

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FACTORS AS PREDICTORS FOR TEACHERS' TEACHING COMPETENCIES AND JOB SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school environment factors and their teaching competencies and job satisfaction. The sample included 197 junior high school teachers in An Giang province, Vietnam. The results obtained from multiple regression analyses indicated that the factors of school environment as the predictors for teachers' teaching competencies and job satisfaction. The factors which evaluated the most were school environment peer relationships and communication, and principal leadership.

Keywords: school environment, teaching competencies, job satisfaction.

TÓM TẮT

Các yếu tố môi trường nhà trường như những chỉ dấu dự báo năng lực giảng dạy và sự thỏa mãn nghề nghiệp của giáo viên

Mục đích của nghiên cứu này là điều tra mối quan hệ giữa sự nhận thức của giáo viên về các yếu tố môi trường nhà trường với năng lực giảng dạy và sự thỏa mãn nghề nghiệp. Mẫu nghiên cứu bao gồm 197 giáo viên cấp 3 tại tỉnh An Giang, Việt Nam. Kết quả thu được từ các phân tích hồi quy bội xác định rằng các yếu tố của môi trường nhà trường dự đoán được năng lực giảng dạy và sự thỏa mãn nghề nghiệp của giáo viên. Các yếu tố dự đoán mạnh nhất bao gồm mối quan hệ giữa đồng nghiệp, sự giao tiếp giữa đồng nghiệp, và sự lãnh đạo của hiệu trưởng.

Từ khóa: môi trường nhà trường, năng lực giảng dạy, sự thỏa mãn nghề nghiệp.

1. Introduction

In recent years, researchers and policy makers have paid more attention to three areas of research focused on teachers' school environment, teaching and job satisfaction. A positive school environment results in an increase in teaching efficacy and teachers' job satisfaction [12]. Some previous research studies showed that teachers' perceptions of school environment are a key predictor of teachers' teaching competencies and job satisfaction [2; 3, 6; 5]. In the setting of Vietnamese junior high schools, the relationships among school environment, teaching competencies, and job satisfaction are rarely investigated. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how teachers' perceptions of school environment operate as predictors of their teaching competencies, and job satisfaction.

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2. Content

2.1. *Predictor and outcome variables*

School environment

School environment has been shown to be determined by the quality of relationships between individuals at a school, the teaching and learning that take place, collaboration between teachers and administrative staff, and the support present in a particular school [4]. Ample research has shown that teachers' perceptions of school environment are a key predictor of teachers' sense of teaching efficacy and job satisfaction [2; 3]. Understanding how perceptions of school climate influence these outcomes variables is important for teachers but also for students, who are inevitably impacted by their teachers' work experiences. It is surprising that few researchers have explored the relationship between school environment and teachers' sense of efficacy or job satisfaction. This study identified five factors of school environment and hypothesized that these factors would be significant predictors of teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction of Vietnamese secondary teachers.

Teaching efficacy

Teachers' sense of efficacy refers to teachers' beliefs about their capabilities to carry out a particular course of action successfully [1]. Teachers' sense of efficacy consisted of two factors, outcome expectancy (reflects a belief that effort expended will result in a wanted outcome), and efficacy expectancy (the extent to which an individual feels capable of influencing outcomes in the desired direction) [12, p. 220]. Some previous research showed that teachers' sense of efficacy associated with school outcomes, such as student achievement gains, successful school change efforts [8]. In this study, a single factor of teachers' sense of efficacy was identified that represented the extent to which a teacher feels capable of positively influencing student outcomes.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as a sense of fulfillment, gratification and satisfaction from working in an occupation [10]. More specifically, it refers to the degree to which an individual feels that his or her job-related needs are being met [7]. Job satisfaction is related with both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Extrinsic satisfaction comes from rewards dispensed by the organization, such as salary and benefits, promotion, status, a safe environment, and job security [9]. Intrinsic sources of satisfaction reside within the individual and are related with performance [9]. It is likely that opening opportunities for teachers to be involved in decision making may provide important sources of satisfaction. Identifying factors of decision making that are associated with sense of efficacy and teachers' job satisfaction can serve as a guide to those interested in school reform.

Until now no known study has examined the the relations among decision participation, teaching efficacy and job satisfaction in the setting of Vietnamese secondary schools. The current study adds to the literature by reporting the results of an investigation to predict that school environment may be positively related to teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. The results of this study may provide Vietnamese secondary teachers as well as school leaders with potentially additional information to improve teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction.

2.2. Research method

A survey research design was utilized to examine correlations between school environment factors and both the scales of sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. The sample used for this research consisted of 197 teachers (96 females and 101 males) from 6 Vietnamese junior high schools. This study used three instruments to examine the relationships among school environment, sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. For each item of each instrument, respondents made a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 for their response, the numbers corresponding to, SD (Strongly Disagree), D (Disagree), U (Undecided), A (Agree), SA (Strongly Agree), respectively.

School environment scale [12] consisted of 5 factors with 32 items. The first factor, called Principal leadership, contained 11 items (Principal makes plans and carries them out, principal lets staff know what is expected of them, principal is interested in innovation, administration knows problems faced by the staff, principal consults staff before making decisions, principal deals effectively with outside pressures, principal is good at getting resources, Goals and priorities for the school are clear, staff members are recognized for job well done, rules for students behaviour are enforced, and union and administration work together). The second factor, called Student discipline, consisted of 6 items (Class cutting is a problem at this school, tardiness to class is a problem at this school, absenteeism is a problem at this school, tardiness and class cutting interferes with teaching, physical conflict is a problem at this school, and verbal abuse of teachers is a problem at this school). The third factor, called Faculty collegiality, contained 7 items (A great deal of cooperative effort exists among staff, teachers can count on staff members to help out, colleagues share beliefs about school mission, teachers at school are continuously learning, school seems like a big family, broad agreement among faculty about school mission, and department chair's behaviour is supportive). The fourth factor, called Lack of obstacles to teaching, consisted of 5 items (Students are incapable of learning material, students have attitudes that reduce academic success, drug/alcohol abuse interferes with teaching, and routine duties interfere with teaching). The fifth factor, called Faculty communication, contained 3 items (Teacher coordinates courses with department teachers, teacher coordinates content with teachers outside department, and teacher is familiar with content taught by department teachers).

Teachers' sense of efficacy scale [12] comprised 6 items (Different methods can affect student achievement, I can get through to most difficult students, I am responsible for keeping students from dropping, I can change my approach if students are not doing well, I can do little to insure high achievement, and Teachers make a difference in students' lives). Table 1 describes the means, standard deviations (SD), and alpha coefficient (α) of this scale.

Job satisfaction scale [12] consisted of 5 items (Teacher usually looks forward to each day, Teacher often feels satisfied with job, Teacher feels it's a waste of time to do best at teaching, and Teacher is happy just to get through day). Table 1 describes the means, standard deviations (SD), and alpha coefficient (α) of this scale.

Table 1. The means, standard deviations (SD), and alpha coefficient (α) of independent and dependent variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Alpha (α)	No. Items
School environment				
Principal leadership (PL)	3.81	.70	.69	11
Student discipline (SD)	3.92	.68	.73	6
Faculty collegiality (FC1)	4.19	.79	.81	7
Lack of obstacles to teaching (LO)	3.67	.75	.78	5
Faculty communication (FC2)	4.11	.82	.68	3
Sense of efficacy (SE)	4.01	.80	.75	6
Job satisfaction (JS)	4.12	.76	.82	5

Note: n = 197

2.3. Data analysis

The relationship among factors of school environment and two scales of sense of efficacy and job satisfaction were investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Multiple regression analyses were also conducted to determine if there were any sense of efficacy-school environment and job satisfaction-school environment associations. For all tests, the significance level was determined with $p < .05$.

2.4. Results and discussion

The descriptive statistics (Table 2) show that the bivariate correlations between scales of school environment and both sense of efficacy and job satisfaction scales were statistically significant for all scales. The SE variable was positively correlated with the PL ($r = .19$, $p = .003$), the SD ($r = .11$, $p = .002$), the FC1 ($r = .21$, $p = .007$), the LO ($r = .09$, $p = .004$), and the FC2 ($r = .24$, $p = .020$).

The JS variable was positively and significantly correlated with the PL ($r = .17$, $p = .005$), the SD ($r = .17$, $p = .007$), the FC1 ($r = .19$, $p = .004$), the LO ($r = .12$, $p = .010$), and the FC2 ($r = .27$, $p = .012$).

Table 2. Correlations between dependent variables (SE and JS) and predictor variables (PL, SD, FC1, LO and FC2)

Variable	SE		JS	
	r	p	r	p
Decision participation				
Principal leadership (PL)	.19	.003	.17	.005
Student discipline (SD)	.11	.002	.07	.007
Faculty collegiality (FC1)	.21	.007	.19	.004
Lack of obstacles to teaching (LO)	.09	.004	.12	.010
Faculty communication (FC2)	.24	.020	.27	.012

Note: $n = 197$

* $p < .01$

Table 3 reports the results of the two multiple regression analyses on the predicted measures and dependent variables. The first model reports the results of regression analyses performed to predict teachers' sense of efficacy from school environment variables. This model with all three predictors explained 34% of the variance in SE scale ($R^2 = .34$), $F = 33.414$, $p < .01$. The five variables of school environment were positively and statistically significant related to SE scale, with the beta value of PL ($\beta = .13$), SD ($\beta = .12$), FC1 ($\beta = .20$), LO ($\beta = .08$), FC2 ($\beta = .21$). The results show that the FC2 factor was the strongest predictor of teachers' sense of efficacy. Consistent with the correlational findings, the strongest predictor of sense of efficacy was the FC2, $\beta = .19$. This was followed by the FC1, $\beta = .20$. The weakest predictor was the LO, $\beta = .08$.

Table 3. Results from Multiple Regression Analyses

Variable	Multiple Regression Weights					
	Model 1 - SE scale			Model 2 - JS scale		
	R^2	F	p	R^2	F	p
	.34	33.414	.001	.33	39.201	.012
	β	t	p	β	t	p
PL	.13	2.976	.000	.11	3.011	.001
SD	.12	2.981	.045	.10	2.612	.032
FC1	.20	3.123	.003	.18	3.012	.006
LO	.08	2.767	.040	.07	2.512	.031
FC2	.21	3.002	.012	.23	3.721	.029

a. Predictors: PL, SD, FC1, LO, FC2

b. Dependent variables: SE and JS

* $p < .05$

Similarly, the second model reports the results of regression analyses performed to predict teachers' job satisfaction from school environment variables. This model with all five predictors produced 33% of the variance in JS scale ($R^2 = .33$), $F = 39.201$, $p < .05$. The five variables of school environment were positively and statistically significant related to the JS scale, with the beta value of PL ($\beta = .11$), the SD ($\beta = .10$), the FC1 ($\beta = .18$), LO ($\beta = .07$), and FC2 ($\beta = .23$). The results show that the FC2 factor was also the strongest predictor of teachers' job satisfaction. Consistent with the correlational findings, the strongest predictor of job satisfaction was the FC2, $\beta = .23$. This was also followed by the FC1, $\beta = .18$. The weakest predictor was also the LO, $\beta = .07$.

The findings obtained from the two models indicated that teachers' sense of efficacy and their job satisfaction increase when they were given opportunity to involve faculty collegiality and faculty communication. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of previous research [5, 12] which indicate a positively significant relationship between the factors of school environment and factors of both teachers' sense of efficacy and their job satisfaction.

3. Conclusion

The purposes of this study were to investigate the relationships among three variables, school environment, sense of efficacy, and job satisfaction. The results show that factors of school environment have positively significant relationships with sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. The best predictors of teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction were faculty communication, faculty collegiality, and principal leadership. The results support the hypothesis that teachers' perceptions of school environment may predict their sense of efficacy and job satisfaction. These findings would be useful in shaping school policy regarding school reconstructing in the setting of Vietnamese secondary schools. It is likely that, from the findings of this study, establishing a possible school environment is the most necessary mandates of school leaders. Thus, an open school environment needs to be established to improve teachers' teaching efficacy and job satisfaction.

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