

School Climate and Work-Balance of Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract

This study utilized the descriptive qualitative research design which primarily aims to find out the school climate and work-balance of the seven elementary teachers in the new normal in the District of Patnongon I, Division of Antique in Western Visayas during the school year 2021 – 2022. The participants revealed the negative school climate conditions in their school such as: foster safety and well-disciplined environment, child friendly and prioritized wellbeing, strong and good leadership of school head, school head-to-teacher good relationship, teacher-to-teacher harmonious relationship, teacher-to-student sound relationship. Negative climate conditions were likewise divulged such as: poor student academic achievement and performance, school head-to-teacher conflict, teachers-to-teacher conflict. In terms of the work-balance activities of the participants, they disclosed the following: prioritizing health, proper work schedule and time management also emerged as a work balance practice, some of the participants revealed that their Personal and professional life must not contradict with each other. Respondent took consideration of balancing time between personal and working time to avoid overwhelming the other and to evade work related problems in the future. In terms of coping mechanisms, teacher-to-parent conferencing was conducted by the teachers. This method helped the teacher clarify and explain problem with the stakeholder and the school. This coping mechanism also gave the stakeholder knowledge about what was happening inside the school and how important was the parent involvement and contribution towards school programs.

Keywords: *School climate, work-balance, coping mechanisms, negative school climate, positive school climate.*

Article History:

Received: April 20, 2023

Accepted: May 8, 2023

Revised: April 24, 2023

Published online: July 26, 2023

Suggested Citation:

Tandoy, E.M. & Barrios, R.T. (2023). School Climate and Work-Balance of Elementary School Teachers. *Industry and Academic Research Review*, 4 (1), 167-176.

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**This paper is presented at the 4th International Conference on Multidisciplinary Industry and Academic Research (ICMLAR)-2023*



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Introduction

School climate refers to social characteristics of a school in terms of relationships among students and staff/teachers, learning and teaching emphasis, values and norms, and shared approaches and practices. School climate has been described as the heart and soul of a school or the amount of teacher morale and empowerment (Thapa, 2013). Various researchers have used a variety of analogies and models to explain school climate which covers the personality of the school, the health of the organization, and the spirit or heartbeat of the school (Daily, 2020).

Researchers have found out that the study of school climate is very useful for school improvement efforts and for better understanding how schools function. On the otherhand, it was also revealed that school climate could be a powerful thing that could foster resilience or it could become a risk factor or a threat for students, teachers, administrators, parents, and other members of the school community.

According to Glynn (2002), work life balance is a growing recognition that individuals require a satisfactory balance between the demands of work and personal life. Persons participating in continuing education and other activities outside their workplace have a better health, live a healthier life style, access new social networks, have a better sense of well-being and a greater motivation for continued learning.

The researcher noticed that teachers in the District of Patnongon I have different perceptions when it comes to the climate of their respective schools and even had devised different work-life balance activities because they carry a 40-hour workload per week; 21 to 24 hours of which are spent in actual teaching and the rest is spent in doing teaching - related work and other assignments which requires them to work often late at night, report early in the morning for their classes, and continue to do their school work at home hereby reduce their chances of being at risk to different forms of pressures and enhance their quality of life.

It was based on the aforementioned premises that this study on school climate and work-life balance of the public elementary school teachers in the District of Patnongon I was conceived.

Methodology

This study utilized the Descriptive Qualitative research design. According to Kumar, 2011, it is a design in which the main focus is on description, rather than examining relationships or

associations, is classified as a descriptive study. A descriptive study attempts systematically to describe a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, or provides information about, say, the living conditions of a community, or describes attitudes towards an issue”.

The researcher asks respondents about their knowledge relevant to a particular phenomenon. The phenomenon that the researcher is addressing has happened sometime in the past and the researcher cannot find any other way to describe it.

This design is appropriate to be used in this study because the researcher wanted to explore the perception of teachers in terms of the school climate and the different work-life balance activities they have adopted. There were 7 teacher-participants in this study. All the 7 teachers are teaching in the Elementary level in the Districts of Patnongon I and II, in the Division of Antique. They were chosen using the following inclusion criteria: Number of years in teaching, Gender/Sex, Teaching Position/rank and age.

The researcher utilized a Researcher-made interview guide that was based on the statement of the problem in order to collect the necessary information from the teacher-participants. In the conduct of this study, the researcher made sure that necessary letters of consent are secured and proper coordination with people who have direct involvement in this study is properly conducted. In addition, letter of informed consent was given to the participants to orient them on the purpose of the study and for them to know their extent of participation in the study being undertaken.

The researcher ensured the anonymity of the participants by using pseudonyms to conceal their real identity. All the information disclosed by the participants were treated with utmost confidentiality by strictly adhering to the provisions of Republic Act 10173 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Findings

1. Out of the responses, majority of the participants experienced various encounters relative to school climate. Teachers perceived school climate either positive or negative. They enumerated their different perception toward their own idea on school climate and their actual experiences on their school, namely: positive school climate, foster safety and disciplined environment, child friendly and prioritized wellbeing, strong and good leadership of school head, school head-to-teacher good relationship, teacher-to-teacher harmonious relationship, teacher-to-student sound relationship. They also categorized aspect of a negative school climate namely: poor student academic achievement and

performance, school head-to-teacher conflict, teachers-to-teacher conflict. These positive and negative school climate within the school environment exist if one was intensified and uncontrollable. Person and environmental aspect might had contributed to this phenomenon since these two were the main elements of school climate. These will clearly impact the teaching and learning process.

2. Prioritizing health was the top one in the list, since the teachers believed this was the first one to be improved and maintained. Having good health gave you opportunity to be active at home and in school. Healthy lifestyle kept you going and could help you fulfilled job without any difficulties. Failure to address health problems was dangerous and lethal to both personal and professional aspect of the teacher.
3. Proper work schedule and Time Management also emerged withing the work balance practices of the teachers. When working one must had working schedule and must manage it properly to be productive and avoid delay in work.
4. To make work effective and low mistakes rate one must be truthful to working skill. She or he must know their limitation to far they could go. If one knew to handle the situation or task that his/her superior had given to him/her then it was very admirable to pursue and finished it, however it was not then this was the time to learn to say “no” suitably.
5. Personal and Professional life must not contradict with each other, that the main point of the respondent over this practice. Respondent took consideration of balancing time between personal and working time to avoid overwhelming the other and to evade work related problems in the future.
6. Teacher-to-Parent Conferencing was one of the coping mechanism that the teacher utilized in order to address low parents’ involvement to school activities and updated them about the children’s progress in school. This method helped the teacher clarify and explain problem with the stakeholder and the school. This also gave the stakeholder knowledge about what was happening inside the school and how important was the parent involvement and contribution towards school programs.
7. Teachers referred to have positive mindset towards the problem. They maintain rational and healthy perception in dealing with the problem. This method of coping mechanism gave opportunity to teachers to meticulously pointed out the proper process to target problems and concluded to a better solution and outcome rather that stressing oneself ending to a more chaotic and incomprehensible results.

8. Engaging to personal and professional development was another coping mechanism of the teacher. This served them avenue to gain knowledge about the problem they had. This also equip them with elaborate and structure sets of strategies and intervention to resolve their problem. Self and work improvement gave the respondent a more inclusive perspective towards the problem and avoid holistic stress and numerous errors in work.

Conclusion

1. Teachers were mostly experiencing varied problems and challenges relative to their school climate. Most of the teachers having difficulties toward declining involvement of parents and stakeholders to the school, poor learner's academic performance and proper discipline.
2. Teachers utilized different work-balance activities to create a positive school climate and most of them employed proper scheduling and time management. They also prioritized their health aspect to properly contributed to the progress of the school.
3. Despite of these difficulties, teacher maintain conclusive outlook towards work and workplace. They harbored to different coping mechanism to address the developing troubles toward school climate. Teachers were known to be researchers and intervention implementers, since they were exposed to many trainings and conventions in relation to addressing existing problem with the workplace, specifically to the learners. Re-echoing it to their colleagues and reinventing proper strategies to cope with it thru the underlying caution and confidence.
4. The researcher was more positive when participants have given more concentration upon developing personal and professional development through all-inclusive approaches such as physical and mental health program, improving optimism towards the work and workplace and life, professional mentoring and fostering better relationship with God, which can completely facilitate improvement upon their personal, professional social, spiritual aspects.

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