THE WORLD WITHIN: TEACHING IN A SAFE AND ENDURING SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract
    Understanding the vital role of the learning environment, this chapter aims at identifying on whether or not teacher's work place has been safe. It also aims to reveal whether teaching effectiveness correlates with safe work place. It is found out that the secondary teachers could effectively work better if the teaching environment is safe and conducive as revealed when these variables were correlated. Teaching effectiveness could be equated with safety in the workplace. Teachers could provide a better and more efficient delivery of instruction if they are teaching in a very ideal classroom even if their teaching assignment is far from their residence.
A safe workplace was perceived by the teacher respondents as an important factor in the overall quality of work life among secondary public school teachers as it was found out to have a significant impact in effective instruction delivery. It even showed an impact factor on the teachers' quality of work life because majority of the teachers were residing near to the school where they are teaching and that most of them were teaching in a school where buildings are well – maintained. This showed therefore that security and safety in their work is still properly managed and that teachers' quality of work life is evident.

Keywords: Safe Environment, Teaching Environment, Workplace, Working Condition

Introduction
    One of the best indicators of a successful organization is one that provides safe working conditions. Generally, in a safe environment teachers work more effectively and satisfactorily. It is because they don't have anything to worry about the work place rather being so focused with their classroom instruction. So, efforts to improve teacher's quality of work life by providing safe work place may produce positive results not only in the

mental health of the organization but also the participation rate of the students. More importantly, it is financially efficient because frequent hospitalization which costs much will be avoided. The whole organization is affected if the work place is not safe not only for the teachers but the learners as well.

Teaching in safe conditions makes the work so interesting and motivating. Teachers are well-motivated to work and can contribute more inputs for high academic performance resulting to their enthusiasm to teach within a safe workplace. It is well-understood that safe workplace is one of the needs of teachers. When this need is just ignored or not given importance most likely teachers experience a lot of work stress that will have adverse consequences on the welfare of the teachers and work performance. Stress is a common problem among teachers (Conley, et al; 2006) that may have serious consequences relating to personal issues, work- related,   and psychological concerns. Giving attention to their work environment is one of the tasks in our educational system to be considered and prioritized for the best work performance and high quality of work life. This conforms to what Hussainzadeh and Saemiran (2002) stressed that giving importance to employees basic needs preparing a suitable work place and creating innovations and growth fields in working environments have very useful and significant results.

Methodology

The data were gathered through a survey questionnaire on safe and healthy environment with eleven (11) items using the Likert Scale. Each item was analyzed utilizing the chi-square and the weighted mean.

A letter was sent to the School's Division Superintendent requesting the secondary school's administrators to facilitate the request of the researcher to administer the self-made questionnaire. The survey questionnaire aimed at identifying the level of satisfaction of the secondary teachers in terms of safe and healthy workplace. It specifically measured whether the employer had adequate resources to help them facilitate their work more effectively. It also helped the researcher to identify whether or not the work had provided security for the teachers and that whether or not the workplace was managed in smooth and effective manner. Furthermore, it also pointed out the health condition of the secondary teachers in Division of Surigao del Sur. All of these conditions were analyzed and correlated with their teaching effectiveness to find out the significant correlation of this particular dimension on their teaching performance.   Another statistical tool on factor analysis was used to find out the significance of the dimension on safe environment in the list among the three dimensions. This was done by extracting the said dimension from the list of the three dimensions. If the

results of the composite matrix were higher, then the dimension on safe environment had less impact but if it had shown higher values then, its presence in the system had created more impact factor. Results of the survey were validated using the focus group discussion (FGD) utilizing the interview questionnaire prepared and conducted by the researcher.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 presents the description of responses by the teacher respondents on safe environment. It was noted that the teachers agreed on the notion that DepEd provided them with teaching materials. At the beginning of the school year, the school used to provide all teachers with teaching materials and other supplies   like lesson plan notebooks, class records, school register, references or textbooks and other supplies necessary to carry out their teaching tasks. When resources are given, the teachers work speedily rather than spending time and effort looking for the needed materials, otherwise, they would not be able to attain their objectives resulting in teacher's discontentment and lower quality of work life. Klott, Mundick and Schuterd (2003) in their QWL study included adequacy of resources as one of the major issues of QWL. This is one of the contributing factors to a higher level of the teachers' quality of work life if these immediate needs are met, therebyeffective instruction is evident.

Table 2   Responses of the Teacher Respondents on a Safe Environment

Descriptors	N	Mean	SD	Computed x^2	p-value	Description
1. My employer provides me a room to safe keep my instructional materials.	190	3.95	0.71	270.87	0.000	Agree
2. I work in an unsafe environment	190	4.15	0.95	152.56	0.000	Disagree
3. The safety of teachers is a high priority with the management where I work	190	4.11	0.71	129.12	0.000	Agree
4. The working conditions are satisfactory	190	4.00	0.60	215.00	0.000	Agree
5. There are no significant compromises or short-cuts when teacher's safety is at stake	190	3.66	0.83	177.11	0.000	Agree
6. Employee and employers work together to ensure the safest possible working conditions	190	4.17	0.68	132.00	0.000	Agree
7. I feel not secure about my work	190	4.05	0.95	133.51	0.000	Disagree
8. In general, I can say my health is excellent	190	3.83	0.68	127.25	0.000	Agree
9. Working extra hours of my main job is mandatory	190	3.05	0.92	111.29	0.000	Neutral
10. The place where I work is run in a smooth and effective manner	190	3.94	0.66	148.21	0.000	Agree
11. Physical injuries frequently	190	3.87	1.07	96.27	0.000	Disagree

occurred in the workplace						
Totality	**190**	**3.89**	**0.80**	**153.93**	**0.000**	**Agree**

Ranges of the Weighted Mean:
1.000 – 1.799   *Strongly Disagree*
1.800 – 2.599   *Disagree*
2.600 – 3.399   *Neutral*
3.400 – 4.199   *Agree*
4.200 – 5.000   *Strongly Agree*

The second statement which is negatively phrased, the respondents showed disagreement. It is noted that the teachers believed that the schools where they are employed are safe, not only for teachers but to the students as well. The Department of Education gives priority to the safe workplace of the teachers and to the learners, in fact, school buildings and school grounds are given a big amount in the national budget especially in ushering the K to 12 curriculum. It is affirmed in the interview during the focus group discussion in the sense that teachers majority commented that they like the workplace where they are now. They are now provided with beautiful and standard school buildings and classroom with complete facilities. Others said that they feel free to do their work and consider the place as an opportunity for them to develop their potentials. Only very few said that there is a risk for them to commute far away stations, as quoted;*"There is a risk for me to report to my workplace because everyday I travel 24 km either by bus or motorcycle."*

Abraham Maslow (1975) in Gibson's , et. al (2006) posited that the basic needs of man includes a healthy safe workplace for teachers' quality of work life. This is supported by Chris Angris (2000), when he said that the more the institution gets successful in meeting human needs, the more the stress or tension decreases. Thereby, the more organization will become healthy.

On the third notion on whether the management has put maximum priority on the safety of the teachers, it was revealed that teachers' perception was positive showing agreement with it. It is because the government is now giving priority to the safety of the teachers. The division of Surigaodel Sur is always affected by natural calamities, hence, teachers are prone to risky untoward incidents. The Department of Education is already providing hazard pay for teachers who are assigned 24 km away from their home of residence**.**Hamidi, et. al (2011) posited that regular monitoring of the safety of the school raises teachers level of efficiency and the entire organization. A good number of respondents similarly expressed during the interview as quoted**;***"The work place that I am in now is safe and nice having an extensive school grounds, beautiful school buildings with nice classrooms."*

The fourth descriptor was affirmatively perceived by the secondary teachers in the Division of Surigao del Sur as they rated it with agreement. They believed that the schools' working conditions are satisfactory in the sense that every three years teachers are promoted through step-increments. A progressive teacher not only stops being a Teacher I (T1) but goes up to Teacher II (T2) then to Teacher III (T3) to Master Teacher I (MT1) and eventually to Master Teacher II (MT2) if one remains to be a classroom teacher following the salary grade scheme.

Pranee (2010) and Considine& Callus (2002) stressed that the quality of work life could be defined as work place strategies, processes and environment combination which stimulates employee's work contentment or job satisfaction which depends on work conditions and organizations' efficiency. They also included human resource development through welfare measures, professional training and participative mechanisms. The concept on working conditions was concurred by the teachers in the interview part of the research when teachers said:

"The working conditions of the workplace where I belongis generally of positive atmosphere. Although not all schooladministrators did their best in bringing the institution to greater
heights of achievement but teachers as a workforce are united in attaining the vision, mission and goals of our institution. Several academic, co-curricular and community related projects were carriedout in the spirit of camaraderie, positive interdependence, volunteerism and genuine service."

This scenario shows the important role of the teachers as instrumental to achieving higher academic performance through collaborative efforts. Studies carried out by Locke (1999) showed that salary and fee is one of the most important factors in determining satisfaction especially if these salaries are fair and equitable (Moghimi; 1998). Hence, it is taken into account that salary and fee play a significant effect on behavior, life level and mental-psychological health of people in one society and it eventually increases performance and achieves higher level of quality of work life. Teachers/employees want payment systems and promotions policy of organization to be fair, clear and according to their expectations. Concerning type of work and skill level of an employee, if the salary and allowances are reasonable and fair, work satisfaction occur (Rabinz;1999).   This was concurred by Obaob (2009) as quoted from Hume (1995) in his study which he explained that motivation is directly linked to the performance of employees. He then added that without stimulation that motivation provides, employees would not behave in a manner that is appropriate to the strategy of the organization.

On the other hand, the fifth descriptor which focused on the safety of workers at the highest level, was rated agree. Safety of the teachers should be given priority for the welfare of both. Teachers are motivated to teach longer in the workplace because of the safety concern for them to achieve quality of work life. Several studies conducted (May, Lau & Johnson; 1999) proved that organizations offering better quality of work life are more likely to gain leverage in hiring and retaining its valuable work force. This implies attaining a reasonable level of quality of work life poses a significant impact on individual's commitment towards their employing institution (Saklan and Razali, 2004; Huang, Lawler & Lei, Kalbers and Cenker, 2007). A teacher respondent commented:

> *"I feel safe because it is my hometown and my workplace is a walking distance to my residence. It is easier for me to monitor my family and my children's needs. It is also very near to the hospital in case my family needs health concerns."*

When teacher respondents were asked about the efforts of the employees and employers in working together to ensure the safest possible working conditions, majority of them agreed on this notion. This implies that QWL is a partnership endeavor to entail a safe working condition. Bahramzadeh and KhedmatgozarBaghan (2004) stressed out that working environment will have high quality when people are considered as main members of the organization and that they must have the opportunity to learn in different ways, can fulfill their job improvement paths, development opportunity is provided for them and their minds encounter intellectual and mental challenges of their abilities. Afshur (2006) explained that when people are aware and well-informed in organizations, they are more patient and can solve problems more logically because they feel they are part of the whole system. A respondent answered when asked and quoted; ***"I felt blessed working with those personalities because through them I learned the value of work ethics, camaraderie and the importance of cooperation in an organization."***

With this point of view, teachers feel the responsibility if given the opportunity to create innovations cooperatively to help solve problems for the safety of the entire system. This concept shows that there is a wider perspective of the employees when it comes to safety not only for themselves but for the whole organization. It follows that the welfare of one is the welfare of all. This outlook on safety becomes inclusive and a collaborative effort between employees and employers. Walton (1975) reinforced this viewpoint in his observation that QWL is getting importance as a way to rescue human and environmental values that have been neglected in favor of

technological breakthrough of the productivity and economic growth. It contradicts to the concept of the humanization of work.

However, this concept of QWL was negated by a teacher respondent when she shared about her own experiences with her administrator in the school where she was assigned as quoted; *"Working with colleagues and other stakeholders gives me freedom to express what's in my mind and heart but not to my superior for being afraid of being insulted because usually he insults me."* This seemed to have a contradiction among teacher respondents on this aspect considering that they have different school administrators with different managerial styles.

The seventh descriptor *"I feel not secure about my work"* is negatively phrased which was disagreed by the teacher respondents. They are all secured about their work. They are assured of the fringe benefits that are given to them as permanent teachers. Their job as teachers are very stable. Through their profession, they can support their families with their daily needs.

Usually, there is a feeling of insecurity for those teachers working as temporary, volunteer or on probationary period. Employing them on permanent basis reduces their sense of insecurity and enhances the QWL (Cook, Warr; J and Wall, 1979). Institutions make precise programs for work security and some benefits including health, meaningful events, life insurance and retirement plans. These aspects cause teachers to become more predictable and that tension and aggressions decrease. In an organization where a fair behavior is evident, employees get along better with the organization and adapt themselves more to the organization's conditions.

The eighth descriptor received confirmation by the teacher respondents as they agreed on the notion regarding their general well-being. When a teacher can say outrightly that he/she is safe then one is contented of his/her work. With a good or excellent environment one can be productive in his/her work and contributes high performance in the organization.

Akaranaviciute&Ruzevicius (2007) & Arts, et. al (2001) expressed that QWL concept encompasses the following aspects like job satisfaction, work contentment, involvement in the work performance, motivation, efficiency, productivity, health, safety and welfare at work. These mentioned aspects could be defined as physical and psychological results of work that affect every employee. Effectively managed schools are able to maximize both the QWL and the performance of the teaching force. If all of these aspects be given importance then and only then teachers can truly be happy and say that their health is excellent.

The ninth descriptor was answered neutral by the respondents. " Working extra hours of my main job is mandatory" as expressed by a teacher respondent.   There are times when teachers are required to work more than

the prescribed official hours of duty due to some rush hour reports needed by the higher authority of the Department of Education. Teachers are the front liners in the teaching career. Hence, reasonable working hours should be observed to attain teachers' quality of work like. Teachers must have a balanced relationship among work, non-work, and family aspects of life. In other words, family life and social life should be strained by working hours including overtime work during inconvenient hours.

"*The place where I work is run in a smooth and effective manner*" said a teacher respondent during the focus group discussion when asked about the way school managers manage their institution as depicted on the tenth descriptor. The school manager must not only look for his/her own personal aggrandizement rather extend his/her foresight for the welfare of everyone in the workplace. There are several ways wherein the organization is managed well. Richard E. Walton (2006) explained his model on QWL which provides constitutional protection to the employees only to the level of desirability on such matters as privacy, free speech, equity and due process. Employees are free from stress. A stress-free workplace makes employees happy, contented and performing. Management should know that stress adversely affects employees' performance. Nobody is motivated to work and contribute to the attainment of the organizational goals with a heavy heart. Walton (1975) termed it as "congenial superior subordinate relationships". Harmonious supervisor-employees relations give the employee a sense of social association, a sense of belongingness; we should not ignore the impact of social relations at the work place because the result of this is high performance.

When the teachers were asked whether physical injuries frequently occurred in their workplace the teacher respondents unanimously negated the notion. It meant that accidents in the school may happen but not as frequent at it is. Those employees who commute everyday from their residence to the workplace are prone to possible accidents. Teachers who are just accepted have the possibility to be assigned in remote areas that are hazardous in nature. Teachers can then apply for possible reassignment in workplaces nearer to their home of residence.

Table 3 presents the profile of the performance of teachers for the last three years on the average. Majority of the teacher respondents had Very Satisfactory rating which showed 65.79% and 34.21% with Outstanding performance. This indicates that the teacher respondents delivered their lesson plans very well with appropriate assessment

Table 3. Performance Profile of the Teacher Respondents for the Last Three Years

Rating	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Percentage
Outstanding	65	8.10	9.56	8.3758	0.24198	34.21
Very Satisfactory	125	8.60	9.89	9.0036	0.36197	65.79

| Totality | 190 | 8.35 | 9.725 | 8.5906 | 0.41464 | 100.00 |

Key to Descriptive Ratings:

8.60 – 10.00   = Outstanding
6.60 – 8.50   = Very Satisfactory
4.60 – 6.50   = Satisfactory
2.60 – 4.50   = Unsatisfactory
2.50 – below   = Poor

tool and maintained a pleasant classroom atmosphere. It was evident that the teachers had significantly improved the level of the performance of their students over pre-test.

The teachers also encouraged the involvement of parents in school programs and activities and did actively participate in community projects and in civic organizations. It is also implied that the teacher respondents displayed commendable professional and personal characteristics which include decisiveness, integrity, commitment, resourcefulness, courtesy, human relations , leadership , punctuality and attendance.

When the researcher tried to correlate between safe environment and teacher's performance as reflected in their Performance Appraisal System for Teachers (PAST) as presented in Table 4, the result showed a positive correlation. Teaching effectiveness was affected by the safety of work place and vice versa. Teachers were more effective when teaching under a building with good condition or in the covered court with walls and division. Some teachers used to commute and took single motorcycle commonly known as "habal-habal" just to reach their work place. Others assigned in the island used to take the boat paddled by the operator and or pump boat. Even if during stormy weather they crossed the sea just to reach the station. This was revealed with the teacher's response and quoted; ***"It is my commitment to go to my workplace during official hours even if the weather is not good."***

Table 4 Correlation Between Safe Environment and Teachers' Performance

Variables	N	f - value	t-value	p-value	Description
Safe Environment Teaching Effectiveness	190	1.010	0.525	0.448	Significantly Correlated

Safe environment could directly affect teacher's effectiveness. It was the desire of the teachers to work in a safe work place as reflected in their responses to the questionnaire. When taken singly, secondary teachers perceived to work in a safer place and that majority were assigned in a safer and more healthy environment.

The absence of a safe environment would affect the impact of the other factors like self-fulfillment and professional growth and development. Professional growth indicated a stronger impact to the teachers' quality of work life.

Conclusion

Teachers feel more secure and better in a workplace that is positive and motivating. Giving importance to safe workplace makes them feel more secure and being valued and energized by their superiors. A stress-free working environment provides enthusiasm to teachers. This is manifested in the performance ratings displayed by the teacher as rated by their school head. Majority of the teachers had very satisfactory rating as perceived by them and their administrators. Working in a safe environment gives teachers positive experience resulting to a meaningful work and a high quality of work life.

The dimension on safe environment created an impact on the quality of work life among secondary teachers. Its absence among the three dimensions would lessen the impact of the other two factors.

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