Interest In Science, Attitude and Sense of Belongingto School, And Science Achievement of Elementary Learners

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Abstract — This study examined the interplay of three variables, namely: interest in science, attitude and sense of belonging to school as factors contributing to a practical means of preparing learners for a career in Science education. The respondents came from the Don Juan dela Cruz Central Elementary School in Dalion, Toril, Davao City consisting of two sections of Grade 6 learners with combined respondents of 112 learners. These students answered the three questionnaires on Interest in Science Scale (ISS), the Students' Attitude towards School Survey (SATSS) and the Students" Sense of Belonging to School Questionnaire (SSBSQ). Students found science useful as a foundation for building a profession; it is important in their future work; and a worthwhile, necessary subject. Science teachers were found by students to be interested in their science progress; encouraging in their science work; and provide positive thinking of what science can do to them. School is important to learners. Its importance is emphasized by learners as being chosen over other things. The sense of being an integral part of the school is important to the learners' well-being, emotional health, psycho-social adjustment, and indicator of success. Most learners need to develop proficiency level in science. The result of the study points to the need to increase the level of science performance of students.

Keywords — Interest in science, attitude towards school, sense of belonging to school, science achievement, career in science education

I.   Introduction

Despite the fact that science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) jobs offer better career prospects even in times of slow economic growth, there is a tendency for learners to not enter these fields of profession. A 2018 study suggests that only around 15.6 percent of Filipino learners receive a bachelor's degree in a STEM-related field. In a technology-driven age, having more individuals involved in STEM fields is crucial to maintaining global competitiveness. Recognizing this, the Aquino administration in 2010 has arduously tried to engage more students in STEM fields through programs such as "Educate to Innovate." Yet one of the biggest reasons as to why learners are not entering STEM fields is that they are not as interested in them because the classes can be too dry and predictable.

School laboratory experiments generally seem to focus on the scientific method; conclusions are reached through a logical and rational order of steps. Because of this emphasis on methodology, students become less curious about the actual results of an experiment. In fact, any curiosity students may have may dissipate quickly because they are told what to expect by the teacher, or because they know the result of the experiment through their schoolwork.

Focusing on the scientific method and understanding the experimentation methodology in labs is a crucial prerequisite for performing lab experiments on one's own. However, I contend that focusing solely on labs that teach the methodology of experiments throughout 12 years of schooling may not be the best approach. Students often begin learning the scientific method as early as third grade. By the time they enter high school, students should have learned the scientific method well enough to start researching on their own.

Science fairs are an excellent way to increase student interest in STEM fields. With science fairs, each student develops a question that he or she is curious about and goes about finding the answer using the scientific method taught in schools. Thus, science fairs are a great way to apply the methodology behind performing experiments while also stimulating curiosity. Though many teachers already encourage participation in science fairs, making participation mandatory would ensure that all students are provided with a rich and stimulating experience. Furthermore, integrating more investigative labs into the high school classroom would also help schools teach students what science truly is — an innovative and creative process. This will not necessarily make every student want to be a scientist. However, for those students who have the inclination, and mistakenly believe that scientific discovery is merely an endeavor sans creativity, efforts to integrate more investigative experiments into the high school curriculum may help open students' eyes and allow them to see the true wonders of science.

On the other hand, this study contends that interest alone may not necessarily spell specific choice for a science career among students. There are other factors to be considered. Today, psychological, and emotional dimensions are explored as factors in molding students to correctly choose their careers.

Attitude towards school and the sense of belonging of a student are two motivational factors that play significant roles in the choice of a career. The attitude towards school develops in the student the right perspectives of learning, habits of study, discipline for course work and organizational commitment. These are factors which later on would spell enormous difference when students are confronted with their choice for a career.

The sense of belonging to a school nourishes the student's pride, fidelity and loyalty to a given group, organization, or institution. Later on, the students' choice of a career would zero in on a particular field where these values are consistently given focus or importance.

Research on playfulness, science, and creativity suggests that there is a connection between having positive background experiences with science and the development of interest in

science. However, there is little empirical research on where, how, and when teachers' interests in science develop. The purpose of this research was to explore connections between attitude toward school, sense of belonging to school and interest in science. Thus, this study examines the interplay of these three variables as contributing to a practical means of preparing for a career in Science education for high school students.

Research indicates that playful engagement with science in childhood and youth influences interest in science. According to Dillon, Franks, and Marolla (2019) children need to be relatively free from testing pressures in schools and have freedom to wonder, explore, and discover in order to develop interest in science. Joyce and Farenga (2019) examined the science perceptions of high ability upper elementary students and ascertained that they had already decided whether they liked or disliked science before the age of nine. These students believed that their early childhood science experiences inside and outside of school played a key role in the development of their interest. There are a few studies on university professors' development of interest in science and selection of science as a career. Jarrett and Burnley (2019) examined the role of a variety of outdoor and indoor activities on geoscientists' interest in science and found that these informal experiences played an important role in the development of a scientific mindset and the selection of science as a career.

Rowsey (2019) examined the influence of schooling on the vocational choice of university professors from various fields of science and ascertained that elementary and middle school teachers had little influence on vocational choice by university professors. Most of the professors were influenced by parents and other relatives in their career choice and said there was not any particularly influential event in junior or senior high school that impacted their choice to become scientists.

Studies repeatedly warn of students' low interest in school science. There are some students who are highly interested in science. However, science is far less interesting to many other students as compared to other subjects (Deci, 2019). Biology was popular but physics and chemistry were less popular among nine subjects in English (;). Out of the four important subjects- science, English, mathematics, and technology-science is the least popular in 4023 pupils (Hendley, Parkinson, Stables & Tanner, 2019). In addition, Lee, and Brophy (2019) analyzed students' motivation patterns in learning science. In the research, only three students had interest in science among 12 case students. The other nine students studied science for extrinsic goals, or avoided or resisted studying science. Furthermore, some primary teacher education students dislike science, especially physics (Palmer, 2019). A low interest in science is a problem in learning science, because it is not easy to concentrate on learning science without interest,

There are two main observations about students' interest in science that are cause of worry. First, many studies repeatedly indicated that students' interest in science *declines* during secondary schools (Haussler & Hoffman, 2019; Osborne, 2019). Especially the decline of students' interest in physics worldwide. Second, there are students who have a negative attitude toward learning

science in school but have a positive attitude toward science itself (Osborne, 2018). Ebenezer and Zoller (2019) studied this contradiction in ten Grade 1564 students in the USA. Seventy-two percent of the students' thought science is valuable and 73 % of the student thought that science in school is important, but 40 % indicated that they found science class boring (Osborne, 2019)

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percent of the students' thought science is valuable and 73 % of the student thought that science in school is important, but 40 % indicated that they found science class boring (Osborne, 2019)

Student attitudes toward school can be defined as their feelings and dispositions toward school and school related activities. Concrete attitudes toward school (Ashburn-Nardo, Smith, 2019) reflect one's beliefs regarding extrinsic rewards for scholastic effort. Factors identified in relation to student attitudes toward school include school support, environment, technology, and organization. Family, social, cultural, peer, and demographic (gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status) factors were also identified.

The term "school attitude," representing a student's positive or negative feelings associated with school, describes students' subjective well-being in school. In the literature, school attitude has been measured through corresponding degrees of behavioral and cognitive engagement. Although they do not use the term *school attitude,* a number of studies focus on conceptually related terms and concern students' affective relationship to school.

The construct attitude toward school was first defined by Lewy (2019) as being the subject's behaviors, their feelings expression regarding to affection and judgments, favorable or unfavorable, for the school and school experiences. The affective characteristics of it may be an important explanatory element of quality education and investment of individual actors in the different dimensions that make up the school. This construct is intrinsically related to other constructs, such as students' perceptions and interest about learning, their competence (perceived and as result of academic achievement) and motivation.

Regarding the relation between attitudes toward school and academic achievement we are able to say that previous school performance experienced by students have influenced the attitudes they have shown toward school, learning and commitment to school. The research developed until now reveals that students with lower performance and higher rate of school failure have more negative attitudes. But when schools are able to provide interesting activities for

their students and the way those activities are engaged, and even the participation of students and their families in school decisions have influence on how students feel at school and how they react to school life. That is, schools that are more engaging arouse more positive attitudes. Students who perceive more support from adults who live with them at school and colleagues have more positive attitudes and academic values and feel more satisfied with school. For example, Linnehan (2019) found differences between racial groups and parental educational background in students' beliefs and attitudes toward grades.

In the same study, he found that parental educational level was associated with more favorable attitudes toward college (except for the Asian group). Moreover, this study stressed the relationship between college-related attitudes and beliefs with students' performance, even among urban students. In short, the results of existing studies about attitudes toward school are shown as the most commonly found: a) Contents of attitudes: learning, competence and motivation); b)

Context variables: the kind of environment: rural/urban, socio economic level and parents' instruction level; and c) Personal and developmental variables (gender and age). Previous Portuguese studies Candeias, and N. Rebelo (2019) also reveal significant effects of gender, contextual background, school failure and development on attitude toward school in general, but not in the case of the perception of competence, as if socio-cultural experience didn't interfere.

The desire for social bonds and connections with others has a long history in psychological research. It has been referred to as the need for affection between people (Murray, 2019), the need for positive regard from others, belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 2019; Goodenow, 2019 Maslow, 2019), affiliation motivation (McClelland, 2019), and the need for relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2019; Ryan, 2019; Vallerand, 2019). It has also been defined in a number of ways. For example, Deci and Ryan suggested that the need for relatedness 'encompasses a person's striving to relate to and care for others, to feel that those others are relating authentically to one's self, and to feel a satisfying and coherent involvement with the social world more generally.' Vallerand suggested that the need for relatedness 'involves feeling connected (or feeling that one belongs in a social milieu)'. Goodenow proposed that a sense of belonging at school reflects 'the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment'.

Baumeister and Leary (2019) suggested that the need to belong is characterized by a need for regular contact and the perception that the interpersonal relationship has stability, affective concern, and is ongoing. In their seminal article on the importance of sense of belonging to wellbeing, they proposed the 'belongingness hypothesis', suggesting that "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships". Failure to have belongingness needs met may lead to feelings of social isolation, alienation, and loneliness. Thus, a sense of belonging can be seen as a precursor to social connectedness. In their detailed analysis of the relevant research, Baumeister and Leary argue that the need for belongingness is more than the need for social contact. It is the need for positive and pleasant social contacts within the context of desired relationships with people other than strangers. That is, the need for belongingness is satisfied by an interpersonal bond marked by "stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future". This relational context of interactions with other people is essential for satisfying the need to belong.

They also propose that people who are well-enmeshed in social relationships should have less need to seek and form additional bonds than people who are socially deprived. As their need for belonging has been met, and is no longer such a significant drive, they do not express or display the need for belonging as strongly as those for whom this need has not been met. Importantly, however, individuals differ in the strength of their need to belong. As Kelly (2019) points out, some people with lower need to belong may be satisfied by few contacts, while others with greater need to belong may need many such contacts. It is the lack of satisfaction with personal relationships relative to their need to belong that puts the individual at risk of loneliness.

The need for belonging can contribute to explaining a variety of human behavior, cognitive, motivational processes, and emotions. For example, individuals explain the reasons for their behaviors in association with the need for belonging. The satisfaction of this need leads to the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and joy, whereas deficiency can cause the experience of negative emotions such as anxiety, jealousy, depression, high level of stress, and loneliness. Many negative behavioral, psychological, and social outcomes, including mental illness, criminal tendency, and social isolation are explained by lack of sense of belonging. Maslow (2019) indicated that beneath most emotional breakdowns lies a need for belongingness, being loved, and respected.

Proper, adequate, and timely satisfaction of the need for belongingness leads to physical, emotional, behavioral, and mental well-being. In a set of three consecutive studies, Sheldon, Elliot, Kim and Kasser (2019) asked college students to remember the most satisfying events in their lives and to rate the needs that had been satisfied through experiencing those events. The ratings in all three studies revealed that relatedness was one of the four major psychological needs that students felt most satisfied with when they experienced it. It is important to indicate here that although in some contexts the need for relatedness and the need for belongingness have been conceptualized differently, given that "the need for relatedness is the need for experiencing belongingness" (Osterman, 2019) relatedness and belongingness were used interchangeably throughout this review.

This study is anchored on three theories: Theory of Reasoned Action, Krapp's Individual Interest Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

Ajzen and Fishbein's (2018) Theory of reasoned action is concerned fundamentally with predicting behavior. This theory focuses on the distinction between interest in some 'object' and interest in some specific action to be performed towards that 'object' e.g., between interest in science and interest towards doing school science. Ajzen and Fishbein argue that it is the latter kind of interest that best predicts behavior. Thus, their theory represents a relationship between interest, intention, and behavior. Behavior is seen as being determined by intention, and intention, in turn, is a joint product of interest towards the behavior and the subjective norm (that is beliefs about how other people would regard one's performance of the behavior). The theory of reasoned action has been successfully applied to some interest and behavior studies in science education (Crawley & Coe, 2019; Norwich and Duncan, 2019; Crawley & Black, 2022). For instance, Crawley and Coe (2019), Koballa (2018) and Oliver and Simpson (2018) have all found that social support from peers and attitude towards enrolling for a course are strong determinants of student choice to pursue science courses voluntarily, which suggests that the theory has at least some partial validity.

The main value of such a theory is its help in determining salient beliefs which can then be reinforced or downplayed to affect relevant behavioral decisions by students such as "girls don't do science". Furthermore, this theory points towards the need to draw a demarcation between

school science and science in society. It is the perception of school science, and the feelings towards the "behavior" of undertaking a further course of study in that context.

On the other hand, another theory that would explain interest was postulated by Krapp (2020). He espoused the creation of learning environments in which students actively interact with materials to reach an actualized state called *situational interest*, eventually developing into an enduring and more diffuse state, called *individual interest*. Krapp (2020) hypothesizes that transition from situational to individual interest can occur only if both feeling-related experiences and cognitively represented factors are experienced together and positively. Glasser (2019) describes fun and freedom to choose as basic human needs, suggesting that students in classrooms where science is fun and where there is student input might develop more interest in science.

On sense of belonging to school, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (2002) emphasizes that the family is the first unit to which children belong, followed by school and community, with each student belonging to a broader network of groups and systems. According to Bronfenbrenner (2019), all children are at the centre of "layers" of the environment that can have a significant effect on their development and psycho-social adjustment. His Ecological Model of human development deals with the quality of a child's environment and how development is subject to multiple levels of influence, that is, the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, and macro-system.

In a school system, the micro-system represents the social networks of family, friends, teachers, and peers, while the meso-system represents school resources and processes at an organizational level. The meso-system is concerned with school management processes and teaching practices that reflect school culture (Rumberger & Palardy, 2019). The exo-system relates to the broader community interactions with other schools, parents, organizations, and external services, while the macro-system encompasses broader structures including social policies, procedures, and laws. Work that has attempted to summarize factors that foster belonging has shown that interventions and strategies fall across multiple domains in a school system including, parents, teachers, peer group, policy, practice, environment (Libbey, 2019; Wingspread, 2020). Bronfrenbrenner's Ecological Model provides the most comprehensive theoretical construct to date with which to investigate belonging in an organizational setting such as a school.

II. Methodology

This study used the descriptive-correlational-predictive design since it first correlated variables and then treated these variables to pinpoint the predictor of an existing issue. The correlational-predictive design is used when the purpose of the study is to predict certain outcomes in one variable from another variable that serves as the predictor. Prediction designs involve two types of variables: a predictor variable and a criterion variable. While the predictor variable is utilized to make a forecast or prediction, the criterion variable is the anticipated outcome that is

being predicted. Prediction studies also include a forecast of anticipated future performance, as well as advanced statistical procedures including multiple regression (Creswell, 2019).

The predictor variables in this study are interest in science, attitude towards school, sense of belonging to school and academic achievement in science while the criterion variable is the college preparedness for Science education.

The respondents come from the Don Juan dela Cruz Central Elementary School consisting of two sections of Grade 6 elementary learners. These two sections have combined respondents of 112 students. These students answered the first questionnaires on Interest in Science Scale (ISS), the Students' Attitude towards School Survey (SATSS) and the Students" Sense of Belonging to School Questionnaire (SSBSQ) were answered by the teachers. Data on students' science achievement consisting of their 3rd Grading Period rating were collected and analyzed.

The study made use of three instruments: the Science Interest Scale (ISS), the Students' Attitude towards School Survey (SATSS) and the Students" Sense of Belonging to School Questionnaire (SSBSQ).

The Science Interest Scale (ISS) is a Modified version of the Fennema-Sherman Science Attitude Scale. It consists of 47 statements aimed to measure learners' interest in science as indicated in the following dimensions: Personal confidence about the subject matter, Usefulness of the subject's content, Subject is perceived as a male domain and Perception of teacher's attitudes. This instrument had been validated and tested for reliability in the studies of Dawson (2019), Ebenezer and Zoller (2019), and Palmer (2019). The questionnaire was answered by the learners.

The Students' Attitude towards School Survey (SATSS) is primarily designed to measure students' attitude toward school in three dimensions: attending school is valuable and important, attending school is enjoyable, and attending school is chosen over other less appropriate activities. The instrument was constructed, validated, and tested for reliability in Gray's (2003) study "The Development of a Survey for the Measurement of Attitudes toward School." The instrument consists of 24 statements factored in three dimensions and answered by the teachers.

The Students" Sense of Belonging to School Questionnaire (SSBSQ) was adapted from the study of Kember and Leung (2019) "*Relationship between the employment of coping mechanism and a sense of belonging for part-time students.*" Consisting of 15 statements, the instrument measures the bond and attachment learners have for their school factored in three dimensions: learner feels cared by teachers and school; learner is encouraged to pursue interests and career; and learner feels important in the school. The questionnaire was answered by the teachers.

All these instruments have been validated and tested for reliability in previous studies where they were originally constructed and used. Data of students' 3rd grading period rating were analyzed as a secondary source of data.

The gathered data were subjected to statistical treatments which included the following: percentage, ranking, mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, Pearson r and multiple regression.

III. Results and Discussion

Level of Students' Interest in Science

All dimensions which measure students' interest in science produced results described as "positive." On closer scrutiny, the dimension that obtained a high mean (2.68) was on "subject is perceived as a male domain." This means that science as a male domain gained a positive interest among students. Students see science as good for both males and females; both sexes can do just as well in science; and both can be smart in science.

Students also registered positive interest in their personal confidence about science (2.58). This means that students can handle science as a subject; they find science easy; they can get good grades in science; and they know they can do well when it comes to science.

Usefulness of science (2.53) and perception of teachers' attitude towards science (2.50) were the last two dimensions in science interest that students found of positive interest. Students found science useful as a foundation for building a profession; it is important in their future work; and a worthwhile, necessary subject. Science teachers were found by students to be interested in their science progress; encouraging in their science work; and provide positive thinking of what science can do to them.

Level of students' attitude toward school

Three dimensions were measured in students' attitude towards school. All three resulted in a positive attitude in the students. School is enjoyable (2.54), valuable and important (2.51). Students agreed that it is fun to be in school, to learn new things in school, and to do schoolwork. They also stressed that school is important and valuable because it prepares them for the future, helps them think better, know more things, and school is good for the brain.

Students, however, think that school should be prioritized over other things. Staying at home, playing video games and being absent from school is seen as a deterrent to learning new things in school by students (2.55). Students chose school over other things making school important and the priority of students.

Level of students' sense of belonging to the school

The three dimensions of the sense of belonging to school were all rated by teachers as having positive sense. There is positivity because students feel cared for by teachers, they are encouraged to pursue their interests and career, and they feel important in school. These three

dimensions rated as positive infer that students feel that they belong to the school. Their attachment is brought about by feelings of being cared for, encouraged, and made to feel important.

As the findings reveal, a positive sense of belonging results from a school that promotes a caring and encouraging attitude towards students. This attitude starts with the right culture among teachers and the entire school as well.

Level of achievement of students in science

More than half of the students (53.57%) have ratings of "*approaching proficiency*" in Science. The result infers that the majority of the class has skills described as "*fair*." Out of the 112 students only 21 (18.76%) are proficient or with satisfactory skills. The rest of the students (28) have grades ranging from 75 to 79 comprising 25.89% of the class. Only two (2) have grades of 90 and above. These results imply that most students have average or satisfactory skills in science. Though there were no students who obtained a failing grade, the results infer that a great stride has to be taken to improve students' performance.

Significant Relationship between variables: students' interest in science and attitude towards school; students' interest in science and sense of belonging to school; and students' attitude towards school and sense of belonging to school

Six pairs of variables were tested to determine their relationships in the context of whether these variables contribute to the preparation of a career in science of high school students.

Of the six pairs, two pairs of variables were found out to have significant relationships: students' interest in science and sense of belonging to school produced an r of -.260 and a p-value of .006; and students' attitude towards school and science rating which revealed an r of .644 and a p-value of .034. The correlation test produced results which provided evidence to reject the hypotheses and to conclude that a significant relationship exists.

Variables which contribute significantly to preparing students for a career in science education

Multiple regression was applied to determine the variables which significantly contribute to preparing students for a career in science education. Of the three variables, two produced coefficients that provided evidence for significant contribution.

Interest with the p-value of .045 (2.547) and belonging with p-value of 0.38 (1.356) are the two variables that produced strong evidence. This data suggests that science rating or the science grade of students is significantly contributed by their interest in science and their sense of belonging to school.

Discussion

This study examined the interplay of three variables, namely: interest in science, attitude towards school and sense of belonging to school as factors contributing to a practical means of preparing students for a career in Science education. A prediction test determined the factor that contributes significantly to increasing students' preparation for a Science career.

This study used the descriptive-correlational-predictive design since it first correlated variables and then treated these variables to pinpoint the predictor of an existing issue (Creswell, 2008). The correlational-predictive design is used when the purpose of the study is to predict certain outcomes in one variable from another variable that serves as the predictor. The respondents come from the Don Juan dela Cruz Central Elementary School in Daliaon, Toril, Davao City consisting of two sections of Grade 6 learners along with elementary teachers. These two sections have combined respondents of 112 students. These students answered the first questionnaires on Interest in Science Scale (ISS), while the teachers answered the Students' Attitude towards School Survey (SATSS) and the Students" Sense of Belonging to School Questionnaire (SSBSQ). The gathered data were subjected to statistical treatments which included the following: percentage, ranking, mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, Pearson r, multiple regression, and Likert scales.

Science as a male domain gained a positive interest among students. Students see science as good for both males and females; both sexes can do just as well in science; and both can be smart in science. Students also registered positive interest in their personal confidence about science, usefulness of science and perception of teachers' attitude towards science were dimensions in science that students found of positive interest.

Students found their school enjoyable, valuable, and important. Students agreed that it is fun to be in school, to learn new things in school, and to do schoolwork. They also stressed that school is important and valuable because it prepares them for the future, helps them think better, know more things, and school is good for the brain. Students, however, think that school should be prioritized over other things. Staying at home, playing video games and being absent from school is seen as a deterrent to learning new things in school by students. Students chose school over other things making school important and the priority of students.

The three dimensions of the sense of belonging to school were all rated by students as having positive sense. There is positivity because students feel cared for by teachers, they are encouraged to pursue their interests and career, and they feel important in school. These three dimensions rated as positive infer that students feel that they belong to the school. Their attachment is brought about by feelings of being cared for, encouraged, and made to feel important.

More than half of the students (53.57%) have ratings of "*approaching proficiency*" in Science. The result infers that the majority of the class has skills described as "*fair.*" Out of the 112 students only 21 (18.76%) are proficient or with satisfactory skills. The rest of the students

(28) have grades ranging from 75 to 79 comprising 25.89% of the class. Only two (2) have grades of 90 and above.

The relationship of students' interest in science and their sense of belonging to school are seen through the positive feeling of attachment felt by the students which produces a deeper impact on the students' interest in science. Students' interest in science and sense of belonging to school do not contribute to the increase of rating of students in science. On the other hand, students' attitude towards school may not result in a positive sense of belonging felt by students.

Multiple regression was applied to determine the variables which significantly contribute to preparing students for a career in science education. Of the three variables, two produced coefficients that provided evidence for significant contribution. Interest with the p-value of .045 and belonging with p-value of 0.38 are the two variables that produced strong evidence as contributing significantly in preparing students for a career in Science education.

IV. Conclusion

There are a variety of reasons that students struggle in the areas of science. One major area of impact is the lack of rigorous curriculum at the secondary level. Margolis (2019) provided a case study of a school for computer science, which targets Asian students. Although this school had access to technology and a large number of computers, there was very little evidence of rigorous curriculum. Most of the assignments were rote, and Asian students were presented with very few problems requiring creative problem solving, which is necessary for success in computer science classes at the college level (Margolis, 2019).

Academic rigor in the secondary level, particularly prior achievement in math, has been found to be an important indicator in selecting a science major in college (Crisp, Nora, & Taggart, 2019). When students are not exposed to engaging pedagogy at the secondary level, they are unlikely to choose a science or engineering major in college. When students do choose a science, technology, or engineering major, and are not adequately prepared in high school, remedial classes can limit the number of math courses (which are required to obtain a degree in science) students are able to complete during a four-year degree (Crisp et al., 2018).

The culture of a school has been found to be very important to the success of students in science. Faculty support, as revealed by the findings in this study, was listed as one of the most important elements in persisting in science majors in a survey of students who were successful in completing a college degree in science (Cole & Espinoza, 2018).

Crisp, et al (2018) conducted a study on the commonalities of science interests held by intermediate children. The investigation revealed that the intelligence quotient difference did not produce any significant shifts in interest. Interest in particular area of science was significantly

related to sex differences. Boys have more interest in science than girls. This is in contrast with the findings of this study.

Chatterjee (2019) found that there was a systematic positive relationship between science interest and probabilities of success in science. High achievers differed significantly from low achievers in their interests and the interaction between interest and achievement was found to be significant.

The term "school attitude," representing a student's positive or negative feelings associated with school, describes students' subjective well-being in school. In this study, school attitude is measured through corresponding degrees of behavioral and cognitive engagement such as fun (interactions with teachers and students), valuable and important (future preparation, brain training, fosters discipline and value learning) and school is chosen over other things (staying at home, video games, spending time with peers).

In their work concerning school attachment, attachment being synonymous with attitude, Gottfredson et al (2019) maintained that it is teacher rapport and student–teacher interaction which ultimately mediate levels of school attitude. Other research supports the finding that underachievers display more negative attitudes and behaviors toward school than high achievers. Those who routinely feel overwhelmed, stressed, or unable to meet academic demands harbor negative feelings toward school. Stated in another way, underachievement is strongly predictive of (negative) school attitude (McCoach, 2020). The result where school should take precedence over other choices can only assume that underachievers chose other things over school.

Components of school attachment highlighted in the literature bring to light several important implications. One is that the dimension concerning students' perception of how much their teachers respect them proves to be a powerful predictor of school attitude. Differential treatment in the classroom contributes significantly to self-perception and school attitude in these students. When there is differentially negative treatment from the teacher, along with chronic academic struggles, school attitude is likely to be very low.

The implications for the work of Stinchcombe and Boesel (2021) is that this study would be wise to probe the degree to which students find their work to be meaningful and relevant, especially in relation to the attainment of future goals, such as career and income capabilities. The findings of Stinchcombe and Boesel (2021) appear to address motivation from an existential point of view. Students strive to find meaning and importance in their schoolwork in terms of its relationship to current and future goal realization.

Of central importance to this study is the notion that peer attitude toward school is a significant contributor to an adolescent's attitude toward school (Kinderman, 2019; McCoach, 2020). Peer group exerts a tremendous amount of influence on shaping adolescents' attitudes as the group strives for consensus and the individual considers group acceptance to be critical and thereby continually abides by its norms and behaviors.

Teachers who incorporate a caring and generous attitude towards students and their academic efforts are vital in creating a school which promotes the success of students. Teachers can play a vital part in creating a school culture which provides supportive relationships between teachers and students, creates opportunities for adult learning, and facilitates student achievement (Fullan, 2019). According to Barth (2019), the nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else. A school culture that encourages a relationship of cooperation and trust between teachers is likely to carry over this same relationship to students. In schools which struggle with student achievement, positive interactions through caring should be at the core of the goals of educational leaders (Thompson, 2019).

School culture has an important influence on student performance. Academic difficulties among the student population are often linked to cultural elements, such as unpleasant surroundings and low teacher expectations (Kozol, 2022). Schools which appear decrepit, with few resources, are unlikely to encourage scholastic achievement. When teachers embody lowered expectations, rather than challenging students and providing support when needed, the general school climate is not supportive of student achievement.

In addition to relationships between teachers, school cultures that encourage meaningful connections between teachers and students, particularly relationships with supportive and caring adults, have been found to be important in achieving success in school (Knesting & Waldron, 2020). Teachers are central to the creation of this type of school culture which can support students in achieving success (York-Barr & Duke, 2019). Teachers take on a wide variety of roles, such as improving achievement, addressing assessment, dealing with diverse populations, and creating opportunities for professional development (Drago-Severson, 2019). This puts teachers in an optimal position to provide the catalyst to change a school culture by helping the entire school community work toward systemic change (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2019).

Indeed, underachieving students often report peer influence as the strongest force that hampers their achievement (Berndt, 2022). Berndt also observed that over the course of an academic school year, significant changes evolve among affiliated students, such that grades and degree of academic aspirations become very similar by the end of the year.

The reasons that adolescents are readily impacted by their peers' attitudes can be traced, in part, to the confluence of dramatic biological, social, and cognitive changes that occur during adolescence. As these changes take place, adolescents begin to interact with each other outside of school. As adolescents, they spend twice as much time with their peers than with their parents, a dramatic increase from their younger years. Furthermore, adolescents are increasingly away from the vigilance (and intervening) of parental figures. It is at this time that they begin to view peers as better companions than parents or siblings (Berndt, 2022). Adolescents begin to recognize that they can work with a peer reciprocally to solve each other's problems. Friends get to know each other's viewpoints, wishes, and opinions.

Schools, which are not adequately funded and not well-maintained, are disheartening at best, and at worst are inadequate for effective instruction. Students who are already at-risk due to ethnicity or socioeconomic status are further impacted by their school environment.

Researchers have noted that many of these high performing schools have a school culture that is supportive of the success of all students (Conchas, 2019). The cultures of these effective schools place a value on diverse cultures, honor native languages, and encourage collaborative work. These successful schools place a value on both culture and native language.

The Environmental Awareness and Education Act of 2008 aims to promote environmental awareness through Environmental Education (EE) and covers the integration of EE in the school curricula at all levels, be it public or private, including day cares, preschools, non-formal, technical, vocational, indigenous learning, and out-of-school youth courses or programs.

Section 6 of the Act says that the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) , Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and other relevant agencies, in consultation with experts on the environment and the academe, shall lead in the implementation of public education and awareness programs on environmental protection and conservation through collaborative interagency and multi-sectoral efforts at all levels. It also declares November as the Environmental Awareness Month in the Philippines.

There is a common misconception in the Philippines that the environment and science are one and the same. Or that science falls under the subject matter of the environment. In fact, the environment is governed by the laws of science. The environment refers to external conditions, resources, or stimuli with which an organism interacts. Science refers to observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena.

Among all the subjects being taught in elementary and high school, science is the most logical anchor for environmental education. And in this larger area, Philippine education has suffered. This is the reason why environmental education is deficient – it's very anchor which is science is weak. Addressing the deficiencies in science education, particularly those related to environmental education, will significantly help solve the problem.

The National Achievement Tests show that aside from Mathematics, Science continues to be the most difficult field of study in basic education in the Philippines. In the 2009-2010 National Elementary Achievement Test (NEAT), Filipino pupils gave correct answers to less than 50% of the questions in Science (48.61%). This score has not improved in recent years. In comparison to our science syllabus, there are fewer topics in the science syllabi of other countries with high achievement scores in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Here, we have consistently ranked among the lowest in the past years. The Philippines has not participated in the TIMSS since 2007.

The main factors that account for the low performance in science of the Filipino students include the lack of support for a scientific culture reflected in the deficiencies regarding the school curriculum, the inadequate teaching learning process, insufficient instructional materials, and lack of teacher training. For instance, the lack of good and engaging textbooks and lack of science equipment have hindered the conduct of scientific investigations and hands-on activities among Filipino pupils.

Thus, we see the importance of informal and non-formal education to develop an aptitude for science in Filipinos. Investing in support systems for a scientific culture will certainly contribute to the supply and demand of science and technology manpower resources in the Philippines, thereby elevating our status in the international playing field.

Osterman (2019) indicates that satisfaction of the need for belonging in educational environments is significantly associated with students' academic engagement and involvement in school and classroom activities. Other dimensions such as academic and social behaviors, motives and attitudes, expectancies, values and goals, emotional functioning, and the development of fundamental psychological processes (e.g. intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, internalization, autonomy) and psychological outcomes like self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy are also influenced strongly. These personality constructs are necessary to establish a sound and successful career for the graduates.

Research from both higher education and K-12 also affirms the importance of building a sense of belonging in students. There is strong evidence of the connection between belongingness and success. The research in this regard is quite clear, namely that the frequency and perceived worth of interaction with faculty, staff, and other students is one of the strongest predictors not only of student persistence but also of student success (Candeias & Rebelo, 2019).

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE

ROSE SHARON C. DUHAYLUNGSOD

Meet the author, a dedicated elementary school teacher with a passion for fostering creativity and imagination in young minds. With a warm smile and a heart full of enthusiasm, Rose Sharon brings joy and inspiration to the classroom each day.

Born and raised in Toril, Davao City, Rose Sharon discovered her love for teaching at an early age. After completing her education at USEP she embarked on a fulfilling career in education, determined to make a difference in the lives of children.

In addition to their role as a teacher, Rose Sharon is also an accomplished storyteller. With a knack for spinning tales that ignite the imagination, she captivates her students with enchanting narratives and colorful characters. Through storytelling, Rose Sharon not only entertains but also instills valuable lessons about kindness, empathy, and the power of imagination.

One of Rose Sharon's favorite activities is reading aloud to her students. Whether it's a classic fairy tale or a contemporary children's book, she brings stories to life with animated voices and interactive discussions. Through these shared reading experiences, Rose Sharon fosters a love for literature and helps her students develop essential literacy skills.

With her passion for teaching and storytelling, Rose Sharon creates a nurturing environment where children feel valued, inspired, and eager to learn. As they continue to ignite the imaginations of young readers, Rose Sharon leaves an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of her students, shaping the storytellers and leaders of tomorrow.