Exploring the Impact of Organizational Culture among School Heads in Public Elementary School: A Phenomenological Study of Values, Beliefs, and Practices in Promoting Learning Excellence

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the impact of organizational culture on school heads' values, beliefs, and practices in promoting learning excellence in Sta. Ana District, Davao City Division. Seven school heads were sampled, and thematic content analysis revealed key themes: effective communication and trust, collaborative leadership and inclusivity in decision-making, fostering positive relationships and inclusive practices, and promoting visionary leadership and student-centeredness. These findings provide insights into fostering a conducive organizational culture for learning excellence. These findings suggest that school heads should prioritize staff communication and trust activities. This could involve regular communication, team-building, and conflict resolution training to foster a healthy and collaborative workplace. Public elementary schools can create a healthy culture that promotes learning excellence and student and staff success by following these suggestions.

Keywords: Organizational culture, values, beliefs, practices

INTRODUCTION

The impact that organizational culture has on the beliefs, values, and practices of school heads is a crucial yet understudied aspect of the complex field of educational leadership. The leadership ethos within an institution is profoundly influenced by the organizational culture of the school, which consists of its shared beliefs, values, and practices. Moreover, school heads, as the primary guardians of educational vision and direction, function within this cultural context, exerting both influence and being influenced by its intricacies. A comprehensive perception of the interdependent link that exists between organizational culture and the fundamental components of educational leadership—namely, the beliefs, values, and practices of heads of school—is crucial in order to unveil the mechanisms that propel effective leadership and learning excellence in education.

In Turkey, Turan and Bektas (2019) conducted studies on the association between leadership practices of school heads and school culture. There were positive and substantial connections observed between school culture scores and primary education teacher leadership practices. The study recommended that school heads use school culture to influence and guide others, as well as to build employee coordination. School heads should be more than just representatives of school bureaucracy; they should be cultural and moral advisers who pioneer the construction and development of core school ideals.

In the interim, a study was undertaken by Dewi et al., (2021) to examine the impact of organizational culture

and the predominant leadership style on the quality of educators in Indonesia. According to the findings of the study, organizational culture would have a significant impact on teacher performance, and there was also a positive relationship between organizational culture and the leadership approach of the school head.

Meanwhile, in the Philippine context, Jabonillo (2022) examined the effects of school culture on leadership and school effectiveness in the Bohol division. A descriptive survey questionnaire and causal research approach were used to measure school culture, leadership practices, and school effectiveness in the quantitative study. School leadership effectiveness is not strongly associated to school practices, according to results. This implies that school culture and school leadership practices have no discernible impact on school effectiveness. It also means that school culture and leadership do not directly affect school effectiveness.

Lastly, Barro and Cuevas (2022) investigated which school head organizational culture dimension strongly affects teacher work engagement in Matanao, Davao del Sur. Analysis shows a high level of organizational culture of school heads and teacher work engagement. In addition, the study showed that school leaders' organizational culture affects teachers' work engagement.

This research endeavors to shed light on how organizational culture shapes the values, beliefs, and practices in promoting learning excellence of school heads. As the researchers embark on this research project, the study hopes to provide significant insights to educational leaders, politicians, and scholars. The study's goal is to lay the groundwork for informed decision-making, targeted leadership development, and the development of positive organizational cultures that promote learning excellence by unraveling the complex connections between organizational culture and school leaders' beliefs, values, and practices. Therefore, it is crucial to undertake this investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study aimed to explore how organizational culture influences school heads' values, beliefs, and practices in promoting learning excellence. The literature review focused on organizational culture and school heads' values, beliefs, and practices, organized by dimensions of organizational culture in public elementary schools.

Organizational Culture

Bungin (2022) defines organizational culture as essentially a value system that has been ingrained by an organization into long-standing practices, routines, and the like. An organization has developed an organizational culture when its members consistently observe written and unwritten rules, conduct ceremonies in accordance with the established value system, and so forth. Simply put, organizational culture is manifested through the manner in which employees conduct themselves when carrying out their assigned responsibilities.

Moreover, according to Schein (2019), organizational culture can be described as a set of fundamental assumptions that are shared by all members of the group and have been acquired as the group resolves challenges related to external integration and adaptation and internal harmony. These assumptions have proven to be effective and are therefore imparted to new members as the proper framework for perceiving, thinking, and feeling regarding those challenges. Organizational culture establishes a unifying force within an organization's internal social system, shapes processes for innovation, directs behavior toward goal attainment, cultivates a sense of identity, adjusts to environmental conditions, and addresses learning and change, among numerous other facets (Hofstede, 2023).

As stated by Denison et al., (2019), an assessment of organizational culture can reveal opportunities to

engage and empower individuals, facilitate coordinated efforts, and encourage conduct that aligns with core values. This instills a distinct sense of direction and purpose, which is emblematic of the significance of culture and its influence on the efficacy of an organization. Academic outcomes are impacted by social processes that occur within the school, as stated by Hopson et al., (2019). Consequently, the extent to which organizational culture supports school effectiveness is contingent upon the values it espouses.

According to this viewpoint, school leadership is not only a job of the school head, but also a desire to achieve a common purpose in collaboration with stakeholders. School culture and leadership can also be viewed as nested processes. Even if school culture is based on the history and deep values of the school community, the leader's core function contributes to its replacement and renovation. This part of the interaction between school culture and leadership is linked to influencing the culture in a favorable or negative way (Deal & Peterson, 2019).

An effective organization is characterized by its members' adherence to a positive organizational culture and conduct, both of which are conducive to the successful attainment of the collective objectives established by the organization. One perception that undermines the attainment of organizational objectives is that the conduct and demeanor of individuals who fall short of expectations will influence the workplace. Such an opinion will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the efficacy of educators (Supardi, 2019).

Learning Organization Theory

According to Peter Senge (1990) groundbreaking Learning Organization Theory, organizations are living, breathing things that can change, adapt, and learn. This theory's fundamental tenets include system thinking, shared vision, mental models, team learning, and personal mastery. These ideas can be used to education to create a collaborative culture among teachers, a vision for academic success, and a dedication to ongoing professional growth.

A common goal of academic achievement is the foundation of any learning organization in the educational sector. As they articulate and spread this vision, school leaders play a critical role in uniting the entire educational community under shared objectives. School leaders can provide the groundwork for a learning organization by encouraging a shared commitment to high standards and ongoing improvement.

Learning Organization Theory emphasizes personal mastery, encouraging individuals to continually enhance their skills and expertise. In an educational setting, school leaders can support personal mastery by investing in professional development opportunities, recognizing and celebrating individual achievements, and promoting a culture that values lifelong learning. Educators who feel empowered to continually improve their craft contribute significantly to the overall learning environment.

Learning Organization Theory provides a valuable framework for school leaders to cultivate environments that promote learning excellence in education. By embracing shared vision, collaborative learning, personal mastery, and system thinking, educational institutions can transcend traditional paradigms and adapt to the evolving needs of students and society. Through the lens of Learning Organization Theory, schools can become dynamic hubs of continuous improvement, innovation, and, ultimately, learning excellence.

The conceptual framework of this study is based on the concept that organizational culture of school heads is tantamount to successful learning excellence. Having established the organizational culture to situationally aware teams, and communicating with clarity and regularity, academic leaders can relax in the knowledge that they are not expected to be perfect. By committing to perceived leadership best practices, academic leaders will emerge from the crisis to rebuild, with their credibility and brand untarnished and perhaps even enhanced. As with any qualitative research study, the goal of this study is to inform, support, and improve. Organizing the themes on the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights of school heads

will determine how the organizational culture of school heads impact the values, beliefs, and practices in promoting learning excellence.

Fig 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODS

This study utilized a qualitative design to document the experiences of school heads on the impact of organizational culture on their values, beliefs, and practices in promoting learning excellence. In the context of the study, I identify phenomenological methodology as the best means for this type of study. This study requires seven (7) school administrators from the public elementary schools in Sta. Ana District of Davao City to make up the study sample population. Ethical practice was observed by the researcher during the conduct of the study. In the data gathering process, the researcher conformed to the University's protocol by accomplishing the standard forms prior to the conduct of the study. The aim of this study was to establish a structure for evaluating school heads' paradigm shifts in order to determine the impact of organizational culture on their values, beliefs, and practices in promoting learning excellence. Then, the thematic data analysis was used in this project to recognize trends of interest in the data. Moreover, triangulation was also used as a method used to verify claims or information gathered during the In-depth Interview for this article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the participants' responses to each question, themes were drawn out. The following was a presentation and discussion of the lived experiences of school heads in public elementary schools regarding the dominant values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the organizational culture within their leadership roles. Followed by the discussion of the shared values and beliefs among public elementary school heads influence their lived experiences in decision-making processes aimed at promoting learning excellence in public schools; then, to discuss the lived experiences of public elementary school heads that can be identified as effective strategies to foster a positive and conducive organizational culture that promotes learning excellence. Lastly, the lived experiences of public elementary school heads in fostering a conducive organizational culture and in promoting learning excellence are worth sharing.

Based on the results of the thematic analysis of the responses of the school heads, it was found that on the lived experiences of school heads in public elementary schools regarding the dominant values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the organizational culture within their leadership roles, two (2) themes were formulated namely: (1) effective communication, and (trust and collaboration.
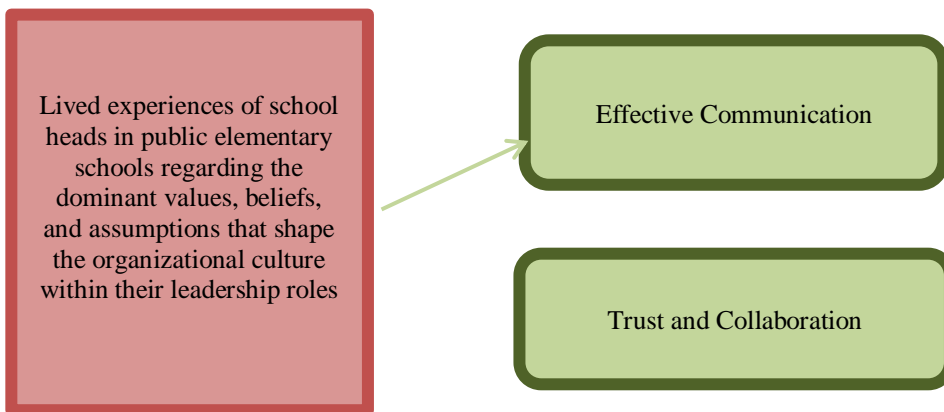

Fig 2: Lived experiences of school heads in public elementary schools regarding the dominant values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the organizational culture within their leadership roles

On the shared values and beliefs among public elementary school heads influence their lived experiences in decision-making processes aimed at promoting learning excellence in public schools showed two (2) major themes namely: (1) promotion of collaborative leadership, and (2) Equality and Inclusivity.
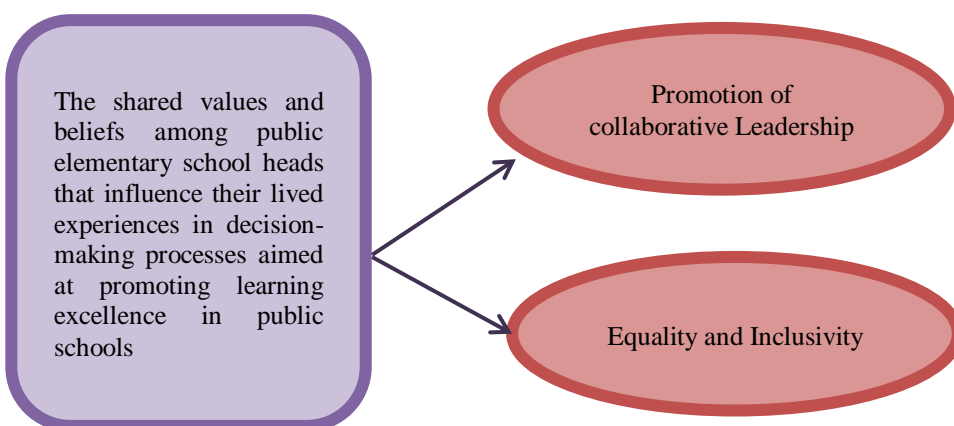

Figure 3: The shared values and beliefs among public elementary school heads that influence their lived experiences in decision- making processes aimed at promoting learning excellence in public schools

On the lived experiences of public elementary school heads that can be identified as effective strategies to foster a positive and conducive organizational culture that promotes learning excellence two (2) themes were also formulated namely: (1) Cultivating Positive Relationships, and (2) inclusive practices.
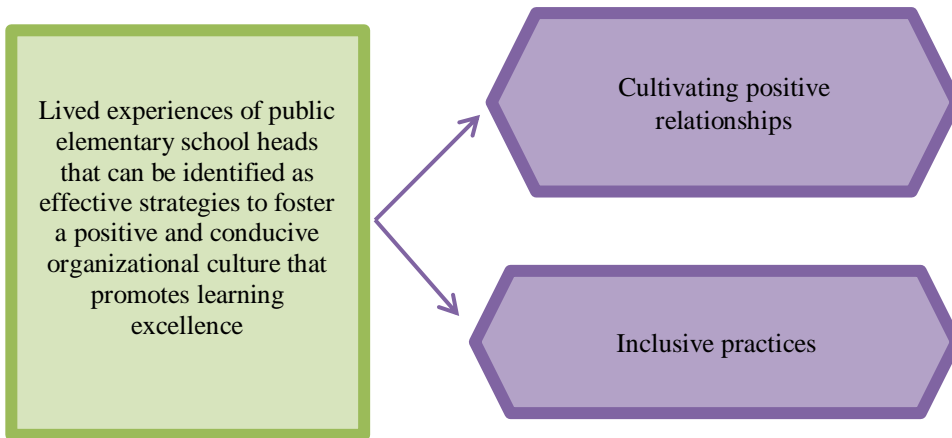

Fig 4: Lived experiences of public elementary school heads that can be identified as effective strategies to foster a positive and conducive organizational culture that promotes learning excellence

Lastly, on the lived experiences of public elementary school heads in fostering a conducive organizational culture and in promoting learning excellence are worth sharing two themes were presented: (1) Visionary leadership, and (2) Promoting student centeredness.
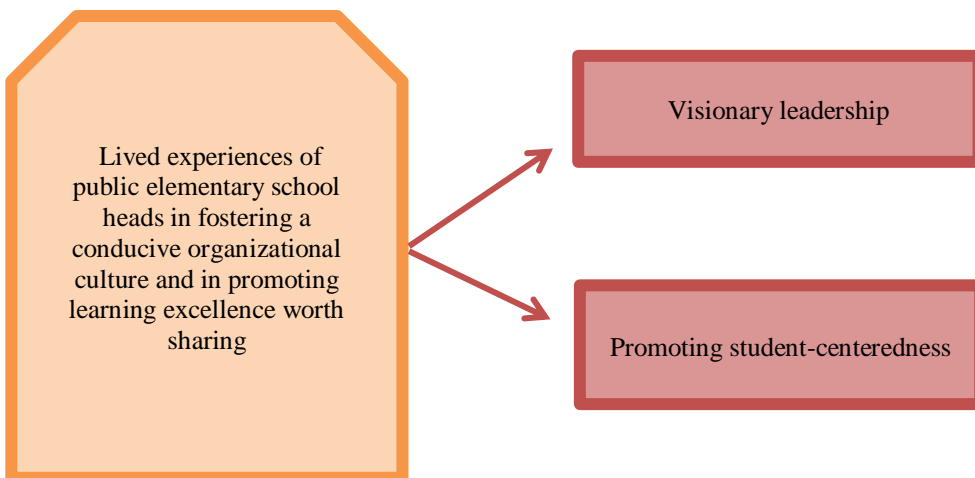

Fig 5. Lived experiences of public elementary school heads in fostering a conducive organizational culture and in promoting learning excellence worth sharing

On the lived experiences of school heads in public elementary schools regarding the dominant values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the organizational culture within their leadership roles School heads in public elementary schools have recently experienced the impact of effective communication on their organizational culture. Participants noted that poor communication hinders knowledge dissemination for school and workplace culture improvement. The following findings support Marion and Gonzales (2019), who stated that every organization relies on communication. Researchers say managers must first explain goals to personnel. An educator's internal communication is as important as their public communication. School administrators must follow local and national Department of Education rules. The Department of Education ensures accrediting agencies implement requirements. Communication and communication attempts develop and reflect educational needs (Gilbert, 2018).

Moreover, trust and collaboration were the following theme on lived experiences of school heads in public elementary schools regarding the dominant values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the organizational culture within their leadership roles. Organizational culture is shaped by trust and collaboration. Trust offers a bridge for efficient communication. Participants have said that developing trust and collaborating with others is tough because some have various ideas and others prefer working alone. Further, the results supported the premise that trust influences culture. However, leadership styles also build trust. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2019) found that distributed leadership encouraged shared decision-making, which increased stakeholder trust and "rippling" back to the school head-building staff trust. The school head's interaction with students, community members, and learners indirectly made teachers trust him.

On the shared values and beliefs among public elementary school heads influence their lived experiences in decision-making processes aimed at promoting learning excellence in public schools. Promoting collaborative leadership affects members' shared experience. Participants said school heads can unite stakeholders, increase communication, and allow others to participate in decision-making. This allows school directors to use the knowledge and experience of educators, students, parents, and community members to solve problems, implement new ideas, and encourage continuous improvement. This also means that collaborative leadership that incorporates stakeholder input affects decision-making to promote excellence. Thus, collaborative leadership creates a climate of trust, shared decision-making, and shared responsibilities where corporate subordinates work together. We recommend collaborative leadership to increase educational output. In addition, leadership styles in educational organizations help members accept and grasp problem identification, decision making, and implementation when their contribution suits the organization's condition (Arendale, 2018).

Furthermore, equality and inclusivity were the second focus on how public elementary school leaders' shared values and beliefs affect their decision-making processes to promote learning excellence. Participants said equality and diversity affected their decisions. This characteristic also directly affects decision-makers who respect everyone's input on learning excellence. Participants stressed the need of inclusivity in workplace culture for peace. Moreover, inclusive education systems improve learning by hiring experienced teachers, fairly supporting poor schools financially, and offering multicultural and bilingual education (UNESCO, 2020). Teachers and administrators cannot do this alone. Training programs must lead this educational shift.

On the lived experiences of public elementary school heads that can be identified as effective strategies to foster a positive and conducive organizational culture that promotes learning excellence A positive company culture that fosters learning excellence can be achieved by cultivating pleasant relationships. Since the participants are creating a positive and conducive environment, they believe that strong and healthy stakeholder communication is the best way to promote peace and harmony and boost employee morale and satisfaction. Employees are more engaged, motivated, and devoted when they feel valued, respected, and supported. This boosts productivity, efficiency, and innovation. Trust amongst stakeholders is one of the biggest benefits of positive school partnerships. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents work better, communicate openly, and share ideas when they trust one other. Trust creates a supportive environment where students feel valued, respected, and empowered to achieve school goals (Bryk & Schneider, 2022).

The second theme based on participant remarks was inclusive practices, which were determined to be successful ways for fostering a healthy workplace culture that supports learning excellence. Inclusive practices help create a positive workplace culture by making sure everyone, regardless of background, identity, or ability, feels valued, respected, and empowered. Promoting inclusion and diversity goes beyond obeying laws; it creates an environment where employees can be themselves and participate fully. Inclusive methods promote school diversity and equity. By accepting and valuing the different backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints of students, teachers, and staff, schools create an inclusive atmosphere (Banks

& Banks, 2020).

Lastly, on the lived experiences of public elementary school heads in fostering a conducive organizational culture and in promoting learning excellence are worth sharing. Visionary leadership fosters a positive business culture by inspiring and guiding employees. Visionary leaders emphasize long-term success and influence over short-term goals. Effectively communicating this vision to team members offers them purpose and meaning in their work, which motivates collaboration to achieve goals. Visionary school leadership inspires and guides the school community's values, goals, and direction. Visionary leaders encourage people to share their vision and motivate their teams to succeed. Visionary leadership is crucial to school culture because it creates a compelling future vision. Visionary leaders inspire stakeholders by painting a vivid picture of the institution, setting aspirational goals, and challenging the status quo. (Fullan 2019).

Student-centeredness was the second theme on public elementary school heads' lived experiences in establishing a suitable organizational culture and developing learning excellence worth sharing. Learner-centeredness is essential to creating a culture that prioritizes learning, development, and progress. A learner-centered approach illustrates that an organization values staff personal and professional development, which promotes performance and engagement for students and staff. Student-centeredness in schools prioritizes students' needs, interests, and voices in teaching, learning, and decision-making. By putting students first, schools foster empowerment, engagement, and achievement. Promote student-centeredness in school culture to empower student voice and agency. Student-centered institutions let students make decisions, express their opinions, and shape their learning (Freire, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The thematic analysis of public elementary school heads' comments has important implications for organizational culture and learning excellence. First, school leaders must prioritize communication and trust-building. This improves teamwork and decision-making, boosting company culture. Second, communicating common principles like collaborative leadership, egalitarianism, and inclusivity helps improve learning excellence decision-making. Creating a healthy learning environment requires methods like positive interactions and inclusive behaviors. Finally, visionary leadership and student-centered methods require innovative leadership and educational practices to improve continuously. These findings emphasize the importance of organizational culture in educational performance and argue for specific measures to promote success in public primary schools.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future researchers should delve into enhancing effective communication and trust-building among school heads in public elementary schools. There's a need to investigate collaborative leadership and equality/inclusivity in decision-making processes. Research should focus on innovative strategies for cultivating positive relationships and implementing inclusive practices. The exploration of visionary leadership and student-centered approaches is crucial. Addressing these areas will deepen our understanding of organizational culture's influence on school leadership and practices, aiding in the development of effective strategies for educational improvement.

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