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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY IN MANGGITHAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study examines how organizational culture shapes and is shaped by administrative practices in a Philippine public secondary school, focusing on the lived experiences of a School Property Custodian. Anchored in organizational culture theory and public sector management, the research explores how shared values, norms, and routines influence asset management, compliance, and service delivery. A qualitative case study design was employed. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, workplace observations, and document analysis (e.g., inventory records, property forms, and maintenance logs). Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, four themes emerged: (1) Norms of Accountability and Stewardship, (2) Collaborative Routines and Informal Coordination, (3) Compliance Pressures and Procedural Rigor, and (4) Resource Constraints and Adaptive Practices. Findings indicate that a culture of accountability and collegial support enables effective property management despite systemic limitations. However, heavy documentation requirements, limited materials, and infrastructure gaps challenge consistency and efficiency. The study highlights the central yet underexplored role of non-teaching personnel in sustaining school operations. Recommendations include strengthening capacity building for custodians, streamlining procedures, enhancing resource allocation, and reinforcing supportive leadership practices. The study contributes context-specific insights into organizational culture in public schools and underscores the need for aligned policy and practice.

Keywords: *organizational culture, administrative practices, property management, public secondary school, Philippines*

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Introduction

Organizational culture defined as the shared values, beliefs, and practices that guide behavior within an institution plays a critical role in shaping administrative effectiveness in schools (Schein, 2010). In public secondary schools, culture is expressed through daily routines, compliance practices, collaboration patterns, and decision-making processes that collectively influence service delivery. While educational research has predominantly focused on teaching and learning, the administrative backbone particularly non-teaching personnel remains underexamined despite its importance to school functionality.

School Property Custodians are responsible for inventory control, asset safeguarding, maintenance coordination, and compliance with government procedures. These responsibilities are embedded in a regulatory environment that requires accuracy, transparency, and timeliness. The effectiveness of such functions is not only a matter of technical competence but also of organizational culture how accountability is practiced, how collaboration occurs, and how rules are interpreted and enacted (Denison, 1990).

In the Philippine context, public schools operate under structured bureaucratic systems with varying levels of resource availability. Administrative personnel must navigate documentation demands, audit requirements, and coordination with internal and external stakeholders. Studies suggest that supportive cultures characterized by trust, clarity of roles, and shared responsibility enhance organizational performance, while resource constraints and role ambiguity can impede it (Deal & Kennedy, 2000; Hofstede et al., 2010).

This study addresses the gap by examining how organizational culture influences administrative practices from the perspective of a School Property Custodian. Specifically, it aims to: (1) describe prevailing cultural norms and values in administrative work, (2) analyze how these shape property management practices, and (3) identify challenges and adaptive strategies within the school context.

Methodology

A qualitative case study design was used to provide an in-depth, context-rich understanding of organizational culture and administrative practices. The study was conducted at Manggithan National High School. The primary participant was the School Property Custodian, selected through purposive sampling due to direct involvement in asset management and compliance processes.

Data collection included: (1) semi-structured interviews to capture lived experiences and perceptions; (2) non-participant observations of routine administrative tasks (inventory checks, document preparation, coordination with staff); and (3) document analysis of property forms, inventory records, and maintenance logs. These sources enabled triangulation and strengthened validity (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis: familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting. Trustworthiness was ensured through member checking (credibility), audit trails (dependability), triangulation (confirmability), and thick description (transferability) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical standards were observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

Results/Findings

Theme 1: Norms of Accountability and Stewardship

A strong culture of accountability and stewardship consistently guided the custodian's administrative practices, emphasizing precision, transparency, and responsible management of public assets. The participant demonstrated a proactive commitment to ensuring that all school properties were properly recorded, monitored, and safeguarded. Routine verification processes, such as periodic inventory checks and cross-referencing of records, were systematically carried out to maintain accuracy and audit readiness. Documentation was treated not merely as a procedural requirement but as a critical mechanism for ensuring institutional integrity and compliance with government regulations.

This culture of accountability reflects a deep sense of ownership over institutional resources, where the custodian perceives their role as a steward of public property. Such orientation goes beyond compliance, embodying ethical

responsibility and professional integrity. In organizational settings, stewardship is closely associated with trust, reliability, and long-term sustainability, particularly in public institutions where transparency is paramount. Research suggests that organizations with strong accountability norms tend to exhibit higher levels of operational efficiency and credibility (Schein, 2010).

Responses:

“Responsibilidad ko na siguraduhin na kumpleto at tama ang inventory.”

(It is my responsibility to ensure that the inventory is complete and accurate.)

“Bawat gamit ay dapat may record para malinaw sa audit.”

(Every item must have a record for audit clarity.)

“Iniingatan namin ang gamit dahil pag-aari ito ng paaralan.”

(We take care of the items because they belong to the school.)

“Sinisigurado ko na updated ang records para walang problema sa inspection.”

(I make sure that records are updated to avoid problems during inspection.)

These practices reflect a stewardship-oriented organizational culture where accountability is internalized rather than externally imposed. The custodian’s actions demonstrate alignment with shared institutional values that prioritize transparency and responsibility. According to Schein (2010), organizational culture is sustained through such shared norms, which guide behavior and decision-making. The findings suggest that when accountability becomes part of the organizational identity, it enhances consistency, reliability, and trust in administrative processes.

Theme 2: Collaborative Routines and Informal Coordination

Administrative work within the school was characterized by a collaborative culture, where coordination among teachers, school heads, and maintenance personnel played a crucial role in accomplishing tasks efficiently. While formal procedures provided structure, informal coordination such as spontaneous consultations, quick updates, and shared responsibilities enabled faster problem-solving and smoother workflow. The custodian actively engaged with various stakeholders to gather information, verify asset conditions, and address maintenance concerns.

This collaborative approach reflects a relational dimension of organizational culture, where teamwork and mutual support are valued. In resource-limited environments, such informal networks often compensate for structural gaps, allowing tasks to be completed despite constraints. Collaboration also fosters a sense of shared responsibility, where administrative functions are not isolated but integrated into the broader school system. Studies indicate that teamwork and participatory practices significantly enhance organizational effectiveness and adaptability (Denison, 1990).

Responses:

“Kinakausap ko ang mga teacher para sa updates ng gamit sa classroom.”

(I talk to teachers for updates on classroom equipment.)

“Magkatuwang kami sa pag-check ng mga sirang kagamitan.”

(We work together in checking damaged equipment.)

“Mas napapadali ang trabaho kapag may tulongan.”

(The work becomes easier when there is cooperation.)

“Kapag may problema, agad kaming nag-uusap para mahanapan ng solusyon.”

(When there is a problem, we immediately communicate to find a solution.)

The findings highlight that a collaborative organizational culture enhances efficiency, responsiveness, and problem-solving capacity. Informal coordination complements formal structures, enabling flexibility and timely action. Denison (1990) emphasizes that involvement and teamwork are key cultural traits associated with high-performing organizations. In this case, collaboration not only improves task execution but also strengthens

interpersonal relationships and collective accountability within the school.

Theme 3: Compliance Pressures and Procedural Rigor

The custodian's role was heavily influenced by strict compliance requirements and procedural rigor, which ensured standardization, accountability, and transparency in administrative processes. The participant managed a wide range of documentation, including inventory records, property forms, and audit reports, all of which required adherence to established guidelines and timelines. While these procedures are essential for maintaining institutional integrity, they also contribute to increased workload and pressure, particularly when multiple deadlines coincide.

The complexity of compliance tasks reflects the bureaucratic nature of public school administration, where accuracy and adherence to regulations are critical. However, excessive procedural demands may lead to work overload and stress if not supported by adequate systems and resources. Research indicates that while formalization enhances consistency and control, it must be balanced with flexibility to maintain efficiency and employee well-being (Deal & Kennedy, 2000).

Responses:

“Maraming forms na kailangang ayusin para sa compliance.”

(There are many forms to complete for compliance.)

“Kailangan sundin ang proseso para maiwasan ang problema sa audit.”

(Procedures must be followed to avoid audit issues.)

“Minsan sabay-sabay ang deadlines kaya nakakapressure.”

(Sometimes deadlines coincide, which is pressuring.)

“Kailangan maging maingat dahil may epekto ito sa buong sistema.”

(You need to be careful because it affects the entire system.)

The findings suggest that procedural rigor is both a strength and a challenge in organizational culture. While it ensures accountability and standardization, it can also increase workload and stress when demands exceed available resources. Balancing compliance with efficiency is therefore essential. Supportive organizational systems such as streamlined processes and adequate staffing can help mitigate pressure while maintaining high standards of accountability.

Theme 4: Resource Constraints and Adaptive Practices

Resource limitations emerged as a significant factor influencing administrative practices, requiring the custodian to adopt adaptive strategies to fulfill responsibilities. Constraints such as limited funding, insufficient materials, and delayed maintenance support necessitated prioritization of tasks, improvisation of solutions, and coordination with stakeholders. These adaptive practices reflect resilience and problem-solving capacity, enabling the custodian to maintain functionality despite systemic challenges.

In many public school settings, resource scarcity is a persistent issue that affects both instructional and administrative operations. The ability to adapt and innovate under such conditions is a critical competency for personnel. However, reliance on improvisation also indicates underlying gaps in institutional support, which may affect long-term efficiency and sustainability. Research suggests that resource adequacy is directly linked to organizational performance, employee morale, and service quality (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Responses:

“Kulang ang pondo kaya inuuna muna ang mas kailangan.”

(Funds are limited, so we prioritize what is most needed.)

“Minsan nag-iimprovise kami para magamit pa ang kagamitan.”

(Sometimes we improvise so equipment can still be used.)

“Kailangan makipag-coordinate para maayos ang kakulangan.”

(Coordination is needed to address shortages.)

“Ginagawa namin ang paraan kahit kulang ang resources.”

(We find ways even when resources are lacking.)

Adaptive practices reflect a resilient organizational culture that enables continuity of operations despite constraints. However, such practices should not substitute for adequate institutional support. Hofstede et al. (2010) emphasize that organizational effectiveness is influenced by both cultural values and structural conditions, including resource availability. The findings suggest that while resilience sustains short-term functionality, long-term effectiveness requires systematic investment in resources, infrastructure, and support systems.

Conclusions

Organizational culture significantly shapes administrative practices in public secondary schools, particularly in functions related to property management and resource stewardship. The findings of the study demonstrate that a culture grounded in accountability, responsibility, and collaboration enables school personnel to carry out their duties effectively despite operational challenges. When accountability is embedded as a shared value, administrative tasks such as inventory management, documentation, and compliance are performed with consistency and integrity. Similarly, a collaborative culture fosters teamwork, shared responsibility, and efficient coordination among school personnel, which enhances overall organizational functioning.

At the same time, the study reveals that compliance-driven practices—while essential for transparency and standardization—can create procedural pressures that affect efficiency and workload. The demands of documentation, reporting, and adherence to policies often require significant time and effort, which may lead to stress and reduced productivity if not properly supported. Moreover, persistent resource limitations, including inadequate materials, insufficient funding, and lack of logistical support, further constrain the ability of administrative personnel to perform their roles optimally. These challenges highlight the tension between maintaining accountability and achieving operational efficiency in resource-constrained educational settings.

The study underscores that while organizational culture can enable effective administrative practices, its impact is maximized when supported by strong leadership, adequate resources, and efficient systems. Supportive leadership plays a critical role in reinforcing positive cultural values, providing guidance, and ensuring that personnel are equipped to meet organizational demands. Likewise, streamlined processes and improved resource provision are essential to reduce unnecessary workload and enhance productivity. Ultimately, sustaining effective administrative performance requires a holistic approach that integrates cultural, structural, and managerial dimensions.

Recommendations

1. Capacity Building

Targeted and continuous professional development programs should be provided for school property custodians to enhance their competencies in inventory management, audit readiness, and digital record-keeping. Training should focus on both technical skills and organizational best practices, enabling personnel to perform their roles with greater efficiency and confidence. Mentoring and peer-learning opportunities may also be integrated to promote knowledge sharing and skill development.

2. Process Improvement

Administrative processes related to documentation and reporting should be reviewed and streamlined to eliminate redundancies and improve efficiency. The adoption of standardized templates, digital systems, and automated workflows can reduce manual workload while maintaining compliance with regulatory requirements. Simplifying procedures will allow personnel to focus more on critical tasks rather than repetitive administrative work.

3. Resource Allocation

Educational authorities, particularly the Department of Education (Philippines), should ensure the timely provision of necessary resources, including office supplies, maintenance tools, and budget allocations for asset management. Adequate resource support is essential to enable administrative personnel to perform their duties effectively and minimize the need for improvisation.

4. Strengthen Collaboration

Formal mechanisms for collaboration and coordination should be institutionalized within schools. This may include regular inventory meetings, clear reporting protocols, and structured communication channels among teachers, administrators, and support staff. Strengthening collaboration not only improves efficiency but also fosters a shared sense of responsibility and accountability within the organization.

5. Further Research

Future studies should employ mixed-methods approaches and expand to multiple school settings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of organizational culture and administrative practices. Comparative and longitudinal studies may also be conducted to examine how cultural and structural factors influence performance over time. Such research will contribute to evidence-based policy development and continuous improvement in school administration.

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