

INSTRUCTIONAL Leadership and Teacher Enthusiasm as Predictors of Student ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Engaging learners in school is among the challenges educators encounter, particularly those who teach students in secondary school. Thus, this study aimed to determine the influence of school head instructional leadership and teacher enthusiasm on student engagement with the use of quantitative descriptive correlational design. Research data were gathered using the adapted questionnaires validated by the panel of experts and administered to the public secondary school teachers of the selected schools in the Division of Davao de Oro. The data gathered were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, and multiple linear regression. Results revealed that the level of the secondary school head instructional leadership was very high. The level of teachers' enthusiasm of the public junior high school teachers and the level of student engagement in secondary public schools were both high. Further, the school head instructional leadership was not a significant predictor of student engagement while the teacher enthusiasm was a significant predictor of student engagement. The findings draw recommendations of intensifying the school-based management implementation, crafting multi-phasic faculty development programs, and crafting of evidence-based intervention programs.

KEYWORDS: *Instructional leadership, enthusiasm, student engagement, public secondary school teachers, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement is described as the state of emotional, social, and intellectual preparedness for learning, categorized with inquisitiveness, involvement, as well as determination to acquire further learning (Abla & Fraumeni, 2019). Engagement, per se, is a key area for intermediations that target to decrease dropout rates, increase achievement, and assist learners in

developing the skills that are essential to prepare for future jobs (Fredricks et al., 2016). However, Furia (2023) cited that student engagement in education lags, particularly as they grow older. Specifically, as cited by Olson and Peterson (2015), students were disengaged in their current schools. Additionally, Pietarinen et al. (2014) revealed that the reduced levels of engagement in school severely affected students, causing less achievement, undesirable behaviors in greater occurrence, and a higher threat of quitting school. Promethean (2023) concluded that student engagement is a serious aspect of a student's educational achievement as they may find it difficult to concentrate when they are disengaged, and this will affect their ability to make progress in their learning as they will not effectively learn.

Studies were conducted to find out variables that provide valuable insights into the significant role factors play in promoting student engagement. One is instructional leadership, which Angelle (2018) regarded as vital in actively learning as well as in student success. Thus, school heads must focus on promoting collaborative principles to inspire students' involvement in schools. The study conducted by Khan (2022) revealed that the total effect of instructional leadership on student engagement is statistically significant. In addition, as highlighted in the study of Markus et al. (2023), the mean correlation is close to zero, and the relationship between instructional leadership and student achievement varies significantly across contexts. This is mainly due to the level of human development and cultural factors.

Additionally, teacher enthusiasm is defined as persistent subject devotion and professional commitment to the work, motivating students through the teacher's own emotions (Punia & Bala, 2023). As mentioned by Cui et al. (2017), teacher enthusiasm is considered a vital teacher distinctive feature that reveals its significant role in students' engagement through sympathetic instructional practices such as support for independence, aptitude, social empathy, and subject relevance. Added on, Skinner and Pitzer (2012) disclosed that teacher enthusiasm can improve students' engagement and willingness to learn can be employed through tasks that trigger extrinsic rewards, fulfill learners' intrinsic well-being, and provide a sense of possession and autonomy that all lead to students' engagement.

Although there are several pieces of research about student engagement in general, limited studies have been carried out explicitly exploring student engagement as influenced by teacher enthusiasm and school head instructional

leadership; thus, correlating these variables motivated the researcher to conduct the study. Particularly, the context of this study is unique since data from the survey will be collected from public junior high school teachers in the Division of Davao de Oro, Region XI, Philippines. Therefore, from that ground, the researcher desires to determine the rationale behind these factors.

More so, the results of this study may help educational leaders in crafting instructional plans that will support teachers in developing innovative methods and approaches as well as activating passion for teaching. This will warrant the engagement of students at the school level with an anticipative result of leading learners toward their responsibility, self-confidence, and achievement. Also, school heads and teachers may be guided in developing a program that supports student engagement in teaching-learning practices and other related activities in school. These may include ways to partner with families, promote a positive and safe learning environment, use data for prompt feedback, and apply cycles of evidence-based continuous improvement.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Theory of Instructional Leadership by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Instructional leadership encompasses the provision of guidance, assistance, and targets to teachers in their instructional practices. The school principals and administrators are the instructional leaders who possess an exceptional opportunity to mold the school community and affect students' academic attainment.

Statement of the Problem

1. What is the level of the school head's instructional leadership?
2. What is the level of the teacher enthusiasm?
3. What is the level of student engagement?
4. Do school head instructional leadership and teacher enthusiasm significantly predict student engagement?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed quantitative research specifically, descriptive correlational design. The quantitative design's advantages aid in testing the causal relationships between variables, making predictions, and generalizing results to wider populations, and it aims to test a

predefined theory or hypothesis and finally either accept or reject it based on the results (Sreekumar, 2023). The present study utilized a descriptive correlational research approach since this will help the researcher seek and identify the relationship between school head instructional leadership style, teacher enthusiasm, and student engagement among the high school students in Davao de Oro.

Research Locale. This study was conducted in public secondary schools in Davao de Oro. The province is also the second most populous in Davao Region. Three schools were chosen for the study. School A is categorized as the large public secondary school in Montevista, School B as a medium secondary school in Compostela, and School C as a large public secondary school in Nabunturan, Davao de Oro.

Research Respondents. The respondents of the study were the 106 teachers in the junior high school unit in Davao de Oro. The sample size was computed using the Raosoft calculator set at a 5 percent margin of error, 95 percent confidence level, and 50 percent response distribution. Since the participating schools have a junior high school teaching population of about 145, the researcher came up with 106 junior high teachers as target respondents of the study who were currently teaching in the chosen public secondary schools in Davao de Oro.

Research Instrument. Three adapted survey questionnaires were used which underwent validation by experts and pilot testing. The first questionnaire was the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale by Halinger and Murphy (1985) is a 71-item questionnaire. It has a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.75, ensuring that the instrument was reliable for both research and evaluation. The second questionnaire was the Teacher Enthusiasm Scale (Punia and Bala, 2021) which consists of 78 items and has a Cronbach's alpha value of .957. The third questionnaire was the Engagement Versus Disaffection with Learning: Teacher Report, EDL by Skinner et al. (2009) was a 20-item survey questionnaire.

Data Gathering. In the data collection of the study, the researcher obtained a letter from the Dean of UIC's Graduate School asking permission to conduct a study. When the researcher received the ethical clearance, she wrote a letter to the graduate school Dean asking for an endorsement letter, requesting permission to conduct the research.

Subsequently, a letter requesting the consent of participating respondents in the study was sent in person to the Division and District Offices of the Department of Education in Davao de Oro, down to the schools where the study was conducted. Upon receiving permissions and approvals, it was sent immediately to the school principals of the chosen schools. Thereafter, with the employment of on-site face-to-face, the researcher, with the assistance of the school principal, convened the respondents.

Ethical Considerations. The researcher ensured that all ethical criteria were complied with. This research protocol underwent a thorough review by the University of Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of School Head Instructional Leadership

The overall level of school head instructional leadership is 4.55, described as very high, which means that school head instructional leadership is always demonstrated. This result implies that school heads consistently demonstrate strong leadership by setting clear academic goals and ensuring staff alignment towards these objectives. They actively engage with teachers, coordinate curriculum efforts, and address student needs based on test results. Additionally, school heads participate in co-curricular activities, support teacher development, and create opportunities for collaboration during faculty meetings. In addition, the overall standard deviation is 0.44, which is less than one, denoting that the respondents have ratings that are clustered around the mean.

Table 1
Level of School Head Instructional Leadership

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Framing School Goals	4.56	.47	Very High
Communicating the School Goals	4.56	.57	Very High
Supervising and Evaluating Instruction	4.51	.49	Very High
Coordinating the Curriculum	4.53	.56	Very High
Monitoring Student Progress	4.46	.57	Very High
Protecting Instructional Time	4.44	.55	Very High
Maintaining High Visibility	4.43	.57	Very High
Providing Incentives for Teachers	4.67	.49	Very High

Promoting Professional Development	4.63	.49	Very High
Developing and Enforcing Academic Standards	4.62	.46	Very High
Providing Incentives for Learning	4.67	.46	Very High
Overall Mean	4.55	.44	Very High

This finding aligns with the study of Aziz et al. (2018) that showed the principal's high level of instructional leadership, wherein leaders create environments where teachers are encouraged to innovate and engage in continuous professional learning. Additionally, the finding supports the study of Arrieta et al. (2020), wherein the instructional leadership of the principal was often practiced. However, the study of Fevre (2021) revealed that the administrative job has various complex goals and that some leadership responsibilities might not be focused on enhancing teaching and learning but primarily on managerial tasks.

The Level of Teacher Enthusiasm

The level of teacher enthusiasm is rated high, with an overall mean of 4.08. This result means that the teacher’s enthusiasm is often observed in the classroom. This indicates that teacher enthusiasm is evident through high student engagement, such as maintaining eye contact, fostering respectful interactions, along with creativity and innovation in using Information Communication Technology, a belief that knowledge gives power, subject expertise, and a professional commitment for continuous learning. In addition, the overall standard deviation is 0.37, which is less than one, denoting that the respondents have ratings that are clustered around the mean.

Table 2
The Level of Teacher Enthusiasm

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Interest and Engagement	4.10	.66	High
Interaction with Students	4.43	.63	Very High
Passion for Teaching	4.53	.56	Very High
Creativity and Innovation	4.27	.57	Very High
Professional Development	4.46	.48	Very High
Subject Knowledge Enrichment	4.56	.51	Very High
Professional Commitment	4.35	.60	Very High
Overall Mean	4.08	.37	High

The finding supports the study of Scott (2022), stating that enthusiasm through verbal and nonverbal cues from teachers benefits the students’ engagement, understanding, and motivation. Further, the result agrees with the study of Akram et al. (2022) that teachers view technology integration positively, exhibiting enthusiasm through the creative use of ICT as it enhances their instructional effectiveness, makes learning engaging, and helps maintain student motivation. Their study also suggests the provision of adequate opportunities for teachers' professional growth. On this note, Peng (2021) cited that teacher enthusiasm is seen as an essential characteristic that plays a crucial role in motivating and engaging students by fostering supportive teaching practices.

Level of Student Engagement

The level of student engagement has an overall mean of 3.72 described as high, which means that student engagement is often manifested. This result means that the students are showing high behavioral and emotional engagement as demonstrated by attentive listening and exhibiting interest in new tasks, and on the other hand, showing moderate behavioral disaffection and low emotional disaffection, reflecting curiosity, positive learning values, and constructive emotional response to learning. The overall standard deviation is .58, denoting that the responses of the respondents are closer to the mean.

Table 3
The Level of Student Engagement

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Behavioral Engagement	3.90	.64	High
Emotional Engagement	4.01	.62	High
Behavioral Disaffection	2.76	.90	Moderate
Emotional Disaffection	2.29	.88	Low
Over-all Mean	3.72	.58	High

This finding supports the study of Paramole et al. (2024), revealing that most of the students expressing happiness, paying attention to the teacher, or asking questions are focused learners, showing a positive behavioral and emotional engagement, while some learners who display inattentiveness are disengaged. Additionally, the result agrees with the study by Gray and DiLoreto (2016), which explained in their study how learner interaction and teacher presence influenced students' perceptions of their learning, with student engagement acting as a key factor in this process. As emphasized by Ke et al.

(2016), when students are engaged, they begin inquiry, persevere in solving difficulties, unravel mysteries, master ideas, and apply new information in a variety of situations.

Significance of the Influence of School Head Instructional Leadership and Teacher Enthusiasm on Student Engagement

The results of the multiple regression analysis of the variables. Statistically, there exists a significant relationship with school head instructional leadership to student engagement and teacher enthusiasm to student engagement.

Table 4
Significance of the Influence of Instructional Leadership, Teacher Enthusiasm on Student Engagement

Student Engagement				
Singular Influence of the Predictors	Standardized Coefficients	T	p-value	Remarks
School Head Instructional Leadership	0.00	.02	.99	Not Significant
Teacher Enthusiasm	0.53	5.60	.00	Significant
Combined Influence of the Predictors				
R	.53			
R ²	.28			
F	20.21			
p	.00			Significant

In terms of singular capacity, school head instructional leadership shows a p-value of .99, which is greater than the .05 level of significance (2-tailed) with a positive standardized beta value of 0.00. It shows that school head instructional leadership is not a significant predictor of student engagement. This indicates that the school head instructional leadership does not have a meaningful impact on student engagement. In this regard, Hallinger (2011) noted that while instructional leadership is crucial in shaping school culture, its direct impact on student engagement is limited. Similarly, the work of Khan (2022) revealed a statistically significant result stating that instructional leadership has an indirect effect on student engagement. Likewise, Grissom et al. (2015) also found that a principal's time is widely expended on instructional leadership does not determine the progress of student engagement rather on several definite instructional investments which predict annual improvements. As discussed by Cruickshank (2017), there is no sole approach to leadership that is fated to be effective for perfecting all schools and student engagement.

Likewise, in singular capacity, teacher enthusiasm reflects a positive standardized beta value of .53 and a p-value of .00, which is less than the .05 level of significance, 2-tailed. It means that teacher enthusiasm is a significant predictor of student engagement. This result means that for every unit of an increase in the value of the level of teacher enthusiasm, there is a corresponding increase of .53 in the level of student engagement. This result implies that teacher enthusiasm is a vital element in stimulating student engagement. This finding supports the study of Frommewelt et al. (2021) who found that teacher enthusiasm significantly influenced student's drive and commitment to master goals, with more enthusiastic teachers promoting greater student support. Further, results from the study of Ciu et al. (2017) showed that having an enthusiastic teacher makes the learners feel more engaged and less disturbed in the class. Notably, while the instructional leaders in schools are tasked with managing the entire school's activities, the teachers are found to play the crucial part in ensuring the goal of high student engagement in schools (Bhebhe and Nyathi, 2019).

In addition, the combined influence of the two independent variables, school head instructional leadership, and teacher enthusiasm on the student engagement is significant ($p < .05$). Meanwhile, the model explains 28 percent of the variance of the student engagement based on the independent variables included in this study as indicated by $R^2 = .28$. This means that 72 percent of the variance in the student engagement can be attributed to other factors aside from school head instructional leadership and teacher enthusiasm.

The result contradicts the Instructional Leadership Theory of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) wherein school head instructional leadership was not a significant predictor of student engagement, implying that while instructional leadership is regarded as a significant factor in leading the educational process, direct classroom-level influences may have more immediate impact on student engagement. This suggests the need for balanced school-wide leadership efforts and setting broader visions with strategies that directly affect the teaching-learning process, like focused support to teacher development and classroom-level engagement initiatives directed to the learners. Likewise, focusing on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the principal's role bounds the successful running of the school, particularly in improving student learning. Instructional leaders can foster a positive school environment by setting high expectations by delivering applicable feedback, endorsing teacher cooperation, and fostering an encouraging school atmosphere.

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