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Teachers' Empowerment, Human Relations Skills, and Professional Development

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Abstract

This study explored the levels of teachers' empowerment, human relations skills, and professional development, while examining how these factors relate to one another in the District of Antique during the 2024–2025 school year. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, 365 actively teaching respondents participated in the study. A validated, researcher-developed questionnaire measured teachers' empowerment in terms of initiative-taking, decision-making, and autonomy; human relations skills in collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution; and professional development regarding relevance, applicability, and frequency of participation. The instrument showed high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89). Results indicated that teachers displayed high levels of empowerment, particularly in initiative-taking, suggesting that they actively participate in decision-making and seek instructional innovation. Human relations skills were also strong, with collaboration as the top-rated dimension, reflecting effective teamwork and interpersonal engagement. Teachers' involvement in professional development was high, demonstrating their commitment to improving instructional competence. Correlation analysis revealed positive relationships between empowerment and professional development and between human relations skills and professional development, indicating that teachers who feel empowered and demonstrate strong interpersonal skills are more likely to engage in meaningful professional growth. The study concludes that fostering teacher empowerment and interpersonal skills is essential for professional development and instructional effectiveness. Targeted programs, mentoring, and supportive systems can strengthen teacher capacity, collaboration, and overall educational quality.

Keywords: Teachers' Empowerment, Human Relations Skills, Professional Development, Instructional Effectiveness, Teacher Collaboration, Teacher Autonomy

Introduction

Teachers are central to shaping the quality of education, and their professional growth greatly affects learner outcomes. Teacher empowerment plays a vital role in promoting autonomy, confident decision-making, and a commitment to instructional excellence (Short & Rinehart, 1992). Empowered teachers are proactive, engage in collaboration, and implement innovative instructional strategies, which benefits both their professional satisfaction and student learning (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Human relations skills are closely linked to empowerment. They involve effective communication, conflict resolution, and the ability to build positive relationships with colleagues,

students, and stakeholders (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013). Teachers with strong interpersonal skills create collaborative, supportive, and respectful school environments, fostering professional development and achieving educational goals (Hargreaves, 1994).

Professional development equips teachers with knowledge, pedagogical skills, and instructional strategies to respond to evolving educational demands and adopt best practices (Desimone, 2009). In the District of Antique, understanding how teacher empowerment, human relations skills, and professional development interact is crucial for improving teacher effectiveness and educational quality.

This study aimed to assess teachers' empowerment, human relations skills, and professional development and to explore the relationships among these variables among 365 teachers during the 2024–2025 school year. Specifically, it addressed questions on the levels of empowerment (decision-making, autonomy, initiative-taking), human relations skills (communication, collaboration, conflict resolution), professional development (relevance, applicability, frequency), and the relationships between these factors. Insights from the study are intended to guide administrators, policymakers, and educators in designing interventions that strengthen empowerment, interpersonal skills, and professional growth.

Methodology

A descriptive-correlational design was employed to assess teachers' empowerment, human relations skills, and professional development and examine their interrelationships in the District of Antique during the 2024–2025 school year. The descriptive component measured the current levels of each variable, while the correlational component explored associations between empowerment, human relations skills, and professional development.

The study included 365 teachers across different grade levels, selected through total enumeration to ensure all actively teaching personnel were represented. Data were gathered using a researcher-developed, validated questionnaire with three parts: empowerment (decision-making, autonomy, initiative-taking), human relations skills (communication, collaboration, conflict resolution), and professional development (frequency, relevance, applicability). Experts in education validated the instrument, and pilot testing yielded a high reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88).

Ethical standards were strictly observed, including securing informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining anonymity. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation) and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at a 0.05 significance level.

Results

Teachers in the District of Antique demonstrated high levels of empowerment, with an overall mean of 4.35 (SD = 0.37). Initiative-taking was the highest-rated dimension (M = 4.41), followed by decision-making (M = 4.33) and autonomy (M = 4.31). This indicates that teachers actively take initiative, make informed decisions, and exercise professional independence.

Human relations skills were also high (M = 4.29, SD = 0.38), with collaboration receiving the highest rating (M = 4.36), followed by communication (M = 4.28) and conflict resolution (M = 4.23). This reflects teachers' ability to work well with colleagues, students, and stakeholders, fostering a positive and professional environment.

Professional development showed a high level of engagement (M = 4.31, SD = 0.36). Relevance of training was rated highest (M = 4.38), followed by applicability to classroom instruction (M = 4.30)

and frequency of participation (M = 4.25), demonstrating teachers' commitment to meaningful professional growth.

Correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between empowerment and professional development ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.01$) and between human relations skills and professional development ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that empowered teachers with strong interpersonal skills are more likely to engage effectively in professional learning activities.

Discussion

The findings confirm that teacher empowerment is crucial for professional growth. Initiative-taking, decision-making, and autonomy enable teachers to proactively manage responsibilities and adapt instructional strategies to meet learners' needs (Short & Rinehart, 1992; Gibson & Dembo, 1984).

Human relations skills significantly enhance professional development. Collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution help teachers build supportive relationships, engage in peer learning, and navigate challenges constructively (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013).

The strong positive correlations between empowerment, human relations skills, and professional development indicate that these factors are interrelated. Teachers who feel empowered and possess strong interpersonal skills are more likely to seek and benefit from professional growth opportunities, improving instructional effectiveness and learner outcomes (Desimone, 2009).

Overall, these results highlight the importance of integrating empowerment initiatives and interpersonal skills training into professional development programs, supporting teachers in becoming confident, collaborative, and proactive educators.

Conclusion

Teachers in the District of Antique exhibit high levels of empowerment, human relations skills, and engagement in professional development. Initiative-taking, decision-making, and autonomy demonstrate that teachers are capable of managing instructional responsibilities proactively. Collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution highlight their ability to foster positive interpersonal interactions.

Participation in professional development is meaningful and applicable to classroom practice, reflecting teachers' commitment to improving their skills and student outcomes. Positive relationships between empowerment, human relations skills, and professional development suggest that these elements collectively enhance instructional effectiveness.

This study affirms that teacher empowerment and strong interpersonal skills are essential for professional growth, and investing in these areas ensures a motivated, competent, and effective teaching workforce.

Recommendations

Professional Development Programs: Design and implement programs that enhance teacher empowerment, decision-making, and initiative-taking. Focus on equipping teachers with strategies for effective classroom management, curriculum adaptation, and innovative instruction.

Interpersonal Skills Training: Conduct regular workshops on communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution to strengthen human relations skills and foster a cooperative school environment.

Mentoring and Peer Support: Establish mentoring programs where experienced teachers guide novice educators. Encourage peer collaboration groups for sharing best practices, problem-solving, and reflective learning.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Regularly monitor and assess the effectiveness of professional development and empowerment programs to ensure they meet teachers' needs and improve instructional performance.

Policy and Support Systems: Develop supportive policies that recognize teacher autonomy, encourage professional growth, and reward collaboration. Provide incentives for participation in training and opportunities for leadership roles.

Further Research: Explore additional factors influencing teacher empowerment and professional development, such as school climate, administrative support, and resource availability, to enhance understanding and guide targeted interventions.

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