

CLASSROOM Learning Environment, Leadership Behavior, and Performance Assessment Attitude of Special Education Teachers: An Explanatory Sequential DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

Performance assessment attitude is the teachers attitude to understand how students' performance is evaluated and which strategies are utilized to evaluate. This study aimed to examine the relationship and influence of classroom learning environment and leadership behavior to performance assessment attitude of teachers. Likewise, employing the explanatory sequential mixed methods design specifically, descriptive correlation design and phenomenology were utilized to reveal intricate understanding of the experiences of Special Education Teachers in Region XI. A validated and reliability tested adapted survey questionnaire were used during the data gathering. More so, a validated guide questions based on the result of the quantitative strand was used in the IDI and FGD. Results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson r and multiple regression in the quantitative strand; thematic analysis in the qualitative strand. Findings of the study revealed that classroom learning environment of teachers was high, perceived leadership behavior of their school heads was very high, and performance attitude of teachers was very high. In addition, there was a significant relationship between classroom learning environment, leadership behavior, and performance assessment attitude. Moreover, it classroom learning environment and leadership behavior significantly influenced performance assessment attitude. Further, confirmed very high rating, contradict moderate rating, and confirmed combined significant influence were the common essential themes. Furthermore, connecting-merging and connecting-diverging were the nature of data integration.

KEYWORDS: *Educational leadership, classroom learning environment, leadership behavior, performance assessment attitude, mixed-methods*

INTRODUCTION

Performance assessment attitude refers to the teachers understanding on how students' performance is evaluated, and which strategies are utilized to evaluate (Metin, 2010). It plays an important role in the process of learning and motivation among learners with special needs that affects how special education teachers approach the learning task and what study behaviors to use (Firtri et al., 2019). However, many teachers do not have the right attitude in assessing students with special needs (Subban et al., 2023). More so, learners with special needs are placed in the general education classrooms and teachers are not flexible and equip with special needs education to fully address these learners (Andiema, 2020). They tend to provide generic tasks assessment to all their learners without considering their learning requirements. Likewise, Ridwan (2021) revealed that teacher's attitude should consider that learners with special needs require special education and services in the learning process (Maryanti et al., 2021).

In the United States, inclusive education is applied however, special education teachers are not prepared to meet the students' needs because there are more general education certified teachers than those of special education certified teachers for content area instruction (Dewey et al., 2017). Without this, special education proficiency teachers have only considered their own complacency than of the students. Thus, they do not have the right attitude to assess the performance of the students. In Scotland, as reported by Florian (2019), the performance assessment attitude of teachers, moved straight to trying to identify learning disabilities without having the needed systems, tools, and practices in place to do it effectively. Likewise in South Africa, teachers performance assessment attitude failed to consider the causes of learning difficulties during the screening or evaluation process; that lead to misdiagnosis.

Taking things in Philippine setting, Roxas et al. (2019) mentioned that more than 50 percent of teachers who teach children with special needs still do not know how to assess learning classroom performance of children with special needs in their classes. They conduct performance assessment in the same way for dealing with children who do not have special needs. In addition, several authors (Baog et al, 2019; Dante & Saludes, 2006) among public education institutions in Davao Region denoted that teachers' inability to use appropriate performance assessment strategies resulted to poor periodical assessment rating

among the six percent of students with learning disabilities. Here, teachers directly show inappropriate towards performance assessment attitude which sacrificed the education of the students with special needs.

On one hand, Irambona and Syomwene (2023) described classroom learning environment as the diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which students learn. Accordingly, the term learning environment encompasses learning resources and technology, means of teaching, modes of learning, and connections to societal and global contexts. More so, Usman and Madudili (2019) highlighted that classroom environment is a critical necessity in performance assessment attitude of teachers. Further, Thapa et al. (2013) mentioned that classroom learning environment favorably associate with the teachers performance assessment attitude . Furthermore, another finding of Fu et al. (2023) suggested that creating more inclusive classroom learning environment improves teachers performance attitude specifically it enhances general teachers' knowledge and skills on inclusive education, especially the skills on collaboration with others, which could contribute to promote more positive attitude on inclusive education of general teachers.

On the other hand, leadership style has a significant effect on teachers' performance assessment attitude (Astuti et al., 2020). This statement was supported by Ridwan (2021) who posited that teacher performance assessment attitude is shaped by the leadership style of supervisors who carry out the management function wisely. This is in line with Garg's (2020) characterization of leadership practices as the processes of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers.

Consequently, through effective leadership practices, people understand, manage, and even live with problems thereby creating the right performance assessment attitude (Frangieh & Rusu, 2021). Thus, leaders must always adapt their behavior to take account of the persons they lead (Kemethofer et al., 2022). As stated by Tschannen-Moran (2020) the right performance assessment attitude of the educators guides the activities to achieve the objectives and establish a desired order and discipline of the students.

Meanwhile, research studies indicated that classroom learning environment and leadership practices are linked to performance assessment attitude of the teachers. However, most of them were in foreign context and

adopted quantitative research approach like correlational and mediation analysis. Specifically, the study conducted by Hernandez-Lopez et al. (2020) showed that there is a relationship between the ability of the leader to lead and attitude towards performance assessment of the teachers. Moreover, Cheung and Wang (2021) found that learning in positive classroom environment may play an increasingly important role in classroom assessment practices. Likewise the study of Madudili (2019) linking classroom learning environment to student performance; Astuti et al. (2020) focuses on the effect on the principals' leadership style to high school teachers; and Ridwan (2021) focuses on performance assessment of teachers linked to other factors.

In this context, the researcher felt the need to fill in the research gap of conducting a study in the Philippine setting, particularly in Region XI using a mixed methods approach. Specifically, the researcher uses sequential-explanatory design to have a better understanding of the performance assessment attitude of special education teachers as determined by the classroom learning environment and leadership practices of school heads, which is found to be scarce. The study is intended to contribute to the limited body of knowledge regarding performance assessment attitude in the context of special education teachers in Davao Region. The results of the study are of interest to other researchers as it provided valuable knowledge for their research. School stakeholders benefitted from this research-based data on the combined influence of classroom learning environment and leadership practices of school heads on the performance assessment attitude of special education teachers in Region XI. Furthermore, the results of the study provided qualitative and quantitative inputs that are research-based in crafting inclusive education policies wherein classroom learning environment as well as leadership practices of school heads among schools with inclusive education play a substantial role.

Importantly, the researcher will disseminate the research findings of this academic pursuit in an engaging and innovative manner, first and foremost to the direct beneficiaries of the study and other stakeholders in the academic community. Hence, the researcher plans to disseminate the result of the study during school governing council meetings and through paper presentation during research forums at the district, division, regional, national, and even international level. Moreover, the publication of the paper is another goal for wide dissemination of the findings.

Theoretical Lens

A pragmatic paradigm was applied in this study. It aimed to identify the problem and view within its broadest context. As a pragmatist, the researcher adhered to a pragmatic worldview in which the creation of individual realities was treated as a derivative of varying personal experiences and ideas encountered and not of an absolute default (Maddux & Donnett, 2015). Particularly, the participants significant experience in classroom learning environment and leadership behavior of the school heads offered a practical meaning in understanding its connection to having the right performance assessment attitude of the special education teachers that greatly contribute to the learning development and progress of the learners. This study was anchored on the theories of Theory of Adaptive Leadership (Marks et al., 2000), Transformational Leadership (Burns, 1985), Theory of Situational Leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969), and Expectancy Theory (Vroom's, 1964).

METHODS

Research Design

In this study, the researcher employed mixed methods, specifically explanatory sequential research design. For this study, quantitative result was sought first. Such result was then used to form an instrument to verify the quantitative data. This instrument was employed in the qualitative strand using IDI and FGD that will provide an in-depth explanation of the variable in the study. This method collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data and integrates data during data collection, analysis, and discussion. Moreover, it uses procedures that implement quantitative and qualitative components concurrently (Creswell, 2017).

In conducting the study, the researcher use the result of the quantitative phase as basis in the construction of the interview guide for the conduct of FGD and IDI in the qualitative phase. At this point, the result provided better understanding of the phenomena and it showed confirmations and contradictions of the variables of the different indicators. Using both quantitative and qualitative results ensures a dynamic and absolute understanding of the result. Likewise, these methods were used to confirm, or corroborate findings, equally prioritizing the quantitative method. Hence, the design was appropriate to use purposely to supplement one method with the strengths of another. Specifically, the quantitative component involved descriptive and correlational approaches.

Research Participants

The respondents of the quantitative phase were the 233 special education teachers of the public schools in Region XI who are handling classes where students with special needs were included. And based on the number of special education teachers and the chosen locale, Region XI, a sample of 206 respondents were chosen. Davao City had 136 respondents, Davao del Norte had 8 respondents, Tagum City had 11 respondents, Mati City had 10 respondents, Davao Oriental had 10 respondents, Panabo City had 12 respondents, Digos City had 9 respondents, Davao del Sur had 8 respondents, and Davao Occidental had 2 respondents: a total of 206 respondents. Moreover, the researcher had employed stratified random sampling in selecting the participants from purposively selected schools in Region XI with school assignment as the basis for stratification.

In the qualitative phase, the researcher purposively selected 15 special education teachers who were drawn from the quantitative strand respondents ten for the IDI and five special education teachers for the FGD. A total of 15 special education teachers were invited as participants. They are permanent-regular teacher who are handling class where students with special needs are included.

Research Instruments

In order to gather the quantitative data, three adapted survey questionnaires were used. The comments, corrections, and suggestions given by the experts were incorporated in the final revisions of the questionnaires. The adapted questionnaires were subjected to validation and reliability for internal consistency of the items. Likewise the suggestions of the validators were consolidated and considered for the improvement of the interview guide.

Based on the original study, the degree of internal consistency of the instruments were the following: Classroom Learning Environment is 0.75, Leadership Behavior is 0.70, and Performance Assessment Attitude is 0.890. More so, to contextualize the items of the questionnaire, the three instruments undergo validation and reliability testing, thus as presented below the details of each questionnaire. Likewise, validated IDI and FGD semi-structured interview were crafted based on the quantitative results.

Data Collection

Following the protocol evaluation provided by the University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC) Research Ethics Committee (REC), the following

steps was taken to gather the data for the study: First, the researcher wrote a letter asking for permission to Dean of the Graduate School of the University of the Immaculate Conception to conduct the study. A letter request was noted by the adviser and the attached endorsement letter signed by the Dean of the Graduate School of the University of the Immaculate Conception was sent to the UIC- Research Ethics Committee for the release of the ethical clearance. Afterwards, a letter was sent to the Office of the Regional Director of the Department of Education-Region XI.

Upon the approval of the Regional Director of the Department of Education-Region XI, a copy of the said letter with endorsement was forwarded and addressed to the offices of the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Davao City, Davao del Norte, Tagum City, Mati City, Davao Oriental, Panabo City, Digos City, Davao del Sur, and Davao Occidental. Once approved, the said letter with endorsements was forwarded to the said school heads together with the manuscript, ICF form, and other relevant documents. The researcher at this stage have waited to the response of the said divisions to start the data gathering. While waiting, the researcher had created the google form that have served as the instrument and created a Google classroom account for the IDI and FGD discussion. After several weeks, the division had already given their go signal for the researcher to conduct the study through a text message. The researcher then has utilized the contact with each division to send the google forms and the google meet link to start the collection of the quantitative data and qualitative data. The researcher had simultaneously gathered the quantitative data and the qualitative data.

Data Analysis

Mean, standard deviation, Pearson-r, and multiple linear regression analysis were used to analyze the quantitative data of this study. In the qualitative strand, the researcher employed thematic analysis and interpretation of data to create the rich descriptions that emanate from the data extracts, using the participants' own words to support their interpretations (Creswell, 2013). While the data from the IDI and FGD were analyzed using thematic analysis, the interview was recorded so that the data and notes that were obtained can be analyzed to determine the emerging codes and themes.

Ethical Statement

The study adhered to the ethical guidelines established by the University of the Immaculate Conception's Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC) as a

result the respondents' involvement was entirely voluntary, and they were shown the highest level of respect. Concerns were handled almost away, and whatever personal information they provided was handled with the greatest confidentiality, and they were granted complete discretion to decline taking the survey at the event of any annoyance. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the questionnaire for the survey was free of any profane, discriminatory, or demeaning language; cautious data collection to prevent collecting unnecessary data; and additional measures to protect the respondents' health. Further, the researcher rigorously upholds the values of confidentiality and confidentiality of the data covered by the Philippine Republic Act 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012 this gave the respondents the assurance that the study's conclusions would only be applied to scholarly and academic purposes.

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

The status of classroom learning environment as assessed by the special education teachers have an overall mean of 4.08 described as high. The result implies that the classroom learning environment is oftentimes manifested as a caring classroom and innovativeness that students of special education teachers reveal their creativity in learning. In addition, its standard deviation of 0.47 showed that special education teachers' responses about classroom learning environment resemble each other.

In addition, it is revealed that the students classroom learning environment has an overall mean of 3.65 described as high. The result indicates that ideal learning environment is oftentimes evident. Considering the degrees of dispersion in this variable, standard deviation is 0.59 indicating that the responses are relatively clustered around them.

More so, the status of leadership behavior of school heads as perceived by special education teachers has an overall mean of 4.52 described as very high. This means that school heads supervising special education teachers always observed leadership behavior in getting organizational goals accomplished. Considering the degrees of dispersion in this variable, the standard deviation is 0.50 indicating that the responses are relatively clustered around the mean.

In addition, the status of performance assessment attitude of special education teachers has an overall mean of 3.60 described as high. The result indicates that the performance assessment attitude of special education teachers

is oftentimes manifested. Considering the degrees of dispersion in this variable, the standard deviation is 0.63 indicating that the responses are relatively clustered around the mean.

Also, there is a significant relationship between classroom learning environment and performance assessment attitude, and leadership behavior, and performance assessment attitude. The normality of data justifies the use of the Pearson r . In addition, there is moderate positive relationship between classroom learning environment and performance assessment attitude. However, low positive relationship exists between leadership behavior and performance assessment attitude. On the results of the multiple regression analysis, the standardized beta coefficients and t-statistic results of the influence of the independent variables namely: classroom learning environment and leadership behavior the dependent variable which is the performance assessment attitude are presented. The level of significance is set at $\alpha = 0.05$. With p value of < 0.05 supports the decision to reject the null hypothesis indicating that the coefficient of the variable is not equal to zero.

Likewise, the standardized beta coefficient of classroom learning environment is 0.341, with t-statistic of 5.252, and p-value of .000. Thus, for every unit increase in the level of classroom learning environment, there is a corresponding increase of 0.341 units in the level of performance assessment attitude. Moreover, the standardized beta coefficient of leadership behavior is 0.154, with a t-statistic 2.379, and p-value of .018. Meanwhile, the R-square value is reported at .149 indicating that 14.9 percent in the variability of performance assessment attitude can be explained by the combined influence of the predictors: classroom learning environment and leadership behavior. Relatively, 85 percent of the variation in the level of performance assessment attitude can be attributed to other factors or independent variables that are not included in this study.

Qualitative Results

For the IDI, 10 informants were purposively selected while five for the FGD from the 64 selected public SPED centers in Region XI that met the inclusion criteria and had signified to voluntarily participate in this study. Likewise, all the participants are female in both IDI and FGD.

The standpoints of special education teachers as regards to classroom learning environment were confirmed very high rating of classroom positive ,

confirmed very high rating of diversity values, contradict moderate rating of personal negative and contradict moderate rating of personal negative. On the standpoints of special education teachers as regards to leadership behavior were confirmed very high rating of model the way, confirmed very high rating of challenge the process, confirmed high rating of enable others to act, and confirmed high rating of encourage the heart. More so, the standpoints of special education teachers as regards to performance assessment attitude were contradicted very high rating of attitude towards using performance assessment in classroom, confirmed high rating of negative attitude towards performance assessment and contradicted moderate rating of attitudes towards self and peer assessment.

Data Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The data integration of quantitative and qualitative results revealed an intricate understanding of the experiences of special education teachers to classroom learning environment, leadership behavior, and performance assessment attitude. According to Fetters et al. (2013) the integration strategy of connecting reflects using the findings of one strand to construct items or questions for the other strand. With the result of the quantitative strand, questions were based to validate and understand the numerical result and explain the connection of the variables. Thus, from the quantitative findings, the qualitative insights gleaned from interviews and focus group discussions support the high mean ratings for classroom learning environment specifically, classroom positive (4.89) and diversity values (4.61), leadership behavior specifically, challenge the process (4.67), enable others to act (4.61), encourage the heart (4.61), and model the way (4.60), and performance assessment attitude specifically, attitude towards using performance assessment in classroom (4.62) and negative attitude towards performance assessment (2.23). Their connection highlights the significant relationship of classroom learning environment and leadership behavior on performance assessment attitude.

The qualitative data validates and confirms the patterns found in the quantitative results, demonstrating integration's connecting and merging character. The participant's affirmations of classroom learning environment, leadership behavior, and performance assessment attitude match the statistical data which confirms the observed tendencies. By providing depth and context to the numerical scores and illuminating the experiences and viewpoints of special education teachers, the qualitative component enhances the quantitative findings.

Furthermore, participant statements obtained through in-depth-interview support the substantial association between classroom learning environment and leadership behavior on performance assessment attitude of special education teachers. The qualitative data demonstrates that good learning environment and lean leadership skills seen in academic learning institutions in Region XI do correspond to the positive performance assessment attitude of special education teachers. This strong correlation supports the statistical significance and provides more comprehensive understanding of how these variables interact to shape the learning development of the students in special education program.

Special education teachers' self-efficacy gained from positive learning environment and competent leadership skills from their school heads considerably affect the performance assessment attitude of the teachers. The finding is aligned with Djazilan et al.'s (2022) conclusion that teacher self-efficacy has considerable effect on teacher's task performance. The quantitative and qualitative data confirm the integration which bolsters the broader literature synthesis highlighting the positive experience that special education teachers consistently have in teaching special education program. This link even emphasizes how important it is to create a positive learning environment and reliable leadership skills of the school heads to have a positive performance assessment attitude of the teachers. It also fits in with the larger body of research on the experiences of teachers in special education program.

However, the connecting-diverging results of classroom learning environment specifically, personal negative (3.03) and performance assessment attitude specifically, attitudes towards self and peer assessment (3.20) highlights the contradicting outcome of quantitative and qualitative result. The result was attributed to the contradictory assertions of the in-depth-interview and focus group discussion. While the indicator established a low numerical rating in the quantitative data, the qualitative data do support its result. It only indicates that there is still confusion as to whether an idea is a positive classroom learning environment that redound to the performance assessment attitude of special education teachers.

Nevertheless, the quantitative findings support the qualitative result gleaned from the in-depth-interview and focus group discussion which show the significant relationship of classroom learning environment and leadership behavior. Their connection highlights their influence on the performance assessment attitude of special education teachers. Moreover, their merging

connection of classroom learning environment highlights the predictor of performance assessment attitude. Generally, based on the qualitative findings, classroom learning environment significantly influence performance assessment attitude.

The result is aligned to the findings of Balog (2018) and Rajendran et al. (2020) that a caring classroom reveal the student's creativity in their learning process such as help, judge, reward, and find out each other that directly influences the moral attitude of the teachers toward work and environment. Directly saying that a positive classroom learning environment not only affects the students but also the attitude of the teachers in supporting the learning tasks of the students through performance assessments.

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