

CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR AND TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the level of teachers' leadership behavior and teacher professionalism. It utilized a non-experimental quantitative research design, specifically employing a correlational method. The study involved 188 respondents, comprising 19 teachers and 136 teachers from various public schools. Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn: the level of teachers' leadership behavior was found to be high, indicating that leadership behaviors are clearly exhibited by the teachers. Similarly, the level of teacher professionalism was also high, demonstrating that the teachers consistently demonstrate professionalism in their roles. The null hypothesis, which posited that there is no significant relationship between teachers' leadership behavior and teacher professionalism, was rejected. This suggests that there is a positive correlation between teachers' leadership behavior and teacher professionalism, implying that effective leadership among teachers is associated with a high level of professionalism. Since teachers' leadership behavior and professionalism are significantly related, it is recommended that policymakers and human resource managers consider these variables when formulating policies, designing training programs, and organizing seminars aimed at enhancing the professionalism of teachers. Additionally, teachers may be encouraged to actively participate in school programs, training sessions, and other activities that foster both their professional growth and social learning, further strengthening their leadership capabilities and commitment to professionalism.

Keywords: teachers leadership behavior and teacher professionalism, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the future of education. Their voices are crucial in driving educational improvement and reform, especially at a time when the education system is grappling with numerous challenges and conflicting pressures (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015). Teacher professionalism is at the heart of education policy, as it underscores the need for teachers to adapt, innovate, and support the learning of children and young people in an ever-evolving society. This innovation is fueled by teacher professionalism, which is grounded in critical self-reflection, professional autonomy, and a deep respect for the role teachers play in the educational landscape (Suriagiri et al., 2023). However, despite its significance, the question of how to cultivate and enhance teacher professionalism remains a pressing issue. This question often explains the mixed emotions teachers have regarding their job. To address this concern, many researchers have explored various factors that influence classroom leadership behavior and teacher professionalism.

Professional teachers maintain a clear line between being liked by students and enforcing classroom and school rules. They avoid favoritism and ensure fair treatment of all students (Ndeto, 2015). In their instruction, professional teachers believe in the potential of

every student to learn and succeed. They design lesson plans that incorporate effective strategies and materials to help all students achieve their best (Stronge, 2018).

Moreover, professional teachers are committed to collaborating with their colleagues to enhance teaching effectiveness. Teachers within the same department work together to share teaching strategies, analyze data, and address curriculum issues. Those who teach the same students often meet to discuss student performance, identify ways to improve learning outcomes, and address specific behavioral concerns (Voelkel Jr. & Chrispeels, 2017). Teachers focused on professionalism extend their concern beyond their own classrooms, they actively contribute to building a school culture that promotes learning and success. They refrain from gossiping, arguing, or engaging in inappropriate behavior with colleagues (Hord & Tobia, 2015).

In many states, teachers are required to participate in ongoing professional development programs to maintain their certification. Teachers who prioritize professionalism engage in these programs regardless of certification requirements. They are committed to staying informed about best practices and continuously improving their teaching methods. These teachers regularly read books, journals, and blogs on education and leadership, engage in research to improve their teaching, and attend conferences—sometimes as presenters. They also join professional organizations to connect with other educators (Andersson & Köpsén, 2015).

In the Philippines, teachers are expected to serve as role models for their students. A failure to demonstrate professionalism can undermine respect and trust, not only from students but also from colleagues. To retain the respect of both students and peers and to provide the best possible education, teachers must consistently exhibit professionalism in all aspects of their careers (Mc Ronald, 2022).

In Davao Region, teachers' appearance and behavior play a crucial role in conveying professionalism. Male teachers are expected to wear dress pants and a polo shirt or button-down shirt, with a tie or jacket for special occasions. Female teachers should wear conservative clothing, avoiding short skirts and revealing tops. Most schools also have policies prohibiting teachers from displaying facial piercings, tattoos, or brightly colored hair while at work. Furthermore, teachers should avoid drinking alcohol or smoking in the presence of students and refrain from using inappropriate language or engaging in unprofessional behavior in front of students (Salibat et al., 2024).

Given these dynamics, the researcher has chosen to conduct this study to assess the level of teacher professionalism, identify the strongest predictors of professionalism, and generate best practices that can enhance professionalism in the teaching profession. This study aims to provide valuable insights that can help inform the development and refinement of policies and regulations by the Department of Education (DepEd) to improve teacher performance. Additionally, the findings may guide the prioritization and implementation of programs and activities that foster and stimulate teacher professionalism.

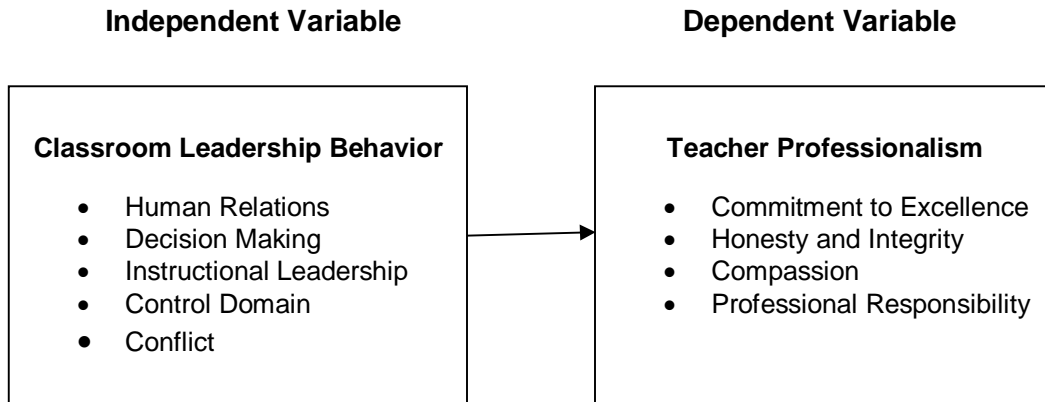


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing the correlational method. The correlational method is used to assess the relationship between variables that may vary in different levels of measurement (Pregoner & Baguio, 2024). According to Pregoner (2024), two variables may be related because they are influenced or caused by another variable or set of variables. In such cases, the two variables may show a tendency to vary together, where the presence of one may indicate the presence of the other, or even allow for the prediction of one variable based on the presence of the other. The correlational method was chosen for this study because its primary objective was to measure the degree of relationship between two key variables: classroom leadership behavior and teacher professionalism among public elementary school teachers.

2.2 Research Respondents

The respondents of this study consisted of 136 teachers from various public schools. All participants had a minimum of three years of experience in the public school system, ensuring a solid foundation for evaluating classroom leadership behavior and teacher professionalism. The study was conducted during the 2021-2022 school year, providing a comprehensive assessment of the classroom leadership behavior and teacher professionalism among public elementary school teachers within this specific timeframe.

2.3 Research Instrument

The instruments used in this study include the Classroom Leadership Behavior and Teacher Professionalism questionnaires. The Classroom Leadership Behavior questionnaire was adopted from the National Association for Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP), with modifications made by the researcher to tailor it to the study's context. The modified instrument was subjected to expert validation to ensure its relevance and accuracy. Hansen (2013) highlighted the effectiveness of NAESP guidelines in improving educational leadership practices, which guided the adaptation of this questionnaire. The 25-item questionnaire covers five

subscales: Human Relations, Decision-Making, Instructional Leadership, Control Domain, and Conflict.

The Teacher Professionalism questionnaire was adapted from Mohd Aizat and Kamarudin (2020) and is divided into four subscales: Commitment to Excellence, Honesty and Integrity, Compassion, and Professional Responsibility. These instruments were developed based on a thorough review of relevant studies and literature to ensure their content is both comprehensive and aligned with the study's objectives.

Before administration, the draft of these instruments was tested for face and content validity by a panel of experts in Educational Management. Based on their feedback, revisions were made to improve clarity and precision. The experts rated the instruments highly, with an overall rating of 4.4, categorized as "Very Good." To assess the reliability and validity of the instruments, a pilot test was conducted with 31 elementary school teachers. The instruments demonstrated excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha (α) of 0.957, indicating strong internal consistency.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process began with the researcher seeking permission and endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School at Rizal Memorial Colleges to request approval from the Schools Division Superintendent. Once approval was granted, a formal request letter was submitted to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. Subsequently, an endorsement letter was provided to the School Heads for further authorization to conduct the study within their schools. After obtaining the necessary approvals, the researcher created a schedule for distributing the questionnaires. Each questionnaire was accompanied by an explanation of the study's objectives and detailed instructions to ensure that participants understood the purpose and how to complete the surveys. Once all the questionnaires were collected, the data were tallied and tabulated. The data were then analyzed and interpreted according to the study's objectives, utilizing appropriate statistical methods to draw meaningful conclusions related to the research questions.

2.5 Data Analysis

The gathered data were systematically classified, analyzed, and interpreted using specific statistical tools. The mean was employed to measure the level of classroom leadership behavior and teacher professionalism among the respondents. This provided an overview of the overall performance of the teachers in terms of their leadership behavior and professionalism. Additionally, the Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, or Pearson r , was utilized to determine the interrelationships between classroom leadership behavior and teacher professionalism. This statistical tool helped to assess whether there was a significant correlation between the two variables, thus providing insights into how they may relate each other within the context of the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Level of Classroom Leadership Behavior among Teachers

Table 1. *Level of Classroom Leadership Behavior among Teachers*

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
Human Relations	4.11	High
Decision-Making	4.35	Very High
Instructional Leadership	4.01	High
Control Domain	4.01	High
Conflict	4.16	High
OVERALL	4.13	High

Table 1 shows the level of classroom leadership behavior among teachers across different subscales. The "decision-making" subscale has the highest mean score of 4.35, which is categorized as "very high," indicating that teachers always exhibited decision-making skills. The "human relations" subscale has a mean score of 4.11, categorized as "high," reflecting oftentimes use of interpersonal skills in the classroom. Both "instructional leadership" and "control domain" have mean scores of 4.01, also classified as "high," demonstrating behaviors that were oftentimes manifested by the respondents. The "conflict" subscale, with a mean score of 4.16, is categorized as "high," showing frequent effective handling of conflicts. Overall, the classroom leadership behavior among teachers is considered "high," with an overall mean score of 4.13, indicating a generally strong display of leadership qualities in the classroom, oftentimes manifested by the respondents. This implies that teachers in the study consistently demonstrate strong leadership skills, with particular strengths in decision-making and conflict management. Their interpersonal skills and ability to manage classroom dynamics contribute positively to their overall leadership effectiveness.

This finding aligns with the study of Day et al. (2016), who emphasized the importance of effective classroom leadership in fostering a positive learning environment and enhancing student outcomes. According to their research, leadership in the classroom is not only about managing students but also about fostering an environment of trust, respect, and clear communication, which ultimately benefits both the students and the teachers. In the context of this study, the teachers' ability to demonstrate strong decision-making skills and manage conflict effectively correlates with their overall leadership success. Moreover, this finding coincides with the research of Marsh and Farrell (2015), which highlighted how teachers' leadership behaviors, particularly in areas such as decision-making and conflict resolution, significantly influence their professionalism and the overall educational experience. They noted that when teachers engage in effective leadership, their professionalism is enhanced, which leads to better student engagement, improved academic performance, and stronger relationships within the school community.

3.2 Level of Teacher Professionalism among Teachers

Table 2. Level of Teacher Professionalism among Teachers

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Level
Commitment to Excellence	4.22	Very High
Honesty and Integrity	4.27	Very High
Compassion	4.27	Very High
Professional Responsibility	4.13	High
OVERALL	4.20	Very High

Table 2 shows the level of teacher professionalism among teachers across different indicators. The "honesty and integrity" and "compassion" indicators both have the highest mean score of 4.27, categorized as "very high," indicating that teachers consistently

demonstrate honesty, integrity, and compassion in their professional behavior. The "commitment to excellence" indicator has a mean score of 4.22, also classified as "very high," reflecting a strong dedication to maintaining high standards in their teaching practice. The "professional responsibility" indicator has a mean score of 4.13, categorized as "high," showing that teachers generally uphold their professional duties. Overall, the teacher professionalism among the respondents is considered "very high," with an overall mean score of 4.20, indicating that teachers consistently display professionalism in their work and always manifested by the respondents.

This finding supports the study of Cheng (2016), who examined teacher professionalism and highlighted that educators who maintain a high level of professionalism tend to demonstrate qualities such as a commitment to excellence, honesty, and integrity, which are essential for creating a positive learning environment. Teacher professionalism is directly linked to positive student outcomes and teacher satisfaction, aligning with the findings of this study, where the teachers' strong professionalism contributes to the overall effectiveness of the classroom.

Moreover, the finding affirms the view of Fullan et al. (2015), who argued that teacher professionalism is not just about individual competence, but also involves a commitment to ethical standards, continuous improvement, and responsibility toward students and the wider community. They emphasized that professionalism is an ongoing process that is demonstrated in both everyday practices and broader educational goals. The results of this study confirm this perspective, as the teachers consistently manifested high levels of professionalism, which supports their role in fostering a productive and respectful educational environment.

3.3 Significant Relationship between the Classroom Leadership Behavior and Teacher Professionalism

Table 3. Significant Relationship between Classroom Leadership Behavior and Teacher Professionalism

Variables	X	Y	p-value	r-value	Degree of Correlation	Decision (Ho)
Classroom Leadership Behavior	4.46		0.0437	0.21	High Correlation	Rejected
Teacher Professionalism		4.04				

The table presents the results of testing the relationship between Classroom Leadership Behavior and Teacher Professionalism. The p-value of 0.0437 is below the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05, indicating that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. The r-value of 0.21 suggests a low to moderate positive correlation,

meaning that as classroom leadership behavior improves, teacher professionalism tends to improve as well, though the correlation is not very strong. Despite the moderate strength of the correlation, the decision is made that the relationship is considered "high" due to the statistical significance of the findings. The null hypothesis (Ho), which posited no significant relationship between the two variables, is rejected, providing evidence to support the claim that Classroom Leadership Behavior and Teacher Professionalism are related. In conclusion, the study indicates that teachers who demonstrate better leadership behaviors are likely to exhibit higher professionalism in their work.

This finding reinforces the study of Cansoy and Parlar (2018), which demonstrated that effective classroom leadership behaviors have a positive impact on teacher professionalism and contribute to a more effective learning environment. Their research highlighted that leadership behaviors such as decision-making, conflict resolution, and instructional leadership were closely linked to a teacher's sense of professionalism and overall effectiveness.

Moreover, the finding validates the theory of Transformational Leadership, as proposed by Bass (1985). Transformational Leadership theory emphasizes the role of leaders in motivating and inspiring followers to achieve high levels of performance and professionalism. According to this theory, leaders who exhibit qualities like clear decision-making, strong interpersonal relations, and effective conflict management tend to inspire greater commitment and professionalism in their followers. The results of this study align with the core principles of this theory, suggesting that teachers who demonstrate strong leadership behaviors also exhibit higher levels of professionalism.

Furthermore, the finding corroborates with the theory of Social Cognitive Learning by Bandura (1989). Bandura's theory posits that individuals learn and develop behaviors through the observation and modeling of others, particularly those in leadership roles. In the context of teaching, when teachers display positive leadership behaviors, it can serve as a model for other teachers and influence their professional conduct. The findings of this study suggest that as classroom leadership behavior improves, it not only positively affects the teacher's own professionalism but may also encourage a broader professional development culture within the educational environment.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the level of classroom leadership behavior among teachers is high, suggesting that teachers consistently exhibit effective leadership qualities in the classroom. Second, the level of teacher professionalism is also high, indicating that teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to maintaining high professional standards. Lastly, the null hypothesis, which proposed no significant relationship between classroom leadership behavior and teacher professionalism, is rejected. The data reveals a positive correlation between the two variables, meaning that as teachers display stronger leadership behaviors in the classroom, their level of professionalism also increases.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, several recommendations are made. First, since classroom leadership behavior and teacher professionalism are positively correlated, it is recommended that policymakers and human resource managers take these variables into account when formulating policies, as well as designing training programs and seminars aimed at enhancing the professionalism of teachers. Additionally, schools may

organize training and professional development programs focused on teachers' growth and organizational development. Teachers are also encouraged to actively participate in school programs, training sessions, and other activities that contribute to their professional and social development. Lastly, future researchers interested in similar studies may consider exploring other indicators of classroom leadership behavior and teacher professionalism to identify additional factors that could serve as predictors for these variables.

CONSENT (WHERE EVER APPLICABLE)

This quantitative study followed rigorous ethical standards to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participants. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, who were fully informed about the study's objectives and the measures in place to protect their confidentiality. To ensure anonymity, no personal identifying information was gathered, and each participant was assigned a unique code for data analysis purposes. All data were securely stored on encrypted servers, with access restricted to the research team. The results were presented in an aggregated format, preventing any individual responses from being traced back to a specific participant. Additionally, statistical analyses were conducted in a way that further maintained the anonymity of the respondents, ensuring their privacy was safeguarded throughout the entire research process.

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