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TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON HEALTHY SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A SEQUENTIAL EXPLANATORY MIXED METHODS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the teachers' perception on healthy school climate in public elementary schools of Davao City Division. Also, it investigated the association of the involved variables of teachers' perception on healthy school climate. With the use of probability sampling, 156 public elementary teachers were selected as the respondents in the quantitative phase while 10 informants were invited in the in-depth interview. Utilizing the sequential explanatory mixed methods approach, the data collated were analyzed through the use of Mean and Regression Analysis while thematic analysis was used in qualitative phase. Results revealed that there was a high teachers' perception on healthy school climate which was confirmed by the responses of the informants. In particular, administrative dimension and technical function are high while institutional dimension is moderately high. Furthermore, there was no significant difference in the healthy school climate when analyzed by school category. This led to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. In the qualitative phase, the informants confirmed that healthy school climate is evident in the school regardless of the school category. Based on the findings, it was further suggested that higher officials in the Department of Education may identify means on how to strengthen the teachers' perception on healthy school climate. More so, future researchers may further explore the involved variables considering other factors and research methods.

KEYWORDS: *Healthy School Climate; Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach; Davao City Division, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

A healthy school climate is essential for fostering a positive and productive educational environment where students, teachers, and staff can thrive. Unfortunately, attaining a healthy school climate can be hindered by leadership issues, where ineffective communication and lack of collaboration create a negative atmosphere. Additionally, poor teacher-student relationships and resistance to change can disrupt efforts to create a positive and inclusive climate, leading to disengagement and conflict within the school community. According to Jaarsveld and Mentz (2021), there was some agreement between the teachers and principals regarding particular factors that have an impact on the school climate, such as poor human relations, disrespect, poor work ethics and competitiveness among teachers.

In the South African education context, the teaching environment remains fraught with challenges, particularly in under-resourced and high-risk communities. Educators frequently operate under conditions marked by violence, instability, and a lack of institutional support. Numerous reports over the years have highlighted incidents where teachers have been subjected to physical attacks, verbal abuse, and intimidation by both learners and, in some cases, parents (Mokoena, 2020). In Indonesia, the synergy between school principals and teachers, between teachers, and teachers and students in the teaching and learning process is not maximized. The teaching and learning facilities provided are not by their purpose. The assistance given has not been maximized for any difficulties that arise as a result of assignments imposed on students (Roesminingsih et al., 2023). Apart from the violence in schools, teachers often question the behaviour of the principal. In Kenya, schools face challenges such as poor teaching and sanitary facilities, negative pupil-teacher relationships, limited teacher training opportunities, and minimal involvement of stakeholders in decision-making. These issues affect teaching quality, learner engagement, and overall school performance (Otieno & Musau, 2023)

In the Philippines, particularly in Western Visayas, negative school climate conditions were also reported, including low student academic achievement, conflicts between school heads and teachers, as well as conflicts among teachers (Tandoy & Barrios, 2023). Additionally, Alson (2019) found that teachers faced stress due to unsafe working environments,

insufficient materials and resources needed to perform their duties efficiently, and a sense of being overly monitored with excessive administrative demands for output. As confirmed by Tarraya (2023), the dissatisfaction of Filipinos with the quality of public-school education is undeniable.

In the local setting, school climate is greatly affected by limited resources. The University of Southeastern Philippines (USeP) and Cotabato State University face ongoing challenges related to limited educational resources, outdated laboratory equipment, and insufficient library holdings (Santos & Lumibao, 2021). These deficiencies hinder both teaching and learning, affecting students' academic performance and faculty effectiveness. Improving infrastructure and access to learning materials remains essential to raising the quality of education in these institutions.

A positive school climate is essential for teachers as it promotes a supportive and cooperative atmosphere. This need to be understood by the local government, school administration, teachers, parents, and students. However, the researcher identified a gap in the existing literature on school climate, particularly studies employing mixed-methods research in Davao City. Therefore, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the school climate in selected schools by incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data.

This study also sought to offer meaningful insights for policymakers to aid in the creation of policies, programs, interventions, and initiatives that would strengthen schools in fostering a positive school climate. In addition, the research aimed to benefit the wider school community. The researcher intended to share the findings at various local, regional, national, and international conferences, with the goal of publishing the study in a Scopus-indexed journal, fulfilling one of the College's academic requirements.

REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT LITERATURE

The review of related literature and studies provides critical insights into teachers' perceptions of a healthy school climate and its impact on the overall functioning of educational institutions. Recent studies continue to affirm that school climate plays a vital role in shaping teacher motivation, collaboration, and instructional effectiveness (Mutheu & Wambua, 2022).

Healthy School Climate

School climate is defined as a mixture of beliefs, values and behaviors of students, teaching staff, leaders and parents, level of independence, leadership styles and job satisfaction. School climate can be perceived as the prevailing atmosphere in the school, which is mainly dictated by the leaders and affects the way how students and teachers perceive their school and affects their values and attitudes toward school and work (Thyen, 2022).

A positive school climate affects the overall effectiveness of the school. In other words, it implies that there is a link between positive climate in the school and its effectiveness. In this regard, it is possible to improve the climate in the school within a short period of time, intervening in leadership style. Students' and community's perceptions about the school are important to create a good climate, where teachers can have a quality teaching, students reach results according to the ambitions, and parents are involved in their children's education (Lombardi et al., 2019).

A positive school climate is supported by consistent instructional practices, a conducive physical environment, and sufficient learning resources. These elements enhance student engagement, academic performance, and teacher satisfaction. As Delos Reyes and Martinez (2021) note, sustaining such a climate is essential for long-term educational success.

Marchante et al. (2022) mentioned that schools with a positive climate had a lower incidence of student risk behavior. An important part of safety is having consistent rules that are enforced fairly; schools with this competency report fewer cases of student victimization and delinquency. Healthy schools also have shown a decrease in bullying, aggression, and sexual harassment. Students are more likely to flourish in a school environment in which they feel comfortable, when they feel they are treated fairly by the teachers and when they feel they have a sense of belonging to the school environment. With regard to the sense of belonging it is vitally important to establish a degree of hospitality for each and every student, in order to avoid any feeling of isolation and detachment.

Safe, clean, and comfortable surroundings make for a space in which students can learn. Students and staff are more receptive to the learning environment when it is physically maintained, and each member of a school community has a role in contributing to the care of the physical environment. Level of upkeep, access to clean water, and ambient lighting and noise are all critical to the quality of a physical environment. A well-maintained physical environment promotes institutional pride, positive behaviors, and a sense of safety (Magby & Cerna, 2022).

A supportive and healthy school climate is positively correlated with teachers' work enthusiasm and satisfaction, which has an impact on teaching activities and the strategies used by students. Teachers are the most important part of achieving school goals because achieving them depends on teachers' willingness to do their best to achieve school goals. Thus, teachers play an important role in shaping and improving children's intelligence during the growing period of students at

schools. The values and knowledge instilled in students by teachers determine the future of their children and the country because they are tomorrow's citizens. Teachers and students practice the course together, and it goes without saying that the quality of teaching has a direct impact on students' performance (Yi et al., 2020).

Schools with positive climates typically experience lower staff turnover and have better attendance rates, and as the organizational context of the school improves there is a corresponding decrease in staff turnover which indicates that teachers are committed to their jobs. This could be due to the teachers' perceptions of administrative support, collegial relationships, school safety, and academic expectations. Studies have also shown an increase in teachers' commitment to their work in schools with positive climates as well as better relationships between school and home (Alinsunurin, 2020). A good school climate is helpful to improve teacher satisfaction, and teachers' job satisfaction has a considerable impact on teachers' teaching input. On the contrary, a negative school climate tends to make teachers tired, unmotivated, and afraid to make mistakes, afraid to try new teaching method. Therefore, it can be inferred that building a good school climate could help to improve teachers' job satisfaction, thus improving students' academic performance and keeping the school's reputation moving in a positive direction (Crisci et al., 2019).

With the increasing demand for accountability in the education sector, school leaders and teachers as having the key roles in education cannot be excluded. Teachers need to spend a lot of time and energy to complete the work outside the inspection teaching, leading to a greater impact on the teacher's job satisfaction, and the administrators' consideration for the teachers, and the establishment of a transparent and systematic management system. The soundness of the school system is a key factor in creating a good school atmosphere. At the same time, the school system should be conducive to mutual cooperation and mutual respect between teachers, which is an effective measure to improve teacher satisfaction. School climate and teacher performance are important prerequisites for student performance (Crisci et al., 2019).

Grazia and Molinari (2021) pointed that school climate is a good predictor of teachers' job performance. The familiar climate leads to the greatest contribution to the teacher's work performance, followed by the open and controllable climate and autonomy, while the contribution of the closed climate is not significant. Therefore, a good school climate could help improve teachers' job satisfaction, and students' academic performance. It keeps the school's reputation moving in a positive direction. The school climate is seen as contributing to the role of the school as learning organization and the key players are the teachers and the principals who are expected to transform their schools into better learning organizations. One commonly used method of promoting positive school climate involves a shared sense of leadership among stakeholders. Leaders should promote teacher leadership roles under a shared and unified vision. According to Culduz (2023), teacher empowerment had the most significant effect on teacher job satisfaction and promotion of positive school climate. This viewpoint is not universally shared. Other researchers argued that empowering teachers with leadership roles and distributive leadership methods may actually create a negative school climate in some schools. Distributive leadership and teacher empowerment through leadership roles may be ineffective due to the lack of authority the teacher leaders are granted. Aspects of team leadership and teacher empowerment through leadership roles could create role confusion within the school climate, and the perceptions of leadership may tend to be top down oriented regardless of the measures taken to distribute leadership and empowerment. In other words, distributive leadership may not result in negative climate but limited authority with distributive leadership may.

If a teacher has a positive perception of the school, research shows student achievement and other key factors will also be positive; conversely, if the perception is negative—the opposite is often the result. Teachers are socially driven and possess a deep connection to teaching. Teachers' intrinsic motives are a love for teaching, a sense of social justice (e.g., democracy, fairness, equality, etc.), and a sense of calling to the profession (i.e., making a difference mentality). Therefore, any negative perceptions are a part of who they are in both climate and norms. When teachers perceive climate as positive it can lead to an increasing commitment toward the profession. On the other hand, if the perceptions are negative an increased disillusionment with the profession may occur (Prado, 2022).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study determined the status of healthy school climate in public elementary schools of Davao City Division using mixed methods approach specifically the sequential explanatory methods. In particular, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of healthy school climate as perceived by public elementary teachers in terms of:
   - 1.1 institutional dimension;
   - 1.2 administrative dimension; and
   - 1.3 technical function?
2. Is there a significant difference on the level of healthy school climate when analyzed by the school category?
3. What are the standpoints of the participants on the salient points of the quantitative results?

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METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology for this study, encompassing the research design, research participants, research tools, data collection procedure, and data analysis to be utilized in this investigation.

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed methods research approach, specifically the sequential explanatory mixed methods research. A mixed-methods research design is a research design that has its own philosophical assumptions and methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it includes philosophical assumptions to provide directions for the collection and analysis of data from multiple sources in a single study. A mixed-methods design offers a number of benefits to approaching complex research issues as it integrates philosophical frameworks of both post-positivism and interpretivism interweaving qualitative and quantitative data in such a way that research issues are meaningfully explained. It also offers a logical ground, methodological flexibility and an in-depth understanding of smaller cases. In other words, the use of mixed-methods enables researchers to answer research questions with sufficient depth and breadth and helps generalize findings and implications of the researched issues to the whole population (Dawadi et al., 2021).

The sequential explanatory mixed methods research comprises of two phases design where quantitative data is collected and analyzed first, then qualitative data is collected and analyzed based on the quantitative results. The qualitative data is used to explain the quantitative data. The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and their subsequent analysis provide a general understanding of the research problem. The qualitative data and their analysis refine and explain those statistical results by exploring participants' views in more depth (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Figure 2 shows the processes in the methodological aspect of the study. In the context of this study, the quantitative phase focused on gathering data by means of a survey questionnaire on which the respondents need to evaluate the level of healthy school climate. It also assessed whether there is a significant difference on the school climate of public elementary schools when analyzed by school category. It was descriptive by nature since it simply describes the situation.

Meanwhile, the qualitative phase of this study was utilizing a phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research is a qualitative research approach that builds on the assumption that the universal essence of anything ultimately depends on how its audience experiences it. Phenomenological researchers record and analyze the beliefs, feelings, and perceptions of the audience they are looking to study in relation to the thing being studied. Only the audience's views matter the people who have experienced the phenomenon (Good, 2023).

Research Respondents

In the quantitative phase, the researcher targeted 156 public school elementary teachers in Davao City Division. Determining the number of sample size was aligned to the claim of Statistic Solutions (2020) stating that the sample size needed for the one-way ANOVA, testing for differences on one independent variable with two groups, is 128, the same as the independent samples t-test. The sample size relies with the number of groups in the independent variable, but for the independent variable with 3 groups, 156 or approximately 52 per group. Hence, there were 52 respondents coming from small school category, medium school category, and big school category. In the qualitative phase, the researcher interviewed 10 informants using the in-depth interview. According to Sim et al. (2019), in phenomenological approach, 3 to 10 participants will do.

For sample selection in the quantitative, the researcher employed a probability sampling method, specifically using cluster random sampling, which involves dividing a dataset or population into smaller groups based on various criteria and then selecting random samples from these clusters for statistical analysis. This approach is cost-effective and practical for studies conducted on large populations or in situations where creating a sample study is complex (Banerjee, 2024).

In the qualitative phase, the researcher made use of purposive sampling. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. Purposive sampling is different from convenience sampling and is also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling.This type of sampling can be very useful in situations when you need to reach a targeted sample quickly, and where sampling for proportionality is not the main concern (Crossman, 2019).

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion criteria in both qualitative and quantitative phase of this study involved selecting elementary teachers who have at least 3 years of teaching experience. This requirement was established under the premise that a minimum tenure of 3 years within the public school system would enable them to provide informed evaluations of school climate. In the qualitative phase, the informants should have not been part of the respondents in the quantitative phase.

Additionally, it was crucial to underscore that respondents had the right to withdraw from the study if they felt uneasy or uncomfortable about participating in the survey questionnaire. Their decision to withdraw was fully respected, emphasizing the utmost priority placed on the welfare and well-being of all participants throughout the research process.

Research Instruments

For data collection, this study made use of quantitative data results and qualitative data results. In the quantitative phase, it used survey questionnaire. In the qualitative phase, it utilized an interview guide tool.

Data Analysis

For more comprehensive interpretation and analysis of the data, specific statistical tools for quantitative and data analysis were used for this mixed methods research.

Quantitative Phase

In the quantitative phase, the researcher utilized the Mean in order to evaluate the level of healthy school climate in the public elementary schools of Davao City. The researcher used ANOVA to determine the significant difference on the healthy school climate when analyzed by school category.

Qualitative Phase

In the qualitative phase, the researcher employed the thematic analysis relying on the responses of the participants. It is a systematic method of breaking down and organizing rich data from qualitative research by tagging individual observations and quotations with appropriate codes, to facilitate the discovery of significant themes (Rosala, 2022). In the context of the study, the researcher determined a priori themes considering the responses of the informants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the results of the study. These are the findings of the problems raised in the previous chapter. They are presented both in the textual and tabular forms.

Level of Healthy School Climate in terms of Institutional Dimension

Table 1 reflects the level of healthy school climate in terms of institutional dimension. It shows that the overall mean is 3.38, in a moderately high level. This means that the level of healthy school climate in terms of institutional dimension is occasionally evident.

It can be gleaned from the data that all 4 statements reveal a moderately high result. When arranged chronologically according to mean scores, the items are as follows: being accepted by its environment (3.39), being able to stand out against inappropriate demands of parents and society (3.38), and working in accord with its environment (3.37). These items prove that the healthy school climate in terms of institutional dimension is occasionally evident.

The findings presented indicate that the level of healthy school climate, specifically in terms of the institutional dimension, is moderately high. This suggests that the institutional aspects contributing to a healthy school climate are occasionally observed across the school setting. The moderately high level implies that while there are signs of a supportive and effective institutional environment, these characteristics are not consistently demonstrated. This level of climate may reflect schools that are in transition—making efforts to maintain institutional health but still facing challenges that hinder full realization. A closer look at the individual indicators shows that all four items are consistently rated at a moderately high level, suggesting a balanced perception among respondents. The highest-rated item, being accepted by its environment indicates that schools are relatively recognized and valued by their surrounding communities. This is followed by the ability to stand out against inappropriate demands of parents and society and working in accord with its environment highlighting that while schools are managing external pressures and maintaining collaborative relationships, these efforts are not yet fully embedded in the institutional culture. Overall, the data reveals a moderately healthy school climate that could benefit from targeted interventions to enhance consistency and sustainability in institutional practices.

The moderately high level of institutional dimension affirmed the stand of Fonllem et al. (2020) stating that for schools to function well, being accepted by, and receiving support from, society are both important. The support of society helps a school adapt to its environment and achieve and maintain a valid educational program. This protects the school from inappropriate requests from the parents and society in general. Schools make choices. They might conduct only a few communications and interactions with families and communities, keeping the three spheres of influence that directly affect student learning and development.

Relevant to the findings of this study, Casey (2022) emphasized that a family-like school recognizes each child's individuality and makes each child feel special and included. Family-like schools welcome all families, not just those that are easy to reach. In a partnership, parents create more school-like families. A school-like family recognizes that each child is also a student. Families reinforce the importance of school, homework, and activities that build student skills and feelings

of success. Communities, including groups of parents working together, create school-like opportunities, events, and programs that reinforce, recognize, and reward students for good progress, creativity, contributions, and excellence. Communities also create family-like settings, services, and events to enable families to better support their children.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Presented in this chapter are the findings based on the results of data gathered, the conclusions drawn from the findings and the recommendations for consideration.

The main focus of the study was to determine the status of healthy school climate in public elementary schools. The study was conducted in the selected public schools of Davao City Division. There were one hundred fifty-six (156) teachers in the quantitative phase and ten (10) informants in the qualitative phase. Sequential explanatory mixed methods approach was used in this study utilizing adapted research instrument for the quantitative phase and an interview guide tool in the qualitative phase. The said instruments were validated by the panel of experts and subjected to pilot testing before it was made ready for administration. Mean and ANOVA were the statistical tools used in analyzing the data in the quantitative phase. The hypothesis raised in this study was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Meanwhile, the thematic analysis was used in the qualitative phase.

The level of healthy school climate is high which was confirmed by the informants in the qualitative phase. The high level of healthy school climate suggests that positive relationships, supportive leadership, and effective school practices are frequently observed. This indicates a conducive environment for both teaching and learning, where stakeholders feel valued and engaged. A strong school climate fosters collaboration, motivation, and overall school improvement.

Meanwhile, it was found out that there is no significant difference in the healthy school climate when analyzed by school category since its t-value is 3.44 and the p-value of 0.00 is lower at the 0.05 level of significance, implying that all schools as perceived by the teachers regardless of the school type have the same extent of healthy school climate. Apparently, the hypothesis of no significant difference on the level of healthy school climate was accepted.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were offered: The level of healthy school climate means that it is oftentimes evident. Notably, administrative dimension and technical function are oftentimes evident while institutional dimension is occasionally evident.

Meanwhile, the results imply that there is no significant difference in the healthy school climate when analyzed by school category suggesting that teachers from big, medium, and small schools have the same level of healthy school climate registering a p-value of .000 which is less than .05 in the level of significance. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Moreover, the findings in the qualitative phase validated the quantitative data. Based on the shared experiences of the informants, the healthy school climate is truly evident in public schools regardless of its category.

The positive findings of the study confirmed the Organizational Health model of Miles (1965 as cited in Hernandez & Zamora, 2018). According to Miles, a healthy organization is considered as a structure which continuously uses its ability to continue its life and overcome difficulties in the long run. In the context of the study, Hoy and Tarter's Organizational Health Inventory (OHI) directly aligns with the concept of a “healthy school climate”, as it provides a structured approach to understanding the factors that contribute to a positive and supportive educational environment. A healthy school climate requires the school to maintain a sense of autonomy and protection from external pressures, allowing it to focus on internal growth, student needs, and educational priorities without being overwhelmed by external conflicts. When a school protects its core values and mission, it ensures a safe and secure environment for both students and staff.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were offered based on the conclusions of the study:Based on the findings, it is recommended that DepEd officials further strengthen programs that support the administrative and technical functions in schools, as these dimensions were found to be oftentimes evident and contribute positively to a healthy school climate. However, attention may be given to enhancing the institutional dimension, which was only occasionally evident. This may involve initiatives that foster stronger collaboration between schools and their surrounding communities, as well as policies that empower schools to respond effectively to external demands. Additionally, since the study revealed no significant difference in the level of healthy school climate across school categories, DepEd may implement uniform interventions that benefit teachers in big, medium, and small schools alike, ensuring equitable support regardless of school size.

Moreover, school heads may continue to strengthen their efforts in the administrative and technical dimensions, which were found to be oftentimes evident in promoting a healthy school climate. This includes maintaining open communication,

providing clear expectations, supporting teacher needs, and fostering professional collaboration. School heads may also place greater focus on improving the institutional dimension by actively engaging the school with its external environment—such as parents, local leaders, and the community—to enhance support, acceptance, and alignment with school goals. Since the level of school climate is consistent across school sizes, school heads from both big and small schools may implement similar best practices to ensure a unified and inclusive climate that benefits all teachers and students.

Furthermore, teachers may sustain their active participation in fostering a healthy school climate by continuously collaborating with colleagues, supporting administrative initiatives, and maintaining high morale and commitment to student success. Given that the administrative and technical dimensions are oftentimes evident, teachers may further reinforce these strengths by remaining open to communication, aligning with school goals, and participating in school improvement efforts. However, since the institutional dimension was found to be only occasionally evident, teachers are encouraged to engage more with parents, local stakeholders, and the wider community to build stronger external relationships that support the school. With the study showing no significant difference across school categories, teachers from all types of schools are in a strong position to contribute equally to enhancing and sustaining a positive and inclusive school climate.

Lastly, future researchers may explore the institutional dimension of healthy school climate more deeply, as it was found to be only occasionally evident compared to the administrative and technical aspects. Further qualitative investigations may uncover specific factors or barriers that hinder stronger institutional engagement and how these might be addressed. Additionally, future studies may consider expanding the scope by including different regions or educational levels to determine whether similar patterns exist in other contexts. Researchers may also incorporate longitudinal designs to assess how school climate evolves over time and how sustained interventions impact each dimension. Finally, using mixed methods remains a valuable approach for capturing both the statistical trends and the lived experiences of teachers.

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