

An Assessment on the Administrative Competence of Elementary School Principals at Indanan District Sulu: Teachers' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT. While national educational frameworks codify standardized leadership competencies, their operationalization in geographically marginalized and resource-constrained environments remains empirically underexplored, particularly from the vital vantage point of frontline educators. To address this localized discrepancy, this research evaluated the administrative competence of elementary school principals within the rural, high-needs context of Indanan District, Sulu, exclusively through the assessment of their teaching staff. Utilizing a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, data were acquired from a purposive sample of 100 public school teachers via a structured instrument targeting four core domains: planning and organizing, leadership and supervision, communication skills, and decision-making and problem-solving. Statistical analysis revealed uniformly high perceptions of administrative competence across all parameters, with adaptive strategic planning and resource organization emerging as the most pronounced operational strengths. Inferential testing indicated substantial perceptual consensus regardless of age, gender, or professional tenure, although significant assessment variances materialized based on civil status and academic credentialing. Crucially, correlational matrices demonstrated a cohesive, interdependent leadership architecture characterized by near-perfect positive relationships connecting communication proficiency with both decisional efficiency and instructional supervision. These empirical insights reveal that rural school leaders successfully buffer systemic deficits through highly integrated, communication-driven management frameworks. Consequently, the findings necessitate a macro-level policy shift away from isolated, compliance-based administrative seminars toward advanced, crisis-adaptive leadership development tailored for marginalized educational frontiers.

KEYWORDS: *administrative competence, educational leadership, rural school management, teacher perspectives, marginalized education*

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Introduction

School leadership fundamentally anchors the efficacy of global education systems, with principals acting as the central nexus for institutional management and instructional support. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that administrative competence—encompassing

planning, leadership, communication, and decision-making—significantly enhances teacher motivation, institutional adaptability, and student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; The World Bank, 2020). Globally, the indispensable role of principals is acknowledged as critical for building resilient educational frameworks capable of navigating modern challenges.

In the Philippines, educational reforms strongly mandate principals to function dually as instructional leaders and administrative managers to ensure operational efficiency and academic excellence (DepEd, 2019). The Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) codify these expectations, emphasizing strategic leadership and organizational management as structural prerequisites for school effectiveness (DepEd, 2020). Consequently, strong administrative leadership directly correlates with improved classroom management and teacher performance within the national context (Gonzales, 2017). However, translating these competency standards into practice becomes highly complex in geographically and socio-politically marginalized regions. In Mindanao—particularly in resource-constrained and conflict-affected provinces like Sulu—principals navigate distinct operational hurdles. These include severe resource deficits, security concerns, and intricate cultural dynamics that heavily impact and complicate school governance (Alhabshi, 2018).

Despite the established importance of standardized school leadership, there remains a critical gap in evaluating how these unique contextual pressures affect the actual administrative competence of principals in frontier areas like the Indanan District of Sulu. Teachers, functioning as primary subordinates and frontline educators, possess critical vantage points for evaluating administrative effectiveness. Their perspectives are essential for assessing principal performance and identifying specific areas for professional development, yet they require systematic evaluation in these marginalized settings (Abubakar, 2021).

Therefore, this study aims to assess the administrative competence of elementary school principals in Indanan District, Sulu, strictly from the perspective of their teachers. Specifically, the research evaluates four core domains of administrative practice: planning and organizing, leadership and supervision, communication skills, and decision-making and problem-solving. Furthermore, it investigates whether teacher demographic variables influence these assessments and explores the statistical correlations among the identified competence domains.

By contextualizing universal leadership standards within a localized, high-needs environment, this assessment provides vital feedback for school administrators and informs macro-level policy directions. The findings are anticipated to guide the Department of Education in designing targeted capacity-building initiatives, leadership training programs, and resource allocation strategies tailored to strengthen educational resilience in Sulu and similar marginalized regions.

Research Questions

This study assessed the teachers' assessment of the administrative competence of elementary school principals at Indanan - District, Sulu, during the School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions upon its completion:

1. What is the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age;
 - 1.2. Gender;
 - 1.3. Civil Status;
 - 1.4. Length of Service; and
 - 1.5. Educational Attainment?

2. What is the extent of teachers' assessment of the administrative competence of elementary school principals in the context of:
 - 2.1. Planning and Organizing;
 - 2.2. Leadership and Supervision;
 - 2.3. Communication Skills; and
 - 2.4. Decision-Making and Problem-Solving?
3. Is there a significant difference in the teachers' assessment of the administrative competence of elementary school principals when the data are grouped according to the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents in terms of:
 - 3.1. Age;
 - 3.2. Gender;
 - 3.3. Civil Status;
 - 3.4. Length of Service; and
 - 3.5. Educational Attainment?
4. Is there a significant correlation among the sub-categories under the extent of teachers' assessment of the administrative competence of elementary school principals in the context of planning and organizing, leadership and supervision, communication skills, and decision-making and problem-solving?

Literature

Dual Mandate of School Leadership

The conceptualization of school leadership necessitates a rigorous synthesis of managerial efficiency and transformational influence. Foundational frameworks position administrative competence not merely as bureaucratic maintenance, but as a complex integration of structural coordination and relational capacity. Mintzberg (1973) delineates this operational baseline through interpersonal, informational, and decisional functions, establishing planning, organizing, communicating, and decision-making as universally critical mechanisms for school operations. Concurrently, Transformational Leadership Theory expands these traditional administrative boundaries, positing that effective principals transition beyond routine management to act as instructional catalysts who foster shared vision, collaborative culture, and professional empowerment among teaching staff (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Contemporary empirical literature largely agrees that while principals rarely impact student learning directly, their administrative proficiency indirectly drives academic success by shaping teacher performance and organizational climate (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Bush, 2008; Fullan, 2014). By applying Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968), researchers observe that educational institutions function as interdependent networks where a principal's strategic and supervisory actions inevitably dictate the efficacy of the whole. Within the Philippine setting, this dual mandate is heavily institutionalized; national frameworks explicitly require school leaders to balance resource allocation and compliance tasks with robust instructional supervision (Aquino, 2015; Brillantes, 2018). Evaluating administrative competence, therefore, requires examining the specific traits and behaviors principals deploy to navigate these competing structural and instructional demands (Stogdill, 1948; Northouse, 2016).

Structural Competencies: Strategic Planning and Decision-Making

Effective planning, resource organization, and structured time management are consistently identified as robust predictors of school productivity and overarching educational success (Cruz, 2019; Garcia, 2016; Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). Within distributed leadership

frameworks, this competency becomes increasingly complex, requiring principals to coordinate decentralized tasks and manage systemic reforms without compromising institutional accountability (Harris, 2009; Spillane, 2006). In parallel, robust decision-making and problem-solving skills act as vital mechanisms for sustaining organizational improvement (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). Research indicates that school leaders frequently operationalize a hybrid approach to problem-solving; routine administrative requirements are managed through rational, data-driven frameworks, whereas complex, high-stakes challenges necessitate intuitive, consultative, and participative strategies (Manalo, 2018; Navarro, 2016).

Despite the established theoretical importance of these domains, empirical evaluations highlight significant practical inconsistencies. Multiple studies within the Philippine context reveal that while principals generally demonstrate proficiency in routine managerial duties—such as scheduling and compliance—critical deficits persist in strategic, long-range planning and participatory decision-making (De Asis-Galvez, 2019; Del Rosario, 2017; Guzman, 2018). These structural vulnerabilities are severely amplified in rural, resource-constrained environments (Laguerta, 2021). In such settings, leaders are forced to abandon standardized frameworks in favor of highly adaptive, localized planning constrained by restricted budgets, logistical isolation, and acute community pressures (Laguerta, 2021).

Relational Competencies: Leadership, Supervision, and Communication

Beyond structural mechanics, administrative competence is heavily predicated on relational capacities, specifically leadership, instructional supervision, and communication skills. Empirical evidence consistently underscores that active supervision, coupled with clear communication and timely feedback, forms the bedrock of collaborative school climates and directly enhances teachers' instructional quality (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Louis et al., 2010; Robinson, 2011; Santos, 2015; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). These relational competencies act as critical determinants of organizational stability; transparent communication and participative leadership styles are strongly correlated with reduced teacher turnover, heightened professional morale, and sustained engagement (Ingersoll, 2001; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Torres, 2020).

Within the Philippines, the operationalization of these relational skills frequently dictates overall administrative success. Local studies indicate that while participative principals successfully utilize transparent communication to foster shared decision-making, systemic communication breakdowns—such as ambiguous directives and constrained feedback loops—routinely undermine instructional coherence (Dizon, 2017; Lopez, 2017; Serrano, 2019). Crucially, in geographically isolated or marginalized regions like Mindanao, where formal resources are scarce, a principal's ability to mobilize staff and community stakeholders through effective communication and robust supervisory support emerges as the primary driver of school resilience (Alvarez, 2020; Laguerta, 2021)

Contextual Discrepancies and the Research Gap

Despite the comprehensive theoretical mapping of administrative competencies, current literature demonstrates a pronounced empirical gap regarding how these standardized leadership dimensions manifest in marginalized, conflict-affected, and severely resource-constrained environments (Alhabshi, 2018; Alvarez, 2020; Laguerta, 2021). National frameworks provide uniform competency expectations, yet localized complexities—ranging from geographical isolation to socio-political instability—demand distinct, highly adaptive leadership practices that broad administrative audits frequently overlook or mischaracterize (Brillantes, 2018; Reyes, 2016).

Additionally, existing competency evaluations predominantly rely on top-down administrative metrics or self-reported data, systematically sidelining the pedagogical frontline. Teachers act as both the direct beneficiaries and the most acute observers of daily school governance. They possess indispensable, empirical insights into the practical efficacy of a principal’s planning, supervisory, and communication protocols; nevertheless, their evaluative perspectives remain historically underutilized in formal leadership assessments, particularly within conflict-affected zones (Abubakar, 2021; Guzman, 2018; Santos, 2015).

Addressing these specific empirical and methodological deficits, this study assesses the administrative competence of elementary school principals in Indanan District, Sulu, exclusively through the evaluative lens of their teaching staff. By isolating four specific operational domains—planning and organizing, leadership and supervision, communication skills, and decision-making and problem-solving—the research measures how foundational leadership standards operate within complex, high-needs realities (Dela Cruz, 2021). Ultimately, this analysis seeks to bridge the disconnect between national policy expectations and local implementation, providing granular data to calibrate targeted capacity-building and professional development initiatives for principals navigating rural educational landscapes.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. This framework was strategically selected to systematically evaluate the existing characteristics and extent of principals' administrative competence while simultaneously exploring the statistical relationships among these competency domains and teacher demographic variables. This dual approach aligns with established methodological frameworks by capturing baseline empirical descriptions prior to executing relational analyses (Polit & Beck, 2017).

2. Participants and Sampling

The sample comprised 100 public elementary school teachers actively employed across 10 schools within the Indanan District of Sulu during the 2025–2026 academic year. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was utilized to select the respondents. Inclusion criteria strictly required participants to be active faculty members possessing direct observational knowledge of their respective principals’ administrative practices, ensuring contextually grounded and meaningful data acquisition (Croswell & Guetterman, 2019). Ethical protocols were rigorously maintained; all participants provided signed informed consent, with absolute guarantees of voluntary participation, institutional confidentiality, and anonymity. The study protocol adhered to the standards of the Sulu State College Ethics Review Board.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by School

Indanan South District School	Number Of Respondents
1. Bunot Elementary School	10
2. Commdar Bara Jalaidi Elementary School	10
3. Dayuan Elementary School	10
4. Kasambuhan Village Elementary School	10
5. Langpas Elementary School	10
6. Lugmag Elementary School	10
7. Manilop Elementary School	10
8. Mukammali Elementary School	10
9. Palan Elementary School	10
10. Panglima Ahajan Elementary School	10
Total :	100

3. Instruments

Data were collected using a structured, two-part questionnaire adapted, with minor contextual modifications, from Sergiovanni's (1991) established framework on reflective principalship. The initial section captured participant demographic profiles, including age, gender, civil status, length of service, and educational attainment. The core section measured the extent of administrative competence across four predefined sub-categories: Planning and Organizing, Leadership and Supervision, Communication Skills, and Decision-Making and Problem-Solving. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" (1) to "Always" (5). To establish content validity, the adapted instrument underwent rigorous review and validation by a panel of educational management experts prior to deployment.

4. Data Collection Procedure

Following the acquisition of institutional ethical clearance, the researcher directly administered the survey instruments to the selected teacher-respondents. Participants were comprehensively briefed on the study's objective and instructed to complete the items accurately based on their professional observations. The personal administration protocol ensured high retrieval rates and allowed the researcher to conduct brief, targeted follow-up interviews to capture substantial qualitative nuances regarding administrative competence when explicit clarification was necessary.

5. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were processed to directly address the specific research objectives. Descriptive statistics, encompassing frequency counts and percentages, profiled the respondents' demographics. Weighted means and standard deviations determined the perceived extent of administrative competence across the four targeted domains. To evaluate significant perceptual differences based on demographic groupings, an independent samples t-test was applied to gender variables. Simultaneously, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tested for variances across age, civil status, length of service, and educational attainment. Finally, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation quantified the relational strength and directionality among the four core sub-categories of administrative competence.

Results

1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

As presented in Table 2, initial analysis of the sample (n=100) reveals a predominantly female teaching workforce (93%), characterized by a mature age demographic where the majority (53%) are 36 years of age or older. In terms of civil status, nearly two-thirds of the participants (64%) are married. Professional tenure within the district highlights a substantial segment of early-career educators, with 37% reporting five years or less of service, followed by 24% with 6 to 10 years of experience. Educationally, the cohort largely holds standard baseline qualifications; 80% possess a Bachelor's degree, while the remaining 20% have either earned or are actively pursuing advanced graduate studies.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Variable	Number of Respondents (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Age		
25 years old and below	8	8.0
26 to 35 years old	39	39.0
36 years old and above	53	53.0
Gender		

Male	7	7.0
Female	93	93.0
Civil Status		
Single	30	30.0
Married	64	64.0
Widowed / Separated	6	6.0
Length of Service		
5 years and below	37	37.0
6 to 10 years	24	24.0
11 to 15 years	18	18.0
16 years and above	21	21.0
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	80	80.0
Bachelor's Degree with Master's Units	16	16.0
Master's Degree	2	2.0
Master's Degree with Doctorate Units	2	2.0
Doctorate Degree	0	0.0

2. Extent of Teachers' Assessment of Administrative Competence

Teachers evaluated the administrative competence of elementary school principals as consistently high across all four core dimensions, with all composite scores falling within the "often" descriptive category. Among the evaluated domains, Planning and Organizing emerged as the highest-rated competency (M=4.361, SD=0.671), driven primarily by the principals' effective organization of resources to support school programs (M=4.44, SD=0.769). Communication Skills closely followed (M=4.303, SD=0.735), highlighted by the principals' proficiency in explaining decisions and policies clearly to staff (M=4.46, SD=0.783). Leadership and Supervision also received strong evaluations (Weighted M=4.287, SD=0.706), anchored specifically by the principals' ability to motivate teachers to improve their performance—a behavior that garnered the highest individual item score across the entire assessment (M=4.53, SD=0.688). Conversely, while still rated highly overall, Decision-Making and Problem-Solving recorded the lowest composite mean among the four constructs (M=4.267, SD=0.726), with the prompt and effective resolution of school problems acting as its strongest indicator (M=4.34, SD=0.819).

Table 3: Extent of Teachers' Assessment of the Administrative Competence of Elementary School Principals

Domain and Statements	Mean	S.D.	Description
A. Planning and Organizing	4.361	0.67193	Often
1. The principal sets clear goals and objectives for the school.	4.42	0.84303	Often
2. The principal prepares systematic plans for school activities.	4.38	0.86199	Often
3. The principal organizes resources effectively to support programs.	4.44	0.76963	Often
4. The principal ensures that school plans align with DepEd standards.	4.31	0.87265	Often
5. The principal delegates tasks and responsibilities appropriately.	4.43	0.76877	Often
6. The principal monitors the implementation of school projects regularly.	4.35	0.82112	Often
7. The principal evaluates school programs and activities for improvement.	4.36	0.73195	Often
8. The principal anticipates potential challenges and prepares solutions.	4.35	0.78335	Often
9. The principal schedules activities to avoid conflicts.	4.41	0.73985	Often
10. The principal promotes efficiency in the use of school resources.	4.16	0.82536	Often
B. Leadership and Supervision	4.287	0.70620	Often
1. The principal provides guidance and direction to teachers.	4.30	0.92660	Often
2. The principal supervises instruction to ensure quality teaching.	4.29	0.85629	Often
3. The principal motivates teachers to improve their performance.	4.53	0.68836	Always

4. The principal sets a good example of professionalism.	4.33	0.79207	Often
5. The principal fosters teamwork among teachers and staff.	4.32	0.82731	Often
6. The principal recognizes and rewards outstanding performance.	4.25	0.92524	Often
7. The principal resolves conflicts fairly and effectively.	4.17	0.82945	Often
8. The principal encourages innovation and creativity in teaching.	4.25	0.85723	Often
9. The principal ensures that teachers comply with school policies.	4.28	0.80503	Often
10. The principal demonstrates fairness and impartiality in decision-making.	4.15	0.83333	Often
C. Communication Skills	4.303	0.73573	Often
1. The principal communicates clearly the goals and policies of the school.	4.42	0.81872	Often
2. The principal listens attentively to the concerns of teachers.	4.32	0.88626	Often
3. The principal provides timely feedback on teachers' performance.	4.34	0.81921	Often
4. The principal uses various channels to share important information.	4.14	0.87640	Often
5. The principal encourages open communication between teachers and administration.	4.31	0.84918	Often
6. The principal explains decisions and policies effectively.	4.46	0.78393	Often
7. The principal responds promptly to teachers' inquiries.	4.43	0.81965	Often
8. The principal maintains professional communication with stakeholders.	4.39	0.81520	Often
9. The principal promotes transparency in school matters.	4.05	1.05768	Often
10. The principal ensures that communication lines are accessible to everyone.	4.17	0.91071	Often
D. Decision-Making and Problem-Solving	4.267	0.72670	Often
1. The principal makes sound decisions based on available data.	4.25	0.80873	Often
2. The principal consults teachers when making important decisions.	4.32	0.83943	Often
3. The principal resolves school problems promptly and effectively.	4.34	0.81921	Often
4. The principal considers multiple alternatives before deciding.	4.28	0.86550	Often
5. The principal uses participatory approaches in problem-solving.	4.27	0.87450	Often
6. The principal shows confidence in making difficult decisions.	4.24	0.76700	Often
7. The principal evaluates the outcomes of decisions made.	4.32	0.77694	Often
8. The principal applies fairness and consistency in decision-making.	4.18	0.93614	Often
9. The principal remains calm and rational during crises.	4.22	0.87132	Often
10. The principal demonstrates accountability in decision-making.	4.25	0.88048	Often

(Legend: 4.50–5.00 = Always; 3.50–4.49 = Often; 2.50–3.49 = Sometimes; 1.50–2.49 = Rarely; 1.00–1.49 = Never)

3. Significant Differences Based on Demographic Profile

Inferential statistical testing, utilizing independent samples t-tests and One-Way ANOVAs, was conducted to determine whether demographic variables influenced teachers' assessments of administrative competence. As detailed in Table 4, results indicated high perceptual uniformity across several demographic lines; age, gender, and length of service yielded no statistically significant differences across any of the four administrative domains (all $p > .05$).

However, civil status emerged as a significant differentiating factor. ANOVA results revealed significant variances in the assessments of Planning and Organizing ($F = 3.291$, $p = .041$) and Decision-Making and Problem-Solving ($F = 3.949$, $p = .022$). Subsequent Tukey HSD post-hoc analyses, outlined in Table 5, indicated that single teachers rated principals significantly lower than married teachers in both the Planning and Organizing (Mean Difference = -0.278 , $p = .040$) and Decision-Making constructs (Mean Difference = -0.406 , $p = .029$). Additionally, educational attainment significantly impacted evaluations, though strictly within the Planning and Organizing domain ($F = 3.941$, $p = .005$). Post-hoc comparisons demonstrated that teachers holding a Bachelor's degree with accrued Master's units provided significantly lower assessments in this category than both baseline Bachelor's degree holders (Mean Difference = -0.458 , $p = .020$) and full Master's degree holders (Mean Difference = -0.633 , $p = .024$).

Table 4. Differences in Teachers' Assessment of Administrative Competence Grouped by Demographic Profile

Demographic Grouping	Test Statistic (t / F)	df	p-value (Sig.)	Description
Age (F-value)				
Planning and Organizing	2.100	2, 97	.128	Not Significant
Leadership and Supervision	0.291	2, 97	.748	Not Significant
Communication Skills	0.006	2, 97	.994	Not Significant
Decision-making and Problem-solving	0.093	2, 97	.911	Not Significant
Gender (t-value)				
Planning and Organizing	-1.066	98	.289	Not Significant
Leadership and Supervision	-1.004	98	.318	Not Significant
Communication Skills	-0.916	98	.362	Not Significant
Decision-making and Problem-solving	-1.282	98	.203	Not Significant
Civil Status (F-value)				
Planning and Organizing	3.291	2, 97	.041*	Significant
Leadership and Supervision	1.537	2, 97	.220	Not Significant
Communication Skills	2.290	2, 97	.107	Not Significant
Decision-making and Problem-solving	3.949	2, 97	.022*	Significant
Length of Service (F-value)				

Demographic Grouping	Test Statistic (t / F)	df	p-value (Sig.)	Description
Planning and Organizing	1.007	3, 96	.393	Not Significant
Leadership and Supervision	1.253	3, 96	.295	Not Significant
Communication Skills	1.206	3, 96	.312	Not Significant
Decision-making and Problem-solving	1.488	3, 96	.223	Not Significant
Educational Attainment (F-value)				
Planning and Organizing	3.941	4, 95	.005*	Significant
Leadership and Supervision	2.243	4, 95	.070	Not Significant
Communication Skills	1.730	4, 95	.150	Not Significant
Decision-making and Problem-solving	0.916	4, 95	.458	Not Significant

**Significance at alpha 0.05*

Table 5 Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Analysis for Significant Variables

4. Significant Correlation Among the Sub-Categories of Administrative Competence

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was utilized to examine the interrelationships among the four domains of administrative competence. As shown in Table 5, the results revealed significant, positive correlations across all assessed sub-categories (all $p < .001$). The most robust statistical relationships, classified as nearly perfect positive correlations, were observed between Communication Skills and Decision-Making/Problem-Solving ($r = .927$), as well as between Leadership/Supervision and Communication Skills ($r = .922$). Furthermore, very high positive correlations were recorded among all remaining domains, notably between Leadership/Supervision and Decision-Making/Problem-Solving ($r = .894$). Planning and Organizing also demonstrated very high significant correlations with Leadership/Supervision ($r = .843$), Decision-Making/Problem-Solving ($r = .822$), and Communication Skills ($r = .805$).

Table 5. Correlation Among the Sub-Categories of Administrative Competence (N=100)

Variables	Pearson r	Sig.	Description
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Planning and Organizing			
with Leadership and Supervision	.843**	.000	Very High Correlation
with Communication Skills	.805**	.000	Very High Correlation
with Decision-Making and Problem-Solving	.822**	.000	Very High Correlation
Leadership and Supervision			
with Communication Skills	.922**	.000	Nearly Perfect Correlation
with Decision-Making and Problem-Solving	.894**	.000	Very High Correlation
Communication Skills			
with Decision-Making and Problem-Solving	.927**	.000	Nearly Perfect Correlation

** Correlation Coefficient is significant at alpha .01 level

Discussion

The demographic profile of the teaching workforce in the Indanan District reveals a predominantly female and married cohort in their mid-to-late chronological life stages, juxtaposed against a significant proportion of early-tenure educators who possess only foundational bachelor's degrees. This compositional dichotomy suggests a highly localized and socially stable, yet professionally developing, educator pool. The disparity between the chronological maturity of the staff and their relative scarcity of advanced academic credentials indicates that while these teachers are deeply rooted in their communities, systemic barriers inherent to geographically isolated or conflict-affected regions likely impede immediate academic progression and professional maturation. These demographic patterns confirm recent localized observations characterizing the district's teaching force as culturally grounded but heavily reliant on foundational qualifications (Juhaili & Asiri, 2024). Furthermore, this demographic reality aligns with broader structural challenges in rural Philippine education, where logistical constraints, limited resources, and geographic isolation frequently delay post-graduate pursuits and necessitate highly adaptive leadership strategies (Laguerta, 2021; Reyes, 2016). Consequently, establishing this structural baseline is critical for contextualizing how administrative competence is operationalized; principals in such marginalized districts are fundamentally tasked with leading a workforce that, while deeply committed to the community, requires sustained capacity-building and intensive instructional supervision to overcome broader systemic constraints.

Building upon this demographic reality, the data reveals that despite the inherent challenges of their geographic and systemic context, this teaching staff perceives their principals as highly effective across all core administrative domains. Most notably, planning and organizing emerged as the most robust competency, driven by the principals' pragmatic ability to mobilize and allocate scarce educational resources. This operational efficiency suggests that school leaders in the Indanan District have successfully internalized the structural demands of their roles, shifting from rigid bureaucratic compliance to highly adaptive resource management. This finding strongly aligns with Laguerta (2021), who posited that effective rural school administration fundamentally relies on localized, adaptive planning to overcome severe logistical and budgetary isolation. Interestingly, this robust evaluation of strategic planning distinctly contradicts prior empirical

audits in the Philippines, which have historically identified long-range planning and resource allocation as critical vulnerabilities among public school principals (De Asis-Galvez, 2019; Guzman, 2018).

Furthermore, the teachers' high appraisals of communication skills and supervisory motivation reflect a successful operationalization of transformational leadership principles. By effectively explaining policy decisions and actively motivating staff, these principals demonstrate that relational capacity is just as vital as structural efficiency. This corroborates existing theoretical frameworks and local studies asserting that transparent communication and active instructional supervision act as critical mediators for teacher engagement and institutional trust (Bass, 1990; Dizon, 2017; Torres, 2020). While decision-making and problem-solving received comparatively lower scores—a likely reflection of the complex, politically charged, and high-pressure community dynamics that constrain rapid problem-solving in marginalized regions (Manalo, 2018)—the overall administrative profile remains cohesive. Practically, these findings imply that district leaders have cultivated a highly resilient managerial framework capable of buffering systemic deficits, suggesting that future capacity-building initiatives should pivot from foundational management training toward advanced, crisis-oriented decision-making.

Beyond how these competencies are perceived across distinct demographic groups, the internal statistical dynamics among the administrative domains reveal a deeply cohesive and interdependent leadership framework. The near-perfect positive correlations observed—most notably bridging communication skills with both decision-making and instructional supervision—suggest that communication is not an isolated administrative duty, but rather the central conduit through which operational authority is exercised and localized problems are resolved. This empirical alignment strongly substantiates Mintzberg's (1973) Managerial Roles Theory, validating the premise that a principal's informational capabilities are fundamentally inseparable from their decisional effectiveness. Furthermore, the pervasive statistical interdependence across all four categories provides robust localized confirmation of Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968), illustrating that the rural school functions as a highly sensitive organizational matrix where targeted proficiency in one administrative area inevitably amplifies success in the others.

Viewed through the lens of Transformational Leadership Theory, this data implies that principals in the Indanan District actively leverage communication not merely for transactional compliance, but as a strategic mechanism for vision-sharing and staff empowerment (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978). The overarching consistency across these domains further reinforces the Trait Theory of Leadership, indicating that effective rural school administration relies on a consolidated suite of core competencies rather than a fragmented set of managerial skills (Northouse, 2016; Stogdill, 1948).

Ultimately, this profound interconnectedness dictates a necessary shift in policy and professional development paradigms for marginalized districts. Institutional training initiatives must abandon siloed managerial seminars in favor of integrated, cross-functional leadership models. In geographically isolated and resource-constrained environments like Sulu, empowering principals to seamlessly weave strategic planning with transparent, adaptive communication remains the ultimate determinant of long-term institutional resilience and educational quality.

Conclusion

The convergence of findings in this investigation underscores that elementary school principals in the Indanan District possess a highly robust and adaptive administrative competence capable of buffering severe systemic and geographic constraints. Rather than operating through

isolated managerial functions, these educational leaders mobilize a deeply interconnected framework where transparent communication serves as the central axis driving both instructional supervision and strategic planning.

These empirical insights necessitate a structural shift in how educational leadership is cultivated within marginalized and resource-constrained environments. For macro-level policymakers and district administrators, the data indicates an urgent need to transition away from routine, compliance-based management seminars in favor of integrated professional development models that emphasize crisis-oriented decision-making and collaborative problem-solving. Furthermore, to elevate the trajectory of the localized teaching workforce, targeted institutional incentives must be established to accelerate post-graduate academic advancement among early-tenure, bachelor-level educators.

While the current assessment offers valuable empirical insight into rural administrative dynamics, the scope of the investigation is inherently constrained by its focus on a singular, geographically isolated district, thereby limiting broad regional generalizability. Additionally, the reliance on cross-sectional, self-reported teacher assessments introduces potential perceptual biases that rigid quantitative frameworks cannot fully contextualize or deconstruct.

To systematically address these boundaries, subsequent investigations should employ qualitative, phenomenological methodologies to explicitly unpack the granular communication strategies and adaptive planning techniques these principals utilize under community pressure. Moreover, expanding future evaluations to incorporate multi-stakeholder perspectives—such as community leaders and higher-level division supervisors—would generate a more multidimensional and exhaustive audit of educational leadership functioning at the marginalized frontiers of the public school system.

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