

School Principals' Leadership Practices, Teachers' Efficacy, Students' Achievement and Behavior

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Abstract

This study examined how school principals' leadership practices influence teachers' efficacy and how teacher efficacy relates to students' academic achievement and behavior in selected public secondary schools in the First Congressional District of Bohol Division during school year 2015–2016. Anchored on transformational leadership theory and Bandura's self-efficacy theory, the study used a descriptive-correlational research design. Respondents included 27 principals, 135 Grade 10 teachers, and 771 Grade 10 students. Data were gathered using the Leadership Practices Inventory, the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale, students' grades in major subjects, and a researcher-developed questionnaire on student behavior. Weighted mean, paired-samples t-test, and Pearson correlation were used for analysis. Findings showed that principals generally practiced transformational leadership, with enabling others to act rated highest and challenging the process rated lowest. Teachers' efficacy in instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management was rated high, while students showed generally good academic performance and positive behavior toward school. Significant relationships were found between principals' leadership practices and teachers' efficacy, and between teacher efficacy and students' achievement and behavior. The study recommends strengthening professional development for principals and teachers to improve leadership practices, instructional effectiveness, and student outcomes. The study supports SDG 4, Quality Education, and SDG 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, by emphasizing effective school leadership, teacher development, and institutional performance. Its sustainability impact lies in promoting long-term educational improvement, stronger school governance, and improved student learning outcomes.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Classroom Management, Leadership Practices, School Principals, Student Behavior, Student Engagement, Teacher Efficacy, Transformational Leadership

1. Introduction

This study examines how school principals' leadership practices influence teachers' efficacy and, consequently, students' academic achievement and behavior. Schools operate in increasingly complex and evolving environments, requiring effective leadership to foster teacher competence and improve educational outcomes. Grounded in transformational leadership and self-efficacy theory, the study explores the interrelationships among leadership practices, teacher beliefs, and student performance in selected secondary schools.

1.1 Background on School Principals' Leadership Practices and Teachers' Efficacy in Selected Secondary Schools

Schools serve as foundational institutions that prepare individuals for future societal roles, with their effectiveness largely dependent on school leadership. Leadership enables ordinary individuals to achieve extraordinary outcomes (Kotter, 2007), and school principals play a crucial role in guiding teachers toward improved student achievement. As emphasized by Fullan (2003), sustained school improvement requires collaborative efforts among competent teachers supported by strong leadership. Teacher efficacy, defined as teachers' belief in their ability to influence student learning, is closely associated with student achievement. Bandura explains that efficacy affects the learning environment teachers create, which in turn impacts academic outcomes. Given this relationship, understanding leadership practices that enhance teacher efficacy is essential for improving educational performance.

1.2 Themes on Transformational Leadership Practices and Teachers' Efficacy Affecting Students' Achievement and Behavior

Literature highlights that modern educational leadership must adapt to rapid societal changes and increasing complexity (Fullan, 1992). Effective principals influence school success through responsibilities such as curriculum implementation, staff development, and community engagement. Leadership that fosters trust, support, and open communication enhances teacher confidence and performance (Hoffman, Sabo, Bliss and Hoy, 1994; Pajares, 2002). Transformational leadership is widely recognized as a framework for effective school leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2002) identify five key practices: challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart.

These practices promote innovation, collaboration, and motivation, leading to improved organizational performance. Leadership rooted in integrity, service, and stewardship further strengthens trust and commitment within schools (Meyer and Slechta, 2002). Teacher efficacy is linked to instructional effectiveness, classroom management, and student engagement (Allinder, 1994). Teachers with high efficacy demonstrate persistence, adaptability, and confidence, resulting in higher student motivation and achievement (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Soodak & Podell, 1996). Conversely, lack of administrative support diminishes teacher confidence and limits performance.

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of School Leadership and Teachers' Efficacy in the Bohol Division

Globally, educational systems face increasing demands for quality and accountability, necessitating effective leadership. Nationally, policies such as Republic Act 9155 mandate school heads to function as both instructional leaders and administrative managers responsible for improving learning outcomes. DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2010 emphasizes leadership as the core of successful schools, promoting collaborative vision-building and transformational practices. Additional policies, including DECS Order No. 17 s. 1997 and the Service Manual 2000, reinforce the autonomy and responsibility of principals in delivering quality education. These frameworks highlight the importance of leadership in creating supportive environments that enhance teacher performance and student learning.

1.4 Theoretical Basis on Transformational Leadership and Teachers' Self-Efficacy Influencing Students' Outcomes

This study is anchored in Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), which explains how individuals' beliefs in their capabilities influence their actions, persistence, and performance. Self-efficacy consists of outcome expectations and efficacy expectations, both of which determine motivation and achievement (Bandura, 2001). The study also adopts transformational leadership theory, which emphasizes leadership as a set of behaviors that inspire, empower, and motivate individuals (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Kouzes and Posner, 2002). The interaction between leadership practices and teacher efficacy forms the conceptual basis for understanding their combined impact on student achievement and behavior.

1.5 Research Gaps on Leadership Practices and Teachers' Efficacy Affecting Students' Achievement and Behavior

Despite extensive research on leadership and teacher efficacy, there remains a need to examine their combined influence on both student achievement and behavior within specific school contexts. Previous studies highlight relationships between leadership support and teacher confidence, but limited research integrates these variables comprehensively in local settings. This study addresses this gap by investigating how principals' leadership practices affect teachers' efficacy and how this, in turn, influences students' academic performance and behavior. The findings aim to inform leadership development and instructional improvement strategies.

1.6 Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals on Quality Education and Institutional Effectiveness

This study aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education, as it focuses on improving teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes through leadership and teacher development. It also supports SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth by enhancing teacher competence and professional capacity, which contribute to workforce quality. Additionally, the study relates to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, as effective school leadership strengthens institutional performance and governance within educational systems.

1.7 Importance of the Study to Educational, Socio-Economic, and Institutional Sustainability

The study contributes to educational sustainability by promoting effective leadership and teacher development that improve long-term learning outcomes. It supports socio-economic sustainability by enhancing student achievement, which is linked to future productivity and societal development.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive method was applied to determine the profile of school principals' and teachers' perceptions of leadership practices, as well as teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher efficacy. The correlational approach was used to examine the relationships among principals' leadership practices, teachers' efficacy, and students' achievement and behavior. Questionnaires were administered to gather data on the variables and to identify differences and relationships among them.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in twenty-seven selected public secondary schools located in the fourteen municipalities of the First Congressional District of the Bohol Division during the school year 2015–2016. These schools had full-fledged principals and represented the research setting for examining leadership practices and their influence on teachers and students.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents included school principals, Grade 10 teachers, and Grade 10 students from the selected secondary schools. A total of twenty-seven principals, one hundred thirty-five teachers, and seven hundred seventy-one students participated in the study, representing the target population for assessing leadership practices, teacher efficacy, and student outcomes.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study involved respondents from selected public secondary schools across the municipalities of the First Congressional District of Bohol Division. The participants consisted of principals, teachers, and students from these schools, ensuring representation of the relevant groups needed to examine the relationships among leadership practices, teacher efficacy, and student outcomes.

2.5 Research Instrument

The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) developed by Kouzes and Posner (2003) was used to measure school principals' leadership practices. This instrument assesses five transformational leadership dimensions: modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. It consists of thirty items rated on a four-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicate more frequent use of leadership practices. Teachers' efficacy was measured using the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES), formerly known as the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale, developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001). This instrument evaluates teachers' perceived efficacy in instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement using a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Students' academic achievement was determined using their average grades in English, Mathematics, Science, Filipino, and Araling Panlipunan for the first and second quarters. Students' behavior toward school was assessed using a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to capture their responses to school and classroom activities.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher secured endorsement from the Dean of the College of Advanced Studies and obtained permission from the Schools Division Superintendent prior to conducting the study. The instruments were pilot tested on non-participant students to ensure clarity and appropriateness of the items. After validation, the researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the school principals, teachers, and students in the selected schools and retrieved them immediately upon completion. The collected data were organized and prepared for statistical analysis using Microsoft Excel.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Data were processed using Microsoft Excel. The weighted mean was used to determine the profile of principals' leadership practices and teachers' efficacy. The t-test for paired samples was applied to assess differences between principals' and teachers' perceptions of leadership practices and between teachers' and students' perceptions of teacher efficacy. The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships among principals' leadership practices, teachers' efficacy, students' achievement, and students' behavior. Interpretation of results followed established scales for leadership practices, teacher efficacy, and student behavior, as well as standard grading descriptors for student achievement based on DepEd guidelines (DepEd Order No. 48, s. 2015).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 School Principals' Leadership Practices and Teachers' Perceptions

3.1.1 Modeling the Way

The results show that school principals rated modeling the way as always practiced, while teachers rated it as very often practiced. Overall, this leadership practice received a high rating, indicating that principals frequently demonstrate expected values and behaviors, although slight differences exist in perception between principals and teachers. This finding suggests that modeling behavior plays a significant role in influencing followers. Maxwell and Dornan (1997) emphasized that individuals are often influenced more by what they observe than what they hear, highlighting the importance of leaders demonstrating consistency between actions and values. The slight variation in perception indicates that principals need to further align their actions with their stated principles to strengthen teacher trust and engagement.

3.1.2 Inspiring a Shared Vision

Both principals and teachers rated inspiring a shared vision as always practiced, indicating alignment in their perceptions. This reflects that principals effectively communicate future goals and organizational direction, fostering shared aspirations among stakeholders. This result implies that leaders are capable of articulating a compelling vision that motivates others. Hoyle (2002) noted that a vision becomes effective when leaders consistently communicate and demonstrate its relevance to organizational success. Similarly, Kouzes and Posner (2003) argued that leaders inspire commitment by aligning individual aspirations with collective goals, reinforcing the importance of shared vision in leadership effectiveness.

3.1.3 Challenging the Process

Challenging the process was rated as very often practiced and had the lowest rating among the five leadership practices. While principals consistently set goals and establish plans, they were less engaged in seeking external innovations and experimenting with new approaches. This finding indicates that although planning is emphasized, innovation and risk-taking require further development. Leaders may face limitations due to workload and time constraints, reducing opportunities to explore new strategies. However, leadership theory emphasizes the importance of experimentation and continuous improvement, suggesting that leaders should actively seek innovative solutions and adapt to changing environments.

3.1.4 Enabling Others to Act

Enabling others to act received the highest rating and was described as always practiced by both principals and teachers. This indicates that principals foster collaboration, respect, and empowerment within the school environment. This result highlights the importance of supportive leadership in building strong relationships and teamwork. Kouzes and Posner (1995) explained that empowerment and collaboration enhance organizational effectiveness by encouraging individuals to take initiative and responsibility. However, the relatively lower rating on professional growth suggests the need for increased opportunities for teacher development.

3.1.5 Encouraging the Heart

Encouraging the heart was rated as always practiced overall, with praise and recognition identified as the most frequent behavior. However, practices related to public recognition and celebration were rated lower. This finding suggests that while principals acknowledge achievements, more emphasis on recognition and celebration could further motivate teachers. Maxwell (1999) emphasized that effective leaders build confidence by recognizing accomplishments, while Kouzes and Posner (2003) highlighted that encouragement sustains motivation and commitment, particularly in challenging environments.

3.2 Teachers' Efficacy in Instructional Strategies, Student Engagement, and Classroom Management

3.2.1 Instructional Strategies

Teachers and students both rated teacher efficacy in instructional strategies as strongly agree, indicating high confidence in teaching abilities, particularly in responding to difficult questions and assessing student understanding. However, adjusting lessons to meet individual needs received relatively lower ratings. This suggests that teachers possess strong subject mastery but may face challenges in differentiating instruction due to large class sizes and diverse learner needs. Effective instructional strategies require adaptability, which is essential for addressing varying student abilities and improving learning outcomes.

3.2.2 Student Engagement

Teacher efficacy in student engagement was rated strongly agree, with the highest rating given to motivating students with low interest. The lowest rating was related to assisting families in supporting student learning. This indicates that teachers are effective in motivating students but have limited engagement with parents. Maton and Hrabowski (2004) emphasized the critical role of parental involvement in student success, suggesting that stronger school-family partnerships can enhance student engagement and achievement.

3.2.3 Classroom Management

Teacher efficacy in classroom management was rated strongly agree, indicating that teachers are capable of maintaining order and implementing routines effectively. However, clarity in communicating behavioral expectations received relatively lower ratings. This finding suggests that while teachers manage classrooms effectively, clearer communication of expectations could further improve student behavior. Establishing consistent rules and expectations is essential for maintaining a positive learning environment.

3.3 Students' Academic Achievement and Behavior

3.3.1 Students' Academic Achievement

The results show that most students performed at very satisfactory and satisfactory levels across English, Mathematics, Science, Filipino, and Araling Panlipunan, with no students failing. Overall, student performance was generally good across all subjects. This indicates that students are achieving acceptable academic standards, reflecting effective teaching practices. Consistent performance across subjects suggests that instructional strategies and teacher competence contribute positively to learning outcomes.

3.3.2 Students' Behavior Toward School

Students' behavior was rated positively, with strong agreement on engagement, participation, and satisfaction with school. However, studying at home without tests and parent communication received lower ratings. This suggests that while students are engaged in school activities, there is a need to strengthen independent study habits and parent involvement.

Positive school experiences contribute to student motivation and participation, but external support systems remain important for sustained engagement.

3.4 Differences in Perceptions

3.4.1 Differences in Leadership Practices Perceptions

The results indicate no significant difference between principals' and teachers' perceptions in modeling the way, challenging the process, and enabling others to act, while significant differences were found in inspiring a shared vision and encouraging the heart. This implies that while some leadership practices are consistently perceived, others vary depending on perspective. Fullan (1997) highlighted the complexity of leadership roles, suggesting that differences in perception may arise from varied expectations and experiences within the organization.

3.4.2 Differences in Teacher Efficacy Perceptions

There was no significant difference between teachers' and students' perceptions across instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. This indicates alignment in how teaching effectiveness is perceived, suggesting that teachers' self-assessment corresponds with students' experiences in the classroom.

3.5 Relationships Among Variables

3.5.1 Leadership Practices and Teacher Efficacy

The findings show a significant relationship between school principals' leadership practices and teachers' efficacy, despite a weak positive correlation. This suggests that leadership practices influence teacher confidence and performance. Blasé and Blasé (2001) emphasized that effective leadership fosters professional growth and reflective practices, which enhance teacher efficacy.

3.5.2 Teacher Efficacy and Students' Achievement

There was a significant relationship between teacher efficacy and students' academic achievement, indicating that higher teacher efficacy corresponds to better student performance. This finding supports previous studies (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy, 2001; Brown, Anfara, and Roney, 2004; and Tucker et al., 2005), which demonstrated that teacher efficacy is a strong predictor of student achievement. Teachers with high efficacy employ diverse strategies and take responsibility for student success.

3.5.3 Teacher Efficacy and Students' Behavior

The results reveal a significant relationship between teacher efficacy and students' behavior, with a slight positive correlation. This indicates that teachers with higher efficacy contribute to improved student behavior and engagement. Good and Brophy (2003) noted that high-efficacy teachers maintain higher levels of student participation, while Archambault, Pagani, and Fitzpatrick (2013) emphasized that supportive teacher behavior enhances student engagement and responsiveness. Additionally, Tournaki and Podell (2005) found that high-efficacy teachers make more adaptive judgments about students, contributing to better classroom outcomes.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study found that school principals and teachers had generally aligned perceptions of leadership practices, with principals consistently demonstrating key practices, particularly enabling others to act, while challenging the process was less frequently practiced. Both teachers and students perceived teacher efficacy to be high across instructional strategies, student engagement, and classroom management. Students exhibited generally good academic performance across learning areas and positive behavior toward school. Differences in perception were significant only in inspiring a shared vision and encouraging the heart, while other leadership practices and teacher efficacy dimensions showed alignment. Furthermore, significant relationships were established between school principals' leadership practices and teachers' efficacy, as well as between teachers' efficacy and students' academic achievement and behavior, indicating that effective leadership contributes to enhanced teacher efficacy, which in turn positively influences student outcomes.

It is recommended that the DepEd Bohol Division provide additional professional development programs to strengthen principals' leadership practices and evaluate their impact on teacher efficacy. School principals should enhance staff development initiatives by identifying instructional needs and reinforcing teachers' confidence in their teaching capabilities. Teachers are encouraged to participate in trainings and seminars to further improve their instructional effectiveness and contribute to better student performance. Future researchers may extend similar studies to broader contexts to further examine the relationship between leadership practices, teacher efficacy, and student outcomes.

The study was limited to selected public secondary schools in the First Congressional District of Bohol during the school year 2015–2016, involving a specific group of principals, teachers, and students, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. The use of descriptive-correlational design and self-reported data through questionnaires

may also limit the depth of analysis and introduce potential response bias, as the results were based on participants' perceptions rather than direct observation or experimental validation.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to institutional requirements by securing endorsement from the Dean of the College of Advanced Studies and obtaining permission from the Schools Division Superintendent prior to data collection. Questionnaires were administered directly to school principals, teachers, and students in selected secondary schools following proper coordination with school authorities.

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