

# INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE AND LEARNERS' BEHAVIOR TOWARDS A CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aimed to promote a positive institutional climate that yields learners' behavior towards a child-friendly school. This study utilized a descriptive-correlation research design wherein the study focused on determining the relationship between the institutional climate and learners' behavior as assessed by the public elementary teachers. A total of 150 public elementary teachers from six selected public elementary schools in Caloocan City voluntarily participated in the study. The teachers were randomly selected using a stratified random sampling technique from kindergarten to Grade 6 during the school year 2019-2020. This study was limited to the assessment of the institutional climate based on the goals of a child-friendly school and learners' behavior. Based on the assessment of public elementary teachers, it showed that the highest degree of achievements on learners' behavior was "social responsibility" and "spiritual growth," while the lowest was "self-confidence." In terms of institutional climate, the study revealed that the highest degree achievements on the institutional climate were "ensure high academic achievement and success" and "raise teachers' morale and motivation," while the lowest was "encourage enrolment and competition." Moreover, the study showed that there is a significant relationship between institutional climate and learners' behavior. This result implies that a school environment is a factor in learners' behavior. The specific intention of the proposed enhancement program is geared towards the understanding that the school environment is a factor in the behavior of a learner. This study is to ensure that teachers and learners co-exist in promoting a healthy learning environment.*

**Keywords:** behavior, child-friendly school, institutional climate, learners' behavior, school environment

## INTRODUCTION

A child-friendly school is not just a place for formal learning. Most importantly, the agency recognizes and respects the rights of many children, not just children's right to education. These rights include children's right to health, the ability to entertain and rest, the right to be free from harm and abuse, and the right to freely express their opinions and participate in decision-making in accordance with their evolving capacity.

By advocating for children's rights, a child-friendly school also teaches children the responsibilities related to their rights, including respecting the rights of others, respecting diversity, respecting equality, and resolving differences without resorting to violence. (Cobanoglu & Sevim, 2019; Aktan, & Akkutay, 2014). It should be noted that the environment greatly affects the behavior of the

learners. So, one may vividly state that the school shapes the kind of students that it has, or it would want to have.

According to National School Climate Council (2007); National School Climate (2009), the quality of the institution concerning the school's atmosphere is based on the school's experience model, norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structure. It is further described as a factor that affects school tone.

Child-friendly schools play a leading role in creating a learning environment so that children can learn as much as possible. In this environment, children can grow up healthily and provide them with knowledge and skills that they can use throughout their lives. And make them become responsible and productive members of society. (The School Improvement Plan Guidebook, 2015).

The Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Leonor Briones urged all stakeholders to create a better learning environment for the Filipino youth. In Sec. Briones' welcome message for the opening of the school year 2019-2020, she said the department has more challenges to hurdle as the country's population continues to increase. "We are likewise increasing our efforts to deliver quality, accessible, relevant, and liberating education basic education. As we pivot from access to quality, we are also continuously reviewing our curriculum and developing our learning resources," she said (Montemayor, 2019).

Learning is influenced by the total environment (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013; Cohen & Geier, 2010). It may also be affected by the interactions with others, physiological needs, and the nature of the personal goals set by the schools (Cohen, 2014). Each learning environment influences learners' behavior about their lives and their hopes (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, Pickeral, 2009). The school caters to those who need or seek knowledge or guidance and is mainly composed of students. Where there are students, there should be teachers who take care of children, take care of their educational needs, and take care of their interests. (Mitchell, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2010).

This research will certainly encourage more educators and school heads to highly consider the importance of not just a school environment but a child-friendly school. Learners who attend child-friendly schools significantly demonstrate positive relationships and better behavior as this study may prove.

## Theoretical Background

The study is anchored on the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs (1943) and Theory of Humanistic Approach towards personality development postulated by Carl Rogers (1959). In this theory, it showed that a child has two basic needs: positive regard from other people; and self-worth. The child is affected by the kind of environment and motivated by the people around them. How individuals think about themselves and their self-esteem is vital to mental health and whether they can achieve the goals and ambitions in life and achieve self-realization. Therefore, the institutional atmosphere plays an important role in behavior and personality development among students (McLeod, 2014).

This study emphasizes the institutional climate based on the goals of a child-friendly school. The study presents the relationship between the school climate with the learners'

behavior. Furthermore, the study involves the assessment of institutional climate and learners' behavior as assessed by the public elementary teachers of every grade level in the school and through these theories, the researcher may be able to come up with conclusions relevant to the development of the learners' behavior. Hence, the very purpose of this research is to identify a child-friendly school so as to reinforce the goal of the DepEd in providing quality education to the youth through a conducive learning environment.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual paradigm of the study wherein the researcher aims to assess the relationship between institutional climate and learners' behavior towards a child-friendly school. This study aims to understand the institutional climate based on the goals of a child-friendly school, namely: encourage children's participation in school and community, enhance children's health and well-being, guarantee safe and protective spaces for children, encourage enrollment and competition, ensure high academic achievement and success, raise teacher's morale and motivation, mobilize community support for education. The learner's behavior is assessed based on the observation of the participants in terms of self-confidence, good health, emotional stability, social responsibility, and spiritual growth. The significant relationship is determined between the institutional climate and learners' behavior. This process means that there must be a correlation between the institutional climate and the behavior of learners. With such a positive relationship, the school is named to be a child-friendly school and be a factor in the learner's behavior.

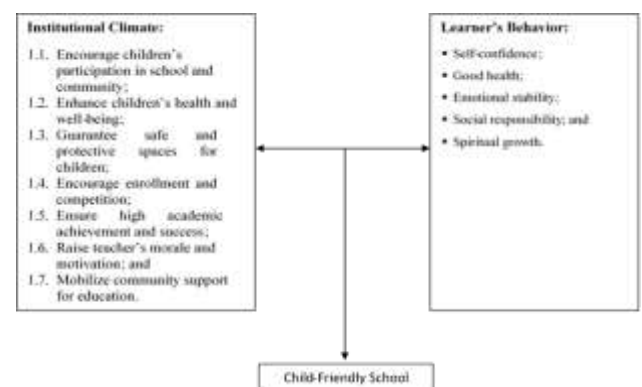


Figure 1. Conceptual Paradigm of the Study

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The researchers utilized a descriptive-correlation research design wherein the study focused on determining the relationship between the institutional climate and learners' behavior towards a child-friendly school as assessed by the public elementary teachers. The results of the study may be able to use to come up with relevant inputs towards the development of learners' behavior. The specific intention of the proposed school enhancement program towards a child-friendly school is to help promote and maintain a child-friendly school program. This proposed enhancement program is geared towards the understanding that the school environment is a factor in the behavior of a learner. Having a positive institutional climate will yield good behavior from students. This result is to ensure that teachers and learners co-exist in promoting a healthy learning environment.

### Research Local/Participants/Sampling

A total of 150 public elementary teachers from six selected public elementary schools in North District II of Caloocan City voluntarily participated in the study. The teachers were randomly selected using a stratified random sampling technique from kindergarten to Grade 6 as in-depth data gathering during the school year 2019-2020. This study was limited to the assessment of the institutional climate based on the goals of a child-friendly school and learners' behavior.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The research instrument used in the study was a researcher-made questionnaire based on the School Improvement Plan (SIP) Guidebook of the DepEd. The instrument used in the study consists of two parts. Part I is about the presentation of the institutional climate based on the goals of a child-friendly school, which includes the following components: encourage children's participation in school and community; enhance children's health and well-being; guarantee safe and protective spaces for children; encourage enrollment and competition; ensure high academic achievement and success; raise teachers' morale and motivation and mobilize community support for education. Part II involves the assessment of the learners' behavior by

their respective public elementary teachers in terms of self-confidence, good health, emotional stability, social responsibility, and spiritual growth. Prior to the actual conduct of the study, the said instrument used in the study was validated by the experts and subjected to a pilot study. Letters of permission to conduct a research study were given to the principals and school heads of the selected public elementary schools in North District II of Caloocan City. The data collected from the participants were used as inputs as to what a child-friendly school is.

A letter of consent to the participants was attached with the questionnaire. On the occasion that participants had clarifications and questions about the research instrument, the researcher made herself available to address any concerns. As the study went on, principles of confidentiality and anonymity were observed during the conduct of the study. After distributing the checklist to the participants, the accomplished checklists were retrieved, tabulated, and tallied. The data gathered were also prepared for statistical treatment and analysis.

### Data Analysis

The researchers made use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The raw data gathered were converted into meaningful information to answer the problems presented in the study. The data gathered from the questionnaire were tallied, tabulated, and analyzed using statistical tools. Weighted Mean was used to measure the extent of the existence of the conditions. This measurement was determined by estimating each weighted average. The corresponding verbal descriptions were also assigned for interpretation of results. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength of correlation between the institutional climate based on the goals of a child-friendly school and learners' behavior.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study presents the results of the gathered information about the institutional climate based on the goals of a child-friendly school and learners' behavior.

## Institutional Climate and Learner's Behavior

As can be gleaned in Table 1, it shows that the highest degree of achievements on the institutional climate as assessed by the public elementary teachers are item nos. 5 and 6, while the lowest is item no. 4. It revealed that the institutional climate in a child-friendly school includes high morale and highly motivated teachers as well as building closer ties with the Parent-Teacher Association officers and members to mobilize community support for education. This finding reveals that a school must have a conscious effort to invite more students from the community through regular coordination with the local barangay officials to identify school-age children who are out of school to bring them to the school. Moreover, there should be a consistent campaign to encourage parents to enroll their children (Arnold et al., 2008).

**Table 1. Summary of the Assessment of Public Elementary Teachers on the Institutional Climate in Selected Public Elementary Schools in North District II of Caloocan City**

| Indicators  | Public Elementary Teachers |    |
|---|----------------------------|----|
|   | WM                         | VI |
| 1. Encourage children's participation in school and community | 3.27                       | MA |
| 2. Enhance children's health and well-being.                  | 3.28                       | MA |
| 3. Guarantee safe and protective spaces for children          | 3.28                       | MA |
| 4. Encourage enrolment and competition                        | 2.87                       | MA |
| 5. Ensure high academic achievement and success               | 3.73                       | HA |
| 6. Raise teacher's morale and motivation                      | 3.73                       | HA |
| 7. Mobilize community support for education                   | 3.02                       | MA |
| <b>GRAND MEAN</b>   | 3.31                       | MA |

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 (Highly Achieved - HA); 2.50 - 3.49 (Moderately - MA); 1.50 - 2.49 (Slightly Achieved - SA); 1.00 - 1.49 (Not Achieved - NA)

The table above manifested that the study on institutional Climate is one of the most important factors affecting the overall success of the school. The school atmosphere includes the interaction of human, material, and material resources. Adeogun, Olisaemeka, and Blessing (2011) defined School climate as a comprehensive indicator that measures the characteristics of the school, such as the relationship between parents, teachers, administrators, and campus facilities. The atmosphere of the school is known as the heart and soul of the school, attracting teachers and students to love the school and hope to become a part of the school.

**Table 2. Summary of the Assessment of Public Elementary Teachers on Learners' Behavior in Selected Public Elementary Schools in North District II of Caloocan City**

| Indicators               | Public Elementary Teachers |    |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----|
|                          | WM                         | VI |
| 1. Self Confidence       | 3.20                       | MA |
| 2. Good Health           | 3.26                       | MA |
| 3. Emotional Stability   | 3.26                       | MA |
| 4. Social Responsibility | 3.30                       | MA |
| 5. Spiritual Growth      | 3.30                       | MA |
| <b>GRAND MEAN</b>        | 3.26                       | MA |

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 (Highly Achieved - HA); 2.50 - 3.49 (Moderately - MA); 1.50 - 2.49 (Slightly Achieved - SA); 1.00 - 1.49 (Not Achieved - NA)

Table 2 shows that the highest degree of achievements on learners' behavior as assessed by the public elementary teachers are items number 4 and 5. The study reveals that learners value their relationship with others as part of a community where they can also share their duties and responsibilities. The gathered data reveal that the learners are God-fearing and God-loving. Their actions are geared towards doing well to others. This result manifests the study of King'oina, Kadenyi, and Mobegi (2017), schools should strive to create a healthy and child-friendly learning environment by establishing friendly relations between teachers and students, which will help students further spiritual growth. And emotional growth.

However, the gathered data also show that the lowest degree of achievement is item no. 1. The study reveals that the learners must still learn to build their self-confidence, especially when relating with other pupils. Besides, a whole-child approach to learning and development begins with a positive school climate (Hammond & Harvey, 2018). The result also supports the study of Berkowitz et al. (2017) and Teng (2020) which asserted that supportive school and classroom climates can positively influence the academic outcomes of learners and the impact of a positive climate on academic achievement.

## The Test of Significant Relationship between Institutional Climate and Learners' behavior

Table 3 shows that there is an acceptable indication in rejecting the null hypothesis, testing it at a level of

significance of 5%. Hence, there is a significant relationship between the institutional climate and learner's behavior.

**Table 3. Relationship between Institutional Climate and Learners' Behavior as assessed by the Public Elementary Teachers in Selected Public Elementary Schools in North District II of Caloocan City**

| Correlation                                 | r-computed | t-computed | Critical value | p-value | Interpretation |
|---|------------|------------|----------------|---------|----------------|
| Institutional Climate<br>Learner's Behavior | 0.79       | 8.54       | 2.65           | 0.033   | Significant    |

Note: The p-values are significant below alpha 0.05

This finding implies that a school environment is a factor in learners' behavior. Having a positive institutional climate will yield good behavior from learners. The table above further manifests the study of McCoy, Roy, & Sirkman (2013), which argued that a school influences its institutional climate, and in turn influences academic achievement and behavior. This explanation describes school climate as influencing behavior and academic achievement through student connectedness and engagement with the school and their sense of safety. Hence, the study is significant as it shows a strong positive relationship between the institutional climate and the behavior of learners. Schools that value the development and well-being of learners promote a healthy learning environment.

The additional inputs recommended towards a child-friendly school are integrated with the proposed school enhancement program align with the goals of DepEd. The purpose of this enhancement program is to help promote and maintain a school-friendly program. This proposed enhancement program is geared towards understanding that the school environment is a factor in the behavior of a learner. Having a positive institutional climate will yield good behavior from students. The main purpose of this program is to ensure that teachers and learners co-exist in promoting a healthy learning environment. Based on the gathered data and trends today, the program of activities for the proposed enhancement program are the following: Health is Wealth Campaign; Create Class Group Chats; Stay at Home: Be safe; Online Enrolment; and Online Teaching Webinars. The objectives of this proposed program of activities are the following: to keep on reminding learners of the importance of staying away from sickness especially from COVID-19; to create a platform where exchange of ideas and reminders in class done online; to emphasize the guarantee for the safety of learners especially with the ongoing pandemic; to present an alternative way of being enrolled and continue one's

education, and to equip teachers with more online teaching strategies and methodologies.

## CONCLUSION

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings of the study.

Schools must maintain existing program and innovate activities relevant to learning management system that ensure their status of having a positive institutional climate align with the policies of the DepEd. The status of institutional climate as assessed by public elementary teachers showed factors that can be used for the school enhancement program towards a child-friendly school (virtually or in other kinds of school set-up), the institution should implement the following: the school itself should encourage learners to participate regularly in extra-curricular and community activities so learners can develop their social skills to build their self-confidence especially when relating with other students; the school should support learners' health and well-being because learners brought within a positive institutional climate are physically and mentally fit and they exhibit good habits of caring for the physical and mental self; the school should guarantee safe and protective spaces for learners, this aspect can be done by improving school facilities and learning management system to make learners more comfortable and more convenient; the school should encourage enrolment and healthy competition among learners; the school should have high academic achievement and success; the school should motivate their teachers by providing an incentive program and reward system, which may not just be monetary-based such as teaching tools and devices; and lastly, the school should mobilize community support through regular coordination with local officials.

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