

Leadership Behaviors and Management Practices of School Heads in Public Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT. This study examined the leadership behaviors and management practices of school heads in public elementary schools in South Ubian, Tawi-Tawi, during the 2025-2026 school year. Using a quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved a total enumeration of 42 respondents, comprising school principals, teachers-in-charge, and teachers. Data were collected through validated and reliable survey instruments measuring five leadership behaviors: transformational, transactional, instructional, servant, and distributed leadership, and five domains of management practices, such as leading strategically, managing school operations and resources, focusing on teaching and learning, developing self and others, and building connections. Descriptive statistics, the Kruskal-Wallis H test, and Pearson product-moment correlation were employed for data analysis. Results revealed that transformational and servant leadership behaviors were consistently practiced, while transactional, instructional, and distributed leadership behaviors were often observed. Management practices were implemented to a great extent across all domains. No significant differences in leadership behaviors and management practices were found across groups defined by profile variables. However, a significant positive relationship existed between leadership behaviors and management practices, indicating that stronger leadership behaviors are associated with more effective school management. The findings highlight the importance of context-responsive leadership in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas and provide empirical bases for leadership development initiatives and policy interventions aimed at strengthening school leadership in marginalized communities.

Keywords: *leadership behavior, management practice, transactional leadership, instructional leadership, servant leadership*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Effective education requires strong leadership, which impacts organizational results and the quality of instruction. Managing the organization, supervising the teaching process, and interacting with the community are just a few of the many duties that principals must perform (Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Contextual obstacles such as inadequate infrastructure, subpar educational resources, and limited access to professional development services increase leadership's obligations in GIDAs (Harris, 2013). School administrators must adopt flexible and responsive strategies in such a setting.

One example of an institution functioning in a specific setting within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) with unique features such as remoteness and socioeconomic difficulties is the South Ubian, Tawi-Tawi school. To manage schools effectively and efficiently, school administrators must overcome logistical obstacles.

The planning, organizing, directing, and controlling aspects of management are closely linked to the behavior of leaders (Robbins & Coulter, 2017). Different approaches that can impact businesses are presented by transformational, transactional, instructional, servant, and distributed leadership styles (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008). The efficiency of school administration will be improved by researching how these various leadership styles are applied in educational settings.

To produce contextually relevant data that accurately depict leaders' experiences in a geographic isolation setting, it is imperative that this study gap be filled. Policies, professional development initiatives, and leadership models might not achieve their goals without the insights these studies offer, since they would not be applicable to the circumstances of rural schools.

Therefore, the current study examines the relationship between management styles and leadership behaviors among principals and supervising teachers in public elementary and integrated schools in South Ubian, Tawi-Tawi. The study aims to provide empirical findings that could support leadership training programs, enhance the school management system, and develop educational policy in a more equitable way by examining how leadership behavior is expressed through management approaches in a remote geographic setting.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research utilized a descriptive–correlational quantitative design to investigate the association between school heads' leadership behaviors and management practices in specific public schools in South Ubian, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. A purposive sampling method was employed to choose a total of 42 participants. Two modified tools were used to collect data: one measured management practices in line with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020), and the other measured leadership behaviors based on established frameworks. Both instruments were subjected to validation and reliability assessments, employing a five-point Likert scale from 5 (Always) to 1 (Never).

The South Ubian, Tawi-Tawi Schools Division Office granted permission prior to data collection. All respondents gave their informed consent, and participation was entirely voluntary. The Kruskal-Wallis test, Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r), and weighted mean and standard deviation were used to examine the data.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the discussion of results and recommendations. This addresses the presentation of results and the discussion of the data gathered, based on the research objectives of this study.

Table 1. The level of leadership behaviors of school heads

Leadership Behaviors	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Transformational Leadership	4.37	.559	Always	Exercised in all instances.
Transactional Leadership	3.91	.731	Often	Exercised in most instances.
Instructional Leadership	4.15	.769	Often	Exercised in most instances.
Servant Leadership	4.30	.640	Always	Exercised in all instances.
Distributed Leadership	4.23	.736	Always	Exercised in all instances.
Overall Mean and SD Average	4.19	.690	Always	Exercised in all instances.

With the highest mean (4.37) and lowest SD (.559), transformational leadership emerges as the most consistently practiced behavior. This aligns with recent findings that transformational leaders positively influence teacher motivation, innovation, and school performance (Al-Khamaisi et al., 2024). Transformational leadership encourages vision, shared goals, and creativity aspects crucial for school improvement and resilience in changing educational landscapes (Lee & Park, 2023). Although transactional leadership scored slightly lower (3.91), it was still frequently practiced. This is consistent with literature suggesting that transactional leadership remains relevant in structured environments where reward and accountability systems are essential (Smith & Brown, 2024).

However, its lower mean and higher SD indicate that standardized routines and contingent rewards may be less uniformly perceived as leadership priorities by teachers (Gomez, 2025). Instructional leadership showed a mean of 4.15 with noticeable variance (.769). This supports research highlighting differentiated perceptions of instructional leadership practices, especially where support for classroom instruction is uneven (Dela Cruz & Santos, 2023). Effective instructional leaders are associated with improved teacher efficacy and student achievement, yet the diversity of experiences suggests that implementation challenges remain (Hernandez et al., 2024). Scoring 4.30, servant leadership is another behavior consistently practiced.

Recent studies underscore servant leadership’s role in fostering teacher well-being and supportive school cultures, which contribute to retention and collaborative practices (Nguyen & Thi, 2025). Leaders who prioritize the needs of teachers and learners create environments conducive to growth and trust. Distributed leadership (mean = 4.23) reflects a shared leadership style where responsibilities are decentralized. This is supported by research showing that distributed leadership enhances collective efficacy and decision-making in schools (Perez & Liu, 2023).

Moderate SD scores indicate that, while many schools practice this approach, perceptions vary, possibly reflecting tradition, school size, or leadership training. The overall mean of 4.19 suggests that leadership behaviors are strongly present in the schools surveyed. Recent educational leadership models advocate for a balanced mix of leadership styles transformational, instructional, and shared approaches to achieve school goals and promote teacher satisfaction (Torres &

Mendoza, 2024). Such integrative leadership contributes to effective school administration and continual professional growth.

Table 2. The Extent of Management Practices of School Heads

Domains	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation
Leading Strategically	4.10	.685	Often	Exercised in most instances.
Managing School Operation	4.10	.707	Often	Exercised in most instances.
Focusing on Teaching and Learning Indicators	4.16	.788	Often	Exercised in most instances.
Developing Self and Others	4.05	.662	Often	Exercised in most instances.
Building Connections	4.19	.640	Often	Exercised in most instances.
Mean and SD Average	4.12	.696	Often	Exercised in most instances.

The overall mean score for the extent of management practices of school principals and Teachers-In-Charge is 4.12 (SD = 0.696), interpreted as “Often” and described as “Exercised in most instances.” This indicates that school leaders consistently implement key management practices, with low variability suggesting a shared perception of leadership effectiveness. Among the five domains, Building Connections scored highest (M = 4.19, SD = 0.640), reflecting frequent engagement with stakeholders, followed by Focusing on Teaching and Learning (M = 4.16, SD = 0.788), Leading Strategically (M = 4.10, SD = 0.685), Managing School Operations (M = 4.10, SD = 0.707), and Developing Self and Others (M = 4.05, SD = 0.662), all falling within the “Often” category.

These findings suggest that school heads demonstrate a balanced approach to school management, emphasizing collaboration, instructional leadership, strategic planning, operational efficiency, and professional growth. The high-rating in-stakeholder engagement underscores the importance of partnerships for school improvement, while the focus on teaching and learning highlights consistent instructional support. Although Developing Self and Others scored slightly lower, it still indicates regular engagement in professional development, pointing to the need for structured capacity-building initiatives. Overall, the results reflect that management practices are institutionalized, multidimensional, and consistently exercised, aligning with contemporary research on effective school leadership (Amancio, 2024; Jumalon, 2025; Zaeni & Wasliman, 2025).

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between Leadership Behaviors and Management Practices

Variables	Pearson r	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Leadership Behavior and Management Practices	0.870**	0.000	42

Greater leadership behavior is associated with greater systematic and effective management procedures, as indicated by the very strong positive relationship between the total number of leadership behaviors and the number of management practices in Table 36 ($r(40) = .870, p < .001$). This suggests that school programs' planning, organizing, and implementation become more efficient through the efforts of the school's leaders, characterized by clear communication, a common vision, collaborative decision-making, and effective supervision.

This finding concurs with previous studies showing the direct impact of leadership behaviors on organizational processes and school effectiveness (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Hattie, 2009). Leadership behavior contributes to collaborative work among teachers, commitment to teaching, and teacher performance, thereby supporting effective management practices. In summary, the study findings show that leadership behaviors are essential for efficient school management and high performance.

4. CONCLUSION

Leadership behavior in public elementary schools under the jurisdiction of the South Ubian, Tawi-Tawi public schools system shows that school heads continuously display high levels of transformational and servant leadership while frequently exhibiting transactional, instructional, and distributed leadership behaviors. Such results imply that leaders employ a multidimensional leadership style that is appropriate for addressing the unique needs of geographically disadvantaged and impoverished regions. As far as management practices are concerned, school heads demonstrate high proficiency and effectiveness in performing various tasks and duties, especially those related to stakeholder engagement and instructional practices. The consistency in using such practices means that school heads have effectively institutionalized school management and practice it frequently. However, the key finding is a strong positive association between leadership behaviors and management practices ($r = 0.870, p < 0.001$). Such an association indicates that school management is strongly influenced by the quality and effectiveness of leadership behaviors. In other words, school heads with high levels of visionary leadership, collaborative decision-making skills, and supportive leadership can employ effective management practices.

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