PERSONAL-SOCIAL ADJUSTMENTS IN RELATION TO COPING MECHANISMS OF SUC PRESIDENTS IN MINDANAO

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the relationship between the personal-social adjustments and coping mechanisms of Presidents of State Universities and Colleges in Mindanao during the school year 2008-2009.

The descriptive-correlational method of research was used and the main assessment tool was the questionnaire which was prepared by the researcher. The responses were drawn from twenty nine Presidents and were analyzed using the mean computation, the t-test, f-test and the Pearson r Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation.

The study revealed that there was a significant relationship between the SUC Presidents’ personal-social adjustments and coping mechanisms. This signifies that their personal-social adjustments influence their abilities to cope with work stress. SUC Presidents’ security or well-being in the personal-social aspects is an important factor to be able to cope with things that come along relative to their positions or jobs. It was also revealed that their personal-social adjustments as well as their coping mechanisms were only “high”. Thus, for an improved adjustment and coping levels, SUC Presidents need to attend in the personality enhancement trainings, physical fitness programs and other forms of recreational and relaxation activities in order to unload work burdens and to gain new strength and vitality.

Key Words: Personal-Social Adjustments, Coping Mechanisms, Stress, Leadership, SUC Presidents

Introduction

Today’s educational leaders are faced with more challenges, conflicts and more pressures than other decades in the 20th century. This is largely caused by their wide-range of work and responsibilities. Many factors also have contributed to the broader scope and expanded amount of work that leaders need to fulfill. Among such factors are the tremendous increase in the school population and additional job requirements necessitated by educational innovations. Not only are they expected to continue their traditional duties such as planning and over-all school organization, but they are also asked to give personal leadership and inspiration (Muello, 2007).

For educational leaders like the Presidents of State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), it is inevitable for them to suffer stress. SUC Presidents are mandated by law to administer, manage and operate the overall welfare of the academic institutions, in particular, and to effect quality and excellence in education in general. Evidently, they are preoccupied with multiple and huge responsibilities and challenges. Research studies revealed that these responsibilities are usually associated with frequent giving of speeches and lectures, attending board meetings,
seminars and conferences, planning, implementing and monitoring of programs and projects along the four areas of instruction, research, extension and production. Challenges, on the other hand, are usually caused by political pressures, insufficient budget from the national government, inadequate capital and savings, lack of buildings and instructional materials and low performance of administrative and academic staff and students.

Considering the tasks demanded from the SUC Presidents, it is highly desirable that they must be personally and socially adjusted. The personality of the leader is an important element in the leading situation and their ability to cope to problems and pressures are necessary for leading effectiveness. SUC Presidents cannot function very effectively in their activities if they do not possess a high level of personal-social adjustments as well as a high level of coping mechanism. Their inability to cope with so many stressful activities and pressures may result to tensions and frustrations which may cripple their ability to work well, which may eventually lead to serious chronic stress and burn-out - that state of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual exhaustion (Solayao, 2006).

Generally, work stress produces negative effects to the organization, its leader and employees. For the organization, the results are disorganization, disruption in normal operations, lowered performance and productivity, and lower margins of profit. For the leader and employees, the effects are threefold: increased physical problems, psychological distress and behavioral disorders. Since a person’s stress is highly emotional, the individual gets easily irritated and anxious over things no matter how trivial they may be. The resulting changes in behavior tend to affect both productivity within the company and lifestyle outside the workplace (Rice, 2004).

Undoubtedly, the leader is the greatest single determinant of whether the community program will be beneficial to the people. Leaders serve as the model of behavior and attitudes to employees. Their personal-social abilities should be favorable to the culture of the workers. A good leader fires the minds of his workers with new ideas, with aspirations, with visions of the yet unknown and a fresh light on things in general (Hurlock, 2002). For Gregorio (2003), “the leader who lacks sunshine in his soul and genuine human kindness should never be allowed to lead”. Effective leading is the result of cheerfulness, understanding and love for people and service. Thus, a disagreeable personality and disposition oftentimes affect everything in the workplace.

Persons who lack emotional stability, drive and determination are not generally efficient as leaders.

On this premise, this study was conducted. It was designed primarily to provide a view of the level of personal and social adjustments of SUC Presidents and their ability to cope with work stress. The researcher believes that it is exceedingly important for SUC Presidents to be well adjusted so that they can easily cope with work stress. When they can handle work stress easily, they are able to attain emotional, mental, physical, social and spiritual stability which is needed to be able to face the many necessities of contemporary life. And, most importantly, for them to be able to competently and productively perform their jobs and functions in the academe. The researcher categorically asserts that the extent to which educational services become efficient and productive depends largely on the quality of leadership of the educational leaders. The quality of governance in the state college or university and the attainment of its vision and mission are primarily dependent on the performance of its President. Thus, the
assessment of SUC Presidents’ personal-social well being and coping abilities is indeed imperative. Hopefully, the result of this study will serve as their guide as they meet the demands of their jobs.

**Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed to find out the relationship between the personal-social adjustments and coping mechanisms of the SUC Presidents in Mindanao during the school year 2008-2009. Specifically, it determined the level of personal-social adjustments of the SUC Presidents in terms of self-reliance, sense of personal worth, sense of personal freedom, feeling of belongingness, impulse control, social standards, social skills, family relations, work relations and community relations, and their level of coping mechanisms of in terms of emotional, mental, physical, social and spiritual ways. It also determined the difference in the level of personal-social adjustments and coping mechanisms of the SUC Presidents when categorized according to gender, age, civil status, economic status, workplace, location and status of the institution.

**Methodology**

The descriptive-correlational method of research was employed in this study. The instrument used was the questionnaire, which consisted of three parts: the profile, personal-social adjustments, and coping mechanisms. The SUC Presidents in Mindanao were the respondents of this study. The data gathered were treated using the weighted mean, t-test, f-test and the Pearson r Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation.

**The Results**

It was revealed in the study that the SUC Presidents had “very high” level of personal-social adjustments in five (50%) out ten indicators, namely: work relations (M=4.53), social standards (M=4.48), sense of personal worth (M=4.44), sense of personal freedom (M=4.23) and community relations (M=4.21). On the other hand, they only had “high” adjustment level in terms of impulse control (M=4.19), sense of belongingness (M=4.17), family relations (M=4.07), social skills (M=3.86) and self-reliance (M=3.58). Work relations was the highest and self-reliance was the lowest. Generally, the SUC Presidents’ level of personal-social adjustments was “high” (GM=4.18).

In terms of coping mechanisms, the SUC Presidents had “very high” level in the spiritual and mental ways (M=4.43 and M=4.25, respectively); and they only had “high” level of coping mechanisms along the social (M=4.08), physical (M=4.03) and emotional (M=3.86) ways. Spiritual coping ranked as number 1 and emotional ranked as number 5. In general, the level of coping mechanisms of the SUC Presidents was “high” (GM=4.14).

It was also revealed that the SUC Presidents’ levels of personal-social adjustments differed significantly when categorized according to gender, age, workplace, location and status of the institution. On the other hand, there was no significant difference shown in their level of adjustments when civil status was considered.

Along coping mechanisms, it was found out there was a significant difference in the SUC Presidents’ level of coping mechanisms when categorized according to civil status and status of the institution. On the other hand, no significant difference was seen when their gender, age, workplace and location of institution were considered.
Finally, the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between the level of personal-social adjustments and level of coping mechanisms of the SUC Presidents in Mindanao.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The results showed that SUC Presidents were not always personally and socially well adjusted. There were times when they manifested poor adjustments in some of their activities in life. This indicates that SUC Presidents still need to work hard to do the necessary adjustments in order to conduct themselves properly and efficiently in their respective workplace. They have to reassess themselves to be able to look for areas in which they can become even stronger and productive individuals and leaders. With the increasing pressures and demands at hand, they have to possess an optimum functioning or a very high sense of well-being personally and socially in all aspects.

On the other hand, SUC Presidents were not spared with work stress. This was evident in their level of coping mechanism which was only “high”. This implies that there were really times when they experienced unmanaged stress that could cause negative effects to their overall functioning, which thereby, consciously or unconsciously affected their performance in the academe.

Moreover, it was seen that SUC Presidents could in the same way be personally and socially adjusted or maladjusted be they single, married or widow and they could similarly cope or uncope with work stress regardless of whether they are male or female, young or old, leader of a university or college, or work in schools located in urban areas or not.

On the whole, SUC Presidents’ personal-social adjustments influence their ability to cope with work stress. SUC Presidents’ level of personal security in terms of self-reliance, feeling of personal worth, feeling of personal freedom, sense of belongingness, impulse control, as well as their security in their relations to family, work and community is significantly related to their ways of coping. SUC Presidents’ personality and social support networks contribute meaningfully in their ability to cope with stressful work-related encounters. Their ways of dealing with their personal lives influence the way they deal with everyday challenges, be it inside or outside the workplace.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that SUC Presidents may review their responses in the personal-social adjustment assessment tool used by the researcher to determine the aspects that need more concentrated adjustments, or, they may immediately start working out in improving their personal and social competencies. They may also join in the personality enhancement programs and trainings focused on social skills and self-reliance in order to acquire modern and more practical techniques and strategies. Likewise, they are encouraged to attend in social gatherings, physical fitness programs and other forms of recreational and relaxation activities to unload work burdens and reload new and more powerful energy supply ready for the next days’ encounters. Moreover, each SUC President may build a recreational center readily available for him and his employees and conduct in it various forms of ‘unloading
activities”. This helps him lessen emotional inadequacy and helps in fostering harmonious relationships with his staff and employees.

It is also recommended that the Board of Trustees may include Emotional Stress Test in the criteria for selection of college or university president. Finally, SUC Presidents are encouraged to always smile and have fun each day and learn how to take themselves lightly and work seriously.

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