

Impact of Leadership Styles on School's Organizational Culture

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Abstract

This study examined the leadership styles of school principals and their influence on the organizational culture of eight public secondary schools in the Municipality of Baleno, Masbate. It was anchored on Schein's Organizational Culture Theory, Lewin's Leadership Theory, and Bass and Avolio's Full Range Leadership Theory. A mixed research design combining quantitative, qualitative, and descriptive approaches was employed. The quantitative phase involved 62 respondents comprising 55 teachers and 7 administrative staff, while 15 qualified participants were purposively selected for the qualitative component. Data were gathered using a survey questionnaire checklist covering transformational, transactional, democratic, laissez-faire, and autocratic leadership, organizational culture, and perceived leadership influence. Frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data. Teachers perceived transformational leadership as the most practiced style, with a mean of 4.17, followed by democratic leadership at 4.07, while administrative staff rated autocratic leadership highest at 4.43, followed by transformational leadership at 4.25 and transactional and democratic leadership at 4.22. The schools generally demonstrated collaboration, academic excellence, discipline, positive professional relationships, open communication, and support for professional development, although shared traditions and some aspects of communication and staff relationships were inconsistently experienced. Qualitative findings indicated that supportive, collaborative, ethical, and vision-driven leadership strengthened motivation, participation, commitment, and organizational cohesion, whereas authoritarian, inconsistent, or disengaged leadership could weaken morale and collaboration. The study recommends strengthening transformational and democratic leadership, consistent communication, professional development, school traditions, integrity, respect, and inclusivity. The study supports SDG 4 – Quality Education, SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals through its emphasis on educational quality, participatory governance, and stakeholder collaboration. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening educational, institutional, governance, social, and community conditions that support sustained school improvement and organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: Autocratic Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Laissez-Faire Leadership, Organizational Culture, School Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Transformational Leadership

1. Introduction

School leadership is a central influence on the organizational culture of educational institutions because principals shape decision-making, professional relationships, shared values, staff motivation, and the direction of school improvement. Effective principals are expected not only to manage institutional operations but also to inspire, guide, and model the values they seek to establish within the school (Méndez-Giménez et al., 2020). As schools respond to emerging technologies, diverse learner needs, changing community expectations, and broader social conditions, leadership increasingly requires instructional support, strategic vision, stakeholder engagement, and the capacity to mobilize people toward common educational goals (Lee, 2025). This study examines how the leadership styles of school principals relate to the organizational culture of public secondary schools in the Municipality of Baleno, Masbate. It considers transformational, transactional, democratic, laissez-faire, and autocratic leadership and examines these styles from the perspectives of teachers and administrative staff. The study is grounded in the premise that leadership styles influence the ways school personnel communicate, collaborate, participate in decisions, pursue institutional goals, and develop shared patterns of behavior. Its localized focus responds to limited research on leadership and organizational culture in rural public secondary schools and seeks to provide evidence relevant to educational quality, institutional effectiveness, participatory governance, and sustainable school development.

Leadership style plays an important role in leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes (Bwalya, 2023). Different approaches to leadership can influence teachers' motivation, enthusiasm, professional responsibilities, and willingness to participate in school improvement (McKinney, Labat, & Labat, 2015). Consequently, principals' leadership styles represent more than personal management preferences; they determine how leaders respond to internal and external challenges and contribute to the formation of school culture. Five leadership styles are central to the study. The University of

Massachusetts (2020) describes transformational leadership as an approach that inspires personnel to exceed basic expectations and work toward a shared vision, while transactional leadership emphasizes extrinsic motivation connected with specific work performance. Democratic leadership incorporates staff participation rather than treating personnel merely as subordinates (Woods, 2021). In contrast, St. Thomas University (2022) positions laissez-faire and autocratic leadership toward opposing ends of a leadership continuum: laissez-faire leadership minimizes direct intervention and allows greater staff autonomy, whereas autocratic leadership centralizes authority, decision-making, procedures, policies, and conflict resolution in the leader. These approaches are important because school culture provides organizational identity, recognizes achievement, shapes behavioral standards, develops accepted ways of working, and directs future action (Teasley, 2017). Principals can therefore influence the norms, relationships, expectations, values, and practices that constitute the organizational culture of their schools. The present study situates this relationship within the public secondary schools of Baleno, Masbate. Secondary schools can be particularly sensitive to leadership because of their more complex structures, specialized departments, and organizational demands. Bantilan et al. (2024) highlighted this sensitivity and the corresponding importance of leadership in strengthening teacher commitment. The study therefore examines how teachers and administrative staff perceive their principals' leadership styles and how these approaches are associated with the organizational culture they experience.

The literature shows a clear shift toward participatory, inclusive, collaborative, and distributed leadership, where stakeholder involvement and shared responsibility strengthen accountability, inclusion, organizational cohesion, and school culture (Yeşil, 2022; Mulawarman et al., 2023; Spillane et al., 2021; Muñoz-Martínez et al., 2021; Candia et al., 2022; Kefallinou et al., 2020). Leadership also shapes institutional values, norms, relationships, and professional commitment, while equity-centered and participatory approaches promote more democratic and responsive school environments (Torres, 2022; Sánchez & Gómez, 2024; Lewis et al., 2023; Uçkun et al., 2024; McDonell, 2021; Sucitra et al., 2024; Cary, Randolph, and Broome (2020). Philippine studies similarly associate transformational, democratic, and participative leadership with collaboration, innovation, teacher engagement, trust, motivation, and institutional effectiveness (Amorin (2021); Galang (2023); Pacadaljen and Pacolor (2019); Camatog and Fu (2024); Grepon et al. (2021); Daguio et al. (2024); Lusung et al. (2023); Esogon & Gumban (2024); Samon and Baluyos (2023); Magallanes and Dioso (2020)). Leadership preparation and contextual responsiveness are likewise important for school effectiveness, particularly in complex and rural settings (Barrett, 2024; Steinberg and Yang (2022); Tesfaye (2020); Gümüş et al. (2024); Wang et al. (2023); Şen et al. (2024); Hannum and Wang (2022); Bayeni and Bhengu (2018)). Overall, instructional, transformational, democratic, distributed, supportive, and ethical leadership are associated with stronger teacher performance, professional development, commitment, adaptability, trust, and organizational culture (Kaya, 2023; Deal & Peterson, 2016; Cansoy and Parlar (2017); Freeman and Fields (2023); Usmanov (2024); Lin (2022); Ma and Marion (2025); Leithwood et al. (2020)). Thus, leadership functions not only as an administrative responsibility but as a major influence on school values, relationships, culture, and effectiveness.

At the global level, research presents leadership as increasingly participatory and shared, with collaboration and stakeholder engagement contributing to inclusive governance and organizational effectiveness (Yeşil, 2022; Mulawarman et al., 2023; Spillane et al., 2021). Cooperative and inclusive practices further support equity and institutional responsiveness (Muñoz-Martínez et al., 2021; Candia et al., 2022; Kefallinou et al., 2020). The movement toward distributed and equity-oriented approaches also reflects a broader reconsideration of traditional hierarchical leadership (Lewis et al., 2023; Sánchez & Gómez, 2024), particularly where leaders must reconcile policy, culture, community expectations, and organizational values (McDonell, 2021; Ishimura & Galloway, 2023). Nationally, Philippine evidence from state universities, colleges, technical institutions, and public schools similarly favors leadership characterized by participation, collaboration, and shared vision (Amorin, 2021; Galang, 2023; Pacadaljen & Pacolor, 2019). Emotional intelligence, ethical conduct, and supportive practices further contribute to commitment and professional engagement (Daguio et al., 2024; Magallanes & Dioso, 2020). Philippine educational frameworks also recognize transformational and democratic approaches as useful for developing cohesive and high-performing environments (DepEd, 2022; Luzon DepEd Leadership Unit, 2021). Locally, the Municipality of Baleno is situated in Masbate Province, Bicol Region (V), and is divided into 24 barangays, with eight barangays providing secondary education. Its public secondary schools vary in size, resources, and community conditions. These differences create a relevant setting for examining whether and how principals' leadership approaches are reflected in staff experiences of organizational culture. The focus on rural public secondary schools is especially important because much of the existing literature concerns urban systems, universities and colleges, or broader educational populations rather than municipality-specific secondary school environments.

The study is anchored in three complementary theories. Edgar Schein's Organizational Culture Theory (2010) explains school culture through artifacts, values, and underlying assumptions that shape organizational behavior (The World of Work Project, 2024; Gerathy, 2025). Kurt Lewin's Leadership Theory (1939) describes autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership and their influence on group behavior and decision-making (Leadership Success, 2024). Bass and Avolio's Full Range Leadership Theory (1994) further explains transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, emphasizing their effects on motivation, performance, and organizational relationships (Lindberg, 2022). Grounded on

Kurt Lewin (1939), Edgar Schein (2010), and Bass & Avolio (1994), the study assumes that leadership styles influence school organizational culture through decision-making, motivation, relationships, shared values, and organizational practices. Conceptually, leadership styles serve as the independent variable, while school organizational culture is the dependent variable, as perceived by teachers and administrative staff.

Although the literature consistently identifies leadership as an important determinant of school culture, several contextual gaps remain. Much existing research concentrates on urban educational systems, higher education institutions, elementary schools, large school systems, or broad regional and national samples. Research specifically examining the relationship between principals' leadership styles and organizational culture in rural public secondary schools remains comparatively limited. The distinction is important because secondary schools often have specialized departments, more formal organizational structures, multiple professional roles, and different administrative demands. Rural schools may additionally operate within distinct resource, community, and institutional conditions. Findings derived from tertiary, metropolitan, or large-scale settings therefore cannot automatically represent the experiences of public secondary school personnel in Baleno. The study addresses this gap by focusing on eight public secondary schools and incorporating both teaching and administrative perspectives. Including these groups provides an internal view of leadership as it is experienced by personnel who work under school principals while participating directly in the norms, relationships, routines, and values that constitute organizational culture. The study consequently provides a localized basis for understanding whether different leadership approaches are associated with collaboration, morale, professional engagement, shared purpose, and institutional cohesion in rural secondary education.

The study most directly aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education because sustainable educational quality depends not only on curriculum and instruction but also on leadership, teacher development, collaboration, inclusive participation, and organizational environments that support effective teaching and learning. Understanding leadership styles that encourage professional growth, shared responsibility, and coherent institutional goals can contribute to stronger and more sustainable school systems. It also relates to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions through its emphasis on participatory decision-making, ethical leadership, transparency, inclusion, trust, accountability, and strong organizational culture. Schools are institutions whose sustainability depends on leadership practices that maintain fair relationships, shared values, credible governance, and meaningful participation by personnel. The research further supports SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals because much of the literature emphasizes collaboration among principals, teachers, administrative personnel, parents, communities, policymakers, and other educational stakeholders. Leadership capable of developing shared ownership and cooperative relationships strengthens the institutional partnerships required for sustained school improvement.

The study contributes principally to educational sustainability by examining leadership conditions that can sustain teacher engagement, professional growth, instructional support, shared responsibility, and an organizational environment conducive to quality education. Leadership that promotes collaboration and a common institutional direction can help schools maintain improvement efforts beyond isolated programs or short-term administrative initiatives. It also contributes to institutional and governance sustainability. Organizational cultures based on trust, ethical practice, participation, accountability, and shared values are more capable of maintaining coherence during leadership transitions, policy changes, and other institutional pressures. Examining how leadership styles reinforce or weaken these characteristics can therefore inform leadership development and school governance. The study also has relevance to social and community sustainability because schools operate through relationships among individuals and stakeholder groups. Inclusive and participatory leadership can strengthen belonging, collective responsibility, professional respect, and cooperation between personnel and the communities they serve. Such conditions support schools not merely as administrative organizations but as enduring community institutions. From a multidisciplinary perspective, the study therefore connects educational administration, organizational behavior, leadership studies, professional development, governance, and community participation. Its contribution to sustainability lies in identifying leadership practices that can help public secondary schools maintain effective relationships, institutional identity, professional capacity, and shared educational purposes over time.

The study seeks to determine the leadership styles of school principals as perceived by teachers and administrative staff, describe the schools' organizational culture from the perspectives of these two groups, and examine how principals' leadership styles influence organizational culture. It is limited to the eight public secondary schools in the Municipality of Baleno during academic year 2024–2025. Private schools and higher education institutions are excluded, as are the perspectives of stakeholders other than teaching and administrative personnel. Accordingly, the inquiry provides a context-specific assessment of perceived leadership and organizational culture rather than establishing direct causation. Its central rationale is to clarify how leadership is experienced within rural public secondary schools and how different leadership approaches correspond with the values, relationships, behaviors, professional environment, and shared institutional direction that constitute school organizational culture.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a mixed research design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches with descriptive analysis. Qualitative research examines experiences, behaviors, meanings, and social phenomena through non-numerical information and commonly uses open-ended questions and thematic analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, the qualitative component provided deeper understanding of how teachers and administrative staff perceived the influence of school principals' leadership styles on organizational culture. The quantitative component collected numerical data for mathematical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It was used to determine the leadership styles prominently demonstrated by principals and identify characteristics of organizational culture in public secondary schools in Baleno. Descriptive analysis was also applied to summarize the existing conditions and basic characteristics of the data through measures such as means and frequencies (McMillan & Schumacher, 2015). Together, these approaches provided numerical evidence of prevailing patterns while also capturing participants' experiences and explanations concerning leadership and school culture.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Municipality of Baleno in the Province of Masbate, Bicol Region (V), Philippines. Based on the 2020 census cited in the manuscript, Baleno has a population of 28,855 and a land area of 204.38 square kilometers. The municipality consists of 24 barangays, eight of which offer secondary education: Gangao, Lagta, Magdalena, Baleno, Tinapian, Batuila, Lahong, and Eastern Capsay. These areas constituted the geographical setting of the participating public secondary schools.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were teaching and administrative staff from eight public secondary schools offering junior and senior high school education in Baleno: Amador-Bello High School, Lagta National High School, Baleno National High School, Batuila Integrated School, Tinapian Integrated School, Lahong National High School, Eastern Capsay Integrated School, and Magdalena National High School. The quantitative phase obtained responses from 62 participants, consisting of 55 teachers and 7 administrative staff, drawn from a population of 196 teaching and administrative personnel. A separate group of 15 qualified participants from the same schools participated in the qualitative component. The respondents represented personnel who directly experienced school leadership and organizational practices. Administrative participants were involved in school operations, while teaching personnel held varied roles and designations under their respective school heads. Security, janitorial, and other non-operational personnel were excluded from the qualitative selection criteria.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Two sampling techniques were used. Convenience sampling was applied to the quantitative phase. This non-probability method selects respondents according to their availability and willingness to participate and is useful when access to the entire population is difficult (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Because participation was voluntary and required consent, the researcher distributed the survey through Google Forms and obtained responses from 55 teachers and 7 administrative staff, for a total quantitative sample of 62 participants. The researcher used Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error in relation to the population of 196 teaching and administrative staff. As explained by Ellen (2022), Slovin's formula provides a sample size from a population when its characteristics are unknown. Purposive sampling was used for the qualitative phase because it enables the selection of individuals who meet criteria relevant to the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants were required to have served in their current schools for at least one year to ensure familiarity with the principal's leadership and the school's culture, be willing to provide more detailed responses and give informed consent, and be directly involved in relevant school functions. Administrative staff had to participate in school operations, while teachers were selected from personnel with varied roles or designations related to strategic or operational functions. Fifteen qualified participants were selected for the qualitative questionnaire.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used a survey questionnaire checklist designed to gather quantitative data and explore staff perceptions. The instrument covered respondents' sociodemographic information, leadership styles, school organizational culture, and the perceived influence of leadership styles on organizational culture. The sociodemographic portion collected the respondent's optional name and designation and was preceded by a consent statement intended to establish voluntary participation and confidentiality. The leadership component consisted of 20 items covering Transformational, Transactional, Democratic, Laissez-Faire, and Autocratic leadership. The items were adapted from the Vannsimpco Leadership Survey (VLS) developed by Vann, Coleman, and Simpson and addressed observable behaviors involving staff consultation, motivation, delegation, compliance, and control. Responses used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 – Strongly Agree to 1 – Strongly Disagree. The organizational culture component assessed school atmosphere, observed values, collegial relationships, communication practices, shared traditions, and opportunities for professional development. The final component examined respondents' perceptions of the relationship between principals' leadership styles and organizational

culture, particularly their influence on teamwork, innovation, communication, and the overall school climate. Open-ended responses also provided contextual information for the qualitative component.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher secured permission from the Schools Division Office of Masbate Province and informed the school principals of the eight participating secondary schools. Data gathering was conducted in May 2025, before the beginning of S.Y. 2025-2026. The survey questionnaire checklist was distributed to teachers and administrative staff through Google Forms to improve accessibility during May, which was designated for the 30-day uninterrupted vacation (DepEd Order No. 009, series of 2025). Participants were given two weeks to complete the questionnaires, with follow-up reminders sent to improve the response rate. After sufficient responses had been obtained, the raw data were compiled and forwarded to the designated statistician for processing and analysis. One week was allotted for the statistical treatment and interpretation of the data, after which the results were reviewed and synthesized for presentation.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative and qualitative procedures were applied in accordance with the mixed-method design. Quantitative survey responses were organized, coded, tabulated, and subjected to descriptive statistical treatment. Frequency count and percentage distribution were used to summarize categorical responses and describe patterns among participants. Weighted means were used to determine average responses for the leadership indicators and assess the extent to which specific leadership behaviors and organizational culture characteristics were manifested. The same measures supported the interpretation of cultural dimensions such as teamwork, communication, innovation, and school climate. Frequency count represented the number of responses falling within particular categories, while percentage distribution showed their relative distribution across the participants. Weighted mean was used when response values carried different weights and was applied particularly in assessing the extent to which respondents perceived different leadership styles among principals. These descriptive procedures allowed the numerical findings to be presented and interpreted systematically. For the qualitative component, participants' open-ended responses were subjected to thematic analysis. Responses were read and examined for recurring ideas, similar statements were grouped, and patterns were clustered into themes. Participant observations and recommendations were then used to provide contextual and experiential depth to the quantitative findings and explain how leadership styles influenced organizational culture.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting the study, approval was obtained from the appropriate authorities, including the Schools Division Office and the school heads of the participating secondary schools in Baleno. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, and informed consent was secured before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Respondent identities were kept anonymous, and information collected during the study was treated with strict confidentiality. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes. The researcher also sought to ensure that participation would not cause psychological, emotional, or professional harm, in accordance with ethical standards for social science research.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Leadership Styles of School Principals

3.1.1 Leadership Styles as Perceived by Teachers

Teachers perceived transformational leadership as the most practiced style, with a mean score of 4.17, followed by democratic leadership at 4.07; both were interpreted as highly practiced. Transactional leadership obtained a mean of 3.94 and autocratic leadership 3.85, both interpreted as moderately to highly practiced. Laissez-faire leadership recorded the lowest mean of 3.62 and was interpreted as moderately practiced. These findings indicate that teachers generally experience principals as visionary, motivational, and participative while still observing elements of structure, authority, and accountability. The predominance of transformational and democratic practices suggests a leadership environment that encourages collaboration, shared vision, participation, and professional growth while retaining sufficient structure for organizational control. This corresponds with Yeşil (2022), who emphasizes participatory and inclusive leadership; Mulawarman et al. (2023), who highlight stakeholder participation in decision-making; and Spillane et al. (2021), who support shared responsibility through distributed leadership. In the Philippine context, Amarin (2021) and Galang (2023) associate transformational leadership with collaboration, innovation, and cohesive organizational culture, while the Department of Education (2022)⁶ similarly promotes transformational and democratic practices for positive school climates and teacher motivation.

3.1.2 Leadership Styles as Perceived by Administrative Staff

Administrative staff perceived autocratic leadership as the most evident style, with a mean score of 4.43. Transformational leadership obtained 4.25, while transactional and democratic leadership both obtained 4.22; these four styles were interpreted as highly practiced. Laissez-faire leadership received the lowest mean of 3.68 and was interpreted as moderately practiced. Thus, administrative staff observed principals who combine strong authority and compliance with motivational, structured, and participative approaches, while relatively limited laissez-faire practices indicate active rather than detached leadership. The combination of directive and participative leadership reflects an approach in which authority coexists with innovation, motivation, and staff involvement. Amorin (2021) emphasized that effective educational leadership can combine vision-setting with decisive authority, while Galang (2023) found that collaborative leadership remains compatible with structured institutional direction. Sánchez and Gómez (2024) further support adaptive, culturally responsive leadership, and the Department of Education (2022) emphasizes the complementary roles of transformational and directive practices in maintaining organizational coherence and motivation.

3.2 Organizational Culture of the Schools

3.2.1 Overall School Atmosphere

Among teachers, 35 or 63.6% described their schools as promoting collaboration and support, followed by 26 or 47.3% who perceived the environment as structured and rule-based. Innovation and adaptability and competitiveness and results orientation were each identified by 25 or 45.5%, while only 9 or 16.4% perceived an emphasis on independence and bottom-up approaches. Among administrative staff, 3 or 42.9% identified innovation and adaptability as the dominant characteristic, 2 or 28.6% identified collaboration and support, and 1 or 14.3% each identified competitiveness and a structured, rule-based environment. None identified independence and a bottom-up approach. Overall, the responses depict schools that combine collaboration, innovation, accountability, and formal structure, although decision-making autonomy appears comparatively limited. The teachers' perceptions are consistent with Galang (2023), who linked leadership competence with collaborative school culture, and Amorin's (2021) finding that innovation can coexist with organizational discipline. The limited emphasis on bottom-up decision-making corresponds with Sánchez and Gómez (2024), while the balance between collaboration and structure reflects Spillane et al.'s (2021)¹⁴ distributed leadership perspective. Administrative staff's emphasis on innovation is similarly supported by Muñoz-Martínez et al. (2021) and Galang (2023), while the observed collaboration reflects Spillane et al.'s (2021)¹⁷ view of shared responsibility. Amorin's (2021) findings further indicate that structure and high expectations can coexist with innovation under effective leadership.

3.2.2 Values Emphasized in the Schools

Teachers identified compliance with rules and discipline as the most emphasized value, reported by 33 or 60%, followed by academic excellence at 32 or 58.2%, collaboration at 26 or 47.3%, respect and inclusivity at 20 or 36.4%, and innovation at 14 or 25.5%. Administrative staff differed somewhat: 4 or 57.1% identified academic excellence, 3 or 42.9% identified innovation, and 1 or 14.3% each identified collaboration, respect and inclusivity, and compliance with rules and discipline. Thus, teachers emphasized discipline and achievement, whereas administrative staff placed greater emphasis on academic excellence and innovation. The teachers' emphasis on discipline and achievement corresponds with Amorin's (2021) and Villanueva and Bernardo (2020), who associate strong school cultures with structure and performance. The presence of collaboration and inclusivity reflects Spillane et al.'s (2021) shared-leadership perspective, although Galang (2023) notes that innovation may receive less emphasis when compliance and performance dominate. For administrative staff, Galang's (2023) emphasis on academic performance and future-oriented growth and Muñoz-Martínez et al. (2021) on creativity and adaptability support the prominence of academic excellence and innovation. Sánchez and Gómez (2024) and Villanueva and Bernardo (2020) further show that the values emphasized within schools often reflect leadership priorities and orientation.

3.2.3 Professional Relationships Among Staff

Among teachers, 32 or 58.2% described professional relationships as generally positive, while 12 or 21.8% each described them as very strong and collegial, neutral, or occasionally tense. Seven or 12.7% reported frequent conflicts. Among administrative staff, 3 or 42.9% described relationships as generally positive, 2 or 28.6% reported occasional tension, and 1 or 14.3% expressed a neutral view; no respondent reported either very strong collegiality or frequent conflict. Overall, relationships were predominantly positive, although the responses also revealed pockets of tension requiring attention. These findings indicate that supportive professional relationships are important to organizational cohesion, but occasional tensions can affect morale and collaboration. Andal (2021) linked open communication and collegiality with organizational harmony, while Cardenas (2020) associated collaborative leadership with stronger staff relationships and reduced conflict. Flores and Zacarias (2024) likewise recognized that organizational pressures may produce occasional interpersonal tension. Among administrative staff, Spillane et al. (2021) emphasize shared responsibilities and dialogue, Galang (2023) highlights communication and participation, and Villanueva and Bernardo (2020) acknowledge that tensions may arise in highly goal-oriented organizational environments.

3.2.4 Communication Practices

Among teachers, 27 or 49.1% reported that open communication was always observed, 16 or 29.1% said it was occasionally observed, and 11 or 20% said it was rarely observed. Among administrative staff, 4 or 57.1% reported that communication was always observed, 2 or 28.6% said it was occasionally observed, and 1 or 14.3% said it was rarely observed. No respondent from either group indicated that communication was completely absent. The findings therefore show that open communication generally exists but is not experienced consistently across all school settings. The variation in responses is important because communication shapes transparency, trust, collaboration, and organizational alignment. Leithwood et al. (2020), Bickmore and Bickmore (2021), Kraft and Falken (2022), and Aladwan and Forawi (2023) associate clear and open communication with trust, engagement, collaboration, and stronger organizational culture. Administrative staff perceptions are similarly supported by Leithwood et al. (2020), Bickmore and Bickmore (2021), and Kraft and Falken (2022), who emphasize that consistent and authentic communication strengthens cohesion and alignment with institutional goals.

3.2.5 Shared Traditions and School Unity

Among teachers, 26 or 47.3% reported that traditions promoting school unity outside academically required activities were occasionally observed, 20 or 36.4% said they were always observed, and 8 or 14.5% reported that they were rarely observed. Administrative staff showed a similar pattern: 4 or 57.1% reported occasional observation, 2 or 28.6% reported consistent observation, and 1 or 14.3% reported rare observation. These results indicate that shared traditions exist but are not consistently institutionalized across the schools. The inconsistent practice of shared traditions suggests variations in leadership priorities, available resources, and the reinforcement of organizational identity. Fullan and Quinn (2016) regard such practices as important elements of school culture, while (Mariano, 2024) and *Frontiers in Education* (2025) similarly indicate that school unity and cultural rituals depend partly on consistent leadership engagement. Plaku and Leka (2025) further associate consistent organizational practices with stronger cultural identity, while Riveras-León and Tomàs-Folch (2024) emphasize systematic reinforcement of shared norms throughout the institution.

3.2.6 Professional Development and Learning Opportunities

Most teachers perceived substantial support for professional development. Thirty-five or 63.6% reported that their schools actively provide and encourage learning opportunities, and 15 or 27.3% reported that some opportunities are provided and encouraged. In contrast, 4 or 7.3% stated that these opportunities are not prioritized unless required, while 3 or 5.5% reported that they are rarely provided. Among administrative staff, 3 or 42.9% reported active provision and encouragement, another 3 or 42.9% reported some provision and encouragement, and 1 or 14.3% indicated that professional development is not prioritized unless required. Thus, both groups generally perceived institutional support for continued learning, although the degree of support varied. The strong support perceived by teachers reflects an organizational culture oriented toward continuous improvement, although inconsistent implementation may limit its effects for some personnel. Fullan (2016) emphasizes the importance of embedding professional learning in school culture, while Leithwood et al. (2020) highlight leadership support and resource allocation as important contributors to school improvement. For administrative personnel, Bush (2020) similarly argues that professional development should extend beyond teachers to strengthen competence and cohesion throughout the school organization.

3.3 Influence of Leadership Styles on School Organizational Culture

The qualitative findings showed that respondents predominantly strongly agreed or agreed that principals' leadership styles influence organizational culture, staff morale and performance, commitment to the school mission, and alignment with institutional goals and values. Participants regarded principals as role models whose professionalism, ethical behavior, fairness, vision, and involvement establish expectations for staff behavior. Supportive principals who acknowledged staff efforts, encouraged participation, provided direction, understood staff circumstances, and remained actively involved were associated with greater motivation, camaraderie, responsibility, improved professional practice, and commitment. Inclusion in planning and school improvement strengthened staff ownership of institutional goals. Respondents also generally perceived leadership as aligned with the schools' mission, vision, values, and DepEd policies, particularly where communication, collaboration, and shared decision-making were evident. However, some participants reported that authoritarian behavior, inconsistent implementation of rules, poor communication, indecisiveness, or disengaged leadership weakened morale, staff involvement, and alignment. The responses further indicated that organizational culture is shaped not solely by principals but through the collective participation of teaching and administrative personnel. These findings reinforce the central influence of leadership on organizational culture. Ancho and Vista (2021) associate effective leadership with ethical behavior and participative governance, while Alvarez et al. (2020) emphasize innovation and vision in building trust and cultural identity. Narullita, Fitria, and Mulyadi (2022) similarly connect principal leadership and organizational culture with teacher performance. Plaku and Leka (2025) found that cooperation, community engagement, and shared decision-making support positive school culture, whereas negative leadership is associated with fragmentation and lower job satisfaction. Alzoraiki et al. (2024) likewise highlight transformational leadership, shared vision, and supportive practices as contributors to morale and organizational coherence. Finally, Kalkan et al. (2023) associate transformational leadership with continuous learning, collaboration, and innovation, while transactional leadership contributes more directly to order and compliance. Collectively, the findings indicate that collaborative, empowering,

ethical, and vision-driven leadership supports a cohesive and mission-oriented organizational culture, whereas excessively rigid or disengaged leadership may weaken motivation and collaboration.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that school principals' leadership styles influence the organizational culture of public secondary schools in the Municipality of Baleno. Teachers perceived transformational and democratic leadership as particularly beneficial because these approaches promote motivation, collaboration, participation in decision-making, professional growth, and commitment to school improvement. Administrative staff perceived transactional and democratic leadership as effective in providing clear expectations, structured guidance, recognition, and inclusive participation. Overall, the schools were characterized by collaboration, mutual respect, continuous development, inclusivity, professionalism, trust, and shared responsibility. Transformational and democratic leadership were found to strengthen organizational culture by promoting unity, professional integrity, motivation, and alignment with school goals and values, whereas authoritarian and laissez-faire approaches tended to weaken collaboration and staff morale.

The study recommends strengthening transformational and democratic leadership practices among school principals to promote collaboration, staff empowerment, and a positive organizational culture. School heads should maintain clear, open, and consistent communication with personnel to strengthen trust and transparency in decision-making, while professional development should be reinforced through mentoring for newly hired teachers, leadership training, and regular in-service workshops. Schools should also institutionalize traditions and non-academic activities that promote unity, teamwork, and a sense of community, while integrating integrity, respect, and inclusivity into leadership practices to maintain alignment with the school mission and provide a positive example to the school community.

The study was limited to the academic year 2024–2025 and to teachers and administrative staff from public secondary schools in the Municipality of Baleno. Private schools and higher education institutions were excluded, as were the perspectives of other school stakeholders. Furthermore, the findings were based on respondents' perceptions of leadership styles and organizational culture and were intended to describe and analyze these perceptions rather than establish direct causation between school principals' leadership styles and organizational culture.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to institutional and social science ethical standards, with permission for data collection secured from the Schools Division Office of Masbate Province and the participating school heads. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, withdrawal was permitted without penalty, and respondents' identities and information were kept confidential, securely stored, and used solely for academic purposes, with safeguards against psychological, emotional, or professional harm. Contributions of the adviser, thesis committee, editor, school officials, colleagues, family, and other supporters were duly acknowledged. The thesis does not provide a separate conflict-of-interest declaration or copyright ownership statement; these should be stated only if verified and required by the institution or publication.

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