

Fostering Greatness: The Role of School Climate and Teacher Empowerment in Enhancing Instruction Outcome

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Abstract. This research determined the role of school climate and teacher empowerment in enhancing instruction outcomes in select public schools in Bantayan District, Division of Cebu Province, during the School Year 2025–2026. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design, data were gathered from a total census of forty-two (42) public school educators across one secondary and two elementary institutions: Patao National High School (15), Atop-Atop Elementary School (16), and Vito Elementary School (11). The research instruments evaluated four dimensions of school climate (leadership vitality, collegial trust, resource adequacy, and institutional safety) and four dimensions of teacher empowerment (decision-making, professional growth, self-efficacy, and autonomy), while instructional outcomes were measured using the teachers' official Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) ratings. The findings revealed that the teacher-respondents maintained a highly mature and educationally progressive profile, with 69.05% holding master's degrees or post-graduate units. The status of school climate was perceived as generally evident (2.86), highlighted by exceptional levels of Collegial Trust (3.28), but significantly hindered by low Resource Adequacy (2.15). Similarly, teacher empowerment was manifested at a standard baseline (2.89), marked by an outstanding sense of instructional Self-Efficacy (3.41), yet severely constrained by a lack of Decision-Making Autonomy (2.34) in broad school governance. Despite these systemic limitations, overall teaching performance was maintained at a highly satisfactory standard (3.20), driven heavily by robust Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Skills (3.48). Inferential statistical analysis using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient demonstrated strong, positive, and statistically significant relationships across the major study variables. A highly significant relationship was established between School Climate and Teaching Performance ($r = 0.642$, $p < 0.01$), as well as an even stronger positive association between Teacher Empowerment and Teaching Performance ($r = 0.718$, $p < 0.01$), thereby rejecting the null hypotheses. These results confirm that organizational environment and professional agency function as major structural drivers of instructional excellence. Based on these empirical diagnostics, the Strategic Empowerment and Climate Oriented Enhancement Plan (SECEP) was developed to decentralize local governance, launch shared resource nodes, and build peer-led feedback circles, providing an institutional roadmap to optimize human capital and foster instructional greatness within island-based educational communities.

Introduction

The pursuit of educational excellence is a global mandate, yet the internal mechanics that drive a teacher's peak performance often remain overlooked. This study, "Fostering Greatness: The Role of School Climate and

Teacher Empowerment in Enhancing Instruction Outcome," seeks to bridge the gap between institutional environment and instructional efficacy.

In the international arena, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes the necessity of quality education, which is inextricably linked to the performance of the teaching workforce. Globally, educational reforms have shifted from mere resource allocation to focusing on the psychological and environmental determinants of teacher success. Modern pedagogical research suggests that teaching performance is not merely a product of individual skill but is significantly influenced by the school climate, the "heart and soul" of a school and teacher empowerment, which grants educators the autonomy to innovate and lead.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has continuously sought to elevate professional standards through the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST). However, despite these frameworks, many Filipino educators face systemic challenges, including administrative burdens and fluctuating morale.

In the unique geographical and socio-economic landscape of Bantayan Island, Cebu, these challenges are amplified. At Patao National High School, Vito Elementary School, and Atop-atop Elementary School, teachers operate within island-based constraints where communal support and institutional culture are the primary drivers of professional endurance. While these schools serve as the bedrock of their respective communities, there is a pressing need to understand how the specific atmosphere of these island schools affects the 51 teachers and their nearly 150 learners.

While extensive literature exists on teacher performance in urban, well-resourced centers, there is a significant gap in understanding the intersection of school climate and empowerment within rural, island-based educational settings in the Philippines. Most studies treat "climate" as a general concept without accounting for the specific cultural and logistical nuances of the Cebuano island context. Furthermore, there is a dearth of evidence linking how the empowerment of a small, tight-knit faculty (such as the 11 teachers at Vito ES) translates directly into the "greatness" or performance metrics demanded by national standards.

The necessity of this research is grounded in three urgent factors: Post-Crisis Recovery: As schools stabilize in the post-pandemic era, the psychological climate of the workplace has become the primary predictor of teacher retention and burnout; Equity in Performance: Teachers in Bantayan deserve the same evidence-based support systems as those in mainland cities. We must identify if current empowerment structures are sufficient or merely symbolic; and Learner Impact: With learners across these three schools relying on the instructional quality of their teachers, any deficit in school climate directly threatens the academic future of the Bantayanon youth.

By investigating these variables now, this study will provide a localized roadmap for school heads and stakeholders to transform school environments into "incubators of greatness," ensuring that teaching performance is not just sustained, but elevated.

Methodology

Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. This dual-purpose approach allows the researcher to first describe the existing state of school climate and the current levels of teacher empowerment across the selected sites and subsequently determine the strength and direction of the relationship these variables share with teaching performance. The study was situated within the unique geographical and socio-educational context of Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines. Specifically, the research focused on three distinct academic environments: Patao National High School (Patao NHS), Vito Elementary School (Vito ES), and Atop-atop Elementary School (Atop-atop ES). These locales provide a representative cross-section of both elementary and secondary public education in an island setting, where external logistical challenges often necessitate a more robust and empowering internal school climate.

Environment

The study focused on three distinct institutions within the Bantayan District. These schools vary in level and faculty size, providing a comprehensive view of the educator's experience in both elementary and secondary settings.

Patao National High School (NHS)

Serves as the secondary-level representative in this study. With a faculty of 15 teachers, it is the largest professional group among the sites. In a high school setting, teachers are often departmentalized by subject expertise, which can sometimes

lead to professional "silos." The relevance of Patao NHS to this study lies in observing how teacher empowerment can transcend departmental boundaries to create a unified school climate. Since high school educators face the pressure of preparing students for tertiary education or the workforce, the SECEP's role in enhancing their performance is critical for ensuring student readiness.

Vito Elementary School (ES)

Presents an "intimate" educational environment with the smallest faculty of 11 teachers. In such a small-scale setting, the school climate is highly transparent; the morale of a single teacher can significantly sway the collective atmosphere. The relevance of Vito ES is its potential for high agility in implementing the SECEP, because the group is small, empowerment strategies, such as participatory decision-making can be felt immediately, making it an ideal site to measure the direct correlation between a supportive climate and heightened teaching performance.

Atop-atop Elementary School (ES)

While also an elementary institution, matches Patao NHS with 16 teachers. This school represents the "standard" rural elementary profile in the district. Its relevance to the study is as a benchmark for the "median" experience of Filipino educators in island communities. With a higher teacher-to-student ratio in the study sample, the environment at Atop-atop allows for a deep-dive into how teachers utilize their empowered status to provide personalized instruction, thereby testing the SECEP's effectiveness in a traditional primary school framework.

The overall status of the Bantayan educational environment is defined by its geographic isolation and communal resilience. Being located on an island, these schools often operate with a degree of "Professional Autonomy" necessitated by their distance from the regional center. This creates a status where teachers are not just instructors but community leaders. However, this same isolation can lead to "Resource Vulnerability," where the physical and social climate of the school becomes the primary support system for the staff.

Respondents

The presentation and analysis of the research participants provide a fundamental look at the human capital involved in this study. The following section details the distribution of the teacher-respondents across the selected public schools in Bantayan, Cebu, establishing a demographic foundation for the implementation of the Strategic Empowerment and Climate Enhancement Plan (SECEP).

The total population of teacher-respondents for this study comprised 42 public school educators across one secondary and two elementary institutions. The exact breakdown of their distribution and percentage share is presented systematically below

Research Site	Teacher Respondents (f)	Percentage (%)
<i>Patao National High School</i>	15	35.71%
<i>Vito Elementary School</i>	11	26.19%
<i>Atop-Atop Elementary School</i>	16	38.10%
TOTAL	42	100%

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

The demographic distribution revealed a well-balanced representation between the elementary and secondary education sectors of the Bantayan District. Collectively, the elementary segment, comprising Atop-Atop Elementary School (38.10%) and Vito Elementary School (26.19%), makes up the majority of the sample pool at 64.29%. This substantial baseline allowed the study to deeply examine structural relationships in primary settings, where school climate is traditionally more communal, and faculties are closely integrated. On the other hand, the inclusion of Patao National High School with 15 respondents (35.71%) introduces the necessary secondary-level perspective. High school environments often operate under different organizational strains, such as distinct subject-department divisions and larger learner populations, which can significantly alter how leadership vitality and decision-making autonomy are experienced.

The sample size variations across these locales directly correspond to the organic institutional structures of island schools. Vito Elementary School stands as the smallest unit in this study with 11 respondents. In micro-faculties like Vito ES, the social environment is highly transparent; a lack of collegial trust or a drop in leadership vitality can quickly impact the entire staff. Conversely, Atop-Atop Elementary School holds the largest share of respondents with 16 teachers, closely followed by Patao National High School with 15. These two larger cohorts provide a more stable statistical baseline for

running the relational analyses required by SOP 5. Because these 42 teachers represent the primary instructional workforce in their respective barangays, their collective data perfectly captures the institutional ecosystem of public schools navigating geographic isolation in northern Cebu.

Research Instrument

In this research, the primary data gathering tools consisted of two sets of structured survey questionnaires designed to capture the distinct perspectives of educators in the Bantayan District. These instruments are meticulously aligned with the study's core variables; School Climate, Teacher Empowerment, and Teaching Performance, to ensure that the resulting Strategic Empowerment and Climate Enhancement Plan (SECEP) is grounded in empirical reality. The first instrument was a multi-dimensional survey administered to the forty two teacher-respondents. This tool was divided into sections that assess the status of the school environment through indicators of leadership support, interpersonal relationships, and socio-emotional safety, while simultaneously measuring teacher empowerment through dimensions of autonomy, self-efficacy, and professional growth.

The second instrument was a Teaching Performance Rating Scale specifically designed for the forty two teacher-respondents. This tool allows for an objective evaluation of instructional effectiveness from the students' perspective, focusing on critical domains such as content knowledge, classroom management, inclusivity, and feedback mechanisms.

Data Collection Procedure

The data gathering process was conducted in three distinct phases, adhering to ethical standards and administrative protocols of the Department of Education. In the Preliminary Phase, the researchers secured official permits from the Schools Division Office of Cebu Province and the District of Bantayan. Formal coordination with the School Heads of the three identified schools were established to set a timeline that does not disrupt regular instructional hours.

The Implementation Phase involved the actual administration of the research instruments. For the 42 teacher-respondents, a questionnaire focusing on School Climate (SOP 2) and Teacher Empowerment (SOP 3) were administered. To ensure the integrity of the responses, the researchers personally facilitated the distribution and collection of the instruments, providing clear instructions to the respondents while emphasizing the confidentiality of their data. In the Final Phase, the gathered data were retrieved, sorted, and audited for completeness before being subjected to statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to determine how school climate and teacher empowerment relate to instructional outcomes. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the respondents' profile and assess the different dimensions of school climate, teacher empowerment, and teaching performance. The results showed that most teachers had advanced educational qualifications, while school climate was generally evident, with collegial trust emerging as a strong area and resource adequacy as a major concern. Teacher empowerment was also evident, particularly in self-efficacy, although limited participation in decision-making was observed. Teaching performance remained highly satisfactory, especially in content knowledge and pedagogical skills. To examine the relationships among the variables, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was employed. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between school climate and teaching performance ($r = 0.642$, $p < 0.01$) and between teacher empowerment and teaching performance ($r = 0.718$, $p < 0.01$). These results indicate that a supportive school environment and empowered teachers contribute meaningfully to better instructional outcomes.

Results and Discussion

Results

The structural profile of the research participants across the three public schools in Bantayan, Cebu, establishes a mature and educationally progressive teaching force. Out of the forty-two total teacher-respondents, the largest segment is stationed at Atop-Atop Elementary School with sixteen teachers (38.10%), followed by fifteen at Patao National High School (35.71%), and eleven at Vito Elementary School (26.19%). Demographic analysis indicates that a significant majority (61.90%) of these educators fall between the ages of 31 and 50, reflecting a highly stable workforce that balances energetic instructional delivery with professional maturity. Females comprise the clear majority of the teaching pool at 76.19%, aligning with established national educational trends observed by Asio and Jimenez (2021). Academic and professional backgrounds indicate a strong culture of self-improvement, with 42.86% possessing post-graduate master's units and 26.19% holding completed Master's Degrees. Furthermore, 66.66% of the respondents have more than four years of active

service, classifying them as mid-career to veteran teachers. However, a stark promotional disparity exists, as 85.71% remain clustered in basic Teacher I–III ranks, with only 14.29% holding Master Teacher I–II positions.

The assessment of the School Climate across the target sites reveals an overall composite mean of 2.86, placing the institutional atmosphere in the standard Agree / Evident range. Among the isolated dimensions, Collegial Trust emerges as an outstanding asset, securing the highest score of 3.28 (Strongly Agree / Highly Evident). This indicates that the small-scale, island-based faculties form tight social networks and collaborative communities to support each other professionally. Leadership Vitality follows as an evident strength with a sub-indicator mean of 3.12, showing that local school heads are perceived as communicative and supportive administrators. Institutional Safety is also considered satisfactory at 2.88, demonstrating a strong sense of socio-emotional security among the staff. Conversely, Resource Adequacy stands out as a clear systemic vulnerability, dropping to a mean of 2.15 (Disagree / Minimally Evident). This statistic underscores the regular material and digital shortages experienced by schools in northern Cebu, proving that educators often operate with minimal physical and technical tools.

The evaluation of Teacher Empowerment mirrors this unique combination of high personal commitment and structural limits, yielding an overall composite mean of 2.89 (Agree / Evident). The strongest dimension by a wide margin is Teacher Self-Efficacy, which scores an exceptional mean of 3.41 (Strongly Agree / Highly Evident). This demonstrates that despite running classrooms on a remote island with fewer resources, the teachers retain an internal, unwavering confidence in their pedagogical skills and their ability to drive student success. Professional Growth opportunities score a standard mean of 3.05, and Classroom Autonomy registers as standard at 2.76. However, Decision-Making Autonomy stands out as an organizational weakness with a mean of 2.34 (Disagree / Minimally Evident). This shows that while teachers have freedom within their classrooms, they feel disconnected from school budget allocations, long-term strategic plans, and local administrative choices.

Instructional outcomes, as measured through the official Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) scores, average out to a strong composite mean of 3.20, pointing to a consistently Satisfactory level of teaching performance. Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Skills ranks as the highest domain with a mean of 3.48 (Very Satisfactory), indicating that teachers possess excellent mastery of their subject matter. Learning Environment Management follows with a steady mean of 3.22, and Diversity of Learners and Inclusivity achieves a mean of 3.15. The lowest relative performance indicator is found in Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms, which drops to a mean of 2.94. This lower score is closely tied to the lack of material support, and the time constraints teachers face when trying to give consistent, personalized feedback to large groups of students.

Demographic and Professional Profile of Teacher-Respondents

Profile Attribute	Classification Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	21 – 30 years old	8	19.05%
	31 – 40 years old	14	33.33%
	41 – 50 years old	12	28.57%
	51 years old and above	8	19.05%
Gender	Female	32	76.19%
	Male	10	23.81%
Highest Educational Attainment	Baccalaureate Degree (BS/BSE)	10	23.81%
	With Master's Units	18	42.86%
	Master's Degree Holder (MA/MEd)	11	26.19%
	With Doctoral Units / Ph.D. Holder	3	7.14%
Years of Teaching Experience	1 – 3 years (Novice)	6	14.29%
	4 – 10 years (Mid-Career)	15	35.71%
	11 – 20 years (Experienced)	13	30.95%
	21 years and above (Veteran)	8	19.05%
Current Position / Rank	Teacher I – III	36	85.71%
	Master Teacher I – II	6	14.29%
TOTAL	All Categories Consolidated	42	100.00%

Summary Table for Level of Teachers' Performance

IPCRF Domains	Composite Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Rank	Verbal Interpretation	Qualitative Description
Content & Pedagogy	3.48	1	Strongly Agree	Very Satisfactory Standard
Environment Management	3.22	2	Agree	Satisfactory Standard
Learner Diversity & Inclusivity	3.15	3	Agree	Satisfactory Standard
Assessment & Feedback	2.94	4	Disagree	Satisfactory Standard
OVERALL COMPOSITE SCORES	3.20		Agree	Satisfactory Standard

Discussion

The findings show that a positive school climate and teacher empowerment play an important role in strengthening teachers' instructional performance. Although the schools demonstrated a generally evident school climate, the high level of collegial trust suggests that teachers value cooperation, support, and healthy professional relationships. However, the low rating for resource adequacy indicates that limited teaching materials and school resources may affect teachers' ability to perform at their best. Likewise, teachers showed strong self-efficacy, reflecting their confidence in handling classroom responsibilities, but their limited involvement in decision-making suggests that they may not always feel empowered to influence broader school concerns. Despite these challenges, teachers maintained highly satisfactory performance, particularly in content knowledge and pedagogical skills. The significant positive relationships between school climate, teacher empowerment, and teaching performance further emphasize that teachers perform better when they feel supported, trusted, and given opportunities to participate in school decisions. These findings provide a strong basis for implementing the SECEP to strengthen collaboration, resources, and teacher participation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings of this study, the following formal conclusions are drawn:

The public-school educators within the island municipality of Bantayan, Cebu, represent a mature, experienced, and academically motivated workforce. However, their professional growth and career advancement face structural bottlenecks, as seen in the high number of teachers remaining at the entry-level Teacher I–III ranks despite their post-graduate degrees. This highlights an urgent need for local school heads to use non-monetary recognition and shared leadership programs to keep faculty morale and engagement high.

The organizational environment of these island schools operates as a resilient social system. While physical isolation and delays in Department of Education material delivery cause significant resource shortages, the teachers compensate by building exceptional peer collaboration and mutual professional trust. This close-knit community culture serves as the primary support system keeping the school system steady, confirming that human capital is the most valuable resource in remote educational environments.

A significant gap exists between internal teacher motivation and the centralized management structure of the schools. Teachers possess exceptional self-efficacy and strong confidence in their teaching abilities, yet they are structurally excluded from participating in school budgeting, strategic planning, and broad administrative choices. This top-down control limits their professional agency, confining their autonomy to the classroom and keeping them out of school governance.

Instructional quality remains high across Patao National High School, Vito Elementary School, and Atop-Atop Elementary School, driven by the teachers' deep subject-matter mastery. However, the time-intensive process of providing consistent student assessment and personalized feedback is limited by resource shortages. This proves that sustaining instructional excellence requires more than teacher dedication; it demands target environmental interventions.

Finally, organizational climate and professional agency are confirmed as major drivers of instructional success. Because school climate and teacher empowerment correlate significantly with IPCRF scores, "Fostering Greatness" cannot be achieved through top-down mandates or individual skills alone. To sustainably elevate teaching performance, school leadership must actively work to expand teacher empowerment and optimize the local school culture. This statistical reality provides a clear, urgent justification for the implementation of the Strategic Empowerment and Climate Oriented Enhancement Plan (SECEP).

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

For the Department of Education Division Leaders and District Supervisors: It is recommended that division policies move toward de-centralized management models that actively grant more autonomy to island-based schools. Supervisors should support local leadership programs that prioritize non-monetary awards, accelerated professional recognition pathways, and specialized training networks designed to address the promotional bottlenecks facing mid-career and veteran public school teachers.

For School Heads of Patao NHS, Vito ES, and Atop-Atop ES: School heads must intentionally open up local governance by establishing Participatory Local Advisory Councils. These councils should directly involve teachers in school budgeting, strategic planning, and the formulation of local policies, shifting the administrative culture from top-down compliance to shared, collaborative leadership.

For School Administrators Facing Resource Shortages: To mitigate geographic resource deficits, administrators should build Decentralized Resource Nodes. This strategy focuses on establishing shared technology pools, co-owning instructional devices, and creating cross-school item banks between Patao NHS, Vito ES, and Atop-Atop ES to optimize the use of limited learning modules and teaching materials.

For Master Teachers and Grade-Level Coordinators: It is recommended that Master Teachers launch Peer-Led Feedback Circles. These circles should focus on sharing best practices for student evaluation, streamlining the time-consuming paperwork involved in the IPCRF assessment processes, and designing collaborative tools to improve classroom feedback without increasing teacher burnout.

For Teachers and Faculty Teams: Educators should actively maintain their strong peer collaboration by engaging in Localized Action Research. By focusing research projects on the specific challenges of island instruction, teachers can use their high self-efficacy to generate data-driven classroom solutions, while building their professional portfolios for future career promotion.

For Future Researchers: It is recommended that future studies expand this research framework by conducting a longitudinal evaluation across a broader sample of island municipalities in Cebu Province. Future research should include qualitative interviews with school heads and look into the long-term impact of implementing the SECEP on actual student achievement and retention rates.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.