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TEACHER-PERCEIVED WORK AUTONOMY AS DETERMINANT OF JOB SATISFACTION OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF DAVAO CITY DIVISION

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A B S T R A C T

The study explored the extent of teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction of teachers of public elementary teachers in Davao City Division. Also, it investigated the association of the involved variables. With the use of probability sampling, 150 elementary teachers in the public schools were selected as the respondents. Utilizing the descriptive-correlational survey method, the data collated were analyzed through the use of Mean and Product-Moment correlation. Results revealed that there was an extensive teacher-perceived work autonomy and an extensive job satisfaction. Furthermore, there was a significant relationship between the two variables. Based on the findings, it was further suggested that higher officials in the Department of Education and school heads may identify means on how to help teachers to reinforce autonomy and attain job satisfaction. More so, future researchers may further explore the involved variables considering other factors and research methods.

Keywords: Teacher-perceived work autonomy, job satisfaction, descriptive correlation, Davao City Division, Philippines

Introduction

Teacher job satisfaction has many important and far-reaching implications. It contributes to teacher well-being as satisfied teachers are less susceptible to stress and burnout. In addition, there is evidence that students of teachers who are content with their job also feel better. Furthermore, satisfied teachers offer higher instructional quality and better learning support for their students. Finally, content teachers demonstrate stronger job commitment and are less prone to leave the profession which is especially crucial in times when teacher turnover is high. Unfortunately, teachers are not anymore satisfied towards their job. In fact, few numbers of teachers make a bold decision of leaving the teaching profession. the status of the work environment is a problematic situation for teachers and students and even to school leaders.

In the international context, Sweden has been experiencing a similar unsettling trend of raising rates of teacher turnover during the past forty years (Lindqvist & Nordänger,2016). Factors leading to this turnover situation include teachers' increased stress, distortion of professional values and identities, and impaired relations with students, colleagues, school leaders and parents (Dovemark& Holm,2017). Dissatisfaction with the teaching profession appears to be an important reason why they leave the teaching profession (Wyatt & O'Neill, 2021). Of the teachers who leave the profession, about half of them are dissatisfied with the school they work at (Federičová, 2021). In many countries, almost half of the teachers leave the profession within in their first years (Räsänen et al., 2020). Veldman et al. (2013) indicated that many veteran teachers are disengaged with their job as well and try to find another profession or quit teaching and get other tasks in school.

Meanwhile, in the Philippine setting, certain working conditions are causing an increasing number of teachers to find employment abroad. 92 percent of public-school teachers are paid a salary between P25,000 to P30,000 a month, which constitutes a significant factor in this job migration. Public school teachers often face unreasonable burdens such as being assigned to teach 90 students in one class (Fabella et al., 2022). Facilities remain inadequate as well as a shortage of classrooms. More so, teachers expressed that there are persisting shortages in school and classrooms, particularly senior high school; lack of textbook, learning facilities, and other needs of students. Teachers were also left to shoulder the expenses on their own (Tibay, 2018).

In the Division of Davao City, the researcher observed that teachers poor working environment, lack of options for professional advancement, overloaded workloads with ancillary services, and limited socialization among teachers because of heavy workload have attributed to dissatisfaction towards work. However, these circumstances were purely observation and were not yet explored by means of academic research. More so, teachers' job satisfaction considering their perceived work autonomy was not yet explored in the local context. Given these circumstances, the researcher aimed to learn more about the status of teachers' perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction. It also sought to investigate the relationship between the two variables.

The researcher was driven to investigate the relevant variables considering the dearth of studies of the involved variables. This undertaking also aimed to offer policymakers insights into creating policies, programs, interventions, projects, and activities that would help public teachers to attain job satisfaction in their designated workplace. This study was mainly anchored to Self-determination theory which maintains that innate psychological needs such as competence, autonomy and relatedness are the drivers fostering positive process such as self-motivation, behavioral self-regulation and personal well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The self-determination theory described autonomy as "not to being independent, detached, or selfish but rather to the feeling of volition that can accompany any act" (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and some theories liken autonomy to individualism and independence.

The self-determination theory strongly supported the notion that people who have a greater feeling of autonomy (self-determined) exhibit a greater sense of positive feelings. Consequently, the present study imports the self-determination theory from the psychology into the domain of education (Ryan & Deci, 2000) in which teaching profession is expected not to occur in a vacuum, and when teachers are autonomous, they feel a greater sense of control and volition, and subsequently, they feel exalted.

In a similar vein, the previous empirical studies maintain that teacher autonomy is about the feeling of teachers that they have control over many aspects in the context of school settings such as freedom to choose teaching methods and strategies, making classroom decisions, a key role in school-wide decision making, and influencing working conditions (Somech, 2016). Remarkably, earlier studies confer teacher autonomy as an essential element of teacher motivation (Pearson &Moomaw, 2005). A very small corpus of empirical evidence suggests that teacher autonomy has a positive association with teacher job satisfaction.

Another theory that supported the study was the Job Demands-Resource (JD-R) model which explains the nature of the relationship between teacher autonomy and teacher job satisfaction. In the educational setting, student misbehavior is regarded as job demands, teacher autonomy as a job resource and the teacher successfulness on the modification of the student misbehavior as an indication of teacher job satisfaction. The job demands mean "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs" (Bakker &Demerouti, 2007).

For instance, work pressure and interactions that are emotionally demanding with customers. The job resources are the job characteristics that trigger the motivational process thereby buffering the impact of job demand on job stress (Bakker &Demerouti, 2007). The confluence of the JD-R model and the job characteristics theory emphasizes that autonomy is a potential motivational job resource (Bakker &Demerouti, 2007; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). The basic tenet of the JD-R model is that a high level of job demands with a low level of job resources has detrimental effects on employees. Therefore, the present study holds a view that teacher autonomy as a job resource that buffers the negative relationship between student misbehavior, considered as job demand, and teacher job satisfaction as a job outcome.

This requires a greater level of teacher autonomy that empowers teachers by giving greater freedom and discretion over the school environment in the everyday life of the school (Somech, 2016). Further, studies highlight that autonomy makes the teacher responsible for good practice (Skaalvik&Skaalvik, 2014). It is, therefore, expected that teachers with high autonomy steer student misbehavior and consequently, feel greater job satisfaction. Taken together with the previous studies, the nexus of student behavior, teacher autonomy and teacher job satisfaction has been extensively neglected in previous studies (Glock &Kleen, 2019; Parker & Levinson, 2018).

Methodology

Research Design

This study was a quantitative research approach utilizing the descriptive correlational approach. Quantitative research methods are used to explain a problem or phenomenon by collecting numerical data and evaluating it using mathematical approaches, particularly statistics (Apuke, 2017). Meanwhile, descriptive correlational studies describe the variables and the relationships that occur naturally between and among them (Davis, 2021). This study was considered as quantitative since it depended on the numerical data when analyzing and interpreting the data. It was descriptive since its purpose was to determine the extent of teacher perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction. In addition, this academic pursuit was correlational since its purpose was to measure the connection between teacher perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction of public elementary teachers in Davao City Division.

Research Respondents

This study catered the 150 public elementary teachers in the Davao City Division. It was claimed that 150 samples were enough when testing the regression analysis (Hair et al., 2018). Hence, the 150 respondents were enough to address the purpose of this study. In the inclusion and exclusion criteria, elementary teachers with 5 years teaching experience were chosen in this endeavor since their 5 years stay in the public school would help them to assess their work autonomy and their job satisfaction. Respondents who felt awkward and uncomfortable in answering the survey questionnaire were free to withdraw from their participation. They were not forced to be part of the study. Their decision to withdraw was respected. Apparently, the respondents' welfare was given utmost importance in the conduct of the study.

Research Instruments

As to the means of gathering data, this study utilized an adapted survey questionnaire. The questionnaire that was employed in this undertaking was divided into two sets. The first set was focusing on the teacher perceived work autonomy while the second set was about the job satisfaction of public elementary teachers.

The teacher perceived work autonomy questionnaire was adapted from Friedman (1999). The instrument consisted of 30 items. It had the following indicators, namely: establishing school identity and praxis (1-6), teaching and achievement evaluation (1-6), parental involvement (1-3), staff development (1-5), extracurricular subjects (1-4), and curriculum change and development (1-6). The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .76 suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

The questionnaire on job satisfaction which was adapted from the study of Romero andBantigue (2017). It consisted of 40 items. There were 10 items for job responsibilities, 10 items for work security, 10 items for community attachment, and 10 items for work environment. The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .74 suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

The instrument in this study was contextualized to achieve the purpose of this study. The researcher integrated all the comments and suggestions of the adviser, panel members and expert validators for the refinement of the tools and to achieve construct validity.

Table

Table 1

Summary on the Extent of Teacher-Perceived Work Autonomy

No	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Establishing School Identity and Praxis	3.44	Extensive
2	Teaching and Achievement and Evaluation	3.62	Extensive
3	Parental Involvement	3.47	Extensive
4	Staff Development	3.43	Extensive
5	Extracurricular Subjects	3.61	Extensive
6	Curriculum Change and Development	3.62	Extensive
Overall		**3.53**	**Extensive**

Table 1 provides the summary on the extent of teacher-perceived work autonomy. It is exhibited that the overall mean of authentic leadership of school heads is 3.53, which is in an extensive level. This means that teacher-perceived work autonomy is oftentimes evident.

Data show that all four (4) indicators are in an extensive level. As arranged chronologically, teaching and achievement (3.62) and curriculum change and development (3.62) have the highest mean score. This is followed by extracurricular subjects (3.47), parental involvement (3.47), establishing school identity and praxis (3.47), and staff development (3.43).

The implications of these results are profound, as they reveal the extensive presence of teacher-perceived work autonomy across various domains in the educational setting. Notably, teaching and achievement, as well as curriculum change and development, received the highest mean scores, indicating a substantial degree of autonomy in these areas. This autonomy empowers teachers to have a significant say in shaping the curriculum and tailoring their teaching methods to meet the unique needs of their students. These findings underscore the importance of promoting teacher-driven and student-centric approaches to education in educational institutions.

With the extensive teacher-perceived autonomy of teachers, this reaffirmed the widely held belief of Tehrani and Mansor (2012) as cited in Ulas and Aksu (2015), stating that teacher autonomy is the liberty given to educators that allows them to decide on their own decisions, aside from performing their job in their respective workplaces. They can also decide what major methodologies they are allowed to employ, design, or even select in order to suit their tasks and materials. They can also evaluate the outcomes of their assigned tasks. They can cooperate well with other teachers when it comes to solving work-related problems. Above all, they can take responsibility for their own decisions.

Similarly, Worth and Vans den Brande (2020) suggested that teacher autonomy is strongly linked with better job satisfaction and a substantial intention to stay in their teaching profession. More so, Lundström (2015) claimed that autonomy is an indispensable facet of professional theory. Furthermore, Frostension (2015) theorized that there are three forms of professional autonomy. These are General Professional Autonomy, Collegial Professional Autonomy, and Individual Autonomy.

In addition, Wermke et al. (2018) showed that the teachers, who were subjects of interview in Sweden and Germany, tend to value such autonomy in numerous educational, social, developmental, and administrative domains. This goes the same at different dimensions, such as classroom, school, and profession. To pursue a study concerning reflecting broader national and global education trends. The teachers found themselves to be autonomous in

instruction, that is in educational autonomy domain. They are autonomous, particularly particular about the kind of content and method that fitted their job. Moreover, autonomous work in intended in the classroom was also recognized the heart of teaching profession.

Table 2

Summary on the Extent of Job Satisfaction

No	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Job Responsibilities	3.56	Extensive
2	Work Security	3.43	Extensive
3	Community Attachment	3.55	Extensive
4	Work Environment	3.51	Extensive
Overall		**3.51**	**Extensive**

Table 2 provides the summary on the extent of job satisfaction. It is exhibited that the overall mean of job satisfaction is 3.51, which is in an extensive level. This means that the job satisfaction is oftentimes evident.

Data show job responsibilities the highest mean score (3.56). This is followed by community attachment (3.55), work environment (3.51), and work security (3.43).

The implications of these results are noteworthy, as they reveal the varying levels of job satisfaction across different aspects. Job responsibilities received the highest mean score, indicating that employees derive substantial satisfaction from their roles and responsibilities. This emphasizes the importance of aligning job roles with employees' strengths and interests to promote job satisfaction. These findings highlight the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction and the importance of considering various aspects to create a positive and fulfilling work experience.

The favorable findings of this study supported the findings of Baluyos et al. (2019) disclosing that job satisfaction plays an essential role in the overall commitment and productivity of the school organization. The teachers' job satisfaction significantly influenced their commitment to the organization. Teachers who are satisfied with the job are also committed to work in the organization. Bashir (2017) defined job satisfaction as an attitude, which results from balancing and summation of many specific likes and dislikes, experienced in connection with the job. These attitudes are related with specific factors such as salary, service condition, opportunity, working condition and colleague.

Furthermore, Ballarta and Roberto (2020) added that when there is a great satisfaction of teachers in their work, they could easily justify the responsibilities in their work. The school administrators have the great responsibility in designing and implementing faculty development program to enhance job satisfaction of teachers that will help in ensuring quality education as teachers would exhibit the spirit of hard work and dedication, which implies that when teacher's needs are adequately and timely made, they tend to be more dedicated to their duty and work hard. Such teachers go to class fully prepared and academically loaded, willing to impart knowledge to bring transformation.

Krush, Agnihotri, Trainor, and Krishnakumar (2013) highlighted that those who are happy with their jobs and feel good about them should be able to express themselves with greater efficiency and execute at an improved level than those who are unhappy with their jobs and spend time trying to deal with their negative emotions. From another point of view, Hayati et al. (2012) claimed that job satisfaction is a person's perception of success and achievement at work. As the author emphasized, it is widely believed that job happiness is strongly related to both productivity and overall well-being.

Table 3

Significance of the Relationship Between the Extent of Teacher-Perceived Work Autonomy and Job Satisfaction

Teacher-Perceived Work Autonomy Indicators	Dependent Variable	r-value	p- value	Decision on Ho
Establishing School Identity and Praxis		0.469	0.000	Rejected
Teaching and Achievement Evaluation		0.492	0.000	Rejected
	Job Satisfaction			
Parental Involvement		0.477	0.000	Rejected
Staff Development		0.466	0.000	Rejected

Extra Curricular Subjects	0.489	0.000	Rejected
Curriculum Change and Development	0.498	0.000	Rejected
Overall	**0.481***	**0.000**	**Rejected**

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

Presented in Table 3 are the data on the significance of the relationship between teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction of teachers. Reflected in the hypothesis, the relationship was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The overall r-value of .481 with a p-value of <0.05 signified the rejection of the null hypothesis. It means that there is a significant relationship between teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction of teachers. This shows that teacher-perceived work autonomy is correlated with the job satisfaction teachers.

In measuring the significant relationship, it considered the Pearson r scale. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is the most common way of measuring a linear correlation. It is a number between –1 and 1 that measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. Positive correlation is evident when the result is between 0 and 1. This means that when one variable changes, the other variable changes in the same direction. No correlation is evident when the result is 0. It means that there is no relationship between the when one variable changes, the other variables. More so, negative relation is evident when the result is 0 and -1. This means that when one variable changes, the other variable changes in the opposite direction.

Doing a pairwise correlation among the measures of both variables, it can be gleaned that establishing school identity and praxis, teaching and achievement evaluation, parental involvement, staff development, extracurricular subjects, and curriculum change and developmentrevealed computed r-values of 0.469, 0.492, 0.477, 0.466, 0.489, and 0.498 respectively with p-values which are less than 0.05 in the level of significance.

The implications of these statistical results are profound and offer valuable insights into the factors that influence job satisfaction among teachers. The significant relationship between teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction, as indicated by the low p-value and r-value, underscores the importance of granting teachers a degree of autonomy in their work. This autonomy empowers teachers to make decisions related to various aspects of their roles, leading to increased job satisfaction.

The pairwise correlations among specific aspects of teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction, such as establishing school identity and praxis, teaching and achievement evaluation, parental involvement, staff development, extracurricular subjects, and curriculum change and development, further emphasize the multifaceted nature of job satisfaction. The strong correlations suggest that these aspects of work autonomy play crucial roles in shaping the overall job satisfaction of teachers.

The result is in consonance to the study conducted by Somech (2016) underscoring the importance of teacher autonomy referring to having control over their school environment and leeway in decision making on the most parts of their job. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2014) directly related teacher autonomy on teacher job satisfaction and the autonomy accommodates consistent changes and continues to evolve over the years. According to Şentürken and Aytunga (2020), teachers with high levels of autonomy and job satisfaction lead to higher performance in their professional development.

Similarly, CarverThomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) revealed that teachers who perceive greater levels of classroom autonomy often report higher levels of job satisfaction. It is an important factor associated with teachers' intentions and decisions to stay in the profession. Autonomy is strongly correlated with the proportion of classroom teachers intending to stay in the profession in the next 12 months. Only around half of those with the lowest autonomy are intending to stay in teaching in the short term, compared to more than 85 per cent of those with the highest autonomy.

Conclusions

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

The extent of teacher-perceived work autonomy of the public elementary teachers implies that it is oftentimes evident in the school. In fact, all dimensions are oftentimes evident from the teachers, namely, establishing school identity and praxis, teaching and achievement evaluation, parental involvement, staff development, extracurricular subjects, and curriculum change and development.

Meanwhile, the extent of job satisfaction of teacher is extensive. Apparently, all indicators are found to be high specifically on job responsibilities, work security, community attachment, and work environment.

Based on the findings, teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction are related. All domains of teacher-perceived work autonomy are linked to the job satisfaction of teachers.

Also, teacher-perceived work autonomy significantly influenced job satisfaction. In fact, all domains of teacher-perceived work autonomy, namely, establishing school identity and praxis, teaching and achievement evaluation, parental involvement, staff development, extracurricular subjects, and

curriculum change and development significantly influence job satisfaction by registering a p-value of .000 which is less than .05 in the level of significance. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Further, the result indicates that for every unit increase in the four domains of teacher-perceived work autonomy, the job satisfaction will increase.

Recommendations

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

The higher officials in the Department of Education may DepEd officials may play a pivotal role in promoting teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction by implementing policies and practices that empower educators and enhance their professional well-being. They may provide teachers with the autonomy to make instructional decisions, tailor their teaching methods to the unique needs of their students, and be innovative in the classroom. Additionally, DepEd officials may prioritize ongoing professional development opportunities that enable teachers to grow in their roles and enhance their teaching skills, which can contribute to increased job satisfaction.

Moreover, school heads may significantly contribute to the attainment of teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction by empowering teachers and creating a collaborative work environment. They may provide teachers with the autonomy to make instructional decisions and encourage innovative teaching approaches. Additionally, school heads may prioritize ongoing professional development opportunities that align with teachers' interests and needs, enabling them to enhance their skills and job satisfaction.

Furthermore, teachers may actively contribute to the attainment of teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction by actively engaging in a collaborative and supportive school culture. They may communicate openly with school heads and colleagues, sharing their ideas, needs, and concerns related to their work. Teachers may actively participate in decision-making processes and offer valuable input, ultimately contributing to a sense of autonomy and job satisfaction. Moreover, they may engage in ongoing professional development opportunities to improve their teaching skills and expand their knowledge, which can enhance job satisfaction.

Lastly, future researchersmay contribute to the attainment of teacher-perceived work autonomy and job satisfaction by conducting in-depth studies that investigate the factors influencing these aspects within the educational context. Their research may focus on identifying the specific conditions, policies, and practices that enhance teachers' work autonomy and job satisfaction. Moreover, they may explore the correlation between teacher autonomy, job satisfaction, and student outcomes, providing empirical evidence to support the importance of these factors in education.

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