

School Heads' Management Practices and Their Influence on School Organizational Climate: A Qualitative Study among Thai Teachers in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Despite extensive studies on educational leadership and organizational climate, limited qualitative research has explored Thai teachers' lived experiences of school heads' management practices. This study explored Thai teachers' lived experiences and perceptions regarding school heads' management practices and their influence on school organizational climate. Guided by Henri Fayol's management principles and Kurt Lewin's organizational climate theory, the study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to deepen understanding of teachers' workplace experiences in Thai public schools. Fifteen Thai teachers from selected public schools in Thailand participated in the study through purposive sampling. Data were collected using semi-structured face-to-face and online interviews conducted during the 2026 academic year. The gathered data were analyzed through thematic analysis.

The findings revealed four major themes: effective communication strengthens organizational climate; participative leadership boosts teacher engagement; administrative support promotes positive workplace relationships; and inconsistent leadership negatively affects school climate. Participants emphasized that transparent communication, collaborative decision-making, and supportive leadership practices fostered trust, motivation, teamwork, and positive organizational relationships. Conversely, inconsistent policy implementation and unclear communication negatively influenced teacher morale and workplace collaboration.

The study concluded that school heads' management practices significantly influence the organizational climate of schools as perceived by Thai teachers. Effective leadership practices foster supportive, collaborative educational environments, whereas ineffective management practices can weaken organizational relationships and teacher engagement. The findings highlight the importance of strengthening leadership competencies, communication practices, and organizational support systems among school heads to improve school climate and institutional effectiveness in Thailand.

Keywords: school leadership, management practices, organizational climate, Thai teachers, phenomenology, educational leadership, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Effective leadership and management practices are essential for educational institutions to achieve organizational goals and maintain institutional effectiveness. School heads play a pivotal role in shaping the educational environment by planning, organizing, supervising, and managing school operations. Their leadership directly influences teachers' professional experiences, workplace relationships, and instructional performance. As educational systems adapt to globalization, technological advancements, curriculum reforms, and post-pandemic recovery, the responsibilities of school leaders have become increasingly complex. School administrators are now expected to oversee administrative functions, foster collaborative learning environments, promote teacher development, and maintain institutional stability in response to evolving educational demands (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Leadership effectiveness is a critical determinant of school performance and teacher engagement. Effective school leaders establish clear goals, foster collaboration, and maintain supportive relationships with teachers, thereby enhancing institutional performance and workplace environments. Practices such as participative decision-making, transparent communication, instructional supervision, and supportive administration positively impact teacher motivation, professional satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Rahman et al., 2021). In contrast, ineffective leadership can result in communication barriers, workplace conflict, reduced morale, increased stress, and limited collaboration among teachers, ultimately undermining organizational performance (Al-Mutairi, 2022).

In addition to leadership effectiveness, organizational climate is vital for promoting teacher well-being and educational success. Organizational climate encompasses teachers' collective perceptions of their workplace environment, including communication systems, leadership support, workplace relationships, and collaboration among school personnel (Hoy & Miskel, 2021). A positive organizational climate significantly enhances teacher morale, productivity, motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Schools with healthy organizational climates often exhibit stronger collegial relationships, higher teacher retention, and improved student outcomes (Aldridge & McChesney, 2021). Moreover, positive workplace environments foster innovation, professional collaboration, and emotional well-being among teachers, which are essential for sustaining educational quality and institutional effectiveness.

In Thailand, school heads are expected to demonstrate effective leadership competencies and foster collaborative, supportive educational environments. School administrators supervise teachers, implement educational policies, manage institutional resources, and ensure the efficient operation of schools. The Thai educational system prioritizes professional collaboration, organizational hierarchy, and respect for institutional authority. Teachers' perceptions of organizational climate may vary based on school heads' communication styles, leadership approaches, decision-making processes, and interpersonal relationships. Additionally, cultural values such as collectivism, workplace harmony, and respect for authority significantly shape leadership dynamics and organizational interactions in Thai schools (Srichaiyapong, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic further transformed educational leadership and school-level interactions. Educational leaders faced increased responsibilities in managing remote instruction, teacher workload, emotional well-being, and institutional adaptation. During periods of disruption, teachers increasingly valued school leaders who demonstrated flexibility, empathy, emotional support, and effective communication. Research conducted during and after the pandemic suggests that adaptive leadership practices became essential in maintaining positive school climates and sustaining teacher motivation amidst uncertainty (Martinez & Cruz, 2023).

Although there is a substantial body of literature on educational leadership and organizational climate, most prior studies have utilized quantitative approaches that primarily examine statistical relationships between leadership styles and teacher performance. Few qualitative studies have investigated Thai teachers' lived experiences and perceptions regarding school heads' management practices and their influence on school organizational climate. As a result, literature offers only limited insight into how teachers interpret leadership behaviors, workplace dynamics, and organizational experiences in educational settings. Therefore, qualitative inquiry is necessary to gain deeper insights into teachers' perspectives and workplace realities within Thai schools (Charoensuk & Intaraprasert, 2021; Santos & De Guzman, 2022).

This study aimed to explore Thai teachers' lived experiences and perceptions regarding school heads' management practices and their influence on school organizational climate. Specifically, the study sought to understand teachers' experiences with leadership approaches, communication patterns, administrative support, workplace relationships, and organizational challenges in their schools. By examining these experiences, the findings may inform improvements in school leadership practices, strengthen organizational climate, and guide educational management and policy development in Thailand.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the management principles of Henri Fayol and the organizational climate theory of Kurt Lewin, which together establish a comprehensive theoretical framework for analyzing the influence of

school heads' management practices on school organizational climate. These foundational theories facilitate a systematic examination of leadership behaviors, management processes, and workplace dynamics within educational institutions. By applying these perspectives, the study sought to elucidate how school leaders' management approaches shape teachers' workplace experiences, organizational relationships, and perceptions of the school climate (Fayol, 1949; Lewin, 1951).

Henri Fayol's Management Principles

Henri Fayol's management principles articulate the core managerial functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling, which are fundamental to achieving organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Fayol, 1949). According to Fayol, the effective execution of these functions fosters institutional order, discipline, clear communication, and organizational stability. Within educational institutions, school heads operate these managerial functions through strategic planning, teacher supervision, policy implementation, resource allocation, and instructional leadership. The effective enactment of these practices enables school leaders to establish robust organizational structures, enhance communication, and maintain institutional effectiveness. In this study, Fayol's theoretical framework is instrumental in analyzing how school heads' managerial practices influence teachers' workplace experiences and perceptions of the organizational climate (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Kurt Lewin's Organizational Climate Theory

Kurt Lewin's organizational climate theory posits that leadership behavior significantly influences workplace dynamics, employee relationships, morale, and the overall organizational atmosphere (Lewin, 1951). Lewin's framework underscores the direct impact of leadership styles on group behavior, workplace experiences, and employee productivity. In educational institutions, the leadership approaches adopted by school heads shape teachers' perceptions of fairness, collaboration, support, inclusion, and professionalism. Participative and supportive leadership styles are often associated with the development of positive organizational climates, whereas authoritarian leadership approaches may contribute to dissatisfaction, workplace tension, and diminished organizational commitment (Hoy & Miskel, 2021). Consequently, Lewin's theory provides a critical foundation for this study by elucidating the mechanisms through which school heads' leadership practices affect teachers' perceptions of organizational climate and workplace relationships (Bass & Riggio, 2021).

Review Of Related Literature

Educational Leadership and School Effectiveness

Educational leadership is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing school effectiveness, teacher motivation, and organizational performance. Effective school leaders establish clear goals, foster collaboration, and maintain supportive relationships with teachers, thereby contributing to productive educational environments and stronger institutional outcomes. Leadership effectiveness has been closely associated with teachers' sense of belonging, professional satisfaction, and commitment to organizational objectives. School heads who demonstrate effective management and leadership practices positively influence instructional quality and institutional productivity, creating environments that support professional growth and collaborative engagement among teachers (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Research further suggests that leadership approaches that emphasize participation, communication, and support significantly enhance teachers' workplace experiences. Participative leadership practices, such as involving teachers in decision-making and encouraging open communication, contribute positively to teacher collaboration, morale, and workplace satisfaction. Teachers tend to perceive school heads more favorably when administrators demonstrate transparency, inclusivity, and responsiveness in managing school affairs. Likewise, supportive leadership behaviors, including guidance, recognition, and emotional support, have been linked to reduced workplace stress and increased teacher motivation, ultimately fostering healthier organizational environments (Rahman et al., 2021; Al-Mutairi, 2022).

Moreover, transformational leadership has been consistently associated with positive school climate and stronger teacher engagement. Transformational leaders inspire teachers by promoting a shared vision, encouraging professional development, and recognizing teachers' contributions within the institution. In educational settings, transformational leadership contributes to collaborative learning environments and higher levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction among teachers. Such leadership practices encourage innovation, strengthen professional relationships, and improve overall school functioning (Bass & Riggio, 2021).

Organizational Climate in Schools

Organizational climate is regarded as an essential component of institutional effectiveness and teacher well-being. It refers to the overall workplace atmosphere shaped by leadership behaviors, communication systems, workplace relationships, and organizational structures (Hoy & Miskel, 2021). In educational settings, organizational climate significantly influences teachers' morale, professional interactions, workplace satisfaction, and instructional performance. Schools characterized by positive organizational climates often exhibit stronger teamwork, trust, collaboration, and professional engagement among teachers, all of which contribute to improved educational outcomes. Conversely, unsupportive organizational climates may lead to workplace conflict, dissatisfaction, and reduced teacher performance.

In the Thai educational context, organizational climate has been found to significantly influence teacher retention, professional engagement, and workplace harmony. Schools that maintain collaborative organizational climates tend to demonstrate stronger teacher morale, reduced workplace conflict, and greater professional cooperation. Conversely, ineffective communication systems and unsupportive leadership practices often contribute to organizational stress, teacher dissatisfaction, and weakened professional relationships (Wongsurawat & Bunpheng, 2024).

Leadership Practices in the Thai Educational Context

Research on educational leadership in Thailand highlights the importance of culturally responsive leadership approaches in promoting positive organizational climates. Thai teachers value school leaders who demonstrate respectful communication, emotional support, and harmonious workplace relationships. Effective leadership within Thai schools often requires balancing authority with interpersonal sensitivity, particularly in contexts influenced by collectivism, workplace harmony, and respect for hierarchy. Supportive and approachable school heads are generally perceived more positively by teachers, resulting in stronger organizational trust, collaboration, and workplace satisfaction (Srichaiyapong, 2023).

Studies conducted in Southeast Asian educational institutions similarly emphasize the significance of collaborative and supportive leadership practices in strengthening organizational cohesion. School leaders who engage teachers in planning and decision-making processes foster higher levels of teacher morale, professional commitment, and institutional trust. These findings suggest that effective leadership practices are essential in sustaining healthy school climates and improving educational effectiveness within culturally diverse settings (Charoensuk & Intaraprasert, 2021; Santos & De Guzman, 2022).

Post-Pandemic Educational Leadership

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed educational leadership and school organizational dynamics. Educational institutions faced unprecedented challenges related to remote instruction, teacher workload management, student emotional well-being, and institutional adaptation. During this period, school leaders were required to demonstrate flexibility, empathy, technological competence, and effective communication to maintain organizational stability. Teachers increasingly valued leaders who provided emotional support, professional guidance, and collaborative problem-solving during periods of uncertainty and transition (Martinez & Cruz, 2023).

Adaptive leadership practices during and after the pandemic have been recognized as crucial in sustaining positive organizational climates and teacher engagement. Schools led by administrators who demonstrated responsiveness and supportive leadership practices were more successful in maintaining teacher morale and

institutional effectiveness despite disruptions in educational delivery. These findings further emphasize the importance of leadership flexibility and emotional support in sustaining educational quality during times of change (Garcia & Lopez, 2023).

Synthesis of Literature and Research Gap

The literature reviewed demonstrates that school heads' management practices substantially influence organizational climate, teacher motivation, professional relationships, and institutional effectiveness in educational settings. Leadership approaches characterized by participative, transformational, and supportive practices are consistently associated with enhanced organizational trust, increased teacher engagement, and the development of collaborative workplace environments. Furthermore, positive organizational climates are linked to higher levels of teacher morale, retention, and workplace satisfaction. Despite the breadth of research examining educational leadership and organizational climate, there remains a notable gap in qualitative investigations that specifically address Thai teachers' lived experiences concerning school heads' management practices and their impact on school organizational climate. Existing studies predominantly utilize quantitative methodologies, emphasizing statistical associations rather than exploring teachers' subjective interpretations and workplace realities. In response to this gap, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive qualitative analysis of Thai teachers' perceptions of school heads' management practices and to examine how these perceptions inform the organizational climate within Thai schools.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do Thai teachers describe the management practices of their school heads?
2. How do Thai teachers perceive the organizational climate in their schools?
3. How do school heads' management practices influence school organizational climate?

METHODS

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design to examine Thai teachers' lived experiences and perceptions of school heads' management practices and their impact on the school organizational climate. The research utilized semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method, enabling an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives. Thematic analysis was employed to systematically identify and interpret recurring themes and patterns associated with leadership practices and organizational climate, consistent with established qualitative methodologies. The participant group comprised 15 Thai teachers from selected public schools, recruited through purposive sampling based on the following inclusion criteria: current employment in Thai public schools, at least 1 year of teaching experience, and voluntary participation. Data collection was guided by a semi-structured interview protocol developed and validated by experts in educational management to ensure content validity. The instrument addressed key domains, including leadership practices, communication, organizational support, and workplace experiences. Interviews were conducted both face-to-face and online during the 2026 academic year, with each session lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to audio recording, ensuring ethical compliance and accurate documentation. To enhance research rigor, the study adhered to the criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established through transcript review, while consistent research procedures supported dependability. Confirmability and transferability were achieved through objective data analysis and comprehensive descriptions of participants' experiences. Ethical considerations were rigorously observed, with voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure data management. Thematic analysis was conducted in accordance with established procedures, involving systematic coding and organization of interview transcripts into themes and subthemes to elucidate patterns in the school heads' management practices and the school organizational climate.

RESULTS

Thematic analysis identified four principal themes concerning the influence of school heads' management practices on organizational climate within educational institutions. These themes include the role of effective communication in reinforcing organizational climate, the impact of participative leadership on teacher engagement, the significance of administrative support in fostering positive workplace relationships, and the detrimental effects of inconsistent leadership on school climate.

Theme 1: Effective Communication Strengthens Organizational Climate

Participants emphasized that open and transparent communication from school heads strengthened trust, collaboration, and positive workplace relationships. Teachers described school heads as approachable and willing to listen to concerns, noting that regular meetings, clear instructions, and constructive feedback improved coordination and reduced misunderstandings. One participant shared, *"Our principal communicates clearly about school activities and listens to teachers' concerns. This makes us feel respected and informed."* (Participant 3) Another participant stated, *"Good communication from the administration helps teachers work together effectively."* (Participant 5)

Theme 2: Participative Leadership Boosts Teacher Engagement

Participants revealed that school heads who involved teachers in planning and decision-making processes promoted stronger teacher engagement and collaboration. Teachers appreciated being consulted regarding school activities, policies, and academic programs, as this fostered a sense of value and responsibility. One participant explained, *"When teachers are included in decision-making, we become more motivated and responsible."* (Participant 1) Another participant noted, *"Our school head asks for suggestions before implementing new programs, which creates teamwork among teachers."* (Participant 6)

Theme 3: Administrative Support Promotes Positive Workplace Relationships

Teachers highlighted the importance of emotional and professional support from school heads in promoting a harmonious and productive work environment. Participants emphasized that supportive leadership behaviors, such as encouragement, recognition, and professional assistance, contributed to positive workplace relationships. One teacher stated, *"Our principal supports us during difficult situations and encourages professional growth."* (Participant 1) Another participant mentioned, *"Teachers feel more confident when school heads provide guidance and assistance."* (Participant 10)

Theme 4: Inconsistent Leadership Negatively Affects School Climate

Some participants reported that inconsistent policy implementation and limited communication negatively affected teacher morale and workplace relationships. Teachers explained that sudden policy changes, unclear expectations, and inconsistent decision-making created confusion and frustration among staff members. One participant shared, *"Sometimes policies change without proper explanation, which creates misunderstandings among teachers."* (Participant 3) Another participant explained, *"Inconsistent leadership affects teamwork because teachers become uncertain about expectations."* (Participant 15).

DISCUSSION

The study's findings indicate that school heads' management practices significantly influence the school organizational climate as perceived by Thai teachers. Effective communication, participative leadership, and administrative support were identified as essential factors in promoting positive workplace relationships, teacher engagement, and collaboration within schools. Conversely, inconsistent leadership practices negatively affected teacher morale and workplace interactions. These findings suggest that school leaders play a crucial role in shaping organizational climate through their management approaches and interpersonal relationships.

The findings support Henri Fayol's management principles, particularly the functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling, which emphasize the importance of effective management for achieving organizational effectiveness (Fayol, 1949). School heads who demonstrated clear communication, organized planning, and supportive leadership created environments that fostered trust, collaboration, and teacher engagement. Similarly, the findings align with Kurt Lewin's organizational climate theory, which emphasizes that leadership behavior significantly influences the workplace atmosphere, morale, and employee relationships (Lewin, 1951). Teachers in this study perceived participative and supportive leadership practices as essential in maintaining a positive school climate.

The theme of effective communication suggests that transparent leadership practices strengthen organizational trust and workplace relationships. Teachers appreciated school heads who maintained open communication and encouraged feedback, consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of communication in educational leadership (Leithwood et al., 2020). Likewise, participative leadership emerged as a key factor influencing teacher motivation and engagement. Teachers who were included in decision-making processes reported stronger commitment, collaboration, and a greater sense of belonging, supporting earlier findings on participative leadership in schools (Rahman et al., 2021).

Administrative support also emerged as a significant contributor to positive organizational climate. Teachers valued school heads who provided encouragement, guidance, and recognition, which enhanced workplace satisfaction and professional confidence. These findings support prior research suggesting that supportive leadership contributes to improved teacher morale and reduced workplace stress (Al-Mutairi, 2022). However, inconsistent leadership practices negatively affected organizational climate. Unclear communication and inconsistent policy implementation created confusion and weakened workplace relationships, underscoring the importance of stable, transparent management practices in educational institutions. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of effective school leadership in fostering supportive and collaborative educational environments in Thailand.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that school heads' management practices substantially influence the organizational climate in Thai educational institutions, as perceived by teachers. Specifically, effective communication, participative leadership, and robust administrative support were identified as critical factors in enhancing teacher engagement, strengthening workplace relationships, and promoting a collaborative school environment. Teachers consistently regard supportive and inclusive leadership as fundamental to fostering trust, motivation, and organizational cohesion. In contrast, the presence of inconsistent leadership practices, such as ambiguous communication and irregular policy implementation, was associated with diminished teacher morale and weakened workplace relationships. These results underscore the necessity for school heads to possess strong leadership and management competencies to cultivate a supportive, harmonious, and productive educational environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the study's findings, several recommendations are advanced to enhance the effectiveness of school leadership and organizational climate within Thai educational institutions:

1. **School heads** are encouraged to strengthen communication practices by ensuring transparency and actively soliciting teacher feedback, thereby fostering trust and facilitating collaborative relationships within the school community.
2. **Educational institutions** should promote participative leadership by systematically involving teachers in planning and decision-making processes, which has the potential to enhance teacher engagement, professional commitment, and overall institutional effectiveness.

3. **It is recommended that leadership development programs** be implemented further to strengthen the management and leadership competencies of school heads, thereby supporting the cultivation of a positive organizational climate.
4. **Schools** should enhance organizational support systems to reinforce teacher motivation, foster positive workplace relationships, and promote the professional well-being of teaching staff.
5. **Future research is encouraged to employ larger participant samples and include** multiple school settings in order to broaden the generalizability and applicability of findings related to school leadership and organizational climate.

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