



Psychological Empowerment in Relation to Proactive Behavior of Public Elementary Teachers of Davao City Division

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the psychological empowerment and proactive behavior levels among public elementary teachers in Davao City Division, as well as the correlation between these variables. Employing probability sampling, 150 elementary teachers from public schools were selected as respondents. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational survey method, the collected data were analyzed using Mean and Product-Moment correlation. Results indicated extensive levels of psychological empowerment and proactive behavior among teachers, with a significant relationship observed between the two variables. Based on these findings, it is recommended that higher officials in the Department of Education and school administrators identify strategies to enhance teachers' psychological empowerment, thereby fostering proactive behavior in delivering instructional services. Furthermore, future research should explore additional variables and employ alternative research methods.

Keywords: Psychological empowerment, proactive behavior, descriptive correlation, Davao City Division, Philippines

Introduction

The proactive behavior of teachers is essential for cultivating a dynamic and engaging learning environment. When teachers exhibit proactivity, they take the initiative to identify and resolve potential challenges, thereby fostering a positive and constructive classroom atmosphere. Proactive teachers not only anticipate the needs of their students but also tailor their teaching methods to accommodate various learning styles, ensuring a more effective and inclusive educational experience. Possessing proactive behavior in their daily tasks is a critical quality for teachers to enhance the success of the education system. Proactive behavior at work, as defined by Cerit (2017), involves actions that go beyond assigned tasks and demonstrate a focus on effecting positive change. However, the teaching profession is inherently stressful and demanding, which can, to some extent, impact the proactive behavior of teachers.

Teachers are grappling with diminished proactive behavior due to burnout and various teaching-related challenges. In Virginia, educators are tasked with managing classrooms comprised of students from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, age, gender, and ability. Each day, teachers face a class size ranging from approximately 20 to 30 students, requiring them to manage both the children themselves and the lesson plans amid limited resources. The demands of the job alone can be taxing on teachers, with the added stress of insufficient resources potentially diminishing their enthusiasm. Even for highly skilled teachers equipped with numerous personal resources, stress and burnout resulting from high demands and inadequate organizational support can impede decision-making and teaching practices (Bottiani, 2019).

In the Philippines, reports of work-related stress impacting Filipino workers have been documented. According to a CNN PH poll conducted in 2017, 23 percent of Filipinos reported experiencing stressors such as management issues, deadlines, workload, and occasional interpersonal challenges with coworkers (Ansis, 2017). Work-related stress has been identified as one of the factors influencing proactive work behavior among teachers. In a study conducted by Cammayo et al. (2022), it was revealed that Filipino teachers work an average of 12.17 hours per day, manage five classes, and instruct 141 students. These factors contribute to high levels of stress, emotional exhaustion, moderate depersonalization, and moderate feelings of personal accomplishment among teachers.

In Davao City Division, it had been observed that teachers encounter difficulties in exhibiting proactive behavior, which was influenced by various individual, environmental, and organizational factors. Teachers felt hesitant to take proactive actions due to fear of making mistakes, facing criticism, or experiencing rejection. Additionally, they experienced constrained by heavy workloads, heightened stress levels, and chaotic environments, which impeded their ability to think and act proactively. Furthermore, insufficient support discouraged teachers from initiating proactive measures, leading to feelings of disempowerment and reduced motivation to take proactive actions.

The aforementioned scenarios were drawn from observations, as the researcher did not encounter specific studies addressing teachers' proactive behavior within the local context, particularly regarding their psychological empowerment. Motivated by this gap in existing research, the researcher

delves into the intricacies of psychological empowerment and its relationship with teachers' proactive behavior, focusing specifically on public elementary schools in the Davao City Division. The primary objective was to examine the correlation between these two variables. This endeavor yielded valuable insights for policymakers, aiding in the development of effective policies, programs, interventions, projects, and activities. These initiatives were designed to encourage all teachers to enhance their psychological empowerment, thereby reinforcing proactive behavior for effective teaching.

This study was predominantly based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Gagne and Deci (2005). According to SDT, individuals have an inherent drive to fulfill three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When teachers perceive a sense of autonomy, demonstrate competence in their responsibilities, and experience positive social interactions, they are more likely to achieve psychological empowerment. This empowerment, in turn, correlates with heightened proactive behavior, as empowered individuals are inclined to take initiative and participate in proactive endeavors aimed at improving their work environment and fostering positive educational outcomes.

Psychological empowerment serves as a catalyst for autonomous motivation among employees (Raub & Robert, 2010). Employees who experience psychological empowerment internalize values that drive them to undertake autonomous and self-directed activities. Proactive behavior, likewise, entails self-initiated actions. A feeling of self-determination inspires employees to question the existing norms and strive to enhance their surroundings. Self-determination (Gagné & Deci, 2005) also prompts employees to tackle problems and initiate change. Conversely, individuals with low levels of psychological empowerment tend to shy away from taking initiative (Raub & Robert, 2010).

Based on empirical evidence, Choi (2007) demonstrated that psychological empowerment acts as a mediator in the relationship between organizational environmental characteristics and employees' change-oriented behaviors. Park, Kim, Yoon, and Joo (2017) asserted that empowerment fosters a positive mindset. Individuals with a positive outlook toward their work and life are inclined to actively pursue their goals. Essentially, empowered employees perceive themselves as capable of effecting meaningful change in their workplace through proactive behavior (Chen, Liu, Zhang, & Qian, 2018).

Psychologically empowered employees are characterized by an active inclination toward shaping both their work roles and their work environments (Spreitzer, 1995). According to Thomas and Velthouse (1990), psychological empowerment is conceptualized as a motivational disposition that is reflected in four overarching assessments related to work. Firstly, "meaning" pertains to the significance of work-related outcomes and suggests that employees perceive alignment between their personal goals and beliefs and their work roles and associated expectations. Secondly, "competence," or self-efficacy (Conger & Kanungo, 1988), signifies an expectation of effort-performance alignment, wherein employees believe in their capacity to fulfill work tasks in accordance with their roles and societal expectations. Thirdly, "impact" denotes an expectation of performance-outcome alignment, indicating that employees perceive their work performance as influential in shaping processes and outcomes in the workplace. Finally, "choice," or self-determination (Gagné & Deci, 2005), refers to the perception of opportunities in relation to work-related efforts, implying that employees feel autonomous in determining how to approach their work tasks.

To foster a genuine sense of empowerment among employees, enabling them to actively seek and initiate actions in the workplace, it is crucial that they experience all four components of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 2008; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). This means that employees must not only find meaning in work-related goals and outcomes, but also feel capable of successfully executing the actions necessary to achieve these goals, believe that their actions have an impact on work processes and outcomes, and perceive that they have the autonomy to make choices. Only when all these components are present will employees feel empowered to actively initiate goal-directed actions. This motivational foundation is particularly important in fostering proactive behavior. Only when employees feel genuinely empowered will they possess the necessary motivation and resilience to handle the uncertainty that comes with proactivity, such as uncertainty about the consequences of decisions, the achievement of goals, and reactions from the social work environment (Bowers & Khorakian, 2014; Janssen, 2003).

Empowered employees are inclined to take the risk of introducing innovative and challenging ideas, even if doing so may lead to social conflicts in the workplace. Similarly, they are more likely to step out of their comfort zone in work-related activities, exploring new tasks or seeking new social relationships, despite the possibility of uncovering competence gaps or biases in their approaches. These theoretical considerations are supported by empirical evidence indicating that psychologically empowered employees engage in more innovative behavior (Liu et al., 2019; Messmann et al., 2017) and job crafting (Hulshof et al., 2020; Matsuo, 2019).

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative research approach, specifically employing a descriptive correlational technique. Quantitative research involves gathering numerical data and analyzing it using mathematical and statistical methods to elucidate and explain specific problems or phenomena (Apuke, 2017). In descriptive correlational investigations, the focus is on detailing variables and the inherent relationships that naturally emerge among them (Davis, 2021). Categorized as quantitative, this study relied on numerical data for analysis and interpretation. Its descriptive nature stemmed from the aim of assessing the psychological empowerment and proactive behavior of teachers. Additionally, it employed a correlational approach to examine the relationship between psychological empowerment and proactive behavior among teachers in the public elementary schools of Davao City Division.

Research Respondents

A total of 150 public elementary teachers were invited to participate in and respond to this study. It has been suggested that for simple regression analysis, a minimum of 50 samples is necessary, with generally 100 samples being sufficient for most research scenarios (Hair et al., 2018). Thus, the inclusion of 150 respondents exceeds the required threshold to achieve the objectives of this study. For this endeavor, elementary teachers with a minimum of 2 years of teaching experience were selected based on the rationale that their tenure in the public-school system enabled them to assess psychological empowerment and its impact on their proactive behavior in the school setting. Participants who felt uncomfortable or uneasy while responding to the survey questionnaire were encouraged to withdraw from their involvement voluntarily, and they faced no coercion to participate. The decision of respondents to withdraw was acknowledged and respected, prioritizing their well-being throughout the study.

Research Instruments

As to the form 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 psychological empowerment while the second set was about proactive behavior of teachers.

The questionnaire on psychological empowerment was adapted from the study of Spreitzer (1995). It had a total of 16 items. It comprised the following indicators: meaning (1-4), competence (1-4), self-determination (1-4), and impact (1-4). The alpha coefficient for the 16 items was .74, suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency.

The teachers' proactive behavior questionnaire was adapted from Kanten and Alparslan (n.d). The tool had a total of 18 items. It had three indicators, namely: organizational proactive behavior (1-6), co-workers oriented proactive behavior (1-6), and individual proactive behavior (1-6). The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot testing having a result of .72 suggesting that the items have relatively *high* internal consistency. The instruments utilized in this study were tailored to align with the specific objectives of the research. The researcher incorporated feedback, comments, and suggestions from the adviser, panel members, and expert validators to refine the tools and ensure the attainment of construct validity.

Table

Table 1

Summary on the Extent of Psychological Empowerment of Teachers

No	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Meaning	3.54	Extensive
2	Competence	3.53	Extensive
3	Self-Determination	3.54	Extensive
4	Impact	3.57	Extensive
Overall		3.55	Extensive

Table 1 provides the summary on the extent of psychological empowerment of teachers. It is exhibited that the overall mean of psychological empowerment of teachers is 3.55, which is in an extensive level. This means that psychological empowerment of teachers is oftentimes evident.

Data show that all four (4) indicators are in an extensive level. As arranged chronologically, impact has the highest mean score (3.57). This is followed by meaning (3.54), self-determination (3.54), and competence (3.53).

The results suggest that teachers consistently perceive a high level of psychological empowerment indicating an extensive presence of empowerment within the teaching profession. Across all four indicators – impact, meaning, self-determination, and competence – the data reveal extensive levels, with impact receiving the highest mean score, followed closely by meaning, self-determination and competence. This consistent pattern underscores the multidimensional nature of psychological empowerment among teachers and emphasizes the importance of fostering environments that promote meaningful work, autonomy, confidence, and opportunities for impactful contributions, ultimately enhancing teacher well-being and effectiveness in the educational setting.

The extensive psychological empowerment experienced by educators supported the perspective articulated by Singh and Kaur (2019), which suggests that empowerment is a structured process aimed at enhancing individuals' sense of autonomy, enabling them to express their interests responsibly and carry out their duties with personal authority. This fosters increased confidence, resilience, and the ability to make well-informed decisions about their lives. Empowered individuals transcend feelings of helplessness by recognizing their inherent capabilities and effectively utilizing available resources. Experiences of psychological empowerment often revolve around an individual's cognitive awareness, including an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. Psychological empowerment represents a mental state where individuals are cognizant of their responsibilities, capabilities, strengths, and skills, fostering both personal and professional development.

Similarly, Kwon et al. (2017) emphasized the widespread recognition of teachers' psychological empowerment as a crucial factor in organizational success. Many scholars have underscored a direct correlation between the level of teacher psychological empowerment and key aspects such as

teachers' performance, job satisfaction, and commitment. Sussan and Francis (2017) proposed that empowering teachers enhances organizational adaptability and responsiveness, facilitating enhancements in both individual and overall organizational effectiveness. Moreover, it is argued that teachers' psychological empowerment significantly influences organizational creativity.

Moreover, Alhabeeb and Rowley (2017) argued that the results pertaining to teachers' psychological empowerment, organizational commitment, professional dedication, and organizational citizenship behaviors indicate that different aspects of teacher psychological empowerment markedly influence these outcomes within the educational setting. This empowerment fosters competencies in decision-making, professional growth, self-efficacy, and autonomy among faculty members. Furthermore, the adoption of these practices leads to favorable outcomes within the educational domain.

Table 2

Summary on the Extent of Proactive Behavior of Teachers

No	Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
1	Organizational Proactive	3.57	Extensive
2	Co-Workers Oriented Proactive Behavior	3.57	Extensive
3	Individual Proactive Behavior	3.63	Extensive
Overall		3.59	Extensive

Table 2 provides the summary on the extent of proactive behavior of teachers. It is exhibited that the overall mean of proactive behavior of teachers is 3.59, which is in an extensive level. This means that the proactive behavior of teachers is oftentimes evident.

Data show that all three (3) indicators are in an extensive level. As arranged chronologically, individual proactive behavior the highest mean score (3.63). This is followed by organizational proactive (3.57), and co-workers oriented proactive behavior (3.48).

The findings indicate that teachers frequently display proactive behavior across various aspects, suggesting a widespread presence of proactive engagement within educational settings. Examination of individual indicators reveals extensive levels of proactive engagement across all three dimensions - individual proactive behavior, organizational proactive behavior, and co-worker-oriented proactive behavior. Among these dimensions, individual proactive behavior obtains the highest mean score, followed by organizational proactive behavior, and co-worker-oriented proactive behavior. These results underscore the proactive inclination of teachers in taking initiative, both independently and collaboratively, to drive positive change and enhance outcomes within their professional environments. This underscores the significance of nurturing a culture that promotes and supports proactive behavior among teachers across all facets of their work.

The positive findings of this study corroborate the findings put forth by Williams (2019), who elucidated that proactive educators distinguish themselves by their proactive approach to managing disciplinary issues. Instead of reacting to problems as they arise, these teachers proactively structure their classrooms to foster positive behavior. They address behavioral challenges with the same proactive mindset applied to academic matters. Proactive educators understand that, akin to academic skills, appropriate social skills can be taught. They seamlessly incorporate lessons on social skills into their daily routines, emphasizing civility and serving as role models for the qualities they aim to instill in their students.

Furthermore, Gaddy (2020) emphasized that teachers embracing a proactive approach do not shy away from learning difficulties or behavioral challenges. Instead, they willingly take responsibility for both their students' successes and failures. Stock (2022) observed that these educators take pride in supporting every student in their class, not just the high achievers. Proactive teachers recognize that each student possesses unique strengths and weaknesses, and their goal is to nurture the best in every student.

Regarding proactive behavior in the workplace, as highlighted by Cerit (2017), it encompasses actions taken by teachers that surpass their assigned duties and aim to bring about positive change. It is emphasized that contemporary teachers frequently encounter challenges in their roles due to ongoing changes in the education system, necessitating adaptability. In such circumstances, schools increasingly rely on teachers to contribute to school effectiveness, irrespective of formal job requirements.

Table 3

Significance of the Relationship Between Psychological Empowerment and Proactive Behavior of Teachers

Psychological Empowerment of Teachers Indicators	Dependent Variable	r-value	p-value	Decision on Ho
Meaning		0.475	0.000	Rejected

Competence		0.470	0.000	Rejected
Self-Determination	Proactive Behavior of Teachers	0.472	0.000	Rejected
Impact		0.478	0.000	Rejected
Overall		0.473*	0.000	Rejected

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

Presented in Table 3 are the data on the significance of the relationship between psychological empowerment and proactive behavior of teachers. Reflected in the hypothesis, the relationship was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The overall r-value of .473 with a p-value of <0.05 signified the rejection of the null hypothesis. It means that there is a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and proactive behavior of teachers. This shows that psychological empowerment is correlated with the psychological empowerment and proactive behavior of teachers

Doing a pairwise correlation among the measures of both variables, it can be gleaned that meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact revealed computed r-values of 0.475, 0.470, 0.472, and 0.478 respectively with p-values which are less than 0.05 in the level of significance. This implies that as meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact increases, the proactive behavior increases.

The overall correlation coefficient (r-value) of 0.473, accompanied by a p-value of <0.05, indicates the rejection of the null hypothesis and confirms a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and proactive behavior among teachers. This underscores the correlation between psychological empowerment and proactive behavior in the teaching profession. A pairwise correlation analysis further reveals that measures such as meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact yielded computed r-values, all with p-values below 0.05, suggesting that increases in these dimensions of psychological empowerment correspond to higher levels of proactive behavior among teachers.

The findings of this study are in accordance with the research conducted by Tosten and Toprak (2017), which indicated that organizations can achieve greater success by fostering psychological capital. This capital engenders positivity among employees, thereby enhancing their performance levels. Additionally, empirical evidence suggests that motivational states, such as psychological empowerment, may precede proactive work behaviors. Moreover, research indicates that cognitive motivational states, such as role breadth self-efficacy and flexible role orientation, can act as mediators in the relationship between proactive personality and proactive behaviors. Considering psychological empowerment as a motivational state may provide further insights into this relationship.

Similarly, Arefin et al. (2015) uncovered a significant positive correlation between psychological empowerment and proactive behavior. It is evident that cognitive motivational states of employees can influence proactive behaviors in the workplace, with psychological empowerment being one such cognitive motivational state. Empowered employees demonstrate a strong identification with their roles, leading them to take initiatives aimed at improving organizational performance. They develop a personal attachment to the organization, considering it meaningful. Furthermore, a sense of competence instills confidence in subordinates, assuring them of their ability to effectively handle various situations.

Conclusions

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

The level of psychological empowerment among public elementary teachers indicates that it is frequently observable within the school environment. Indeed, all dimensions, including meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, are often apparent among teachers. Similarly, the level of proactive behavior among teachers is frequently observable. It appears that all indicators, particularly organizational proactive behavior, co-worker-oriented proactive behavior, and individual proactive behavior, are often evident. These findings suggest a relationship between psychological empowerment and proactive behavior among teachers, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Recommendations

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

The higher officials in the Department of Education may prioritize the psychological empowerment and proactive behavior of teachers by implementing comprehensive support programs, such as regular mental health check-ins and stress management workshops ensuring that educators would be equipped to handle the challenges they face in the classroom and beyond. They may foster a culture that values proactive approaches to teaching encourages innovation and collaboration among educators, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes. Investing in the well-being and proactive engagement of teachers is essential for creating a nurturing and thriving educational environment.

Moreover, school heads may prioritize initiatives aimed at the extensive psychological empowerment and promotion of proactive behavior among teachers. They may provide regular opportunities for teachers to engage in self-care practices, such as mindfulness exercises and counseling sessions, can significantly contribute to their overall well-being and resilience. Also, they may encourage a proactive approach to teaching through continuous professional development and recognition of innovative teaching strategies fosters a culture of excellence and growth within the school community.

Furthermore, teachers may prioritize their own psychological empowerment and proactive behavior to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. Engaging in regular self-care practices, such as mindfulness, exercise, and seeking support when needed, may help maintain their mental well-being and resilience. They may embrace a proactive mindset involves continuously seeking opportunities for professional growth, experimenting with new teaching methods, and collaborating with colleagues to improve student outcomes.

Lastly, future researchers may prioritize studying the extensive psychological empowerment and proactive behavior of teachers to gain insights into their impact on educational outcomes. Conducting longitudinal studies that track the effects of psychological empowerment initiatives on teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and performance may provide valuable evidence for designing effective interventions. By focusing on these areas, future researchers can contribute to the development of evidence-based practices that promote the psychological empowerment and proactive behavior of teachers, ultimately benefiting the entire educational community.

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