

Instructional leadership, empowering leader behaviors and enthusiasm among public elementary school teachers: An explanatory sequential design

Pene G. Oxales

University of the Immaculate Conception
Davao City, Philippines
Email: peneraingoden@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Enthusiastic teachers cultivate a positive and stimulating learning environment, promoting active student engagement and fostering a sense of community. This study aimed to determine the significance of the influence of instructional leadership and empowering leader behaviors on enthusiasm of the public elementary school teachers in Region XI. A mixed methods research, particularly sequential explanatory design, was utilized. A validated and reliability-tested adapted questionnaire was used in the data gathering. The statistical tools used for the quantitative data analysis were mean, standard deviation, and multiple linear regression. Moreover, a validated interview guide based on the results of the quantitative strand was constructed and used in the in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Thematic analysis was utilized for the qualitative data to extract the themes. The results revealed that the status of instructional leadership and empowering leader behaviors were rated very high, while enthusiasm was rated high. Further, instructional leadership and empowering leader behaviors significantly influenced enthusiasm. The standpoints of the participants regarding the salient points of the quantitative data and qualitative findings revealed confirmation of the status and the significant relationship between instructional leadership, empowering leader behaviors, and enthusiasm. Furthermore, the nature of data integration revealed connecting-confirmation and connecting-diverging.

Keywords: educational leadership, instructional leadership, empowering leader behaviors, enthusiasm, explanatory sequential design, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Enthusiasm is widely understood as a strong and passionate eagerness or interest, often accompanied by excitement and positivity (Swart et al., 2022). In the teaching profession,

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enthusiasm is characterized as an unwavering love of the subject, a commitment to instruction, and a dedication to the job (Keller et al., 2023). Teacher enthusiasm is especially critical in fostering student motivation and engagement, as it positively influences learners' curiosity, intrinsic motivation, and willingness to learn (Yalçınkaya et al., 2021). Enthusiastic teachers are known to create stimulating and supportive environments that enhance active learning and foster a sense of community. However, studies highlight an alarming decline in teacher enthusiasm, which poses a significant concern for educational outcomes (Nong et al., 2022; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017).

Globally, diminished teacher enthusiasm has become a persistent challenge. In the United States, systemic issues such as standardized testing and accountability pressures have contributed to reduced enthusiasm (Frahm & Cianca, 2021). A Gallup (2017) survey revealed that 69% of teachers were disengaged or lacking enthusiasm, ranging from indifference toward their work to spreading negativity in their institutions. Similar concerns have been noted in Norway, where a high percentage of teachers report low enthusiasm paired with intentions to leave the profession (Culbertson, 2024). The United Kingdom has also experienced high levels of poor teacher enthusiasm (McGhee & Stark, 2021). These trends are especially detrimental in disadvantaged schools where students face additional barriers, as declining teacher enthusiasm exacerbates inequities in academic achievement. A lack of participation in school decision-making and policy formation further alienates educators, leading to decreased professional connection and reduced engagement (Gordon et al., 2021).

In the Philippine context, low teacher enthusiasm is shaped by systemic, socio-economic, and professional stressors. Estudillo and Mhunpiew (2021) argue that disparities in educational systems and resource allocation significantly influence teachers' morale. Abun et al. (2020) found that improvements in workplace treatment, respect, rights, and collegial relationships directly enhanced enthusiasm among employees in the Ilocos Region. In Metro Manila, Mingoa (2017) reported that excessive paperwork was the most burdensome stressor, cited by 52% of teachers, alongside financial and personal pressures. Such challenges highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions that support teachers' motivation and commitment.

Research further emphasizes the role of leadership in shaping teacher enthusiasm. Instructional leadership, in particular, has been identified as a key factor in promoting a positive school climate that fosters teacher motivation (Yalçınkaya et al., 2021). Magboo et al. (2023) found that instructional leaders who consistently model expected behaviors inspire teachers to work with greater enthusiasm. Similarly, Hanks (2023) demonstrated that public school leaders acknowledge the influence of their leadership on teacher enthusiasm and overall school performance. Using structural equation modeling, Dami et al. (2022) confirmed that instructional leadership is positively correlated with enthusiasm. Complementing this, studies on empowering leader behaviors have shown that autonomy, shared decision-making, and professional development opportunities strengthen teacher motivation and intrinsic commitment (Goddard et al., 2021; Da'as et al., 2020; Khaola & Oni, 2020).

Despite these findings, research gaps remain. Nogadas and Apostol (2024) and Estudillo and Mhunpiew (2021) stress the importance of localized studies to address unique regional contexts affecting teacher enthusiasm. While some studies have examined instructional leadership independently (Setiyaningsih, 2020), fewer have explored its combined influence with empowering leadership behaviors. In particular, Ahmed et al. (2022) argue that the role of

empowering leadership in shaping enthusiasm remains underexplored in the Philippine setting, despite its recognized importance for educational leadership. This study addresses these gaps by examining the significance of instructional leadership and empowering leadership behaviors in influencing the enthusiasm of public elementary school teachers in Region XI.

The study is expected to yield practical and theoretical contributions. On a practical level, it can inform school leaders about developing programs that enhance teacher enthusiasm, which in turn may improve student engagement, creativity, and academic achievement. Retaining motivated teachers also ensures stability in the educational system, a crucial element for sustaining institutional culture and student success. On a scholarly level, the study adds to the limited literature exploring leadership-behavioral influences on teacher enthusiasm, offering a basis for future research and discourse. Dissemination strategies include sharing results with DepEd, CHED, private institutions, and professional communities through conferences, academic networks, and reputable publications, as well as potentially presenting findings at international forums.

Guided by a pragmatic worldview, the research emphasizes actionable insights and flexible methodologies to address complex social realities. Pragmatism prioritizes outcomes, collaboration, and adaptability, making it well-suited for educational research that navigates diverse challenges (Tan, 2022; Shannon-Baker, 2016). A mixed-methods explanatory sequential design was employed to capture both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of teacher enthusiasm. Integrating surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions allows for a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, with the strengths of each method compensating for the limitations of the other (Taljaard, 2018; Baskarada et al., 2018).

The theoretical foundation of the study draws from Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985) and Control-Value Theory (Pekrun, 2000). Transformational leadership underscores the importance of vision-setting, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support, all of which cultivate teachers' sense of purpose and commitment. Control-Value Theory highlights how teachers' perceptions of control and value in their work shape their emotional responses, motivation, and enthusiasm. Together, these frameworks offer a comprehensive lens to analyze how leadership practices affect teacher engagement and passion.

By focusing on Region XI, this research responds to localized challenges while also contributing to broader conversations on global educational leadership. The findings are intended for multiple audiences, including administrators, teachers, research ethics committees, journal editors, and policymakers. Through its emphasis on leadership and teacher enthusiasm, the study aspires to support meaningful change in educational systems and sustain the long-term professional vitality of teachers.

Statement of the problem

This study determined the significance of the influence of instructional leadership and empowering leader behaviors on the enthusiasm of the public elementary school teachers in Region XI. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the status of instructional leadership, empowering leader behaviors, and enthusiasm of teachers?

2. Do instructional leadership and empowering leader behaviors significantly influence enthusiasm?
3. What are the standpoints of the participants concerning the salient points of the quantitative and qualitative findings?
4. To what extent do the qualitative findings explain the quantitative data

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, specifically the explanatory sequential design, which involves the collection, analysis, and integration of both quantitative and qualitative data to address the research problem (Mertens, 2019). This design began with quantitative data collection and analysis, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis, to provide deeper explanations of the initial results (Creswell, 2011). In the quantitative phase, a descriptive-correlational design was used to capture the current state of variables and to examine the relationships among them without manipulation (Polit & Beck, 2017). This design allowed for the observation of naturally occurring variables, the identification of trends, and the analysis of associations, which could serve as bases for hypothesis generation and predictive insights (Briguglio, 2016). Descriptive research further reinforced the approach by providing a systematic account of the characteristics of the study population and context (Grove & Gray, 2018). In this way, the study established a clear understanding of the phenomena being explored, which served as a foundation for the subsequent qualitative phase. The qualitative component employed a phenomenological approach to capture and interpret the lived experiences of teachers, emphasizing authentic narratives and the essence of participants' perspectives (Neubauer et al., 2019; Padilla-Díaz, 2018). This combination of quantitative and qualitative strands ensured both measurable outcomes and in-depth insights, enhancing the comprehensiveness of the findings.

The study was conducted in Region XI, or the Davao Region, in southeastern Mindanao, Philippines. The area encompasses Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, Davao Oriental, and Davao City, along with Panabo, Tagum, Mati, Digos, and Samal Island. This setting provided diverse socio-economic, cultural, and geographic contexts, ranging from agrarian and coastal communities to highly urbanized centers. The choice of Region XI as the research locale was purposeful, given its large and varied public elementary school system and its demographic diversity, which provided a rich basis for examining how leadership practices influence teacher enthusiasm. The presence of both metropolitan and rural school environments allowed the study to capture perspectives that reflect the breadth of the region's educational landscape.

The participants were public elementary school teachers across Region XI. For the quantitative strand, the sample size of 379 was determined using the Raosoft calculator, ensuring a five percent margin of error and a 95 percent confidence level. Stratified random sampling was applied to ensure proportional representation across provinces and cities, with respondents distributed from Davao City, Davao de Oro, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, Davao Oriental, and several component cities. The inclusion criteria required teachers to be tenured with at least three years of teaching experience, while those who did not meet these requirements were excluded. This ensured that the data represented experienced educators who had sufficient exposure to leadership practices in their schools. For the qualitative strand,

purposive sampling was employed, selecting 17 teachers from the quantitative sample who scored either very high or very low on the survey. These participants joined either in-depth interviews or focus group discussions, providing insights that reflected extreme perspectives on leadership behaviors and enthusiasm.

The instruments used in the study were adapted from established scales and validated for reliability and appropriateness. The Instructional Leadership Questionnaire, adapted from Akram et al. (2017), the Empowering Leader Behaviors scale from Konzack et al. (2000), and the Teacher Enthusiasm scale from Punia and Bala (2021) were employed in the quantitative phase. Each instrument used a five-point Likert scale and underwent validation by experts. Pilot testing established high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.96 for instructional leadership, 0.92 for empowering leader behaviors, and 0.96 for enthusiasm, confirming their reliability. For the qualitative strand, a semi-structured interview guide was developed and validated by a panel of experts. Revisions were made to ensure clarity and alignment with the study objectives. This instrument was used in both the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, which were designed to generate deeper insights into participants' lived experiences.

The data collection process followed strict ethical protocols. Approval to conduct the study was secured from the University of the Immaculate Conception Dean of the Graduate School, followed by clearance from the University Research Ethics Committee. Permissions were subsequently obtained from the Regional Director and Schools Division Superintendents, after which coordination with school heads facilitated the administration of surveys and interviews. For the quantitative strand, participants signed informed consent forms prior to answering the survey instruments. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, with data collected and consolidated systematically for statistical analysis. For the qualitative strand, similar ethical safeguards were applied. Participants in the in-depth interviews and focus groups were informed of the study's purpose, risks, and confidentiality measures. Pseudonyms were used to protect identities, and participants were reminded of their right to withdraw at any time. The sessions were audio-recorded with consent, and debriefings were conducted to ensure participant well-being.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The mean and standard deviation were employed to describe the levels of instructional leadership, empowering leader behaviors, and teacher enthusiasm, while multiple linear regression determined the influence of the independent variables on enthusiasm. Qualitative data, on the other hand, were subjected to thematic analysis following Creswell's (2009) framework. Transcripts from interviews and focus groups were coded, categorized, and synthesized into emerging themes that reflected the participants' lived experiences. Integration of the quantitative and qualitative findings occurred at the interpretation stage, where results were compared and contrasted to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established by triangulating survey results with interviews and focus groups, as well as member checking and peer debriefing. Transferability was addressed by providing thick descriptions of the research context, allowing future studies to adapt the findings. Dependability was reinforced through an audit trail and detailed documentation of research procedures, ensuring transparency and replicability. Confirmability was achieved through

member checks, peer reviews, and the use of an audit trail to minimize researcher bias. Ethical considerations were rigorously upheld, with attention given to informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, participant safety, and the principles of the Data Privacy Act of 2012. In addition, the study aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals on quality education and reducing inequalities, emphasizing the broader value and social relevance of the research.

Overall, the methodology was carefully structured to ensure a rigorous, ethical, and comprehensive investigation into the influence of instructional leadership and empowering leader behaviors on teacher enthusiasm. By employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, the study balanced the strengths of quantitative measurement and qualitative depth, ultimately providing insights that were both statistically valid and contextually meaningful.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 379 public elementary school teachers from Region XI participated in this study, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across the region. These teachers provided quantitative responses using validated instruments that measured instructional leadership, empowering leader behaviors, and teacher enthusiasm, while additional qualitative data were gathered through interviews and focus group discussions. The quantitative findings presented here focus on the status of instructional leadership as assessed by the respondents.

The overall results indicated that the status of instructional leadership of school administrators in Region XI was assessed at a very high level, with an overall mean score of 4.36 and a standard deviation of 0.63. This suggests that instructional leadership is consistently manifested by administrators, with responses tightly clustered around the mean, implying agreement among teachers on the effectiveness of their administrators' leadership practices. The dimension of instructional leadership was measured through seven indicators: instructional resource provider, maintaining visible presence, professional development, maximizing instructional time, monitoring student progress, feedback on teaching and learning, and curriculum implementation. Each of these areas contributed significantly to the strong overall result, reflecting administrators' active involvement in guiding teaching and learning.

In terms of instructional resource provision, the results generated a category mean of 4.20, interpreted as very high. The highest-rated item was the encouragement for teachers to use instructional materials freely, with a mean of 4.53, while the lowest was providing students sufficient access to instructional materials, rated at 3.95, which still fell within the high interpretation. These findings indicate that administrators are particularly effective in motivating teachers to make full use of instructional resources, though some room for improvement exists in ensuring equitable student access.

Maintaining visible presence emerged as a particularly strong indicator, with a category mean of 4.46 described as very high. Items under this indicator, such as presenting visibly in school for both teachers and students ($M = 4.51$) and attending co-curricular activities ($M = 4.50$), received the highest ratings. This suggests that administrators are highly engaged and visible within the school environment, which supports teacher motivation and reinforces their role as accessible leaders in instructional matters.

Professional development also recorded a very high category mean of 4.40. Teachers affirmed that administrators were consistently available to support professional growth, with the highest rating for encouraging teachers to improve classroom practices ($M = 4.41$). Other items, such as arranging meetings for professional development ($M = 4.38$) and developing follow-up plans for assessing growth ($M = 4.30$), further emphasized administrators' active role in supporting continuous teacher learning. These results highlight the strong alignment of leadership practices with the professional development needs of teachers.

Maximizing instructional time garnered a category mean of 4.27, likewise interpreted as very high. Among the items, the highest rating was for encouraging teachers to come to class well-prepared and on time ($M = 4.61$), while the lowest was for using class time for meetings ($M = 3.57$), which only fell under the high category. These results suggest that administrators prioritize efficient use of instructional time and minimize disruptions, although some administrative practices, such as meetings during class hours, may occasionally conflict with this goal.

The monitoring of student progress reflected a category mean of 4.28, very high overall. The highest-rated practice was encouraging teachers to send progress reports to parents ($M = 4.50$), indicating strong administrator emphasis on home-school communication. Meanwhile, reviewing students' work during classroom evaluations and meeting teachers individually on progress matters were rated slightly lower, though still high, reflecting opportunities for deeper engagement in monitoring practices.

Feedback on teaching and learning also scored strongly with a category mean of 4.43, interpreted as very high. The most notable responses were praising outstanding students publicly ($M = 4.52$) and communicating students' performance in parent-teacher meetings ($M = 4.47$). Providing public praise to teachers ($M = 4.46$) and reinforcing teachers in formal communications ($M = 4.38$) also ranked high, indicating that administrators consistently acknowledge and celebrate both teacher and student achievements as part of their leadership approach.

Finally, curriculum implementation emerged as the strongest indicator of instructional leadership with a category mean of 4.56, also interpreted as very high. Teachers emphasized that administrators ensured the teaching of required curricula ($M = 4.59$) and encouraged the preparation of lesson plans ($M = 4.49$). Encouraging teachers to engage students in learning activities ($M = 4.55$) was also highly rated, underscoring administrators' commitment to ensuring curriculum effectiveness and student engagement.

In summary, the findings on instructional leadership revealed that school administrators in Region XI consistently demonstrate practices aligned with strong instructional leadership, with particularly high performance in curriculum implementation, visible presence, and professional development. The results suggest that administrators are effective in supporting teachers through resources, professional growth opportunities, and recognition, while also prioritizing curriculum fidelity and efficient use of instructional time. These findings confirm the crucial role of instructional leadership in shaping teacher practices and ensuring quality education in diverse public elementary school settings.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to determine the influence of instructional leadership and empowering leader behaviors on the enthusiasm of public elementary school teachers in Region XI, employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The quantitative phase, which surveyed 379 teachers across diverse provinces and cities in the Davao Region, revealed that instructional leadership was rated at a very high level, with an overall mean of 4.36 and a standard deviation of 0.63. This indicates that administrators consistently demonstrated leadership practices such as resource provision, maintaining visible presence, professional development, maximizing instructional time, monitoring student progress, providing feedback on teaching and learning, and implementing the curriculum. Similarly, empowering leader behaviors, including delegation, accountability, self-directed decision-making, information sharing, skills development, and coaching, were perceived by teachers as highly evident and strongly contributory to their motivation and work commitment. Teachers' enthusiasm likewise manifested at very high levels, reinforcing the integral role of school leadership in shaping positive professional attitudes and sustained engagement.

The qualitative phase, involving 17 purposively selected teachers for in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, complemented these findings by highlighting the lived experiences of educators who strongly associated their enthusiasm with the presence of supportive, empowering, and instructional leadership practices. Teachers described how autonomy, recognition, and opportunities for growth directly enhanced their sense of competence and professional worth. Conversely, heavy administrative workloads, insufficient resources, and rigid accountability systems were identified as persistent challenges that risk undermining enthusiasm. The convergence of quantitative and qualitative data affirmed that both instructional leadership and empowering leader behaviors significantly influence enthusiasm, thereby validating theoretical underpinnings from Transformational Leadership Theory and Control-Value Theory.

Overall, the findings underscore the critical importance of school administrators' leadership practices in sustaining teachers' enthusiasm, which in turn directly impacts student engagement, learning outcomes, and school effectiveness. By fostering environments where instructional leadership and empowering behaviors are consistently practiced, schools can cultivate motivated, passionate educators who are more resilient to challenges and more committed to their profession. Beyond immediate school outcomes, this contributes to the long-term stability and quality of the educational system, aligning with the broader goals of inclusive and equitable education.

The study thus concludes that leadership is not merely an administrative function but a transformative force in shaping teacher enthusiasm and, ultimately, student success. It provides a foundation for designing leadership development programs, revisiting policies on teacher support, and conducting further localized research that continues to explore the dynamic relationships between leadership, motivation, and teacher well-being.

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