



Working Climate Mediating Role to Empowering Leadership and Teacher's Professionalism in Public Elementary School

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Abstract

This study investigated the mediating role of working climate in the relationship between empowering leadership and teacher's professionalism in public elementary schools. The results indicated that teacher-respondents highly observed empowering leadership behaviors among school heads, particularly in leading by example, participative decision making, coaching, informing, and showing concern/interacting with teams. Similarly, teacher's professionalism was rated very highly, with respondents expressing great extent of professionalism in areas such as professional community, professional knowledge, professional accountability, and ideal professional service. Additionally, working climate received high ratings, particularly in respect, communication, career development, relationship, teamwork and support, and training and learning. Furthermore, the study revealed significant relationships between empowering leadership and teacher's professionalism, empowering leadership and working climate, as well as teacher's professionalism and working climate. Based on these findings, it is concluded that empowering leadership plays a crucial role in shaping both the working climate and teacher's professionalism in public elementary schools. These conclusions underscore the importance of fostering empowering leadership behaviors and nurturing positive working climates to enhance teacher professionalism and ultimately improve educational outcomes in public elementary schools.

Keywords

Empowering Leadership, Teachers Professionalism, Working Climate, Coaching, Leading by Example, Professional Community

INTRODUCTION

Public elementary schools are the foundation of educational systems, affecting future generations' academic and personal growth. The interaction between empowering leadership, the current working atmosphere, and teachers' professionalism becomes crucial in this foundational context. Empowering leadership, defined as leaders who inspire and enable the growth of their teams, has gotten a lot of attention in educational research because of its potential to boost teachers' effectiveness and commitment. However, the extent to which the working environment mediates the relationship between empowered leadership and teacher professionalism remains an important question.

The social, emotional, and organizational characteristics of a school's working climate have a considerable influence on educators' attitudes and behaviors. A healthy work environment promotes teamwork, trust, and a sense of belonging, which can enable teachers to flourish in their roles. A negative or unsupportive climate, on the other side, might inhibit professional growth and hamper the implementation of an empowering leadership vision.

This study sheds light on the intricate relationships that exist between teachers' professionalism, the working environment, and empowering leadership in public primary schools. By examining how the work environment mediates the impacts of empowering leadership on teachers' professionalism, researchers hope to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms that support the development of successful and empowered educators.

This work is significant not only because of its potential to promote intellectual discourse, but also because of its practical consequences for school administrators, policymakers, and educators themselves. The findings of this study can be used to drive leadership strategies, professional development efforts, and school policies aimed at creating a healthy working environment and encouraging educators to flourish in their critical jobs.

Performance of permanent professors is positively and significantly impacted by empowered leadership. The findings of this study back up Amundsen and Martinsen's (2014, 2015) theory that employee empowerment helps employees become more independent and capable of leading themselves. Individuals who employ self-leadership abilities and strategies to propel themselves to higher levels of effectiveness and performance are known as self-leaders (Ahmed et al., 2017). Leaders who share authority with subordinates, according to Vecchio et al. (2010), contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction and performance among these subordinates. Empowering leadership, according to Jones (2013), is characterized as a leader's capacity to comprehend motivation and be demonstrating that a leader is interested in and cares about his staff, that he can communicate effectively, and that he can motivate his employees.

According to the research, one of the most successful strategies to increase teachers' dedication is to empower them (Muhammad & Hussain Ch., 2020). Bogler and Somech (2004) suggest that empowered leadership will produce more committed teachers because empowered instructors have a higher level of organizational commitment. Schools generally rely on organizational commitment to achieve their goals because it is an antecedent of performance (Boz et al., 2021; Mailool et al., 2020). Further investigation into the correlations between these three variables is necessary, considering their importance for academic performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research employed descriptive correlational research. This design established the relationship among variables and find out the direction and extent relationship between different variables.

It involved the collecting, recording and interpreting the data. Questionnaire designed to determine the working climate, empowering leadership and teacher's professionalism.

Teachers in Mauban District public elementary schools made up the study's respondents. It specifically featured 134 Mauban North District public primary teachers who were classified as Master Teachers and Teacher I–III. Twelve (12) students attended Balaybalay Elementary School; seven (6) students attended Concepcion Elementary School; seventeen (9) students attended Liwayway Elementary School; fifteen (14) students attended Mabato Elementary School; thirty-eight (27) students attended Mauban North Elementary School I; seven (7) students attended Mauban North Elementary School II; seven (6) students attended Remedios I Elementary School; four (4) students attended Remedios II Elementary School; seventeen (13) students attended San Lorenzo Elementary School; eight (8) students attended San Miguel San Rafael Elementary School; thirteen (13) students attended SWA Elementary School; and seven (7) students attended Tejero Elementary School.

The one hundred thirty four (134) teacher respondents of the study come from public elementary schools in Mauban North District. They are selected according to their designation as part of the restriction of the study. The survey, questionnaire, test, scale, rating, or tool designed to assess the variable(s), characteristic(s), or information on interest, frequently behavioral or psychological characteristics, will be utilized as research instruments. The survey questionnaires are the main instrument in gathering the data. Researcher adapted questionnaires used to Working climate, empowering leadership and teacher's professionalism. The internal consistency of validated research instruments for assessing empowering leadership, teachers' professionalism, and the working climate. Cronbach's alpha coefficients provide insight into the reliability of each subscale, with interpretations ranging from "Excellent" to "Good." Empowering leadership dimensions, such as leading by example, participative decision making, coaching, informing, and expressing concern/interacting with the team, demonstrate robust internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .880 to .954, indicating "Good" to "Excellent" reliability.

In order to guarantee that the idea under investigation is of the highest caliber and satisfies the prerequisites for the degree in educational administration, the researcher adhered to the procedures set forth by the dean's office. In front of an expert panel, the suggestion was made and debated. The paper's content was improved based on all suggestions and remarks given during the defense. The researcher wrote a letter requesting authorization to perform the study and distribute the research instrument to the superintendent's office, SDO-Quezon. After approval, a letter informing the district supervisor and each school head in Mauban North District of the researcher's intention to gather data at their locations was sent to them.

Following acceptance of the authorization letter by the offices of the superintendent, district supervisor, and school heads, the researcher carried out his study as follows: first, with help from the school heads, the researcher built a Google Form for the questionnaire and disseminated it to the respondents. They had plenty of time to finish filling out the survey. The researcher was gathering the questionnaires.

Once the responses were retrieved, the researcher started tabulating and analyzing the data with the help of his statistician and the Statistic Center at LSPU San Pablo, to which he sent a copy of the data matrix and other supporting documents to make sure the data were handled correctly and statistically, especially when determining the role that the working climate plays in mediating between teacher professionalism and empowerment and leadership.

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The study's data requirements were met by statistically analyzing the Mauban North District teachers' questionnaire replies. Descriptive statistics like frequency count, mean, and percentage are employed in descriptive analysis. Pearson Product Moment Correlation employed in the management of educational resources to the instructional behavior and performance of teachers in terms of meaningful relationship. The survey is aimed at empowering leadership behaviors, working climate perceptions, and self-reported performance measures. Using a stratified random sample method will result in a representative demographic distribution among participants. The acquired data analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics provided a thorough picture of central tendencies and variables, whereas correlation analysis will reveal the interrelationships between empowering leadership, working climate, and teacher professionalism. Regression and structural equation modeling were the main mediation techniques employed in the analysis to dissect the nuanced role that working climate plays in moderating the effect of empowered leadership on teacher performance. Subgroup studies looked into potential variations, and the results presented thoroughly, with clear visual aids and a complete narrative explanation. The implications for educational stakeholders, as well as ideas for optimizing leadership and working conditions to improve teacher performance, presented, ending in a thorough examination of limitations and future research opportunities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Empowering Leadership

The table illustrates the level of empowering leadership based on the presented indicators. The data provided reflects a highly observed as reported by the respondents. The combined mean score for empowering leadership across all subscales is 4.56 with a standard deviation of 0.62, indicating that empowering leadership is highly observed overall.

Table 1 Summary Table for Empowering Leadership

Variables	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Leading by Example	4.59	0.57	Highly Observed
Participative Decision Making	4.55	0.61	Highly Observed
Coaching	4.59	0.61	Highly Observed
Informing	4.57	0.61	Highly Observed
Showing Concern/Interacting with the Team	4.51	0.69	Highly Observed
Overall	4.56	0.62	Highly Observed

Legend: 4.50 – 5:00 Strongly Agree/Highly Observed, 3.50-4.49 Agree/ Observed

2.50-3.49 Moderately Agree/ Moderately Observed

1.50-2.49 Disagree/Less Observed, 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree/Not Observed

This suggests that the leadership in question demonstrates strong traits of empowerment, such as leading by example, involving others in decision-making, providing coaching and support, effective communication, and showing concern for team members' well-being. These behaviors contribute to creating a positive and supportive work environment conducive to individual and team success. This finding suggests that the leadership in question demonstrates strong empowerment characteristics across multiple dimensions, such as setting a good example, involving others in decision-making, providing coaching and support, communicating effectively, and caring about the well-being of team members. These behaviors are congruent with current empowering leadership theories, which highlight the significance of developing employee autonomy, engagement, and support (Spreitzer, 2008; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

The observed high degree of empowering leadership indicates that the organization would benefit from a positive and supportive work environment in which people feel valued, inspired, and empowered to deliver their best efforts. Leaders can promote a culture of trust, cooperation, and continuous improvement by embodying empowered leadership behaviors (Eisenbeiss & Boerner, 2013; Laschinger et al., 2016). These values are critical for long-term success in today's competitive landscape.

Teacher's Professionalism

The table illustrates the level of teacher's professionalism based on the presented indicators. The data provided reflects a highly observed as reported by the respondents. The combined mean score for teacher professionalism across all subscales is 4.63 with a standard deviation of 0.55, indicating a very high level of professionalism overall.

Table 2 Summary Table for Teacher's Professionalism

Variables	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Professional Community	4.66	0.53	Very Great Extent
Professional Knowledge	4.55	0.61	Very Great Extent
Professional Accountability	4.63	0.54	Very Great Extent
Ideal Professional Service	4.68	0.52	Very Great Extent
Overall	4.63	0.55	Very Great Extent

Legend: 4.50 – 5:00 Strongly Agree/Very Great Extent, 3.50-4.49 Agree/ Great Extent,

2.50-3.49 Moderately Agree/Moderate Extent, 1.50-2.49 Disagree/Some Extent,

1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree/Not at all

This suggests that teachers demonstrate exemplary professionalism in various aspects of their work, including their engagement with the professional community, depth of knowledge, accountability, and commitment to providing high-quality service. Such professionalism contributes to creating a positive and effective learning environment for students and fosters a culture of continuous improvement within the educational institution. This supports a study by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) that highlights how crucial it is to develop a professional culture in educational institutions in order to support both organizational effectiveness and student achievement. According to the findings, educators exhibit a great dedication to holding themselves accountable for the academic achievements of their students, keeping up-to-date with professional developments, and offering top-notch instruction. A culture of continual improvement is fostered within the educational institution by such exceptional professionalism, which also helps to create a positive and effective learning environment for students. These findings emphasize the critical role of teachers as leaders in the pursuit of educational excellence, drawing on work by Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) that emphasizes the value of teacher professionalism in driving educational reform and enhancing student outcomes. Stakeholders in education should collaborate to promote and improve teaching practices, which will ultimately benefit teachers and students, by acknowledging and applauding the professionalism of teachers.

Working Climate

The table illustrates the level of working climate based on the presented indicators. The data provided reflects a highly observed and observed as reported by the respondents. The combined mean score for the working climate across all subscales is 4.55 with a standard deviation of 0.59, indicating that the working climate is highly observed overall.

Table 3 Summary Table for Working Climate

Variables	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Respect	4.78	0.47	Highly Observed
Communication	4.55	0.61	Highly Observed
Career Development	4.57	0.57	Highly Observed
Relationship	4.54	0.58	Highly Observed
Teamwork and Support	4.35	0.70	Observed
Training and Learning	4.49	0.60	Observed
Overall	4.55	0.59	Highly Observed

Legend: 4.50 – 5.00 Strongly Agree/Highly Observed, 3.50-4.49 Agree/ Observed

2.50-3.49 Moderately Agree/ Moderately Observed

1.50-2.49 Disagree/Less Observed, 1.00-1.49 Strongly Disagree/Not Observed

This suggests that the organization provides a positive and supportive environment characterized by respect, effective communication, and opportunities for career development, positive relationships, teamwork, and learning. Such a conducive working climate is likely to contribute to employee satisfaction, engagement, and organizational success. These findings align with research by Schneider et al. (2003), which emphasizes the importance of creating a positive organizational climate characterized by supportive relationships and opportunities for growth in promoting employee satisfaction and organizational success. The conducive working climate depicted in the data is likely to contribute to enhanced employee morale, engagement, and commitment, ultimately fostering a culture of continuous improvement and driving organizational effectiveness. By recognizing and building upon the strengths of the existing working climate, organizations can further cultivate a positive and supportive environment that nurtures employee well-being and facilitates optimal performance and success.

Relationship between the Empowering Leadership and the Teacher's Professionalism

The positive significant relationship between the empowering leadership of the school head and teacher professionalism underscores the transformative impact of leadership practices on teacher behavior and attitudes. Empowering leaders cultivate a supportive and collaborative environment where teachers feel valued, trusted, and empowered to excel in their roles. By fostering a culture of autonomy, shared decision-making, and professional growth, empowering leaders inspire teachers to take ownership of their practice, pursue continuous improvement, and uphold high standards of professionalism. Through effective communication, mentorship, and recognition of teacher contributions, empowering leaders promote a sense of ownership, commitment, and dedication among teachers, leading to enhanced professionalism and ultimately improving student outcomes. Therefore, investing in empowering leadership practices is essential for nurturing a culture of excellence, fostering teacher development, and promoting organizational effectiveness within the school community.

Table 4 Test of Relationship between the Empowering Leadership and the Teacher's Professionalism

Empowering Leadership	Teachers Professionalism			
	Professional Community	Professional Knowledge	Professional Accountability	Ideal Professional Service
Leading by Example	.695**	.655**	.642**	.565**
Participative Decision Making	.631**	.625**	.595**	.466**
Coaching	.667**	.674**	.613**	.502**
Informing	.648**	.702**	.615**	.485**
Showing Concern	.677**	.644**	.577**	.472**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

This claim is supported by research by Li et al. (2016), which shows that supportive and collaborative environments created by empowering leaders help instructors feel valued, trusted, and empowered. This setting fosters professional development, shared decision-making, and autonomy, all of which help educators perform to the best of their abilities. Teachers are motivated to take charge of their practice when they see empowering leaders who maintain high standards of professionalism and cultivate a culture of continual development. Teachers' sense of ownership, passion, and commitment is further reinforced by effective communication, mentorship, and acknowledgment of their work. In the end, empowered leadership techniques require significant investment if the school community is to cultivate an excellence culture, support teacher development, and increase organizational success (Li et al., 2016).

Relationship between the Empowering Leadership and the Working Climate

The positive significant relationship between empowering leadership and the working climate highlights the critical interplay between leadership practices and organizational culture within educational settings. Empowering leaders foster a work environment characterized by trust, collaboration, and shared decision-making, which in turn contributes to a positive and supportive working climate. When school leaders empower their staff by delegating authority, providing resources, and encouraging innovation, they create a culture where individuals feel valued, motivated, and inspired to contribute their best efforts. This supportive working climate, in turn, reinforces empowering leadership by fostering open communication, creativity, and a sense of collective ownership among staff members

Table 5 Test of Relationship between the Empowering Leadership and the Working Climate

Empowering Leadership	Working Climate					
	Respect	Communication	Career Development	Relationship	Teamwork & Support	Training & Learning
Leading by Example	.535**	.623**	.610**	.666**	.474**	.577**
Participative Decision Making	.469**	.607**	.566**	.630**	.428**	.533**
Coaching	.512**	.631**	.645**	.721**	.463**	.544**
Informing	.533**	.627**	.666**	.706**	.500**	.568**
Showing Concern	.536**	.651**	.644**	.702**	.490**	.562**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Therefore, investing in empowering leadership not only strengthens organizational culture but also cultivates a work environment that promotes collaboration, resilience, and continuous improvement, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness and success of the school. Wang and Guan (2018) conducted research that corroborates this claim by showing that leaders who are able to exercise empowerment are critical in creating a work environment that is marked by shared decision-making, trust, and collaboration. School administrators create an environment where people feel appreciated, inspired, and empowered to put out their best efforts by enabling their personnel through authority delegation, resource allocation, and innovation encouragement. By encouraging open communication, innovation, and a sense of shared responsibility among employees, this positive work environment in turn supports empowered leadership. Consequently, allocating resources towards empowering leadership builds a collaborative, resilient, and continuously improving work environment in addition to fortifying organizational culture. Thus, the school's overall performance and efficacy are improved (Wang & Guan, 2018).

Relationship between Teacher's Professionalism and their Working Climate

Table 6 Test of Relationship between Teacher's Professionalism and their Working Climate

Working Climate	Teachers Professionalism			
	Professional Community	Professional Knowledge	Professional Accountability	Ideal Professional Service
Respect	.733**	.695**	.727**	.759**
Communication	.697**	.753**	.724**	.667**
Career development	.789**	.784**	.758**	.724**
relationship	.760**	.761**	.704**	.630**
Teamwork and Support	.572**	.601**	.523**	.470**
Training and Learning	.655**	.715**	.686**	.660**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The positive significant relationship between the working climate and teacher professionalism underscores the vital influence of organizational context on teacher behavior and attitudes. A supportive and positive working climate, characterized by trust, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose, provides a conducive environment for teachers to exhibit professionalism in their practice. When teachers feel valued, respected, and supported by their colleagues and school leadership, they are more likely to demonstrate professionalism through their commitment to student learning, dedication to continuous improvement, and willingness to collaborate with peers. Conversely, a negative or unsupportive working climate can hinder teacher professionalism by eroding trust, stifling innovation, and fostering a culture of

disengagement. Therefore, investing in cultivating a positive working climate is essential for promoting teacher professionalism, enhancing job satisfaction, and ultimately improving the quality of education within the school community.

The strong correlation that exists between teacher professionalism and the work environment highlights the critical role that organizational context plays in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of educators. Teachers are able to practice professionalism in a setting that is supportive and constructive, where there is a shared sense of purpose, trust, and teamwork. When teachers feel valued, respected, and supported by their colleagues and school leadership, they are more likely to demonstrate professionalism through their commitment to student learning, dedication to continuous improvement, and willingness to collaborate with peers. On the other hand, a hostile or unwelcoming workplace environment can undermine teacher professionalism by undermining creativity, destroying trust, and encouraging a disengaged culture. Thus, funding to create a supportive work environment is essential to encouraging teacher professionalism, improving job satisfaction, and eventually raising the standard of instruction in the school community (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014).

Mediation Analysis

Table 7 Mediation Analysis of Working Climate to the Relationship between the Empowering Leadership and Teachers Professionalism

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		t	P
			Lower	Upper		
Direct	.1673	.0466	.0751	.2596	3.5888	.0005
Indirect	.4226	.0839	.2597	.5844		
Total	.5900	.0480	.4949	.6850	12.2833	.0000

Effect	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		T	P
			Lower	Upper		
Empowering L --> Working Climate	.5878	.0495	.4899	.6856	11.8848	.0000
Empowering L --> T Professionalism	.1673	.0466	.0751	.2596	3.5888	.0005
W Climate --> T Professionalism	.7190	.0570	.6062	.8319	12.6063	.0000
EL --> WC--> TP	.4226	.0839	.2597	.5844		

The table shows the mediating analysis of working climate to the relationship between the empowering leadership and the teacher's professionalism. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of the working climate to the empowering leadership of the school head and the teacher's professionalism. Furthermore, the direct effect of empowering leadership of the school head to the professionalism of the teachers in presence of the mediator was also found significant ($p = .0000$, $t = 3.5888$). Hence, the working climate partially mediated the relationship between empowering leadership of the school head and the teacher's professionalism.

The findings indicating a significant indirect effect of the working climate on the empowering leadership of the school head and teacher professionalism highlight the critical role of organizational climate in shaping leadership practices and teacher behavior. A positive working climate characterized by trust, collaboration, and support creates a conducive environment where empowering leadership can thrive. When school leaders foster a culture of empowerment, encourage autonomy, and provide opportunities for professional growth and development, they contribute to the cultivation of professionalism among teachers. The relationship between working climate and empowering leadership reflects the importance of organizational context in shaping leadership behaviors and influencing teacher attitudes and behaviors.

Moreover, the direct effect of empowering leadership on teacher professionalism, even in the presence of the mediator, underscores the significant impact of leadership practices on teacher behavior and professional development. School leaders who adopt empowering leadership styles demonstrate a commitment to fostering teacher autonomy, growth, and ownership of their professional responsibilities. By providing support, resources, and opportunities for professional learning and growth, empowering leaders inspire teachers to take ownership of their practice, pursue excellence, and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the school community. Consequently, teachers are more likely to exhibit higher levels of professionalism, dedication, and commitment to their roles, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes and school success. Therefore, investing in empowering leadership practices and cultivating a positive working climate are essential for promoting teacher professionalism, enhancing organizational effectiveness, and creating a culture of continuous improvement within the school. The significant indirect effect of the working climate on the relationship between empowering leadership and teacher professionalism suggests that the organizational climate plays a crucial role in mediating the impact of leadership practices on teacher behavior. This aligns with the research conducted by Zhang and Zhu (2018), which highlights the importance of organizational context in shaping leadership behaviors and influencing teacher attitudes and behaviors. A positive working climate characterized by trust, collaboration, and support creates an environment where empowering leadership can flourish, contributing to the cultivation of teacher professionalism.

Furthermore, the significant direct effect of empowering leadership on teacher professionalism, even in the presence of the mediator, emphasizes the profound impact of leadership practices on teacher behavior and professional

development. This finding resonates with studies by Lee and Byun (2019), indicating that empowering leadership styles inspire teachers to take ownership of their practice, pursue excellence, and contribute to the overall effectiveness of the school community. School leaders who adopt empowering leadership styles demonstrate a commitment to fostering teacher autonomy, growth, and ownership of their professional responsibilities, thereby enhancing teacher professionalism.

In conclusion, investing in empowering leadership practices and cultivating a positive working climate are essential for promoting teacher professionalism, enhancing organizational effectiveness, and creating a culture of continuous improvement within the school. By understanding the mediating role of the working climate and the direct impact of empowering leadership on teacher professionalism, educational leaders can effectively shape the organizational context to support the growth and development of teachers, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes and school success (Zhang & Zhu, 2018; Lee & Byun, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the result of this study, this conclusion has been drawn. There is a significant relationship between the empowering leadership and the teacher's professionalism therefore, the hypothesis being posited is not supported. Also, there is a significant relationship between the empowering leadership and working climate in school therefore, the hypothesis being posited is not supported. Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between working climate and teacher's professionalism therefore, the hypothesis being posited is not supported.

Finally, the working climate in school mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and teacher's professionalism therefore, the hypothesis on mediation analysis is not supported.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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