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Leadership Strategies Employed by School Heads in Fostering a Positive Work Environment for Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the leadership strategies employed by school heads in fostering a positive work environment for teachers. It also examines their impact on teacher morale, job satisfaction, burnout, and productivity. Using quantitative design - assessed the level of leadership strategies through statistical analysis. Findings revealed that school heads consistently practice effective leadership strategies, with communication and support systems playing a significant role in enhancing teacher morale and productivity. While teachers generally reported high job satisfaction, areas such as burnout reduction and efficiency improvements require further attention.

The study concludes that strong and supportive leadership is essential in creating a motivating, empowering, and productive teaching environment. By continuously improving leadership strategies, school heads can foster a thriving educational culture, ensuring both teacher well-being and student success. The results provide valuable recommendations for educational leaders, policymakers, and future researchers in enhancing school leadership practices.

INTRODUCTION

School heads play a crucial role in shaping educational institutions' overall culture and work environment. Their leadership sets the tone for how teachers interact, collaborate, and engage in their professional duties. A positive work environment directly impacts teacher satisfaction, retention, and overall performance, which in turn influences student outcomes. School heads can significantly enhance teachers' well-being and motivation by fostering open communication, providing opportunities for professional growth, and promoting a supportive atmosphere.

However, many schools face challenges in establishing a positive work environment due to ineffective leadership strategies, lack of teacher support, and inadequate professional development opportunities. School heads must employ leadership approaches that not only ensure administrative efficiency but also create an atmosphere where teachers feel valued, motivated, and empowered to perform their roles effectively (Avolio & Bass, 2019).

Additionally, school heads can foster a positive work environment by ensuring that teachers have access to adequate resources and professional development opportunities. Creating a culture of collaboration, where teachers can share ideas, mentor one another, and work together toward common goals, enhances job satisfaction. Recognizing and rewarding teachers for their hard work and accomplishments also contributes to a healthy and positive workplace, leading to better retention and overall school performance (Abari-Ibolya and Baráth 2020).

The existing research gaps for the study were anchored in many challenges encountered by school heads in different educational contexts, that examine the role of school heads in diverse settings, particularly in under-resourced schools, where creating a positive work environment may present unique challenges. Understanding this contextual variance could offer valuable insights into leadership practices tailored to different school environments (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016).

Observing issues such as lack of effective communication, limited support for professional growth, and low teacher morale has highlighted the critical need for strong leadership in creating a motivating and collaborative atmosphere. These challenges not only impact teacher satisfaction but also influence student learning outcomes. By examining the role of school heads in shaping a positive work environment, this study aims to identify strategies that can enhance teacher well-being, job performance, and overall school effectiveness (Abari-Ibolya and Baráth 2020).

This study aims to further understand the role of school heads in fostering a positive work environment for teachers. This is exploratory research aimed at finding the specific role of the school heads and possible strategies to enhance their capabilities and effectiveness in leading diverse educational communities (Juneja, 2020).

Statement of the Problems

The general aim of this study is to find out the leadership strategies employed by school heads in fostering a positive work environment for teachers. Specifically, the study will be conducted to answer the following:

1. What are the leadership strategies employed by the school heads to increase the positive working environment for teachers?
2. To what extent is the level of school heads in terms of job satisfaction, teachers' morale, reduced burnout and enhanced productivity?
3. Is there a significant influence on the leadership strategies employed by school heads on teachers' work environment?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of school heads' support to teachers' morale, motivation, and job satisfaction?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers used a descriptive research design (Williams, 2017). Data were described using quantitative analysis of the respondents. An answer to the survey questionnaire was presented using the frequency count, weighted mean, and statistical tools.

The validity of a measurement procedure refers to the extent to which it accurately measures what it intends to measure. It's a critical aspect of research methodology, ensuring that the data collected is meaningful and relevant to the research question or hypothesis (Wainer & Braun, 2018).

Locale of the Study

This study conducted in selected schools within the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Cotabato, specifically in the municipalities of Matalam, M'lang, and Tulunan. These municipalities, located in the province of Cotabato, are known for their diverse cultural and educational landscapes, accommodating learners from various socio-economic backgrounds.

Matalam is a progressive municipality with a mix of urban and rural communities. It hosts several public elementary and secondary schools that cater students from different barangays. The town's educational institutions focus on enhancing students' academic performance while promoting local culture and traditions.

M'lang, another key municipality in Cotabato, is recognized for its agricultural economy and commitment to quality education. The schools in M'lang strive to balance academic excellence with technical-vocational skills, equipping students with competencies essential for lifelong learning. The presence of both urban and rural schools highlights the municipality's efforts in making education accessible to all learners.

Tulunan, situated in the southern part of Cotabato, is a growing community that values education as a crucial tool for development. The schools in Tulunan serve students from both lowland and upland communities, providing learning opportunities that cater to diverse needs.

Despite challenges such as geographical barriers and resource limitations, the educational institutions in the municipality remain dedicated in improving student outcomes through innovative teaching strategies.

These municipalities collectively represent the diverse educational landscape of SDO Cotabato, making them suitable locations for conducting studies related to academic interventions and instructional improvements. This research study conducted by the safety precautions specified by IATF, so the respondents were aware of the safety protocols and followed them while answering the questionnaire/survey.

Research Instrument

The researchers used adapted survey questionnaires from Locke (2016) to generate and validate the question or questionnaires consisting of indicators that measured the level of leadership development skills and challenges faced by elementary administrators in leading school communities and underwent internal consistency.

The first part of the instrument measured the role of school heads. The second part of the instrument measured school principals' role in fostering a teachers' work environment in getting to know the respondents' different school communities. This part was scored using the following scale.

Level	Range	Verbal Description
5	4.50 - 5.00	Always
4	3.50 - 4.49	Oftentimes
3	2.50 - 3.49	Sometimes
2	1.50 - 2.49	Rare
1	1.00 - 1.49	Very rare

Research Participants

The respondents of this study were school heads and teachers from selected public elementary schools in the municipalities of Matalam, M'lang, and Tulunan under the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Cotabato. These respondents were chosen based on their direct involvement in the implementation and experience of leadership strategies within their respective schools.

Meanwhile, the teachers provide firsthand accounts of how these leadership strategies impact their job satisfaction, motivation, and overall work environment. By gathering data from both school leaders and teachers, the study ensures a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of leadership strategies in enhancing workplace conditions in the selected municipalities. Region XII of the Department of Education (DepEd) continues its commitment to providing quality education and fostering the development of learners, educators, and communities within its jurisdiction. This annual report presents an overview of the region's educational landscape, focusing on the number of school heads and their roles in advancing educational objectives (<https://deped12.weebly.com/about-deped-xii.html>).

As of the end of the fiscal year 2024, Region XII DepEd has a total of 2,240 school heads overseeing various levels of educational institutions, including elementary (1,658) secondary (584), and alternative learning systems (ALS) centers across the region (<https://deped12.weebly.com/about-deped-xii.html>).

Table 1. Distribution of respondents of the study in Schools Division office of Cotabato

Municipality	Name of District	Number of School Heads	Number of Teachers
Matalam	Matalam Central District	10	30
	Matalam South District	15	40
Mlang	Mlang Central District	5	25
	Mlang South District	5	25
	Mlang North District	5	30
Tulunan	Tulunan East District	5	25
	Tulunan North District	5	25
TOTAL		50	200

Source: (<https://ebeis.deped.gov.ph>). Accessed on September 10, 2024).

Data Analysis

The data gathered in this study analyzed and interpreted using a descriptive design such as weighted mean, and Spearman Rho correlation coefficient Spearman (1907), and the hypotheses of the study were tested using multiple regression analysis Pearson (Gelman, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section deals with the results of the quantitative data gathered from the respondents using a survey questionnaire. It discusses the level of the leadership strategies employed by the school heads to increase the positive working environment for teachers and extent is the level of school heads' support on teachers' morale, motivation, and job satisfaction. It discusses the significant influence on the leadership strategies employed by school heads on teachers' work environment and development and significant relationship between the level of school heads' support to teachers' morale, motivation, and job satisfaction.

Leadership Strategies Employed by the School Heads

The leadership approaches used by school administrators are important in determining the overall performance and achievement of an educational institution. Successful school leaders use transformational leadership, which creates a culture of teamwork, motivation, and ongoing improvement among teachers and students. Through the establishment of clear objectives, offering professional development, and promoting innovative teaching practices, school administrators establish an environment that improves teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Additionally, instructional leadership helps ensure well-developed, supervised, and refined academic programs as a function of students' needs, and consequently, quality in education.

The consequences of these leadership approaches go beyond school management and extend directly to the broader educational community. Effective implementation of participative and distributive leadership by a school head inspires collaborative decision-making, which enhances teacher morale and creates a sense of ownership of school programs. Strong leadership also promotes a healthy school climate, stemming the tide of teacher turnover, and enhancing student engagement. Schools with strong leadership tend to realize better academic performance and the development of well-rounded students, supporting the significance of strategic leadership practices in maintaining educational excellence.

Summary of Leadership Strategies Employed by the School Heads to Increase the Positive Working Environment for Teachers

The summary of findings presented in Table 2 reveals that school heads consistently implement leadership strategies that foster a positive working environment for teachers, as indicated by the overall weighted mean of 4.75 (Always). Among the key leadership strategies, Trust and Respect received the highest weighted mean of 4.80, emphasizing that school heads prioritize building strong professional relationships, mutual respect, and trust among educators. This high level of trust contributes to a supportive and inclusive school culture, where teachers feel valued and empowered.

This result implies that school heads must continuously refine and enhance these leadership strategies to sustain a positive work culture. By doing so, they can motivate teachers to perform at their best, encourage innovation in teaching, and ultimately improve student learning outcomes. Future policies and training programs should focus on strengthening leadership capacity, promoting teacher well-being, and maintaining an environment of collaboration and trust to ensure long-term educational success.

Table 2. Summary of leadership strategies employed by the school heads to increase the positive working environment for teachers in terms of **teacher collaboration, trust & respect, communication strategies and support system.**

Leadership strategies employed by the school heads		
	Weighted Means	Verbal Description
Teacher collaboration	4.79	Always
Trust and respect	4.80	Always
Communication Strategies	4.73	Always
Support System	4.68	Always
OVER-ALL WEIGHTED MEAN	4.75	Always

Level	Range	Verbal Description
5	4.50 - 5.00	Always
4	3.50 - 4.49	Oftentimes
3	2.50 - 3.49	Sometimes
2	1.50 - 2.49	Rare
1	1.00 - 1.49	Very rare

Teachers' Work Environment

A positive work environment is essential for teachers to perform their roles effectively, stay motivated, and provide quality education to students. A supportive and encouraging school atmosphere allows teachers to thrive both professionally and personally, fostering collaboration, innovation, and overall job satisfaction. Factors such as leadership support, open communication, trust, respect, and access to resources significantly influence the overall work environment. When school heads prioritize these elements, teachers feel valued, empowered, and motivated to give their best efforts in the classroom.

In support, research consistently shows that supportive and effective school leadership is a crucial factor in teacher satisfaction, motivation, and retention. Leaders who are visible, provide clear direction, offer constructive feedback, and advocate for their teachers create a more positive work environment (Leithwood et. al., 2020).

Summary of Teachers' Work Environment in terms of Job Satisfaction, Teacher Morale, Reduced Burnout and Enhanced Productivity

Table 3 reveals that the overall work environment for teachers is generally positive, as reflected in the overall weighted mean of 4.48 (Oftentimes). This suggests that while teachers frequently experience job satisfaction, high morale, reduced burnout, and enhanced productivity, however there are still areas that require continuous improvement to ensure a consistently supportive and motivating workplace.

The results suggest that school administrators should focus on strengthening programs and policies that promote teacher well-being, resilience, and efficiency. Providing structured mentorship programs, reducing excessive administrative tasks, recognizing teachers' efforts, and fostering collaborative work environments can significantly enhance morale, reduce burnout, and improve productivity.

Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017), stated that supportive and collaborative work environment can significantly reduce emotional exhaustion and increase job satisfaction among teachers. When teachers perceive that their school provides sufficient resources, professional support, and constructive feedback, they are more likely to feel valued and motivated.

Table 3. Summary of teachers' work environment in terms of **job satisfaction, teacher morale, reduced burnout and enhanced productivity**

Teachers' work Environment	Weighted Means	Verbal Description
Job Satisfaction	4.52	Always
Teacher Morale	4.48	Oftentimes
Reduced Burnout	4.44	Oftentimes
Enhanced Productivity	4.48	Oftentimes
OVER-ALL WEIGHTED MEAN	4.48	Oftentimes

Level	Range	Verbal Description
5	4.50 - 5.00	Always
4	3.50 - 4.49	Oftentimes
3	2.50 - 3.49	Sometimes
2	1.50 - 2.49	Rare
1	1.00 - 1.49	Very rare

Relationship of the Leadership Strategies and Teachers' Work Environment Communication Strategies and Teacher Morale

Presented in Table 4 reveals the correlation matrix illustrates a highly significant relationship between leadership strategies in terms of communication strategies and teachers' morale. Specifically, there is a correlation coefficient of 0.333** with a probability value of 0.017, indicating a highly significant association. The p-value is less than 0.01 level of significance, hence, the hypothesis was rejected.

It entails that the significant relationship between communication strategies and teachers' work environment, school heads should continue enhancing their communication approaches to create a more collaborative and supportive teaching atmosphere. Strategies such as regular staff meetings, open-door policies, clear and timely dissemination of information, and encouraging teacher participation in decision-making can further strengthen this positive relationship.

Leithwood and Sun (2019), principals and school administrators play a key role in shaping teacher morale by offering emotional support, professional autonomy, and recognition for their work. Their study revealed that teachers who feel valued and trusted by their school leaders are more likely to report higher levels of morale and job satisfaction. Moreover, teachers who are involved in decision-making processes within the school feel a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for the school's success, which enhances their morale.

Communication Strategies and Enhanced Productivity

Set out in the table 4 reveals the correlation matrix illustrates a highly significant relationship between leadership strategies in terms of communication strategies and enhanced productivity. Specifically, there is a correlation coefficient of 0.261* with a probability value of 0.044, indicating a highly significant association. The p-value is less than 0.01 level of significance, hence, the hypothesis was rejected.

This implies that school administrators should continuously improve how they communicate with their teachers. Implementing transparent policies, encouraging open dialogues, and using effective communication tools can help strengthen the connection between leadership and teacher performance.

The result signifies that as school heads improve their communication strategies, teachers tend to become more productive in their work. Effective communication fosters clarity in expectations, better collaboration, and a sense of direction, all of which contribute to a more efficient and motivated teaching workforce.

Men (2020) highlighted the role of internal communication in boosting employee engagement and organizational performance. The study found that transparent, consistent, and two-way communication between leadership and employees is vital.

Table 4 Correlation matrix showing the relationship of the leadership strategies of the school heads and teachers' work environment.

<i>Spearman Rho</i>					
Leadership Strategies		Job Satisfaction	Teacher Morale	Reduced Burnout	Enhanced Productivity
Teacher	Cor. Coef.	-0.036	0.097	0.017	0.049
Collaboration	Probability	0.801	0.499	0.907	0.733

Trust and Respect	Cor. Coef.	0.002	0.019	0.029	0.097
	Probability	0.990	0.892	0.841	0.499
Communication Strategies	Cor. Coef.	0.140	0.333*	0.139	0.261*
	Probability	0.326	0.017	0.331	0.044
Support System	Cor. Coef.	-0.095	-0.067	0.065	-0.066
	Probability	0.507	0.640	0.649	0.645

**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

*.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Influence of the Leadership Strategies on the Teachers' Work Environment Summary of Influence of the Leadership Strategies of the School Heads on the Teachers' Work Environment

Table 5 reveals the Summary of Influence of the leadership strategies of the school heads on the teachers' work environment. The study findings indicate that among the leadership strategies examined, communication strategies and support systems play a crucial role in shaping the teachers' work environment, particularly in terms of job satisfaction, morale, productivity, and burnout reduction. Effective communication strategies significantly enhance teacher productivity and engagement, ensuring that expectations are clear, collaboration is encouraged, and professional support is readily available. Meanwhile, strong support systems contribute to higher teacher morale and job satisfaction, providing educators with the necessary resources, mentorship, and recognition to thrive in their roles.

Johnson et. al., (2020) emphasize that school leadership plays a vital role in shaping this environment by establishing clear expectations, fostering collegiality, and ensuring teachers have a manageable workload. When teachers experience a positive school climate—marked by mutual respect, open communication, and shared decision-making—they are more likely to stay committed to their profession.

Table 5 Summary of Influence of the leadership strategies of the school heads on the teachers' work environment

Leadership Strategies	Job Satisfaction		teacher morale		reduced burnout		enhanced productivity	
	t-value	Prob.	t-value	Prob.	t-value	Prob.	t-value	Prob.
Teacher collaboration	0.159	0.875	0.796	0.430	0.175	0.862	-0.110	0.913
Trust and respect	-0.840	0.405	-1.200	0.236	-0.520	0.605	-0.250	0.804
Communication strategies	1.822	0.048*	2.886	0.006**	0.972	0.336	2.193	0.033*
Support system	-1.747	0.057	-2.076	0.044*	-0.161	0.873	-1.245	0.099
R ²	0.096		0.185		0.024		0.107	
F – Value	1.916		2.604		0.228		2.371	
Probability	0.049*		0.048*		0.884 ^{ns}		0.049**	

*.Correlation is Significant at 0.05 level.

**.Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Summary

This study explored the leadership strategies employed by school heads in fostering a positive work environment for teachers and their impact on teachers' job satisfaction, morale, burnout, and productivity. It focused on identifying the level of leadership strategies employed by school heads in key areas such

as teacher collaboration, trust and respect, communication strategies, and support systems. Findings revealed that these strategies were consistently practiced, as reflected in the high weighted means across all indicators. The study also analyzed the teachers' work environment, highlighting their perceptions of job satisfaction, morale, burnout, and productivity.

Results showed that while teachers generally experienced high job satisfaction, there was still room for improvement in reducing burnout and enhancing overall productivity.

Overall, the study emphasizes the critical role of transformational leadership in education, demonstrating that strong, supportive leadership fosters teacher well-being, engagement, and effectiveness, ultimately benefiting student learning and school success. The findings provide valuable insights for school administrators, policymakers, and educators in shaping leadership practices that promote a thriving teaching community.

Conclusions

The study explored the leadership strategies employed by school heads in fostering a positive work environment for teachers, findings highlight that school heads consistently employ effective leadership strategies including teacher collaboration, trust and respect, communication strategies, and support systems to foster a positive work environment for teachers. The high weighted means indicate that teachers generally perceive their school leaders as supportive and proactive in creating an environment where they feel valued and motivated.

Additionally, while teachers report high job satisfaction, challenges such as burnout and the need for further productivity enhancement remain areas for improvement. The statistical analysis further confirmed that communication strategies play a crucial role in influencing teacher morale and productivity, emphasizing the importance of clear, transparent, and open dialogue between school leaders and teachers.

This study assert that effective school leadership is a cornerstone of a thriving educational environment by prioritizing communication, trust, collaboration, and support, school heads can significantly improve teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. Moving forward, school administrators must continuously assess and refine their leadership strategies, ensuring that teachers feel empowered, valued, and motivated to deliver high-quality education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to further enhance the leadership strategies of school heads and foster a more positive work environment for teachers:

1. Strengthen Communication Strategies were found to significantly influence teacher morale and productivity, school heads should implement regular feedback sessions, open forums, and digital communication platforms to ensure transparent and effective communication. Encouraging active listening and open discussions will help teachers feel heard and valued.
2. Given the findings on burnout and work-related stress, schools should develop structured mentorship programs, teacher wellness initiatives, and stress management workshops. Providing counseling services and flexible workload adjustments can help teachers maintain a healthy work-life balance and reduce burnout.
3. To further build strong relationships between school leaders and teachers, administrators should recognize and appreciate teachers' efforts through awards, incentives, and public recognition programs. Additionally, involving teachers in policymaking and school improvement plans will foster a sense of ownership and trust.
4. Teacher productivity is influenced by leadership strategies, school heads should streamline workloads, promote time management training, and integrate technology tools to improve efficiency. Encouraging a positive work-life balance will result in more engaged and effective educators.
5. Future researchers may consider examining different leadership styles, such as servant leadership, instructional leadership, or democratic leadership, and their specific impact on teacher motivation, well-being, and school performance.

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