

Workforce Diversity And Creative Process Engagement of Public School Teachers During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

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This study was conducted to determine the level of workforce diversity, the level of creative process engagement, the relationship between workforce diversity and creative process engagement among public school teachers, and whether workforce diversity significantly influenced the creative process engagement of 124 public school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. The study used mean, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (Pearson r), and regression analysis. Results revealed

that the level of workforce diversity had a mean score of 4.11, and creative process engagement had a mean score of 4.50. Both were described as excellent, indicating that workforce diversity and creative process engagement were consistently observed. There was a significant relationship between workforce diversity and creative process engagement. Thus, public school teachers exposed to workforce diversity were highly engaged in creative processes. Furthermore, factors of workforce diversity, such as receptivity to diversity and diversity management, promotion of gender diversity, and hiring and retaining diverse employees, significantly influenced creative process engagement.



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INTRODUCTION

The world's increasing globalization requires more interaction among people from diverse backgrounds. People no longer live and work in insular environments; they are now part of a worldwide economy competing within a global framework. For this reason, both for-profit and non-profit organizations must become more diversified to remain competitive. Management must maximize and capitalize on workplace diversity (Tweve, 2011).

In Southeast Asia, notably the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), recent research has illustrated a more specific definition that conceptualizes a diverse workforce with a committed work environment as the extent to which a firm implements fair human resource policies and socially integrates underrepresented employees. Factors that create a positive, diverse, and conducive work environment include personal demographics, professional characteristics, department structural diversity, perceptions of the department's work environment, views of the institution's commitment to diversity, and personal experiences with diversity (Mayhew et al., 2016).

In the Philippines, Diversity Management is defined as the process of planning, directing, organizing, and applying comprehensive managerial attributes to develop an organizational environment where all diverse employees, regardless of their similarities and differences, can actively and effectively contribute to an organization's competitive advantage. Diversity encompasses both the differences and similarities among individuals. It is not limited to racial or religious differentiation but refers to the full spectrum of individual differences (Andrew & Raj, 2012). Effectively managing diversity means addressing and valuing both aspects simultaneously.

Creative process engagement, distinguished from general job engagement, may have specific effects on in-role performance. While creative activities require more time and effort—potentially detracting from other tasks—the resources and skills gained through creative engagement can enhance other areas of performance as well (Eschleman et al., 2014).

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered economic, political, social, and educational systems, prompting a new normal in education. School closures forced governments to identify flexible solutions, often involving sudden transitions to distance learning with limited time for teachers to prepare or enhance their digital and creative skills (McLauren, 2012).

As a public-school teacher, the researcher brings a unique perspective to this study, being directly involved in the issues of workforce diversity and creative process engagement. This study significantly contributes to the field of education by providing new insights and understanding the impact of workforce diversity on the creative engagement of teachers, especially during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objectives of the Study

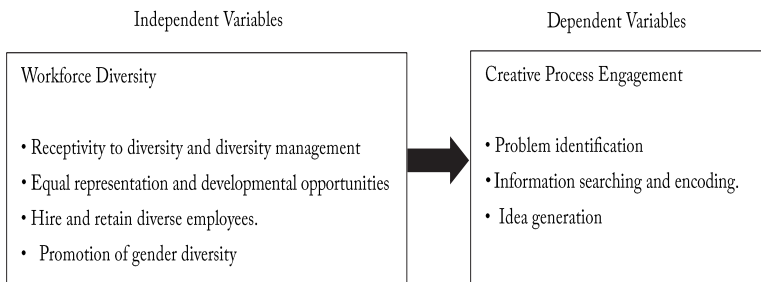
The primary goal of this study is to establish the relationship between workforce diversity and the creative process engagement of public-school teachers. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Determine the level of workforce diversity among public school teachers in terms of:
 - 1.1 Receptivity to diversity and diversity management
 - 1.2 Equal representation and developmental opportunities
 - 1.3 Hiring and retaining diverse employees
 - 1.4 Promotion of gender diversity
2. Ascertain the level of creative process engagement among public school teachers in terms of:
 - 2.1 Problem identification
 - 2.2 Information searching and encoding
 - 2.3 Idea generation
3. Determine the significance of the relationship between workforce diversity and the creative process engagement of public-school teachers.
4. Determine which workforce diversity domains significantly influence public school teachers' creative process engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1

The conceptual framework shows the study variables



The conceptual framework presented the study variables. The independent variable of this research focused on workforce diversity in terms of receptivity to diversity management, equal representation, developmental opportunities, hiring and retaining diversity, and promotion of gender diversity. In contrast, the dependent variable was creative process engagement, which included problem identification, information searching and encoding, and idea generation.

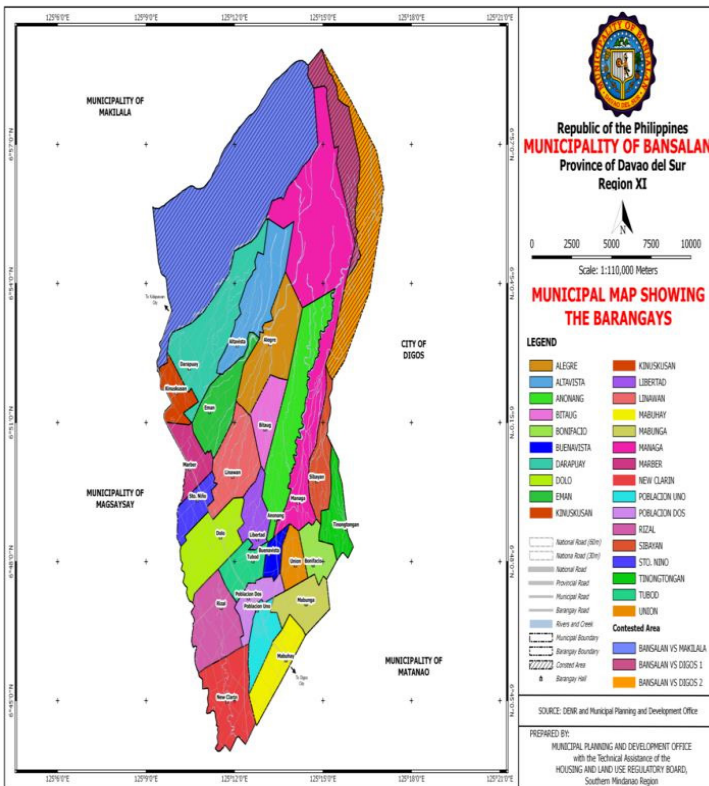
MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Locale

This study was conducted in public elementary schools in Bansalan West, Davao del Sur. Bansalan is about 72 kilometers (45 miles) south of Davao City and is accessible by land transportation, primarily by buses going to Cotabato City, Kidapawan, and Tacurong. It is located approximately 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) northwest of the provincial capital city of Digos. The neighboring towns include Makilala in the north, Magsaysay in the west, and Matanao in the south. Bansalan was once a primeval forest, and the aborigines were the Bagobos.

Figure 2

Map of the Municipality of Bansalan, Davao del Sur



As nomads, they traveled from one place to another by hacking through the virgin forests. They also cultivated land for their staple food, but would soon leave after harvest to seek better places to cultivate.

Research Design

This study employed a non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing the descriptive-correlation technique to gather data, ideas, facts, and information related to the study. In non-experimental research, researchers collect data without implementing changes or introducing treatments. The descriptive-correlation research design was used to describe and interpret the prevailing conditions and to reveal relationships that exist or do not exist (Gehle, 2013). The descriptive aspect of the study determined the different levels of workforce diversity and creative process engagement among public school teachers in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. The study was also correlational, as it identified the relationship between the aforementioned variables, specifically investigating the link between workforce diversity and creative process engagement.

Sampling Design and Technique

The researcher adopted a stratified random sampling technique to select the respondents carefully. This design ensures that the population within each stratum is homogenous, based on specific characteristics used for stratification. The total population was identified across the 14 public elementary schools of Bansalan West, namely: Alegre Elementary School, Altavista Elementary School, Anonang Elementary School, Bitaug Elementary School, Darapuyay Elementary School, Dolo Elementary School, Eman Elementary School, Kinuskusan Elementary School, Malupo Elementary School, Marber Elementary School, Libertad Elementary School, Linawan Elementary School, Vicente Duterte Elementary School, and Villa Doneza Elementary School. A total of 124 public elementary school teachers were identified. Considering the quantitative nature of the study, a relatively large sample was needed. The final sample size of 124 teachers was determined using Slovin's formula.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were 124 public school teachers from the Bansalan West District. All participants were full-time teachers with at least one year of teaching experience. Table 1 presents the distribution of the sample among the respondents of the study. For the quantitative segment, purposive random sampling was also cited, and the exact total of 124 public school teachers served as the sample for the research.

Table 1. *Distribution of teacher respondents of the study*

School	Population	Sample Size
Alegre Elem Sch	8	6
Altavista Elem Sch	10	7
Anonang Elem Sch	8	6
Bitaug Elem Sch	73	1
Darapuy Elem Sch	9	6
Dolo Elem Sch	23	16
Eman Elem Sch	11	7
Kinuskusan Elem Sch	15	10
Malupo Elem Sch	9	6
Marber Elem Sch	13	9
Libertad Elem Sch	9	6
Linawan Elem Sch	10	7
V. Duterte Elem Sch	9	6
Villa Doneza Elem Sch	37	25
Total	180	124

Research Instrument

In this study, the researcher utilized an adapted questionnaire. Two sets of instruments were used to gather the study's data. The first set consisted of a questionnaire for workforce diversity, adapted from the study of Kundu and Mor (2017). The second set was adopted from the study of Bartol and Bartol (2007). To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments, experts in the field of education—both internal and external—served as validators. The validation sheet used by the panel of validators can be found in the appendices section of the paper.

Data Analysis

Social Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data accurately, following the recommendation of McLauren (2012). Additionally, a five-point Likert scale was employed in this study to measure the workforce diversity and engagement in the creative process of public-school teachers. In determining the level of workforce diversity, the following scale was used:

Range of Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Excellent	It means that workforce diversity has always been observed.
3.41 – 4.20	Very Good	It means that workforce diversity was often observed.
2.61 – 3.40	Good	This means that workforce diversity was sometimes observed.
1.81 – 2.60	Fair	This means that workforce diversity was seldom observed.
1.00 – 1.80	Poor	It means that workforce diversity was never observed.

This was used in interpreting the level of creative process engagement (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Range of Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Excellent	It means that engagement in the creative process was always observed.
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1.81 – 2.60	Fair	This means that engagement in the creative process was seldom observed.
1.00 – 1.80	Poor	It means that engagement in the creative process was never observed.

Data Gathering Procedures

A permission letter was secured through the appropriate department offices, beginning with the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao del Sur, then the office of the District Supervisor, and, subsequently, the offices of the school heads. Through proper coordination with the Municipal Inter-Agency Task Force for COVID-19 (MIATF), the researcher enforced and strictly followed minimum health protocols to ensure the personal safety of both the researcher and the study's respondents. No health risks were incurred by any participant during the conduct of this study.

Following the acquisition of permissions, the researcher conducted a series of expert validations on the survey instruments used in the study. The researcher established rapport with the respondents and, with the assistance of fellow teachers, personally administered the survey questionnaires to the public-school teachers. Permission was also sought directly from each

respondent. Further, the researcher became acquainted with the participants of the study.

After collecting the data, analysis was performed using appropriate statistical tools. All information was kept confidential, ensuring the privacy and anonymity of each respondent. Data was carefully studied and analyzed, and interpreted according to the data analysis procedures previously described, following the methodology outlined by Kundu & Mor (2017).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher was responsible for guaranteeing the safety of all participants, especially the respondents, during the survey process. At the start of the study, the researcher explained to the respondents the purpose of the study, their roles and participation, and the potential benefits they could gain. This was accomplished through a pre-orientation session. The data gathered were used solely for research purposes, and all information provided by the respondents remained confidential and anonymous. Utmost care was taken to secure the anonymity of sourced data and to protect any personal information shared.

Ethical considerations regarding privacy were also thoroughly discussed with the respondents. The issue of plagiarism was addressed by ensuring proper credit, attribution, and acknowledgment of all authors' previous work. Proper citations and quotations were used where necessary. Before the final printing of this study, plagiarism detection tools were utilized to check the manuscript, using an online plagiarism checker.

Statistical Tools

The following statistical tools were utilized for a comprehensive and accurate interpretation and analysis of the data:

Mean: Used to determine the level of workforce diversity and creative process engagement of public-school teachers.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (Pearson r): Employed to ascertain the significance of the relationship between workforce diversity and the creative process engagement of public-school teachers (Bartol & Bartol, 2007).

Regression Analysis: Applied to determine which domain of workforce diversity affects the creative process engagement of public-school teachers (Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the workforce diversity data for 124 public school teachers in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. Among the factors of workforce diversity, the highest mean was found in “receptivity to diversity and diversity management,” with a mean of 4.30 and a standard deviation of 0.827, indicating excellent receptivity. This result indicates that workforce diversity has always been observed in this aspect. In contrast, “equal representation and developmental opportunities” had the lowest mean of 3.65, with a standard deviation of 1.05, indicating that this facet of workforce diversity was frequently observed.

Additionally, the domain “hire and retain diverse employees” showed a mean of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.801, indicating excellent performance. The “promotion of gender diversity” yielded a mean of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.897, indicating an excellent level of performance. The overall mean workforce diversity score was 4.11, with a standard deviation of 0.894, indicating a high level of diversity.

This finding aligns with Saxena (2014), who explained that workforce diversity represents the extent to which differences exist among members of an organization in characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, heritage, physical abilities and disabilities, race, and sexual orientation. In the information age, diversity is increasingly recognized as a vital business concern, as a diverse workforce is one of the greatest assets of any organization.

Moreover, diversity management approaches—such as implementing diversity perspectives and programs—support the equality and inclusion of people within organizations. Leadership is also crucial in managing diverse teams (Nkomo et al., 2019). Incorporating diversity practices in organizations can help reduce barriers such as conflicts, tensions, absenteeism, and turnover, fostering a more inclusive and productive environment.

Table 2. *The level of workforce diversity*

Particulars	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Receptivity to diversity and diversity management	4.3	0.8272	Excellent
Diverse employees bring new perspectives to the organization	4.44	0.7892	Excellent
Diversity Management taps the contributions of all employees	4.49	0.7703	Excellent
All employees benefit from effective diversity management	4.24	0.833	Excellent
Information for working effectively in a diverse workforce is welcome	4.12	0.898	Very Good
I work with people who are different from me	4.12	0.8485	Excellent

Equal representation and developmental opportunities	3.65	1.05	Very Good
Development opportunities for socially disadvantaged employees	3.86	1.07	Very Good
Development opportunities for minority employees	3.98	0.8833	Very Good
Increased socially disadvantaged representation	3.62	1.05	Very Good
Development opportunities for women employees	2.9	1.23	Good
Increased minority representation	3.9	1.02	Very Good
Hire and retain diverse employees	4.29	0.8018	Excellent
Organizations must hire and retain minority employees	4.12	0.8224	Very Good
Organizations must hire and retain socially disadvantaged employees	4.59	0.6986	Excellent
Organizations must hire and retain disabled employees	4.26	0.7637	Excellent
The organization has diverse employees	4.22	0.8701	Excellent
The organization must hire without discrimination	4.26	0.8542	Excellent
Promotion of gender diversity	4.2	0.8974	Very Good
The organization must hire and retain women employees	3.99	0.9239	Very Good
Gender diversity is important	4.35	0.8558	Excellent
Organizations must hire and retain disabled employees	4.24	0.8683	Excellent
All types of gender are accepted in our organization	4.1	0.9179	Very Good
Activities promoting gender diversity are organized and celebrated	4.31	0.9211	Excellent
Overall	4.11	0.8942	Excellent

CONCLUSION

The sustainability and continuation of current programs for hiring and retaining teachers are contingent upon the excellent diversity within the teaching workforce. Additionally, the level of creative process engagement among public school teachers is notably high. The study revealed a significant relationship between workforce diversity and the creative process engagement of public-school teachers, emphasizing the impactful role of a diverse teaching staff in fostering creativity within educational settings. Factors contributing to workforce diversity play a crucial role in influencing the creative process

engagement of public-school teachers. Thus, acknowledging and fostering diversity within the teaching profession not only enriches the educational environment but also enhances the creative potential of educators, ultimately benefiting students and the broader community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

Continuous professional development and sustained activities to maintain excellent workforce diversity among public school teachers should be implemented. Since equal representation and developmental opportunities recorded the lowest mean, the Department of Education needs to intensify its efforts in providing equal opportunities for all employees. Activities and training must be inclusive and not selective, and issues related to gender, religion, and culture should be thoroughly addressed during orientations and professional development activities.

Relevant and guided activities should be conducted to develop and encourage creative engagement among public-school teachers. For example, arts and literary festivals among teachers during Arts and Culture Month could be organized to foster continuous creative engagement. Creative activities and projects that boost teachers' creativity can be explored—these may include arts, music, dance, literary activities, and other forms of training. The many facets of art extend beyond dance and music and should be tapped for teacher development.

Given the significant relationship found between workforce diversity and creative process engagement, it is recommended that the Department of Education initiate workshops and capacity-building activities aimed at bridging gaps between diversity and culture. For instance, greater openness in hiring people of diverse genders and providing robust support for teachers' creativity is essential during the new normal.

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies that explore additional variables not included in this research and to extend the study to other parts of the Philippines.

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