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INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP OF SCHOOL HEADS AND LEARNING ATMOSPHERE IN KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM OF MALABOG DISTRICT, DAVAO CITY

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I. INTRODUCTION

Children's early learning experiences have a profound effect on their development. Children's receptivity to new influences and capacity to learn are at their peak in kindergarten education. During this period, they acquire a variety of important skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will affect their ability to learn, their personal development, their relationships with others, and their future participation in a bigger society. The previous statement highlighted the significance of having positive teaching and learning experiences among preschool education learners.

One of the most pressing issues confronting kindergarten education today is the increasing difficulty in creating a conducive environment for teaching and learning. Nearly half of all preschool teachers reported significant levels of difficulty in arranging classroom layout, designing school activities for children, constructing learning centers, and introducing school interactions and activities. This study investigates the relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in kindergarten programs within Malabog District, Davao City. The primary focus is to understand how effective leadership strategies can enhance the educational environment for young learners, fostering an atmosphere conducive to exploration, curiosity, and active engagement.

In the United States of America, kindergarten teachers feel the pressures of the "pushed down" curriculum, especially in creating an atmosphere for conducive learning, and knowing what is to be taught in kindergarten looks like first-grade material, rather than play-based learning activities. Many teachers feel pressure to fulfill accountability standards of a more rigorous academic curriculum in kindergarten through teacher-directed, less child-centered approaches, even though such teaching styles clash with many teachers' beliefs about developmentally appropriate practice and accepted best practices for teaching young children (Young et al., 2022).

However, as noted in Germany, most studies in instructional leadership and learning atmosphere are focused mainly on the general idea of instructional leadership and learning environment or atmosphere at the secondary or middle school levels. Fewer studies are concentrated in kindergarten (De Stercke et al., 2018), but teachers in kindergarten and early grades also need support from administrators (Eller & Eller, 2018). For example, school heads' instructional leadership has been found to directly influence teachers' performance (Kraft et al., 2020), suggesting that school heads can help their teachers in their instructional tasks. School heads as instructional leaders can influence teachers' performance in school and the profession by helping them overcome their instructional challenges and appreciate the joy of teaching their learners (Kindall et al., 2018). School heads, as instructional leaders, assist the schools in ensuring effective teacher performance and a quality classroom atmosphere to deliver and implement the curriculum effectively (Day et al., 2020). Though research has shown the influence of maintaining high-quality instruction as an important aspect of learning, effective instructional delivery depends on the quality of support and kind of instructional leadership that school heads provide to their teachers, and maintaining a quality learning atmosphere is essential in the kindergarten program (Phyu & Vinitwatanakhun, 2018).

Recent cross-national research underscores how school heads' instructional (pedagogical) leadership critically shapes kindergarten programs' learning atmosphere. In Norway and Finland, in 2022, early childhood teachers' perceptions and practices related to pedagogical leadership, including how leaders and educators collaboratively create supportive interactions, curriculum guidance, and reflective pedagogical environments that enhance young learners' engagement and well-being (Heikka et al., 2020). It emphasizes that when school heads adopt a distributed leadership style actively involving teachers in decision-making, modeling reflective teaching, and fostering ongoing professional dialogue, they significantly enrich the quality of classroom environments in kindergarten. These insights from Scandinavian educational contexts offer compelling global evidence: effective instructional leadership that empowers teachers and nurtures collaborative learning climates plays a pivotal role in improving kindergarten learning atmosphere.

The importance of kindergarten education in the Philippines is often overlooked by parents. However, this stage of education is crucial for your child's future development. Attending kindergarten helps set a strong foundation for your children's development by placing

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them in a nurturing, non-competitive environment and using engaging activities that help children learn about fundamental knowledge. It is also in kindergarten that your child will learn various cognitive, emotional, and social skills that will set them up for future academic and interpersonal success. The value of providing quality kindergarten education should not be ignored. Research has indicated that school heads' instructional leadership and support for instruction in the kindergarten program are essential for achieving a high level of performance among learners. Based on the concepts presented, it is therefore essential to conduct this study to identify the instructional leadership of school heads implementing kindergarten programs and assess the learning atmosphere in kindergarten (Reedley, 2022).

Recent Philippine studies affirm the vital influence of school heads' instructional leadership on early learning environments. In Santa Maria, Kalayaan, a strong pedagogical leadership in communication, relationship management, clarity, and conflict resolution was perceived as significantly supportive of positive kindergarten classroom contexts (Kilag & Sasan, 2023). Similarly, in the Buenavista Districts I & II in Quezon Province, it is revealed that instructional supervisory practices such as instructional planning, teacher motivation, and assessment supervision varied depending on demographic factors and influenced the overall instructional quality in early grade programs during the new normal (Guamos & Leodegario Jr., 2023).

In Sarangani Province, school heads exhibited very high levels of instructional leadership, significantly influencing teachers' confidence and effectiveness in content delivery, instructional engagement, and community linkages (Rodulfa, 2022). This underscores how strong leadership contributes to both teacher empowerment and improved classroom practices, aligning with your research focus on kindergarten programs in Malabog District.

In Talomo District, Davao City, it is found that a positive classroom atmosphere significantly enhanced the impact of teacher creativity on students' resilience and academic performance (Almonia & Oliva, 2022). Specifically, the environment characterized by encouragement, flexibility, and resource-rich settings served as a partial mediator in strengthening the positive effect of creative teaching on learners' stability and success.

In Malabog District, Division of Davao City, creating a highly conducive learning atmosphere for kindergarten learners is a challenge to most teachers. However, because of the instructional leadership of school heads in the District, the challenge of creating a learning atmosphere for learners in kindergarten became doable.

The drive for conducting this study stems from the recognition that the early years of education are critical for child development. By examining the role of school heads in shaping the learning atmosphere, the researcher aims to identify best practices that can be implemented to improve educational outcomes in kindergarten settings. Further, the study seeks to bridge the gap between leadership and classroom dynamics, providing insights into how leadership styles influence the overall learning experience for children.

The study's significance lies in its potential to contribute to the enhancement of kindergarten education. By investigating the relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in kindergarten programs, this research offers valuable insights into how effective leadership can positively impact early childhood education. By identifying the key characteristics of effective instructional leadership in kindergarten settings, policymakers and school administrators can develop strategies to support and promote quality early childhood education.

From the concepts mentioned above, it can be said that this study highlights the significance of instructional leadership of school heads in shaping the learning atmosphere in kindergarten programs, ultimately contributing to the educational development of young learners in Malabog District, Davao City.

Statement of the Problem

This study was conducted to determine the significance of the relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program in Malabog District, Division of Davao City. Specifically, it sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of:
   1.1. developing programs;
   1.2. programs for instructional improvement;
   1.3. instructional supervision; and
   1.4. assessment?
2. What is the level of learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program in terms of:
   2.1. school-classroom layout;
   2.2. school activities;

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2.3. learning centers; and
2.4. school interactions and activities?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program?

4. What domains of instructional leadership of school heads significantly influence the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the Transformational Leadership Theory of Burns (1978). This theory focuses on inspiring and motivating followers to exceed expectations. It emphasizes creating a shared vision, providing intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. School heads as instructional leaders in the kindergarten program need to exhibit charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to their teachers. School heads following this theory are often seen as visionary, charismatic, and inspirational.

The Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977) also provided the foundation of this research. This posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling. Further, the theory suggests that people learn new behaviors by observing and imitating others. To summarize, the pronouncement of the theorist emphasizes the importance of observational learning, where learners acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs by watching the actions of others and the consequences that follow, leading to the modeling and adoption of observed behaviors.

Hypotheses

It provides a foundation for testing relationships between variables and determining their significance within the context of instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program. The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H_{o1}. There is no significant relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program.

H_{o2}. None of the domains of instructional leadership of school heads significantly influences the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program.

This study is significant as it provides valuable insights into the instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program. The findings of this research will benefit various stakeholders, including educators, students, policymakers, and researchers.

The present study can offer valuable insights into effective instructional leadership practices. School heads can use these findings to develop their own leadership skills and improve their ability to create positive learning environments by integrating concrete approaches in leadership in the School Improvement Plan. In the same space, the study can identify areas where the kindergarten program can be strengthened. School heads can implement strategies to improve instructional leadership and create a more conducive learning atmosphere.

Also, the study can provide teachers with a better understanding of the role of instructional leadership of school heads in creating effective learning environments at the early education level in Malabog District, Davao City. This can help them develop their own teaching practices and collaborate more effectively with school leaders to improve instruction. Teachers can use the findings of the study to implement strategies in their classrooms that align with effective instructional leadership practices.

Moreover, the results of this study can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of current instructional leadership practices in kindergarten programs. This information can be of help to school heads in the development of policies and guidelines to improve these practices, particularly in Malabog District, Davao City. In addition, the study can identify areas where additional resources or support are needed to enhance instructional leadership and learning atmospheres. This can help DepED officials allocate resources more effectively to improve the quality of instruction.

Lastly, the study can contribute to the existing body of knowledge on instructional leadership and learning atmospheres in early childhood education. It can provide new insights and perspectives on these topics. In addition, the findings of the study can be compared to research from other contexts to identify both similarities and differences in instructional leadership practices and their impact on student learning.

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II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a quantitative, non-experimental design, specifically the descriptive-correlational approach to observe and describe naturally occurring relationships among variables without manipulating them (Mekonnen, 2020). In this framework, variables are categorized as independent (predictors) and dependent (outcomes), and the design allows researchers to explain and interpret prevailing conditions by collecting data from relatively large samples (Bhandari, 2023). Further, descriptive-correlational research is ideal for capturing a snapshot of how variables co-vary in real contexts, offering insights that guide future investigations and educational practice.

It is for this purpose that the method was used, since the focal point of this two-variable research study was to determine the significance of the relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program and the learning atmosphere of schools in kindergarten in Malabog District, Division of Davao City, Region XI.

Research Respondents

The participants of the study were the 24 kindergarten teachers from Malabog District, Division of Davao City, Region XI, during the Academic Year 2022-2023. The sample size of 24 participants is justified through the use of total enumeration, wherein all members of the identified population were included in the study. This approach is appropriate given the small and manageable size of the population. As Creswell (2022) emphasized, when the number of cases is small and the researcher has access to the entire population, total population sampling is both practical and methodologically sound.

For teacher-respondents, total enumeration or universal sampling was used. It is most practical when the total population is of manageable size, such as a well-defined subgroup of a larger population (Crossman, 2018).

In this study, all kindergarten teachers in Malabog District, Davao City, became automatic participants in the study. These teachers are all majoring in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or have taken at least 18 units in ECE as required.

All of them (the teacher-respondents) received training and orientation in the kindergarten program of the Department of Education. The twenty-one (21) schools of the entire district are involved in this study. The total number of respondents is 24.

Research Instrument

The instrument has two (2) parts. The first part focuses on the instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in Malabog District, Davao City, while the second part is designed to gauge the learning atmosphere of schools in the kindergarten program. The independent variable, which is the instructional leadership in the kindergarten program, has four (4) indicators. Each indicator has five items purposely constructed to assess the variable.

The dependent variable, which is the learning atmosphere of schools in the kindergarten program in Malabog District, Davao City, has four (4) indicators to describe the variables, and each indicator has five (5) items purposely constructed to elicit the necessary data for analysis. A five-point scale with its corresponding descriptive rating was provided to guide the respondents in making the appropriate choice of evaluation. To assist respondents in understanding the content and purpose of the research instrument, clear and simple instructions on how to complete the instrument were also included.

The survey instrument for instructional leadership of school heads and learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program was pilot tested in one of the elementary schools using a group of kindergarten teachers. The results were analyzed for reliability, with the instrument on instructional leadership obtaining a Cronbach's Alpha of (0.897), and the instrument on learning atmosphere obtaining a Cronbach's Alpha of (0.863). These values indicate that both instruments have a good level of internal consistency and are reliable for use in the study.

The research instrument was subjected to validation to elicit a correct and accurate response from the participants. In this study, content validity was used. This describes the relevance of a test to the different types of criteria concerning the parameters of the indicators of the variable under study (Bhandari, 2023). To complete the validation process, the three experts who reviewed and checked the instrument were given an evaluation form assessing the construct and the technicalities of the instrument.

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Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher asked for endorsement from the dean of the Graduate School for this academic endeavor to be conducted. Along with the dean's approval, he recommended to the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao City Division, to conduct a survey of kindergarten teachers in Malabog District during the school year 2022-2023.

When the request was approved by the superintendent, the researcher personally arranged with the PSDS and the school principals regarding the planned data collection. This was done in order not to disrupt the class schedule of learners as indicated in the Instructional Learning Plan and Weekly Home Learning Plan and other official functions of the schools during the conduct of the study in adherence to DepED Order No. 9 series 2005 or (*Instituting Measures to Increase Engaged Time-on-Task and Ensuring Compliance Therewith*).

Upon approval, the researcher personally distributed and administered the research instrument. During the data collection, the researcher herself followed the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) Against COVID-19 policies and standards during the national health emergency. The researcher personally explained to the respondents the ethical considerations involved in the study. To observe the ethical standards in research, informed consent forms were given and discussed with the respondents to establish the parameters involved in the process.

After the retrieval of the answered questionnaire, the data gathered were tallied, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted confidentially and accordingly.

Data Analysis

In this study, the *mean* was used to determine the level of instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program.

Meanwhile, in this study, *Pearson's r* was used to determine the significant relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program in Malabog District, Davao City.

Lastly, *multiple regression* was employed to identify which specific indicators of the independent variable, instructional supervision of school heads in the kindergarten program, significantly influence the learning atmosphere of schools in the kindergarten program. This method provided insights into the predictive power of each component of instructional supervision in shaping the overall learning environment in kindergarten settings.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Level of Instructional Leadership of School Heads in the Kindergarten Program

Developing Programs. Explicated in Table 2 are the data on the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of developing programs. The statements describing this indicator are presented as follows: assists teachers in the conduct of learning action cell and in-service training for teachers registered a mean rating of 3.50 or high; provides training and inputs in content pedagogy and assessment gained a mean rating of 3.58 described as high; links with private stakeholders for possible support in instruction and teaching-learning materials recorded a mean rating of 3.54 with descriptive equivalent of high; encourages teachers to use localized teaching-learning materials obtained a mean rating of 3.46 with descriptive equivalent of high; and coordinates with the local government unit for possible support for the school and the learners got a mean rating of 3.58 with descriptive equivalent of high. The five items describing the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of developing programs gathered an overall mean rating of 3.53 with a descriptive equivalent of high.

This figure explained that the provisions of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of developing programs are well practiced and are relatively evident among the school heads of Malabog District, Davao City.

As noted in the table, though all mean ratings are on the scale of high, the lowest among the 5 mean ratings of the indicator, developing programs, is the item on encouraging the teachers to use localized teaching-learning materials. This explains that school heads of Malabog District are not really encouraging teachers to use contextualized teaching materials. It can be said that they only rely on the teaching-learning materials that are given to them by the concerned office, like the division or regional offices. In the evolving landscape of global education, the importance of localization in education cannot be understated. As educational institutions and content providers strive to meet the diverse needs of learners worldwide, adapting educational materials through localization has emerged as a crucial strategy.

The above findings support the statement of Kilag and Sasan (2023) that developing programs as an indicator of instructional leadership in kindergarten typically focuses on developing the teachers to be effective in the discharge of their duties as educators in early childhood

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programs. He further said that successful instructional programs for early childhood education are warranted if the professional development of teachers, including staff, is prioritized. Developing programs involves a continuous process of reflection, learning, and action to further a teacher's knowledge and skills, leading to enhanced teaching practices that positively impact students' learning. Developing programs for teachers aims to improve teachers and their practice by adopting a holistic approach to developing the teacher as a professional practitioner, particularly in early childhood education. It is an ongoing process that supports the continuous development of practice throughout the whole of a teacher's career.

The findings were also congruent with the statement made by Cordingley et al., (2019) that school heads have a significant role in instructional leadership. Some of the activities that school heads can offer are the conduct of in-service training, learning action cell sessions, and providing input on content, pedagogy, and assessment during and after the conduct of classroom observations. Further, they also emphasized that school heads can establish linkages with private entities for possible support in instruction, teaching, and learning material development. In this connection, school heads, as instructional leaders, can also coordinate with the local government units for possible support for the schools and the learners.

Table 2. Instructional Leadership of School Heads in the KindergartenProgram in Terms of Developing Programs

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Assists teachers in the conduct of learning action cell and in-service training for teachers.	3.50	High
2.	Provides training and inputs in content pedagogy and assessment.	3.58	High
3.	Links with private stakeholders for possible support in instruction and teaching-learning materials.	3.54	High
4.	Encourages teachers to use localized teaching-learning materials.	3.46	High
5.	Coordinates with the local government unit for possible support for the school and the learners.	3.58	High
	Overall	**3.53**	**High**

Programs for Instructional Improvements. Elucidated in Table 3 are the data on the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of programs for instructional improvements. The statements describing this indicator are presented as follows: encourages teachers to engage children in learning activities registered a mean rating of 3.67 or high; observes how teachers facilitate learning gained a mean rating of 3.63 described as high; checks how teachers give questions to learners recorded a mean rating of 3.58 with a descriptive equivalent of high; helps teachers in designing instructional activities obtained a mean rating of 3.54 with a descriptive equivalent of high; and promotes the development of reasoning abilities and knowledge in the content of the curriculum yielded a mean rating of 3.50 with a descriptive equivalent rating of high.

The five items describing the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of programs for instructional improvements consolidated an overall mean rating of 3.58 with a descriptive equivalent of high. This figure explained that the provisions of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of programs for instructional improvements are well practiced and are relatively evident among the school heads of Malabog District.

As noted, though all means are on the scale of high, the lowest among the 5 mean ratings of the indicator is on promoting the development of reasoning abilities and knowledge in the content of the curriculum. School heads are not so keen on designing and implementing a curriculum that encourages students to think critically and analytically, while also ensuring they acquire a deep understanding of the subject matter. Promoting the development of reasoning abilities is not frequently manifested by the school heads, as observed by the teachers in the school district.

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The findings on programs for instructional improvement were consistent with the pronouncement of DepED (2020) that school heads are duty-bound to create an environment that supports learning for kindergarten learners. They must encourage and monitor their teachers to engage learners in meaningful activities. Learners on their first day of school are typically timid and reserved. They must be motivated by the teachers to engage and take part in the activities in the class. Through consistent encouragement and the creation of an inclusive learning environment by the teachers and the supervision of the school heads, students become more willing to participate and develop a positive attitude toward learning.

The findings were also aligned with the assertion of Culla (2023) that to promote a quality learning experience for learners, school heads conduct monitoring and classroom observation. The school heads work side by side with teachers in setting goals for the learners, expecting good performance, and often exemplifying it in themselves. During the classroom observation, the principal gives technical assistance, which leads to a higher level of school performance. It enables the principal to get a glimpse of the performance of both teachers and pupils under her jurisdiction. It also asserts the importance of classroom observation in the school head's performance of supervisory functions.

These were also found to be in line with the statement of Karaman and Büyükkıdık (2023) that classroom teaching practices, including questioning, are critical indicators of teacher effectiveness. When questioning, teachers should focus on posing open-ended questions of a consistent quality that allow students time to reflect and respond. To engage students meaningfully, questions should be prepared in advance.

Table 3. Instructional Leadership of School Heads in the Kindergarten Program in Terms of Programs for Instructional Improvements

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Encourages teachers to engage children in learning activities.	3.67	High
2.	Observes how teachers facilitate learning.	3.63	High
3.	Checks how teachers give questions to learners.	3.58	High
4.	Helps teachers in designing instructional activities.	3.54	High
5.	Promotes the development of reasoning abilities and knowledge in the content of the curriculum.	3.50	High
	Overall	**3.58**	**High**

Instructional Supervision. Presented in Table 4 are the data on the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of instructional supervision. The statements describing this indicator are presented as follows: observes classes as scheduled registered a mean rating of 3.54 or high; monitors teachers' performance through assessment results of learners gained a mean rating of 3.58 described as high; documents significant findings in the classroom observations recorded a mean rating of 3.46 with a descriptive equivalent of high; evaluates teachers' performance through teaching learning domains in the IPCR obtained a mean rating of 3.50 with a descriptive equivalent of high; and conducts one-on-one conference with teachers as a form of technical assistance yielded a mean rating of 3.50 with a descriptive equivalent rating of high.

The five items describing the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of instructional supervision gathered an overall mean rating of 3.52 with a descriptive equivalent of high. This figure explained that the provisions of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program of Malabog District in terms of instructional leadership are well practiced and are relatively evident among the school heads as they manage the kindergarten programs in their respective schools in the district. Instructional supervision in a kindergarten program is a vital process that ensures high-quality teaching and learning experiences for young children. It involves a systematic approach to observing, evaluating, and supporting teachers in their classroom practices.
The findings regarding instructional supervision as an indicator of instructional leadership among school heads in the kindergarten program aligned with the assertions made by Fosu-Ayarkwah, et al. (2022) that the supervisory role of school heads in kindergarten teachers is primarily concerned with supervising and managing the efforts of their learning environment to create safe, positive learning environments for all learners, as well as ensuring that no child is left alone or unsupervised by teachers while under their supervision.

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Instructional supervision practice contributes to the creation of a safe atmosphere for overall academic activities by detecting risks that might jeopardize the fulfillment of educational objectives. Instructional supervision of school heads in kindergarten education is a critical aspect of ensuring quality early childhood education. It involves observing, evaluating, and providing feedback to teachers to help them improve their teaching practices. This process is essential for supporting children's learning and development. To ensure quality instructional supervision, school heads conducted classroom observation and monitoring as scheduled, monitored teachers' performance through assessment results of the learners, and documented significant findings in classroom observation for technical assistance purposes.

Moreover, the findings were consistent with the literature of Borag (2022), which emphasized that a fundamental aspect of instructional supervision is the evaluation of teachers' performance. According to this is a continuous, routine, and mandatory exercise in educational settings, usually done by school heads and the teachers themselves. Its relevance to students' learning outcomes and school accountability is enormous and cannot be underestimated. Similarly, it is a well-known fact that a school is only as good as its teachers'. The only way to determine the effectiveness of a teacher is through assessment or evaluation. Evaluating teachers' performance in kindergarten is crucial for ensuring quality education and supporting professional growth. In evaluating, the school heads shall consider the following domains: classroom observation results through the Classroom Observation Tool (COT), students' achievement, professional development, parents' feedback and suggestions, and collaborative evaluation of teachers, peers and school heads.

Table 4. Instructional Leadership of School Heads in the Kindergarten Program in Terms of Instructional Supervision

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Observes classes as scheduled.	3.54	High
2.	Monitors teachers' performance through the assessment results of learners.	3.58	High
3.	Documents significant findings in the classroom observations.	3.46	High
4.	Evaluates teachers' performance through teaching learning domains in the IPCR.	3.50	High
5.	Conducts one-on-one conferences with teachers as a form of technical assistance.	3.50	High
	Overall	**3.52**	**High**

Assessment. Presented in Table 5 are the data on the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of programs for assessment. There are 5 items used to gauge this indicator. The statements describing this indicator are presented as follows: orients the teachers on the principles and contents of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist registered a mean rating of 3.54 or high; supports the teachers in making contextualized assessment materials gained a mean rating of 3.50 described as high; supervises teachers in the conduct of quarterly assessment recorded a mean rating of 3.58 with a descriptive equivalent of high; ensures that provisions of DepED Order No. 8 s. 2015 were observed and followed, obtained a mean rating of 3.67 with a descriptive equivalent of high; and communicates assessment results regularly to students and parents/guardians yielded a mean rating of 3.71 with a descriptive equivalent rating of high.

The five items describing the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in terms of assessment gathered an overall mean rating of 3.60 with a descriptive equivalent of high. This figure explained that the provisions of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program of Malabog District in terms of assessment are well practiced and are relatively evident among the school heads as they manage the kindergarten programs in their respective schools. Provisions for assessment are well implemented. The school heads conducted orientations on the ECCD checklist and assured teachers that the contents of Department Order No. 8 of 2015 of the Department of Education were observed and followed. They also supported teachers in designing contextualized assessment materials, and they constantly communicated the results of assessments to parents.

The findings of the study on assessment corroborated the statement of Glasper (2018) that a school principal needs to be knowledgeable about past and present curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Similarly, the findings also supported the idea of Glatthorn et

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al. (2019) that strong, intentional leadership in curriculum development is a necessity for strong instructional leadership. Other daily initiatives a school principal could take to be an effective curriculum leader include: learning from other school leaders; making time for classroom observations; orienting teachers on the principles and processes of assessment; and creating open dialogues with parents about the results of students' assessments (Adkins-Sharif, 2019).

Further, the findings also highlighted the statement of the Department of Education (DepED) that for assessing the year-end school readiness of kindergarten learners to check on their pre-schooling progress with the end goal of providing them with specific learning interventions. To assess the performance level of all kindergarten pupils, DepEd came up with the School Readiness Year-End Assessment (SReYA). Kindergarten pupils will be assessed across the different developmental domains that include physical health and well-being, motor development, mathematics, language and literacy, sensory perceptual, physical and social environment, character and values development, and socioemotional development. The school heads are expected to orient their teachers on this mode of assessment. This ensures that teachers are well-informed and capable of administering the assessment accurately and consistently. Moreover, the results of SReYA serve as a valuable tool in identifying areas that require intervention and support, allowing school leaders and teachers to enhance the overall learning atmosphere for kindergarten learners.

Table 5. Instructional Leadership of School Heads in the Kindergarten Program in Terms of Assessment

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Orients the teachers on the principles and contents of the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Checklist.	3.54	High
2.	Supports the teachers in making contextualized assessment materials.	3.50	High
3.	Supervises teachers in the conduct of quarterly assessment.	3.58	High
4.	Ensures that provisions of DepED Order No. 8 s. 2015 are observed and followed.	3.67	High
5.	Communicates assessment results regularly to students and parents/guardians.	3.71	High
	Overall	**3.60**	**High**

Summary Data on the Level of Instructional Leadership of the School Heads in the Kindergarten Program

Exhibited in Table 6 are the summary data on the level of instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program. The variable is described through the 4 indicators. As seen in the table, developing programs got a mean rating of 3.53 or high; programs for instructional improvements gained a mean rating of 3.58 or high; instructional supervision recorded a mean rating of 3.52, and assessment obtained a mean rating of 3.60 or high. The four mean ratings of the four indicators describing the instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program in Malabog District, Davao City, gathered an overall mean rating of 3.56 with a descriptive equivalent of high.

Table 6. Summary Data on the Level of Instructional Leadership of School Heads in the Kindergarten Program

No.	Indicators of Instructional Leadership of School Heads in Kindergarten	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Developing Programs	3.53	High
2.	Programs for Instructional Improvements	3.58	High
3.	Instructional Supervision	3.52	High
4.	Assessment	3.60	High
	Overall	**3.56**	**High**

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The statistical figures described that the provisions relating to the instructional leadership of school heads in the kindergarten program were well practiced or always observed by the school heads. As seen in the table, assessment got the highest mean rating among the four indicators, and on the other hand, instructional supervision had the lowest mean rating.

The findings supported the pronouncement of Close et al. (2020) that as school heads, they promote the success of all learners by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture, learning atmosphere, and institutional programs that are conducive to student learning and teachers' professional growth. One of the roles of an effective school head is to create a quality learning atmosphere for the learners. School heads supervise and evaluate teachers to ensure the proper implementation of school programs.

Learning Atmosphere in the Kindergarten Program

Presented in Tables 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 are the data on the level of learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program with the following parameters: school classroom layout, school activities, learning centers, and school interactions and activities.

School-Classroom Lay-out. Presented in Table 7 are the data on the level of learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program in terms of school-classroom layout. There are 5 items used to measure this indicator. The statements describing this indicator are presented as follows: is functional and doesn't require learners to depend on the teacher for everything registered a mean rating of 3.67 described as high; provides ample opportunities for learners to play, feel happy, and secure gained a mean rating of 3.63 described as high; has space for easy and safe movement for the learners recorded a mean rating of 3.63 with a descriptive equivalent of high; matches the age and level of the children, obtained a mean rating of 3.58 with a descriptive equivalent of high; and provides sufficient materials for young children to be joyful and creative yielded a mean rating of 3.67 with a descriptive equivalent rating of high.

Table 7. Learning Atmosphere in the Kindergarten Program in Terms of School-Classroom Lay-out

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Is functional and doesn't require learners to depend on the teacher for everything.	3.67	High
2.	Provides ample opportunities for learners to play, feel happy, and be secure.	3.63	High
3.	Has space for easy and safe movement for the learners.	3.63	High
4.	Matches the age and level of the children.	3.58	High
5.	Provides sufficient materials for young children to be joyful and creative.	3.67	High
	Overall	**3.64**	**High**

As seen in the table, the fourth item on the school-classroom layout, though at a high level, obtained the lowest mean among the five items of the school-classroom layout. This means that the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program in terms of classroom layout consistently meets or slightly exceeds the set targets. Further, it is noted that schools are not particular in designing classroom layout based on the ages of the learners.

The findings of this study about the learning atmosphere of the kindergarten program corroborated the idea of Karhdag (2021) that the physical arrangement of the kindergarten classroom is a vital component in achieving a successful learning atmosphere for young children. Developmentally appropriate programs provide opportunities for children to broaden and deepen their knowledge through interaction with the atmosphere by engaging in play-based experiences while using a variety of different materials and tools that are conducive to successful learning. The difference between a chaotic classroom and an orderly classroom is based in great part on how the teacher prepares the environment. Successful teachers know that the arrangement and management of the early childhood classroom have direct effects on the classroom behaviors children exhibit as they live and work together in the environment with their peers.

In addition, the findings also supported the statement of Lau (2023) that students' learning atmosphere must have rich literacy-based experiences that represent culturally and linguistically diverse contexts. The classroom layout shall provide ample opportunities for

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learners to play, feel happy, and feel secure. It also provides an opportunity for all students to learn about the diverse cultures represented in their classroom and opens the door for parents to become involved in the classroom as they share their culture and language.

School Activities. Shown in Table 8 are the data on the level of learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program in terms of school activities. There are 5 items used to gauge this indicator. The statements describing this indicator are presented as follows: provides opportunities to develop learners' talents and skills (e.g., singing, dancing, acting etc.). gained a mean rating of 3.58 described as high; support physical activities obtained a mean rating of 3.54 or high; designs activities based on individual needs got a mean rating of 3.58 described as high; promotes nationalism in its activities (e.g., Buwan ng Wika Araw ng mga Bayani etc.) yielded a mean rating of 3.79 with a descriptive equivalent of high; and creates activities for the learners to effectively interact with their peers recorded a mean rating of 3.71 or high.

Table 8. Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program in Terms of School Activities

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Provides opportunities to develop learners' talents and skills (e.g., singing, dancing, acting, etc.).	3.58	High
2.	Supports physical activities.	3.54	High
3.	Designs activities based on individual needs.	3.58	High
4.	Promotes nationalism in its activities (e.g., Buwan ng Wika Araw ng mga Bayani etc.).	3.79	High
5.	Creates activities for the learners to effectively interact with their peers.	3.71	High
	Overall	**3.64**	**High**

The five items of the indicator gathered an overall mean of 3.64 with a descriptive interpretation of high. The overall statistical value means that the learning atmosphere of the kindergarten program in terms of school activities in Malabog District consistently meets or slightly exceeds the set target for related school activities in the kindergarten program. This suggests that learners are provided with ample opportunities to participate in meaningful activities that enrich both their academic and social experiences. It also indicates that teachers and school heads are effectively collaborating to design activities that are engaging, developmentally appropriate, and responsive to the needs of young learners. Such consistency reflects a strong commitment to sustaining a vibrant and supportive learning environment in the district.

Further, it can be seen in the table that the item on supports physical activities got the lowest mean among the five items. This somehow means that schools prioritized other activities, like cultural activities, rather than physical activities.

The findings of the study on learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program in terms of school activities validated the idea of Aboud and AlAli (2023) that school heads of elementary schools can do a number of things to help teachers in kindergarten programs design activities that support teaching and learning in the early grades. Perhaps most importantly, school heads can make time and space for kindergarten teachers when they are housed in the same building to plan together and share data on incoming children, and principals can connect with other early learning providers in the community who have served students who will soon be entering elementary school. The school can better design opportunities to develop learners' talent and skills when they are aware of the individual learning needs of each student.

On the other hand, the pronouncement of Alzahrani et al. (2019) was validated by the present findings that children's bodies, minds, emotions, and spirits come to school as a package, all wrapped up in an ever-accumulating set of experiences, relationships, and connections that shape learning. Teachers must act with intentions to make beliefs about the value of children, childhood, family, community, and the learning and teaching process visible in the environment. Activities in the classroom should provide kindergarten children with an opportunity to express their personal opinions and ideas, take on more responsibility, and express themselves creatively. Through the teacher's guidance and facilitation, children are encouraged to take appropriate risks and learn the important social rules of

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working and playing together. A successful kindergarten program actively acknowledges that parents and teachers are partners in a child's development. When the social and emotional needs of the kindergarten child are acknowledged and supported both at home and at school, the child's overall development benefits.

Learning Centers. Elucidated in Table 9 are the data on the level of learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program in terms of learning centers. There are 5 items used to measure this indicator. The statements describing this indicator are presented as follows: collects hands-on learning materials that help young students understand various topics gained a mean rating of 3.67 or high; acquires Math materials such as blocks, counters, dice, rulers and number lines obtained a mean rating of 3.54 described as high; introduces writing activities that act as reinforcement of reading and spelling skills got a mean rating 3.63 or high; provides enough space for children to run and play yielded a mean rating of 3.58 or high; and 5 puts up a playground for kindergarten learners recorded a mean rating of 3.63 or high. The five items describing the learning centers in the kindergarten program in Malabog District gathered an overall mean rating of 3.61 described as high.

The overall statistical value means that the provisions relating to the learning atmosphere of the kindergarten program in Malabog District in terms of learning centers consistently meet or slightly exceed the set target for a learning center in kindergarten.

Table 9. Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program in Terms of Learning Centers

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Collects hands-on learning materials that help young students understand various topics.	3.67	High
2.	Acquires Math materials such as blocks, counters, dice, rulers, and number lines.	3.54	High
3.	Introduces writing activities that act as reinforcement of reading and spelling skills.	3.63	High
4.	Provides enough space for children to run and play.	3.58	High
5.	Puts up a playground for kindergarten learners.	3.63	High
	Overall	**3.61**	**High**

The above findings verified the statement of Scholastic Parents Staff (2020) that a kindergarten classroom needs a collection of hands-on learning materials that help young students understand various topics and develop pre-requisite skills. Books and print materials are imperative in kindergarten when the students are mastering letters and working on their reading skills, and paper and writing utensils support early writing skills. Math materials such as blocks, counters, dice, rulers, and number lines are equally useful, as they allow students to practice their ability to count and measure. To explore science concepts, the classroom might include a terrarium, weather tools, charts, and items from nature, including rocks or leaves. No matter what supplies a teacher collects, the space should give students access to an array of educational tools.

The findings were also found to be consistent with the pronouncement of Scholastic Parents Staff (2020) that the typical kindergarten classroom or learning center is not quiet or calm, but it should have a sense of organization. Favorable arrangements include a learning center with designated areas for activities such as math, reading, and music.

Another review of literature on learning centers stated in the report made by Friendly et al. (2019) was found to be congruent with the present findings, which stated that young children learn by doing and actively engaging with materials, equipment, and people in their learning environment. Creating a physical space that recognizes the developmental needs of learners provides a context in which optimal learning occurs. The choice and organization of classroom materials in the learning atmosphere influence the way in which a kindergarten teacher guides a student's development and sets expectations for student engagement. Well-structured and intentionally designed learning centers foster independence, creativity, and collaboration among learners. As such, the learning atmosphere becomes a critical factor in ensuring that children's developmental milestones are addressed through meaningful and developmentally appropriate experiences.

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School Interactions and Activities. Presented in Table 10 are the data on the level of learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program in terms of school interactions and activities. There are 5 items used to measure this indicator. The statements describing this indicator are presented as follows: designs activities for adjustment to school routines gained a mean rating of 4.00 described as high; promotes interaction with classmates obtained a mean rating of 3.42 or high; encourages participation in large and small group activities Encourages participation in large and small group activities gained a mean rating of 3.38 with a descriptive equivalent of moderate; includes play in the block of times recorded a mean rating of 3.38 or moderate; and holds activities every month (e.g Buwan ng Nutrisyon, Buwan ng Wika, Buwan ng Pagbasa, UN Day etc.) obtained a mean rating of 3.42 or high.

The five items describing the school interactions and activities in the kindergarten program in Malabog District gathered an overall mean rating of 3.52 described as high. The five items describing the school interactions and activities in the kindergarten program in Malabog District gathered an overall mean rating of 3.52 described as high. This indicates that schools in the district generally provide a positive and engaging environment for young learners through varied activities. These regular interactions and structured group activities contribute to children's socio-emotional growth and enhance their readiness for more formal learning experiences.

Table 10. Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program in Terms of School Interactions and Activities

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	Designs activities for adjustment to school routines.	4.00	High
2.	Promotes interaction with classmates.	3.42	High
3.	Encourages participation in large and small group activities.	3.38	Moderate
4.	Includes play in the block of times.	3.38	Moderate
5.	Holds activities every month (e.g Buwan ng Nutrisyon, Buwan ng Wika, Buwan ng Pagbasa, UN Day etc.)	3.42	High
	Overall	**3.52**	**High**

As noted from the data, two items have mean ratings equivalent to moderate. These items are encouraging participation in large and small group activities and the inclusion of play in the block of time in the kindergarten. These practices relative to the learning atmosphere are moderately practiced in the kindergarten program. In totality, school interactions and activities, as one of the indicators of learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program, consistently meet or slightly exceed the set targets for school interactions and activities.

The findings verified the statement of Aboud and AlAli (2023) that school interactions and activities in kindergarten program are various ways and activities that young children engage with their peers, teachers, and the school environment. These interactions and activities play a crucial role in children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. School heads play a pivotal role in shaping the social environment of kindergarten programs. They are responsible for creating a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere where young children can develop essential social skills and learn to interact positively with their peers.

Further, the findings of the recent study validated the statement of Tilbe and Gai (2020) that the quality of teacher-child interactions in classrooms, in terms of emotional, organizational, and instructional support, for instance, has been found to affect children's learning outcomes both in early childhood education and at school interactions. Another factor that seems to affect the development of children's reading skills is the level of exposure to literacy activities in school or at home. Nevertheless, this has not been looked at together with the quality of classroom activities in the same study. Experts in teacher-child interactions in kindergarten seem particularly important for children at risk of failing in schools' standards of performance (Mohammed & Amponsah, 2018).

To synthesize the findings, it is further explained by the literature of Prieur (2022) that in kindergarten, school heads managed to create opportunities and design activities to help learners adjust to school routines. These activities are believed to foster interaction with classmates and promote a sense of belonging. Examples of such activities include observing yearly like Nutrition Month, Buwan ng

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Wika, Buwan ng Pagbasa, and United Nations Day can create opportunities for children to learn about different cultures, participate in hands-on activities, and interact with their peers for more opportunities of learning.

Summary of the Data on Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program

Presented in Table 11 are the data presenting the summary of the learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program. As noted in the table, the second indicator of the variable got the highest mean rating of 3.64, or high, while school interactions and activities obtained the lowest mean rating of 3.52 still within the scale of high.

Table 11. Summary of the Data on Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program

No.	Items	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1.	School Classroom Layout	3.63	High
2.	School Activities	3.64	High
3.	Learning Centers	3.61	High
4.	School Interactions and Activities	3.52	High
	Overall	**3.60**	**High**

The findings said that the practices related to the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program consistently meet or slightly exceed the set targets and description of the best learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program of Malabog District, Division of Davao City. This aligned with the assertion made by Western Governors University (2021) that the learning atmosphere for kindergarten learners should be vibrant and colorful, featuring a desk layout that allows for flexibility when lessons require additional space for movement and physical expression.

Gandini (2018) elaborated in the study that the kindergarten environment fosters complex and rich play. It is a warm and inviting space where children and adults can inquire, learn, and collaboratively construct concepts while acquiring competencies. Children's natural curiosity and inquisitiveness are nurtured in a learning atmosphere that encourages active, explorative play and sustained peer interactions. The kindergarten learning atmosphere, encompassing its physical, social, and organizational characteristics, both indoors and outdoors, plays a crucial role in children's learning and skill acquisition.

Significant Relationship Between Instructional Leadership of School Heads and Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program

Presented in Table 12 are the data on the significant relationship between instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program.

The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to examine the significance of the relationship between two variables. The independent variable in this case is the instructional leadership of school heads, and the dependent variable is the learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program. It was revealed that there was a significant relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads and the dependent variable is the learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program, as evidenced by the computed r-value of (0.922) and a p-value of 0.00, which is significant at the 0.05 level of significance (p-value < 0.05). This very high correlation suggests that the stronger the instructional leadership, the more positive the learning environment becomes. It implies that effective leadership practices by school heads play a crucial role in shaping classroom dynamics and overall school climate, particularly in the early childhood setting.

The value was found to be of high correlation and marked relationship. It is said that the correlation coefficient can range in value from −1 to +1. The larger the absolute value of the coefficient (0.922), the stronger the relationship between the variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads, and the dependent variable is the learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program, was rejected. This strong correlation implies that improvements in instructional leadership are likely to bring about corresponding enhancements in the overall learning atmosphere. The result emphasizes the pivotal role of school heads in shaping a positive, developmentally appropriate environment in early childhood education.

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Table 12. Significant Relationship Between Instructional Leadership of School Heads and Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program

Variables	Computed r Value	p value	Equivalent Decision on Ho
(**X**) Instructional Leadership of School Heads	0.922s	0.00	Positive High Correlation
(**Y**) Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program			Reject Ho

The findings regarding the significant relationship between the variables are supported by the assertion that school heads play a pivotal role in shaping the social environment of kindergarten programs. They are responsible for cultivating a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere where young children can develop essential social skills and learn to interact positively with their peers (Smith & Lee 2021).

Further, the significant relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program is supported by Transformational Leadership Theory of Burns (1978). This theory posits that effective leaders inspire and motivate their teachers to exceed expectations, fostering an environment of collaboration and innovation.

In the context of kindergarten programs, school heads who adopt transformational leadership practices can cultivate a positive learning atmosphere by encouraging teachers to implement creative and engaging instructional strategies to create learning opportunities for the pupils. This approach not only enhances teacher morale but also significantly impacts children's learning experiences. By fostering a culture of innovation and support, transformational school heads inspire teachers to go beyond traditional methods and tailor their instruction to meet the unique needs of young learners. This results in classrooms that are more inclusive, stimulating, and conducive to holistic development. Ultimately, such leadership leads to improved learner outcomes and a stronger foundation for lifelong learning.

Moreover, transformational leaders actively promote collaboration, trust, and a shared vision among the teaching staff, which contributes to a more cohesive and nurturing learning environment. When school heads empower teachers through supportive leadership and professional development, educators are more likely to feel valued and motivated to innovate in their teaching practices. As a result, the classroom atmosphere becomes more dynamic, responsive, and child-centered, key elements in fostering young learners' curiosity, social-emotional growth, and academic readiness.

Domains of Instructional Leadership of School Heads that Significantly Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program

The data on which indicators of instructional leadership of school heads significantly influence the learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten programs are presented in Table 13. Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine which indicators of the independent variables significantly influence the dependent variable. It was noted that all the p-values of the indicators were less than the set significance level. The first indicator of the independent variable, developing programs, was found to be of significant influence on learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program since it generated a significant p-value of (0.03). On the other hand, programs for instructional improvement was also found to be of significant influence on the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program, as evidenced by the obtained p-value of (0.02). Instructional supervision, the third indicator of the independent variable, was also found to be of significant influence to the dependent variable just like the other two mentioned indicators, as proved by the gained p-value of (0.01). Lastly, assessment was also found to be of significant influence on the dependent variable as proved by the p-value of 0.01.

The findings indicate that the indicators of instructional leadership of school heads significantly influenced the learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten programs, as presented in the table. School heads are responsible for cultivating a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere where young children can develop essential social skills and learn to interact positively with their peers (Aboud & AlAli, 2023).

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Furthermore, the significant influence of the indicators of instructional leadership on the learning atmosphere in public elementary schools' kindergarten programs is supported by the Transformational Leadership Theory of Burns (1978). This theory posits that effective leaders inspire and motivate their teachers to exceed expectations, fostering an environment of collaboration and innovation.

In the context of kindergarten programs of public elementary schools of Malabog District, Davao City, school heads who adopt transformational leadership practices can create a positive learning atmosphere by encouraging teachers to implement creative and engaging instructional strategies that provide meaningful learning opportunities for students. This approach not only enhances teacher morale but also significantly impacts children's learning experiences. When school leaders demonstrate a clear vision, offer motivational support, and provide opportunities for professional growth, teachers feel more empowered to experiment with innovative teaching approaches, utilize varied learning materials, and respond to the diverse developmental needs of their pupils. As a result, classrooms become more dynamic, inclusive, and responsive to the holistic growth of children fostering not just cognitive development but also social-emotional and physical well-being. Moreover, a transformational leadership style helps build a strong sense of community and collaboration among educators, making it easier to sustain a nurturing and stimulating environment where young learners thrive. In this way, the leadership practices of school heads serve as a pivotal force in shaping early learning experiences and setting the foundation for lifelong learning and success.

Table 13. Domains of Instructional Leadership of School Heads that Significantly Influence Learning Atmosphere of Public Elementary Schools in the Kindergarten Program

Indicators	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-ratio	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	β_0	3.37	0.44	21.00	0.03
Developing Programs	β_1	0.56	0.94	29.09	0.02
Programs for Instructional Improvement	β_2	0.58	0.47	6.20	0.01
Instructional Supervision	β_3	0.23	0.68	12.07	0.02
Assessment	B_4	0.23	0.68	12.07	0.01

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that the school heads of Malabog District, Division of Davao City, have a high level of instructional leadership in the kindergarten program. In addition, the level of learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program is high in terms of school classroom layout, school activities, learning centers, and school interactions and activities.

As noted, it was found that the instructional leadership of school heads had a significant relationship to the learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program in Malabog District. Further, developing programs, programs for instructional improvement, instructional supervision, and assessment, significantly influenced the learning atmosphere of public elementary schools in the kindergarten program.

The Transformational Leadership Theory of James MacGregor Burns (1978) supports the finding of a significant relationship and significant influence, as this theory emphasizes inspiring and motivating followers to exceed expectations. It emphasizes creating a shared vision, providing intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. School heads as instructional leaders in the kindergarten program need to exhibit charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized considerations to their teachers. School heads following this theory are often seen as visionary, charismatic, and inspirational. They can create a positive and motivating work environment that encourages teachers to reach their full potential.

Further, the results of the study strongly support Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. The significant relationship between the instructional leadership of school heads and the learning atmosphere in the kindergarten program reflects the idea that modeling and guided behavior, key components of Bandura's theory, play a vital role in shaping school environments. As school heads demonstrate

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strong practices in developing programs, instructional improvement, supervision, and assessment, they serve as role models whose behaviors and leadership approaches are observed and internalized by kindergarten teachers. This modeling contributes to the establishment of a positive and engaging learning atmosphere. The findings affirm that when school leaders consistently exhibit effective instructional leadership, it influences the behavior and strategies of teachers, thereby creating a conducive learning environment aligned with the mechanisms of observational learning emphasized by Bandura.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher recommends that school heads of Malabog District should continue to develop their instructional leadership skills by participating in leadership and management training programs that focus on transformational leadership principles and practices to inspire and motivate their teachers effectively, especially in the kindergarten program. They may encourage the development of collaborative programs that involve teachers in the planning and implementation processes to foster a shared vision and commitment to improve the learning atmosphere for the learners.

The researcher further recommends that teachers should actively participate in professional learning communities like the Learning Action Cell (LAC) to share best practices, contextualized learning resources, and effective strategies that contribute to a positive learning atmosphere for kindergarten learners. They may regularly seek feedback from school heads and colleagues to improve instructional practices and enhance the overall learning experience for the learners.

In essence, the DepED officials concerned may promote and support research initiatives that explore effective instructional strategies and learning atmospheres in kindergarten programs. The budget may be allocated to support training in early childhood education. The concerned officials may strengthen the networking opportunities for school heads and teachers to share successful practices and experiences from the different school districts to foster a culture of collaboration and shared learning in the instructional practices.

Lastly, future researchers may conduct longitudinal studies to assess the impact of instructional leadership on the learning atmosphere over time, providing deeper insights into effective practices. Another study may be conducted on the same topics utilizing other indicators and be conducted in highly urbanized communities or school districts.

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