

# School Heads' Perception on their Leadership Practices and its Effect on School Performance at San Fernando District

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**Publication history:** Received: April 09, 2026; Revised: April 14, 2026; Accepted: April 24, 2026

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## Abstract

This study examined the leadership practices of public elementary and secondary school heads in San Fernando District, Masbate, and determined their perceived impact on school performance. It was anchored on Instructional Leadership Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Distributed Leadership Theory, which collectively explain how leadership influences instruction, teacher motivation, collaboration, and school effectiveness. The study used a descriptive-quantitative research design and involved 30 school heads selected through convenience sampling. Data were gathered through a validated questionnaire covering respondents' profile, leadership practices in school management, educational leadership, supervision, and curriculum implementation, and the perceived impact of these practices on school performance. Frequency count and percentage were used for the demographic profile, weighted mean for the level of leadership practices and impact on school performance, and Pearson correlation for the relationship between variables. Findings showed that the respondents were mostly 31–35 years old, predominantly male and married, with master's degree units, long years of service, and mostly holding the position of Principal I. The school heads demonstrated a very high level of leadership practices across all measured dimensions, particularly in educational leadership, supervision, school management, and curriculum implementation. Their leadership practices were also perceived to have a very positive impact on school performance, especially in program implementation, student achievement, resource management, and stakeholder involvement. The study further revealed a statistically significant strong positive relationship between leadership practices and school performance. It concludes that effective leadership among school heads is strongly associated with improved school outcomes and recommends continued leadership training, strengthened school-based management, sustained teacher support, closer curriculum monitoring, and enhanced stakeholder involvement. The study aligns with SDG 4 on Quality Education and SDG 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions by emphasizing effective educational leadership and stronger school governance. Its sustainability contribution lies in supporting educational, institutional, governance, and community sustainability through improved school leadership and performance.

**Keywords:** Curriculum Implementation, Educational Leadership, Leadership Practices, School Heads, School Management, School Performance, Supervision

## 1. Introduction

School leadership is a central determinant of educational quality because school heads influence instructional delivery, teacher performance, curriculum implementation, and the overall effectiveness of school operations. The manuscript establishes that examining school heads' leadership practices is necessary to understand how school management, educational leadership, supervision, and curriculum implementation shape school performance in the specific context of San Fernando District, Masbate. It also positions the study within existing foreign and local scholarship, identifies a localized research gap, and anchors the inquiry in instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership theories.

School heads serve as the central figures in ensuring the smooth operation of schools by managing administrative functions, addressing teacher and learner concerns, responding to community-related challenges, and shaping the overall educational environment. Because their decisions affect teaching quality, learner performance, and institutional climate, school heads must demonstrate effective leadership practices that strengthen school management, guide instruction, and sustain a positive learning culture. The manuscript emphasizes that strong leadership fosters teacher motivation, enhances instructional quality, and improves institutional effectiveness (Paitao-Dumrang, 2025). In the Philippine context, school heads are specifically tasked with school management, educational leadership, supervision, and curriculum implementation, all of which are integral to quality education and school performance. Studies further indicate that transformational and instructional leadership positively influence teacher motivation and instructional effectiveness (Ermita & Baysa, 2025), that leadership practices are significantly associated with teachers' accomplishments (Olasiman & Torreon, 2024), and that academic supervision and instructional leadership improve school performance through better teaching quality and stronger curriculum alignment (Rivera, Jr., 2024). Leadership support systems are likewise associated

with stronger teacher performance, professional conduct, and student achievement (Sultan et al., 2025; Virtudazo, 2025). Despite these findings, the manuscript notes that leadership practices and their effects still vary across schools, especially when demographic factors such as age, educational attainment, and length of service are considered, thereby justifying a district-based inquiry focused on school heads' own perceptions.

The reviewed literature consistently presents school leadership as a major force in shaping teacher development, school climate, instructional quality, and student outcomes. Foreign literature shows that principals' leadership supports inclusive and equitable learning environments, improves student achievement, strengthens teacher motivation, and contributes to retention, school climate, and professional growth, as discussed by Cook (2023), Shen and Wu (2022), Shen et al. (2024), Wallace (2021), Rehman et al. (2019), He et al. (2024), Sen (2023), Khan et al. (2020), Akram et al. (2022), Faremi and Tshabalala (2024), Ruman et al. (2022), Marshall (2024), Watson (2024), Sharif (2020), Tan et al. (2021), Vahalik (2022), Windasari and Roesminingsih (2025), Ghirmai (2024), Aboagye et al. (2025), Aslam et al. (2023), Gatama et al. (2023), Miano et al. (2023), Mbatuyimana and Hesbonopiyoandala (n.d.), Tang (2023), De Lima (2024), Tahir and Fatima (2023), Sianipar (2025), Tonich (2021), and Demirdag (2021). Collectively, these studies suggest that effective leadership is instructional, motivational, collaborative, and context-responsive, although some findings also indicate that leadership alone may not fully explain school outcomes when factors such as teacher efficacy and school climate intervene. Local literature reinforces these themes within the Philippine educational setting. Studies by Razon and Dabuet (2023), Peralta (2024), Mendoza and Castro (2024), Santos (2025), Pana (2024), Magboo, Velasco, and Luis (2023), Almoceda and Pedroso (2025), Bastasa and Guhao Jr. (2025), Batiancila (2025), Adlawan and Quines (2025), Oliveros (2025), Dimatera (2024), Panga et al. (2025), Vecaldo (2019), Tuang and Quintos (2025), Mendoza and De Jesus (2024), Ornopia, Franca, and Bauyot (2022), Caballero and Bantulo (2023), Sanglitan (2025), and Ylanan and Salva (2025) show that instructional, transformational, entrepreneurial, strategic, and participative leadership practices are generally associated with teacher motivation, pedagogical performance, school climate, engagement, empowerment, and school improvement. At the same time, the literature also highlights continuing concerns such as inconsistent monitoring, workload pressures, limited resources, weak stakeholder involvement, and the need for stronger mentoring, coaching, and data-informed decision-making.

Globally, related studies indicate that leadership and academic supervision are closely tied to curriculum implementation, teacher practices, and school performance. Research by Abuhammad, Alzoubi, and Khabour (2024), Babic and Barrett (2023), Bashir, Bano, and Gul (2024), Bellibas and Liu (2020), Calik and Nkambule (2024), Spillane and Zuberi (2021), Zimmermann et al. (2021), and Dutta and Sahney (2022) shows that clear curriculum communication, distributed instructional leadership, positive school climate, and coordinated leadership structures improve instructional delivery and student outcomes. These studies frame school leadership as both a managerial and pedagogical function that extends beyond administration into curriculum guidance, teacher morale, and school improvement. Nationally and locally, Philippine studies present school leadership as a critical factor in teacher performance and school outcomes. Capillanes (2025), Dinglasa and Lantaka (2025), Perez and Banayo (2022), Aquino et al. (2021), Rivera (2024), Gumban and Esogon (2024), Oriola and Aureada (2024), Olasiman and Torreon (2024), Virtudazo (2024), Rodulfa (2023), Prestoza and Naldoza (2025), Afalla et al. (2021), Ulit (2025), Precioso and Chua (2025), Padilla et al. (2025), Largo et al. (2024), Apellido and Ventura (2025), and Reyes (2024) collectively show that school heads' leadership and supervision practices influence teacher effectiveness, engagement, accountability, reading programs, and school climate, although outcomes differ by school context and resource conditions. Within this broader context, the present study narrows the inquiry to San Fernando District, Masbate, a setting composed of coastal and inland communities with varied accessibility and school conditions. This localized setting is important because the district includes schools with differing student populations, resources, and administrative realities, making it a relevant context for examining how school heads perceive their own leadership practices and their effects on school performance.

The study is anchored in Instructional Leadership Theory (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985), Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985), and Distributed Leadership Theory (Spillane, 2006). Instructional Leadership Theory explains that effective school leadership focuses on goal setting, instructional supervision, curriculum coordination, and monitoring of student progress, thereby directly linking leadership to teaching quality and school performance. Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes leaders' capacity to inspire, motivate, and empower teachers through shared vision, commitment, and professional growth, helping explain how leadership affects morale, engagement, and school effectiveness. Distributed Leadership Theory views leadership as a shared process among school heads, teachers, and other stakeholders, highlighting collaboration, collective decision-making, and shared accountability as contributors to improved school outcomes. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive explanation of how school heads' leadership practices may influence instruction, teacher performance, school climate, and overall school effectiveness in San Fernando District. The manuscript's conceptual framework further uses the IPO approach, where the inputs include respondent profile and leadership practice variables, the process covers survey-based data gathering and statistical treatment, and the output centers on identifying leadership levels, perceived impact on school performance, and the relationship between the two.

The manuscript identifies a clear gap in the literature: while many studies already confirm that leadership practices influence school performance, most focus on teachers' or students' perceptions and are conducted at broader regional or national levels. There is limited research that examines school heads' own perceptions of their leadership practices, particularly within a specific district context. This study addresses that gap by focusing directly on public elementary and secondary school heads in San Fernando District and by examining their profile, their leadership practices in school management, educational leadership, supervision, and curriculum implementation, the perceived impact of these practices on school performance, and the relationship between leadership practices and school performance. Its rationale rests on the need for localized evidence that can inform school improvement planning, leadership development, and policy formulation while also identifying areas of strength and improvement among district-level school heads.

Based on the manuscript's focus, the study aligns most directly with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it examines how leadership practices improve instructional quality, teacher performance, curriculum implementation, and school effectiveness. It also aligns with SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions because it generates evidence that can strengthen school-level governance, leadership accountability, and education management within the public school system. These SDG linkages are supported by the study's emphasis on effective supervision, school management, professional development, and policy-relevant evidence for improving educational institutions.

The study contributes primarily to educational sustainability by identifying leadership practices that can sustain teaching quality, professional growth, and positive school outcomes over time. It also contributes to institutional and governance sustainability because its findings may guide DepEd policymakers, school administrators, and community stakeholders in strengthening leadership systems, school improvement planning, and district-level decision-making. In addition, the study has community sustainability value because improved school leadership can indirectly support learner welfare, parental confidence, community engagement, and the broader quality of education in San Fernando District. As presented in the manuscript, its significance extends to DepEd, school administration, teachers, parents, learners, the community, future researchers, and the broader body of knowledge on educational leadership in the Philippines, making the study relevant across educational, managerial, and institutional domains.

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## **2. Material and methods**

### **2.1 Research Design**

The study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design to determine the leadership practices of school heads and their impact on school performance. Quantitative methods were used through structured questionnaires and diagnostic tools to gather numerical data from the respondents. The collected data were analyzed statistically to determine the level of leadership practices, the perceived impact of these practices on school performance, and the significant relationship between the two. This design was considered appropriate because it allowed systematic measurement and analysis of the variables within a defined group of respondents.

### **2.2 Locale of the Study**

The study was conducted in San Fernando District, located in the southern part of Masbate Province under the Department of Education–Division of Masbate, Region V. The district consists of coastal and inland barangays characterized by agricultural and fishing communities, with some schools located in remote upland areas that require longer travel time for teachers and learners. The district includes several public elementary schools with varying student populations, resources, and administrative structures, making it an appropriate setting for examining the leadership practices of school heads and their perceived effect on school performance.

### **2.3 Respondents of the Study**

The respondents of the study were the public elementary and secondary school heads assigned in San Fernando District, San Fernando, Masbate. They were chosen because they are directly responsible for managing school operations, supervising teachers, implementing curriculum programs, and leading initiatives that affect school performance. Their perspectives were considered essential in assessing leadership practices and their perceived influence on school outcomes.

### **2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure**

Convenience sampling was used in selecting the respondents. This non-probability sampling technique involved choosing participants based on their availability, accessibility, and willingness to participate. The method was deemed appropriate because of the limited number of school heads in the district and the practical constraints in reaching all possible respondents. The selected participants provided firsthand information on leadership practices and their effects on school performance. Although the method does not allow full generalization to other districts, it was considered suitable because the respondents possessed the needed experience and expertise to provide meaningful data. The manuscript also states that 30 copies of the survey instrument were reproduced and distributed to the respondents upon approval.

## 2.5 Research Instrument

The main instrument used in the study was a questionnaire designed to gather data on school heads' perception of their leadership practices and their effect on school performance in San Fernando District. The questionnaire contained items on demographic profile, specifically age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, length of service, and present position. It also included indicators measuring leadership practices in terms of school management, educational leadership, supervision, and curriculum implementation, as well as items assessing the impact of leadership practices on school performance. Likert-scale items were used to quantify the respondents' perceptions and experiences for consistency and ease of analysis. To establish validity, the instrument was reviewed and evaluated by experts in educational research to determine whether the items were clear, relevant, and appropriate for the respondents. For reliability, the manuscript states that a pilot test was conducted with a small group similar to the study population, and Cronbach's alpha was used to determine internal consistency. These procedures were intended to ensure that the instrument could generate accurate, consistent, and dependable data.

## 2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

After the thesis proposal was approved by the school thesis committee, the researcher secured permission to conduct the study. The permit was noted by the adviser and submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent for approval, then forwarded to the Public Schools District Supervisor and school heads for the distribution of the survey questionnaires. The survey instrument was first prepared and approved by the thesis adviser, then subjected to validation by other school heads and significant individuals in education close to the researcher. After validation, the questionnaire was revised and finalized before reproduction and distribution to the respondents with their approval. The accomplished questionnaires were later retrieved, after which the responses were tallied, subjected to statistical treatment with the assistance of an expert statistician, and interpreted to derive the study's implications. The findings then served as the basis for writing the remaining chapters of the manuscript and for subsequent review and correction by the thesis adviser.

## 2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The study used frequency count and percentage to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean was applied to determine the numerical representation of the school heads' leadership practices and their impact on school performance. To test whether there was a significant relationship between leadership practices and school performance, Pearson correlation was used. The manuscript also provided the interpretation ranges for the correlation coefficients, from very weak to very strong, in both negative and positive directions, to guide the analysis of the relationship between the variables.

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## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Respondents' Profile

#### 3.1.1 Age

The respondents were predominantly 31–35 years old, with 14 or 46.67% of the 30 school heads falling in this age group. This was followed by those aged 36–40 years old, with 11 or 36.67%, while 3 or 10.00% were 41–45 years old and 2 or 6.67% were 46–50 years old. No respondent was 30 years old and below or 51 years old and above. This distribution indicates that the respondents were largely in early to middle adulthood, suggesting a relatively young administrative workforce. The finding points to leadership positions being occupied by school heads who likely combine sufficient professional experience with adaptability and contemporary perspectives in school administration.

#### 3.1.2 Sex

Of the 30 school heads, 17 or 56.67% were male and 13 or 43.33% were female. The difference shows a slight male majority among the respondents. The result suggests that male school heads slightly outnumber female school heads in the study area, although the distribution remains relatively balanced. This may reflect the continuing presence of both sexes in school leadership and management positions.

#### 3.1.3 Civil Status

Most respondents were married, with 19 or 63.33%, while 11 or 36.67% were single. None of the respondents were widowers or widows. This pattern suggests that most school heads balance professional leadership roles with family responsibilities, while the presence of a substantial number of single respondents shows diversity in personal circumstances. Overall, the findings indicate that school leadership roles are accessible regardless of civil status.

#### 3.1.4 Educational Attainment

In terms of educational attainment, 18 or 60.00% had earned units in a master's degree, 10 or 33.33% were master's degree graduates, and 2 or 6.67% were bachelor's degree graduates. No respondent had earned units in a doctorate or completed a doctoral degree. The result shows that most school heads had already pursued graduate education, reflecting a strong



orientation toward professional development and academic advancement. At the same time, the absence of doctoral qualifications may indicate that master's-level preparation remains the more common credential among school heads in the district.

### **3.1.5 Length of Service**

The largest group of respondents had served for 16 years and above, with 10 or 33.33%. This was followed by those with 6–10 years of service, with 9 or 30.00%, and those with 11–15 years of service, with 8 or 26.67%. Only 3 or 10.00% had rendered 5 years and below in service. These results indicate that the respondents generally had substantial professional experience. The concentration of school heads in the longer service brackets suggests that leadership positions in the district are largely occupied by experienced educators who have already accumulated considerable administrative and instructional exposure.

### **3.1.6 Present Position**

In terms of present position, Principals I comprised the largest group, with 8 or 26.67%, followed by Head Teachers III with 7 or 23.33%. Five or 16.67% each were Head Teacher II and Teacher-in-Charge, 3 or 10.00% were Head Teacher I, and 2 or 6.67% were Principal II. No respondent held the positions of Principal III, Principal IV, or Head Teacher IV. This distribution shows that the respondents were concentrated in entry- to mid-level school leadership positions. It also suggests that the district's school leadership structure is dominated by operational leadership roles directly engaged in day-to-day school administration and instructional supervision.

## **3.2 Leadership Practices of the School Heads**

### **3.2.1 School Management**

In school management, all seven indicators were verbally interpreted as Strongly Agree, yielding an overall weighted mean of 3.77. The highest-rated practice was participation in trainings, seminars, and workshops to improve school and teacher management, with a weighted mean of 3.87. Clearly delineating duties and responsibilities and adopting appropriate safety measures for learners both obtained 3.83. Providing sufficient training and support to teachers, staff, and students obtained 3.77, while ensuring adequate instructional resources received 3.73. Leading school development competently and conducting meetings, trainings, or team-building activities to promote harmonious workplace relationships received 3.70 and 3.67, respectively. These results indicate a very high level of school management effectiveness among the respondents. The pattern shows that the school heads consistently implement management practices that support a safe, organized, and supportive school environment. This discussion is aligned with Tang (2023)<sup>1</sup>, which found that principals' leadership practices, including professional development, resource management, and fostering a safe and supportive school environment, significantly enhance overall school performance and contribute to a positive school climate.

### **3.2.2 Educational Leadership**

For educational leadership, all eight indicators were also interpreted as Strongly Agree, with an overall weighted mean of 3.82. The highest-rated indicators were giving opportunities to teachers to join trainings, seminars, and workshops and ensuring that organizations and departments are clearly stated and aligned with the needs of teachers and students, both with a weighted mean of 3.90. Supporting teacher advocacy ranked next with 3.87, while modeling accountability and demonstrating positive expectations both obtained 3.83. Supporting creativity, innovation, and risk-taking received 3.80, seeking opinions and suggestions obtained 3.73, and assigning grade-level chairmen and coordinators received 3.70. The findings show a very high level of educational leadership, particularly in teacher development, organizational alignment, accountability, and support for collaborative initiatives. They suggest that the school heads foster a supportive and empowering environment that encourages shared leadership and instructional improvement. This interpretation is consistent with Pitrian (2025)<sup>2</sup>, which emphasized the role of educational leadership in improving school performance and teacher professional development.

### **3.2.3 Supervision**

In supervision, all seven indicators were rated Strongly Agree, with an overall weighted mean of 3.78. The highest-rated practice was being hands-on in handling teachers' and students' issues and concerns to avoid misunderstandings, with 3.93. This was followed by the presence of a teacher organization that addresses teachers' concerns, with 3.87. Listening to both sides before deciding received 3.80, personally supervising urgent teacher needs obtained 3.77, assigning a duly authorized person when absent obtained 3.73, giving everyone equal opportunities to work with the school head received 3.70, and supervising school funds for the welfare of teachers, students, and the school obtained 3.63. These results indicate a very high level of supervisory competence. The school heads appear to practice responsive, fair, and structured supervision, which helps maintain trust, accountability, and support within the school community. This is consistent with Cabildo (2025)<sup>3</sup>, who found that instructional supervision is practiced frequently and systematically and contributes to teacher support, teaching quality, and professional development.

### **3.2.4 Curriculum Implementation**

In curriculum implementation, all seven indicators were likewise interpreted as Strongly Agree, with an overall weighted mean of 3.73. The highest-rated indicator was ensuring compliance with DepEd orders and program implementations, with 3.83. Support for instructional materials and technological needs followed with 3.80, while teacher involvement in curricular decision-making obtained 3.77. Ensuring enough teachers for subject areas and grade levels received 3.73, involving parents in school programs and activities obtained 3.70, implementing programs to support teachers in delivering quality education received 3.67, and setting an appropriate time frame for teachers to accomplish work tasks obtained the lowest mean of 3.63. The findings indicate that the school heads show a very high level of competence in guiding curriculum implementation. They appear to support teachers with resources, involve stakeholders in curriculum-related processes, and ensure adherence to policy requirements, all of which contribute to learner achievement and instructional coherence. This agrees with Ta-Ala et al. (2025)<sup>4</sup>, who examined how school heads and their leadership influence readiness, attitudes, and experiences in implementing the Matatag Curriculum in Philippine schools.

### **3.3 Impact of Leadership Practices on School Performance**

All ten indicators measuring the impact of leadership practices on school performance were interpreted as Strongly Agree, with an overall weighted mean of 3.70. The highest-rated indicator was ensuring effective implementation of school programs and projects, with 3.80. Improving student academic achievement, managing school resources efficiently, and strengthening community and stakeholder involvement in school activities each obtained 3.77. Motivating and supporting teachers and supporting their professional growth both received 3.73. Upholding accountability and transparency in school operations obtained 3.70, promoting a positive and conducive learning environment received 3.60, encouraging teamwork and collaboration among teachers received 3.57, and regularly monitoring and evaluating school performance obtained the lowest mean of 3.53. These findings indicate that the school heads perceive their leadership practices as having a very significant and positive effect on school performance. The results suggest that leadership supports student learning, teacher performance, resource management, and stakeholder engagement, while monitoring and evaluation remains an area that may still be strengthened. This interpretation is supported by Ombao and De Jesus (2025)<sup>5</sup>, who found that effective leadership practices, particularly transformational and democratic leadership, consistently contribute to quality performance in schools.

### **3.4 Relationship Between Leadership Practices and School Performance**

The correlation analysis showed a computed r-value of 0.66, which was higher than the critical r-value of  $\pm 0.3610$  at the 0.05 level of significance with 28 degrees of freedom. Because the computed r-value exceeded the critical value, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a statistically significant strong positive linear relationship between school heads' leadership practices and school performance. This means that better leadership practices were associated with better school performance. The result implies that strengthening leadership competencies in areas such as supervision, curriculum implementation, and educational guidance may contribute directly to improved student outcomes, teacher performance, school climate, collaboration, and continuous school improvement.

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## **4. Conclusion & Recommendations**

The study concludes that the respondents were mostly 31–35 years old, predominantly male and married, had earned master's degree units, had rendered 16 years and above in service, and were largely holding the position of Principal I. It further concludes that the school heads demonstrated a very high level of leadership practices in school management, educational leadership, supervision, and curriculum implementation, all of which were positively perceived by the respondents. The findings also show that these leadership practices had a very positive impact on school performance, particularly in the effective implementation of school programs and projects, improvement of student academic achievement, efficient resource management, and strengthened stakeholder involvement. Overall, the study established that there is a strong positive linear relationship between the leadership practices of school heads and their impact on school performance.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends that school heads continuously engage in leadership trainings and professional development activities, further strengthen school-based management practices, consistently promote teachers' professional growth, shared leadership, and collaborative decision-making, and maintain a proactive and hands-on supervisory approach that strengthens accountability, trust, and professional growth among teachers and staff. It also recommends strict compliance with DepEd policies, stronger curriculum monitoring and evaluation, and enhanced stakeholder involvement to sustain effective program implementation and overall school performance. Future researchers are encouraged to explore other variables, wider populations, or different approaches to further validate and enrich the study.

The study was limited to public elementary and secondary school heads in San Fernando District and was based solely on the school heads' perceptions rather than direct observation or assessment from their schools. It did not include private

schools or other districts, and variables such as number of teachers, total student population, school facilities, and other related factors were excluded from the scope. In addition, the use of convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the study setting.

### Compliance with ethical standards

The study was conducted in accordance with institutional academic and research procedures, beginning with the approval of the thesis proposal by the school thesis committee and the securing of permission to conduct the study from the Schools Division Superintendent, the Public Schools District Supervisor, and the concerned school heads before the distribution of the survey questionnaires. Participation was voluntary, as respondents were selected based on their availability, accessibility, and willingness to participate, and the questionnaires were released only with their approval. The research instrument underwent adviser review and validation by qualified individuals in education to ensure appropriateness, clarity, and relevance, and the information gathered from the respondents was used strictly for academic and research purposes.

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