HEART OF LEADER: SUPREME PUPIL GOVERNMENT ADVISERS' VIEWS ON THE SERVANT LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR OF OFFICERS

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the views of Supreme Pupil Government Advisers regarding the servant leadership behaviors of the officers. This study employed a phenomenological research design which aims to determine the experiences and perceptions of the eight (8) participants. The emerging themes under positive views were heightened social consciousness and collaboration for meaningful outcomes. Meanwhile, the emerging themes on the negative views encompassed hampered decision-making process, overshadowed direction and goals, and difficulty in enforcing accountability. On the coping ways of the Supreme Pupil Government advisers to assist the officers in handling the challenges, the emerging themes were enhancing problem-solving skills, developing self-reflection and reaffirmation, and seeking feedback and improvement. Lastly, the emerging themes on the educational management insights drawn from the experiences of the Supreme Pupil Government advisers' included empowerment and accountability of SPG officers, emotional intelligence for servant leadership, and positive organizational culture. Accepting these themes, educational managers could effectively support and promote servant leadership behavior among students, creating a positive and impactful learning environment in schools, and producing servant-oriented generation of student leaders. The results generated in this study also provided comprehensive data in conducting future research with similar scope. This study may be published in a reputable research journal.

Keywords: servant leadership, behavior, views, officers, Davao Occidental

1. INTRODUCTION

Servant-leadership is a leadership philosophy that emphasizes serving others first, rather than focusing on one's own interests or power (Samon, 2020). In the context of student governing bodies, servant-leadership can be an effective approach to student leadership that fosters collaboration, inclusivity, and a sense of community among students. In addition, such philosophy is important for student governing bodies to adopt as it can help them become effective leaders while also contributing to the betterment of their school and communities. By prioritizing the needs of others, collaborating effectively, and developing strong interpersonal skills, students can build a strong foundation for success in their personal and professional lives.

Student leaders may at times face challenges while attempting to put the ideology of service-leadership into practice. It requires them to invest significant emotional energy into their work (Oanda, 2016). This can involve listening to the needs and concerns of others, building relationships, and offering emotional support. Emotional labor can be draining, especially when dealing with challenging or difficult situations. Moreover, service-leadership often involves high expectations from oneself and others (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Student leaders may feel pressure to perform at a high level, deliver results, and make a meaningful impact. These expectations can be challenging to meet, and failure to meet them can be discouraging. What is more is that, service-leadership can be a time-consuming endeavor, especially for students who may also have other commitments such as schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and social engagements (Sifuna, 2012). Finding the time to engage in service work, attend meetings, and coordinate with others can be difficult and tiring.

According to the findings of certain experts, there are some student leaders who either resign from their positions or try to avoid them because they have too many responsibilities and are under too much pressure. For example, Vikas (2009) found that four out of ten student leaders in Canadian schools who participated in the survey admitted that stress was a factor in their decision to step down from their leadership roles. Student leaders in Canada are often juggling multiple responsibilities, including their academic workload, extracurricular activities, personal relationships, and their leadership position. Vikas (2009) also claimed that 75% of student leaders in Canadian schools experiences burnout which led to the lack of motivation, energy, and productivity.

Just like in other countries, student leadership in Japanese schools is an important aspect of the education system but is also comes with its own set of issues. Based on Maina (2011) study, Japanese schools are known for their strict hierarchical structure, which can make it difficult for student leaders to challenge authority or propose new ideas. The strict hierarchical structure of Japanese schools can pose a challenge to the practice of service-leadership among students. In Japanese schools, students are expected to show respect for their elders and follow the instructions of their

teachers and superiors. This emphasis on hierarchy and obedience can sometimes limit the ability of student leaders to practice service-leadership effectively, which is why majority of Japanese students refuse leadership roles in schools, especially girls who are only expected to take on more administrative or supportive roles rather than leadership roles (Wangenge-Ouma, 2012).

Further, like in Japan, the hierarchical structure of Chinese schools is very rigorous. Chinese students are also expected to show respect for their elders and follow the instructions of their teachers and superiors (Chen, 2018). This can limit the ability of student leaders to challenge authority or propose new ideas that may conflict with established norms or expectations. There may be limited opportunities for student input and participation in decision-making processes. This can limit the ability of student leaders to practice service-leadership effectively and create a culture of inclusivity and diversity. In addition to strict hierarchical structure, Chinese students are pressured to excel academically (Huang, 2016). Chinese students are known for their rigorous academic workload and the emphasis place on academic achievement. This can make it difficult for student leaders to reconcile their leadership responsibilities with their academic load, which is why some stand down from their positions and others are discouraged from joining governing bodies by their parents (Xi, 2019).

Meanwhile, the student governing body in the Philippines, specifically at the primary level, is known as the Supreme Pupil Government (SPG). As is the case in other nations, this student governing body is both intricate and fluid, and its efficiency is contingent on the willingness of both the student leaders and the school administration to collaborate with one another to achieve the shared objective of improving the quality of life for students. In the same way that there have been problems in other countries, there have been a variety of problematic issues surrounding the Supreme Pupil Government in their role as servant leaders. For instance, in the research locale, Malita West District, Division of Davao Occidental, SPG advisers observed that the student leaders lack assertiveness. Assertiveness is an important trait for leaders, including those who practice servant leadership. Fear of conflict, low self-esteem, and lack of communication skills are observed as contributing factors. In addition, the SPG advisers acknowledge that student leaders lack adequate training or development, which makes it difficult for them to effectively practice servant leadership and overcome obstacles along the way. In fact, some of the officers refuse work because it is difficult for them to do.

There is currently extensive study on the contributions of student governing bodies to school performance; however, there is a dearth of research on the challenges of student servant-leadership that affect how they accomplish their roles in schools. It is for this reason that the researcher undertook this study to explore the view of SPG advisers regarding the servant-leadership of the student leaders. Such will cover both good and negative views to generate further research on the behavior of student leaders.

2. METHODS

Methodology is different from method. Methodology is creative and responsive approach to understand questions and subject matter while method refers to the exact knowledge and procedure (Gerodias, 2013). In this study, the lived perspectives of Supreme Pupil Government (SPG) advisers on student leaders' servant leadership behavior were explored, particularly those Supreme Pupil Government (SPG) advisers from Malita West District, Division of Davao Occidental.

The researcher's drive in knowing the deeper meaning of their experiences became the basis for doing qualitative research, a means of which is considered helpful in looking for "meanings and motivations that underline cultural symbols, personal experiences and phenomena". By using phenomenology, this need was hoped to be addressed by bringing the stories of the Supreme Pupil Government (SPG) advisers in a manner that, as David (2005) wrote, the themes, symbols and meaning of the experiences were presented. Phenomenological research was based on two premises. The first was that experience is a valid, rich and rewarding source of knowledge; this experience is a source of knowledge and shapes one's behavior.

From the definition, human experience was viewed as a cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena and not as an unreliable source. The second premise of phenomenological research laid in the view that the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge, and that we can learn much about ourselves and reap key insights into the nature of an event by analyzing how it occurs in our daily lives (Morrissey & Higgs, 2006).

By doing phenomenology which concerns with that "what" and the "how" (Moustakas, 1995), the researcher projected that the subjective experiences, challenges and coping mechanisms of the Supreme Pupil Government (SPG) advisers were explored and insights were drawn as basis for the possible future researches and policy analysis in relation to this research.

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3. RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the study were presented and discussed with reference to the aim of the study. Moreover, the themes that emerged from the data gathered were discussed in this chapter. The results presented the description and background of the participants who were assigned pseudonyms to conceal their identity.

Views of SPG Advisers on the Servant Leadership Behaviors of SPG Officers

Servant leadership emphasizes the importance of serving others and focusing on their needs, growth, and well-being. While servant leadership has the potential to create a positive and empowering atmosphere that promotes personal and collective development, the participants of the study also noted certain limitations or drawbacks associated with this leadership style. Below are the positive and negative views of SPG advisers on the servant leadership behavior of SPG officers.

4. DISCUSSIONS

In this study, thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the gathered data. The researcher analyzed the answers of the participants from the conducted interviews with the use of Creswell's Model specifically the identifying of themes approach. According to Creswell (2012) themes in qualitative research were similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database.

Familiarization with the data was common to all forms of qualitative analysis, the researcher immersed herself in, and became intimately familiar with, their data; reading and re-reading the data and noting any initial analytic observations.

Coding was also a common element of many approaches to qualitative analysis, involved generating pithy labels for important features of the data of relevance to the (broad) research question guiding the analysis. Coding was not simply a method of data reduction; it was also an analytic process, so codes captured both a semantic and conceptual reading of the data. The researcher coded every data item and ended this phase by collating all their codes and relevant data extracts.

Searching for themes was coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. The researcher ended this phase by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme.

Reviewing themes. The researcher reflected on whether the themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data, and began to define the nature of each individual theme, and the relationship between the themes. Defining and naming themes: The researcher prepared a detailed analysis of each theme identifying the 'essence' of each theme and constructing a concise, punchy and informative name for each theme.

Writing-up involved weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data, and contextualizing it in relation to existing literature. The researcher made sure that the perspectives of Supreme Pupil Government (SPG) advisers on student leaders' servant leadership behavior were presented comprehensively.

5. CONCLUSIONS

For the participants, SPG officers today exhibit a heightened awareness of social issues and a desire to make a positive impact. The SPG advisers observed that the SPG officers are often passionate about promoting social justice, equality, sustainability, and community development. The participants also acknowledge that different forms of oppression and discrimination intersect, affecting individuals in diverse ways depending on factors such as their race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and other related aspects. Their responses are the following:

"SPG officers exemplify servant leadership. In today's world, the youth possess a profound comprehension of the experiences, viewpoints, and obstacles encountered by individuals from various backgrounds." (P1)

"From my observations, it is evident that SPG officers demonstrate a strong appreciation for the distinct circumstances and needs of their fellow students. Their level of social awareness has notably increased." (P4)

The connection between increased social consciousness and effective leadership was implied. Thus, practicing servant leadership proves advantageous. By embodying servant leadership, SPG officers can develop a heightened level of social awareness, enabling them to better comprehend the needs, perspectives, and challenges of those they lead. This understanding empowers them to make well-informed decisions, foster effective communication within their team, and establish an inclusive and supportive environment. In addition, other participants expressed that:

"The SPG officers are driven by their increased social awareness to tackle issues and bring positive change in the school." (P6)

"The heightened social awareness of SPG officers motivates them to address issues and actively contribute to positive change. As a result, they exemplify servant leadership and experience numerous benefits from it. Moreover, not only do these officers benefit, but also the individuals they are serving." (P8)

The response indicated that SPG officers in the present time demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility for the well-being and progress of others, resulting in benefits for the entire community. Additionally, the responses suggest that through servant leadership, these officers are motivated to actively participate in initiatives that tackle social issues and contribute to the creation of a more improved society.

The viewpoint of SPG advisers regarding the increased social awareness of SPG officers, attributed to their embodiment of servant leadership, aligns with the assertion made by Kuh & Lund (2012). According to Kuh & Lund, today's young generation benefits from abundant information and resources due to technological advancements and widespread internet access. They utilize these tools to educate themselves about significant social issues. With an immense wealth of knowledge readily available, they acquire a comprehensive understanding of the diverse challenges confronted by various communities, be it on a local or global scale.

In addition, Stevens (2009) explained that servant leadership motivates student leaders to engage with a broader range of social issues and work towards creating a more just and sustainable world. He revealed that young people nowadays are influenced by their peers and the role models they admire. When they see their friends and influential figures actively engaging in social issues, it inspires them to become more socially conscious and take actions themselves.

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