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Transformational Leadership of School Heads and the Instructional Performance of Public School Teachers: A Convergent Parallel Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between school heads' transformational leadership and the instructional performance of public-school teachers in the District of Kabacan, Schools Division of Cotabato, Philippines. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed, involving 281 teachers selected through proportional stratified random sampling and 15 interview participants selected purposively. Data were collected using a transformational leadership questionnaire, official Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) ratings, and semi-structured interviews. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and thematic analysis were utilized. Results revealed Very High transformational leadership (M = 4.858, SD = 0.276) but Moderate instructional performance (M = 2.855, SD = 0.208). No statistically significant relationship was found between the variables ($r = -0.110$, $p = .562$). Qualitative findings highlighted developmental supervision, professional encouragement, ethical leadership, and collaborative support, while identifying workload, large class sizes, and limited resources as instructional challenges. The study concluded that favorable leadership perceptions did not correspond to significantly higher instructional performance ratings. School administrators should strengthen differentiated instruction, constructive supervision, workload management, and professional collaboration. Limitations included the district-specific setting, cross-sectional design, and inconsistencies requiring verification of the analyzed quantitative sample. The findings contribute to Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, and 16 by informing educational quality, supportive working conditions, and accountable school governance. Integrating leadership development with practical institutional support may strengthen sustainable instructional practices and educational management.

Keywords: Educational Sustainability; Instructional Performance; Mixed-Methods Research; Public-School Teachers; School Leadership; Transformational Leadership

1. Introduction

Instructional performance is essential to educational quality because teachers translate curriculum standards into effective classroom practices through lesson planning, content delivery, classroom management, differentiated instruction, and assessment. International education indicators also situate teaching within wider institutional and resource conditions (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). However, increasing professional demands, teacher shortages, workload pressures, and retention challenges may affect instructional effectiveness (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024). These conditions highlight the importance of school leadership and institutional support in maintaining teachers' professional performance and improving educational outcomes. Reviews of school leadership also emphasize teacher well-being and the organizational conditions surrounding instructional practice (Heenan et al., 2023; Meidelina et al., 2023).

In the Philippines, instructional performance is guided by the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), established through DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017. The framework identifies seven domains and 37 strands of teacher competence. This study focuses on Content Knowledge and Pedagogy, Learning Environment, Diversity of Learners, Curriculum and Planning, and Assessment and Reporting (Department of Education, 2017). Teacher performance is evaluated through the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF), consistent with Department of Education guidelines for School Year 2025–2026 (Department of Education, 2026). Using official performance records provides an administrative measure of instructional performance rather than relying exclusively on teachers' self-assessments.

Existing literature recognizes transformational leadership as a relevant factor in teachers' professional development and instructional practices (Caharian & Cabanlit, 2024; Ginanjar et al., 2024; Ortiz & De Jesus, 2024). School heads may influence teachers through ethical leadership, shared educational goals, professional encouragement, and individualized support. However, leadership practices do not necessarily produce consistent instructional outcomes across different educational settings. Recent reviews describe variation across school contexts and caution against assuming uniform effects (Li & Karanxha, 2024; Toprak et al., 2023). In the District of Kabacan, Schools Division of Cotabato, Gorosin et al. (2026) reported no statistically significant relationship between transformational leadership and teacher performance among public secondary school teachers. This finding highlights the need to examine leadership and instructional performance across broader educational levels while considering teachers' experiences and institutional conditions.

The study is anchored in Transformational Leadership Theory, originally conceptualized by Burns (1978) and developed by Bass (1985) and Bass and Avolio (1994). The theory identifies four dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These dimensions describe how school heads demonstrate integrity, communicate shared goals, encourage innovative teaching, and provide individualized professional support. Recent Philippine and international reviews revisit these dimensions in educational governance and school culture (Galila et al., 2025; Heenan et al., 2023). Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Burns, 1978) provides the conceptual foundation for examining leadership practices and their relationship with teachers' instructional performance without assuming a causal association.

The study addresses an empirical and methodological gap in understanding transformational leadership across elementary, junior high school, and senior high school settings in Kabacan, where approximately 950 public-school teachers were identified for School Year 2025–2026. The broader literature also notes differences in the ways principal leadership and teacher outcomes are operationalized (Ahmed, 2026). Unlike previous investigations limited to particular educational levels, the present research employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design integrating quantitative leadership assessments and official IPCRF performance ratings with the lived experiences of 15 teachers. Specifically, it examined the levels of transformational leadership and instructional performance, their statistical association after considering school level, teaching experience, and teaching load, and the convergence or divergence of quantitative and qualitative findings. The null hypothesis proposed no statistically significant association between transformational leadership and instructional performance after accounting for these contextual variables.

The study aligns primarily with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by examining school leadership and instructional performance as relevant components of educational quality. It also relates to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) through its consideration of teachers' workload and professional conditions and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) through its emphasis on ethical leadership, accountability, and institutional support. These connections emphasize the relevance of effective school administration and supportive professional environments to sustainable educational development.

From a multidisciplinary sustainability perspective, the research contributes to educational and institutional sustainability by examining how transformational leadership relates to teachers' instructional performance within public schools. Integrating administrative performance evidence with teachers' lived experiences provides a more comprehensive understanding of leadership practices and contextual challenges. Recent reviews suggest that organizational culture and professional commitment should be considered alongside leadership behavior (Caharian & Cabanlit, 2024; Sianipar & Putri, 2024). The findings may inform school leadership development, professional support, workload management, and evidence-based educational decision-making, contributing to efforts to maintain instructional quality and strengthen sustainable public-school governance.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2022), wherein quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently during School Year 2025–2026 and analyzed independently before integration. The quantitative strand examined transformational leadership and instructional performance, while the qualitative strand explored teachers' lived experiences. Integration identified convergence, complementarity, expansion, and divergence between statistical findings and participants' accounts.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the District of Kabacan, Schools Division of Cotabato, Philippines, covering public elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. The district's reported population comprised approximately 950 active public-school teachers, providing the institutional context for examining leadership practices and instructional performance across basic education levels.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The quantitative strand involved 281 public-school teachers representing elementary, junior high, and senior high school levels. Respondents assessed their immediate school heads' transformational leadership, while instructional performance was measured using official Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) ratings. The qualitative strand involved 15 teachers who shared their experiences of school leadership, professional support, and instructional challenges.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The quantitative sample was determined using Slovin's formula with a 5% margin of error, yielding approximately 281 respondents from a population of 950 teachers. Proportional stratified random sampling allocated 169 respondents (60.1%) to elementary schools, 77 (27.4%) to junior high schools, and 35 (12.5%) to senior high schools. Participants were randomly selected from official teacher lists. For the qualitative strand, 15 teachers were selected through nested purposive sampling from consenting survey respondents to represent variations in school levels and leadership assessments.

2.5 Research Instrument

Three instruments were utilized. The researcher-adapted Transformational Leadership Scale contained 40 positively worded items measuring idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, with ten items per dimension rated on a five-point Likert scale. The IPCRF Data Extraction Form recorded authorized numerical performance ratings, rating periods, school levels, teaching experience, and relevant Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) domains. A semi-structured interview guide explored teachers' experiences of leadership and instructional practices. The leadership questionnaire and interview guide underwent expert review for relevance, clarity, and representativeness, with targeted content validity indices of at least .78 for individual items and .90 for the overall scale (Polit et al., 2007). Pilot testing assessed clarity and internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega considered and .70 identified as the minimum acceptable reliability threshold (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2021). Exploratory factor analysis was proposed to examine the instrument's four-factor structure where feasible. Official IPCRF records were subject to verification of participant identity, rating period, and finalized performance ratings.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers secured institutional approval, ethics clearance, and permission from the Schools Division Office before collecting data. Following population verification and participant selection, informed consent was obtained, and teachers completed the transformational leadership questionnaire. Authorized IPCRF ratings were retrieved and linked to survey responses using coded identifiers. Fifteen consenting teachers participated in approximately 30–45-minute semi-structured interviews, with audio recording conducted only when separately authorized. Interview transcripts were anonymized and verified, while research files were maintained in secure storage. Quantitative and qualitative datasets were analyzed independently before integration.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Means and standard deviations described transformational leadership and instructional performance, while Pearson's product-moment correlation examined their relationship. Multiple linear regression assessed the association between leadership and instructional performance after controlling for school level, teaching experience, and teaching load, using a significance level of .05. Statistical assumptions were evaluated, with Spearman's rho considered when correlation assumptions were violated. Regression diagnostics included residual examination, multicollinearity assessment, and influential-case analysis. Qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis through familiarization, coding, theme development, review, and interpretation. Deductive codes reflected the four transformational leadership dimensions, while inductive codes captured emerging participant experiences. Quantitative and qualitative findings were subsequently compared to identify convergence, complementarity, expansion, or divergence. This integration examined how leadership practices, workload, resources, and institutional conditions related to teachers' instructional experiences and official performance ratings.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Institutional approval, ethics clearance, and permission from the Schools Division Office were reported as secured before data collection. Participants provided informed consent, and participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained through coded identifiers, restricted access to performance records, and encrypted or password-protected storage. The handling of IPCRF records followed Republic Act No. 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012) to protect participants' personal and professional information.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Transformational Leadership of School Heads

Teacher-respondents rated school heads' transformational leadership as Very High ($M = 4.858$, $SD = 0.276$). Idealized Influence obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.910$), followed by Inspirational Motivation ($M = 4.900$), Intellectual Stimulation ($M = 4.813$), and Individualized Consideration ($M = 4.807$). These findings indicate consistently favorable perceptions across the four leadership dimensions. The results suggest that teachers frequently perceived ethical role modeling, shared vision, professional encouragement, and individualized support. These practices reflect the transformational leadership dimensions described by Bass and Avolio (1994). Reviews of transformational school leadership similarly examine leadership behaviors in relation to teacher practices and school culture (Heenan et al., 2023; Li & Karanxha, 2024). Similarly, Bao (2024) associated transformational leadership with teachers' innovative behavior, while Esogon et al. (2024) examined its relationship with teachers' work performance. However, favorable leadership ratings do not establish improvements in instructional performance.

3.2 Instructional Performance of Public-School Teachers

Official IPCRF ratings for School Year 2025–2026 indicated an overall instructional performance mean of 2.855 ($SD = 0.208$), interpreted as Moderate under the adopted scale. Assessment and Reporting obtained the highest mean ($M = 2.907$), followed by Content Knowledge and Pedagogy ($M = 2.867$), Learning Environment ($M = 2.860$), Curriculum and Planning ($M = 2.853$), and Diversity of Learners ($M = 2.787$). The findings indicate variation across instructional domains, with Diversity of Learners receiving the lowest reported rating. The Department of Education (2017) identifies professional standards guiding teachers' instructional competencies, while Esogon et al. (2024) provide related Philippine evidence on leadership and teacher performance. These results may inform targeted professional development, although their interpretation requires verification against authorized IPCRF records and applicable rating standards.

3.3 Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Instructional Performance

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a weak negative, statistically non-significant relationship between transformational leadership and instructional performance ($r = -0.110$, $p = .562$). The reported regression likewise indicated no significant predictive relationship ($B = -0.083$, $\beta = -0.110$, $p = .562$, $R^2 = .012$). However, inconsistencies between the planned sample of 281 teachers and the reported regression degrees of freedom require verification of the actual analyzed sample and statistical model. The findings provide insufficient statistical evidence of a relationship between transformational leadership and official instructional performance ratings. This does not establish that leadership is unrelated to teaching effectiveness. Esogon et al. (2024) examined leadership and teacher performance in Philippine public elementary schools, while Gorosin et al. (2026) investigated similar variables in Kabacan. Differences in research contexts, measurement approaches, and analytical procedures may contribute to varying findings. Recent syntheses likewise report contextual variation and methodological limitations in school-leadership research (Ahmed, 2026; Toprak et al., 2023).

3.4 Teachers' Lived Experiences of Transformational Leadership

3.4.1 Leadership Support and Instructional Practices

Interviews with 15 teachers identified developmental supervision, encouragement of adaptive teaching, practical instructional support, and psychological safety as important leadership experiences. Participants described constructive feedback, collaborative problem-solving, and access to teaching resources as helpful, while public criticism and overly evaluative supervision created anxiety. These findings suggest that leadership support was perceived as more useful when supervision encouraged reflection and addressed actual instructional needs. Bao (2024) provides related evidence concerning transformational leadership and teacher innovation. The experiences emphasize the importance of constructive feedback, professional trust, and practical assistance without establishing direct effects on official performance ratings. This interpretation is consistent with research discussing leadership and teacher well-being (Meidelina et al., 2023).

3.4.2 Transformational Leadership Dimensions

Participants described school heads demonstrating integrity, fairness, shared educational goals, encouragement of innovative teaching, and individualized professional assistance. These experiences reflected idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The findings are consistent with the four transformational leadership dimensions described by Bass and Avolio (1994). Teachers' accounts suggest that ethical leadership, shared vision, innovation, and personalized support contribute to favorable professional experiences. However, these qualitative perceptions do not independently establish measurable improvements in instructional performance.

3.4.3 Challenges and Contextual Factors

Teachers identified heavy workloads, administrative responsibilities, large class sizes, limited preparation time, and inadequate instructional resources as barriers to implementing leadership-supported practices. Conversely, peer mentoring, Learning Action Cells, collaboration, and contextually appropriate assistance were described as supportive conditions. These findings suggest that teachers' ability to apply leadership guidance depends partly on available time, resources, and institutional support. Hogan and Pollock's (2023) synthesis highlights workload intensification and time pressures in education, while Bao (2024) provides context for leadership-related innovation. The findings emphasize the importance of realistic expectations and collaborative support rather than leadership encouragement alone. Sianipar and Putri (2024) also discuss collaborative culture in transformational school leadership.

3.5 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The quantitative findings showed Very High transformational leadership ratings but Moderate instructional performance and a statistically non-significant relationship between the variables ($r = -0.110$, $p = .562$). Qualitative accounts supported favorable perceptions of ethical leadership, shared vision, innovation, and individualized assistance while identifying workload, class size, and resource limitations as implementation challenges. The integrated findings are consistent with the transformational leadership dimensions described by Bass and Avolio (1994), particularly regarding teachers' perceived professional support. However, positive leadership experiences did not correspond to a statistically significant relationship with official instructional performance ratings. Structural challenges provide possible contextual explanations for this divergence but were not established as mediating factors. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of combining leadership development with realistic workloads, instructional resources, and collaborative professional support, while recognizing that the quantitative results remain subject to dataset verification.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study revealed that public-school teachers in the District of Kabacan, Schools Division of Cotabato, perceived their school heads' transformational leadership as Very High, while their instructional performance was rated Moderate based on official IPCRF records. Idealized influence and inspirational motivation emerged as the highest-rated leadership dimensions, whereas diversity of learners received the lowest instructional performance rating. Despite favorable leadership perceptions, the quantitative findings indicated no statistically significant relationship between transformational leadership and instructional performance. Qualitative findings identified developmental supervision, professional encouragement, collaborative support, and psychological safety as positive leadership experiences. However, heavy workloads, large class sizes, administrative responsibilities, and limited instructional resources constrained teachers' ability to apply leadership-supported practices. Overall, the findings suggest that favorable transformational leadership perceptions do not necessarily correspond to higher instructional performance ratings. The study contributes context-specific evidence emphasizing the importance of examining leadership practices alongside institutional conditions and teachers' professional experiences.

School heads should sustain ethical leadership, shared decision-making, professional encouragement, and individualized support while strengthening instructional supervision through constructive feedback and collaborative problem-solving. School administrators and the Schools Division Office should prioritize

professional development addressing differentiated instruction, inclusive teaching strategies, and instructional planning, particularly in domains receiving comparatively lower performance ratings. Administrative responsibilities and teaching workloads should be reviewed to provide teachers with adequate preparation time and opportunities for instructional improvement. Schools should strengthen Learning Action Cells, peer mentoring, and access to appropriate teaching resources to support professional collaboration and classroom implementation. Leadership development programs should integrate practical instructional assistance with attention to teachers' working conditions rather than focusing exclusively on leadership behaviors. Researchers should also verify the reported statistical outputs and analyzed sample before drawing definitive conclusions. Future studies may examine additional school contexts and use longitudinal approaches to clarify relationships among leadership practices, institutional support, and instructional performance.

The study was limited to public-school teachers in the District of Kabacan, restricting the generalizability of findings to other educational settings. Its cross-sectional design prevented causal conclusions, while teacher-reported leadership assessments may have been influenced by individual perceptions. Instructional performance relied on official IPCRF ratings, which may not capture every aspect of classroom practice. Inconsistencies between the planned sample and reported statistical outputs require verification before interpreting the relationship between variables. Furthermore, qualitative findings reflected the experiences of 15 teachers. Future research should consider broader samples, additional performance measures, longitudinal designs, and stronger statistical verification to improve the reliability and transferability of findings.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The authors affirm that no conflicts of interest exist in relation to this study. The research involved public-school teachers from elementary, junior high, and senior high schools in the District of Kabacan, Schools Division of Cotabato, with institutional permission and ethics clearance reported before data collection. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty. Data were collected through non-invasive questionnaires, interviews, and authorized IPCRF records, while confidentiality was maintained through coded identifiers, restricted access, and secure data storage in accordance with Republic Act No. 10173 (Data Privacy Act of 2012).

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