



## Exploring the Leadership Practices and Management of Teachers' Behavior in Schools

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### ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the perception of leadership practices and management of teachers' behaviors in schools. The study generated three (3) major themes and three (3) subthemes identified in school head's leadership practices and management of teachers behaviors, namely: (1) Managing Human Resources to their Fullest Extent, (a) leading equally and ethically, (b) appropriate Delegation of Tasks and Responsibilities, and (c) Opportunities for Development and Growth; (2) Handling Staff with Care and Respect, (a) empathy, (b) responsibility, and (3) communication; (3) Addressing Professionalism through Leadership, (a) flexible leadership, (b) leadership as a good listener, (c) act of humility and sense of belongingness. It fosters that school heads who prioritize ethical delegation, empathetic communication, and flexible listening foster teacher professionalism, commitment, and growth – ultimately enhancing school performance through respectful human resource management and inclusive leadership.

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## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic blurred work-family boundaries by forcing remote work into homes, eliminating physical separations and heightening inter-role conflicts (Shockley et al., 2021). Educational institutions pivoted to online platforms amid lockdowns and health protocols, yet leadership remained essential for turning challenges into opportunities. The bond between school heads and teachers proved resilient, with studies underscoring the need for collaboration, communication, and community involvement to sustain instructional leadership (Kilag et al., 2023). However, abrupt digital transformation exposed key hurdles: technological infrastructure gaps, digital competence deficits, socio-economic inequalities, heavy workloads, assessment difficulties, and the incompatibility of hands-on subjects like sports (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020; Heng & Sol, 2020).

In the Philippine context, these challenges were particularly pronounced. The Department of Education (DepEd) reported that over 24 million learners were affected by school closures, forcing a rapid shift to distance learning modalities (DepEd, 2020). Public school teachers faced overwhelming adjustments, with studies documenting excessive paperwork, techno-overload, and eroded quality of life due to modular, online, and blended delivery systems (Asio, 2021; Oducado & Estoque, 2021; Rabacal et al., 2020). Mendoza et al. (2022) found that 37% of teachers reported poor performance and high techno-overload, while Rabacal et al. (2020) documented that only 41% of Filipino teachers maintained normal depression and anxiety levels post-pandemic. These stressors were compounded by inadequate technological infrastructure, with many teachers relying on personal resources to conduct online classes (Jimenez, 2021a).

These challenges extended to managing teachers' behavior in virtual environments, where school heads grappled with equipment shortages, digitization of instruction, and monitoring mechanisms. Beyond technical issues, leaders faced budget constraints, student disabilities, curriculum enhancements, and innovations—all while navigating organizational behavior. Defined by individual, group, and structural determinants (Robbins & Judge, 2019), effective organizational behavior hinges on skilled human resources and directly influences goal achievement. School heads must leverage leadership practices to harness individual strengths, foster productive groups, and build adaptive structures, mitigating behaviors like resistance or burnout.

School heads' leadership behavior emerged as pivotal in the Philippine setting, directly influencing teachers' stress adaptation, work-life balance, and resilience. Studies confirm that transformational and supportive styles buffer burnout while laissez-faire approaches exacerbate overload amid familial conflicts and policy flux (Cabalida et al., 2022; Jeolongos, 2025; De Castro & Jimenez, 2022). Human resource management also contributes significantly, with leadership style influencing teacher retention and satisfaction (Mondejar & Asio, 2022). Aquino et al. (2021) characterized Philippine school heads as agents of change who influence environments through information-sharing, supportive connections, and mentoring, yet noted significant variation in leadership effectiveness across contexts.

Recent policy developments underscore the timeliness of this investigation. DepEd's Basic Education Development Plan 2030 (DepEd, 2023) emphasizes the need for "competent, motivated, and well-supported teachers and school leaders" as a key pillar for educational transformation. The plan explicitly calls for strengthening leadership competencies to "create a positive school climate and culture that supports learner achievement and teacher well-being" (DepEd, 2023, p. 45). Furthermore, DepEd Order No. 005, s. 2022 established the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-Being Program, recognizing that teacher mental health directly impacts educational quality. The recent grant of five days wellness leave for all teaching and non-teaching personnel (Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 01, series of 2026) further acknowledges the need for systemic support.

This study investigates school heads' leadership practices and their significant influence on teachers' organizational behavior in schools. By elevating the dynamic model of conflict within behavioral complexity theory, it examines how leaders mitigate conflicts through targeted roles, enhancing team success. The phenomenological approach captures rich, contextualized data on how Philippine school heads navigate the complexities of managing teacher behavior—addressing resistance, fostering motivation, building trust, and maintaining professionalism amid resource constraints and policy demands. Findings will inform targeted programs, projects, and activities aligned with DepEd's Basic Education Development Plan (2023–2028), equipping leaders to manage teacher behavior effectively in hybrid contexts and contributing to the growing body of Philippine educational leadership literature.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership coaching has been established as a fundamental method for professional development in educational organizations. Kliewer and Wanjiku Ndirangu (2019) emphasize that effective leadership must navigate cultural contexts through reciprocal partnerships, demonstrating that cross-cultural coaching achieves better outcomes when reciprocity is prioritized. Building on this developmental perspective, Dunst et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis identifying eleven distinct leadership practices differentially related to organizational outcomes, shifting focus from leadership theories to specific behavioral indicators that leaders can adopt to influence their teams.

The relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcomes has been extensively documented. Özgenel and Karsantik (2020) established significant correlations between principals' leadership styles and their practices, with transformational leadership yielding positive effects while laissez-faire approaches produced negative outcomes. This finding is reinforced by Ramzam et al. (2018), who found significant relationships between teachers' perceptions of leadership styles and change processes, noting that the "pace of change" depends upon leaders' adaptive approaches. Kiral (2020) adds that improving educational quality requires both effective leadership practices and collaborative efforts, underscoring the relational nature of teacher behavior management.

The importance of values in leadership is highlighted by Vikaraman et al. (2021), who examined ethical leadership across seven dimensions and found strong relationships between ethical leadership and teacher trust. This connection provides foundations for accepting guidance and direction, as teachers receive clear signals about expected behavioral standards when school heads model ethical behavior.

Distributed leadership has emerged as a significant paradigm shifting focus from individual leaders to collective practice. Jambo and Hongde (2020) found positive yet indirect effects of distributed leadership on student achievement, while noting limited empirical evidence and lack of universally accepted patterns. Irvine (2021) advances this understanding by emphasizing that distributed leadership concerns practice rather than formal roles, implying that managing teacher behavior requires attention to how leadership functions are enacted across the organization. Bagwell (2019) explored how leadership practice is enacted through interaction of individuals and situational contexts, calling for research focused on the "how" of leadership practice. Grootenboer and Hardy (2017) identified three dimensions of formal leadership practices: actions, dialogue, and relationships, demonstrating how multiple channels influence teacher behavior.

Teacher leadership within hierarchical structures was examined by Shah (2019), who found that despite heavy workloads and limited autonomy, shared leadership practices within groups help address challenges. Sharp et al. (2019) similarly found that literacy teacher educators must engage as advocates and responsive leaders, recommending frequent collaboration opportunities and ongoing professional learning support.

Connecting leadership to student outcomes, O'Meara (2018) revealed significant correlations between principal practices and student achievement, with "modeling the way" demonstrating strong relationships with proficiency. Even and Hadar (2021) found that principals perceived as transformational leaders achieved higher student performance, even among challenging populations. Kiral and Siccegi (2017) examined relationships between instructional leadership and organizational commitment, finding positive correlations while noting that teacher support and development received lowest ratings, suggesting areas for improvement.

Organizational behavior provides essential frameworks for understanding teacher behavior. The University of Southern Maine (2020) positions organizational behavior as concerned with understanding and influencing human behavior within organizational environments. The OECD distinguishes between hierarchical structure and organizational culture, noting that culture requires collaborative effort from multiple stakeholders. Papa (2022) identifies establishing collaborative organizational effort as a primary leadership challenge.

Aytac (2015) found significant positive relationships between talent management leadership and teachers' organizational commitment, identifying strategic acumen and interoperability as significant predictors. Mory, Wirtz, and Gottel (2016) and Hofman and Newman (2014) found that corporate social

responsibility enhances organizational commitment, though Prutina (2016) cautions that employee perceptions may not reflect organizational initiatives without effective communication.

Contextual factors were examined by Burkman et al. (2019), who found that while core leadership practices may transfer across contexts, effective teacher behavior management requires attention to local conditions. Philippine studies provide locally relevant insights: Cabigao (2019) found generally competent school heads but questioned how competencies translate into organizational improvement; Chaudary (2019) identified areas for targeted development; and Aquino et al. (2021) characterized school heads as agents of change influencing environments through information-sharing, supportive connections, and mentoring.

In summary, school heads' leadership practices influence teacher behavior through multiple pathways including direct guidance, relational trust-building, organizational culture cultivation, and distributed leadership structures. This relationship is mediated by teacher perceptions, contextual factors, and organizational processes, requiring school heads to integrate multiple approaches and maintain responsiveness to changing circumstances.

### *Conceptual Framework*

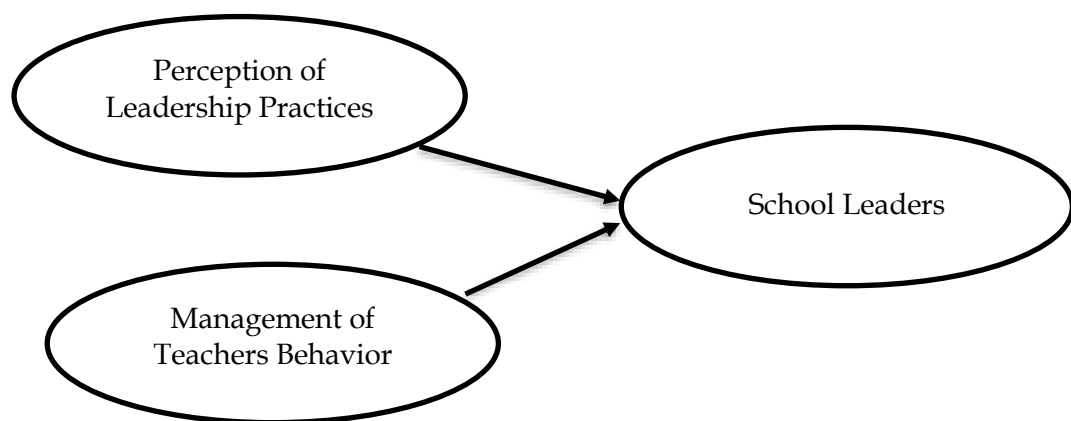


Table 1. Conceptual Framework

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a phenomenological research design to deeply explore and interpret the lived experiences, views, beliefs, and perceptions of public school teachers concerning the leadership practices and management of their school leaders as regards to the teacher's behavior. Phenomenology was strategically selected as it prioritizes understanding the essence of participants' subjective realities—capturing how teachers perceive leadership influences, workload overloads, and performance pressures—providing rich, contextual insights into the phenomenon that quantitative approaches alone cannot reveal. This design aligns perfectly with the study's aim to uncover nuanced barriers compromising leadership practices and management of teacher's behaviors of their school leaders they experienced, such as clerical task delegation and workload assignments.

## RESEARCH RESULT

### *Theme No. 1 Managing Human Resources to their Fullest Extent*

The first theme captures school heads' fundamental responsibility to optimize human capital through ethical leadership, appropriate delegation, and professional development opportunities. This finding aligns with organizational behavior principles that position human resources as the most valuable organizational asset (Robbins & Judge, 2019). The three subthemes—leading equally and ethically, appropriate delegation, and opportunities for development and growth—represent interconnected strategies for maximizing teacher potential.

#### *Subtheme 1: Leading Equally and Ethically*

School heads in this study emphasized the importance of ethical conduct and equitable treatment. One participant articulated, "To be a principal is to be ethical, we must be transparent and straight people which is always to empathizes with the teachers" (School Head 1). Another emphasized, "As leaders we should treat them fairly and equally. We need to provide their needs in terms of their professional growth, work related matters and others" (School Head 2).

These findings resonate with Vikaraman et al. (2021), who examined ethical leadership across seven dimensions among Malaysian school leaders and found strong relationships between ethical leadership and teacher trust. Their study demonstrated that when school heads model ethical behavior—transparency, integrity, and fairness—teachers receive clear signals about expected behavioral standards, creating foundations for accepting guidance and direction. The present study extends these findings to the Philippine context, where cultural values of *\*pakikisama\** (getting along) and *\*utang na loob\** (reciprocal obligation) may amplify the importance of relational fairness in leadership.

Erdoğan and Sezgin (2020) found that school principals and teachers commonly use strategies of establishing dialogue and receiving opinions in solving ethical dilemmas, alongside unilateral decision-making when necessary. The emphasis on empathy in the present study—"always empathizes with the teachers" (School Head 1)—aligns with their conclusion that ethical leadership requires balancing principled decision-making with genuine concern for stakeholders. This balance proves particularly important during crises, when teachers face heightened vulnerability and uncertainty (Jimenez, 2021b).

Philippine-based research by Aquino et al. (2021) characterized effective school heads as "agents of change" who influence environments through information-sharing and supportive connections. The present study found that ethical leadership involves "listening to their ideas and correcting them when they are on the wrong path" (School Head 2) extends this characterization by specifying how change agency operates through daily interactions—providing guidance while maintaining respect and openness.

#### *Subtheme 2: Appropriate Delegation of Tasks and Responsibilities*

Participants emphasized the importance of strategic delegation, with one school head noting "Delegation of responsibility with regards to the different

PPA's [programs, projects, and activities]" (School Head 3). Another emphasized fairness: "As a school head, I always see to it that I gave equal chances and fair distribution of tasks and responsibilities to all my personnel here in our school" (School Head 5).

These findings align with Grootenboer and Hardy's (2017) identification of three dimensions of formal leadership practices: actions, dialogue, and relationships. Delegation represents a critical leadership action that, when performed equitably, strengthens relationships and opens channels for ongoing dialogue. The emphasis on "equal chances" suggests that school heads recognize how perceived favoritism in task can damage trust and undermine organizational commitment—a concern validated by organizational behavior research (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

Bagwell (2019) explored how leadership practice is enacted through interaction of individuals and situational contexts, calling for research focused on the "how" of leadership practice. The present study contributes to this call by documenting how school heads operationalize delegation: by matching tasks to individual capabilities, ensuring fair distribution, and connecting delegated responsibilities to organizational goals (e.g., "DepEd vision, mission and goals" as noted in Theme 2). This strategic approach to delegation reflects what Aytaç (2015) identified as "talent management leadership" – the ability to recognize and deploy human capital effectively.

In the Philippine context, where teachers often face heavy workloads and multiple designations (Cabalida et al., 2022), appropriate delegation becomes not merely a management technique but a protective factor against burnout. Nalla's (2022) phenomenological study of teachers in Malolos, Bulacan, revealed that "multitasking and multitudes of paperwork" were primary contributors to stress and anxiety. School heads who delegate thoughtfully – considering individual capacity, providing necessary support, and ensuring equitable distribution – may buffer teachers against these stressors.

### ***Subtheme 3: Opportunities for Development and Growth***

When one belongs to an institution and he or she loves what he or she is Participants emphasizes the importance of professional development, with one school head stating, "As a school head, I give them equal opportunities to my teachers for them to grow professionally. I see to it that they are being sent on different training courses and seminars which could help in their professional growth" (School Head 4). This same leader elaborated on comprehensive support: "I also encourage them to pursue on their graduate studies and guide them on their career path. I also provide technical assistance in their teaching delivery, classroom management, use of technology, conduct of assessment and others" (School Head 4).

These findings align with Aytaç's (2015) research demonstrating significant positive relationships between talent management leadership and teachers' organizational commitment. His study identified strategic acumen and interoperability as significant predictors of commitment, suggesting that school

heads who strategically develop teacher talent foster stronger organizational attachment. The present study extends this by documenting the specific forms such development takes—trainings, graduate studies encouragement, and technical assistance across multiple professional domains.

Dunst et al. (2018), in their meta-analysis of leadership practices, identified eleven distinct leadership behaviors differentially related to organizational outcomes. Professional development support emerged as a key practice influencing employee outcomes, shifting focus from abstract leadership theories to specific behavioral indicators that leaders can adopt. The present study found that school heads provide "technical assistance in their teaching delivery, classroom management, use of technology, conduct of assessment and others" (School Head 4) exemplifies this behavioral specificity, offering concrete practices that other school heads can emulate.

The emphasis on graduate studies encouragement is particularly significant in the Philippine context, where the Department of Education has prioritized professional development through initiatives like the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) and scholarship programs for advanced degrees (DepEd, 2023). School heads who actively encourage and support teachers' graduate studies align with national policy priorities while simultaneously building institutional capacity. This finding also resonates with Santos's (2021) observation that engagement in professional learning opportunities enhanced teachers' quality of life during the pandemic, suggesting that development opportunities serve both professional and psychological functions.

Overall, the participants shared some interesting and very credible insights in relation to the current analysis that the current study intends to elicit. In the field of management, human resources are a very delicate part of the holistic make-up of the organization. Every individual that belongs to the organization is unique and interesting people, which contributes significantly to the success of the organization. Now, in the school setting, the teaching and non-teaching personnel comprise human resources, their tasks and responsibilities are essential to keep the school working and provide vital function to the community. According to Mehmet and Emel (2020), in the process of establishing cooperation between school, family, and environment the most influential element is school. The teacher, who is part of the human resources of the school, was the most important sub-element of this process followed by the school principal and the administrative staff.

Table 1. Thematic Presentation for Pandemic Experiences and Communication

Subtheme	Significant Statements
1) Leading Equally and Ethically	<p><i>"To be a principal is to be ethical, we must be transparent and straight people which is always to empathizes with the teachers"- School Head 1</i></p> <p><i>"Human Resources are very much important in every organization. As leaders we should treat them fairly and equally. We need to provide their needs in terms of their professional growth, work related matters and others. We should listen to their</i></p>

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	<i>ideas and correct them when they are on the wrong path." School Head 2</i>
2) Appropriate Delegation of Tasks and Responsibilities	<i>"Delegation of responsibility with regards to the different PPA's." – School Head 3</i> <i>"As a school head, I always see to it that I gave equal chances and fair distribution of tasks and responsibilities to all my personnel here in our school." – School Head 5</i>
3) Opportunities for Development and Growth	<i>"As a school head, I give them equal opportunities to my teachers for them to grow professionally. I see to it that they are being sent to different trainings and seminars which could help in their professional growth."- School Head 4</i> <i>"I also encourage them to pursue on their graduate studies and guide them on their career path. I also provide technical assistance in their teaching delivery, classroom management, use of technology, conduct of assessment and others." – School Head 4</i>

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### ***Theme 2: Handling Staff with Care and Respect***

One of the most difficult tasks that a leader must accept is to handle The second theme encompasses the relational dimension of school leadership, emphasizing how school heads' interpersonal approaches—empathy, responsibility, communication, and love/respect—shape teacher experiences and organizational climate. This theme aligns with the people-oriented dimension of Behavioral Leadership Theory (Mulholland, 2019), which positions consideration for subordinates' well-being as essential for effective leadership.

#### ***Subtheme 1: Empathy***

Participants emphasized the centrality of empathetic leadership, with one school head providing a comprehensive articulation: "As a school principal we must realize that we should not be the ones who always speak but we must take time to listen with our heart. Emphatic leaders must be seen to every school head for our teachers to open their life to us. We must be a friendly principal but firm" (School Head 1).

This finding resonates with Ertürk's (2021) research demonstrating that school administrators' supportive behaviors significantly predict teachers' job satisfaction and subjective well-being. The emphasis on listening "with our heart" extends beyond superficial listening to what organizational behavior scholars' term "empathetic listening"—the capacity to understand and validate others' emotional experiences (Robbins & Judge, 2019). The balancing statement "friendly principal but firm" reflects the dual demands of leadership: maintaining approachability while preserving authority necessary for organizational functioning.

Garciano and Garciano (2024) found that "principal autonomy-support moderated the link between stress and psychological well-being" among Philippine K-12 teachers. Their research demonstrated that the negative relationship between stress and well-being was "more pronounced for teachers

who reported lower autonomy-support from principals and weaker for those who reported higher principal autonomy-support." The present study found that empathetic leaders create conditions where teachers "open their life to us" (School Head 1) provides a qualitative complement to these quantitative findings, suggesting that autonomy-support operates through the relational channel of empathy.

Pressley's (2021) research on teacher stress during COVID-19 identified administrative support as a critical predictor variable, with teachers needing support during unprecedented times. The present study extends this by specifying the quality of support that matters not merely instrumental assistance, but genuine emotional connection characterized by listening and understanding. This finding aligns with Jimenez's (2021b) emphasis on emotional intelligence in educational leadership during crisis, suggesting that empathy serves as a protective factor against pandemic-induced stress.

### ***Subtheme 2: Responsibility***

Participants framed responsibility in terms of both task delegation and holistic care for teachers. One school head noted, "Every teacher was given the responsibility to give them the chance especially when it comes to the different responsibilities needed to fulfill the DepEd vision, mission and goals" (School Head 2). Another emphasized comprehensive support: "As a school head it is important that you handle your school staff properly. We should prioritize their needs and help them to grow professionally. Guide them in the correct path" (School Head 3).

These findings align with Kiral's (2020) concept of "excellent leadership theory," which positions responsibility as a core leadership virtue. The connection between responsibility assignment and organizational mission "fulfill the DepEd vision, mission and goals" (School Head 2) – reflects what Papa (2022) identifies as the primary leadership challenge: establishing collaborative organizational effort toward shared purposes. By framing responsibility as opportunity provision ("give them the chance"), school heads transform potentially burdensome tasks into developmental experiences.

The emphasis on prioritizing teachers' needs and guiding them "in the correct path" (School Head 3) resonates with Shah's (2019) findings on teacher leadership within hierarchical structures. Despite heavy workloads and limited autonomy, teachers in Shah's study found meaning when leaders created conditions for shared leadership and provided clear guidance. The present study suggests that responsibility, when exercised as care rather than control, enables teachers to navigate organizational demands while maintaining professional identity and motivation.

In the Philippine context, where teachers often face conflicting demands from multiple stakeholders (parents, DepEd officials, learners, community), school heads' responsible guidance serves as an anchoring function. Nalla (2022) found that teachers sought "assistance of other people who are knowledgeable" to cope with pandemic challenges. The present study suggests that school heads who accept responsibility for teacher well-being "prioritize their needs and help

them to grow professionally" (School Head 3)—fulfill this need for knowledgeable guidance.:

### *Subtheme 3: Communication*

Participants emphasized open communication as foundational to effective leadership. One school head described "Open communication with teaching and non-teaching, works collaboratively, shared governance" (School Head 6). Another provided an extended reflection on coaching as communication:

Coaching is a conversation that ensures support which creates a process that inspires people to maximize their personal and professional potential and creates an environment for learning and growth. It would be nice if we school head would be the one to initiate open communication inside our premises, because coaching is one of the many tasks of the principal, it is a conversation which reinforces good behavior." (School Head 1)

These findings align with Grootenboer and Hardy's (2017) identification of dialogue as one of three core leadership practice dimensions. The emphasis on coaching as "conversation that ensures support" reflects a developmental approach to communication, positioning school heads not merely as information disseminators but as facilitators of teacher growth. This finding extends Vikaraman et al.'s (2021) research on ethical leadership by suggesting that open communication serves as the medium through which ethical principles translate into daily practice.

The connection between communication and "shared governance" (School Head 6) resonates with distributed leadership literature. Jambo and Hongde (2020) found positive yet indirect effects of distributed leadership on student achievement, while Irvine (2021) emphasized that distributed leadership concerns practice rather than formal roles. The present study suggests that open communication enables distributed leadership by creating conditions where teachers can meaningfully participate in governance without requiring formal structural changes. This finding is particularly relevant in the Philippine context, where hierarchical structures often concentrate decision-making authority at the school head level.

Kliwer and Wanjiku Ndirangu's (2019) emphasis on reciprocity in cross-cultural leadership coaching finds resonance in the present study's finding that "coaching is a conversation which reinforces good behavior" (School Head 1). By framing coaching as bidirectional conversation rather than unidirectional instruction, school heads create conditions for reciprocal learning and mutual influence—dynamics particularly important in collectivist cultural contexts like the Philippines, where relationships and mutual obligation shape organizational behavior.

### *Subtheme 4: Love and Respect*

Participants articulated love and respect as foundational leadership orientations. One school head shared:

As a leader, I always see to it that the school's teaching and non-teaching staff are well served and taken care of. I treat everyone with utmost respect and dignity. I see to it that I am dealing with them harmoniously and do not coerce

with anyone. I also treat each one fairly and provide equal opportunities to learn and grow." (School Head 4)

Another emphasized familial framing: "I handled my teachers and non-teaching staff with love and made them feel that I treated them as my family. I always give respect to what they feel, to their own opinions and ideas and always give them a chance to lead" (School Head 5).

These findings align with Quines and Maguan's (2025) research on paternalistic leadership among Philippine elementary teachers. Their study of 400 public elementary teachers in Region XII demonstrated that "paternalistic leadership style can enhance teachers' quality of work life through improved supervisory relationships and increased empowerment expectations." The familial framing—"treated them as my family" (School Head 5)—exemplifies paternalistic leadership's cultural resonance in the Philippine context, where family relationships provide the primary model for understanding authority, obligation, and care.

The emphasis on respect for "what they feel, to their own opinions and ideas" (School Head 5) reflects what Hofman and Newman (2014) identify as the relational dimension of organizational commitment. Their research demonstrated that corporate social responsibility enhances organizational commitment when employees perceive genuine care and respect. The present study extends this finding to educational settings, suggesting that teachers' commitment depends not only on instrumental conditions (salary, resources) but also on relational conditions of being valued and respected.

The practice of giving teachers "a chance to lead" (School Head 5) reflects distributed leadership principles operationalized through love and respect. Sharp et al. (2019) found that literacy teacher educators must engage as advocates and responsive leaders, recommending frequent collaboration opportunities. The present study suggests that love and respect create psychological safety that enables teachers to accept leadership opportunities without fear of failure or judgment—conditions essential for distributed leadership effectiveness.

To sum up, managing staff is not a simple walk in the park and needs a deeper perspective of understanding, patience, and conscious actions which will let the staff feel that they are important and needed. In the world of leadership, a good leader is flexible and ever enduring even during the trying times. As a school head one must profess a persona that will help the institution to grow and the same goes with its stakeholders and its teachers and staff. The main goal for all existing organizations, including the schools and other institutions, is to advocate success and triumph by providing a character of enthusiasm and passion for serving society. As cited by Suratmi and Sopandi (2022), knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers in developing critical thinking in elementary school students are a good category. Description knowledge, skills, and attitudes of a good teacher impact the designed learning process.

Table 2. Thematic Presentation for Handling Staff with Care and Respect

Subtheme	Significant Statements
1) Empathy	<i>“As a school principal we must realize that we should not be the one who always speak but we must take time to listen with our heart. Emphatic leaders must be seen to every school head for our teachers to open their life to us. We must be a friendly principal but firm.” – School Head 1</i>
2) Responsibility	<i>“Every teacher was given the responsibility to give them the chance especially when it comes to the different responsibilities needed to fulfill the DepEd vision, mission and goals.” - School Head 2</i>
3) Communication	<i>“As a school head it is important that you handle your school staff properly. We should prioritize their needs and help them to grow professionally. Guide them in the correct path.” - School Head 3</i>
	<i>“Open communication with teaching and non-teaching, works collaboratively, shared governance.”- School Head 6</i>
	<i>“Coaching is a conversation that ensures support which creates a process that inspires people to maximize their personal and professional potential and creates an environment for learning and growth. It would be nice if we school head would be the one to initiate the open communication inside our premises, because coaching is one of the many tasks of the principal, it is a conversation which reinforces good behavior.”- School Head 1</i>
4) Love and Respect	<i>“As a leader, I always see to it that the school's teaching and non-teaching staff are well served and taken care of. I treat everyone with utmost respect and dignity. I see to it that I am dealing with them harmoniously and do not coerce with anyone. I also treat each one fairly and provide equal opportunities to learn and grow.” - School Head 4</i>
	<i>“I handled my teachers and non-teaching staff with love and made them feel that I treated them as my family. I always give respect to what they feel, to their own opinions and ideas and always give them a chance to lead. - School Head 5</i>

### **Theme 3: Addressing Professionalism through Leadership**

The third theme captures how school heads' leadership approaches – flexibility, listening, and humility – cultivate teacher professionalism and organizational commitment. This theme integrates the task-oriented and people-oriented dimensions of Behavioral Leadership Theory (Mulholland, 2019), demonstrating how flexible leaders adapt their approaches to situational demands while maintaining core values of respect and inclusion.

#### **Subtheme 1: Flexible Leadership**

Participants emphasized contextual adaptation as essential for leadership effectiveness. One school head articulated:

Styles of leadership depends on the school cultures and traditions, our flexibility as a Principal matter on the school that we are serving in order to

implement transformation and changes in our organization for the good and betterment of our learners." (School Head 1)

Another described shared leadership structures: "We practice shared leadership in our organization by utilizing our Master Teachers in the curriculum area and our Administrative Officer II in the administrative side. Whenever there are challenges that we encounter, we always see to it that we will collaborate on that certain matter to come up with the best possible solution" (School Head 4).

These findings align with Özgenel and Karsantik's (2020) research establishing significant correlations between principals' leadership styles and their practices. Their finding that transformational leadership yields positive effects while laissez-faire approaches produce negative outcomes supports the present study's emphasis on active, context-sensitive leadership. The recognition that leadership "depends on the school cultures and traditions" (School Head 1) reflects Burkman et al.'s (2019) conclusion that while core leadership practices may transfer across contexts, effective teacher behavior management requires attention to local conditions.

The practice of shared leadership through master teachers and administrative officers exemplifies what Ramzam et al. (2018) identified as adaptive approaches to change management. Their finding that the "pace of change" depends upon leaders' adaptive approaches supports the present study's emphasis on flexibility as a mechanism for navigating organizational challenges. By distributing leadership across formal roles (master teachers, administrative officers) and engaging in collaborative problem-solving, school heads create structures that can flexibly respond to emerging challenges without overburdening any single individual.

Gultom et al. (2021) revealed that good school performance depends on good governance and better leadership style, establishing these as performance characteristics that every school leadership must possess. The present study's finding that flexible leadership involves matching approach to "school cultures and traditions" (School Head 1) extends this research by specifying the mechanism: contextual adaptation enables school heads to work with rather than against existing cultural patterns, increasing the likelihood that change initiatives will be accepted and sustained.

In the Philippine context, where schools vary significantly in resources, community characteristics, and organizational culture (Cabigao, 2019), flexible leadership proves essential. A leadership approach effective in an urban, well-resourced school may fail in a rural, under-resourced setting. The present study's emphasis on contextual adaptation acknowledges this diversity while affirming core leadership principles of collaboration and shared governance.

### ***Subtheme 2: Leader as a good Listener***

Participants positioned listening as central to leadership effectiveness. One school head stated simply, "I have ears to listen, heart to understand them. Because I believe that a good leader knows how to listen to the voice of others" (School Head 3). Another emphasized the relationship between listening and

decision-making: "I often listen to the voice of the personnel, vividly explain the situation before decision making" (School Head 6).

These findings align with Grootenboer and Hardy's (2017) identification of dialogue as a core leadership practice dimension. Listening serves as the receptive component of dialogue, creating conditions for meaningful exchange and mutual understanding. The connection between listening and decision-making—"vividly explain the situation before decision making" (School Head 6)—reflects what Erdoğan and Sezgin (2020) identified as the strategy of establishing dialogue in ethical decision-making processes.

The metaphorical framing—"ears to listen, heart to understand" (School Head 3)—extends beyond technical listening to encompass empathetic understanding. This finding resonates with Ertürk's (2021) research on supportive leadership behaviors, suggesting that listening gains significance when teachers perceive genuine interest in their perspectives and well-being. The "heart to understand" component aligns with Garciano and Garciano's (2024) emphasis on autonomy-support, which requires understanding teachers' needs, values, and perspectives to provide appropriate support.

In the Philippine context, where communication often operates through indirect and high-context patterns (e.g., \*pakiusap\*, \*sensitivity\*, \*delicadeza\*), listening becomes particularly important for decoding implicit messages. Teachers may hesitate to directly express concerns or disagreements, making it essential for school heads to listen attentively to what is said, how it is said, and what remains unsaid. School Head 3's emphasis on understanding with the "heart" acknowledges this cultural dimension, suggesting that effective listening in the Philippine context requires emotional attunement, not merely information processing.

### ***Subtheme 3: Act of Humility and Sense of Belongingness***

In the workplace, a good quality of a leader is to let his or her Participants emphasize humility and belongingness as essential leadership qualities. One school head identified core values: "Practice of Humility, Unity and Equality" (School Head 2). Another articulated the outcome: "I think that is letting them feel their importance and having a sense of belongingness to our school" (School Head 5).

These findings align with Vikaraman et al.'s (2021) research on ethical leadership, which positions humility as foundational for building trust. Leaders who practice humility—acknowledging limitations, sharing credit, soliciting input—create conditions where teachers feel psychologically safe to contribute fully. The emphasis on "Unity and Equality" (School Head 2) reflects what Papa (2022) identifies as the challenge of establishing collaborative organizational effort, achieved here through leadership that minimizes hierarchical distance.

The concept of belongingness connects to organizational behavior research on identification and commitment. Mory et al. (2016) and Hofman and Newman (2014) found that corporate social responsibility enhances organizational commitment when employees perceive genuine care. The present study extends this finding by identifying belongingness as the psychological

mechanism through which leadership practices translate into commitment. When teachers "feel their importance and have a sense of belongingness" (School Head 5), they identify more strongly with the school and invest more fully in its success.

Prutina (2016) cautions that employee perceptions may not reflect organizational initiatives without effective communication. The present study's emphasis on making teachers "feel their importance" (School Head 5) addresses this caution by highlighting the perceptual dimension: leadership practices must not only exist but be experienced by teachers as genuine and meaningful. Humility, unity, and equality become meaningful not through declaration but through consistent enactment in daily interactions.

In the Philippine cultural context, where *\*kapwa\** (shared identity) and *\*pakikipagkapwa\** (relating to others as fellow human beings) are core values, belongingness carries particular significance. School Head 5's emphasis on letting teachers "feel their importance" aligns with these cultural values, suggesting that effective Philippine school heads create conditions where teachers experience themselves as valued members of a shared community, not merely as employees fulfilling assigned functions.

In totality, a great leader never lets his or her guard down even in a moment in time. Although this idea might be quite taxing, if he or she exhibits good quality and character such as those concepts that were discussed earlier, it is believed that the organization will have a smooth operation. The commitment of the staff or workers in the organization reflects their head or leader. Thus, the golden rule applies, if you do good things to your people, so do the people do good things to you. A good leader leads by example, and this is worth emulating and passed down through the next generation.

This is strongly supported by Gultom et al. (2021) revealed that good performance of a school depends on good governance and better leadership style of the school head, established as performance characteristics that every school leadership must possess. This implies that the present study will be a useful contribution to understanding leadership styles and school performance in the education sector. It will provide useful insights into leadership styles as a crucial element in growth and development of the education sector.

Table 3. Thematic Presentation for Addressing Professionalism through Leadership

Subtheme	Significant Statements
1) Flexible Leadership	<p><i>"Styles of leadership depends on the school cultures and traditions, our flexibility as a Principal matter on the school that we are serving in order to implement transformation and changes in our organization for the good and betterment of our learners." – School Head 1</i></p> <p><i>"We practice shared leadership in our organization by utilizing our Master Teachers in the curriculum area and our Administrative Officer II in the administrative side. Whenever there are challenges that we encounter, we always see to it that we will collaborate on</i></p>

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	<i>that certain matter to come up with the best possible solution. - School Head 4</i>
2) Leadership as A Good listener	<i>"I have ears to listen, heart to understand them. Because I believe that a good leader knows how to listen to the voice of others." - School Head 3</i>
	<i>"I often listen to the voice of the personnel, vividly explain the situation before decision making." - School Head 6</i>
3) Act of Humility and Sense of Belongingness	<i>"Practice of Humility, Unity and Equality" - School Head 2</i>
	<i>"I think that is letting them feel their importance and having a sense of belongingness to our school." - School Head 5</i>

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## DISCUSSION

This phenomenological study explored school heads' leadership practices and their management of teacher behavior in Philippine public schools, generating three major themes with multiple subthemes that collectively illuminate the complex dynamics of educational leadership during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings reveal that effective school heads integrate task-oriented and people-oriented leadership behaviors, adapting flexibly to contextual demands while maintaining core values of ethical conduct, empathetic care, and professional respect.

The first theme, **\*\*Managing Human Resources to their Fullest Extent\*\***, captured school heads' strategic approach to human capital development through ethical leadership, equitable task delegation, and professional growth opportunities. This theme reflects the task-oriented dimension of Behavioral Leadership Theory (Mulholland, 2019), emphasizing goal achievement, clear role definition, and efficient resource utilization. However, the ethical framing of these practices – "transparent and straight people which is always empathizes with the teachers" (School Head 1) – demonstrates that task orientation in effective Philippine school heads is infused with relational considerations, challenging the dichotomy between task and people orientation suggested by some leadership theories.

The second theme, **\*\*Handling Staff with Care and Respect\*\***, illuminated the relational foundations of effective leadership through empathy, responsibility, communication, and love/respect. This theme aligns with the people-oriented dimension of Behavioral Leadership Theory, emphasizing trust-building, mutual respect, and concern for subordinates' well-being. The depth of relational investment described by participants – listening "with our heart" (School Head 1), treating teachers "as my family" (School Head 5) – suggests that effective leadership in the Philippine context requires emotional connection that transcends professional courtesy, reflecting cultural values of *\*pakikipagkapwa\** (shared humanity) and familial obligation.

The third theme, **\*\*Addressing Professionalism through Leadership\*\***, integrated task and people orientations through flexible leadership, listening, and humility. This theme demonstrates how effective school heads navigate the inherent tensions of leadership – maintaining authority while remaining

approachable, directing work while respecting autonomy, making decisions while soliciting input. The emphasis on flexibility – "Styles of leadership depends on the school cultures and traditions" (School Head 1) – reflects sophisticated understanding that leadership effectiveness requires contextual adaptation rather than rigid application of preferred styles.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly affected teachers' professional and personal lives, creating unprecedented challenges that required adaptive responses from both teachers and school heads. Effective school heads demonstrated their value for teachers through open communication, active listening, and genuine concern for teacher welfare. They implemented strategies to empower teachers, including motivational support, stress-reduction programs, and practical guidance. The findings underscore the critical importance of empathy, sensitivity, and conducive workplaces in managing teacher behavior and supporting teacher well-being. School heads who recognize workload-related stress, provide technical assistance, and create positive working environments are better positioned to influence teacher behavior positively and maintain organizational effectiveness even during times of crisis.

## ADVANCED RESEARCH

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted teachers' professional and personal lives, requiring adaptive and empathetic leadership from school heads. Effective leaders who foster open communication, provide emotional and technical support, and create a positive work environment are better able to enhance teacher well-being, influence behavior, and maintain organizational effectiveness during crises.

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