Teachers' Extent of Personal Decision-Making for Classroom Control
Tahap Guru Membuat Keputusan Kendiri Dalam Pengawalan Kelas

Kenny S.L Cheah
Sathiamoorthy Kannan
Email: cheahsoonlee@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this case study is to uncover teachers' extent of personal involvement in decision-making in classroom control. Contextually, the private school prohibits teachers from punishing students physically for their misbehaviors. Additionally, parents as stakeholders were capable of suing the school from any malpractices of teachers in the private school. Thus, teachers were reported by the Head of Discipline (HOD) to frequently transferring discipline cases due to perceived risks in making wrong decisions. Qualitative methods were used in data collection that included purposive sampling, face-to-face in-depth interviews. Results indicated that the extent of personal involvement for teachers who transferred discipline problems to HOD was explained by a list of risks that threatened to their professional reputation. Within personal involvement however, teachers who seldom transfer discipline cases to HOD were able to; (a) gather evidence(s); (b) differentiate discipline problems; and (c) trace discipline problems to cause(s). The researcher concluded this research by highlighting the patterns that respondents portrayed in their personal decision-making that progresses from personal involvement, to collaboration and finally transfer as discipline problems deteriorate. This study suggests that teachers can be trained in the three aspects of personal involvement to further enhance their competency in personal decision-making under the organization's contextual circumstances.

Keywords*: Classroom management strategies, organizational decision-making, personal decision-making*

Introduction

Issues of teachers' malpractice in disciplining students had captured numerous headlines in local newspapers due to incidents that did not follow protocol when administering physical punishments on discipline problems. As a result, the Ministry of Education (MOEM) has issued the Professional Circular 7/1995 (MOEM, 1995) to prohibit teachers from using excessive force in disciplining. Private schools are not exempted from complying with this directive, and as a result, initial findings indicated that most private schools made it mandatory to prohibit their teachers from disciplining students physically in misbehaviors (Meek, 2015; Gomba, 2015). Realizing the difficulty to apply the right procedures for teachers to discipline students, there are still loopholes where teachers may perceive abdication as the only choice for classroom control (Ghiaṭău & Mâṭă, 2015). In the subsequent years, Professional Circular 10/2001(MOEM, 2001) detected such problem to exist in schools, and further reminded teachers that they should at least learn to discipline students through other better forms of methods for the purpose of educating, correcting and preventing students discipline from occurring in schools. With these two professional circulars, teachers are given their space to decide the right approach to disciplining students. In reality, managing discipline problems would require taking risks by deciding on strategies that are not endorsed by the organization (Merç & Subaşı, 2015; Omoyemiju, Ojo & Olatomide, 2015 ;Naicker, 2014). Furthermore, a few local studies concluded that teachers' extent of involvement in organizational decision-making is still low (Ngang, 2003; Ngang, Fooi, & Samah, 2004) . Another study highlighted that when teachers do not feel that they have influence over a discipline situation, they are most likely to contribute the reasons to external factors rather than internal factors (Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015). Generally, studies pertaining to classroom strategies and decision-making continue to evolve (Schoenfeld, 2015, Sun, 2015), but more research is needed to explore and explain the said phenomenon through a rich and

contextual approach. Thus, this study becomes the pilot research to investigate on their extent of personal involvement, and their perceived risks associated with decision-making.

Problem statement

Contextually in the researched organization, the Head of Discipline (HOD) reported a habitual problem among teachers who frequently transfer discipline cases that are considered trivial and unnecessary. In his views, he lamented that teachers in the school should be more independent and proactive in solving discipline problems that are re-occurring and common. Consequently, serious discipline cases that demand more personal attention were interrupted by minor matters that are taxing on the HOD's time. Additionally, there are no local evidence to explain teachers' extent of personal involvement in decision-making. Thus, the researcher hopes to explain the phenomenon and other perceived risks associated with personal decision-making.

The purpose of the case study to uncover and explain teachers' extent of personal involvement when confronted with classroom discipline problems, while subsequently look into their perceived risks in personal decision-making. As the researcher probes on their classroom management strategies prior to transfer, their patterns of personal decision-making will be analyzed and presented as a model for understanding.

Objectives of research

Three objectives were listed out in this case study:
1. To explain teachers' extent of personal involvement for those who are less likely to transfer discipline problems to the HOD in a context where physical punishments are prohibited by the school management.
2. To explore the patterns of personal decision-making when respondents manage classroom discipline in the researched organization.

Methods

In terms of research design, qualitative methods were used for this study that involved purposive sampling, use of an open-ended questionnaire, in-depth interviews and triangulation. These approaches were used because of the nature and complications associated with a case study (Maxwell, 2009). As the first approach, the researcher became a participant observer in the researched organization for six months prior to beginning the rigorous data collection. As a participant observer, the researcher:

1. Ascertained a case exists to be studied
2. Ensured study was feasible (with the limited resource of researcher) and appropriate with the theme and scope of study.
3. Seek approval from School and MOE's authority to conduct research in the private school.
4. Identified who to approach as key persons (mainly the Principal and HOD).
5. Being tactical and sensitive to hierarchy and organizational structure; to get clearance from 'gatekeepers': Principal, School Administrators, HOD & Respondents.
6. Seek Head of Discipline's (HOD) recommendation to select the appropriate and right candidate as respondents.
7. Communicated intentions, objectives and appointments and frequencies of visits to potential respondents.
8. Established rapport with respondents and explain how findings would be used while protecting personal data, and
9. Being tactical to acquire sources for data triangulation (such as minutes of meeting, teachers' observation forms.)

Sampling

For the researcher, the Head of Discipline (HOD) was the key personnel to approach for the study. Due to his previous encounters and experience with teachers in the school, the HOD was invited to identify respondents through a list of criteria that reflects the problem statement and the purpose of this study. There were two groups of samples chosen for comparisons in the investigation; (a) teachers who seldom transfer discipline problems to the HOD; and (b) teachers who frequently transfer discipline problems to the HOD. Purposive sampling and the open-ended *decision-making questionnaire* enabled the researcher to capture a wider picture to explain the circumstances that respondents go through. From the initial total of twenty-three volunteers, fifteen respondents (including the HOD) completed the whole process of data collection that included voiced recorded interviews.

Research instruments

As this research was conducted through qualitative means, data collection was carried out through direct-observation as a participant observer, writing reflective journals, collecting organizational evidences such as manuscripts, minutes of meetings, brochures, school website and other relevant documents. As filming is prohibited by the school management, most of the data were acquired through the open-ended *decision-making* questionnaire and voice recorder.

Data analyses

For analyses, all respondents' data were transcribed, coded and analyzed with the qualitative software (ATLAS.ti) to address the research questions sequentially. Triangulation methods were also used to address researcher's biases, to improve validity and evaluation of data. Analyses were also carried out through occasional data re-visitation and exploring other theoretical explanations to explain the phenomenon. To further enhance the credibility of the researcher, inter-coder reliability tests were carried out through two other researchers to ensure that interpretations from data fall within an acceptable range above 80%. Ultimately, additional precautions include getting respondents to verify their final transcripts to ensure correct representation and understanding from the researcher.

Results

In the process of reporting research, all fifteen respondents (including the HOD) were labeled as Teacher A, B, C and so forth consecutively. For the first research question, the findings discussed in this paper is only limited to the fourteen participants of the study because they were the key respondents selected through purposive sampling by the HOD. Rationally, the Head of Discipline (HOD) would be fully involved and decide on all discipline matters in the school. Regardless of the nature of the discipline case, the HOD must prepare a report to explain his decisions and outcome of any personal intervention to the principal. Thus, the HOD would only transfer discipline cases to the principal. Occasionally, he would collaborate with his team of Discipline Coordinators for consensus towards a final decision. As the first process of reporting results, the researcher identified respondents who were more likely to transfer discipline case to the HOD. To answer the question on teachers' extent of personal involvement, the researcher evaluated and categorized data into four areas of sub-analyses: (a) their frequency of transfer in relation to perceived risks; (b) how they differentiate between a serious and a less serious discipline problem; and (c) their personal intervention prior to transfer. As much as collective comparisons are concerned, only major areas from (a) to (c) are addressed in this paper. Eventually, all respondents' patterns of decision-making (including the HOD) will be summarized to address the second research question.

Research Question 1: What is the extent of personal involvement for teachers who are less likely to transfer discipline problems to the HOD?

Respondents' frequency of transfer in relation to perceived risks

In one of the questions from the *Decision-making* questionnaire, respondents were asked about their frequency of transfer (to the HOD) for both serious and serious discipline problems. Respondents who answered 'frequently' to serious discipline problems and 'sometimes' to less serious discipline problems were highlighted and tabulated for reader's reference. Table 1 presents the data pertaining to the frequency of transfer among fourteen respondents.

Table 1: Analyses of Fourteen Respondents on their Frequency of Transfer to the Head of Discipline (HOD)

Type of discipline problems	Frequency of transfer	Respondents	No. of respondents
Serious discipline problem	Never	Teacher A	1
	Sometimes	Teacher B	6
		Teacher H	
		Teacher I	
		Teacher J	
		Teacher K	
		Teacher O	
	Frequently	Teacher D	5
		Teacher E	
		Teacher F	
		Teacher G	
		Teacher N	
		Total	12
Less serious discipline problems	Never	Teacher A	10
		Teacher B	
		Teacher D	
		Teacher F	
		Teacher G	
		Teacher H	
		Teacher I	
		Teacher K	
		Teacher L	
		Teacher O	
	Sometimes	Teacher E	3
		Teacher J	
		Teacher N	
	Frequently	–	Nil
		Total	13

Note: The Head of Department (Teacher C) was excluded in this table. Teacher M was omitted from the table as she gave no answer to these two questions. Teacher L did not give any answer for 'serious discipline problem', and therefore was omitted in the first section.

Notably, the focus should be on teachers who have stated high frequencies of transfer for both serious and less serious discipline problems. Respondents who have stated "frequently" (Teacher D, E, F, G and N) and "sometimes" (Teacher E, J, N) were further analyzed for their internal factors. Through triangulation, the researcher looked into the HOD's opinion during purposive sampling and other related data to understand and explain their reasons behind transfer. The subsequent section explains further on of these particular respondents.

Due to the nature of a case study, the question on the frequency of transfer was subjective because it was based on individual's perception. Logically, every respondent does not necessarily encounter the same number of discipline problems, or the same types of discipline problems. Thus, the researcher reminded respondents that their responses should be based on likelihoods, habits and experiences. On this basis for comparisons, it was observable that there were more teachers who claimed that they 'never' transfer less serious discipline cases as compared to those who mentioned 'sometimes'. With exception to Teacher A, a majority of teachers shifted their answers to 'sometimes' for serious discipline problem.

Later however, Teacher A explained why transfer is better preferred over personal involvement, *"Over the years, I no longer prefer to punish students unless I have the right to do it. Getting them to reflect and write on to their mistakes should be more effective as compared to punishment. Times have changed as parents and students are aware of their rights now. If punishment is to be carried out, it has to be reasonable to the problem. Otherwise, parents will see you in court! The best outcome for me is to see students recognizing their mistakes and understand our intentions behind the punishment. "*

(Line 60 from personal transcripts.)

Cross referencing to Teacher A's personal data revealed that he is an experienced teacher who was once the Head of Discipline. He credited his abilities to manage students' misbehaviors to experience. Thus, years of exposure to discipline management gave him the confidence to handle discipline cases personally without any need to refer to the Head of Discipline.

The following results will concentrate on teachers who prefer to transfer discipline cases to the Head of Discipline. Specifically, teachers who claimed to "frequently" transfer serious discipline problems and to "sometimes" transfer less serious discipline case were narrowed in for comparisons as in Table 2 and Table 3 respectively.

Table 2: Analyses of Respondents Who "Frequently" Transfer Serious Discipline Problems to the Head of Discipline (HOD)

Respondents	HOD's criteria during purposive sampling	Risks associated with personal decision-making
Teacher D	Less likely to transfer	Fear that personal actions/intentions could be misunderstood by management.
Teacher E	Less likely to transfer	Fear that parents may complain and concerned with job security.
Teacher F	Less likely to transfer	Risks are perceived higher for serious discipline problems. There are no options for any personal decision, but to transfer to HOD for decision-making.
Teacher G	Less likely to transfer	Intervening with existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) could be unintentional but may result with serious consequences.
Teacher N	Likely dependent on transfer	Fear that personal actions/intentions could be misunderstood by school management and parents.

Head of Discipline is referred to as HOD.

Table 3: Analyses of Respondents Who "Sometimes" Transfer Less Serious Discipline Problems to the Head of Discipline (HOD)

Respondents	HOD's criteria during purposive sampling	Risks associated with personal decision-making
Teacher E	Less likely to transfer	Fear that parents may complain and concern of job security
Teacher J	Less likely to transfer	Intervening with existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
Teacher N	Likely dependent on transfer	Fear that personal actions/intentions could be misunderstood by school management and parents.

Head of Discipline is referred to as HOD.

As the analyses looked into teachers who responded "frequently" and "sometimes", it was evident that Teacher E and Teacher N appeared in both tables as likely to transfer discipline cases to the Head of Discipline. Even though data did not converge for Teacher E (that the HOD perceived Teacher E to be 'less likely to transfer'), it is worthwhile to investigate further on her perceived risks to personal decision-making. Further analyses into Teacher E revealed that despite her role as a discipline coordinator, she preferred to transfer discipline case to the HOD because it was not within her powers to decide on matters pertaining to any outcome of discipline problem. In other words, she was merely complying with organizational procedures even though she mentioned that she was capable of solving the problem. Therefore, she preferred collaboration over personal decision to determine the outcome of discipline problems. Unlike Teacher E, Teacher N was not in the discipline committee. Despite highlighting her limited role in decision-making (like Teacher E), she attributed low confidence as her problem to further involve pen decision-making. On the basis of personal habits and experience, many more comparisons can be made among the list of fourteen respondents pertaining to their frequencies in transfer. From Table 2 and Table 3, it is evident that: (a) Standard operating Procedures (SOPs);

and (b) parental involvement are the two major setbacks that are perceived as risk factors to personal decision-making. For the purpose of explanation, the researcher has picked two samples among respondents (such as Teacher E and Teacher N) to explain the extent of personal involvement due to their likelihood to transfer discipline cases to the HOD.

Respondents' perceptions to differentiate between a serious and a less serious discipline problem

From analyses, all respondents described serious discipline problems as synonymous to physical injuries and harm to others. Although their experiences with discipline problems were different and circumstantial, they defined seriousness almost similarly. Beyond personal strategies and styles in classroom management, these similar perspectives determined if one discipline problem should be solved personally, or be transferred to the Head of Discipline for further actions. As a result, Table 4 is a comparative summary between a serious and a less serious discipline problem according to all fifteen respondents' perceptions (including the Head of Discipline, HOD). All aspects of comparisons were based on their opinions, experience and personal encounters with discipline problems.

Table 4: Comparisons between a Serious and Less Serious Discipline Problem from Respondents' Perspectives

Aspects	Highlighted by	Situation of Discipline Problem	
		Less Serious	Serious
Involvement of principal	Teacher J	Less likely	More likely
Involvement of more people	Teacher K,J,E.O,B	Less likely	More likely
Standard Operating Procedures	Teacher B	Less procedures	More procedures
Potential physical injury	All respondents	Less likely	Likely
Time for contemplation	Teacher L, J	Shorter duration	Longer duration
Urgency for decision-making	Teacher H,J,F,G,B	Need not be immediate	Must be immediate
Emotional harm or hurt	Teacher I,K,M,G	Less likely	More likely
Need of corroboration	Teacher N	Less likely	More likely
Requires transfer	Teacher L,A,D,O,E,F	Less likely	More likely
Types of portrayal	Teacher L,H,J	Verbal	Physical and emotional
Familiarity to the problem	Teacher L,N,K,A,B,C	High	Low
Pranks and mischiefs	Teacher A	More likely	Less likely
Frequency of encounter	Teacher B,N	More	Less
Elements of risk	Teacher O	Low	High

Note: Aspects of differentiation were identified through data coding and limited to a total of fifteen respondents.

From respondents' viewpoints, physical risk is the differentiating aspect that distinguishes a serious discipline problem from a less serious one. For teacher H, she explained,

"Serious discipline problems are actions that can disrupt or threaten the educational process. Some examples are vandalizing school's property, drug abuse and disrespectful to teachers. I once witnessed a serious incident where naughty students threw my colleague's handbag in the dustbin in another class. Instantly, I reported the case to the Head of Discipline. "

(Line 44 from personal transcripts.)

From her sharing, she indicated the need to transfer to the HOD whenever she is faced with serious discipline problems. Her response was also supported by Teacher C,

"Serious discipline problems usually affect and impact the school community in a big way, while less serious ones are considered trivial and do not impact others other than their own self. Some examples of serious discipline problems are fights, smoking and threatening others, while trivial ones usually involve impletion of homework or coming late to class."

(Line 44 from personal transcripts.)

As for Teacher J, she also highlighted her assumptions from her experience,

"Serious discipline problems are often traced to family issues at home, whereas less serious ones are not caused by external factors."   (Line 47 from personal transcripts.)

In reality, not every respondent highlighted the same number of aspects for comparison. Nevertheless, all responses were gathered and compiled altogether to present a general overview on how discipline problems were perceived among all fourteen respondents.

Personal intervention prior to transfer

Prior to transferring discipline cases to the HOD, all fourteen respondents confirmed during the interview that they could gather evidence, trace problems to their cause and differentiate the seriousness of discipline problems. They claimed that these measures were taken to conclude if discipline situations were serious enough before they decide on their next course of actions. However, no conclusions can be made on how committed were these fourteen respondents in carrying out these three actions in every discipline case that they handled. Briefly, Table 5 presents the result analyses on coding from all fifteen respondents (including the HOD) to highlight their abilities in the three areas within personal involvement. Within the same table, respondents explained further on their reasons to intervene at the personal level.

Table 5: Respondents' Personal Intervention Prior to Transfer

Personal intervention	Further explanation	No. of times mentioned	Mentioned by
Gather evidence(s)	Respondents would probe students to investigate	12	Teacher L, K, H, A, J, M, E, F, O
	Respondents would be assertive to ask for confession with sufficient evidence	2	Teacher L
	Respondents would look for students' favorite hangouts during investigations	3	Teacher N
	Respondents wanted to be sure in their investigations	15	Teacher N, H,A, D,M,E,F,G,
	Respondents wanted to be neutral and fair before concrete evidence is found	11	Teacher C,E, F, O, G
	Respondents would corroborate with other teachers to find evidence	3	Teacher J,F
	Respondents gather evidence to find out if students are lying	2	Teacher A, N
	Respondents wanted to find out if problems are repeated	7	Teacher J, D, F, G, O
	Respondents wanted to identify students who are directly/indirectly involved	16	Teacher L, I, N, K, H,A. D,F,O,G
	Respondents wanted to separate the culprit from the victim	8	Teacher N, K, A, D, O
	Respondents gather evidence to ascertain students' intentions	3	Teacher L, I
Trace problem to cause(s)	Respondents highlighted the cause of problems be from internal and external factors	5	Teacher J, B
	Respondents mentioned that they would find out about student' environment at home	4	Teacher L, A, J and E
	Respondents attributed problems to societal labeling on weaker students	3	Teacher D
	Respondents mentioned that discipline problems are caused by peer groups	2	Teacher A
	Respondents tend to use their instincts for personal judgment	3	Teacher A, D and K
Differentiate discipline problem(s)	Respondents differentiate the problems by looking at students' habits and patterns	5	Teacher I, J, E,O,G,
	Respondents differentiate problems by relying on their experience	10	Teacher N. K. A, J, M, G
	Respondents differentiate problems by looking at urgency	2	Teacher E, F

In essence, respondents carried out these tasks within their investigation process to arrive at a personal decision: (a) to transfer the problem to the discipline teachers; (b) to seek assistance from others (collaborate); or (b) to solve the discipline problem personally. Additionally, if there were no option for immediate transfer to the Head of Discipline, some respondents will do their best to contain the situation from deterioration (as mentioned by Teacher I and G). These teachers would (a) gather as much evidence as possible and; (b) be prepared to give an account to the principal or Head of Discipline. These steps were carried out to fulfill personal responsibilities and organizational

expectations before proceeding into collaborating or transfer to other persons-in-charge. As an illustration, Figure 1 summarizes respondents' intervention within personal involvement.
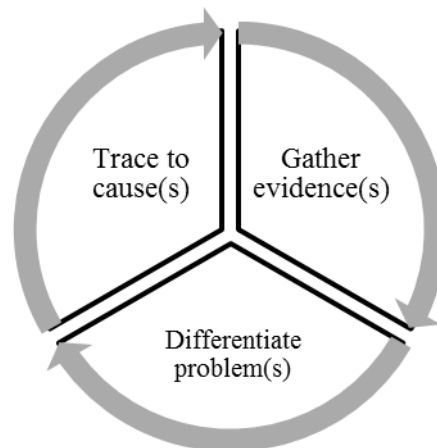

Figure 1. Personal interventions prior to transfer

In addition, it was not known if respondents intervened with these measures consistently in their professional practice. As highlighted earlier, respondents were only probed on the frequency of transfer between serious or less serious discipline problems. When respondents indicated a high frequently of transfer to the Head of Discipline, the researcher cannot ascertain if such behavior implicates a lesser tendency to carry out these measures within the personal involvement stage. As a precaution of research, the researcher must not conclude without sufficient evidence. However, knowing that they carried out all three measures was a good indicator that none of the respondents were lacking in basic skills for personal involvement.

Furthermore, the time taken between personal involvements prior to transfer varied between one respondent to another. Some respondents preferred to give second chances to their students, to allow students to reflect on their mistakes and to delay transfers to HOD (such as Teacher J, K and I). These teachers preferred to withhold punishments and concentrate on corrections and support. Other respondents would transfer discipline problems immediately to the Head of Discipline to comply with organizational protocol, even though they were capable handling matters directly (Teacher N and E). For Teacher A and H, transfer was perceived as an act of compliance, rather than a projection of incompetence. Naturally, respondents would expect the HOD to decide on the best outcome if any discipline cases were to be transferred to him.

In essence, all respondents admitted that *Teachers' Code of Ethics* and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the school have limited personal involvement, especially in personal decision-making. These findings will be elaborated further in the following research questions. While all respondents acknowledged their personal duties to manage students' discipline, they expressed the risk of trespassing beyond the SOPs. Several teachers cautioned that a lack of awareness to SOPs could lead to wrong strategies and styles of classroom control even though they have trace discipline problems to their cause correctly. Other teachers have also expressed that they would spread out risks of decision-making through collaboration with other teachers, and thread along the fine lines of SOPs when solutions are unclear or unstated.

Research question 2: What are the observable patterns of decision-making when respondents manage classroom discipline in the researched organization?

Analyses of data suggest that regardless if teachers chose to use classroom control strategies that were either supportive or enforcing, their patterns of decision-making were found to be progressing from personal involvement, collaboration and finally transfer to the Head of Discipline (HOD). As an

organizational norm, all respondents expected the HOD to intervene and solve the discipline problems upon transfer.

Another recognizable pattern was that teachers would progress their process of decision-making from personal involvement to collaboration and finally transfer when discipline problems deteriorate from less serious to more serious (as indicated by Teacher A, E, H, L and M). Interestingly, there are teachers who would prefer to transfer directly to the HOD without any need for collaboration when discipline matters are very urgent and serious (as indicated by Teacher D, F, G, J and O). Similar pattern is also observable from the HOD's style of decision-making. As an illustration, Figure 2 shows the patterns of decision-making exhibited by respondents as a result of data analyses.

Figure 2. Respondents' Patterns of Decision-making

Discussions

This paper has presented the findings in relation to the two research questions in the researched organization. In reality, respondents' extents of personal decision-making were described from their personal perceptions and experiences. In addition, data analyses have revealed that their patterns of decision-making progressed from personal involvement, to collaboration and finally transfer when discipline problem deteriorates from less serious to serious.

The researcher explored into the fourteen respondents (excluding the Head of Discipline) on their level of personal involvement because little was known about their behaviors prior to transfer. Respondents' extent of personal involvement were analyzed and explained in three areas: (a) their frequency of transfer; (b) how teachers perceived between a serious to a less serious discipline problem; and (c) their personal interventions prior to transfer. Within the phase of personal involvement, the researcher discovered that respondents could conduct basic investigations such as: (a) to gather evidence; (b) to differentiate discipline problems according to the level of seriousness; and (c) to trace the cause of discipline problems. These steps were interrelated and occurred simultaneously among each respondent. As a limitation of research, data could not support if respondents were carrying out all three actions consistently in their classrooms. In addition, analyses of data could not rank these separate actions into sequential steps. Instead, qualitative analyses could only suggest respondents do not lack personal abilities in personal involvement, but in participation decision-making.

For the Head of Discipline (HOD), the benefits of knowing the obstacles that teachers faced during personal decision-making would enable him to institute change management programs to assist teachers to be more competent in their own personal involvement. Such example would be training teachers to be more skillful in identifying, diagnosing or differentiating discipline problem prior to transfer. Thus, this research had also highlighted the key areas that would encourage more organizational learning in the areas that are needed most. Behavioral theory derived from Thorndike's *Law of Effect* states that behavior that is followed by positive consequences will likely be repeated (Nevin, 1999). This illustration is also consistent with other hedonic theory of motivation, where people would usually be motivated towards a pleasurable goal while simultaneously trying to avoid pain due to fear, threats and risks associated with personal decision-making (Li, Liu, Xu, Heikkilä &

Heijden, 2015). Thus, it is important for the HOD to consider managing the perceived risks among the respondents to guide them towards personal involvement in organizational decision-making.

A large contribution from data analyses also stemmed in uncovering the aspects relating to classroom control and decision-making that was happening within a bureaucratic organization. Inevitably, SOPs are rules that dictate the decisions of all school communities (Scott & Davis, 2015). To face challenges and threats of personal decision-making, respondents suggested that the school's SOPs must undergo improvements in aspects of teacher education, teacher supervision and program interventions. Inculcating multiple viewpoints of teachers in this case study was like putting together a jigsaw puzzle that would help school leaders to have a larger perspective on the predicament that teachers faced when dealing with discipline problems. As such, school policies must support different viewpoints so that it can be successfully implemented across school communities (Crone, Hawken & Horner, 2015).

For discussions on methodology, the researcher started out this research by trying to gather as many respondents as possible through the HOD. Due to circumstances, however, only fifteen respondents (including the HOD) managed to complete the whole cycle of data collection from the initial twenty-three. Additionally, in order to gather data and win the trust of respondents, the researcher had to be transparent with his intention and how the findings are to be reported as a research. Researching on teachers' personal practice in the classroom may be deemed sensitive by teachers if organizational restrictions and secrecy are concerned. In terms of ethics, respondents had to be given the choice to withdrawal at their free will. Other precautions include the need to sharpen his communication skills as a participant observer, reduce personal error of personal judgment (or biases) through triangulation and seeking validation of transcripts from respondents.

Due to the voluminous data obtained from this case study, the researcher had to constantly refer to the objectives of the study to ensure that all research questions were addressed appropriately and extensively. It is vital for the researcher to highlight that this case study is not meant to generalize across all teachers in the researched organization. Also, data gained from the exploration of respondents' personal involvement in decision-making must not be used as reasons to jeopardize their position as teachers (if they have carried out their duties diligently or expectedly) by the school management. Instead, respondents with high frequencies of transfer should be viewed as important persons to explain their motivation and fears associated with personal decision-making. Through delicate persuasions and trust, individual's perspectives on institutional risks were eventually revealed and presented without threatening their identity and reputations as teachers.

Implications of research

Key findings from this study serve as an indicator for the organization to consider if teachers' participation in discipline management should be encouraged further. Contextually, many intervention programs could be implemented to improve teachers' personal involvement in decision-making. From the findings, it is evident that respondents did not lack personal abilities to gather evidence(s), trace problem(s) and differentiate if discipline problem(s) are serious or not. Subsequent follow-ups could be carried to evaluate and identify other teachers who may not be skillful enough to undertake the three measures within personal involvement. Thus, they can be trained to be more committed and proactive to deal with all types discipline problems, and subsequently reduce the number of transfers to the HOD.

Future suggestions for research

Due to the selective and a small number of respondents, it is suggested that more similar research could be carried out in other organizations with different contexts. As case studies are qualitative in nature, is important that samples are chosen carefully and strategically to increase the meaningfulness of the study. Key persons (such as the principal and HOD) are important as 'gatekeepers' to provide the opportunity to conduct case studies. Other suggestions include the need to look at the school's

standard operating procedures (SOPs) and how parental involvement affects teachers' psychological barrier in personal decision-making.

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