



SUPPORT OF SCHOOL HEADS AND RESEARCH COMPETENCE OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN PANABO CITY DIVISION

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the relationship between support of school heads and research competence of teachers in public elementary schools of Panabo City Division. Also, it investigated the association of the involved variables and the domains of support of school heads that significantly influence research competence of teachers. With the use of probability sampling, 188 public elementary teachers were selected as the respondents. Utilizing the descriptive-correlational survey method, the data collated were analyzed through the use of Mean, Product-Moment correlation and Regression Analysis. Results revealed that there was a high support of school heads and a high research competence of teachers among the respondents. Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between the support of school heads and research competence of teachers. Moreover, all domains of support of school heads, namely, collaboration, challenging, enthusiasm, and encouragement were found to have significantly influence the research competence of teachers. Based on the findings, it was further suggested that higher officials in the Department of Education may identify means on how to strengthen the support of school heads which would boost research competence of teachers. More so, future researchers may further explore the involved variables considering other factors and research methods specifically the qualitative research and mixed-methods research.

KEYWORDS- Support of School Heads, Research Competence, Descriptive Correlational Panabo City Division, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Research competence among teachers is vital for enhancing educational practices and improving student outcomes. It enables teachers to critically analyze educational research, apply effective methods in their classrooms, and contribute to the development of innovative teaching approaches. Support of school heads play a critical role in fostering research competence among teachers by creating an environment that supports professional development and encourages scholarly inquiry. When school leaders actively promote a culture of research and provide resources and opportunities for teachers to enhance their research skills, it significantly boosts their ability to conduct meaningful studies and apply evidence-based practices in the classroom. However, ineffective leadership practices by school heads can hinder the development of research competence among teachers by failing to provide necessary support, resources, and encouragement for scholarly activities.

In Kazakhstan, several issues teachers face while conducting action research. Firstly, teachers indicate they lack action research knowledge; secondly, they lack the necessary skills to conduct research; and finally, they do not have enough support and resources (Nagibova, 2019). Global teachers face several challenges in conducting research, including limited access to resources and professional development opportunities, which can impede their ability to engage in rigorous academic inquiry (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023). Additionally, the demands of teaching responsibilities and lack of institutional support can restrict the time and capacity teachers have for research activities (Smith et al., 2022). These barriers can result in reduced research output and hinder the ability to contribute to advancements in educational practices.

In the Philippines, despite the institutionalization of research in the basic education and the many initiatives and programs of the Department of Education, still the research productivity of teachers is still low. In fact, many studies revealed that teachers in the basic education such as in the junior high school still in the adjustment phase in embracing action research as part of their educational culture. Tingabngab and Binayao (2023) disclosed that teachers experienced the following in conducting their action research namely: struggling during the initial stage, the feeling of rejection, the complexity of demands, constraints with set priorities, difficulties in recognizing relevant theories, inadequate background knowledge on theories, lack of skills in the formulation of objectives, demonstrating low-spiritedness, lack of methods and techniques, falling short of pre-notification process, and inadequate skills in data analysis.

In Mindanao, crowded teaching timetables, heavy teaching workloads, insufficient research training, lack of research skills, lack of financial support and limited time to do research often constitute the primary challenges and concerns faced by teachers and other educators aspiring to undertake research (Ulla, 2018). In Panabo City, the researcher observed that most of the teachers are hesitant in making research. Common concerns of these teachers



are the limited knowledge in the conduct of research and heavy workload that restrained them to be active in research. However, these are purely observations and not yet validated by research.

Apparently, an empirical gap in the study of research competency among teachers, considering their school heads' support, lied in the lack of comprehensive data on how specific leadership behaviors directly impact teachers' research abilities. While existing research highlighted the importance of leadership support in fostering professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023), there was limited empirical evidence exploring which specific leadership support was most effective in enhancing teachers' research competence specifically in Panabo City Division.

Hence, the researcher assessed the research competence of teachers while considering the support provided by their school heads. It also explored the relationships between leadership practices and research competence. The findings would offer crucial insights for policymakers, guiding the creation of policies, programs, and interventions designed to enhance both school heads' support and teachers' research capabilities. The researcher also intended to present these findings at local, national, and international conferences and publish it in a Scopus-indexed journal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The related literature and studies of this study provided inputs about the support of school heads and research competence of teachers. Also, it presented varied studies showcasing the association of the involved variables in this study. The independent variable is support of school heads. It has four indicators namely: collaboration, challenges, enthusiasm, and encouragement (Padua-Castañeda, 2023). Meanwhile, the dependent variable is research competence of teachers. It has four indicators namely: identifying research problems, framing questions and data collection, identifying literature and theoretical knowledge, and analyzing and presenting research data (Comon & Corpuz, 2022).

Supportive principal behaviors are defined through actions such as openness to suggestions, the ability to give and receive criticism, and genuine use of praise. Additionally, supportive principals treated staff members with respect and demonstrated both a professional and a personal interest in the well-being of all staff members. Administrator/supervisor support refers to meeting the needs of employees to increase their performance levels, the supportive activities that will make employees feel that they are a valuable asset and increase their quality of work life and the positive relationship between administrators and employees. The main elements of this type of support are respect, trust and the administrator's desire and efforts to help employees (Okoro, 2022).

Perceived administrative support is employee beliefs about being cared for and valued for their contributions to the organization by their administrators. Administrative support provided to teachers in schools includes professional, personal and environmental support and time, project, educational support and resources. The attitudes and behaviors that constitute administrator/supervisor support consist of appraisal of teachers' efforts and the degree of this appraisal and placing emphasis on teachers' personal and professional development (Ertuk, 2021).

Principal support is conceptualized as having four dimensions as emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal, with the following dimensions: emotional, instrumental, professional and appraisal support. Researchers have conceptualized the dimensions of principal support as emotional support, instrumental support and informational support. Emotional principal support refers to the type of support demonstrated when principals/supervisors accept their employees as they are, value them by showing respect and affection and helping them to cope with conflict, stress and difficulties they encounter. Instrumental support refers to the provision of materials, resources, space, and time needed by teachers, while informational support refers to principals' constructive and ongoing feedback on teachers' work, support for teachers' professional development, and the provision of current and useful information and guidance to teachers regarding effective instructional practices (Dipaola, 2018).

Supportive leaders train employees to deal with issues themselves, as they arise, relying on the manager when necessary but dealing with the problems themselves as much as possible. This requires significant time investment by the leader. Supportive leadership helps to build and maintain effective interpersonal relationships. A manager who is considerate and friendly toward people is more likely to win their friendship and loyalty. The emotional ties that are formed make it easier to gain cooperation and support from people on whom the manager must rely to get the work done. It is more satisfying to work with someone who is friendly, cooperative, and supportive than with someone who is cold and impersonal, or worse, hostile and uncooperative (Udod, Collins, & Jenkins, 2020).

It is very important that principals support teachers in creating a school climate where teachers are valued, where they can work peacefully and comfortably, where their ideas, requests and complaints are considered, where their problems are solved effectively and where their achievements are appreciated. Previous studies in the literature show that principal/supervisor support increases employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, and performance, while decreasing perceptions of organizational cynicism (Ozkara, Taş, & Aydıntan, 2019) and burnout. Therefore, it can be assumed that the support from the principal is effective in ensuring teachers' job satisfaction.

By creating a professional learning community, principals create an environment encouraging mutual cooperation, emotional support, personal growth, which cannot be accomplished alone. These professional learning communities



are identified as professional collaboration to improve student learning. Professional collaboration is provided when teachers and administrators work together, share their knowledge, contribute ideas, and develop plans to reach educational and organizational goals. In practice, collaborative practice is exemplified when school staff members come together on a regular basis in their continuing attempts so that their students can become more successful learners. In this respect, if principals become the “lead teacher and lead learner”, they can move beyond traditional leadership styles to create professional learning communities. The basic goal here is to develop people at school. Teachers must be comfortable to challenge their own and others’ assumptions and beliefs within safe places to learn together at school, (Eyo, Abdul, & Maples, 2023).

Effective schools establish professionally collaborative cultures and argues that attention should shift from focusing on individuals (e.g. merit pay, career ladders etc.) to developing schools as professional learning communities. Furthermore, professional community is an important contributor to instructional improvement and school reform. Teachers who develop professional learning communities do not only enhance their knowledge, but they also have a significant impact on their classroom work. In this regard, Payne (2018) mentioned that collaborative schools can have a positive impact on teachers and pupils. In these schools’ teacher behaviors change and teachers have greater confidence, enhanced beliefs and development of enthusiasm for collaborative working. In these communities this may lead to positive attitudes in school-based activity, observation, feedback, an emphasis on peer support, processes to encourage, extend and structure professional dialogue, and processes for sustaining the practices in their own classroom settings.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the relationship between the support of school heads and research competence of public schools elementary teachers in Panabo City Division. More specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of support of school heads as perceived by public elementary teachers in terms of:
 - 1.1 collaboration;
 - 1.2 challenges;
 - 1.3 enthusiasm; and
 - 1.4 encouragement?
2. What is the level of research competence of public elementary teachers in terms of:
 - 2.1 identifying research problems;
 - 2.2 framing questions and data collection;
 - 2.3 identifying literature and theoretical knowledge; and
 - 2.4 analyzing and presenting research data?
3. Is there a significant relationship between support of school heads and research competence of public elementary teachers?
4. Which domains of support of school heads significantly influence the research competence of public elementary teacher?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research approach, specifically applying the descriptive correlational method. Quantitative research is frequently utilized by social scientists, such as communication researchers, to investigate phenomena impacting individuals. It focuses on the study of people, examining a specific group known as a sample population. By employing scientific inquiry, quantitative research relies on data that are either observed or measured to address questions regarding the sample population. The goal of quantitative research is to produce knowledge and enhance understanding of the social world (Allen, 2017).

Descriptive correlational research is typically employed when a researcher aims to discern the traits of specific groups or explore relationships between various variables. This approach involves examining a single group to understand how two variables relate to each other. The purpose of using a descriptive correlational design is to clarify its significance in investigating the connections between different variables (Brodowicz, 2024).

This study belonged to the quantitative domain, employing numerical data for analysis and interpretation. It utilized a descriptive approach to assess support of school heads and research competence. Additionally, it was categorized as correlational as it investigated the relationship between support of school heads and research competence in public elementary schools within Panabo City Division.

Research Respondents

This study examined 188 public elementary teachers within the Panabo City Division, considering both resources and statistical guidelines when determining the sample size. Using the Slovin Formula with a margin error of .05, the calculation for 355 public school elementary teachers with two (2) years teaching experience was decreased to 188. Van Voorhis and Morgan (2007) as cited by Lakens (2022) suggested that for correlation or regression analyses, a minimum of 50 participants is recommended, with larger samples needed for additional independent variables (IVs). Moreover, the number of participants should surpass the number of predictors by at least 50. For regression models with six or more predictors, a minimum of 10 participants per predictor is advised, though aiming for around 30 participants per variable is preferable to better detect small effect sizes. Consequently, the researcher selected 188 participants exceeding the minimum requirement for a study using regression analysis.



For sample selection, the researcher employed a probability sampling method called cluster random sampling. This technique involved segmenting a large population into clusters and then randomly selecting these clusters to create the sample. Cluster random sampling is often used for managing large populations and sample sizes (Simkus, 2023). In this study, the researcher ensured that each school was equally represented when determining the sample size.

The criteria for selecting participants in this study included choosing elementary teachers with a minimum of 2 years of teaching experience. This duration was assumed to provide them with sufficient insight into the support from school heads and the research competence of teachers. It was important to emphasize that participants had the right to withdraw from the survey at any time if they felt uneasy or reluctant, and their choice to do so was completely respected. This approach highlighted the commitment to safeguarding the well-being and comfort of all participants throughout the research.

Research Instrument

To gather data, this study used a modified survey questionnaire developed for this specific research. The questionnaire was divided into two separate sections to thoroughly address the study's goals: the first section evaluated the support provided by school heads, and the second section focused on assessing research competence.

Support of School Heads

The support of school heads questionnaire was adapted from Padua-Castañeda (2023). The instrument consisted of 20 items. It was composed of four (4) indicators, namely: collaboration (1-5), challenges (1-5), motivation (1-5), and encouragement (1-5). The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .85 suggesting that the items had relatively high internal consistency.

The research competence questionnaire was adapted from Comon and Corpuz (2022). The instrument consisted of 17 items. It had the following indicators, namely: framing questions and data collection (1-5), identifying literature and theoretical knowledge (1-6), and analyzing and presenting research data (1-6). The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .87 suggesting that the items had relatively high internal consistency.

The research tool used in this study was modified to align precisely with the study's objectives and goals. A content validity was ensured in the survey questionnaire by inviting three expert validators who assessed the survey questionnaire. The researcher integrated feedback, recommendations, and insights from the advisor, panel members, and expert reviewers through a thorough iterative process. Also, the tool was subjected to pilot testing by allowing forty (40) public elementary teachers who were not part of the identified respondents to answer the survey. This aimed to attain the reliability of the survey questionnaire. This method was essential for enhancing the instrument's ability to accurately measure the desired constructs.

Data Analysis

For more comprehensive interpretation and analysis of the data, the following statistical tools were utilized. These were used to answer the statement of the problem of this study.

Mean. This was used to measure the level of support of school heads and research competence. It answered the statement of the problem 1 and 2.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. This was utilized to determine the relationships between support of school heads and research competence. It answered the statement of the problem 3.

Regression Analysis. This was employed to determine the significant influence of support of school heads on research competence. It was used to answer the statement of the problem 4.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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 significance of the relationship between support of school heads and research competence of teachers in public elementary schools. The study was conducted in the selected public schools of Panabo City Division. There were one hundred eighty-eight (188) teachers who participated in this study. Descriptive correlational method of research was used in this study utilizing adapted research instruments. The said instruments were validated by the panel of experts and subjected to pilot testing before it was made ready for administration. Mean, Pearson Product Correlation of Coefficient, and Regression Analysis were the statistical tools used in analyzing the data. The hypotheses raised in this study were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The level of support of school heads is high suggesting that they consistently provide valuable assistance to teachers in various areas. This level of support likely contributes to a positive school environment where teachers feel encouraged and motivated to perform their duties effectively. Such strong leadership support is essential in fostering teacher growth, collaboration, and overall school success.



Meanwhile, the level of research competence of teachers is high. The high level of research competence among teachers indicates that they are capable of effectively engaging in research activities, which can enhance their professional development. This competence suggests that teachers are not only able to identify research problems but also proficient in framing research questions, gathering data, and analyzing results. Such a high level of research competence is crucial for fostering an evidence-based approach to teaching and improving educational practices within the school.

It was found out that there is a significant relationship between support of school heads and research competence of teachers. Also, all domains of support of school heads are linked with the research competence of teachers. The findings revealed a significant relationship between the support of school heads and the research competence of teachers. Each domain of support, collaboration, challenging, enthusiasm, and encouragement, was positively associated with teachers' ability to conduct research. This indicates that school heads play a crucial role in enhancing teachers' research competence through comprehensive and consistent support.

Also, all domains of support of school heads significantly influence the research competence of teachers. This highlights the important role that leadership plays in fostering a research-driven environment. It suggests that when school heads provide consistent support in areas like collaboration, enthusiasm, and encouragement, teachers' research competencies are enhanced. Moreover, each domain of support—whether it is collaboration, enthusiasm, challenging, or encouragement—positively influences the development of teachers' research skills, further reinforcing the need for strong leadership in educational settings.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were offered:

The level of support of school heads means that it is oftentimes evident. Notably, enthusiasm and encouragement are oftentimes evident while collaboration and challenging are occasionally evident.

Meanwhile, the level of research competence of teachers is high. Specifically, identifying research problem and framing questions and data collection are oftentimes evident. On the other hand, identifying literature and theoretical knowledge and analyzing and presenting data are occasionally evident.

Based on the findings, support of school heads and research competence are related. All domains of support of school heads are linked and significantly the research competence of teachers. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Furthermore, support of school heads significantly influenced the research competence. All domains of support of school heads significantly influenced the research competence. Of which, encourage is the domain of support of school heads that has greater impact to research competence of teachers which leads to the rejection of the second null hypothesis.

The significant and positive correlation between the support of school heads and the research competence of teachers supports the principles established in the Organizational Support Theory by Eisenberger and colleagues (1986). This theory suggested that when teachers perceive strong support from their school heads, such as recognition, resources, and professional development opportunities, they feel more valued and motivated to contribute to organizational goals, including research competence. This perceived support fosters a sense of obligation and enhances their commitment, leading to increased effort and motivation to engage in and improve their research skills. Consequently, school heads' active involvement in providing resources and encouragement plays a pivotal role in enhancing teachers' research competence. Zhou et al. (2019) claimed that when school organizational support offers teachers with effective aid in their educational research efforts, involvement will increase dramatically.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were offered based on the conclusions of the study:

Based on the findings, DepEd officials may consider enhancing the support provided by school heads to foster teachers' research competence. Training and professional development programs may be introduced to equip school heads with the skills necessary to provide more consistent and comprehensive support in areas such as collaboration and challenging teachers to engage with research. Additionally, officials may encourage school heads to create a more research-friendly environment by allocating time and resources for teachers to enhance their skills in literature review, data analysis, and theoretical knowledge. Encouraging partnerships and networking with external research institutions or universities could also promote further development in these areas. By prioritizing these aspects, DepEd may enhance the overall research capacity of teachers, ultimately improving the quality of educational practices.

Moreover, school heads may increase their involvement in fostering teachers' research competence by providing more consistent and proactive support in all areas of research development. Specifically, they may enhance collaboration by facilitating regular meetings, workshops, or research communities where teachers may share insights and challenges related to research. School heads may also challenge teachers to deepen their understanding and skills in areas such as literature review, data analysis, and theoretical application by offering targeted resources, mentoring, or professional development opportunities. Encouraging a culture of inquiry and offering time or



incentives for teachers to focus on these aspects will help strengthen their overall research competence and improve the quality of educational practices within the school.

Furthermore, teachers may actively seek to further develop their research competencies, particularly in areas such as identifying literature, theoretical knowledge, and data analysis and presentation, where opportunities for growth were identified. Teachers may initiate or participate in professional development activities that focus on these specific skills, such as workshops or collaborative research groups within the school. Furthermore, teachers may enhance their research outcomes by leveraging the support and encouragement provided by school heads, actively engaging in collaborative projects with colleagues, and seeking guidance or mentorship on complex research tasks. Strengthening these areas will contribute not only to teachers' professional growth but also to improving the overall research culture within the school.

Lastly, future researchers may explore in greater detail the specific types of support that most effectively enhance teachers' research competencies, particularly in the areas where growth is needed, such as identifying literature, theoretical knowledge, and data analysis. It would be valuable to conduct longitudinal studies that track the progression of teachers' research skills over time in relation to varying levels of support from school heads. Additionally, future studies may investigate the impact of different leadership styles, not just in terms of enthusiasm and encouragement, but also in fostering a collaborative and challenging environment for research, to understand how these factors contribute to teacher development. Expanding the scope of research to include diverse educational settings could also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between school leadership and teachers' research competencies.

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