

Creating Safe Schools: School Leadership and Teachers' Perceptions of Child Safety and Well-Being

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Abstract

This study examines the role of school leadership in promoting child safety and well-being in a public basic education school in Dumaguete City, Philippines. Anchored in an integrated leadership–school climate–child safety and well-being framework, it adopts a quantitative, descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional design. A structured questionnaire is intended for 79 teachers from a population of 98 to assess school leadership practices and teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being. Using a synthetic dataset for illustration, the analysis demonstrated favorable leadership assessments, with safe and inclusive school climate obtaining the highest mean ($M = 4.39$). Supportive relationships and school belonging received the highest perceived well-being rating ($M = 4.34$). The results showed a strong positive relationship between school leadership and perceived child safety and well-being ($r = .773$, $p < .001$). Multiple regression explained 67.3% of the variation in outcome scores, with safe and inclusive school climate, bullying and violence prevention, and mental-health and psychosocial support emerging as significant predictors. These findings demonstrate the potential relevance of coordinated leadership practices but do not establish the actual conditions of the participating school. The study recommends strengthening learner participation, reporting mechanisms, psychosocial assistance, and continuous monitoring. It supports SDG 4 on Quality Education, SDG 3 on Good Health and Well-Being, and SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Its potential sustainability impact lies in strengthening institutional child-protection systems, educational continuity, school governance, and community partnerships to sustain safe and supportive learning environments.

Keywords: Anti-Bullying; Child Safety; Child Well-Being; Mental Health; School Climate; School Leadership; School Safety; Student Well-Being

1. Introduction

Schools are expected not only to facilitate academic learning but also to provide environments in which children are protected, respected, supported, and able to develop physically, socially, and psychologically. Safety and well-being are therefore not peripheral concerns of education; they are fundamental conditions for meaningful participation in schooling. A child who experiences bullying, violence, discrimination, psychological distress, or persistent fear within the school environment may find it difficult to develop a sense of belonging, participate confidently in learning, or maintain regular engagement with school. UNESCO (2026) consequently frames school violence broadly to include physical, psychological, and sexual violence, bullying and cyberbullying, fighting, exclusion, and other harmful practices occurring in classrooms, elsewhere on school grounds, on the way to and from school, and in digital environments. Globally, approximately one in three learners experiences bullying at school each month, more than 36% experience physical fights with peers, almost one in three has been

physically attacked at least once within a year, and cyberbullying affects as many as one in ten children (UNESCO, 2026). These concerns give school leadership particular significance. School leaders influence how policies are translated into everyday practice, how adults respond to student concerns, how disciplinary systems operate, how teachers and support personnel collaborate, whether reporting mechanisms are trusted, and whether care, fairness, inclusion, and accountability become embedded in school culture. Recent research increasingly suggests that the effects of leadership extend beyond administrative efficiency and academic supervision. Leadership practices can shape school climate, interpersonal relationships, perceptions of fairness, help-seeking behavior, and the institutional capacity to prevent and respond to threats to children's safety and well-being (Da'as, 2023; Jiang & Liu, 2024; Pearce et al., 2024). The urgency of examining this relationship is particularly evident in the Philippines. PISA 2022 showed that 43% of Filipino girls and 53% of Filipino boys reported experiencing bullying acts at least a few times each month. Moreover, 19% reported feeling unsafe in areas such as hallways, cafeterias, and restrooms, almost twice the OECD average of 10% for such school spaces (OECD, 2023). The 2024 Philippine Global School-based Student Health Survey further documented substantial safety and psychosocial concerns among adolescents. These national data strengthen the need to investigate not merely whether child-protection policies exist, but how school leadership transforms those policies into functioning preventive, responsive, and supportive systems. Accordingly, the present study positions school leadership as an institutional mechanism through which safer and more supportive schools may be created and sustained. It views child safety as encompassing physical, psychological, emotional, social, and digital protection, while child well-being encompasses children's sense of belonging, supportive relationships, psychological welfare, access to help, and capacity to participate meaningfully in school life. By examining the role of school leadership across these interconnected areas, the study seeks to contribute to an evidence-informed understanding of how leadership can move child protection from policy compliance toward a sustainable culture of safety and care.

A safe school extends beyond protection from physical violence to include freedom from bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination, exclusion, harassment, and psychological intimidation. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that bullying is shaped not only by individual behavior but also by power imbalances, school norms, relationships, and institutional responses. School safety is therefore closely linked with educational participation and well-being, as frequently bullied learners are more likely to miss school and experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (UNESCO, 2025). Schools consequently have an important role in providing protective environments, psychosocial support, and appropriate referral mechanisms. Philippine data demonstrate the continuing magnitude of the problem. The 2024 Philippine Global School-based Student Health Survey found that 30.2% of respondents experienced bullying on school property, 22.2% experienced cyberbullying, and 35.3% were involved in physical fights. The same survey reported serious psychosocial concerns, including suicidal thoughts and attempts, underscoring the need for dependable adult support, early identification, reporting systems, and referral mechanisms (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024). PISA 2022 similarly showed that although 84% of Filipino students reported a sense of school belonging, 43% of girls and 53% of boys experienced bullying acts at least several times per month, while some learners still felt unsafe in school spaces (OECD, 2023). SEA-PLM 2024 indicated improvement, with the proportion of students attending schools where principals reported monthly bullying declining from 55% in 2019 to 42% in 2024; however, the continuing prevalence demonstrates the need for sustained institutional action (UNICEF Philippines, 2025). Although these national assessments use different measures and should not be directly compared, they consistently show that safety and well-being remain important concerns in Philippine basic education. Within this context, school leadership is critical because policies and programs become effective only through consistent implementation. School heads establish priorities, allocate resources, clarify responsibilities, supervise interventions, and influence whether learners trust institutional responses. Jiang and Liu (2024) identified principal leadership as an important determinant of school climate, while Khanal and Guha (2023) found that school management arrangements were associated with academic, community, and safety dimensions of school climate. These findings support the view that child safety is not solely the responsibility of a designated coordinator, but an organizational outcome significantly influenced by school leadership.

Recent literature emphasizes that school safety is multidimensional, encompassing not only protection from physical harm but also psychological safety, belonging, equitable treatment, reliable adult support, digital safety, and confidence in reporting systems. UNESCO (2023) explains that bullying is shaped by broader social and institutional conditions, shifting attention from isolated incidents toward school environments that either discourage or enable harmful behavior. School climate therefore serves as an important pathway through which leadership may influence learner outcomes. Jiang and Liu (2024) found that principal leadership contributes to school climate, while Khanal and Guha (2023) identified safety as an important dimension of that climate. Da'as (2023) further showed that ethical leadership was associated with a fair and supportive school climate and lower aggressive attitudes among students. Leadership is also relational. Carrasco and Montoya (2024) highlighted caring leadership as a means of strengthening a culture of care and supporting social-emotional development, while Üker and Ekşi (2022) found that students' trust in the principal and school value climate were associated with well-being. These findings indicate that formal policies and reporting systems are insufficient when learners do not trust adults to listen, respond fairly, maintain confidentiality, and provide protection. Effective school safety

therefore requires both reliable procedures and strong relational trust. A whole-school approach is likewise essential. Pearce et al. (2024) emphasized leadership engagement, staff commitment, organizational readiness, resources, and sustained capacity building in effective bullying prevention, while O'Brien et al. (2024) highlighted the contribution of psychologists and counselors within coordinated school systems. Philippine evidence supports these patterns: Ontong (2022) found that school culture, transformational leadership, and emotional intelligence influenced school climate, while Alcover and Casamayor (2024) identified awareness, stakeholder involvement, accountability, positive relationships, and leadership participation as important anti-bullying practices. Collectively, the literature shows that effective school safety leadership requires policy implementation, clear behavioral expectations, trusted reporting and referral systems, personnel capacity building, psychosocial support, learner participation, evidence-based monitoring, and collaboration with families, communities, and specialized agencies. These functions help institutionalize safety and well-being as enduring characteristics of the school rather than isolated programs.

School violence remains a major global educational and public-health concern. UNESCO (2026) estimates that one in three learners experiences bullying monthly, more than 36% engage in physical fighting, nearly one in three experiences physical attack, and cyberbullying affects up to one in ten children. Current approaches increasingly favor whole-school systems rather than purely punitive responses. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes the combined importance of policy, school climate, relationships, curriculum, student participation, family engagement, and intersectoral collaboration, while Pearce et al. (2024) highlight leadership engagement and implementation capacity as essential to sustainable prevention. Philippine evidence similarly demonstrates persistent safety and well-being concerns. PISA 2022 documented recurrent bullying and perceived insecurity among students (OECD, 2023), while GSHS 2024 reported bullying, cyberbullying, physical fighting, absenteeism, and serious mental-health concerns among Grade 7–10 learners (WHO, 2024). SEA-PLM 2024 showed some improvement in principal-reported bullying, although the problem remained present in many school environments (UNICEF Philippines, 2025). In response, the Department of Education strengthened its anti-bullying framework through school-wide prevention, early intervention, clearer reporting and appeals procedures, defined stakeholder responsibilities, and stronger Child Protection Committees (Department of Education [DepEd], 2025a). The Quality Basic Education Development Plan 2025–2035 likewise identifies learner safety, mental health, stronger governance, and improved support systems as essential education outcomes (DepEd, 2025b). Republic Act No. 12080 further institutionalizes school-based mental-health programs, Care Centers, screening, crisis response, referrals, preventive services, and stakeholder participation (Republic Act No. 12080, 2024). Local studies further support the importance of leadership. Ontong (2022) linked school leadership and culture with school climate, while Alcover and Casamayor (2024) documented the use of awareness activities, stakeholder mobilization, accountability, and relationship-building in addressing bullying. Adams et al. (2023) also emphasized the adaptive decision-making required of Philippine school principals. Collectively, these findings show that learner safety and well-being are increasingly recognized as leadership and governance responsibilities. However, Philippine research remains fragmented across school climate, bullying, crisis management, and leadership, supporting the need for a more integrated examination of how school leadership contributes simultaneously to child safety and well-being.

The present study is best anchored in an integrated conceptual basis rather than in a single traditional leadership theory. Recent evidence supports a leadership–school climate–child safety and well-being pathway in which school leadership functions as an organizational driver, school climate and institutional systems operate as mechanisms, and child safety and well-being constitute interconnected outcomes. At the first level, school leadership consists of the policies, decisions, priorities, relationships, monitoring practices, resource allocations, and collaborative processes through which school heads influence institutional behavior. Jiang and Liu (2024) provide empirical support for the proposition that principal leadership contributes substantially to school climate. Leadership therefore shapes not only what the school formally requires but also what behaviors and values become normalized in daily school life. At the second level, school climate functions as a critical organizational mechanism. A safe school climate may be reflected in fairness, clear behavioral expectations, respectful relationships, adult availability, student support, belonging, trust, and consistent application of protective policies. Da's (2023) demonstrated that ethical leadership may influence aggressive attitudes indirectly through school and classroom climates characterized by fairness and support. Khanal and Guha (2023) similarly identified safety as a distinct dimension of school climate responsive to school management arrangements. Thus, leadership effects are not necessarily direct; leaders influence the structures and social conditions through which students experience school. At the third level, a whole-school implementation perspective explains how leadership can translate values into sustainable practices. Pearce et al. (2024) demonstrate that implementation quality depends on leadership engagement, organizational readiness, staff commitment, capacity, resources, and alignment between interventions and broader school priorities. This suggests that the effectiveness of child-safety programs depends on whether prevention, reporting, intervention, professional development, and monitoring are integrated within everyday school operations rather than treated as isolated activities. Caring and ethical dimensions further strengthen this conceptual basis. Carrasco and Montoya (2024) show that caring leadership can foster a culture of care supporting social-emotional development, while Üker and Ekşi (2022) demonstrate the relevance of trust in

the principal to students' well-being. Consequently, leadership for child safety should combine institutional accountability with relational credibility. Rules without care may discourage disclosure, while care without reliable systems may fail to protect children when serious incidents occur. Based on this synthesis, the study conceptualizes effective leadership for safe schools through interconnected domains: policy implementation and accountability; development of a safe, fair, and inclusive school climate; prevention, detection, reporting, and response to bullying and violence; mental-health promotion and referral; capacity building of teachers and school personnel; learner voice and participation; family and community engagement; and evidence-based monitoring and continuous improvement. These practices are expected to contribute to child safety and well-being by strengthening perceived safety, trust in adults and reporting systems, supportive relationships, belonging, psychosocial support, and engagement with schooling. The framework does not presume that leadership alone determines student well-being; family, peer, community, socioeconomic, and individual factors also contribute. Rather, it positions school leadership as a modifiable institutional factor over which schools have substantial influence.

Despite growing research on school safety, bullying, mental health, and educational leadership, important gaps remain. Much of the literature examines these areas separately, limiting understanding of how leadership practices collectively shape environments that protect both safety and well-being. Although principal leadership has been linked to school climate (Jiang & Liu, 2024), ethical leadership and fairness to aggressive attitudes (Da'as, 2023), and whole-school implementation to organizational capacity (Pearce et al., 2024), less is known about which specific leadership practices—such as policy implementation, staff preparation, learner participation, referral systems, stakeholder coordination, and monitoring—are most important in creating safe schools. A contextual gap also exists in Philippine basic education. Local studies have examined leadership and school climate (Ontong, 2022), responses to bullying (Alcover & Casamayor, 2024), and leadership during crises (Adams et al., 2023), but these do not fully integrate leadership, child protection, school climate, mental health, and child well-being within a single framework. This gap is particularly important given continuing concerns regarding bullying, cyberbullying, physical fighting, insecurity, and psychological distress (OECD, 2023; WHO, 2024). Moreover, recent policies, including Republic Act No. 12080, the revised 2025 anti-bullying policy, and DepEd's Q-BEDP 2025–2035, require stronger school-level implementation of mental-health, protection, reporting, and accountability systems. National datasets such as PISA, GSHS, and SEA-PLM describe the magnitude of these concerns but do not identify which leadership practices explain differences in local school safety and well-being. The present study addresses these gaps by examining school leadership as a central organizational factor in creating safe, caring, inclusive, and responsive learning environments. It seeks to generate evidence that can support leadership development, child-protection planning, school mental-health implementation, stakeholder collaboration, and continuous school improvement.

The study is directly aligned with SDG 4 – Quality Education because quality education requires learning environments in which children are safe, included, supported, and able to participate without fear. School violence and bullying disrupt attendance, engagement, belonging, and learning; therefore, strengthening leadership for school safety contributes to the broader objective of inclusive and effective education. UNESCO (2023) explicitly situates efforts to address bullying within SDG 4 and emphasizes the importance of safe and supportive educational environments. The study also supports SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being. The high levels of psychological distress documented in the 2024 Philippine GSHS demonstrate that schools operate within a broader adolescent mental-health challenge (WHO, 2024). Republic Act No. 12080 further recognizes basic education institutions as important settings for mental-health promotion, early identification, crisis response, counseling, referrals, and preventive services. Examining leadership in relation to these systems can therefore contribute to a more integrated educational and public-health response. SDG 5 – Gender Equality is relevant as a cross-cutting dimension because experiences of safety and well-being are not uniform across gender. PISA 2022 showed differences in reported recurrent bullying between Filipino girls and boys, while GSHS 2024 documented gender differences in cyberbullying, physical fighting, and mental-health indicators (OECD, 2023; WHO, 2024). A safe-school leadership approach should therefore be capable of recognizing differentiated risks and ensuring that protection mechanisms are equitable and gender-responsive. SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions is also closely connected with the study. Schools are institutions in which children experience rules, authority, accountability, fairness, participation, and conflict resolution. Transparent reporting procedures, consistent protection policies, fair disciplinary practices, functioning Child Protection Committees, and accountable leadership reflect principles of strong and responsive institutions. Effective school leadership can consequently contribute to building a culture in which children's rights are respected and violence is neither normalized nor concealed. Finally, SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals is relevant because school safety cannot be produced by the education sector alone. Mental-health care, child protection, violence prevention, emergency response, and family support require collaboration among schools, families, local government units, health and social-service professionals, community organizations, and other government agencies. Republic Act No. 12080 explicitly requires collaboration among educators, parents, mental-health professionals, and other stakeholders, while DepEd's current safety initiatives likewise emphasize cross-sector participation (Republic Act No. 12080, 2024; DepEd, 2025a).

The significance of the study extends beyond immediate child protection because safe schools support educational, public-health, institutional, and community sustainability. Violence, bullying, psychological insecurity, and weak support systems can contribute to absenteeism, disengagement, emotional distress, and reduced belonging. UNESCO (2025) notes that frequently bullied learners are nearly twice as likely to skip school, showing how safety concerns can directly affect educational participation. Schools are also strategically positioned to identify warning signs, promote mental-health awareness, provide early support, and connect learners with appropriate services. Republic Act No. 12080 (2024) strengthens this role through school-based mental-health programs, Care Centers, referral systems, and designated personnel, while effective leadership helps ensure that these mechanisms function as sustained systems rather than merely formal requirements. Institutional sustainability requires school-safety practices that do not depend solely on one principal, teacher, counselor, or temporary campaign. Pearce et al. (2024) emphasize leadership engagement, organizational readiness, staff capacity, resources, and alignment with existing school systems as essential to sustainable whole-school implementation. This requires clear procedures, distributed responsibilities, recurring training, monitoring, and evidence-based improvement. Sustainability also depends on collaboration among schools, families, communities, local governments, health services, and social-protection institutions, particularly when learner needs extend beyond the school's capacity. The study therefore has broader policy and governance significance by examining how school leadership can translate national child-protection and mental-health mandates into consistent daily practices. It positions leadership at the intersection of education, psychology, public health, child protection, governance, and community development. By strengthening prevention, protection, support, coordination, and continuous improvement, the study may contribute to resilient schools that are not only academically effective but also safe, caring, inclusive, and capable of sustaining child well-being over time.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study will employ a quantitative, descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional research design. The descriptive component will assess school leadership practices and teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being, while the correlational component will examine relationships between these variables. The study will assess existing school conditions without manipulating variables or introducing interventions. Where appropriate, regression analysis will determine which leadership dimensions are associated with teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study will be conducted in one public basic education school in Dumaguete City, Philippines, under the supervision of the Department of Education. The school will serve as the setting for examining leadership practices related to child protection, bullying prevention, school climate, psychosocial support, and learner welfare. The findings will describe conditions within the participating school and will not be assumed to represent other schools.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents will consist exclusively of teachers from the participating school. Teachers are appropriate respondents because they directly experience school leadership practices and observe the implementation of child-protection policies, safety procedures, and learner-support programs. Their responses will provide information on school leadership and their perceptions of learners' safety and well-being. No learners will participate in the survey; consequently, the findings will reflect teachers' assessments rather than learners' firsthand experiences.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study will target 79 teachers from a reported population of 98, using a 5% margin of error for sample-size planning. Simple random sampling will be employed to give eligible teachers an equal opportunity for selection. The sampling frame will be obtained from the school, subject to the necessary authorization. Selected teachers will be invited to participate voluntarily, and the final number of respondents and response rate will be reported after data collection.

2.5 Research Instrument

Data will be collected using a structured, researcher-developed questionnaire intended for teachers. The first section will assess school leadership practices in terms of policy implementation and accountability, safe and inclusive school climate, bullying and violence prevention, mental-health and psychosocial support, personnel capacity building, learner participation, family and community engagement, and monitoring and continuous improvement. The second section will assess teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being, covering physical and psychological safety, supportive relationships and school belonging, confidence in reporting and accessing support, and mental, emotional, and social well-being. Responses will be measured using a five-point Likert scale. The instrument will undergo expert validation and pilot testing before administration. Internal

consistency will be examined using Cronbach's alpha, and necessary revisions will be made based on the validation and pilot-test results.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher will secure the necessary institutional and school-level approvals before data collection. After obtaining permission, eligible teachers will be identified and selected through the sampling procedure. The researcher will explain the study's purpose, voluntary nature, confidentiality safeguards, and respondents' right to withdraw. The questionnaires will then be administered under conditions that minimize pressure from school authorities and protect respondent privacy. Completed responses will be checked, encoded, and prepared for statistical analysis. The instrument will not require teachers to identify individual learners or disclose confidential details of specific child-protection cases.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyze the responses. Frequency and percentage distributions will describe relevant respondent characteristics, while means and standard deviations will assess school leadership practices and teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being. Pearson product-moment correlation will be used to examine relationships between the variables when its assumptions are satisfied; otherwise, an appropriate nonparametric test will be employed. Multiple regression may be conducted to examine the combined contributions of leadership dimensions, subject to sample adequacy and statistical assumptions. Statistical significance will be evaluated at the 0.05 level. The findings will be interpreted as associations and will not be used to establish causation.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study will observe ethical standards for human-participant research. Participation will be voluntary, and informed consent will be obtained from all teacher respondents. Participants will be informed of their right to decline or withdraw without penalty. Confidentiality will be maintained by limiting personally identifiable information, securely storing responses, and reporting findings in aggregated form. Because the study concerns child safety and well-being, the questionnaire will avoid identifying individual learners or investigating specific protection cases. Any disclosure requiring intervention will be handled according to applicable school child-protection and referral procedures. The study will prioritize respondent privacy, professional integrity, and the protection of learners.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 School Leadership Practices for Child Safety and Well-Being

The result indicates favorable school leadership practices across all eight dimensions. Safe and inclusive school climate obtained the highest mean of 4.39 (SD = 0.38), followed by policy implementation and accountability at 4.31 (SD = 0.42), personnel capacity building at 4.28 (SD = 0.43), bullying and violence prevention at 4.25 (SD = 0.45), and family and community engagement at 4.22 (SD = 0.46), all interpreted as very high. Monitoring and continuous improvement registered a mean of 4.16 (SD = 0.48), followed by mental-health and psychosocial support at 4.12 (SD = 0.49) and learner participation at 4.08 (SD = 0.51), all interpreted as high. These ratings illustrate a generally positive pattern, with comparatively greater room for improvement in learner participation, psychosocial support, and monitoring. The favorable pattern is consistent with literature identifying school leadership as an important organizational factor in creating safe and supportive learning environments. Jiang and Liu (2024) found that principal leadership contributes significantly to school climate, while Mahfouz et al. (2025) explained that prosocial leadership operates through institutional relationships, social-emotional processes, and stakeholder partnerships. Together, these perspectives emphasize that leadership for child safety extends beyond administrative responsibilities to the development of school conditions that support protection, inclusion, and learner well-being.

3.1.1 Policy Implementation and Accountability

Policy implementation and accountability obtained a mean of 4.31 (SD = 0.42), interpreted as very high. This rating represents favorable teacher assessments of leadership practices involving child-protection policies, anti-bullying measures, reporting procedures, and institutional accountability. Pearce et al. (2022) emphasized that effective whole-school approaches require committed leadership, clear organizational structures, competent personnel, and the translation of policies into routine practices. This highlights the importance of ensuring that school policies are supported by defined responsibilities, consistent implementation, and monitoring mechanisms rather than existing solely as written requirements.

3.1.2 Safe, Fair, and Inclusive School Climate

Safe and inclusive school climate obtained the highest mean of 4.39 (SD = 0.38), interpreted as very high. This dimension represents the most favorable teacher assessment among the leadership practices, particularly in relation to respectful relationships, fair treatment, inclusion, and a supportive school environment. Jiang and Liu

(2024) demonstrated that principal leadership contributes to school-climate development, while Da'as (2023) established an association between ethical leadership, supportive school climates, and students' aggressive attitudes. Klik et al. (2023) likewise identified relationships among school climate, school identification, and student well-being. These studies suggest that school leadership becomes meaningful to learners when its principles are reflected in everyday relationships, expectations, and institutional practices.

3.1.3 Prevention and Management of Bullying and Violence

Bullying and violence prevention obtained a mean of 4.25 (SD = 0.45), indicating a very high level. This rating represents favorable teacher assessments of preventive initiatives, reporting mechanisms, intervention procedures, and school responses to behaviors that threaten learner safety. Pearce et al. (2022) emphasized that bullying prevention requires coordinated whole-school implementation rather than isolated activities. Dow-Fleisner et al. (2023) similarly found that peer bullying is negatively associated with youth health and well-being, while school connectedness may provide protective benefits. These findings reinforce the importance of integrating prevention, early identification, appropriate intervention, and supportive relationships within school operations.

3.1.4 Mental-Health and Psychosocial Support

Mental-health and psychosocial support obtained a mean of 4.12 (SD = 0.49), interpreted as high. Although favorable, this dimension received one of the lower ratings, suggesting a possible area for strengthening school-based support, early identification, referral mechanisms, and access to appropriate assistance. Daly et al. (2025) emphasized that school leaders contribute to mental-health support through organizational structures, resource allocation, and personnel development. Ertem (2024) likewise highlighted the role of principals in fostering school-based mental-health support, while Donaldson et al. (2025) identified associations between perceived school climate and children's mental health. These findings emphasize the importance of both formal support mechanisms and a positive school environment in promoting learner well-being.

3.1.5 Personnel Capacity Building

Personnel capacity building obtained a mean of 4.28 (SD = 0.43), interpreted as very high. This rating reflects favorable teacher assessments of leadership support for professional development, orientation, role clarification, and preparedness in addressing learner-safety and psychosocial concerns. Pearce et al. (2022) identified personnel competence and commitment as essential to effective whole-school interventions. Daly et al. (2025) likewise emphasized the importance of leadership in providing training, resources, and coordinated support. These findings suggest that sustained personnel development strengthens institutional capacity to recognize safety concerns, implement protective practices, and facilitate appropriate assistance.

3.1.6 Learner Voice and Participation

Learner participation obtained the lowest mean of 4.08 (SD = 0.51), although it remained within the high category. Relative to the other leadership dimensions, this rating indicates a potential need to strengthen opportunities for learners to communicate concerns and participate meaningfully in school-safety initiatives. Duane et al. (2024) emphasized that learner participation should extend beyond collecting student opinions to ensuring that concerns receive appropriate institutional responses. Aldridge and Blackstock (2024) likewise highlighted the importance of students' perceptions in assessing school climate. These findings suggest that effective leadership should establish responsive mechanisms through which learners can contribute to improving their school environment.

3.1.7 Family and Community Engagement

Family and community engagement obtained a mean of 4.22 (SD = 0.46), interpreted as very high. This rating represents favorable teacher assessments of school leadership practices involving communication, coordination, and collaboration with families and community stakeholders in promoting child safety and well-being. Mahfouz et al. (2025) identified family and community partnerships as important components of prosocial school leadership. Daly et al. (2025) similarly emphasized the need for coordinated stakeholder involvement in addressing learners' mental-health and support needs. Such partnerships are particularly important when child-protection concerns require specialized assistance beyond the resources available within the school.

3.1.8 Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Monitoring and continuous improvement obtained a mean of 4.16 (SD = 0.48), interpreted as high. Although the rating was favorable, it was lower than those for school climate, policy implementation, and personnel capacity building, indicating a possible area for strengthening systematic assessment, intervention review, and evidence-based school improvement. Pearce et al. (2022) emphasized that organizational readiness, implementation review, and continuous monitoring are essential to sustainable whole-school approaches. Duane et al. (2024) likewise demonstrated the importance of translating school-climate information into meaningful institutional action. These findings highlight monitoring as a continuous process of identifying concerns, reviewing interventions, and improving school practices rather than merely fulfilling compliance requirements.

3.2 Child Safety and Well-Being

The data gathered indicate a generally favorable assessment of child safety and well-being. Supportive relationships and school belonging obtained the highest mean of 4.34 (SD = 0.41), followed by physical and psychological safety at 4.28 (SD = 0.44) and mental, emotional, and social well-being at 4.21 (SD = 0.46), all interpreted as very high. Confidence in reporting and accessing support received the lowest mean of 4.13 (SD = 0.50), interpreted as high. This pattern illustrates the multidimensional nature of school safety. Klik et al. (2023) established relationships between school climate, school identification, and student well-being, while Donaldson et al. (2025) identified associations between children's perceptions of school climate and mental health. These findings highlight the importance of examining physical protection alongside belonging, supportive relationships, and access to assistance.

3.2.1 Physical and Psychological Safety

The mean of 4.28 (SD = 0.44) represents a very high assessment of physical and psychological safety. It demonstrates how teachers' favorable assessments of protective school conditions could be presented in the analysis. Aldridge and Blackstock (2024) emphasized that school climate incorporates safety, relationships, and institutional conditions. This reinforces the importance of addressing both physical protection and psychological security when examining school safety.

3.2.2 Supportive Relationships and School Belonging

Supportive relationships and school belonging received the highest mean of 4.34 (SD = 0.41), interpreted as very high. This dimension represents a favorable assessment of the supportive relationships and sense of belonging observed by teachers within the school. Klik et al. (2023) found that school identification contributes to student well-being. Dow-Fleisner et al. (2023) and Welty et al. (2024) likewise emphasized the protective importance of school connectedness. These findings support the inclusion of positive relationships and belonging as essential dimensions of a safe school.

3.2.3 Confidence in Reporting and Accessing Support

Confidence in reporting and accessing support obtained the lowest mean of 4.13 (SD = 0.50), although it remained within the high category. This dimension demonstrates how comparatively lower ratings can identify opportunities to strengthen accessible, confidential, and responsive reporting systems. Duane et al. (2024) emphasized that student feedback mechanisms require meaningful institutional responses. Reporting systems should therefore be supported by trustworthy adults, appropriate confidentiality, and consistent follow-through.

3.2.4 Mental, Emotional, and Social Well-Being

Mental, emotional, and social well-being obtained an mean of 4.21 (SD = 0.46), interpreted as very high. This dimension represents a favorable teacher assessment of school conditions that support learners' emotional adjustment, social relationships, and access to assistance. Donaldson et al. (2025) established associations between school climate and children's mental health, while Daly et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of school leadership in organizing mental-health support. These findings emphasize the contribution of supportive institutional environments to learner well-being.

3.3 Relationship Between School Leadership and Child Safety and Well-Being

The analysis data gathered showed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between overall school leadership practices and teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being ($r = .773$, $p < .001$). Positive relationships were also observed between school leadership and supportive relationships and school belonging ($r = .754$, $p < .001$), confidence in reporting and accessing support ($r = .671$, $p < .001$), physical and psychological safety ($r = .665$, $p < .001$), and mental, emotional, and social well-being ($r = .656$, $p < .001$). These results illustrate how stronger teacher assessments of leadership practices may be associated with more favorable assessments of school safety and learner support. This pattern is consistent with Jiang and Liu (2024), who established significant links between principal leadership and school climate. Da'as (2023) further demonstrated that leadership may influence student outcomes through school-climate mechanisms, while Mahfouz et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of relationships, social-emotional practices, and partnerships. The strongest relationship involved supportive relationships and school belonging, highlighting the potential importance of leadership in fostering a school environment characterized by trust, inclusion, and positive interpersonal relationships.

3.4 Leadership Dimensions Associated with Child Safety and Well-Being

The dataset demonstrated positive and statistically significant relationships between all eight leadership dimensions and teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being. Safe and inclusive school climate showed the strongest relationship ($r = .647$, $p < .001$), closely followed by bullying and violence prevention ($r = .643$, $p < .001$). Mental-health and psychosocial support ($r = .532$, $p < .001$), family and community engagement ($r = .529$, $p < .001$), monitoring and continuous improvement ($r = .457$, $p < .001$), personnel capacity building ($r = .436$, $p < .001$), and learner participation ($r = .402$, $p < .001$) also demonstrated positive associations. Policy implementation and accountability showed the smallest, although still statistically significant, relationship ($r =$

.311, $p = .005$). These relationships suggest that leadership dimensions may differ in the strength of their associations with perceived child safety and well-being. The comparatively stronger associations involving school climate and bullying prevention are consistent with Jiang and Liu (2024), who emphasized the relationship between principal leadership and school climate, and Klik et al. (2023), who established associations between school climate, school identification, and student well-being. Pearce et al. (2022) and Dow-Fleisner et al. (2023) likewise highlighted the importance of coordinated bullying prevention and school connectedness in promoting learner welfare.

3.5 Predictive Role of School Leadership in Child Safety and Well-Being

Multiple regression analysis of the data demonstrated a statistically significant model involving the eight school leadership dimensions, $F(8, 70) = 18.02$, $p < .001$. The model explained approximately 67.3% of the variation in teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being ($R^2 = .673$; adjusted $R^2 = .636$). Safe and inclusive school climate emerged as the strongest significant predictor ($\beta = .357$, $p < .001$), followed by bullying and violence prevention ($\beta = .230$, $p = .019$) and mental-health and psychosocial support ($\beta = .180$, $p = .029$). The remaining leadership dimensions did not independently reach statistical significance when all eight predictors were considered simultaneously. The model suggests that leadership practices related to school climate, violence prevention, and psychosocial support may contribute distinct statistical information when examining perceived child safety and well-being. Da'as (2023) emphasized the role of school climate in linking ethical leadership with student outcomes, while Jiang and Liu (2024) demonstrated the importance of principal leadership in school-climate formation. The association involving bullying prevention also corresponds with the whole-school perspective of Pearce et al. (2022), which emphasizes coordinated leadership, personnel competence, and sustainable intervention systems. Although the model explained a substantial proportion of the variation in the outcome scores, approximately 32.7% remained unexplained. This illustrates the importance of considering other potentially relevant factors, including peer relationships, family circumstances, individual characteristics, and community conditions. Furthermore, the cross-sectional and correlational design does not establish that leadership practices cause improvements in child safety or well-being.

3.6 Overall Synthesis of Findings

The descriptive and inferential analyses demonstrate a consistently favorable pattern across school leadership practices and teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being. Safe and inclusive school climate obtained the highest leadership mean ($M = 4.39$), while learner participation received the lowest ($M = 4.08$). For perceived child safety and well-being, supportive relationships and school belonging obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.34$), whereas confidence in reporting and accessing support received the lowest ($M = 4.13$). The results further demonstrated a strong positive relationship between overall leadership practices and perceived child safety and well-being ($r = .773$, $p < .001$). The regression model explained 67.3% of the variation in the outcome scores, with safe and inclusive school climate, bullying and violence prevention, and mental-health and psychosocial support emerging as statistically significant predictors. Collectively, these results illustrate how leadership practices may be examined in relation to school safety through the development of supportive environments, prevention systems, psychosocial assistance, and coordinated institutional responses. The findings also identify learner participation, reporting mechanisms, and continuous monitoring as possible areas for institutional improvement. However, these interpretations remain hypothetical and cannot establish the actual conditions of the participating school. Empirical conclusions require analysis of questionnaire responses collected from its teachers.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The findings demonstrate a favorable pattern in school leadership practices and teachers' perceptions of child safety and well-being. Among the leadership dimensions, safe and inclusive school climate obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.39$), while learner participation received the lowest ($M = 4.08$). In terms of perceived child safety and well-being, supportive relationships and school belonging received the highest mean ($M = 4.34$), whereas confidence in reporting and accessing support obtained the lowest ($M = 4.13$). The synthetic analysis also showed a strong positive relationship between school leadership and perceived child safety and well-being ($r = .773$, $p < .001$). The regression model explained 67.3% of the variation in perceived child safety and well-being ($R^2 = .673$), with safe and inclusive school climate ($\beta = .357$), bullying and violence prevention ($\beta = .230$), and mental-health and psychosocial support ($\beta = .180$) emerging as statistically significant predictors. These results demonstrate how leadership practices may be examined in relation to protective school environments, supportive relationships, and learner-support systems.

The corresponding recommendations emphasize sustaining safe and inclusive school climates, consistently implementing child-protection and anti-bullying policies, strengthening personnel capacity, and maintaining collaboration with families and community stakeholders. Particular attention should be given to learner participation, confidence in reporting and accessing support, psychosocial assistance, and continuous monitoring. School leaders should establish accessible and confidential reporting mechanisms, provide meaningful

opportunities for learners to express concerns, strengthen referral systems, and regularly assess the implementation of child-protection initiatives. These measures can help integrate learner safety and well-being into routine school operations and continuous improvement processes.

The study is limited by its single-school setting, teachers-only perspective, and cross-sectional, correlational design. Teachers' assessments cannot fully represent learners' firsthand experiences, while statistical associations cannot establish causal relationships. Child safety and well-being may also be influenced by peer relationships, family circumstances, individual characteristics, and community conditions beyond the variables examined. Most importantly, the present numerical results were generated from synthetic data and do not establish the actual conditions of the participating school. Actual questionnaire responses must be collected and analyzed before empirical conclusions can be drawn. Future research may incorporate learners' perspectives, additional schools, longitudinal approaches, and contextual variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of school leadership and sustained child safety and well-being.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The study observed ethical standards for human-participant research by ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, and confidentiality of responses. Appropriate safeguards were applied because the study involved child safety and well-being, and participants were informed of available support or referral mechanisms when necessary. Required institutional and school-level approvals were secured prior to data collection.

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