

School Management, Leadership and Organizational Climate, in Relation to Teacher Resilience

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Abstract: *In this research study, the existence and character of the relationships between the subjectively evaluated quality of school organizational climate and the level of teacher resilience are the focus. The main objective of the presented investigation was to confirm the existence of the hypothesized association between these two phenomena. The research study was performed with a sample of 474 secondary school teachers in the Slovak Republic, two research instruments were used: The Organizational Climate Description for Secondary Schools (OCDQ-RS), to measure the subjectively perceived quality of school organizational climate by teachers and The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale CD-RISC 25^{SLOVAK}, to examine teachers' resilience levels. To reveal the associations between teacher resilience and school openness, a comparison of the subjectively perceived quality of school climate by participating teachers and their level of resilience was carried out according to their scores achieved, within the individual dimensions of CD-RISC 25^{SLOVAK}. The obtained results confirmed the existence of the presumed relationships. As no available study has focused on this field (through the research findings), the authors aim to fill the gap in current knowledge and provide a starting point for future research projects.*

Keywords: *educational management, educational leadership, school organizational climate, teacher resilience.*

1 Introduction

The areas of educational management, educational leadership and school organizational climate are closely linked, and several international research studies on these phenomena are available. Teacher resilience is seemingly not associated with them; therefore, it is not surprising that there is no available research study dealing with the relationship between teacher resilience and school organizational climate. It also means that there are no relevant data that could be compared with the research findings of the present study. Considering the novelty of the topic, one of the objectives of the grant project IGA005DTIPE/2024_2026 Interconnection between Teacher Resilience and School Organizational Climate – within which the present study was conducted – is to find out about the existence and character of relationships between the subjectively evaluated quality of the school organizational climate and the levels of teacher resilience. The purpose of this study is to fill the gap in this area of knowledge and provide a deeper understanding of the investigated field.

2 Educational Management

For the notion of educational management, there is no universally accepted definition. There are many common features of educational management and managing other types of organizations (e.g., leadership, planning, organization, controlling, resource management, etc.) since they build upon similar principles and skills, but educational institutions' unique needs and goals require a specific approach. The main difference lies in their mission, focus, and application.

Educational management encompasses activities and dynamic processes implemented with the aim to ensure the smooth functioning of an educational institution and its overall maintenance. Connolly et al. [1] point out the existence of an organizational hierarchy in school management and the importance of taking responsibility for the educational institution's processes and achieving its goals [2]. Bush and Glover [3] highlight two aspects of educational management:

1. The management as in implementing school policies
2. The effective and efficient maintenance of activities

3 Educational Leadership and Leadership Styles

Currently, concerning educational institutions, the term educational leadership is dominant in scholarly literature, and the notion of educational management has almost disappeared [2], even if excellent leadership requires strong management [4]. It is not an optimal situation, since, as pointed out by several authors [2][5-8], they are not the same despite a clear overlap between management and leadership.

Both are important for schools' smooth functioning, but their application depends on particular contexts. While leadership aims to introduce positive changes and innovations [9] into an educational institution that have the potential to help meet its goals more quickly or efficiently, the primary role of management is to stabilize the school [10] and maintain the current situation.

Leadership in educational institutions impacts their effectiveness [11] and the quality of teacher and student performance. It includes the processes of influencing, inspiring, and supporting community members in achieving the desired goals, fulfilling an institution's mission [1], and building a learning community [12]. In educational leadership, typical behavior for a school leader and certain tendencies can be observed, and it can be assumed that these are based on professional and personal values, influence, and vision [1][13]. Most school leaders have a background in pedagogy, so it is natural that many of them, primarily focus on instructional leadership and student development.

There are several perspectives from which educational leadership styles can be characterized. Some authors take into account teacher involvement in decision-making processes and distinguish between authoritarian, democratic, and liberal educational leadership styles; others consider different aspects important and categorize leadership style as follows:

1. Rational leadership
2. Leadership focused on social relationships
3. Postmodern leadership
4. Integrated leadership [14]

According to Bush [15], there are eight basic models of leadership:

1. Managerial – aims to maintain proper functioning of the institution
2. Transformational – using the school leader's power to influence the school's outputs
3. Participative – democratic style of leadership for which shared responsibility is characteristic
4. Political and transactional – characterized by a. the status of a leader and their power; and b. benefits for all stakeholders
5. Postmodern – building on diversity and respecting various points of view;
6. Moral – based on ethics, the leader's values and beliefs
7. Instructional leadership – oriented on quality of the educational process
8. Contingent – context-specific leadership

Still, there is no consensus on which leadership style is the most efficient but, for example, Drysdale and Gurr [16] consider:

1. Understanding the context, i.e., the environment, conditions, and circumstances in which a school operates, that helps school leaders make informed decisions.

2. Setting direction in the form of a shared vision and developing strategic goals.
3. Developing the organization to improve its effectiveness and healthy functioning and increase the quality of internal processes
4. Developing people by applying a strategic approach
5. Improving teaching and learning by adopting effective strategies
6. Influencing, i.e., shaping the school culture
7. Leading self-highlighted the main characteristics of successful leadership.

4 School Organizational Climate

School organizational climate is a quality that is relatively stable over time [17]. It reflects how the members of a school community feel in a particular institution and can be characterized by their shared (collective) perception of various phenomena or behaviors [18], e.g., relationships, structures, and practices. Good educational leaders are aware of the impact of their school's organizational climate on students' [19] and teachers' performance and the quality of the school's outputs [20]. Therefore, they focus on its cultivation and introduce measures contributing to creating favorable conditions for teaching and learning, opportunities for professional and personal development, and establishing healthy professional and personal relationships that form the basis for positive interactions. From the teachers' perspective, in this context, the capacity of school leaders to listen to others, their approach to solving problems and conflicts, and their ability to lead constructive dialogues are decisive [9].

4.1 Teachers as Determinants of School Organizational Climate

On one hand, school organizational climate significantly impacts teachers' experiencing, performance, and satisfaction in an educational institution [15][20], but, on the other, teachers and their work influence the quality of the organizational climate and the educational process [21]. Teacher job (dis)satisfaction is a reaction [22] (from happiness to burnout [23]) to the existing conditions. It results from a kind of negotiation between a teacher's needs and expectations and the everyday reality of an educational institution. It is associated with teacher engagement, and there is also research evidence on the existence of a relationship between teacher career satisfaction and work engagement [24]. If teachers feel comfortable in their role of a teacher and are satisfied in their workplace (school), they tend to apply a responsible and positive approach to performing their job, work on improving their teaching by implementing new methods and practices, are creative, and show an inclination to collaborate with their colleagues. Their relationships within the school community tend to be more favorable compared with their less engaged peers.

According to Schaufeli and Bakker [25], for teacher engagement, dedication, vigor, and absorption are characteristic; Timms and Brough [26] mention higher work contentment, input, and productivity.

5 Teacher Resilience

Although teacher resilience and school organizational climate may seem unrelated at first glance, they are interdependent and reinforcing. Teacher resilience can significantly influence the school organizational climate and vice versa. Teacher resilience has several more or less detailed definitions, for example, it is characterized as positive adaptation to demanding situations [25], the ability or capacity to maintain balance, focus, and a sense of duty despite the presence of a certain degree of uncertainty [26], or as a progressive competence that allows teachers to maintain normal functioning and mental health either when significant adversity occurs [27] or when a substantial change in a teacher's environment requires adaptation. It is determined by the teacher's ability to select an appropriate coping strategy from the scale of the available ones [28]. As pointed out by Mansfield [29], teacher resilience helps teachers take advantage of their strengths and use them when faced with challenges, increasing their satisfaction and contributing to their well-being. External protective factors in the workplace, in addition to internal protective factors (personality traits, teaching skills, scale of coping strategies, etc.) are important when facing adversity [30]. A research study conducted by Bagdžiūnienė et al. [31] confirmed the existence of an association between the subjectively evaluated quality of job resources and the level of teacher resilience.

6 Methodology

In the present part of a more extensive research study conducted within the grant project IGA005DTIPE/2024_2026 Interconnection between Teacher Resilience and School Organizational Climate, the main objective was to confirm or deny the existence of an association between the subjectively evaluated quality of school organizational climate and teacher resilience levels.

In this study, a quantitative research design was utilized. It was conducted in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Helsinki. The participating teachers signed an informed consent form. All the collected data were anonymized. Before their realization, the research activities were approved by the Board for Internal System of Quality Assurance of DTI University, Slovakia, according to the Code of Ethics of DTI University, Slovakia.

6.1 Research Instruments

In the process of research instrument selection, the available research tools' compliance with the established research objectives and the availability of their Slovak version were considered. To measure the subjectively evaluated quality of school organizational climate, the standardized Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp's [32][33] OCDQ-RS (The Organizational Climate Description for Secondary Schools) [34] was used, which was translated and adapted to the Slovak conditions by Gavora and Braunová [35]. Although this research instrument was designed to test the organizational climate within individual schools, in the present research study, it was used to find out about school climate openness as perceived by Slovak teachers. The scale consists of 34, 4-point Likert scale items (from 1- rarely occurs, to 4-very frequently occurs). It measures five dimensions: Supportive principal behavior (SPB), Directive principal behavior (DPB), Engaged teacher behavior (ETB), Frustrated teacher behavior (FTB), and Intimate teacher behavior (ITB). Based on the scores obtained for each of the dimensions, the Index of school climate openness can be calculated as $IO = (SPB + ETB) - (DPB + FTB)$.

The Slovak version of the original 25-item instrument – The Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC 25^{SLOVAK}) [36] – was used to examine the participating teachers' resilience levels. The scale consists of 5-point Likert scales (from 0 – not true at all to 4 – true nearly all of the time), and the respondents refer to particular situations or events that occurred in their lives during the previous month or indicate what their reaction would be in a specific situation. The total scores for the scale range from 0 to 100, and the higher the achieved score is, the higher is the particular respondent's resilience level.

The CD-RISC-25 measures seven dimensions:

1. Hardiness – not giving up, tenacity, endurance, and belief in one's ability to control what happens
2. Coping – the ability to handle difficult situations
3. Adaptability/Flexibility – the ability to adapt to new conditions and requirements
4. Meaningfulness/Purpose – a positive and proactive approach to new conditions and circumstances
5. Optimism – a positive approach characterized by anticipating success
6. Regulation of emotion and cognition – the ability to control own emotions and cognition
7. Self-Efficacy – trust in one's capacity to deal with adversity successfully and maintain normal functioning

In the initial phase of the research study, the construct validity of both research instruments was tested by factor analysis. In the case of the OCDQ-RS, the existence of the five factors was confirmed. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (0.776) and

Bartlett's tests ($\chi^2 = 0.786$, significance level = 0.000) were carried out, and Varimax rotation was performed. The extracted factors explain 64.85% of the cumulative variance. Similarly, the construct validity of CD-RISC 25^{SLOVAK} was confirmed – KMO (0.785) and Bartlett's ($\chi^2 = 0.794$, significance 0.000) tests were used, and the seven extracted factors explained 71.47% of the cumulative variance.

6.2 Research Sample

The data were collected from 474 secondary school teachers from schools in all self-governing regions of the country. The research sample comprised 282 female teachers (59.49%) and 192 male teachers (40.51%).

7 Results and Discussion

To reveal the associations between teacher resilience and school openness, a comparison of the subjectively perceived quality of school climate by teachers and their levels of resilience was carried out according to their scores achieved in individual dimensions of the CD-RISC 25^{SLOVAK}.

In the case of teacher resilience, four quartiles were detected – Q1 <91-100>; Q2 <83-90>; Q3 <74-82>; and Q4 <0-73>, which are identical to the values detected by the authors of CD-RISC 25 [35] in the USA (N=577), where the achieved score average was 82. For each quartile, the Index of School Openness values were calculated (Table 1).

Table 1
Evaluation of school openness according to teachers' levels of resilience

Dimensions	CD-RISC-25 ^{SLOVAK} Quartiles	Index of School Openness
Hardiness	Q1 <91-100>	22.78%
	Q2 <83-90>	47.47%
	Q3 <74-82>	21.52%
	Q4 <0-73>	8.23%
Coping	Q1 <91-100>	7.59%
	Q2 <83-90>	39.24%
	Q3 <74-82>	38.61%
	Q4 <0-73>	14.56%
Adaptability/Flexibility	Q1 <91-100>	27.85%
	Q2 <83-90>	45.57%
	Q3 <74-82>	22.57%
	Q4 <0-73>	4.01%
Meaningfulness/purpose	Q1 <91-100>	18.98%
	Q2 <83-90>	17.72%
	Q3 <74-82>	34.18%
	Q4 <0-73>	29.12%
Optimism	Q1 <91-100>	39.24%

	<i>Q2</i> <83-90>	38.61%
	<i>Q3</i> <74-82>	17.09%
	<i>Q4</i> <0-73>	5.06%
Regulation of emotion and cognition	<i>Q1</i> <91-100>	17.07%
	<i>Q2</i> <83-90>	39.24%
	<i>Q3</i> <74-82>	27.22%
	<i>Q4</i> <0-73>	16.47%
Self-efficacy	<i>Q1</i> <91-100>	21.52%
	<i>Q2</i> <83-90>	38.61%
	<i>Q3</i> <74-82>	27.85%
	<i>Q4</i> <0-73>	12.02%

When analyzing the collected data for the Hardiness subscale, teachers belonging to Q2 evaluated school openness the most positively. In the case of the quartiles Q1 and Q3, very similar results were found, with a difference of only 1.26% in favor of the respondents in Q1. Respondents with the lowest levels of resilience (Q4) achieved significantly lower scores than their colleagues. This finding suggests that individuals' belief in their inability to influence the world around them or to change their environments in combination with their low engagement can be reflected in the relatively low scores in the Hardiness subscale that they achieved. This can be explained by the fact that such characteristics as confidence, not giving up, tenacity, and endurance are examined in this subscale. Considering the significant differences found between the computed values for quartiles Q1 and Q2 (24.69%), it can be assumed that very high degrees of self-confidence or excessive goal orientation can be associated with a less favorable evaluation of school openness. Teachers who share these characteristics are often considered individualists who do not feel the need to build positive social relationships at work nor rely on teamwork or cooperation.

A comparison of the data obtained for individual quartiles for the Coping subscale revealed that teachers from Q2 and Q3 evaluated their schools as more open than their colleagues. The computed difference between these two quartiles represents 0.63%. Respondents with the lowest levels of resilience (Q4) achieved significantly lower scores compared with teachers in Q2 and Q3, but, surprisingly, the lowest scores were achieved by teachers in Q1.

By comparing teachers' evaluation of school openness with the scores achieved in the subscale Adaptability/Flexibility according to teachers' resilience levels, school openness is the most positively evaluated by teachers with resilience levels in Q2. It must be noted that the school organizational climate was similarly favorably evaluated by respondents in quartiles Q1 and Q3, but the respondents with the lowest levels of resilience showed dissatisfaction. It is not surprising as participants with low self-confidence who have problems with adaptation to new conditions tend to evaluate the quality of school organizational climate characterized as school openness the least positively.

Interesting findings were obtained in the case of the Meaningfulness/Purpose subscale, in which the values achieved by the respondents in each of the quartiles were similar. Although the differences are not statistically significant, the data obtained deserve attention since the observed trend differs from the results obtained in the above dimensions. The most satisfied group of respondents is represented by teachers with resilience levels in Q3, whose behavior can be characterized as active, positive, and proactive. With a minimal difference, they are followed by the participants in Q4, who also evaluate the school's organizational climate positively. A decrease in the achieved scores for the Index of School Openness was found in the respondents belonging to Q1 and Q2 according to their scores in CD-RISC 25^{SLOVAK}. Teachers in Q1 ranked third, and in teachers with resilience levels in Q2, the smallest degree of engagement and perspective was identified. It can be assumed that teachers in quartiles Q1 and Q2 often rely on such phenomena as destiny or intuition that might help them overcome adversity. This may suggest that they do not actively manage their lives nor seek a rational explanation for events in their environments. Therefore, they may perceive the quality of their school's organizational climate as unsatisfactory.

In the Optimism subscale, as the data in Table 1 show, with a difference of 0.63%, the respondents in Q1 evaluated the school organizational climate most positively. They were followed by the teachers in Q2. These two groups of teachers can be considered motivated and ready to face adversity, representing a barrier to achieving goals. Unsurprisingly, these respondents, who can also see the humorous side of problems and can persist in striving for success despite failure, evaluate their schools as more open than their colleagues. Less positive results were obtained from respondents in Q3, and school openness was the least favorably evaluated by the respondents in Q4.

Based on a comparison of values for the Regulation of emotion and cognition subscale, it may be assumed that the school organizational climate was evaluated as the closest to open by participants with resilience levels in Q2. Still, relatively high values can be observed in respondents in Q3. Between respondents in quartiles Q1 and Q4, only statistically non-significant differences (0.60%) were found, which is interesting since for the respondents in Q1, a high ability to concentrate and an increased capacity to deal with sadness, anxiety, and anger are characteristic, and for Q4, the opposite is true. These two groups of participants perceived the quality of school organizational climate as less open.

In the Self-Efficacy subscale, school openness was most positively evaluated by respondents with resilience levels in Q2, but high values were also obtained from participants in Q3. Lower scores were achieved in the case of respondents from the first quartile (Q1), and schools were evaluated as less open by respondents in Q4. The obtained results suggest that a high degree of self-confidence and self-esteem associated with self-efficacy, as well as their low degrees, can be linked with evaluating a particular school's organizational climate as less open.

For better visualization and to get a different perspective, the values obtained for each dimension of the CD-RISC 25^{SLOVAK} are also shown in Figure 1.

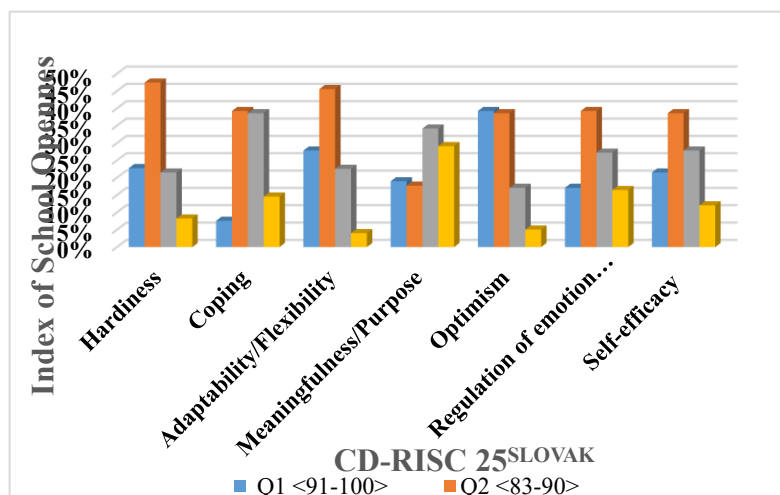


Figure 1

School openness and teacher resilience – evaluation according to dimensions

Although it was presumed that the quality of school openness would be the most positively evaluated by the respondents with the highest levels of resilience, as Figure 1 shows, in five of the seven subscales of the CD-RISC 25^{SLOVAK} (Hardiness; Coping; Adaptability/Flexibility; Regulation of emotion and cognition; and Self-Efficacy), the respondents whose scores achieved in the CD-RISC 25^{SLOVAK} ranged between 83-90 (Q2), evaluated their school organizational climate as the most open. In the Optimism subscale, the responses of the teachers in Q2 indicated a high degree of school openness. Their scores were only 0.63% lower than those of the respondents in Q1. Surprisingly, after carrying out the analysis of the Meaningfulness/Purpose scale data, it was found that the quality of school organizational climate was less favorably evaluated by the respondents in Q2. The lowest scores were achieved by respondents in Q3. In the remaining subscales, school openness was considered the least satisfactory by respondents with resilience levels in Q4. The Coping subscale can be considered an exception since, in relation to it, the quality of the school organizational climate was the least positively evaluated by the respondents with the highest levels of resilience.

As mentioned above, there are no available research studies on the association between school organizational climate and teacher resilience, and this situation does not allow us to compare our results with the findings of previously published studies. On the other hand, based on our findings, the existence of a link between the subjectively perceived school organizational climate quality and teacher resilience level can be confirmed, which is in line with Bagdžiūnienė *et al.* [31] who

claim that there is a positive association between the subjectively perceived quality of job resources and the level of teacher resilience. Nagy et al. [37] revealed a relationship between social support and motivation linked with work-related goals in the context of teacher burnout, which also supports the existence of an association between educational leadership, teacher engagement, and teacher resilience. Additionally, considering the fact that the quality of the school organizational climate is always subjectively evaluated and impacted by the teacher's experiences, social, family, and educational background, as well as personal characteristics (including resilience), the connection between the two phenomena examined is undeniable. Mansfield [29] pointed out that teacher resilience helps teachers perceive adversity as a challenge and not a barrier to achieving goals and thus increases teacher job satisfaction. This is also supported by Pretsch et al. [38], Kärner et al. [39], and Chen [40], and can be assumed that if teachers are satisfied at work, they are also satisfied with the organizational climate.

The confirmed existence of the link between teachers' levels of resilience and the subjectively evaluated quality of school organizational climate is interesting from the perspective of both policymakers and school leaders. Our results suggest that the quality of schools' work and outputs can be increased by cultivating teacher resilience and creating an environment that provides teachers with a wide scale of protective factors [30]. This aligns with Drysdale and Gurr's [14] characteristics of successful leadership, especially with developing people and adopting effective strategies to improve teaching and learning, as well as with the mentioned school leaders' role in shaping school culture.

8 Conclusions

Although educational management, educational leadership and organizational climate, are seemingly not associated with teacher resilience, the opposite is true. Teachers are among the determinants of the quality of school organizational climate, and therefore, they have an important role to play in the contexts of educational management and educational leadership. Teacher resilience has a significant impact on the quality of their performance since it helps teachers maintain normal functioning even if adversity is present. This way, teacher resilience affects the schools' output, as well as the organizational climate.

The presented research findings confirmed the existence of associations between the subjectively evaluated school organizational climate and teachers' resilience levels. The novelty of this research study is given by the fact that no available study addresses these two seemingly distinct phenomena. The contribution lies in the unique data obtained from secondary school teachers and in drawing attention to the importance of dealing with the issues discussed.

The limits of this research study are given by the size and composition of the sample and the fact that convenient sampling was applied. Therefore, the results obtained

cannot be generalized to the entire teacher population, but have implications for schools and further research.

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