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Examining School Climate and Teachers' Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

This study examined the school climate, teachers' organizational commitment, investigated the perceived school climate of the participating schools, and teachers' organizational commitment. It aimed to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the effects of the school climate on teachers' organizational commitment. Data were gathered from six participating schools from all districts of the Schools Division of Quezon City. The study was descriptive in nature and the respondents' responses were measured through a survey which was followed by interview and focus group discussions to probe and constructively discuss what factors would improve or strengthen teachers' organizational commitment and school climate. In total, 218 teachers and 6 principals participated. The instrument used to measure school climate was based from the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) developed by John Schindler of the California State University and the Three-Component Organizational Commitment Questionnaire developed by Natalie Allen and John Mayer to assess the respondents' organizational commitment. The results suggested a strong positive relationship between school climate and teachers' organizational commitment. Moreover, the results proved that school climate influenced the teachers' organizational commitment and elicited other factors that somehow affected their organizational commitment.

Keywords: school climate, organizational commitment, school-based management, school management.

Introduction

School climate might not be seen as very important by some educators, but it is an essential factor that affects the emotions and behaviors of principals, teachers, students and the non-teaching personnel within institution (Amrit and Cohen, 2013). It highly influences the attitudes and performances of the teachers and the principals. Many studies on school climate have shown that it promotes academic achievement, school safety, dropout prevention, teacher retention, healthy social interactions, and well-being (Cohen, 2010). Hence, there have been much research done to support the importance of a positive school climate in UNICEF, along with the US Department of Education, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Institute for Educational Sciences and foreign education ministries. These institutions focus its attention on school climate reforms that supports K-12 stakeholders of this era when technology had shaped our values and views on things anew.

In the Philippines, educators promote a positive school climate through heartwarming quotes, slogans and taglines, and murals painted on their walls. Simple yet striking quotes and proverbs are conspicuously painted around Philippine schools. Although there are disparities to be settled in improving school climates, this somehow affects the relationships between and among teachers and principals as well as the learning outcomes of students. A positive school climate could alleviate most, if not, all pressing concerns of teachers in the workplace.

Cerado (2016), examined the three dimensions of school climate, namely: physical, social, and academic. He mentioned that people's attitudes were affected by the physical and psychological aspects that were considered as essential elements of better teaching-learning conditions. He added that teachers would be more motivated if schools provided ample opportunities to teach more effectively. Also, he reiterated that social climate was characterized by good communication between and among teachers and learners, as well as their peers.

School climate is deemed as one of the most important factors in teachers' commitment and attitudes towards work. The interaction between teachers and principals may greatly predict the success of the schools' achievement of their goals. This link between people in schools could highly affect their motivation, aspirations towards their tasks and participation with school-based activities spearheaded by principals (Smith *et al*., 2014). Hence, for a closer perspective, the school climate of public elementary schools in Schools Division Office of Quezon City was explored to see how school climate could affect teachers' organizational commitment.

As stated, principals play vital roles in improving their school climate and teachers' organizational commitment in order to build rapport and develop harmonious relationships with open communication, trust, and sense of belonging. In addition, she emphasized that both teachers' and principals' commitment is mutually valuable because they are both aware that their interest is of no different to that of the organization. Filipinos in general are relationship-oriented and at the same time, take much priority over structural achievements; hence, principals need to practice considerate leadership to encourage their teachers better.

To address these issues, in 2015, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued DO 44, S. 2015 – Guidelines On The Enhanced School Improvement Planning (SIP) Process And The School Report Card (SRC) which aims to strengthen School-Based Management (SBM) by further devolving the governance of education to schools,

empowering school teams and personnel, expanding community participation and involvement, and making the delivery of education services to the learners more responsive, efficient, and effective through an enhanced school planning and communication process. The order expects the regional offices (ROs) and schools division offices (SDOs) to create support mechanisms for the schools and to orient them before its implementation in January 2016. This is an initiative by the bureau to improve school climate in public schools. Moreover, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the School Report Card (SRC) are DepEd's elements on School-Based Management (SBM) thrust. To improve the spirit of shared governance, schools prepare the SIP after thorough analyses of the school and the learner situation. These also serve as a communication and advocacy tool to inform the stakeholders of the school status and to encourage and inspire them to take an active role in planning, managing and improving schools.

In lieu of school climate is its effect on school personnel and staff. Teachers as front-liners have the greatest impact on the learners so their perceptions could help greatly in identifying the areas for reforms and interventions. Hence, examining the school climate could reveal the extent of teachers' organizational commitment. After all, no educational reform can begin unless it first starts with the teacher (Lucero and Etom, 2017). In addition, organizational commitment has been identified to have three components, namely: affective, continuance and normative (Starnes and Truhon, 2000). Affective or moral commitment occurs when teachers fully embrace the goals and values of the organization. It is a psychological attachment, and it refers to a positive affection reflected in a desire to see the organization succeed in its goals and a feeling of pride at being part of the organization. On the other hand, continuance commitment occurs when teachers base their relationships with the organization on what they could lose if they leave. It is an individual's awareness of the costs of leaving the organization. Employees continue to be a part of an organization because they fear the unknown opportunity cost of leaving the organization or having few or no alternatives. Lastly, normative commitment occurs when individuals remain with an organization based on the expected standards of behavior and social norms. These employees value obedience, cautiousness, and formality, and these attitudes are similar to that of affective commitment. They suggested that developing high levels of affective commitment will be useful to leaders who want to positively impact the performance of their organization. Without organizational commitment any plans and programs of top managers won't get far and the most modest plan and the most straightforward program will come out well.

Celebi *et al*. (2016), stated that the relationship between dimensions of loyalty and organizational commitment were significant predictors of affective commitment while employees' loyalty to their supervisors was a significant predictor to continual commitment.

This study aimed to examine school climate and its relationship to teachers' organizational commitment. Specifically, the study answered the following questions:

1. What is the perceived school climate of the teachers' respective schools?
2. What is the level of teachers' organizational commitment?
3. Does school climate affect teachers' organizational commitment?

Methodology

The study was descriptive in nature. The researcher used the survey method to explore the relationship of school climate to the teachers' organizational commitment. The purpose of the study was to: 1) examine the school climate and its effect to teachers' organizational commitment; and 2) investigate the factors that affect teachers' organizational commitment.

Overall, the design involved a total of 6 big (P3 and P4 categories) public elementary schools from the six districts of Quezon City. One school was selected per congressional district. Responses were sought from at least 30 teachers and principals through stratified sampling. Regardless of age, gender and years of service, there were 224 respondents from different positions, namely: Teacher I, Teacher II, Teacher III, Master Teacher and School Principals. After that, the researcher personally met the principals for an onsite structured interview which was done during the former's availability. The researcher also met with the selected teachers per school to conduct an interview with them.

School climate and teachers' organizational commitment were measured through a survey and a follow-up interview a number of focus discussion groups to validate the participants' responses and constructively discuss what factors could better improve or strengthen teachers' organizational commitment.

The researcher devised an instrument which was adapted but was locally relevant to the Philippine setting. The tools used were based from the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) Elementary Teacher Version to measure school climate and the Three-Component Organizational Commitment Questionnaire to assess their organizational commitment.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in this study. The relationship between school climate and teachers' organizational commitment was tested using the regression analysis while the output of teachers and principals was summarized to present and compare the school climate of participating schools. Regression analysis was used to determine the extent of a linear relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables.

On the other hand, the respondents' responses during the interview and focused group discussions were recorded, collated and themed to support the quantitative data.

Results and Discussion

1. Perceived School Climate of the Teachers to their Respective Schools

Based on the interviews, the principals defined school climate as the overall styles (of teachers, principals and students) employed in their schools, classrooms and communities. As they have been assigned to different schools before, they emphasized that school climate differs from one school to another, depending on the needs and culture of the teachers and the community in the area.

The respondents, principals and teachers alike, spoke about the varied concepts on school climate, namely: 1) Physical appearance of school and classrooms; 2) Relationships between and among principals, teachers, students

and their community; 3) Positive discipline; 4) Management/leadership styles of principals, overall styles and customs employed in the school; 6) learning outcomes of students: 7) student discipline; and 8) parental /community relations. They unanimously spoke that these dimensions on school climate affect their organizational commitment.

Table 1. Summary of General Weighted Mean of all Seven (7) Dimensions of School Climate

School climate Dimensions	Mean	Description
1. Physical Appearance	4.2	Middle High
2. Faculty Relations	4.4	Middle High
3. Leadership and Decisions	4.3	Middle High
4. Discipline Environment	4.2	Middle High
5. Learning Assessment	4.3	Middle High
6. Attitude and Culture	4.3	Middle High
7. Community Relations	4.4	Middle High
General Weighted Mean	4.3	Middle High

Range of Rating Description and Verbal Interpretation: 1-1.49: Low, 1.50-2.49: Middle-Low, 2.50-3.49: Middle, 3.50-4.49: High Middle, 4.50-5: High

Physical Appearance

It was evident from the interviews with principals that the physical appearance of the school was their first and top priority. Their schools were visibly welcoming because of murals, quotations, and reminders. For them, school climate was the atmosphere that was very conducive for both teaching and learning so improving the physical appearance of the school was their first priority and other aspects should follow after this. They all agreed that school climate was the overall ambience, appearance, cleanliness, and should ensure the safety of the students in the school; hence, it should be thoroughly maintained and improved at all times. However, during the discussions, teachers reported that their class and classroom size affected their class instruction. They would prefer their rooms to be more spacious for their students to be able to move around during group activities, as well for teachers to go around to check their students' work.

These statements were confirmed by Jonathan and Mbogo (2016), who stated that work safety and surroundings should not create significant risks for people to perform their work but should be aimed at creating

conditions, capabilities, and habits that enable them to perform work efficiently. These results also suggested that by ensuring the safety of the school, everyone could work more efficiently and comfortably.

Faculty Relations

The respondents thought that school climate also pertains to the relationships not only between faculty members but also with the principals, teachers, students and communities. According to the principals for the school to be successful, teachers should be able to work together collaboratively and this is not possible so if they don't have sound relationships with each other and this is not limited to the faculty members alone but also with their administrators, students and the non-teaching personnel based on sincerity and concern with one another. Hence, this should be maintained and be treated carefully because it affects the emotions and motivation of teachers.

Misunderstandings can sometimes be dangerous as some teachers tend to become uncooperative and antagonistic to school plans and activities which may lead to failure. This is why principals play a very vital role in the school climate especially on managing their teachers by being supportive and by communicating with them constantly; this will speed up the attainment of organizational goals.

The principals and teachers should make a good connection between each other to better work as a team to supports all endeavors towards the achievement of their organizational goals, and not as critics to each other, which could lead them nowhere.

Leadership and Decisions

Respondents put an overall rating of high middle for this dimension. Principals emphasized that principals should always remember their roles as school managers. Being visible at all times is very important in school management. By doing so, they could identify their schools' needs. Hence, they should avoid skipping or escaping work because they won't be able to justly and objectively make decisions if they are not always around. Also, they can affect the school climate positively if they can make firm and sound decisions on important matters. Communicating with them through timely meetings and memos can help them understand thing more easily. Fair consultations with the faculty members and affirmations from the principals could fire up their motivation. The National Education Association (2013) stated that principals should not neglect the fact that open communication and collegiality bring higher levels of commitment among teachers.

DISCIPLINE ENVIRONMENT

Overall, the discipline environment dimension data was perceived favorable by the respondents. However, the teachers complained about the discipline environment consistently as this is the most challenging because their students came from different kinds of families.

For most teacher respondents, this was the most challenging area and was the main cause of low academic achievement. Principals claimed that their school adhered to the positive discipline strategies to improve their classrooms' climate. To help their teachers, they would invite distinguished resource speakers to discuss positive

discipline strategies during their in-service trainings. Despite this, the majority of the teacher respondents had mentioned that student discipline was really taxing to them, more so because of the limitations posed in the Child Protection Policy. Teachers agreed that it would be a lot easier to teach if they were more disciplined. They suggested that the school, in partnership with the local government unit, should annually provide a series of parenting seminars and workshops to help parents help them handle their children's attitudes. If parents would be more involved in their children's discipline, they could lead them more easily towards better academic achievements. Joyce Epstein, the proponent of the six types of parental involvement, stated, that student achievement and parental involvement in their children's schooling was very closely related to high student achievement and better self-esteem. This could help ease the burden of student discipline among teachers and school heads.

Besides having parenting seminars, a behavioral management plan should also be prepared by principals and teachers to help them deal with discipline issues and implement or even devise policies for them to achieve their organizational goals. Smith (2009) mentioned that intentional strategies which were based on the schools' needs should be developed to address the schools' weaknesses and maintain or improve their strengths. However, there was a lack of policies to address disciplinary issues and as what Farah (2017) suggested that a professional development-training plan with proven behavioral techniques should be devised and adapted school wide to guarantee consistency so they could collectively help one another in dealing these issues.

Learning Assessment

The respondents similarly rated their school climate on learning assessment dimension high middle with a general weighted mean of 4.3. The principals expressed confidence on their teachers' instructional skills although they still felt the need to sometimes check on them. For them, it was important that teachers have well-prepared lessons. However, teachers complained that this dimension was affected by disciplinary issues. A lot of training was given to teachers to help them with their classroom instructions. This dimension was handled well by the schools, but the fact that this could be affected by the piling paperwork could not be ignored. It could also be noted during the interviews that they were zealous about giving their best but complained about the pile of paperwork that sometimes impeded their preparations for more interactive classroom strategies.

Respondents rated their schools' climate on attitude and culture dimension as middle high with a general weighted mean of 4.3. They could identify with the organization's goals and objectives. Teachers were supportive and helpful as attested by the principals. They stated that they value traditional programs like Family Day and Foundation Day. Some teachers stated that when a principal did not seem so interested in making efforts to continue these and activities that have been implemented and conducted for so long, they felt sad. Continuing these traditional events were usually anticipated by the stakeholders; hence, principals should also consider and include these activities in their school plan.

Community Relations

This dimension obtained a general weighted mean of 4.3 which indicated high middle. However, many teachers complained about student discipline and that it was highly related to community relations/parental relations. They claimed that many parents did not seem to help the teachers with their students' behavior and academic achievements, and stated that if they were more disciplined at home, teaching them would have been much easier because too much of their class time was lost whenever students misbehaved. Hence, they suggested that parents should be obliged to meet with them and cooperate in disciplining their children. They also mentioned that a yearly parenting seminar should be given to remind them of their duties as parents and partners of teachers and the school community for the betterment of their students towards more successful learning outcomes.

While some were uncooperative and unsupportive, other parents hover over their children too much that they tend to be overly sensitive when their children did not get to do the most important roles and tasks. Some principals narrated that the community relations were very challenging because some parents tended to linger in schools and have become friends with their children's teachers and have already grown familiarity which was not good because this might affect their credibility.

While many schools welcome parental involvement and made great efforts to listen to their students, we know that this was not always the case and not every family was able to take advantage. Other school-related issues included: absenteeism; truanting; challenging behaviors such as aggression, physical and verbal abuse; schoolwork; and homework. Schools recognized family differences and struggles but there were not many programs that obliged them to take part in school. Hence, parental involvement programs should be developed and an information drive on certain school policies should be implemented to make parents as teacher partners towards achieving organizational goals.

Teachers' Organizational Commitment Level

Generally, the respondents moderately agreed with the indicators in the affective commitment dimension with an overall weighted mean of 5.7 which meant that teachers were emotionally attached to their respective schools. Some teachers lived far from the schools they taught in because they claimed that their school had become their second home. However, principals seemed to be a little distant to their assigned schools because they were assigned to different schools from time to time but were concerned with their respective organizational goals and were willing to maintain good working relationships with their teachers. For them, their main goal was to monitor and supervise all their teachers to become better instruments of education for the achievement of their organizational goals. As Cogaltay (2015) stated that the quality of teachers' relationships motivated them and played an important role.

Continuance Commitment

Generally, the respondents slightly agreed to the continuance commitment indicators with an overall mean of 5.3. This meant that majority of the respondents were not just after the benefits they received from the government but more importantly towards achieving their organizational goals; although, some teachers went through financial issues. The always put extra effort to improve their students' academic achievement. However, as for the teachers juggling their finances, it was very challenging because of many reasons such as sending their children to school, funding their own education, rent and mortgage, food, and buying school supplies. Many teachers went through financial problems, as they lack financial management skills. The same remark emerged during the teachers' discussion. Teachers suggested that besides providing teachers pedagogical seminars and trainings, they should also provide them with seminars on financial management. These results meant that financial matters may affect teachers' organizational commitment hence, this should also be considered by the school planning team to help the teachers be better managers of their finances.

Normative Commitment

Teachers perceived their normative dimension of organizational commitment generally good. Overall, the general weighted mean for this dimension is 5.5 interpreted as moderately agree. This meant that teachers identified their individual goals with their organization's goals. As Celebi (2016) stated, normative commitment was evident when teachers valued obedience, cautiousness and formality, similar to that of affective commitment. If teachers did not have this kind of organizational commitment, any plans and programs could not succeed.

The principals stated that they saw to it that the teachers' goals were always aligned with the organizations' so that they could easily align their goals well and work together towards them. In relation to this, teachers valued their relationships with their principals, this was why they wanted their principals to relay important issues and decisions to them because they felt left out when there were changes they did not understand. With this, it could be inferred that practicing open and collegial relationships in schools affected teachers' organizational commitment. Principals should inform and involve the teachers in dealing with school issues for them to be always aligned with their organizational goals. As Tentama and Pranungsuri (2016) stated, organizational commitment came from teachers' motivation and satisfaction and a reflection of the supervisor's decency and monetary aspect alone could not do these but by making them feel valued and their skills and capacities are utilized for the attainment of organizational goals (Mohamed and Ruth, 2016).

Problem 3. Does school climate affect teachers' organizational commitment?

Table 2. Scatter Plot of School Climate VS Organizational Commitment

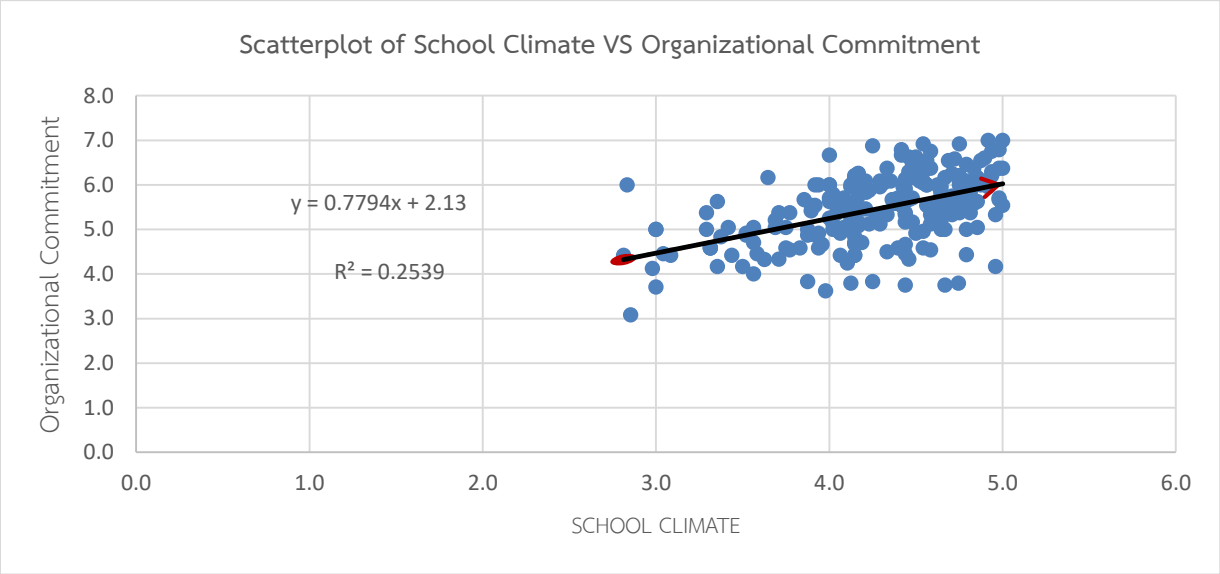


Table 2 shows the scatterplot of the respondents' responses on the indicators on school climate and organizational commitment. It can be noted that there are a few observations below the 4-point rating but most responses can be seen above it. In addition, the trend line shows that there is a strong positive correlation between school climate and teachers' organizational commitment because the good-fit line drawn amongst these points have a positive slope. Furthermore, Tables 3 and 4 specifically explain the regression statistics of the relationship of the two variables.

Table 3. Regression Statistics

Regression Statistics	
R	0.503903933
R Square	0.253919173
Adjusted R Square	0.250558449
Standard Error	0.668199133

Table 4. ANOVA Statistics

ANOVA

	Df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	1	33.73450999	33.73451	75.55489226	7.93664E-16
Residual	222	99.12079806	0.44649		
Total	223	132.855308			(p<.001)

Table 5. Intercept of School Climate

	Coefficients	*Standard Error*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
SCHOOL CLIMATE	0.779403925	0.089666722	8.692232	7.93664E-16	0.602697053	0.956110797	0.602697053	0.956110797

After treating the data in a scatterplot using simple linear regression technique, the trend line shows that there is a strong positive relationship between school climate and organizational commitment of teachers and principals of Quezon City. The equation on the scatterplot is the same as in the succeeding tables (Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5). As shown in the table, the R^2 value in the scatterplot, which is R2=0.2539, is the same as the value of R^2 after the regression treatment of the data. This means that prior to regression, a valid correlation was obtained. The model shows that 25% of the differences in teachers' organizational commitment is explained and that there are 75% that are unexplained. Studies that involve human behavior generally have R^2 values less than 50% because people are just harder to predict than other processes. The data show that there are many other unexplored reasons why teachers have high or low organizational commitment hence, these points are interesting points and would be good to investigate.

The principals and teachers expressed their perceptions on school climate and organizational commitment. During the interview, all principals claimed that their schools had a positive climate and that their teachers had strong organizational commitment. However, it could be noted that when the respondents were asked to define what school climate was, they interchangeably defined it with organizational commitment. When asked about their school climate, they spoke about being committed and motivated to their sworn vocation. The principals described them in different ways but all fell down to the different dimensions of school climate.

During the interviews and discussions with teachers and principals, they all agreed that they have strong organizational commitment although there were times when teachers hit their lows. They also thought that it was just normal to feel this way sometimes but they believe that all teachers had the passion and love of learning and teaching, hence they were strongly committed to their vocation.

It was clearly stated by Cohen and colleagues (2012), that teachers and principals should strive harder to clearly define the sets of norms, goals and values that shape the learning and teaching environment and this can be done well if teachers feel attached to the goals and visions of the school. Hence, principals should push for cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect and mutual trust between and among teachers and school principals not only to create a positive school climate but also to strengthen teachers' commitment.

When asked to define what organizational commitment was, the principals stated that this was evident when teachers could deliver their lessons despite any hindrances like personal problems or lack of instructional materials. A strongly committed teacher would not let a day slip away that their students would not learn a thing from them. They would surely ensure that they would go home loaded with learning. For them, teachers who had strong organizational commitment had a positive attitude towards their students and the work that came with the job. They also believed that seasoned teachers had stronger and more positive organizational commitment than those who just started in the service. In addition, the principals mentioned that organizational commitment was seen when teachers tried their best to teach well and had the initiative and responsibility to perform their tasks with joy in their hearts. One reiterated that, no seasoned teacher had very low organizational commitment. In fact, no one in the service had low organizational commitment and if there was, they would quit in a few years' time. Additionally, a principal described it as one's motivation towards work and patriotism towards their duties to their students and to the country. They also emphasized that teachers in public school were driven with a great amount of motivation and patriotism.

While these might be true, when asked about what drives them to continue working, the teachers would mention the different dimensions of school climate, namely: 1) physical appearance; 2) faculty relations; 3) student learning outcomes; 4) leadership and decisions; 5) discipline environment; 6) learning assessment; 7) community relations; and 8) community relations. At the same time, these indicators, according to them, dampened their spirits towards work at times.

From these discussions, the majority of the teachers mentioned the following indicators affected their organizational commitment more frequently than others: 1) Student discipline; 2) leadership and decisions; 3) family/community relations; 4) learning assessment, outcomes, and other issues and conditions emerged. As Lucero and Etom (2017) cited in their study, schools should pay attention to their teachers because they are the front liners and have the greatest impact on the learners so their perceptions could help greatly in identifying the areas for reforms and interventions.

Conclusion

The study shows that the principals did not have a well-defined management plan to improve or sustain their school climate and strengthen teachers' organizational commitment. Open-communication and collegial decision-making were some factors that could better involve teachers in School-based Management as they could better identify their individual goals with the organizational goals. The piling teacher workload was one huge factor that takes much time away from teachers' personal and social relationships with their families and friends. Preparation of instructional materials was a factor that struck their physical and mental health.

It should be noted that principals played a vital role in maneuvering their school climate; hence, they should look into all the school climate dimensions, not only to strengthen teachers' organizational commitment, but also to increase participation of the community, families and more importantly, the development of critical and reflective students.

Principals expected their teachers to be focused, happy and open-minded, but teachers expected them to be motivators, good decision-makers and communicators, role models, and improvement-oriented. By considering these, both parties would be able to address certain areas to improve school climate and strengthen teachers' organizational commitment.

The over-all school climate invigorates teachers' organizational commitment; hence, schools should have definite programs to uplift teachers' motivation to work collegially with one another towards the attainment of their organizational goals.

In the light of the findings and conclusion, schools are recommended to practice consulting and communicating issues with the teachers to be done regularly to further improve trust in leadership and decisions as well as to improve the attitude and culture of the school community. Seminars and conferences should be conducted to better motivate teachers to involve themselves in school projects and programs. They should also develop a wellness program for their teachers to maintain and improve their physical and mental health.

Schools should also develop a behavior management plan or a professional development-training plan which includes all the proven behavioral techniques. This should be adopted school-wide to help teachers deal with discipline issues. They should also consistently conduct parenting seminars to help the parents and teachers with students' discipline.

These results may be used in the policy making process of schools for the School Improvement Plan which involves developing a strong partnership between and among teachers and principals for them to attain their organizational goals. The instruments used in this study can also be used to determine the school climate and teachers' organizational commitment of teachers from the smaller public elementary schools (P1 and P2 categories) and in private schools. There is also a need to explore and investigate other unexplained factors of school climate which affect teachers' organizational commitment including a study on other stakeholders, like students, parents and the community to better measure school climate and its factors affecting them.

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