



Research in Management and Humanities

DWIJMH VOL. 5 NO. 3 (2026) ISSN: 2980-4817

Available online at www.dwijmh.org

Journal homepage: <http://www.dwijmh.org>

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6884-3504>

The dynamics of power distance cultural practice, bureaucratic management practice, and the basic psychological need satisfaction: the educational context

Egdonna A. Quinto: Professor, Divine Word College of Laoag, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: May 25, 2026

Received in rev. form. July 15, 2026

Accepted: August 10, 2026

Published: September 10, 2026

Keywords: *Power distance culture, bureaucratic culture, basic psychological need satisfaction.*

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JEL Classification: M14

ABSTRACT

The study examined the effects of power-distance organizational culture and bureaucratic management practices on employees' satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Relevant literature was reviewed to strengthen the study's theoretical framework. A descriptive-assessment and correlational research design was employed, with all DWCL employees comprising the study population. Data were collected through questionnaires.

The findings revealed moderate levels of power-distance culture and bureaucratic management practices, while employees' satisfaction of their basic psychological needs was high. Correlation analysis showed a significant negative relationship between power-distance culture and basic psychological need satisfaction. This indicates that as power distance increases, employees' satisfaction of their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness tends to decrease. Therefore, the hypothesis concerning this relationship was supported. In contrast, bureaucratic management practices were not significantly related to basic psychological need satisfaction; thus, the corresponding hypothesis was not supported.

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Introduction

Management is a dynamic, complex, flexible, and rational process; therefore, no single management approach can be applied universally. Because organizational environments continually change and differ in complexity, management practices must be adapted to specific situations and contexts (Burlea & Mahon, 2013). Managing an organization also requires careful analysis of the practices that influence individual behavior and organizational performance (Einhorn et al., 2023). Understanding why a particular practice succeeds in one organization but fails in another requires managers

to examine the conditions and factors underlying these differences. Organizational problems rarely have quick or simple solutions.

The environment in which an organization operates plays an important role in determining how it is managed. Each organization also possesses a unique identity shaped by its culture. The contextualization of management therefore emphasizes the importance of understanding the culture and environment of the organization when selecting and implementing management practices (Rosemann et al., 2008).

Positive and negative organizational cultures produce different consequences. Studies have shown that a positive organizational culture contributes to organizational performance and its various dimensions. For example, Nneji and Asikhia (2021), Einhorn et al. (2023), Hardiyono et al. (2017), and Bogale and Bebel (2024) reported that a positive organizational culture improves overall organizational performance. It has also been associated with greater employee productivity (Abane et al., 2022), stronger organizational commitment (Sarhan et al., 2019), and increased positive emotions and learning among employees (Nguyen et al., 2023). In contrast, a negative organizational culture can weaken organizational performance (Abane et al., 2022; Mian et al., 2008). It may also adversely affect employee well-being (Klajko et al., 2019), organizational resilience (Fietz et al., 2021), and employees' overall functioning (Assens-Serra & Boada-Cuerva, 2021).

Despite the recognized influence of organizational culture on employees and organizational functioning, limited research has directly examined how power-distance culture and bureaucratic management practices relate to the satisfaction of employees' basic psychological needs. This relationship deserves further investigation because employees' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are important aspects of their well-being and functioning at work. Power distance and bureaucratic management may share certain characteristics in practice, but they may have similar or different effects on employees' need satisfaction. Therefore, the present study examines the relationship between power-distance organizational culture, bureaucratic management practices, and employees' satisfaction of their basic psychological needs.

The study is organized into five sections. The first section presents the background and rationale of the study. The second reviews the relevant literature, while the third describes the research methodology. The fourth presents and analyzes the findings. Finally, the fifth section discusses the results and provides the study's conclusions.

Literature review

Power distance organizational culture

Culture plays an important role in shaping human thought and behavior (Salazar, 2022). This idea is reflected in Tylor's (1871) definition of culture as "the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society" (p. 1). His definition presents culture as a collection of mental capabilities and behaviors that are learned and shared by members of society.

Since Tylor's work, scholars have offered different definitions of culture. Hofstede (1980) focused on its mental dimension, describing culture as the programming of the human mind that distinguishes one group from another. From this perspective, culture consists of shared beliefs and values (Stephenson, 2023; Ylimaki & Brunderman, 2021). Similarly, Schein (1985) defined culture as a pattern of basic assumptions that a group develops as it learns to address its internal and external challenges. Both Hofstede and Schein viewed culture as largely intangible and rooted in the human mind.

However, defining culture only in terms of beliefs, values, and assumptions may overlook its observable dimensions, such as behavioral norms (Murthy & Page, 2023). Avruch (1998) addressed this limitation by describing culture as "an

evolved constituent of human cognition and social action” (p. 4). Similarly, Davis (2020) viewed culture as an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communication, and actions. Thus, culture encompasses not only abstract beliefs and values but also observable behavior. Although culture itself cannot be directly seen, it is expressed through the social norms and behaviors that distinguish one society or group from another. These observable behaviors allow certain aspects of culture to be measured (Kalwar et al., 2013).

Hofstede (1980) examined cultural differences across IBM branches in 50 countries using data collected between 1968 and 1972 (Zemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023). His work explored how national cultural values influenced workplace attitudes and behavior. He initially identified four cultural dimensions: individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and masculinity versus femininity. These dimensions were found to influence employees’ values and behavior across countries (Ylimaki & Brunderman, 2021). Hofstede’s framework was later expanded to include six dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, 2011; Zemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023).

Hofstede (1985) defined power distance as “the extent to which the members of a society accept that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (p. 34). In a high-power-distance culture, individuals generally accept inequalities between people in positions of authority and those at lower organizational levels. This creates clear gaps among employees based on their positions and degree of authority. Power distance can significantly shape relationships between supervisors and subordinates, particularly through fear of authority and limited communication (Dai et al., 2022; Richard et al., 2022).

Employees in high-power-distance cultures may be less willing to participate in organizational decision-making because they expect managers to make decisions on their behalf (Khatari, 2009). This may limit employee empowerment (Kwan et al., 2024) and influence organizational commitment (Brockner et al., 2001). In contrast, people in low-power-distance cultures place greater value on equality and perceive a smaller gap between managers and their subordinates (Alper, 2019). Such cultures promote more open relationships and communication between managers and employees and encourage employees to contribute ideas to organizational decision-making (Fietz et al., 2021).

Adamovic (2023) measured power distance in organizational culture through five dimensions: power, conflict with authority figures, hierarchy, prestige, and social distance. These dimensions describe a structured work environment in which authority and decision-making are concentrated among individuals who hold power. For the present study, an examination of the scale’s content suggested that dividing power distance into five separate dimensions was unnecessary. Therefore, the dimensions were consolidated into two broader areas: decision-making power and workplace relationships.

Bureaucratic management

Bureaucratic management practices originated from the work of Max Weber (1966), a German sociologist, philosopher, jurist, and political economist. Weber introduced bureaucracy as a model for government administration and regarded it as an efficient and rational means of managing large organizations. The model uses systematic processes and clearly defined organizational structures to maintain order (Mulder, 2017). By following established rules, procedures, and lines of authority, organizations can improve efficiency while reducing favoritism and nepotism (Swedberg & Agevall, 2005).

Bureaucratic management therefore relies heavily on rules and procedures to promote consistency and efficiency (CEOpedia, 2019; Ebane & Asamoah, 2024). However, these rules and procedures are often difficult to change or revise. Although bureaucracy was originally associated with public administration, it has since been applied to large private organizations (Howard, 2012). Its modern definition is therefore no longer limited to government institutions. It now refers more broadly to the rational organization of work through formal structures, clearly defined functions, and impersonal professional relationships (Aron, 1994; Giddens, 1997, as cited in Serpa & Ferreira, 2019).

Barnett and Finnemore (2004) classified modern bureaucracy according to four characteristics: hierarchy, continuity, impersonality, and expertise. Reynolds (2018), however, identified six broader characteristics of bureaucratic management.

The first characteristic is formal hierarchical authority. A bureaucratic organization follows a clearly defined management structure that extends from top management to middle and lower-level managers and employees (Green, 2013). Reports and communication follow the established chain of command. Employees are generally expected to communicate through their immediate supervisors rather than approach top management directly (Haveman & Kluttz, 2016). When employees encounter problems that cannot be resolved at their level, these concerns are passed upward through the organizational hierarchy. Consequently, decisions may be made by senior managers who have less direct knowledge of the situation than frontline employees.

The second characteristic is dependence on rules. Work activities and problem-solving must follow established policies and procedures. Managers and employees have limited freedom to act solely according to their own judgment or experience (Green, 2013; Olejniczak, 2018). Their actions must remain within the organization's prescribed rules, regulations, and job descriptions.

The third characteristic is the division of labor. Employees are assigned specific duties based on their skills, expertise, and positions within the organization (Erkoc, 2023; Zhao & Han, 2022). Their responsibilities are formally defined, and they are generally expected to focus on tasks within their assigned areas.

The fourth characteristic is performance-based promotion. Advancement is based on an employee's ability to meet established performance objectives. Managers and employees are assigned specific targets, while salaries, benefits, and promotions may be linked to the achievement of these predetermined objectives (Gavis et al., 2000).

The fifth characteristic is efficiency. Employees are expected to accomplish their assigned objectives using minimal time, effort, and resources. To maintain efficiency, organizations must periodically review their written rules and guidelines to determine whether they remain effective and relevant (Erkoc, 2023; Haveman & Kluttz, 2016).

The sixth characteristic is impersonality. Decisions in bureaucratic organizations are expected to be based on formal rules, established objectives, and organizational roles rather than personal relationships or individual preferences (Erkoc, 2023). Although this approach may promote consistency and fairness, strict impersonality may also result in insufficient consideration of employees' circumstances and psychological needs.

Bureaucratic management may be valued for its ability to promote order, consistency, and efficiency. However, it may also produce several unintended consequences. Hamel and Zanini (2017) identified a number of weaknesses associated with excessive bureaucracy.

The first weakness is bloating. Bureaucracy may create additional organizational layers, resulting in more managerial positions, higher administrative costs, and reduced efficiency. The second is friction. Excessive procedures and approval requirements may slow decision-making and prevent organizations from responding promptly to changes in their external environment. Bureaucracy may also require considerable time and paperwork, causing organizations to overlook valuable opportunities (Hamel & Zanini, 2017; Johnson, 1979).

The third weakness is insularity. Managers may devote too much time to internal administrative concerns and fail to respond to emerging external trends or opportunities to improve services (Terjesen, 2022). Terjesen (2022) further argued that excessive bureaucracy may contribute to a decline in innovation and creativity within universities.

The fourth weakness is disempowerment. Employees may be given limited freedom and autonomy to act according to their professional judgment, potentially creating conflict between management and employees (Monteiro & Adler, 2022). When employees cannot participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their work environment, they may feel powerless and undervalued. This may reduce their willingness to accept responsibility for organizational concerns. Weber also recognized that bureaucracy could restrict human freedom by requiring individuals to follow formal rules and prescribed job descriptions rather than exercise autonomy in carrying out their responsibilities (Matipa, 2023). Bureaucracy has consequently been criticized as an impersonal “iron cage” of rule-based rational control (Haveman & Kluttz, 2016; Ritzer, 2004).

The fifth weakness is risk aversion. When employees have limited autonomy and freedom, they may become unwilling to take risks (Leyden & Link, 1993). Fear of failure may lead them to rely exclusively on established rules and procedures. They may repeatedly use familiar approaches because the results are predictable, thereby limiting experimentation, creativity, and innovation (Mori, 2017).

The sixth weakness is inertia. Employees who are discouraged from taking risks may also become resistant to change. They may hesitate to initiate improvements because they believe that change must come from senior management (Jovita & Nurmandi, 2018). As a result, the organization may struggle to respond to emerging opportunities and changes in its external environment.

The seventh weakness is organizational politics. Hamel and Zanini (2017) observed that bureaucratic organizations may become preoccupied with the pursuit of power and influence. Considerable time and energy may be spent on internal competition and political activity (Favero, 2018). This environment may create conflict, encourage blame shifting, and lead employees to prioritize the protection of their positions. It may also result in promotions based on political connections rather than merit (Rahman, 2018).

Bureaucratic management practices ultimately shape the organizational environment. Langer et al. (2017) explained that administrative models influence how employees experience their workplace. A bureaucratic environment develops when organizational policies and practices strongly emphasize compliance with formal rules and procedures. Within such an environment, employees may have limited flexibility to exercise professional judgment when performing their duties or addressing work-related problems. In other words, they may experience little autonomy (Wright & Davis, 2003). Employees may also spend substantial time completing paperwork, while their work becomes increasingly routine because of excessive, repetitive, or unnecessary procedures (Bozeman & Feeney, 2011).

Self-determination theory and basic psychological need satisfaction

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000), provides a framework for examining the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Earlier theories sought to move away from treating motivation as a single concept by distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. White (1959, as cited in Schunk & Zigarmi, 2015) described intrinsic motivation as the desire to participate in an activity for the enjoyment of learning, whereas extrinsic motivation involves participation to obtain external rewards, such as praise. Harter (1978, as cited in Schunk & Zigarmi, 2015) adopted a similar distinction but emphasized that experiences of success and failure can also influence motivation.

Further work by Deci (1971, 1975) and Deci and Ryan (1985) contributed to the development of SDT. According to Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000), behavior may be driven by external demands and rewards or by internal interests and values. SDT is a broad theory of human motivation and personality concerned with people’s inherent tendencies toward growth and integration and the psychological conditions that support these tendencies.

Within SDT, Deci and Ryan (2000) identified three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These needs are considered universal and essential to healthy motivation, personal growth, psychological integration, and optimal functioning. Autonomy refers to experiencing volition and choice; competence involves feeling capable and effective; and relatedness concerns feeling connected to and cared for by others.

Deci and Ryan (2000) argued that social and cultural conditions can either support or undermine an individual's volition, initiative, well-being, and quality of life. Cognitive Evaluation Theory, a subtheory of SDT, explains how social conditions and external controls influence intrinsic motivation and interest. Basic Psychological Needs Theory, another SDT subtheory, proposes that optimal functioning and well-being depend on the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When the social environment supports these needs, individuals are more likely to function effectively. Conversely, when any of these needs is frustrated or unsupported, individuals may experience negative psychological and functional consequences.

Autonomy

Autonomy generally refers to self-direction, self-governance, and the freedom to make choices. Within SDT, autonomy is the experience of acting with volition and according to personally endorsed values and decisions. It is the capacity to act according to self-determined principles (Moreno, 2013) and to experience self-direction in one's thoughts, feelings, and actions (Legault, 2016). Autonomy also reflects an individual's freedom to exercise control over personal decisions and is closely associated with human dignity (Linhares & Atienza, 2022).

An autonomous person perceives the self as the source of personal choices and actions. This involves exercising free will and accepting responsibility for one's decisions (Lickerman, 2012). Autonomy has also been described as a foundation of intentionality, functioning, and meaning (Collier, n.d.) and as a self-organizing process (Holzer et al., 2008; Ryan et al., 1997). Piaget (1965) viewed autonomy as internally directed behavior arising from free choice. Rather than merely following externally imposed rules, autonomous individuals understand and personally accept the principles that guide their behavior (Sugarman, 1990).

In the workplace, autonomy allows employees to exercise judgment, make decisions, and take ownership of their actions. Cooper (2016) argued that workplace happiness depends not only on financial rewards but also on employees' ability to make meaningful decisions. When employees act voluntarily, they experience themselves as the source of their behavior and personally endorse their goals and actions (Legault, 2016; Steckermeier, 2021).

Greater workplace autonomy has been associated with higher job satisfaction and a lower intention to leave one's employment (Kaushal, 2021; Zychova et al., 2023). An autonomy-supportive workplace may encourage employees to work more effectively, develop their capabilities, and remain committed to the organization (Legault, 2016). Ryan (1995) identified autonomy as an important source of motivation and suggested that its absence can be demotivating. Studies have likewise reported a significant relationship between autonomy and job satisfaction, productivity, and positive work outcomes (Dickinson, 1995; Legault, 2016).

Relatedness

Relatedness refers to the experience of being meaningfully connected to others. It involves interpersonal closeness, mutual trust, empathy, acceptance, and a sense of belonging. Within SDT, relatedness is the need to care for others and to feel cared for, valued, and understood in return (Legault, 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020).

Relatedness involves developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with friends, family members, partners, colleagues, and social groups (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It is considered a universal psychological need because people naturally seek opportunities to interact with others, establish connections, and experience mutual care. Alderfer (1969)

similarly associated relatedness with social relationships and external esteem, emphasizing the importance of involvement with family, friends, co-workers, and employers.

As one of the three basic psychological needs identified in SDT, relatedness motivates individuals to participate in mutually rewarding activities that provide enjoyment, connection, and shared experiences. Through these activities, individuals may receive peer support, cooperate with others, share accomplishments, and experience a sense of belonging (Rigby & Ryan, 2011). They also satisfy their need to be heard, acknowledged, and supported.

The workplace can help satisfy relatedness by fostering supportive relationships, cooperation, inclusion, and mutual respect among employees. Such an environment can reduce feelings of isolation and strengthen employees' sense of connection to their colleagues and organization (Patterer et al., 2022). Relationship Motivation Theory, a subtheory of SDT, further proposes that meaningful interpersonal relationships are not merely desirable but essential to well-being because they satisfy the fundamental need for relatedness (Knee & Browne, 2023).

Relatedness was also discussed in Alderfer's (1969, 1972) Existence, Relatedness, and Growth Theory, commonly known as ERG Theory. Alderfer organized human needs into three categories: existence, relatedness, and growth (Niemelä & Kim, 2014). Unlike Maslow's hierarchical model, ERG Theory proposes that needs do not necessarily emerge or become satisfied in a fixed sequence. Different needs may become active at any time, depending on the person and the situation (Furnham, 1994).

Existence needs include the physiological and safety requirements necessary for survival, such as food, clothing, shelter, and security. These correspond broadly to the first two levels of Maslow's hierarchy (Quigley, 2015). Relatedness needs concern meaningful interpersonal relationships in personal and professional settings. These include relationships with family members, friends, colleagues, and other social groups and correspond broadly to Maslow's belongingness and external esteem needs (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Growth needs concern personal development, achievement, and the realization of one's potential. These correspond to Maslow's internal esteem and self-actualization needs (Legault, 2017). Thus, ERG Theory presents a more flexible organization of Maslow's five categories of physiological, safety, belongingness, esteem, and self-actualization needs.

Competence need

Competence refers to the innate tendency to develop skills and abilities and to experience effectiveness in one's actions (Legault, 2017). Individuals naturally seek challenges that are appropriate to their abilities. Successfully meeting these challenges produces a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, which contributes to psychological growth and well-being (Horikoshi, 2023; Phan et al., 2017; Vittersø, 2014).

The need for competence does not develop independently of the surrounding environment. Its satisfaction depends partly on social and cultural conditions that provide opportunities for learning, mastery, and improvement. Feedback from managers, colleagues, and peers can either support or undermine an individual's sense of competence. Deci (1971) found that unexpected positive feedback following the successful completion of a task increased intrinsic motivation by strengthening individuals' perceptions of competence. Positive feedback can encourage people to continue performing an activity because they find it meaningful and experience a sense of capability (Legault, 2020). In contrast, negative feedback may weaken perceived competence and reduce intrinsic motivation (Legault, 2020; Vallerand & Reid, 1984).

Competence is one of the three basic psychological needs considered innate to every person. It motivates individuals to develop mastery over tasks they consider important (Ryan & Deci, 2023; Sagor, 2003). According to Legault (2017), the desire to satisfy the need for competence encourages individuals to persist, sustain their effort, and continue

improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Individuals who feel capable are more likely to remain committed to their goals despite challenges or criticism.

Research has shown that satisfying the needs for autonomy and competence can strengthen engagement, intrinsic motivation, and achievement while reducing susceptibility to negative emotions (Jang et al., 2009). Therefore, a supportive work environment that provides appropriate challenges, constructive feedback, and opportunities for professional growth can promote employees' sense of competence and improve their motivation and functioning.

Psychological need frustration

Within Self-Determination Theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that satisfying the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is essential for optimal functioning and psychological well-being. When these needs are supported, individuals are more likely to experience motivation, personal growth, and well-being. Their satisfaction also supports the process through which externally motivated behavior becomes internalized and personally meaningful.

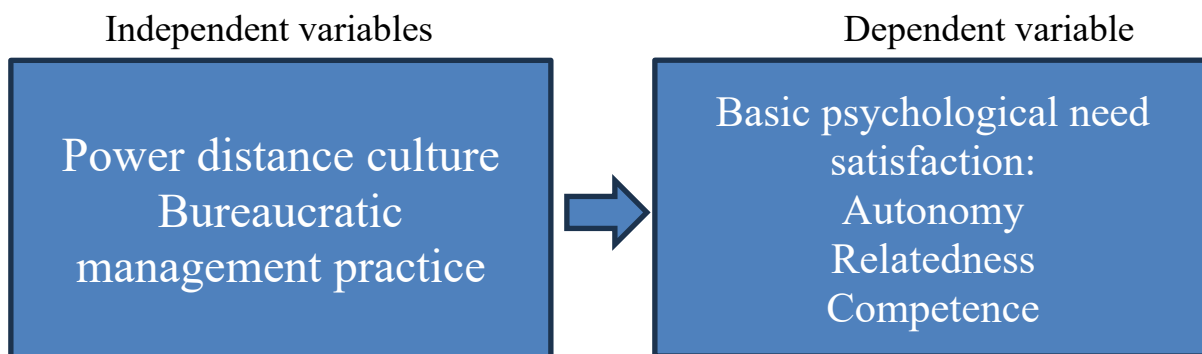
In contrast, when these needs are frustrated or left unsatisfied, individuals may experience reduced motivation and psychological distress (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). Although all individuals have inherent tendencies toward growth, how these tendencies are expressed depends partly on the conditions in their social environment. Environments that support basic psychological needs promote healthy development, while controlling, rejecting, or discouraging environments may hinder growth and contribute to ill-being.

Autonomy refers to the need to experience choice, self-direction, and volition when performing an activity. It involves acting willingly and feeling ownership over one's decisions and behavior. Autonomy is frustrated when individuals feel pressured, controlled, or unable to influence their decisions and direction because of external demands or restrictions (deCharms, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Relatedness refers to the desire to connect with others and experience mutual care, acceptance, and belonging (Ryan, 1995). This need is satisfied when individuals feel valued, supported, and meaningfully connected to others. Its frustration may result in feelings of rejection, isolation, and loneliness.

Competence involves feeling capable, skillful, and effective in performing tasks and achieving desired outcomes (Deci, 1975; Ryan, 1995). It is satisfied when individuals have opportunities to use and develop their abilities successfully. Conversely, competence frustration may cause individuals to feel incapable, ineffective, or doubtful of their ability to accomplish their goals.

Conceptual framework



Source: Hofstede (1980), Langer, et al. (2017)

Ryan and Deci (2000)

Figure 1: The conceptual framework explains the objective of the study. It shows that power distance and bureaucratic management can affect employees' basic psychological needs.

Statement of the problems

The study aimed to examine the impact of power distance, organizational culture, and bureaucratic management practices on employees' basic psychological needs. It specifically answered the following questions:

Hypothesis

H 1: Is there a relationship between power distance, organizational culture, and basic psychological needs satisfaction?

H2: Is there a relationship between bureaucratic management practice and basic psychological needs satisfaction?

Organizational culture and management practices can positively or negatively affect performance. Studies have suggested that positive organizational culture affects employees' productivity and performance (Niswaty et al., 2021; Abane et al., 2022), and the same is true for bureaucratic management practices, which can influence employees' organizational commitment (Suzuki & Hur, 2019). The current study also hypothesizes that power-distance organizational culture and bureaucratic management practices can affect employees' satisfaction with basic psychological needs.

Scope and delimitation of the study

The current study limits its investigation to one dimension of organizational culture presented by Hofstede (1980), namely power distance and bureaucratic management practices, and their effects on the basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

Research methodology

This section presents the methodology employed in conducting the study. It describes the research design, data-gathering instruments, study population, research locale, data-gathering procedures, and statistical methods used to analyze the data.

Research design

The study employed a quantitative approach using descriptive-assessment and correlational research designs. Descriptive research involves describing, recording, analyzing, and interpreting data collected through questionnaires. It is a fact-finding method that systematically presents existing conditions or describes "what is" based on the data obtained from the study participants (Ariola, 2006).

In this study, the descriptive-assessment design was used to determine the levels of power-distance organizational culture, bureaucratic management practices, and satisfaction of basic psychological needs. The correlational design was used to examine whether power-distance organizational culture and bureaucratic management practices were significantly related to employees' satisfaction of their basic psychological needs.

Locale of the study

The study was conducted at Divine Word College of Laoag, in Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Philippines.

Population

The study population consisted of all teaching and non-teaching employees of Divine Word College of Laoag. Because the total number of employees was manageable, total enumeration was employed. Thus, all eligible employees were invited to participate in the study.

Data gathering instruments

The study utilized a structured questionnaire composed of three scales. The items measuring power distance were adapted from the Power Distance Scale developed by Adamovic (2023). The items assessing employees' satisfaction and frustration of the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness were adapted from the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale developed by Chen et al. (2015). Meanwhile, the items measuring bureaucratic management practices were adapted from the questionnaire developed by Langer et al. (2017) and subsequently adopted by Abun (2021).

Data gathering procedures

Before collecting the data, the researcher submitted a formal letter to the President of Divine Word College of Laoag requesting permission to administer the questionnaires to the College's employees. After approval was granted, the researcher personally met with the employees, explained the purpose of the study, and invited them to participate by completing the questionnaire.

The distribution and retrieval of the completed questionnaires were coordinated by the researcher with the assistance of the President's designated representative and members of the teaching and non-teaching personnel.

Ethical considerations

The study complied with applicable ethical standards for research involving human participants. Before data collection, permission was obtained from the College President, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and the data collected were used solely for the study. No animals were involved in the research.

Statistical treatment of data

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The weighted mean was employed to determine the levels of power-distance organizational culture, bureaucratic management practices, and satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine whether significant relationships existed between power-distance organizational culture and basic psychological need satisfaction, and between bureaucratic management practices and basic psychological need satisfaction.

The following ranges of values with their descriptive interpretation were used:

Statistical Range	Descriptive Interpretation
4.21-5.00	<i>Strongly agree/ very High/Very satisfied (SA/VH/VS)</i>
3.41-4.20	<i>Agree/High/Satisfied (A/H/S)</i>
2.61-3.40	<i>Somewhat agree/Moderate/Somewhat satisfied (SWA/M/SWS)</i>
1.81-2.60	<i>Disagree/Low/Dissatisfied (D/L/D)</i>
1.00-1.80	<i>Strongly disagree/very low/very dissatisfied (SD/VL/VD).</i>

Data presentation and analysis

Problem statement: Is there a relationship between power distance organizational culture and satisfaction of basic psychological needs?

Table 1: Correlation between power distance and satisfaction of basic psychological needs

		autonomy	relatedness	competency	Overall, the basic psychological needs of employees
Decision-making	Pearson Correlation	-.249**	-.249**	-.361**	-.322**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
Work relationship	Pearson Correlation	-.029	.005	-.161*	-.063
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.682	.941	.024	.379
Overall power distance organizational culture of the institution	Pearson Correlation	-.165*	-.149*	-.294**	-.225**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.036	.000	.001

Source: SPSS

The analysis shows a significant negative relationship between power-distance organizational culture and employees' satisfaction with basic psychological needs. Overall, higher levels of power distance are associated with lower satisfaction of autonomy, relatedness, competence, and overall psychological needs ($r = -0.225$, $p = .001$).

A closer look at the dimensions indicates that decision-making is the key driver of this relationship, showing strong correlations with competence ($r = -0.361$, $p < .01$), Overall Needs Satisfaction ($r = -0.322$, $p < .01$), Autonomy ($r = -0.249$, $p < .01$), and Relatedness ($r = -0.249$, $p < .01$). In contrast, the work relationship dimension shows weaker, mostly non-significant correlations, with only a small negative effect on competence ($r = -0.161$, $p = .024$). This suggests that power distance practices are the primary factors undermining employees' satisfaction of psychological needs.

Problem statement: Is there a relationship between bureaucratic management practice and basic psychological needs satisfaction?

Table 2: Correlation between bureaucratic management and basic psychological need satisfaction

		Bureaucratic management practice
autonomy	Pearson Correlation	.104
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.145
relatedness	Pearson Correlation	.059
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.411
competency	Pearson Correlation	-.033
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.641
Overall, the basic psychological needs of employees	Pearson Correlation	.048
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.501

Source: SPSS

The analysis indicates no significant relationship between bureaucratic management practices and employees' satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Correlations are weak and non-significant across all dimensions: Autonomy ($r = 0.104$, $p = .145$), Relatedness ($r = 0.059$, $p = .411$), Competence ($r = -0.033$, $p = .641$), and overall needs satisfaction ($r = 0.048$, $p = .501$). This suggests that the presence of formal rules, procedures, and structured work roles neither enhances nor undermines employees' sense of autonomy, connectedness, or competence in this organizational context.

Results and discussions

The study examined the relationship between power-distance organizational culture, bureaucratic management practices, and employees' satisfaction of their basic psychological needs. The findings revealed moderate levels of power distance and bureaucratic management practices, while the satisfaction of employees' basic psychological needs

was high. Correlation analysis showed a significant negative relationship between power-distance culture and basic psychological need satisfaction. In contrast, no significant relationship was found between bureaucratic management practices and basic psychological need satisfaction.

The significant negative relationship indicates that as power distance increases, employees' satisfaction of their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness tends to decrease. Employees' perceptions and acceptance of unequal power distribution may shape the extent to which they can exercise autonomy, demonstrate competence, and establish meaningful workplace relationships (Johnstone & Beusch, 2025; Pardede & Kovac, 2023). In high-power-distance environments, employees are generally expected to respect authority and accept centralized decision-making. Such conditions may limit their opportunities to express opinions, participate in decisions, and exercise control over their work. In contrast, low-power-distance cultures place greater emphasis on equality, individual freedom, and open communication, which may support autonomy and self-expression (House, 2004; Zhang et al., 2018).

The findings are consistent with the proposition that organizational environments influence the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Abbate et al., 2025; Ryan & Deci, 2000). When employees have limited involvement in decisions and experience a substantial gap between themselves and organizational authorities, they may feel less autonomous, less capable of influencing workplace outcomes, and less connected to management. These experiences may have implications for their motivation and well-being. However, because the study used a correlational design, the findings establish an association rather than a causal relationship.

The absence of a significant relationship between bureaucratic management practices and basic psychological need satisfaction suggests that formal rules, hierarchy, and specialization do not necessarily correspond to higher or lower need satisfaction among the employees studied. Bureaucratic management emphasizes organizational structure, standardized procedures, and specialized responsibilities (Abun et al., 2021; Matjie, 2022). Although these practices may sometimes create impersonal relationships or limit employee discretion, they may also provide order, clarity, consistency, and clearly defined responsibilities.

The effect of bureaucratic practices may therefore depend on how they are implemented and experienced by employees. Other workplace conditions, such as leadership style, job design, supervisory support, and opportunities for participation, may have stronger relationships with psychological need satisfaction (Khan et al., 2025; Monteiro & Adler, 2022). The nonsignificant result should not be interpreted as proof that bureaucratic management has no effect under all circumstances. It indicates only that no statistically significant relationship was detected among the participants and variables examined in the present study.

Theoretical contribution

The significant negative relationship between power-distance organizational culture and basic psychological need satisfaction supports the application of Self-Determination Theory in the workplace. The findings suggest that organizational environments characterized by greater power distance may provide fewer opportunities to satisfy employees' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Hussain et al., 2026).

The study offers empirical evidence that power distance may function as an environmentally controlling condition associated with reduced self-direction, fewer opportunities to demonstrate mastery, and limited interpersonal connection (Ye et al., 2025). However, because the study employed a correlational design, the findings support an association between these variables and do not establish that power distance directly causes the frustration of employees' psychological needs.

Practical contribution

The significant relationship between power distance and basic psychological need satisfaction suggests that the organization may benefit from reducing practices that unnecessarily reinforce status differences and centralized authority. Management may consider delegating appropriate decision-making authority so that employees can exercise professional judgment and take greater ownership of their work. Open communication should also be encouraged by providing employees with opportunities to express concerns, offer suggestions, and engage in constructive dialogue across organizational levels.

Employees may also be given meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their duties and working conditions. Their perspectives should be acknowledged and considered during policy development and organizational planning. These practices may help create a more inclusive and empowering work environment that supports autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Nevertheless, these recommendations should be implemented carefully because the study's correlational findings do not establish that reducing power distance will directly cause improvements in psychological need satisfaction.

Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between power-distance organizational culture, bureaucratic management practices, and employees' satisfaction of their basic psychological needs. The findings revealed moderate levels of power-distance culture and bureaucratic management practices, while employees' satisfaction of their basic psychological needs was high.

A significant negative relationship was found between power-distance organizational culture and basic psychological need satisfaction. This indicates that higher levels of power distance are associated with lower satisfaction of employees' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, the corresponding research hypothesis was supported. In contrast, bureaucratic management practices were not significantly related to basic psychological need satisfaction; thus, the corresponding research hypothesis was not supported.

The study recognizes its limitation in coverage. There is a need to conduct a broader study involving a larger population and a more diverse set of organizations.

Authors' contribution: The paper was written by the author

Ethical review statement: The study was conducted with approval from the ethics review board.

Conflict of interest: No conflict of interest.

Funding: The study was funded by the author.

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