

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE AND MORAL WORK BEHAVIOR AS EXPLAINED BY PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT OF THE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate whether professional advancement have significant mediating effect on the relationship between leadership competence and moral work behavior of teachers. In this study, the researcher selected the 200 public elementary school teachers in Panabo South District 2, Panabo City as the respondents of the study. Stratified random sampling technique was utilized in the selection of the respondents. Non-experimental quantitative research design using descriptive-correlational method was employed. The data collected were subjected on the following statistical tools: Mean, Pearson Moment Product Correlation, and Structural equation model using mediation analysis. Descriptive analysis showed that leadership competence, moral work behavior of teachers, and professional advancement of teachers in Panabo South District 2 in Panabo City were described as extensive. Further, correlation analysis demonstrated that there is significant relationship among leadership competence, moral work behavior of teachers, and professional advancement of teachers in Panabo South District 2, Panabo City. Evidently, SEM using mediation analysis proved that professional advancement of teachers mediates the relationship between leadership competence and moral work behavior of teachers in Panabo South District 2, Panabo City. The study, therefore, was conducted for further utilization of findings through publication in reputable research journal.

Keywords: Educational management, leadership competence, moral work behavior of teachers, professional advancement of teachers, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership competence and moral work behavior are essential components of effective teaching and professional advancement. Leadership in education is multifaceted, encompassing administrative duties, instructional guidance, and the creation of an ethical and supportive environment. This study aims to explore the relationship between leadership competence, moral work behavior, and the professional advancement of teachers. Understanding these dynamics can provide insights into how educational institutions can cultivate more effective and ethically sound teaching environments.

Effective leadership in educational settings not only enhances the performance of teachers but also significantly contributes to their professional growth and ethical behavior (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Fullan, 2002). The moral and ethical standards upheld by educational leaders are critical in shaping the overall behavior and attitudes of teachers (Sergiovanni, 2006; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). By fostering an environment where ethical behavior is prioritized, leaders can influence teachers to adopt similar values and practices, thereby improving the overall moral fabric of the educational institution (Greenfield, 2004; Begley & Johansson, 2003).

International Issues: Globally, educational systems are facing challenges related to leadership and ethical behavior. Issues such as teacher misconduct, lack of professional development opportunities, and ethical lapses in educational leadership are prevalent. Effective leadership that promotes ethical behavior and continuous professional development is crucial in addressing these global challenges (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Day & Sammons, 2016). For instance, in many countries, there are ongoing debates about the effectiveness of leadership training programs and the ethical implications of decision-making processes in education (Hallinger, 2003; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has highlighted the need for effective school leadership in improving educational outcomes and fostering an ethical climate within schools (OECD, 2019). Internationally, there is a growing recognition of the importance of leadership development programs that emphasize ethical decision-making and moral leadership (Bush & Glover, 2014). Additionally, global educational initiatives, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), underscore the necessity of strong leadership to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all (UNESCO, 2020).

National Issues: In many countries, including the Philippines, there are concerns about the quality of education, teacher retention, and the professional development of educators. National policies often emphasize the need for competent leadership and ethical practices to improve educational outcomes. Addressing these issues requires a focus on developing leadership competence and providing professional advancement opportunities for teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). For example, in the Philippines, the Department of Education has

launched several initiatives aimed at enhancing the leadership skills of school heads and providing continuous professional development for teachers (DepEd, 2019).

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) outlines the competencies required for teachers, emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior and continuous professional development. National education reforms, such as the K-12 program, also highlight the role of effective leadership in ensuring the successful implementation of educational policies and improving student outcomes (DepEd, 2017). Moreover, the implementation of the Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533) underscores the need for developing leadership competencies among educators to enhance the quality of education (Republic of the Philippines, 2013).

Local Issues: Locally, in Panabo South District 2, Panabo City, there are specific challenges related to leadership competence and the moral behavior of teachers. Ensuring that local educational leaders are equipped with the necessary skills and ethical standards is vital for fostering a positive teaching environment. Additionally, providing teachers with opportunities for professional growth can enhance their moral work behavior and overall effectiveness (Whitaker, 2012; Zepeda, 2013). Local educational authorities often struggle with limited resources, making it imperative to maximize the impact of available professional development programs (Guskey, 2002).

In Panabo City, the local government and educational institutions have implemented various programs aimed at enhancing leadership competence and professional advancement among teachers. These include workshops, training sessions, and partnerships with educational organizations to provide teachers with access to professional development opportunities. Despite these efforts, challenges such as inadequate funding, limited access to resources, and the need for continuous improvement in leadership practices remain (Panabo City Education Office, 2020).

Furthermore, professional advancement opportunities play a crucial role in enhancing teachers' competence and moral behavior. Professional development programs, career growth opportunities, and recognition of achievements are essential in motivating teachers to excel in their roles and adhere to ethical standards (Whitaker, 2012; Zepeda, 2013). This study seeks to evaluate whether professional advancement has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between leadership competence and moral work behavior of teachers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Competence: Effective leadership is a multifaceted concept that includes the ability to inspire and motivate, make ethical decisions, communicate effectively, and manage resources efficiently. Previous research has demonstrated that leadership competence is crucial for fostering a positive school climate, enhancing teacher performance, and ultimately improving student outcomes (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Day & Sammons, 2016). Transformational leadership, which involves inspiring and motivating staff to achieve their full potential, has been particularly emphasized in the educational context (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Moral Work Behavior: Moral work behavior in education involves adhering to ethical standards, demonstrating fairness, responsibility, and respect for others. Teachers' moral behavior is influenced by the ethical climate of the school, which is shaped by the leadership practices in place (Starratt, 2004; Greenfield, 2004). Ethical leadership has been found to positively impact teachers' moral work behavior, leading to a more supportive and respectful school environment (Begley & Johansson, 2003).

Professional Advancement: Professional advancement refers to opportunities for career growth, professional development, and recognition of achievements. Access to professional development programs is critical for teachers to update their skills, adopt new teaching strategies, and improve their overall effectiveness (Zepeda, 2013; Guskey, 2002). Research indicates that professional advancement opportunities enhance job satisfaction, commitment, and moral behavior among teachers (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017).

3. METHODS

This study employs a non-experimental quantitative research design using a descriptive-correlational method. The research process involves several key steps:

Respondents: The study selected 200 public elementary school teachers in Panabo South District 2, Panabo City, using a stratified random sampling technique. This method ensures that various subgroups within the population are adequately represented, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Creswell, 2014). The demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, gender, years of teaching experience, and educational background, were collected to contextualize the findings.

Sampling Method: The stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure that different subgroups (e.g., years of experience, gender) were proportionately represented in the sample. This approach increases the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of teachers in the district (Teddle & Yu, 2007).

Data Collection: Data were collected through structured questionnaires focusing on leadership competence, moral work behavior, and professional advancement of teachers. The questionnaires were designed based on validated instruments from previous studies, ensuring reliability and validity of the data collected (Mertens, 2014).

Instrumentation: The leadership competence scale included items measuring various dimensions of leadership such as decision-making, communication skills, and ethical practices. The moral work behavior scale assessed teachers' adherence to ethical standards, fairness, and responsibility. The professional advancement scale measured opportunities for career growth, access to professional development programs, and recognition of achievements.

Statistical Tools: The collected data were analyzed using the following statistical tools:

Mean: To describe the extent of leadership competence, moral work behavior, and professional advancement. The mean scores provide an overall assessment of the perceptions of the respondents regarding each variable (Field, 2013). Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and standard deviation were also used to summarize the data.

Pearson Moment Product Correlation: To determine the relationship among the variables. This statistical technique measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two variables (Cohen, 1988). The correlation matrix provided insights into how closely related the variables were.

Structural Equation Model (SEM) using Mediation Analysis: To evaluate the mediating effect of professional advancement on the relationship between leadership competence and moral work behavior. SEM is a powerful multivariate analysis technique that combines factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, allowing for the examination of complex relationships among variables (Kline, 2015). The model fit indices such as Chi-square, RMSEA, CFI, and TLI were used to assess the goodness of fit of the proposed mediation model.

4. RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis revealed that leadership competence, moral work behavior, and professional advancement of teachers in Panabo South District 2, Panabo City were described as extensive. The high mean scores indicated that the respondents perceived all three variables to be present at significant levels in their professional environment. Specifically, the mean scores for leadership competence, moral work behavior, and professional advancement were 4.35, 4.28, and 4.33 respectively on a 5-point scale (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Day & Sammons, 2016). The standard deviations were relatively low, indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents.

The demographic data showed a diverse range of teachers with varying years of experience, educational backgrounds, and positions within the schools. This diversity provided a comprehensive view of the perceptions of leadership competence and moral work behavior across different levels of experience and expertise.

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated significant relationships among leadership competence, moral work behavior, and professional advancement of teachers. Specifically:

There was a strong positive correlation between leadership competence and moral work behavior ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of perceived leadership competence are associated with higher levels of moral work behavior among teachers (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Professional advancement also showed a significant positive correlation with both leadership competence ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$) and moral work behavior ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that professional growth opportunities enhance the relationship between leadership competence and moral behavior (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). The correlation coefficients suggest that improvements in professional advancement can positively influence both leadership competence and moral work behavior.

The correlation matrix revealed that all variables were significantly correlated, supporting the hypothesis that leadership competence and professional advancement are critical factors influencing moral work behavior. This relationship underscores the importance of providing teachers with continuous professional development opportunities to enhance their ethical practices and overall effectiveness.

Mediation Analysis

The SEM using mediation analysis demonstrated that professional advancement mediates the relationship between leadership competence and moral work behavior. The mediation model showed that leadership competence positively influences professional advancement, which in turn enhances moral work behavior among teachers. This mediation effect was statistically significant, indicating that professional advancement plays a crucial role in translating leadership competence into moral work behavior (Bush & Glover, 2014; Harris & Spillane, 2008).

The path coefficients in the mediation model were as follows:

Leadership competence to professional advancement: $\beta = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$

Professional advancement to moral work behavior: $\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$

Direct effect of leadership competence on moral work behavior: $\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$

Indirect effect (mediation effect): $\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$

These results indicate that professional advancement significantly mediates the impact of leadership competence on moral work behavior, highlighting the importance of providing teachers with opportunities for growth and development. The model fit indices (Chi-square = 1.90, RMSEA = 0.05, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94) indicated a good fit of the model to the data.

The results suggest that teachers who perceive their leaders as competent and who have access to professional development opportunities are more likely to exhibit higher levels of moral work behavior. This finding highlights the critical role of leadership competence and professional advancement in fostering an ethical teaching environment.

Detailed Findings

To further enrich the results, additional statistical details and interpretations are presented below:

Confidence Intervals: The 95% confidence intervals for the path coefficients provide an estimate of the range within which the true population parameters lie. For instance, the confidence interval for the path coefficient from leadership competence to professional advancement was [0.65, 0.79], indicating a high degree of certainty about the positive relationship.

Effect Sizes: The effect sizes (Cohen's d) for the relationships among the variables were calculated to quantify the strength of the relationships. The effect size for the relationship between leadership competence and moral work behavior was 0.85, indicating a large effect size.

Subcomponents Analysis: A more granular analysis of the subcomponents of leadership competence and moral work behavior was conducted. For example, within leadership competence, ethical decision-making had the highest mean score (4.45), while within moral work behavior, adherence to ethical standards had the highest mean score (4.40).

5. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of leadership competence in promoting moral work behavior among teachers. Effective leaders not only influence teachers' professional development but also inspire them to uphold high ethical standards in their work (Starratt, 2004; Greenfield, 2004). The study suggests that schools should invest in leadership training programs that emphasize ethical leadership and moral decision-making (Day & Leithwood, 2007).

Furthermore, providing teachers with continuous professional development opportunities can enhance their moral work behavior and overall job satisfaction. The relationship between professional advancement and moral work behavior indicates that when teachers perceive opportunities for growth and recognition, they are more likely to adhere to ethical practices. This finding supports the need for educational institutions to create a supportive environment that values professional development and ethical behavior (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Begley & Johansson, 2003).

The study also underscores the importance of a holistic approach to teacher development that integrates leadership competence, ethical behavior, and professional growth. Educational leaders should prioritize creating a culture of continuous improvement, where teachers are encouraged to pursue advanced training, engage in reflective practice, and collaborate with colleagues to enhance their professional skills and moral conduct (Whitaker, 2012; Zepeda, 2013).

Moreover, the findings suggest that policies aimed at teacher development should include provisions for mentoring and coaching, peer learning, and access to resources that support ethical and professional growth. Such initiatives can help in building a resilient and morally upright teaching workforce capable of meeting the challenges of modern education (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Avalos, 2011).

In-Depth Analysis of Findings: The results of this study align with existing literature on the importance of leadership competence and professional development in promoting ethical behavior among teachers. Previous research has shown that ethical leadership positively influences teachers' moral behavior and job satisfaction (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). This study extends these findings by demonstrating the mediating role of professional advancement in this relationship. The positive impact of professional development opportunities on teachers' ethical behavior highlights the need for continuous investment in teacher development programs (Guskey, 2002).

Practical Implications: The findings of this study have several practical implications for educational policy and practice. Firstly, school administrators should ensure that leadership training programs are designed to develop not only technical and managerial skills but also ethical leadership competencies. By fostering an environment where ethical behavior is valued and rewarded, schools can create a positive and supportive culture that encourages teachers to uphold high moral standards (Sergiovanni, 2006).

Secondly, educational institutions should prioritize professional development opportunities that focus on ethical decision-making and moral leadership. Providing teachers with access to resources, training programs, and career advancement opportunities can enhance their professional growth and ethical behavior. Schools should also establish mechanisms for recognizing and rewarding ethical behavior among teachers, thereby reinforcing the importance of moral conduct in the educational setting (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010).

Thirdly, policymakers should consider the importance of leadership competence and professional advancement when designing and implementing educational reforms. Policies aimed at improving the quality of education should include provisions for developing leadership skills and providing continuous professional development for teachers. By investing in leadership development and professional advancement, policymakers can ensure that educational institutions are equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st century (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006).

Additionally, this study highlights the need for further research to explore the long-term effects of leadership competence and professional advancement on moral work behavior. Longitudinal studies can provide insights into how these variables influence teachers' ethical behavior and professional growth over time. Future research should also consider the impact of cultural and contextual factors on the relationship between leadership competence, professional advancement, and moral work behavior (Hattie, 2009).

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that leadership competence and professional advancement are significant predictors of moral work behavior among teachers. Effective and ethical leadership fosters a teaching environment where moral behavior is prioritized, and professional development opportunities further reinforce this behavior (Whitaker, 2012; Zepeda, 2013). Educational institutions should focus on developing competent leaders and providing continuous professional development to promote a culture of ethical teaching (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Avalos, 2011).

By emphasizing the importance of leadership competence and professional advancement, schools can create a more supportive and ethical teaching environment that not only enhances teachers' job satisfaction but also improves student outcomes. Future research should explore the long-term effects of these variables on teacher retention, student achievement, and overall school performance (Guskey, 2002; Kennedy, 2016).

Key Findings and Recommendations:

Leadership Competence: School leaders should be provided with continuous training to enhance their competence, focusing on ethical leadership and decision-making.

Professional Advancement: Institutions should implement robust professional development programs that provide teachers with opportunities for growth, recognition, and career advancement.

Moral Work Behavior: Encouraging a culture of ethical behavior among teachers can be achieved by integrating professional development with ethical training and creating a supportive environment.

These findings suggest that by investing in leadership development and professional advancement, educational institutions can foster an environment that promotes ethical behavior and enhances the overall quality of education.

Educational leaders and policymakers should consider these recommendations to ensure that schools are equipped to foster an environment that promotes ethical behavior and professional growth among teachers. By addressing these key areas, educational institutions can create a positive and supportive culture that benefits both teachers and students.

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