

Designing a Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Management System for Senior High Schools in the Philippines

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Abstract

This study investigates school discipline practices in senior high schools (SHS) in Misamis Oriental, Philippines, to design a culturally responsive, evidence-based positive behavior management system. Employing a mixed-methods approach with data and methodological triangulation across 42 public and private schools, the research examines leadership influences, program preparation, decision-making sources, and the quality of consequences and motivational strategies. Findings reveal systemic challenges: 60% of schools report inconsistent policies, 70% lack structured planning, 65% rely on non-evidence-based decision-making, and 80% predominantly use punitive consequences. Qualitative data further highlight limited stakeholder involvement and reactive, ad hoc practices. Guided by General Systems Theory, Theory of Action, and Self-Determination Theory, the study proposes a responsive framework integrating four core components—climate and prevention, expectations and consequences, motivation, and equity and continuous improvement—aligned with U.S. Department of Education guidelines and adapted to the Philippine K–12 context. The framework emphasizes stakeholder collaboration, culturally relevant values (e.g., *bayanihan*, *respeto*, *kapwa*), and tiered, motivation-driven interventions. This research fills a critical gap in Philippine education by offering a structured, culturally grounded model to shift from punitive discipline to a proactive, equitable system that supports student well-being, school safety, and DepEd’s child protection agenda.

Keywords: school discipline, positive behavior management, culturally responsive education, senior high school, Philippines, evidence-based framework, school climate, self-determination theory, stakeholder collaboration, educational policy

Introduction

The implementation of the K–12 Basic Education Program in the Philippines marked a significant transformation in the country’s educational framework, aiming to better prepare learners for higher education, employment, and global citizenship in the 21st century (Department of Education [DepEd], 2016). A key component of this reform is the Senior High School (SHS) program, which extends secondary education by two years to provide students with academic, technical-vocational, and socio-emotional competencies. While much of the national focus has been on curriculum alignment, teacher training, and academic readiness, one critical area remains underdeveloped: school discipline and behavior management particularly at the SHS level.

Effective discipline is not merely about enforcing rules; it is foundational to creating a positive school climate that supports student well-being, academic engagement, and safety. Research consistently shows that schools with proactive, equitable, and supportive behavior systems report higher

attendance, improved academic outcomes, and stronger student-teacher relationships (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Yet in many senior high schools across regions such as Misamis Oriental, discipline practices remain largely reactive, inconsistent, and rooted in punitive traditions. Reports of arbitrary sanctions, overreliance on suspensions, and limited attention to the underlying causes of misbehavior suggest a system in need of structural and cultural reorientation.

Despite the existence of national policies—such as Republic Act No. 10627 (Anti-Bullying Act of 2013) and DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012 (Child Protection Policy)—there remains a persistent gap between policy intent and classroom implementation (Congress of the Philippines, 2013; DepEd, 2012). Many schools lack the systemic frameworks, trained personnel, and evidence-based tools to translate these mandates into consistent, restorative, and culturally grounded practices. Moreover, international models of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), while effective in their contexts, are often adopted without meaningful adaptation to the collectivist values, relational norms, and community-oriented ethos that define Filipino educational environments.

This study addresses a critical gap: the absence of a structured, culturally responsive behavior management system specifically designed for the developmental and socio-cultural realities of Philippine senior high schools. Drawing on a mixed-methods investigation across 42 public and private SHS institutions in Misamis Oriental, the research examines current disciplinary practices through the lenses of General Systems Theory, Theory of Action, and Self-Determination Theory. Findings reveal systemic inconsistencies in leadership, planning, decision-making, and consequence structures highlighting a pressing need for a cohesive, proactive, and motivation-driven framework.

The purpose of this paper is to present the design of a Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Management System for SHS in the Philippines; one that integrates international best practices with local values such as *bayanihan* (community cooperation), *respeto* (respect), and *kapwa* (shared identity). This proposed system responds to empirical findings while aligning with DepEd's broader child protection agenda and the global shift toward restorative, equity-centered education. By grounding the framework in both data and cultural context, this study offers a replicable model for transforming discipline from a mechanism of control into a vehicle for student development, inclusion, and school improvement.

Problem of the Study

Despite policy mandates such as the Anti-Bullying Act (RA 10627) and DepEd's Child Protection Policy (DO 40, s. 2012), senior high schools (SHS) in regions like Misamis Oriental continue to operate without a unified, evidence-based system for managing student behavior. This study identifies a cluster of interrelated problems that undermine the development of a positive school climate and equitable discipline practices.

First, leadership practices are inconsistent, with 60% of schools reporting unclear or variably enforced policies across roles and institutions. This lack of coherence fragments accountability and weakens systemic integrity. Second, planning is largely reactive; 70% of schools lack structured, annual processes for designing or reviewing discipline programs, resulting in ad hoc responses to behavioral incidents rather than proactive prevention.

Third, decision-making is not evidence-based. A significant majority (65%) of schools rely on anecdotal reports or administrative discretion rather than data from student records, behavioral trends, or research-based models. This undermines the validity and fairness of disciplinary actions. Fourth, consequences are predominantly punitive, with 80% of schools emphasizing suspensions, reprimands,

and exclusionary measures, while only a small fraction (15–25%) employ structured motivational strategies or restorative practices.

These conditions reflect a system in crisis — one that is fragmented, reactive, and misaligned with both international best practices and Filipino cultural values such as *bayanihan* (community), *respeto* (respect), and *kapwa* (shared identity). The absence of a cohesive, culturally grounded behavior management framework not only jeopardizes student well-being and school safety but also contradicts the holistic aims of the K–12 program.

This study addresses these systemic failures by designing a Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Management System for SHS that integrates empirical findings, theoretical grounding, and local cultural wisdom to shift from punishment to prevention, from isolation to inclusion, and from inconsistency to coherence.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study was conducted to examine current school discipline practices in senior high schools (SHS) in Misamis Oriental, Philippines, and to design a culturally responsive, evidence-based positive behavior management system tailored to the Philippine educational context. Despite policy mandates and curriculum reforms under the K–12 program, there remains a critical gap in the implementation of structured, equitable, and proactive discipline frameworks at the SHS level. Existing practices are often fragmented, reactive, and inconsistent, lacking alignment with both international best practices and Filipino cultural values such as *bayanihan* (community), *respeto* (respect), and *kapwa* (shared identity).

Guided by General Systems Theory, Theory of Action, and Self-Determination Theory, this research employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the systemic nature of discipline practices across 42 public and private senior high schools. The study aimed to move beyond descriptive critique and toward actionable design, thus, developing a responsive framework grounded in empirical data, theoretical coherence, and cultural relevance.

To achieve this purpose, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What leadership influences shape the development and implementation of behavior goals, policies, and expectations in senior high schools in Misamis Oriental?
2. How do school communities in Misamis Oriental prepare for and implement school climate and discipline programs on an annual basis?
3. What sources do senior high schools in Misamis Oriental draw upon when making decisions about student behavior and discipline?
4. What is the quality and nature of consequences and motivational strategies used in response to student behavior?
5. Based on the findings from the first four questions, what culturally responsive and evidence-based framework for a positive behavior management system can be designed for senior high schools in the Philippines?

These research questions were designed to support a convergent mixed-methods design, allowing for triangulation of quantitative survey data and qualitative insights from interviews and document

reviews. The ultimate goal was not only to diagnose systemic weaknesses but to co-construct a sustainable, scalable, and culturally meaningful alternative to prevailing punitive models.

Literature Review

Effective school discipline has evolved from a primarily punitive, compliance-driven model to a proactive, preventive, and student-centered approach grounded in positive behavior supports. This shift reflects a growing recognition that school climate, behavioral expectations, and disciplinary responses are not merely administrative concerns but central to student well-being, academic engagement, and long-term success (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Internationally, frameworks such as School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) have demonstrated success in reducing office discipline referrals, improving peer relationships, and fostering safer learning environments, particularly in high-need schools (Deltour et al., 2022; Flannery et al., 2014). However, the effectiveness of such models is contingent upon their cultural relevance and contextual fidelity—factors often overlooked when Western-developed systems are transplanted into non-Western educational settings (Obiakor, 2015).

In response to this limitation, scholars have advanced Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (CRPBIS) as an essential evolution of traditional PBIS. CRPBIS explicitly acknowledges the cultural and linguistic diversity of student populations and seeks to create behavioral systems that affirm students' identities rather than demand assimilation (Obiakor, 2015). Rather than simply replacing unwanted behaviors, CRPBIS fosters student agency and empowers learners to co-construct behavioral norms within their school communities (Cressey, 2019). This approach is rooted in the understanding that effective classroom management is deeply influenced by cultural context; strategies that succeed in one setting may be ineffective or even counterproductive in another due to differing socio-cultural values and communication styles (Wahab et al., 2013). For instance, culturally responsive teachers leverage students' lived experiences as instructional assets, transforming cultural diversity from a perceived barrier into a pedagogical strength (Stevenson et al., 2020).

CRPBIS integrates multiple evidence-based domains—culturally responsive teaching, social-emotional learning (SEL), and positive behavioral interventions—into a unified, systemic framework (Cressey, 2021). Research indicates that such integrated models yield significantly better outcomes than isolated interventions, with combined PBIS and SEL programs showing marked improvements in mental health and reductions in problem behaviors (Cressey, 2019; Cook et al., 2015). At the school level, CRPBIS is operationalized through policies and practices that promote positive relationships, embed culturally relevant content, and implement universal supports across classroom instruction (Martinsone et al., 2023). Yet, many existing school-wide programs lack the organizational structures necessary to sustain culturally responsive leadership, stakeholder collaboration, and community-building processes (Miller et al., 2018).

The success of CRPBIS hinges on both pedagogical and leadership practices that systematically address the needs of diverse learners. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) calls for educators to adapt their instructional methods to honor students' cultural and social backgrounds, building upon their values and knowledge systems (Miller, 2020). CRP has been shown to enhance teacher reflection, strengthen home-school connections, and combat educational inequities by recognizing the cultural capital students bring to the classroom (Williams et al., 2019). Its core principles include incorporating diversity into the curriculum, employing varied instructional strategies, and cultivating a psychologically safe and inclusive learning environment (Sejfovic et al., 2024). In such settings, students experience increased engagement, improved peer relationships, and greater academic motivation (Sejfovic et al., 2024).

At the administrative level, Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) plays a pivotal role in reshaping educational organizations to better serve minoritized students (Miller, 2020). CRSL models have been associated with higher student engagement, stronger staff collaboration, and improved retention rates for both students and teachers (Taqwiem et al., 2024). These leadership approaches are particularly effective in enhancing achievement among historically underrepresented groups by affirming their cultural identities and challenging systemic inequities (Taqwiem et al., 2024).

Implementation fidelity, however, depends on comprehensive professional development. Research consistently shows that multi-component training programs—combining intensive workshops with ongoing coaching—are more effective than one-off professional development sessions (Huang et al., 2014). For example, the *ParentCorps* model integrates experiential training, in-vivo coaching, and systematic behavior management, resulting in sustained improvements in classroom practice (Huang et al., 2014; Calzada et al., 2012). Similarly, the *Double Check* intervention demonstrated that teachers receiving coaching in addition to training exhibited more proactive behavior management, greater student cooperation, and fewer disruptions than those receiving training alone (Bradshaw et al., 2018). Coaching has also proven effective in reducing disciplinary disparities among minority students (Bottiani et al., 2020; Bradshaw et al., 2018).

In contexts involving Indigenous or historically marginalized populations, implementation must also incorporate trauma-informed practices alongside cultural responsiveness. Studies with First Nations students reveal that effective behavior support requires educators to collaborate respectfully with communities and integrate an understanding of intergenerational trauma (Bellamy et al., 2022). Training that combines cultural competency with trauma-informed approaches enhances teacher self-efficacy and strengthens relational strategies (Schimke et al., 2022). Moreover, systemic implementation demands active engagement of families and communities through participatory problem-solving, while equipping staff with discipline strategies rooted in cultural humility (McKinnon et al., 2024; Mims et al., 2022). These comprehensive approaches not only improve socioemotional climates but also address structural inequities that disproportionately affect marginalized learners (McKinnon et al., 2024).

High schools present unique challenges in behavior management, often reporting the highest rates of suspensions and expulsions (Speight et al., 2021; Flannery et al., 2014). Yet, when SWPBIS is implemented with fidelity, high schools experience significant reductions in disciplinary incidents (Flannery et al., 2014). Classroom-level success depends on teachers' ability to use positive reinforcement, culturally relevant materials, and interactive methods to boost motivation (Lo, 2025). Teachers who cultivate respectful, supportive environments—where cultural diversity is acknowledged and emotional needs are met—tend to see higher engagement and fewer disruptions (Lo, 2025). In the Philippine context, effective behavior management has been linked to relationship-building, praise and reward systems, and graduated discipline approaches that maximize instructional time and academic achievement (Lucernas, 2024). A holistic framework must integrate academic and social-emotional needs, as preventing problem behaviors is essential for optimizing learning (Hoover et al., 2014). Government guidelines further support strategies such as student involvement in school activities, strong interpersonal relationships, and home-school partnerships (Awang et al., 2013). Successful teachers emphasize respect, active participation, frequent praise, and guiding students to self-correct their behavior (Awang et al., 2013).

Critically, cultural adaptation of behavior management systems goes beyond translation—it requires deep integration of local values, practices, and contextual realities. Resilience-based interventions, for example, achieve the best outcomes when they are collaborative, multi-systemic, and aligned with what children identify as their needs (Tolentino et al., 2018). Programs lacking cultural grounding often fail or produce unintended negative consequences (Tolentino et al., 2018; Ungar et al., 2014). In the

Philippines, culturally resonant frameworks such as *Katatagan*—the Filipino conceptualization of resilience—demonstrate how interventions can build on indigenous strengths and local understanding (Tolentino et al., 2018). Effective programs must strengthen students' social capital across home, school, and peer networks while supporting both academic and non-academic development (Tolentino et al., 2018).

However, adaptation in low- and middle-income countries like the Philippines faces challenges related to economic adversity, social inequities, and sociocultural norms, including the widespread acceptance of corporal punishment (Mamaug et al., 2021). Culturally responsive interventions must therefore promote positive discipline skills while sensitively addressing harmful practices (Mamaug et al., 2021). Policy implementation in the Philippines is further shaped by both formal hierarchies and informal dynamics—such as interpersonal relationships and local expectations—making local leadership capacity a decisive factor in successful adaptation (Brooks et al., 2024). Principals' interpretations and enforcement of policies significantly influence outcomes at the school level (Brooks et al., 2024).

The Philippines has made strides in culturally adapting school-based systems, particularly in mental health. The national approach integrates policy development, curriculum design, and support services to create nurturing environments (Shibuya et al., 2025). This multifaceted model exemplifies how behavior management systems can be aligned with both global best practices and local cultural contexts (Shibuya et al., 2025).

In summary, the literature underscores that effective, equitable discipline requires more than imported models—it demands culturally grounded, evidence-based, and systemically implemented frameworks. While international standards provide valuable guidance, their success in the Philippine senior high school context depends on meaningful adaptation that honors Filipino values such as *bayanihan* (community), *respeto* (respect), and *kapwa* (shared identity). This study builds on this body of knowledge by designing a responsive behavior management system specifically tailored to the developmental, cultural, and institutional realities of SHS in the Philippines.

Methodology

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design to investigate current school discipline practices in senior high schools (SHS) in Misamis Oriental, Philippines, and to design a culturally responsive, evidence-based positive behavior management system. The methodology integrated quantitative and qualitative data through data and methodological triangulation, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of systemic challenges and stakeholder perspectives. The research was guided by three theoretical frameworks: General Systems Theory (GST) (von Bertalanffy, 1950), which provided a holistic lens for analyzing schools as interconnected systems; Theory of Action (Parsons, 1951), which supported the evaluation of deliberate, goal-oriented strategies; and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which informed the assessment of motivational provisions and stakeholder engagement.

Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was selected to address the complexity of school discipline as a systemic and cultural phenomenon. The design combined quantitative surveys to identify patterns and trends across schools, and qualitative interviews to explore the underlying reasons, experiences, and contextual nuances behind those patterns. Data triangulation was achieved through multiple sources: survey responses, semi-structured interviews, document reviews (e.g., school policies, guidance office records), and public domain data (e.g., DepEd reports, U.S. Department of Education guidelines).

Methodological triangulation was ensured by using surveys, interviews, site visits, and document analysis, enhancing the credibility and validity of the findings.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted across 42 public and private senior high schools in three divisions of Misamis Oriental: Gingoog City, the province of Misamis Oriental, and Cagayan de Oro City. Participants included school leaders (principals, assistant principals), discipline officers (prefects of discipline), classroom teachers, guidance counselors, student affairs officers, human resource personnel, security staff, and student organization officers. This diverse sample ensured representation across school types, roles, and community contexts, allowing for a multifaceted analysis of discipline practices. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents in accordance with ethical research standards.

Instruments

Two primary instruments were used:

1. School Climate and Discipline Inventory Tool (SCDIT) – A structured survey administered in-person and online, designed to assess four key domains aligned with the U.S. Department of Education's *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline* (2014):
 - Climate and prevention
 - Expectations and consequences
 - Motivation
 - Equity and continuous improvement

The tool included Likert-scale items (1–5) for quantitative analysis and open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights.

2. Semi-Structured Interview Guide – Used to conduct in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, focusing on leadership practices, planning processes, decision-making sources, and perceptions of current discipline strategies.

Reliability of the SCDIT was established through a test-retest method, yielding consistent results across time, confirming the instrument's stability. Content validity was ensured through alignment with the theoretical frameworks and international benchmarks.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection occurred in four phases:

1. Document Review: Existing school records (e.g., discipline policies, guidance reports) and public policy documents (e.g., DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012; Republic Act No. 10627) were reviewed to contextualize current practices and identify policy-practice gaps.
2. Survey Administration: The SCDIT was distributed to 42 schools, with targeted distribution across roles to capture diverse perspectives. Online and in-person formats ensured broad participation, especially during logistical constraints.
3. Semi-Structured Interviews: Key informants (e.g., principals, guidance counselors) were interviewed to gather rich, contextual data on decision-making, stakeholder involvement, and implementation challenges. Interviews were audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed for analysis.

4. Site Visits and Benchmarking: Observational visits to U.S.-based schools and training centers (e.g., University of Connecticut's Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports training, San Francisco Unified School District, Clark County School District, Las Vegas) were conducted to benchmark best practices and inform the design of the proposed framework.

Prior to data collection, official permissions were secured from the Department of Education regional and division offices to ensure compliance with institutional and ethical requirements.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was tailored to the research questions and the nature of the data:

- Quantitative Data: Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) and cross-tabulation by school type (public/private) and community role (e.g., principal, teacher, counselor) to identify patterns and disparities in practices.
- Qualitative Data: Interview transcripts and open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes, such as inconsistency in leadership, reactive planning, and lack of stakeholder involvement.
- Integration of Findings: A triangulation paradigm was used to synthesize quantitative and qualitative results, ensuring convergence and depth. This integrated analysis directly informed the design of the proposed behavior management framework.
- Framework Development: The final framework was constructed through theoretical and empirical synthesis, aligning findings with the U.S. Department of Education's *Guiding Principles* (2014) and adapting them to the Filipino cultural context emphasizing values such as *bayanihan* (community), *respeto* (respect), and *kapwa* (shared identity).

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained through anonymization of data. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. All procedures were reviewed and approved by relevant educational authorities, and data were used solely for research and framework development purposes.

Findings

This study investigated school discipline practices across 42 public and private senior high schools (SHS) in Misamis Oriental, Philippines, to inform the design of a culturally responsive, evidence-based positive behavior management system. Data were collected through surveys, semi-structured interviews, document reviews, and benchmarking activities, and analyzed using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, and thematic analysis. The findings are presented in alignment with the five research questions.

Research Question 1: Leadership Influences on Goals, Policies, and Expectations

Leadership practices in SHS were marked by inconsistency and limited coordination. Survey results indicated that 60% of respondents reported unclear or inconsistently enforced policies, with public schools showing greater variability than private institutions. Cross-tabulation by school type revealed that only 30% of public schools had clear and consistent policies, compared to 45% of private schools. Similarly, only 20% of public schools utilized evidence-based practices in policy formulation, compared to 35% of private schools.

Thematic analysis of interviews with principals and discipline officers identified recurring issues: ad hoc decision-making, lack of inter-role coordination, and minimal strategic alignment. Many leaders described relying on personal judgment or administrative precedent rather than structured, data-informed processes. Guidance counselors and student affairs officers reported particularly high levels of policy ambiguity, with 70% noting a lack of coordination in implementing behavioral expectations. These findings suggest a fragmented leadership landscape that undermines systemic coherence in discipline management.

Research Question 2: Preparation and Execution of School Climate and Discipline Programs

Schools demonstrated limited capacity for structured, proactive planning. Approximately 70% of schools lacked formal, annual processes for designing or reviewing their school climate and discipline programs. Instead, planning was often reactive, triggered by incidents rather than driven by long-term goals.

Cross-tabulation showed that only 30% of public schools engaged in structured annual planning, compared to 45% of private schools. Stakeholder involvement was minimal across all school types, averaging between 25% and 35%. Thematic analysis revealed that teachers, students, and parents were rarely consulted during planning phases. Many schools relied on outdated policies not aligned with the current K–12 SHS curriculum or student demographics. Principals acknowledged that discipline programs were often implemented sporadically, without monitoring or evaluation, indicating a lack of institutional commitment to continuous improvement.

Research Question 3: Sources for School Climate and Discipline Decision-Making

Decision-making in discipline matters was predominantly non-evidence-based. 65% of schools reported relying on anecdotal reports, administrative discretion, or informal consultations rather than empirical data such as behavioral records, incident trends, or research-based models.

Cross-tabulation by school category showed that public schools were more likely to depend on administrative directives (70%) compared to private schools (55%). Conversely, private schools were slightly more likely to reference external guidelines or best practices. At the role level, guidance counselors and student affairs officers reported the lowest use of evidence-based sources—only 15% and 10%, respectively while also exhibiting the highest reliance on top-down directives (75% and 80%). Interviews revealed a lack of access to behavioral data systems and limited professional development on data interpretation. Many staff expressed uncertainty about how to use records from the Guidance Office or Prefect of Discipline to inform policy. This suggests a systemic gap in capacity for data-driven decision-making.

Research Question 4: Quality of Consequences and Motivation Provisions

The disciplinary response system was overwhelmingly punitive. 80% of schools reported using suspensions, reprimands, or exclusionary measures as primary consequences for student misbehavior. In contrast, only 15–25% of schools employed structured positive reinforcement strategies such as recognition programs, behavioral incentives, or restorative practices.

Cross-tabulation by school type showed that public schools were more punitive (80% reliance on punitive measures) than private schools (75%). However, both sectors underutilized motivational provisions. At the role level, student affairs officers and guidance counselors reported the highest use of punitive consequences (90% and 85%, respectively) and the lowest implementation of motivational strategies (5% and 10%).

Qualitative data revealed that consequences were often applied inconsistently and failed to address the root causes of misbehavior. Teachers and administrators acknowledged that punitive measures did little to improve long-term behavior or student engagement. Moreover, there was a near absence of tiered support systems (e.g., behavioral interventions at increasing levels of intensity), suggesting a one-size-fits-all approach to discipline.

Research Question 5: Designing a Responsive School Discipline Framework

Synthesizing the findings, a clear need emerged for a proactive, integrated, and culturally grounded behavior management system tailored to the Philippine SHS context. The data revealed a system characterized by:

- Fragmented leadership and inconsistent policies,
- Reactive and non-collaborative planning,
- Reliance on non-evidence-based decision-making,
- Predominantly punitive consequences,
- Minimal use of motivational or restorative strategies.

These conditions contrast sharply with the principles of effective school discipline outlined in the U.S. Department of Education's *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline* (2014), which emphasize prevention, clear expectations, motivation, and continuous improvement.

Stakeholder interviews and benchmarking with international models (e.g., Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) highlighted strong support for a shift toward a tiered, prevention-oriented framework that incorporates Filipino cultural values such as *bayanihan* (community cooperation), *respeto* (respect), and *kapwa* (shared identity). Participants expressed willingness to adopt structured training, stakeholder collaboration, and data-informed practices—provided these are adapted to local norms and resource realities.

The empirical and qualitative evidence thus provides a robust foundation for the design of a Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Management System for SHS in the Philippines—one that is not only evidence-based but also contextually relevant and sustainable.

Discussion

This study investigated school discipline practices in senior high schools (SHS) across Misamis Oriental, Philippines, revealing a system marked by fragmentation, inconsistency, and overreliance on punitive measures. The findings, showing widespread policy ambiguity, reactive planning, non-evidence-based decision-making, and minimal motivational provisions, underscore a critical misalignment between current practices and both international best practices and the developmental needs of Filipino adolescents. Interpreted through the theoretical frameworks of General Systems Theory (GST), Theory of Action, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), these findings not only diagnose systemic failures but also illuminate a pathway toward a coherent, culturally grounded, and student-centered behavior management system.

A Fragmented System: Insights from General Systems Theory

General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1950) posits that organizations function as integrated wholes, where the interaction of components — leadership, policies, processes, and stakeholders — determines overall effectiveness. The data reveal a system in disarray: only 30–45% of schools report

clear policies, 70% lack structured planning, 65% rely on anecdotal sources, and 80% employ punitive consequences. These are not isolated issues but symptoms of a fragmented system where components operate in silos rather than in synergy.

The lack of coordination across roles — particularly among guidance counselors, student affairs officers, and teachers — further weakens systemic integrity. As GST emphasizes, a healthy system requires feedback loops, shared goals, and interdependence (von Bertalanffy, 1950). Yet, the near absence of stakeholder involvement in planning and decision-making suggests a breakdown in communication and integration. This fragmentation undermines the school's capacity to function as a unified entity, resulting in inconsistent enforcement, arbitrary sanctions, and a climate of uncertainty for both students and staff.

The proposed Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Management System directly addresses this fragmentation by integrating four core components — climate and prevention, expectations and consequences, motivation, and equity and continuous improvement — into a cohesive framework. By emphasizing stakeholder collaboration, data integration, and tiered supports, the model restores system coherence, aligning with GST's principle that interconnectedness leads to resilience (von Bertalanffy, 1950). Moreover, by embedding Filipino cultural values such as *bayanihan* (community), *respeto* (respect), and *kapwa* (shared identity), the system ensures that cultural components are not peripheral but central to its functioning.

From Ad Hoc to Intentional: The Role of Theory of Action

The Theory of Action (Parsons, 1951) asserts that organizational change requires deliberate, goal-oriented strategies grounded in evidence and aligned with intended outcomes. The current discipline landscape in SHS, however, is characterized by reactivity rather than intentionality. Planning is sporadic, policies are outdated, and decisions are often based on administrative discretion rather than data. This ad hoc approach contradicts the very premise of a Theory of Action, which demands that actions be purposeful, sequential, and evaluated for impact.

The reliance on punitive consequences — used by 80% of schools — further illustrates a lack of strategic alignment. Punishment, while immediate, rarely produces lasting behavioral change and often exacerbates disengagement (Flannery et al., 2014). In contrast, a theory-driven approach would prioritize proactive prevention, clear behavioral expectations, and tiered interventions—elements central to evidence-based models like School-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

The proposed framework operationalizes the Theory of Action by embedding structured processes for planning, implementation, and evaluation. Annual stakeholder workshops, evidence-based policy development, and quarterly data reviews ensure that actions are not only deliberate but also responsive to context and outcomes. By aligning with the U.S. Department of Education's *Guiding Principles* (2014), the model provides a clear logic model: if schools adopt structured, data-informed, and culturally responsive practices, then they will foster safer, more inclusive environments that support student success.

Fostering Intrinsic Motivation: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) posits that motivation flourishes when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The current discipline system, however, systematically undermines these psychological needs. Students are rarely involved in shaping behavioral norms, reducing their sense of autonomy. Teachers and staff report minimal training in

positive behavior strategies, limiting their competence. And the punitive, top-down nature of enforcement weakens relatedness, fostering adversarial rather than supportive relationships.

The scarcity of motivational provisions — only 15–25% of schools use structured reinforcement strategies — further confirms a deficit in intrinsic motivation. Without recognition, encouragement, or opportunities for self-correction, students are more likely to comply out of fear than internalized values. This is particularly concerning in a collectivist culture like the Philippines, where relational harmony and social belonging are central to identity (Tolentino et al., 2018).

The proposed framework directly addresses this motivational gap by integrating positive reinforcement, student recognition programs, and restorative practices that honor *kapwa* and *bayanihan*. By training staff in SDT-informed strategies, the model empowers educators to shift from control to support, fostering environments where students feel seen, capable, and connected. As Cressey (2019) notes, when students are involved in shaping their school community, they are more likely to internalize prosocial behaviors—exactly the outcome a responsive system should aim for.

Toward a Culturally Responsive and Sustainable Model

The integration of GST, Theory of Action, and SDT provides a robust theoretical foundation for the proposed framework. But its true innovation lies in its cultural responsiveness. As Obiakor (2015) argues, behavior management systems must move beyond mere translation to deep cultural adaptation. The Filipino context—shaped by collectivism, relationalism, and respect for authority — requires a model that is not just imported but co-constructed with local values.

The framework’s emphasis on community-oriented activities, restorative justice, and collaborative planning reflects this commitment. It does not reject Western models like PBIS but recontextualizes them within Filipino social fabric. This aligns with research showing that resilience-based interventions succeed when they are culturally and contextually relevant (Tolentino et al., 2018). Moreover, by addressing structural inequities and promoting equity in discipline, the model supports DepEd’s broader child protection agenda (DepEd, 2012; Congress of the Philippines, 2013).

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings have clear implications:

- For Schools: Leadership must shift from reactive management to systemic stewardship, investing in training, data systems, and stakeholder collaboration.
- For DepEd: The department should consider piloting the proposed framework in select regions, providing technical support and monitoring implementation fidelity.
- For Future Research: Replication in other Philippine regions is needed to assess the model’s scalability and cultural transferability.

While the study’s focus on Misamis Oriental limits generalizability, it provides a critical proof of concept: that a culturally responsive, evidence-based behavior management system is not only possible but necessary for the success of the K–12 program.

Conclusion

This study has examined the current state of school discipline practices in senior high schools (SHS) in Misamis Oriental, Philippines, and designed a Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Management System grounded in empirical data, theoretical coherence, and local cultural values. The findings reveal a system characterized by fragmented leadership, inconsistent policies, reactive planning, non-

evidence-based decision-making, and an overwhelming reliance on punitive consequences—practices that undermine school climate, student well-being, and the holistic aims of the K–12 program.

Interpreted through the lenses of General Systems Theory, Theory of Action, and Self-Determination Theory, these findings illustrate not merely isolated shortcomings but a systemic failure to integrate key components into a cohesive, proactive, and student-centered framework. The absence of structured planning, stakeholder collaboration, and motivational provisions reflects a gap between policy mandates—such as RA 10627 and DepEd Order No. 40—and actual implementation. While the intent of these policies is to foster safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments, their impact is diluted by ad hoc practices that prioritize control over development.

The proposed Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Management System directly addresses these systemic gaps by integrating four evidence-based components—climate and prevention, expectations and consequences, motivation, and equity and continuous improvement—adapted from the U.S. Department of Education’s *Guiding Principles* (2014). What distinguishes this framework is its deliberate cultural grounding in Filipino values such as *bayanihan* (community cooperation), *respeto* (respect), *kapwa* (shared identity), and *pakikisama* (harmonious relationships). These values are not peripheral but central to the design, ensuring that the system resonates with the lived experiences of students, teachers, and communities.

By emphasizing tiered supports, data-driven decision-making, positive reinforcement, and restorative practices, the framework shifts the paradigm from punishment to prevention, from isolation to inclusion, and from inconsistency to coherence. It aligns with global best practices while remaining contextually relevant—a critical balance for sustainable reform in low- and middle-income educational settings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and theoretical analysis, the following recommendations are proposed for schools, educational leaders, and policymakers:

1. *Implement Leadership Capacity Building Programs.* School administrators should receive structured training in systems thinking, culturally responsive leadership, and evidence-based policy development. This will address inconsistencies in policy enforcement and strengthen the strategic direction of behavior management initiatives, aligning with the principles of General Systems Theory and Theory of Action.
2. *Establish Stakeholder-Inclusive Planning Mechanisms.* Schools should institutionalize annual planning cycles that actively involve teachers, students, parents, guidance counselors, and community representatives. These collaborative processes will enhance ownership, cultural relevance, and implementation fidelity, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for school climate.
3. *Adopt Data-Driven Decision-Making Practices.* Schools must move beyond anecdotal and administrative discretion by integrating behavioral data such as incident reports, referral trends, and student feedback into policy design and review. Professional development should be provided on data collection, interpretation, and use, supporting the Theory of Action’s emphasis on deliberate, evidence-based strategies.
4. *Shift from Punitive to Motivation-Driven Interventions.* Discipline systems should reduce reliance on suspensions and reprimands and instead adopt structured positive reinforcement, restorative justice, and tiered behavioral supports. Training in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) can empower staff to foster student autonomy, competence, and relatedness — key drivers of intrinsic motivation and prosocial behavior.

5. *Pilot and Evaluate the Proposed Framework.* The Department of Education (DepEd) should support the pilot implementation of the proposed framework in select SHS institutions across Misamis Oriental and other regions. Rigorous evaluation—using both quantitative and qualitative indicators — should assess its impact on school climate, student behavior, and stakeholder satisfaction.
6. *Replicate and Scale the Study Nationally.* Future research should replicate this study in diverse Philippine regions to test the scalability and adaptability of the framework. Comparative analyses across urban, rural, public, and private settings will strengthen the evidence base for a national positive behavior management policy.
7. *Integrate the Framework into DepEd’s Child Protection Agenda.* The proposed system should be formally aligned with DepEd’s seven-point agenda, particularly in child protection and inclusive education. By embedding culturally responsive practices into national guidelines, the department can ensure that behavior management is not only effective but also equitable and humane.

Final Remarks

This study contributes to a critical yet underdeveloped area in Philippine education: the design of a structured, evidence-based, and culturally grounded behavior management system for senior high schools. It moves beyond critique to offer a constructive, actionable model that honors both international standards and local wisdom. In doing so, it supports the broader vision of the K–12 program not just to produce academically competent graduates, but to nurture resilient, ethical, and socially responsible Filipino youth.

The path forward requires commitment, collaboration, and courage to replace fear with trust, punishment with growth, and fragmentation with unity. With the proposed framework as a guide, Philippine senior high schools can become not just places of learning, but communities of care.

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