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Social Justice Leadership and School Culture of Public Junior High Schools in the Division of Dasmarinas City: Basis for Context-Driven Framework

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of social justice leadership in public high schools has become increasingly significant in shaping inclusive and equitable school cultures. Social justice leadership emphasizes fairness, equity, and advocacy for marginalized groups, ensuring that educational practices address systemic inequalities. Within the context of public high schools, this leadership style plays a crucial role in fostering a positive school culture-one that values diversity, promotes student voice, and cultivates a sense of belonging among all stakeholders. By examining the relationship between social justice leadership and school culture, this research seeks to highlight how leadership practices influence the development of supportive, inclusive, and academically thriving learning environments.

OBJECTIVES

This study aims to assess the social justice leadership and school culture of junior high school as a basis for proposing an intervention program. Specifically, the objectives are to evaluate the school administrators, head teachers, and teachers, for the implementation of social justice leadership and school culture in terms of equity and inclusion, advocacy and empowerment, cultural responsiveness, ethical and moral leadership, participatory and democratic leadership, critical consciousness and reflection, community engagement and partnership and transformative action. To determine if there is a significant difference in the assessment of the three groups of respondents regarding the implementation of social justice leadership of public junior high school. To identify how the three groups of respondents assess the school culture in terms of shared vision and mission, collaboration and collegiality, communication and openness, professional growth and development, respect, trust and relationships, student centeredness, high expectations and achievement orientation, shared leadership and empowerment, sense of belonging and community and organizational support and structures. To determine if there is a significant relationship between the social justice leadership and school culture. To find the problems encountered by the respondents relative to the social justice leadership and school culture. To propose intervention program based on the findings of the study. To perceive the acceptable intervention program.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive research approach to describe and interpret the current state of how school principal, head teachers, and teachers, implement the social justice and school culture in public junior high school. Using this methodology, the research aims to inform the development of targeted interventions that address the identified issues and challenges in the implementation of program related to social justice leadership and school culture of public junior high school.

This research focused on the assessment of the implementation of social justice leadership and school culture in the Junior High School in the Division of Dasmarinas City.

RESULTS

The highlights that social justice leadership is strongly evident in public schools in Dasmariñas City, with high ratings across equity and inclusion, advocacy and empowerment, cultural responsiveness, ethical leadership,

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participatory governance, critical reflection, community engagement, and transformative action. School leaders are consistently perceived as promoting fairness, inclusivity, respect for diversity, integrity, and collaboration, while also advocating for resources and empowering teachers. They integrate cultural practices, foster partnerships, and sustain long-term improvements, reflecting a solid foundation of value-driven and inclusive leadership. However, areas such as learner participation, family involvement, language inclusivity, addressing inequality, and broader advocacy for social change remain less emphasized, suggesting opportunities for further strengthening.

The assessment shows that social justice leadership is strongly evident among principals, department heads, and teachers, with an overall composite mean of 4.47. Equity and Inclusion emerged as the strongest domain, followed by Participatory and Democratic Leadership, and Critical Consciousness and Reflection, while Cultural Responsiveness and Community Engagement were also highly evident. Ethical and Moral Leadership and Transformative Action ranked slightly lower, and Advocacy and Empowerment was the least emphasized, though still positively rated. Overall, the findings highlight a solid commitment to fairness, inclusivity, participation, and ethical leadership, with advocacy and transformative practices identified as areas for further strengthening. The ANOVA results reveal shared perceptions across groups in Equity and Inclusion and Participatory Leadership, but significant differences in other domains such as advocacy, cultural responsiveness, ethics, reflection, community engagement, and transformative action. These variations suggest that while some aspects of social justice leadership are consistently recognized, others are perceived differently depending on roles and experiences, reflecting diverse perspectives on school leadership practices.

The post hoc analysis reveals that significant differences in perceptions of social justice leadership occur mainly between department heads and the other groups. Department heads and teachers differed significantly in their views on advocacy and empowerment, cultural responsiveness, and community engagement. Department heads also showed distinct perceptions compared to principals and teachers in ethical and moral leadership, while differences between department heads and principals were noted in critical consciousness and transformative action. Overall, the findings indicate that department heads consistently hold different perspectives from principals and teachers, suggesting that their administrative role influences how they assess leadership practices related to social justice.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive research approach to describe and interpret the current state of how school principal, head teachers, and teachers assess the school culture. Using this methodology, the research aims to inform the development of targeted interventions that address the identified issues and challenges concerning the social justice and school culture.

This research focused on the assessment of the shared vision, collaboration and collegiality, communication and openness, professional growth and development, respect, trust and relationship, student-centeredness, high expectations and achievement orientation, shared leadership and empowerment and organizational support and structures in the Junior High School of the School Division of Dasmarinas City.

Result

The findings demonstrate a strong foundation in social justice leadership, highlighting highly evident practices in shared vision, collaboration, and communication alongside professional growth as the strongest domain. While schools successfully cultivate cohesive, transparent, and growth-oriented environments, key areas for improvement remain. Specifically, schools need to strengthen teacher participation in shaping the vision, provide more structured support for teacher collaboration, refine internal communication responsiveness, and ensure that professional development activities directly benefit learners.

Schools demonstrate a positive, highly trusting environment with a strong overall composite mean of 4.53 for respect, trust, and relationships. Strong community bonds, kindness, and mutual respect among staff, parents, and learners are consistently practiced fostering unity. Although fairness and respect for individual dignity scored slightly lower, they remain clearly-evident, indicating minor room to further strengthen consistent respect and fairness for every individual.

Student-centeredness is highly evident in schools, yielding a strong overall composite mean of 4.66. Schools consistently prioritize learners by protecting their rights, supporting their growth, and placing them at the center of institutional decisions. While learner voice and welfare are deeply valued, the specific prioritization of learner needs rated lowest among the indicators. Overall, the findings highlight a powerful commitment to learner-

focused education, reinforcing the schools' dedication to equity, participation, and continuous student development.

Schools foster a positive academic environment focused on excellence, motivation, and continuous improvement, yielding a strong overall composite mean of 4.56 for high expectations and achievement orientation. Teachers are encouraged to aim for excellence, while learners are consistently motivated, supported, and celebrated for reaching their goals. Although setting high standards for learners rated slightly lower, academic expectations are still perceived as fair, realistic, and strongly evident across the board.

Shared leadership and empowerment are highly evident in schools, with an overall composite mean of 4.60. Teachers are actively engaged in leadership roles, responsibilities are distributed fairly, and parents and staff are empowered to participate and grow in leadership. Learners are also encouraged to take initiative, though staff decision-making empowerment was rated slightly lower. Overall, schools demonstrate a collaborative leadership structure that promotes inclusivity, shared responsibility, and leadership development across all stakeholders.

Sense of belonging and community is highly evident in schools, with an overall composite mean of 4.60. Learners feel accepted, inclusion in activities is promoted, and schools foster welcoming environments and strong community spirit. Families are valued and stakeholder participation is encouraged, though unity among staff and learners was rated slightly lower. Overall, schools demonstrate a supportive and inclusive culture that strengthens belonging, acceptance, and community engagement.

The organizational support and structures are highly evident in schools, with an overall composite mean of 4.45. Policies promoting fairness, responsiveness to stakeholder needs, and structures that encourage inclusion and collaboration are strongly practiced. Organizational systems are also seen to benefit learners, though teacher empowerment and fair resource distribution were rated lower. Overall, schools demonstrate supportive and collaborative structures but strengthening resource allocation and empowerment could further enhance equity and organizational effectiveness.

The school culture is highly evident across all dimensions, with an overall composite mean of 4.55. Student-centeredness ranked highest, reflecting strong prioritization of learners' needs, rights, and development, followed by shared leadership, empowerment, and sense of belonging. Professional growth, high expectations, communication, shared vision, and respect were also strongly evident, while organizational support and collaboration, though positively rated, were the lowest. Overall, schools demonstrate a positive and inclusive culture characterized by fairness, collaboration, communication, and learner-focused practices, with collaboration and support systems identified as areas for improvement.

The results further reveal significant positive relationships between social justice leadership and school culture. Equity and inclusion showed strong correlations with all dimensions, particularly communication, professional growth, respect, student-centeredness, and shared leadership. Advocacy and empowerment also demonstrated significant positive relationships, enhancing collaboration, inclusivity, and supportive practices. These findings suggest that when school leaders actively promote equity, fairness, and empowerment, schools foster stronger collaboration, communication, inclusivity, and learner-centered environments.

Cultural responsiveness, ethical leadership, participatory governance, and critical consciousness are all significantly and positively related to a healthier school culture ($p = 0.001$). Ethical leadership and critical consciousness correlate highest with communication, collaboration, and professional growth, while cultural responsiveness strongly drives inclusivity and student-centered practices. Participatory leadership heavily supports stakeholder collaboration, though it shows slightly weaker ties to learner voice. Collectively, these findings emphasize that when leaders embrace diversity, integrity, shared decision-making, and self-reflection, they cultivate a more inclusive, supportive, and open school environment.

Community engagement and transformative action are significantly and positively related to school culture ($p = 0.001$). Both dimensions correlate strongly with student-centeredness, communication, collaboration, and professional growth, highlighting that community partnerships and inclusive change cultivate achievement-oriented environments. However, challenges persist: social justice leadership is moderately hindered by limited resources, staff hesitancy to advocate for fairness, and weak parental participation. Similarly, school culture faces minor hurdles in sustaining collaboration under heavy workloads and bridging communication gaps. Ultimately, while both leadership and culture are strong, schools must improve resource allocation, workload management, and stakeholder involvement to sustain equity.

At the same time, challenges in social justice leadership were moderately encountered, with limited resources, staff hesitancy to advocate for fairness, exclusion of diverse learner needs, and weak parental participation emerging as key issues. Problems in school culture were least encountered overall, though sustaining collaboration under heavy workloads, limited professional growth opportunities, weakened trust, and communication gaps with parents were noted. Overall, while schools demonstrate strong community engagement, transformative leadership, and positive culture, strengthening resource allocation, inclusivity, workload management, and stakeholder involvement remains essential to sustaining equity and collaboration.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the study reveals that equity, inclusion, and social justice are deeply embedded in school leadership practices across Dasmariñas City. School leaders consistently demonstrate fairness, integrity, and cultural responsiveness, fostering environments that emphasize collaboration, trust, and learner-centered education. Strong foundations in advocacy, empowerment, professional development, and transformative leadership highlight schools' commitment to continuous improvement and social change.

At the same time, the findings point to areas requiring further strengthening. Greater stakeholder involvement, participatory decision-making, language inclusivity, and resource allocation remain critical to fully realizing democratic and equitable leadership. Enhancing family engagement, workload management, and support systems would also deepen collaboration and inclusivity within school cultures.

Importantly, differences in perspectives between department heads, principals, and teachers suggest that administrative roles shape how leadership practices are assessed, underscoring the need for alignment across leadership levels.

In sum, while schools in Dasmariñas City demonstrate a strong commitment to fairness, inclusivity, and ethical leadership, advancing advocacy, transformative action, and stakeholder engagement will be essential to sustain and expand the impact of social justice leadership. By reinforcing these dimensions, schools can further cultivate environments that are not only equitable and inclusive but also resilient, collaborative, and deeply responsive to the diverse needs of learners and communities.

KEYWORDS: *Social Justice Leadership, Social Culture.*

INTRODUCTION

Education in the Philippines is framed not only as academic instruction but also as a crucial tool for character formation and nation-building, with school leadership playing a central role in fostering equitable and values-driven environments. Policies such as DepEd Order No. 21, s.2019 emphasize values formation-respect, integrity, and social responsibility-which strengthen both leadership practices and school culture. At the same time, global perspectives highlight the importance of social justice leadership, which extends beyond administration to include advocacy, empowerment, and transformative action. This study examines social justice leadership through dimensions such as equity and inclusion, cultural responsiveness, ethical and moral leadership, participatory and democratic leadership, critical reflection, community engagement, and transformative action, showing how Filipino values and DepEd directives converge to shape leadership practices and empower communities.

School culture is recognized as a vital foundation of educational success, shaping values, relationships, and practices within the learning environment. In the Philippine context, it is strengthened through both policy and practice, particularly directives like DepEd Order No. 21, s.2019, which highlight respect, integrity, and social responsibility as essential to institutional growth. This study assesses school culture across dimensions such as shared vision, collaboration, communication, professional growth, trust in relationships, student-centeredness, high expectations, shared leadership, community belonging, and organizational support. By analyzing these interconnected aspects, the research underscores that school culture is a lived reality shaped by leadership, values, and policy, enabling schools to build inclusive and socially responsible communities.

Social justice leadership requires school leaders to promote fairness, inclusiveness, and democratic participation while eliminating unjust practices that marginalize learners. Leaders must unite diverse individuals under shared goals, foster collaboration, challenge inequalities, and empower all members of the school community. In doing so, they help build supportive and sustainable school cultures where both learners and educators thrive. Within this framework, the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas aligns with DepEd's mandate for inclusive education by enhancing leadership roles through social justice principles. However, despite existing policies and

literature, there remains a lack of empirical data connecting leadership practices to actual school culture within the DepEd framework. Thus, this study seeks to assess the implementation and impact of social justice leadership, ultimately using its findings to design a targeted intervention program that strengthens equity, inclusiveness, and student-centered practices in Philippine schools.

OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to assess the Social Justice Leadership and School Culture of Public Junior High Schools in the Division of Dasmarinas City as a basis for the Context-Driven Framework.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following problems:

1. How do the Principals, Department Heads, and Teachers assess the Social Justice Leadership of Public Junior High Schools in the Division of Dasmarinas City in terms of:

1.1. Equity and Inclusion;
1.2. Advocacy and Empowerment;
1.3. Cultural Responsiveness;
1.4. Ethical and Moral Leadership;
1.5. Participatory and Democratic Leadership;
1.6. Critical Consciousness and Reflection;
1.7. Community Engagement and Partnership; and
1.8. Transformative Action?

2. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the three groups of respondents on the Social Justice Leadership of Public Junior High Schools in the Division of Dasmarinas City using the above-mentioned variables?

3. How do the three groups of respondents assess School Culture in terms of:

3.1. Shared Vision and Mission;
3.2. Collaboration and Collegiality;
3.3. Communication and Openness;
3.4. Professional Growth and Development;
3.5. Respect, Trust, and Relationships;
3.6. Student-Centeredness;
3.7. High Expectations and Achievement Orientation;
3.8. Shared Leadership and Empowerment;
3.9. Sense of Belonging and Community; and
3.10. Organizational Support and Structures?

4. Is there a significant relationship between the Social Justice Leadership and School Culture?

5. What are the problems encountered by the respondents relative to the Social Justice Leadership and School Culture?

6. Based on the finding what intervention program may be proposed?

7. How acceptable is the proposed context-driven framework?

Research Design

To attain the objectives of the study, a descriptive-correlational research design was utilized. This non-experimental, quantitative method is uniquely suited for describing the characteristics of a population and investigating the relationships between variables without researcher manipulation. According to Bhat (2018), a descriptive-correlational design functions by first detailing the variables in depth and subsequently analyzing the data to uncover emerging patterns and associations without altering the natural state of the environment. In this study, this dual-purpose design was appropriately applied to measure and describe the prevailing levels of Social Justice Leadership and School Culture among selected secondary school principals within the City Schools Division of Dasmariñas, while simultaneously determining the strength and direction of the significant relationship between these two variables.

Summary of Findings

The following are the key findings of the study:

1. On the assessment of the principals, department heads, and teachers on the social justice leadership in public junior high schools in the Division of Dasmariñas City in terms of:

The assessment of social justice leadership yielded a grand mean of 4.47, which is verbally interpreted as "Highly Obvious."

2. On the test of significant difference on the assessments of the three groups of respondents on the social justice leadership:

The three respondent groups showed statistically significant differences in their assessments of most social justice leadership indicators-specifically advocacy and empowerment, cultural responsiveness, ethical and moral leadership, critical consciousness and reflection, community engagement and partnership, and transformative action (all $p = 0.001$). Conversely, no significant variations were found in their assessments of equity and inclusion ($p = 0.065$) and participatory and democratic leadership ($p - 0.062$), as both p-values exceeded the 0.05 significance threshold.

3. On the assessment of the three groups of respondents on the school culture in terms of:

The assessment of school culture yielded a grand mean of 4.55, which is verbally interpreted as "Highly evident."

4. On the test of the significant relationship between the social justice leadership and school culture:

This study establishes a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between social justice leadership and school culture, yielding an overall grand mean correlation of $r = 0.635$. Ethical and moral leadership (r = 0.688$) and critical consciousness (r = 0.679$) showed the strongest connections, particularly with communication and openness, while transformative action (r = 0.651$) linked heavily to student-centeredness. Remaining dimensions-including equity, democracy, community engagement, cultural responsiveness, and advocacy-maintained robust correlations ranging from r = 0.590$ to r = 0.634$, collectively proving that social justice practices are deeply tied to healthier, more collaborative school environments.

5. On the problems encountered by the respondents relative to the social justice leadership and school culture:

The results revealed a grand mean of 2.92, which is verbally interpreted as "Moderately Encountered."

6. On the proposed intervention program:

The proposed intervention program aims to sustain and institutionalize the highly apparent social justice leadership and positive school culture within public junior high schools in the Division of Dasmariñas City. While current practices in equity, collaboration, and learner-centeredness are strong, the program provides a structured guide for leaders, teachers, and stakeholders to ensure continuous support, monitoring, and improvement. Ultimately, it embeds these effective practices into school planning and decision-making to maintain a fair, supportive, and responsive learning environment.

On the acceptability of the proposed SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL CULTURE OF PUBLIC JUNIOR HGH SCHOOL IN THE DIVISION OF DASMARINAS CITY : BASIS FOR CONTEXT;DRIVEN FRAMEWORK

Was highly acceptable to respondents, with an overall weighted mean of 4.30.

Conclusions

Based on the outcomes of the study, the following were concluded:

1. Social justice leadership was highly remarkable in public junior high schools in the Division of Dasmariñas City across all assessed areas, particularly equity and inclusion, participatory leadership, critical reflection, cultural responsiveness, community partnership, ethical leadership, and transformative action.
2. The three groups of respondents differed significantly in most areas of social justice leadership, but they shared similar assessments on equity and inclusion and participatory and democratic leadership.
3. School culture is highly practiced in public junior high schools in the Division of Dasmariñas City across all areas, especially student-centeredness, shared leadership, belongingness, professional growth, achievement orientation, communication, and organizational support.
4. Social justice leadership is significantly related to school culture.
5. The extent of problems met in social justice leadership and school culture was minimally encountered, mainly involving equal access to learning opportunities, hesitation to speak up, diverse learner needs, teacher collaboration, professional growth, and staff trust.
6. The proposed intervention program is designed to sustain highly distinct social justice leadership and school culture practices.
7. The proposed was highly suitable as rated by the respondents.

Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of the study, the following are hereby recommended:

1. Principals should consider adopting and implementing the Social Justice Leadership and School Culture Framework at Paliparan II Integrated High School and across the Division of Dasmariñas City.
2. The school administrators may conduct regular consultations with principals, teachers, and other personnel to address differences in perceptions and improve common understanding of leadership practices.
3. Non-teaching personnel are requested to maintain practices that promote student-centeredness, collaboration, communication, belongingness, professional growth, and organizational support.
4. Department Heads and planning teams may integrate social justice leadership activities into the School Improvement Plan, Annual Implementation Plan, and other school development programs.
5. Guidance Designate may address concerns on equal access, teacher collaboration, professional growth, staff trust, and diverse learner needs through targeted support activities.

6. SPTA, particularly the school administrators, are encouraged to implement the program systematically and evaluate its progress quarterly, semesterly, and annually.
7. Future researchers may conduct qualitative studies to explore the lived experiences, perceptions, challenges, and practices of specific stakeholders in sustaining inclusive and supportive school environments.

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