

# Transparency, Accountability and Ethical Leadership Practices of School Heads: Their Influence on Teacher Commitment and School Climate

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## Abstract

This study examined the relationship between leadership practices—transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership—of school heads in the Division of Bohol and their influence on teachers' commitment and school climate during the School Year 2025–2026. Anchored on Ethical Leadership Theory (Brown and Treviño, 2006), Meyer and Allen's (1997) organizational commitment model, and Pekrun's (2006) Control-Value Theory, the study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design. Data were collected from 353 elementary school teachers using structured survey instruments measuring leadership practices, teacher commitment, and school climate. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, ANOVA, t-test, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression. Findings revealed that transparency was the most positively perceived leadership practice and showed strong positive relationships with teacher commitment and moderate positive relationships with school climate. Accountability, however, demonstrated negative relationships with both teacher commitment and school climate, suggesting issues in its implementation. Ethical leadership showed a positive relationship with teacher commitment but a negative relationship with school climate. Teacher commitment emerged as the strongest predictor of leadership practices, while school climate negatively predicted transparency and accountability. Differences in perceptions of transparency were observed across age and length of service, while accountability and ethical leadership were consistently perceived across demographic groups. The study concludes that leadership practices significantly shape teacher attitudes and organizational conditions, with transparency playing a critical role in fostering positive outcomes. It recommends strengthening leadership development, improving accountability approaches, and enhancing teacher commitment. This study supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting effective educational leadership and governance. It contributes to institutional and socio-educational sustainability by improving leadership practices, strengthening teacher commitment, and fostering a supportive school climate.

**Keywords:** Accountability, Ethical Leadership, School Climate, Teacher Commitment, Transparency

## 1. Introduction

Leadership in Philippine public schools extends beyond administrative functions and is experienced through communication, accountability, ethical conduct, and teacher engagement. Leadership practices significantly influence teacher commitment and school climate, either fostering motivation or contributing to disengagement. Despite existing studies, relational dimensions such as transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership remain underexplored from teachers' perspectives. This study examines how these leadership practices affect teacher commitment and school climate, particularly within the Division of Bohol, and aims to generate evidence-based insights for improving school governance and organizational outcomes.

### 1.1 Background of Transparency, Accountability, and Ethical Leadership Practices and Teacher Commitment in Public Elementary Schools

Leadership in education plays a critical role in shaping teacher attitudes, performance, and organizational culture. However, most Philippine studies emphasize administrative efficiency and student outcomes rather than relational leadership aspects (Nordin & Abas, 2021). Transparency in leadership fosters trust and respect, while secrecy and favoritism lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement. Brown & Treviño (2006) found that transparency and ethical leadership significantly improve teacher trust and job satisfaction. Accountability, when shared among stakeholders, promotes collaboration and strengthens teacher commitment. Santiago & Luna (2022) highlighted that shared accountability enhances collegial relationships, whereas top-down blame reduces collaboration. Similarly, Starratt (2004) observed that lack of ethical behavior and transparency decreases organizational commitment and increases turnover intentions. Ethical leadership, defined as the demonstration of appropriate conduct through actions and relationships (Brown and Treviño, 2006), serves as a foundation for trust and fairness. Leaders who model integrity foster positive school environments, while unethical

practices lead to teacher disengagement. Thus, leadership practices rooted in transparency, accountability, and ethics are essential for sustaining teacher commitment and school effectiveness.

### **1.2 Themes and Insights on Transparency, Accountability, Ethical Leadership, Teacher Commitment, and School Climate**

Research consistently highlights the importance of transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership in improving school climate and teacher outcomes. Transparent communication and participatory decision-making foster trust and engagement (Nordin & Abas, 2021). Collaborative accountability enhances teacher motivation and inclusivity (Santiago & Luna, 2022). Ethical leadership promotes fairness, trust, and organizational commitment (Brown & Trevino, 2006). Empirical studies further demonstrate that ethical leadership strengthens teacher trust and motivation (Tajeddini et al., 2022), while collaborative leadership improves school culture and performance (Santiago & Luna, 2022). A positive school climate reduces burnout and increases teacher satisfaction. Recent Philippine studies confirm these relationships. Tajeddini et al., (2022) found that ethical leadership mediates the relationship between transparency and teacher trust. Harris (2013) reported a strong link between ethical leadership and administrative competence, while Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) emphasized the influence of socio-cultural factors on leadership values. Qualitative findings also show that effective school leaders demonstrate transparency and fairness in stakeholder engagement (Nordin & Abas, 2021), while accountability remains a key leadership attribute (Fullan, 2014). Teacher commitment is a critical factor influencing educational outcomes. Committed teachers demonstrate dedication, innovation, and strong engagement with learners (Kuo & Tsai, 2021). It is strongly associated with performance and motivation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Organizational commitment includes affective, normative, and continuance components (Meyer and Allen, 1997), each influencing teacher behavior differently (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019; Somech & Bogler, 2002). Additionally, work values significantly affect teacher motivation and organizational success (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Positive values promote collaboration, responsibility, and improved performance. Teacher commitment also directly influences student achievement and school effectiveness (Thapa et al., 2013).

### **1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of School Leadership Practices in Philippine Public Elementary Schools**

Educational leadership in the Philippines is guided by key policies that emphasize decentralization, accountability, and ethical governance. Republic Act No. 9155 promotes decentralized school management and empowers school heads. Republic Act No. 6713 establishes ethical standards for public officials, while Executive Order No. 292 reinforces efficiency and accountability in governance. The Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (DepEd, 2020) further institutionalize transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership as essential competencies. These frameworks align with global perspectives emphasizing participatory leadership, ethical governance, and collaborative accountability in education systems. Despite these policies, challenges persist in implementing leadership practices effectively, particularly in fostering teacher trust and engagement within local school contexts.

### **1.4 Theoretical and Conceptual Basis of Leadership Practices, Teacher Commitment, and School Climate**

This study is grounded in several theoretical frameworks. Ethical Leadership Theory explains how leaders influence behavior through fairness, integrity, and transparency (Brown and Trevino, 2006). Transparency and collaborative leadership theories highlight the role of open communication and shared accountability in building trust (Nordin & Abas, 2021; Santiago & Luna, 2022). Meyer and Allen's (1997) three-component model explains teacher commitment through affective, normative, and continuance dimensions. Pekrun's (2006) Control-Value Theory further explains how leadership practices influence teachers' emotional responses, motivation, and engagement. These frameworks collectively support the assumption that leadership practices directly influence teacher commitment and school climate. The conceptual model links transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership to teacher commitment and school climate outcomes.

### **1.5 Research Gaps on Leadership Practices, Teacher Commitment, and School Climate in Philippine Public Schools**

Although existing studies highlight the importance of ethical leadership, limited research examines the combined effects of transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership on teacher commitment and school climate in Philippine public schools. Most studies focus on administrative efficiency rather than relational leadership dynamics (Nordin & Abas, 2021). Additionally, there is a lack of culturally adapted assessment tools for measuring school climate and achievement emotions in Philippine contexts (Hoy & Tarter, 1997; Pekrun, 2006). Existing instruments are often adopted without localization, limiting their relevance. This study addresses these gaps by examining leadership practices from teachers' perspectives and developing contextually appropriate tools. It also investigates how demographic factors influence leadership perceptions and identifies which leadership practices most strongly predict teacher commitment and school climate.

### **1.6 Alignment of Leadership Practices and Teacher Commitment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

This study aligns with several Sustainable Development Goals. It supports SDG 4 – Quality Education by improving school leadership practices that enhance teaching quality and learning environments. It also contributes to SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth by promoting teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and retention through effective leadership.

Additionally, the study aligns with SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions by strengthening transparency, accountability, and ethical governance within educational institutions. These leadership practices contribute to building trust, fairness, and institutional effectiveness in schools.

### **1.7 Importance of Leadership Practices, Teacher Commitment, and School Climate to Multidisciplinary Sustainability**

This study contributes to educational sustainability by enhancing teacher commitment and improving school climate, which are essential for long-term educational quality. It supports socio-economic sustainability by promoting teacher retention and productivity, which influence workforce stability and educational outcomes. It also advances institutional sustainability by strengthening governance practices rooted in transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership. Furthermore, the study contributes to community sustainability by fostering trust and collaboration among stakeholders, ultimately improving the overall effectiveness of public education systems. By integrating leadership, psychology, and organizational behavior, the study provides multidisciplinary insights that support sustainable educational development and policy improvement.

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## **2. Material and methods**

### **2.1 Research Design**

The study utilized a quantitative method with a causal research design to analyze how leadership practices influence teacher commitment and school climate. This design enabled the identification of relationships among variables and provided insights into how transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership affect teacher attitudes and the overall school environment. Data were gathered using structured survey instruments to ensure systematic measurement of the variables under investigation.

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

The study was conducted in public elementary schools within the Division of Bohol during the academic year 2025–2026. Bohol, located in the Central Visayas region of the Philippines, presents a diverse educational setting that includes both urban and rural schools, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of leadership practices across varied contexts.

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

The respondents consisted of elementary school teachers in the Division of Bohol for the academic year 2025–2026. This group was selected to capture diverse perspectives on leadership practices, teacher commitment, and school climate across different demographic characteristics such as age, gender, educational attainment, and length of service.

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

A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure a representative sample of respondents. The sampling considered key demographic variables, including age, gender, educational attainment, and length of service, to reflect the diversity of the population. This approach enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how demographic factors influence teachers' perceptions and experiences within their school environments.

### **2.5 Research Instrument**

The research instrument consisted of four sections designed to address the study's objectives. The first section collected demographic information of school heads, including age, gender, length of service, and highest educational attainment, to examine their relationship with leadership practices and school climate. The second section measured leadership practices in terms of transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership using a 4-point Likert scale, anchored on DepEd Order No. 24, s. 2020 Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). It assessed the extent to which school leaders demonstrate openness, clarity, and ethical conduct in decision-making and policy implementation. The third section was based on the organizational commitment frameworks of Meyer and Allen (1997) and Wang (2004). It assessed teacher commitment across value, affective, passive, active, and normative dimensions using multiple-item scales. Commitment was further examined in relation to the school, profession, pupils, and workgroup, with modifications made to align the instrument with leadership-related variables. The fourth section measured school climate across six dimensions: supportive principal behavior, directive principal behavior, restrictive principal behavior, collegial teacher behavior, intimate teacher behavior, and disengaged teacher behavior. This section was adapted from Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory of achievement emotions, extending its application to teacher experiences and school environments. The instrument was culturally adapted to the Philippine context through simplified language and stakeholder consultation, ensuring relevance while maintaining theoretical rigor. Overall, the instrument provided a comprehensive assessment of the relationships among leadership practices, teacher commitment, and school climate.

## 2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection began with securing approval from the Campus Director of Bohol Island State University Main Campus, followed by obtaining permission from the Schools Division Superintendent and District Supervisor. Upon approval, school heads were approached to facilitate the distribution of questionnaires to elementary teachers. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and were given clear instructions to ensure accurate and complete responses. The researcher provided assistance throughout the process to minimize non-responses. After data collection, the completed questionnaires were compiled and organized in collaboration with a statistician. The data were then subjected to statistical analysis, followed by interpretation to generate meaningful conclusions aligned with the study objectives.

## 2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize demographic data and describe leadership practices, teacher commitment, and school climate. Inferential statistics were applied to examine differences and relationships among variables. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine differences in leadership practices across demographic groups such as age, length of service, and educational attainment, while an independent samples t-test was used to compare differences based on gender. Post-hoc tests were conducted when significant differences were identified. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to assess relationships between leadership practices and the dependent variables of teacher commitment and school climate. Multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership predict these outcomes. All analyses were conducted using statistical software, and results were interpreted based on the study's objectives.

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## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Demographic Profile and Perceptions of Leadership, Commitment, and Climate

#### 3.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Teacher-Respondents

The results show that most respondents are mid-career teachers, particularly aged 32–41, with a majority being female. Most have 6–15 years of service, and a large proportion possess graduate-level education. This indicates a highly experienced and academically qualified workforce concentrated in mid-career stages. This pattern reflects an aging and experienced teaching workforce, which may bring stability but also risks of burnout. Mid-career professionals typically develop established expectations regarding leadership and school climate (Day & Gu, 2010). The predominance of female teachers aligns with global trends in education (OECD, 2020), while high educational attainment suggests heightened expectations for leadership transparency, accountability, and ethics (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

#### 3.1.2 Transparency in Leadership Practices

The findings indicate that transparency received the highest rating among leadership dimensions, with teachers generally agreeing that school heads communicate openly and share information effectively. Strong areas include dissemination of policies and communication of school programs, while weaker areas involve clarity in decision-making processes and governance communication. This suggests that while communication is frequent, deeper transparency regarding decision rationale may be limited. Such findings support distributed leadership principles emphasizing openness and participation (Harris, 2013). However, incomplete transparency may weaken leadership credibility, as effective leadership requires clear reasoning behind decisions (Kouzes and Posner, 2017).

#### 3.1.3 Accountability in Leadership Practices

The results show that teachers generally perceive school heads as accountable in monitoring performance and enforcing policies. However, lower ratings were observed in areas related to leaders holding themselves accountable and fostering shared responsibility. This indicates that accountability may be perceived as more top-down than reciprocal. Effective accountability requires leaders to model responsibility alongside enforcing it (Fullan, 2014). When accountability is one-sided, it can reduce trust and weaken collaboration, suggesting the need for more participatory accountability practices.

#### 3.1.4 Ethical Leadership Practices

The findings reveal that ethical leadership is positively perceived overall, particularly in terms of maintaining high ethical standards. However, lower ratings were observed in areas such as staff well-being, ethical training, and responsiveness to ethical concerns. This pattern suggests a gap between ethical principles and their practical application. Ethical leadership must extend beyond values to include care, fairness, and responsiveness (Starratt, 2004). When ethics are not operationalized, teachers may question leadership authenticity, potentially weakening trust and engagement.

### 3.2 Teacher Commitment and School Climate

#### 3.2.1 Level of Teacher Commitment

The results indicate a moderately positive level of teacher commitment overall. Continuance commitment, both passive and active, recorded the highest levels, while affective and normative commitment were relatively lower. This suggests



that teachers remain primarily for practical or economic reasons rather than emotional attachment or moral obligation. This pattern reflects a pragmatic workforce, where retention is driven by necessity rather than dedication. Continuance commitment stabilizes retention but does not promote engagement or innovation (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Lower affective and normative commitment is concerning, as these dimensions are linked to resilience and performance (Klusmann et al., 2016). External pressures and limited mobility may explain the dominance of continuance commitment (Collie, Perry, and Martin, 2022).

### **3.2.2 Level of School Climate**

The findings show a moderately underdeveloped school climate overall. Supportive principal behavior is only moderate, while directive and restrictive behaviors are low, indicating that principals are not perceived as controlling but also not strongly supportive. In contrast, collegial teacher relationships are strong, while social intimacy outside work is limited. This suggests that teachers rely more on peer relationships than leadership support. Strong collegial ties can buffer stress but cannot replace effective leadership (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; Johnson et al., 2015). Moderate principal support indicates a need for stronger leadership engagement, as supportive leadership is critical to job satisfaction and retention (Liu and Hallinger, 2018). These findings align with research highlighting the importance of principal support in creating positive school climates (Hoy & Tarter, 1997).

## **3.3 Differences in Leadership Practices by Demographic Factors**

### **3.3.1 Differences in Transparency**

The results show significant differences in perceptions of transparency based on age and length of service. Younger and less experienced teachers perceive lower transparency compared to older and more experienced teachers, while no differences were found based on gender or educational attainment. This suggests that experience influences expectations and understanding of leadership communication. Younger teachers may require clearer and more structured communication. These findings align with Liu & Hallinger (2018) and Ingersoll (2012), who found that early-career teachers often report lower satisfaction with leadership communication due to limited access to decision-making processes.

### **3.3.2 Differences in Accountability**

The results indicate no significant differences in perceptions of accountability across all demographic factors. Teachers consistently perceive accountability practices regardless of age, gender, experience, or education. This suggests that accountability is a universally observable leadership behavior. Consistent perceptions align with findings that accountability is less influenced by demographic variables (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Fullan, 2014). This implies that accountability practices can be applied uniformly across teacher groups.

### **3.3.3 Differences in Ethical Leadership**

The findings reveal no significant differences in perceptions of ethical leadership across demographic factors. Teachers consistently evaluate ethical leadership regardless of personal characteristics. This indicates that ethical leadership is universally recognized and valued. Such consistency supports findings that ethical leadership transcends demographic differences (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Brown & Treviño, 2006). Ethical behaviors such as fairness and integrity are widely understood and similarly interpreted across groups.

## **3.4 Relationship Between Leadership Practices, Teacher Commitment, and School Climate**

### **3.4.1 Transparency and Organizational Outcomes**

The results show strong positive relationships between transparency and teacher commitment, and moderate positive relationships with school climate. This indicates that transparent leadership significantly enhances teacher engagement and organizational climate. These findings align with research showing that transparency builds trust and inclusion (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006), making it a key driver of positive outcomes.

### **3.4.2 Accountability and Organizational Outcomes**

The results reveal negative relationships between accountability and both teacher commitment and school climate. This suggests that accountability may be perceived as punitive or controlling rather than supportive. Such perceptions can reduce morale and trust (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). Effective accountability should therefore emphasize support and shared responsibility rather than monitoring and control.

### **3.4.3 Ethical Leadership and Organizational Outcomes**

The findings show a positive relationship between ethical leadership and teacher commitment, but a negative relationship with school climate. While ethical leadership strengthens commitment, it may be perceived as rigid or disconnected from daily realities, affecting climate negatively. Although ethical leadership generally promotes trust (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Brown and Treviño, 2006), contextual factors may influence its impact on school climate.

### **3.5 Predictors of Leadership Practices**

#### **3.5.1 Predictors of Transparency**

The results indicate that teacher commitment positively predicts transparency, while school climate negatively predicts it. This suggests that committed teachers engage more in communication processes, while leaders in positive climates may rely less on formal transparency. These findings align with Liu & Hallinger (2018), emphasizing the role of teacher engagement in leadership dynamics.

#### **3.5.2 Predictors of Accountability**

The findings show that teacher commitment positively predicts accountability, while school climate negatively predicts it. This indicates that committed teachers are more attentive to accountability practices, while supportive environments may reduce reliance on formal accountability. These results highlight the need to balance accountability with positive climate-building efforts.

#### **3.5.3 Predictors of Ethical Leadership**

The results show that teacher commitment significantly predicts ethical leadership, while school climate does not. This suggests that perceptions of ethical leadership are shaped more by individual teacher commitment than by overall school conditions. This finding supports Liu & Hallinger (2018) and indicates a reciprocal relationship between commitment and leadership perception.

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## **4. Conclusion & Recommendations**

This study established that leadership practices—transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership—are significantly associated with teacher commitment and school climate among public elementary school teachers in the Division of Bohol. Transparency emerged as the most influential and consistently positive leadership practice, showing strong positive relationships with both teacher commitment and school climate, while also varying across demographic factors such as age and length of service. In contrast, accountability demonstrated negative relationships with both teacher commitment and school climate, indicating potential issues in its implementation. Ethical leadership showed a positive association with teacher commitment but a negative relationship with school climate, suggesting inconsistencies between ethical principles and their practical application. Furthermore, teacher commitment was identified as the strongest and most consistent predictor of leadership practices, positively influencing transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership, while school climate negatively predicted transparency and accountability and did not significantly predict ethical leadership. Overall, the findings highlight the critical role of leadership practices in shaping teacher attitudes and organizational conditions, emphasizing the need for balanced and context-sensitive leadership approaches.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that the Division of Bohol implement structured leadership development initiatives, including succession planning programs to prepare mid-career teachers for leadership roles and training for school heads on modeling self-accountability and ethical leadership in practice. School leaders should strengthen teacher commitment through career development opportunities, financial wellness support, and initiatives that reinforce professional purpose. Additionally, school administrators should enhance collaboration by allocating protected time for teamwork, reducing unnecessary workload, and promoting inclusive activities that support professional relationships. Transparency practices should be tailored according to teacher demographics, providing clearer communication for younger and less experienced teachers while maintaining consistency for all groups. Accountability systems should be reframed from punitive approaches to shared, growth-oriented processes that emphasize collaboration and continuous improvement. Furthermore, leadership strategies should be sensitive to school climate conditions to ensure that efforts to improve transparency and accountability do not inadvertently weaken positive organizational environments.

This study was limited to 353 teacher-respondents from the Division of Bohol during the School Year 2025–2026, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other regions or educational contexts. The use of a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among variables. Data were collected through self-reported survey instruments, which may be subject to response bias and may not fully capture the complexity of leadership practices and school dynamics. Additionally, the study focused only on selected leadership variables—transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership—and did not consider other potential factors that may influence teacher commitment and school climate.

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## **Compliance with ethical standards**

This study adhered to established institutional and procedural requirements for conducting research in public elementary schools within the Division of Bohol. Approval to conduct the study was secured from the Campus Director of Bohol Island State University Main Campus, as well as from the Schools Division Superintendent and District Supervisors. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and encouraged to provide honest and accurate

responses throughout the data collection process. The study followed appropriate protocols in the administration of surveys and handling of data to ensure the integrity of the research process.

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