of this committee and are empowered to implement programs and provide support, even if it means addressing minor issues or concerns. We also conduct training programs such as the Red Cross Community Training Program and Boy Scout and Girl Scout first aid training, which target both students and teachers. These training courses are essential for occupational health and safety, and the school provides necessary supplies like medicines, a clinic, beds, CR, refrigerator, electric fan, weighing scale, and BP apparatus, all in close coordination with the police. Our PTA president is a police officer, which helps facilitate quick police response and visibility, especially during incidents. The municipality also conducts training and seminars, and we have scheduled active shooter drills in July or August to prepare for potential threats like bombings or in-fighting, aiming to reduce parental anxiety and ensure everyone knows what to do in emergencies.”

Fifth, also added that “As a school head, I believe that involving teachers, students, and other stakeholders through open communication is essential. I make it a point to be present within the school premises to identify problems firsthand and observe best practices that can be improved. I involve teachers through regular faculty meetings, LAC sessions, and collaborative expertise discussions with subject coordinators and grade level

coordinators to address issues and strategize solutions. Additionally, I ensure open communication by inviting PNP officers to supervise and maintain visibility, which helps monitor student activities and promote safety. Community involvement is also vital, so we work closely with the barangay to support student safety. Furthermore, I actively engage parents and guardians through PTA meetings, homeroom guidance sessions, and other activities to foster a collaborative effort in creating a safe and conducive learning environment.”

Finally, Sinclair stated that “I actively involve teachers, students, and other stakeholders in implementing our school’s Occupational Safety and Health Program by encouraging their active participation. Teachers assist in enforcing safety protocols, monitoring classrooms, and guiding students during emergency drills and school activities. Students take part in safety orientations, drills, and cleanliness campaigns, practicing responsible behavior to maintain a safe environment. Parents and the PTA support our safety initiatives by reinforcing safety practices at home and cooperating with school policies. Additionally, I collaborate with the DRRM Team, school nurse, local government units, and other partners to strengthen emergency preparedness and address safety concerns. This collaborative approach fosters shared responsibility and has been key to the successful implementation of our OHSP.” Follow-up question 4: What difficulty if any, did you face when applying these strategies, and how did you overcome them?

Primo stated that “One of the difficulties I faced when applying these strategies was involving our stakeholders, particularly the parents. I consider parents to be our primary partners, especially when it comes to the health and safety programs of the school and the students. I observed that some parents are more participative than others, as some are active while others are passive, which is a natural trait. Despite this, I continue to encourage them to get involved because they are vital partners, especially since I prioritize the health and safety of their children. I also recognize that students are naturally playful and sometimes misbehave, but I make sure to promote positive discipline and inform the parents that their children’s actions can be guided toward becoming better citizens.” Segunda stated that “One of the difficulties I faced when applying these strategies was the lack of proper tools or instruments to check the bags. To overcome this challenge, I took the initiative to purchase the necessary equipment. However, I am still in the process of acquiring all the tools needed, so the implementation is not yet complete. Despite this, I am actively working on resolving the issue to effectively carry out the strategy.”

Thirdy also added that “One of the main difficulties I faced when applying these strategies was coordinating with other stakeholders to ensure the safety of our students and community, especially given our school’s geographical location in a coastal area near Canlaon Volcano. Whenever the volcano erupts or ash falls, we are directly affected, and I make sure to inform all teachers promptly to have students wear face masks and take necessary precautions. However, managing effective communication and cooperation with the families of our learners proved to be challenging at times. To overcome this, I emphasized the importance of collaboration and maintained open lines of communication with teachers, parents, and local authorities to ensure that everyone was informed and prepared to respond quickly to such emergencies.”

Forth also replied that “One of the difficulties I faced when applying these strategies was that not all children are easy to discipline, as some are stubborn and misbehave. However, I found that the teachers I worked with were very supportive and approachable, almost like angels, and I didn’t encounter any trouble from them, especially since they do not carry weapons and are there to help. Another challenge was securing training funds and program funding, as we needed to initiate our own programs for us. To overcome this, we tapped resources from the police, LGU, division office, nurses, and legal attorneys to minimize expenses, since doing everything on our own would be costly. When the police visit, they only request simple things like breakfast. I also hope to be able to invite more speakers to further improve our programs.”

Fifth, further said that “At first, I found it challenging to figure out how to approach the mayor and express our concerns, especially regarding the safety needs of our school. I was unsure how to effectively communicate that their presence was truly necessary. However, I overcame this difficulty by applying the strategy of open communication and honest dialogue. During our meetings with the mayor through SRDP, we laid out our concerns for each school, highlighting those that needed immediate attention, especially regarding peace and

security for the students. Since our town is small, it was easier to identify which schools required urgent support. Once we discussed and presented our issues clearly, the mayor understood the importance of our concerns. After talking and consulting with them, I felt more confident, knowing that our concerns were acknowledged, and any misunderstandings or issues were resolved through these open conversations.”

Sinclair finally said that “One of the main challenges I faced was ensuring consistent participation and compliance with safety protocols among teachers, students, and other stakeholders while managing my other school responsibilities. Limited resources and varying levels of awareness also impacted on the smooth implementation of safety initiatives. To overcome these difficulties, I maintained regular communication, conducted continuous safety orientations, and coordinated closely with the School Head, the DRRM Team, parents, and other stakeholders. I also encouraged teamwork and promptly addressed safety concerns through regular monitoring and follow-up. These efforts helped strengthen cooperation and significantly improved the overall implementation of our school’s Occupational Safety and Health Program.”

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were formulated:

First, it highlights that school heads in the 4th district of Negros Occidental emphasize the importance of school safety and health programs, community engagement, and effective communication in implementing OHSP. These themes underscored that a comprehensive approach involving health initiatives, active community involvement, and awareness campaigns was vital for fostering a safe school environment. The findings contribute to school safety management by illustrating that successful implementation relies on integrating health protocols with community support and robust communication strategies. This insight could inform DepEd policies by emphasizing the need for structured programs that promote community partnership, enhance communication channels, and prioritize health and safety education within schools.

Second, it identifies key challenges faced by school heads, such as family influences, student behavior, resource constraints, and limited LGU support. These challenges revealed that effective school safety management must account for external factors like family and community dynamics, as well as internal limitations such as insufficient resources and facilities. Recognizing these challenges could guide the development of policies that strengthen partnerships with families, allocate resources more efficiently, and seek increased support from LGUs. It also highlighted the necessity for school heads to enhance self-preparedness, record-keeping, and monitoring systems, which were critical for timely response and sustained safety efforts.

Finally, it discussed strategic approaches employed by school heads, including governance, community involvement, training, and collaboration with LGUs. These strategies demonstrated that proactive leadership, continuous capacity-building, clear communication, and environmental safety measures were essential for effective OHSP implementation. Policies should promote comprehensive planning that integrates safety protocols, regular training, stakeholder collaboration, and resource management. Such strategies could improve school safety outcomes by fostering a culture of safety, ensuring policy enforcement, and creating resilient school communities equipped to handle emergencies and environmental challenges.

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