

Principals' Achievement Motives and Goals as Predictors of Leadership Styles: Basis for School Leaders Development Program

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Publication history:

Received: August 15, 2026

Accepted: September 9, 2026

Revised: September 5, 2026

Published: September 10, 2026

International Journal of Sustainable and Integrated Studies, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 215–227, September 2026.

Abstract

This study examined school principals' achievement motives and leadership styles in Olutanga Island District Schools, Division of Zamboanga Sibugay, as a basis for developing a school leader development program. It was anchored on McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory, Achievement Goal Theory, and Path-Goal Theory of Leadership. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed involving 105 Department of Education head teachers, master teachers, and school heads/school principals from public elementary and secondary schools in Talusan, Mabuhay, and Olutanga through total enumeration. Data were collected using an adapted and modified five-point Likert-scale questionnaire that underwent expert validation and pilot testing, obtaining a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.884. Weighted mean, frequency, percentage, standard deviation, Pearson product-moment correlation, independent samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used for analysis. Results showed a very high overall need for achievement, with pursuit of excellence and drive to succeed very highly demonstrated and initiative highly demonstrated. Fear of failure was generally high but manageable, with moderate risk avoidance and higher tendencies toward protecting one's image and seeking short-term security. Achievement-oriented leadership was very highly demonstrated, while directive-oriented leadership was highly demonstrated. Initiative and pursuit of excellence were significantly related to achievement-oriented leadership, while drive to succeed, initiative, pursuit of excellence, and short-term security were significantly related to directive-oriented leadership. No significant differences were found according to sex and leadership experience, whereas school type, educational attainment, and training attended produced significant differences in selected motivational and leadership dimensions. The study recommends sustained, evidence-based leadership development, differentiated training, postgraduate education, participative decision-making, innovation, and adaptive leadership, serving as the basis for the proposed ACHIEVE-LEAD Program. The study primarily supports SDG 4 – Quality Education and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions by strengthening educational leadership, professional capacity, governance, and institutional effectiveness. Its sustainability contribution is mainly educational, institutional, and governance-related through continuous leadership development, improved decision-making, effective resource management, and sustained school improvement.

Keywords: Achievement Motivation; Achievement-Oriented Leadership; Directive-Oriented Leadership; Leadership Styles; School Leadership; Financial Status; Business Involvement; Investment Involvement

1. Introduction

School leadership is influenced not only by professional experience and training but also by the internal motives that shape how principals set goals, make decisions, manage resources, respond to challenges, and interact with

teachers and other stakeholders. In particular, the need for achievement and fear of failure may influence whether school principals adopt proactive, achievement-oriented practices or more cautious and directive approaches. Because leadership behavior affects teacher motivation, school climate, organizational effectiveness, and student outcomes, understanding the motivational foundations of principals' leadership is important for improving educational management. This study therefore examines the achievement motives and leadership styles of school principals in Olutanga Island District Schools, Division of Zamboanga Sibugay, as a basis for developing a school leader development program. School principals' achievement motives, particularly the need for achievement and fear of failure, influence leadership strategies, decision-making, goal-setting, resource management, and the school climate. Effective leadership involves engaging teachers, students, and parents toward common learning objectives while selecting appropriate approaches according to organizational conditions and needs (Saleem & Noshaba, 2021). Principals are also directly responsible for allocating and monitoring human and material resources and creating conditions in which teaching and learning can occur effectively (Abdullahi, 2022). Their leadership style consequently has implications for teacher performance, student achievement, instructional practices, and organizational effectiveness. Achievement-oriented principals generally establish challenging goals, assume responsibility for outcomes, monitor progress, and pursue high standards. However, a strong personal preference for accomplishing tasks independently may also create difficulties in delegation and may contribute to excessive supervision. Gartner (2023) characterized micromanagement as excessive control and supervision accompanied by limited delegation of tasks or decision-making authority. Conversely, fear of failure may lead principals to avoid risks, prefer familiar approaches, protect their professional image, or seek short-term security. Such tendencies are especially relevant in school environments where principals are accountable for instructional performance, resource management, school improvement, and compliance with educational standards. Within this study, the need for achievement is expressed through the drive to succeed, taking initiative, and pursuing excellence, while fear of failure is reflected in avoiding risk, protecting one's image, and seeking security within a short period of time. Leadership behavior is examined through achievement-oriented leadership, characterized by challenging goals and high performance expectations, and directive-oriented leadership, characterized by clear instructions, expectations, structure, and control.

The literature consistently links achievement motivation with leadership behavior and organizational performance. Bradmo, Tiplic & Elstad (2014) found that achievement goals shape how school leaders respond to challenges and pursue improvement, while Elliot et. al (2025) reported that stronger achievement motives are associated with challenging goals and fear of failure with avoidance-oriented goals. Hariri, Monypenny, and Prideaux (2019) likewise found that achievement motivation predicts task- and relationship-oriented leadership, while transformational leadership is associated with teachers' motivation and performance (Alfahad, Alhajeri, and Alqahtani, 2013). Fear of failure may promote caution, risk avoidance, and resistance to innovation, although moderate levels can support accountability and careful planning. Elliot, A. J., Alzaidi, A., Weissman, D. L., & Kobeisy, A. N. M. (2023), associated stronger fear of failure with mastery-avoidance and performance-avoidance goals, while Omer Caliskan (2021) showed that organizational barriers may encourage cautious responses to failure. Brandmo, Tiplic, and Elstad (2014) further emphasized that mastery-oriented goals strengthen leadership commitment and school improvement, while Elliot et al. (2023) showed that achievement motives influence school leaders' goal-setting. Foreign studies also demonstrate that leadership motivation affects teacher and organizational outcomes. Rabago, Adino, and Bunyi (2023) reported that achievement-oriented leadership significantly influenced teacher motivation ($\beta = 0.456$, $p < .001$) and explained 32% of teacher engagement ($R^2 = .32$), while Karadurmuş and Apaydin (2021) found significant positive relationships ($r > .50$) between Path-Goal leadership styles and instructional planning, classroom management, and teacher leadership. A 2020 study similarly found achievement motivation negatively associated with passive leadership and positively associated with transformational and transactional leadership. Putra and colleagues (2021) also linked achievement motivation and growth mindset with transformational practices such as innovation, professional development, and teamwork. Philippine studies similarly emphasize the contribution of leadership to school outcomes. Moti (2022) associated effective leadership with teamwork, innovation, professional learning, and positive school climate, while Mata, Fernando, and Cabrera (2023) linked transformational and strategic leadership with School-Based Management and improved governance. Oco (2022) connected leadership styles with teacher productivity and school effectiveness, while Yongco (2026) found that leadership styles affect teacher and student performance. Caballero (2025) identified democratic leadership as a predictor of teacher motivation and school performance, and Gannaban and Marquez (2025) emphasized leadership development programs. Related findings showed that leadership influences teacher motivation, commitment, instructional quality, and school effectiveness (Caballero and Bantulo, 2025; Ermita and Baysa, 2025), while Ortiz and Blancia (2025) emphasized instructional leadership in improving teaching and learning. Path-Goal studies further showed positive relationships between leadership styles and teacher outcomes (Pacia and Guevarra, 2023; Ocampo and Chua, 2023), while Caballero and Bantulo (2025) associated democratic and participative leadership with teacher motivation and school performance.

International evidence indicates that the effects of leadership may vary according to educational context. A study published online in April 2025 reported that principal leadership had a comparatively strong role in the United States, whereas teacher leadership showed a stronger influence on student achievement in the Turkish context;

nevertheless, leadership and school climate were identified as important variables in improving achievement. Studies from Kenya, Turkey, and Indonesia also demonstrate associations among achievement-oriented leadership, adaptive leadership, motivational orientation, teacher efficacy, and organizational outcomes. At the national level, Philippine studies conducted in Mandaluyong City, Sarangani Province, Laguna, Quezon Province, and other educational settings demonstrate that transformational, strategic, democratic, directive, achievement-oriented, and instructional leadership styles influence teacher motivation, commitment, governance, instructional performance, and school effectiveness. These findings establish the importance of leadership within the Philippine educational system while also showing that leadership effectiveness depends on organizational circumstances and follower needs. Locally, the present study focuses specifically on public elementary and secondary schools within Olutanga Island District Schools, Division of Zamboanga Sibugay, during school year 2025-2026. It addresses school heads and principals responsible for implementing Department of Education policies, programs, projects and activities and for ensuring that schools are effectively managed. The study also considers profile characteristics including gender, educational attainment, trainings attended, years of leadership experience, and school context. Private schools and schools outside the district or division are excluded.

The study is anchored on three complementary perspectives: McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory (1961); Achievement Goal Theory (Elliot & McGregor, 2001); and Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House, 1971). McClelland's Human Motivation Theory (1961) explains behavior through psychological needs for achievement, power, and affiliation, although the present research concentrates on the need for achievement and fear of failure. In school leadership, a strong need for achievement is associated with goal-setting, responsibility, persistence, continuous improvement, and high expectations. Although fear of failure was not included in McClelland's original formulation, Elliot, A. J., Alzaidi, A., Weissman, D. L., & Kobeisy, A. N. (2023) recognized its relevance to principals' achievement motives and goal orientations. Achievement Goal Theory (Elliot & McGregor, 2001), recently used by Zhou & Wang (2023), distinguishes mastery and performance goals and their approach or avoidance orientations. Elliot & Thrash (2023) explained that mastery-approach orientations can support growth-oriented leadership, whereas performance-avoidance orientations may encourage caution and reduced risk-taking. The conceptual structure derived from the 2×2 framework of Elliot and McGregor (2001) therefore connects mastery-approach motivation with learning, improvement, and supportive leadership, while performance-avoidance reflects concern about failure and defensive or low-risk behavior. Consistent with this interpretation, (Zhou & Wang, 2023; Solberg et al., 2022) showed that mastery-oriented principals are more likely to promote supportive and innovative school environments, whereas performance-avoidance orientations may encourage rule dependence and preservation of the status quo. Path-Goal Theory explains leadership as adaptive rather than fixed. Developed by Robert House (1971), it proposes that effective leaders adjust their behavior according to follower needs and environmental demands. Directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented behaviors represent alternative approaches that leaders may use depending on situational conditions. In this study, attention is specifically directed toward directive-oriented and achievement-oriented leadership. The theoretical logic is that leadership effectiveness depends on the principal's ability to respond to school conditions in ways that influence teacher motivation, school climate, and organizational performance. Conceptually, achievement motives serve as the principal explanatory variables. The need for achievement encompasses the drive to succeed, taking initiative, and pursuing excellence, whereas fear of failure includes avoiding risks, protecting one's image, and seeking short-term security. These motives are expected to shape achievement-oriented and directive-oriented leadership. Elliot, Alzaidi, Weissman, & Kobeisy (2023) linked these achievement motives to leadership behavior, while Elliot et. al (2023) associated a high need for achievement with proactive and goal-driven practices such as instructional innovation, high standards, and staff development. The model further considers profile-related variables and uses the resulting evidence as the basis for a School Leader Development Program.

Although previous studies have extensively examined leadership styles and their effects on teacher motivation, instructional performance, organizational commitment, school climate, and student achievement, fewer studies have directly examined the predictive relationship between principals' achievement motives and their preferred leadership styles. Existing research has often treated leadership outcomes, motivational orientations, and goal-setting separately. Limited empirical evidence therefore explains how the need for achievement and fear of failure jointly relate to directive-oriented and achievement-oriented leadership, particularly as a basis for designing structured leadership development programs suited to principals' motivational characteristics. The study addresses this gap by determining principals' levels of need for achievement through their drive to succeed, initiative, and pursuit of excellence; their fear of failure through risk avoidance, protection of image, and preference for short-term security; and their levels of achievement-oriented and directive-oriented leadership. It examines the significant relationship between achievement motives and leadership styles and tests whether these variables differ according to respondents' profiles. At the .05 level of significance, the study tests the null assumptions that no significant relationship exists between achievement motives and leadership style and that no significant differences exist according to profile. The findings are intended to serve as the basis for designing a school leader development program. The investigation is deliberately bounded to two achievement motives—the need for achievement and fear of failure—and two Path-Goal leadership styles—achievement-oriented and

directive-oriented leadership. Power and affiliation motives and supportive and participative leadership are outside its empirical scope. The study is also geographically limited to Olutanga Island District Schools, uses survey questionnaires rather than direct observation or interviews, and reflects conditions within a single academic year. These delimitations further establish the specific context within which its findings should be interpreted.

Based on the study's stated focus, its strongest alignment is with SDG 4 – Quality Education. By examining leadership factors associated with teacher motivation, instructional performance, school improvement, student achievement, professional development, and positive learning environments, the research contributes to strengthening the leadership conditions needed to sustain educational quality. The proposed school leader development program further supports continuous professional capacity-building among present and aspiring educational leaders. The study also relates to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, particularly its strong-institutions dimension. School principals are responsible for governance, resource management, implementation of educational policies and programs, organizational accountability, and the development of effective school climates. Understanding how their motives influence leadership decisions can therefore contribute to more responsive, adaptive, and effective educational institutions. A secondary connection exists with SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, specifically its decent-work dimension rather than economic growth itself. The literature emphasizes teacher motivation, professional growth, participation, organizational commitment, supportive work environments, and leadership practices that enable teachers to perform effectively. These workplace-related outcomes provide a reasonable educational and professional-development connection to SDG 8 without extending the study beyond its actual scope.

The sustainability contribution of the study is primarily educational, institutional, governance-related, professional, and community-oriented rather than environmental or ecological. Educational sustainability is supported by strengthening leadership practices that can maintain teacher effectiveness, student engagement, school improvement, and quality learning environments over time. Institutional and governance sustainability are advanced through improved decision-making, accountability, adaptive leadership, strategic goal-setting, and responsible management of school resources. For school principals, the study can promote greater awareness of how internal motives influence decisions and leadership behavior. For aspiring school heads, head teachers, and master teachers, it can provide a foundation for developing appropriate leadership orientations before assuming greater administrative responsibility. For faculty and staff, improved leadership can support collaboration, professional development, shared responsibility, motivation, and a more positive organizational environment. For students, stronger leadership may contribute to safer, more supportive schools and conditions that enhance engagement and academic performance. From a multidisciplinary sustainability perspective, the study links psychology through achievement motivation and fear of failure, educational management through leadership and organizational effectiveness, human-resource development through teacher motivation and leadership training, and institutional governance through decision-making and school administration. Its proposed leadership development program translates these interconnected dimensions into an applied mechanism for strengthening the long-term capacity of school leaders and the institutions they manage.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a quantitative research design employing the descriptive-correlational method to examine the relationship between school principals' achievement motives, specifically need for achievement and fear of failure, and their leadership styles. Quantitative research enabled systematic measurement of the variables and statistical analysis of their relationships (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The descriptive component determined the levels of achievement motives and achievement-oriented and directive-oriented leadership without manipulating the variables, consistent with descriptive research for identifying existing population characteristics (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). The leadership dimensions were grounded in Path-Goal Theory, which holds that leadership effectiveness depends on adapting leadership behavior to follower needs and situational demands (House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974). The correlational component determined the extent and nature of the statistical relationship between principals' motivational profiles and leadership styles without implying causation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2020). The study also examined differences according to gender, years of leadership experience, school context, educational attainment, and number of trainings attended, recognizing that demographic and contextual characteristics may influence leadership behavior (Bush, 2018). The research further considered how the need for achievement relates to leadership practices such as goal-setting, delegation, and innovation. This component was informed by McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory, which describes individuals with a strong need for achievement as inclined toward challenging goals, responsibility, and creative responses to organizational problems (McClelland, 1961; McClelland, 1987). Overall, the descriptive-correlational design integrated motivational and leadership perspectives to generate empirical findings relevant to leadership development in the study setting.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Olutanga Island District Schools under Region IX, Department of Education, Division of Zamboanga Sibugay. The setting covered public elementary and secondary schools in the municipalities of Talusan, Mabuhay, and Olutanga, including rural and coastal communities. The locale was selected because its geographic conditions, varied school sizes, diverse population, and differences in leadership experience provided an appropriate setting for examining principals' achievement motives and leadership styles. The secondary schools included Talusan National High School, Laparay National High School, and Kasigpitan National High School in Talusan; Mabuhay National School and Mabuhay-Agro Industrial High School in Mabuhay; and Pantaleon Cudiera National High School and Olutanga National High School in Olutanga. The elementary-school population comprised 14 schools in Talusan, 18 in Mabuhay, and 19 in Olutanga. Talusan National High School, Laparay National High School, and Kasigpitan National High School serve coastal and inland communities in Talusan, a 5th-class municipality with a land area of 58.16 square kilometers. Mabuhay National High School and Mabuhay Agro-Industrial High School serve communities in Mabuhay, with the latter located in San Roque and providing vocational-focused education. Olutanga National High School and Pantaleon Cudiera National High School serve the municipality of Olutanga, which has an approximate land area of 113.30 km². Olutanga Island itself covers about 194.1 km² and consists of the municipalities of Olutanga, Talusan, and Mabuhay.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were 105 Department of Education head teachers, master teachers, and school heads/school principals from public elementary and secondary schools in Talusan, Mabuhay, and Olutanga Districts during school year 2025–2026. The population consisted of 44 males or 41.9% and 61 females or 58.1%. By school type, 68 or 64.8% were from elementary schools and 37 or 35.2% were from secondary schools. In terms of educational attainment, 41 respondents or 39.0% had Master's units, 37 or 35.2% were full-fledged Master's degree holders, 19 or 18.1% had Doctoral units, and 8 or 7.6% were full-fledged Doctoral degree holders. Regarding training, 8 or 7.6% had attended no training, 58 or 55.2% had attended 1–2 trainings, 23 or 21.9% had attended 3–4 trainings, and 16 or 15.2% had attended 5 or more. Leadership experience ranged from 1–5 years for 35 respondents or 33.3%, 6–10 years for 36 or 34.3%, 11–15 years for 19 or 18.1%, 16–20 years for 14 or 13.3%, and 21–25 years for 1 or 1.0%.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

Because the target population was manageable and clearly defined, total enumeration sampling was used, allowing all 105 eligible head teachers, master teachers, and school heads/school principals to participate. This approach enabled comprehensive data collection and minimized sampling bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Including all eligible school leaders also allowed variations in leadership behavior and achievement motives across Talusan, Mabuhay, and Olutanga Districts to be represented. The respondents were selected using total enumeration sampling to obtain comprehensive and accurate information from the entire target population (Creswell, 2014). Because the population was accessible and manageable, the study avoided selecting only a subset of eligible respondents, thereby reducing potential sampling bias (Creswell, 2014). This procedure supported the validity, representativeness, and contextual relevance of the assessment of achievement motives and leadership styles.

2.5 Research Instrument

Data were gathered through an adapted and modified survey questionnaire based on previously developed instruments and contextualized according to the study variables, objectives, and respondents. Before administration, the instrument underwent content validation by the research panelists, and revisions were made according to their comments and recommendations regarding clarity, relevance, and suitability. The questionnaire had two major components. It collected respondents' demographic information, including gender, years of leadership experience, school context, educational attainment, and number of trainings attended, with disclosure of names left optional. It also assessed achievement motives and leadership styles. Need for Achievement items were adapted from McClelland's Achievement Motivation Inventory (AMI), while Fear of Failure items were aligned with Atkinson's conceptualization. Achievement-Oriented Leadership and Directive-Oriented Leadership were likewise measured. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree. Some Principals' Need for Achievement (nAch) items addressed tendencies toward goal-setting, delegation, and innovation, while some leadership items were adapted from Robert House's Path Goal Leadership Questionnaire and contextualized for school leadership. The instrument underwent construct and content validity evaluation by three experts from Universidad de Zamboanga School Graduate Studies. They assessed item consistency, clarity, appropriateness, relevance to the variables, and alignment with the research objectives, after which necessary revisions were incorporated. For reliability testing, 55 teachers who were not part of the actual respondents, consisting of 11 males and 44 females from public DepEd elementary and secondary schools in SDO Zamboanga Sibugay, participated in pilot testing. The instrument obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.884, indicating very high reliability. According to Creswell (2014), an alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument was reliable and suitable for use in the main data-gathering process. Moreover, as explained by Ibañez, as cited in Rondaris, Ibañez, and

Varela, meaningful interpretation of instrument scores requires adequate internal consistency among items measuring the same underlying construct.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection began after securing permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Zamboanga Sibugay, Dr. Virgilio P. Batan Jr., followed by approval from the respective district supervisors. Consent letters explaining the purpose of the study were then provided to the participating head teachers, master teachers, and school heads/school principals. The study examined the relationship between achievement motives and leadership styles and differences according to gender, leadership experience, school context, educational attainment, and trainings attended. After the required approvals were obtained, the researcher scheduled and administered the adapted modified questionnaire. Respondents were given approximately 30–45 minutes to complete it, after which the accomplished questionnaires were retrieved immediately. The first component gathered demographic information, while the second assessed leadership motives and the Principals' Need for Achievement (nAch), including tendencies related to setting goals, delegating tasks, and promoting innovation in school leadership. Confidentiality and privacy were maintained through secure data storage and disposal procedures. Physical questionnaires and consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher, while encoded responses and statistical files were kept on a password-protected computer. Access to responses was restricted to the researcher and the information was used solely for the study. Following completion of the research and submission of the final report, physical documents were shredded and electronic files were permanently deleted to prevent continued access to identifiable information.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) or equivalent software. Weighted mean, frequency and percentage, and standard deviation (SD) were used to determine the levels of achievement motives, including need for achievement through drive to succeed, take initiative, and pursue excellence, and the levels of Achievement-Oriented Leadership and Directive-Oriented Leadership. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine whether a significant relationship existed between achievement motives, specifically need for achievement and fear of failure, and leadership styles. Independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were employed to determine significant differences in achievement motives and leadership styles according to respondents' profiles. No inferential statistical procedure was required for developing the proposed school leader development program because it was formulated from the significant findings of the study.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles concerning informed consent, voluntariness, confidentiality, privacy, and respondents' right to withdraw. The purpose, possible risks and benefits, and right to discontinue participation were communicated to respondents, and their identities and information were treated confidentially. The research underwent ethical review by the University's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC). The review covered the research proposal, informed consent forms, questionnaire, methodology, statistical treatment, participant selection, privacy and confidentiality, potential physical, psychological, or emotional risks, voluntariness, fairness, and the balance between possible risks and benefits. Required revisions were completed and resubmitted until the committee granted formal ethics clearance for the research involving head teachers, master teachers, and school heads/principals in the Schools Division of Zamboanga Sibugay. Throughout implementation, participation remained voluntary, informed consent was secured, and safeguards were maintained to protect respondents from harm and preserve the confidentiality and integrity of their data. Secure storage, restricted access, and final disposal of physical and electronic records were implemented to uphold ethical responsibility and accountability throughout the research process. The correlational approach was applied to determine whether significant relationships and predictive associations exist between the respondents' financial status and their involvement in business and investment activities. This research design was deemed appropriate as the study aimed to describe existing conditions and examine relationships among variables without manipulating the study variables.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Achievement Motives of School Principals

3.1.1 Drive to Succeed

School principals demonstrated a very high drive to succeed, with an overall weighted mean of 4.50. The highest-rated behavior was satisfaction from completing tasks requiring effort and skill ($M = 4.59$), while preference for tasks involving full personal responsibility for success received the lowest mean ($M = 4.45$), although it remained highly demonstrated. The findings indicate strong motivation toward challenging goals, accomplishment, recognition, and successful completion of demanding leadership responsibilities. The high rating for completing difficult tasks reflects mastery orientation, persistence, and resilience, consistent with Carol Dweck (1986,1999), Ames (1992) and Elliot (1999). The comparatively lower preference for full individual responsibility suggests

that principals may also value collaboration and shared accountability, consistent with Northouse (2018). Overall, the strong drive to succeed reflects motivation, goal commitment, and persistence in accomplishing difficult objectives, as supported by Locke and Latham (1990, 2002), Deci and Ryan (2000), Duckworth et al. (2007), and Bandura (1997).

3.1.2 Taking Initiative

Taking initiative was highly demonstrated, with an overall weighted mean of 4.49. Delegating tasks according to staff strengths received the highest rating ($M = 4.58$), followed by implementing new school programs ($M = 4.50$). Involving teaching staff in goal-setting to increase commitment received the lowest mean ($M = 4.44$), although it remained highly demonstrated. These results show that principals generally initiate improvements and distribute responsibilities but involve teachers somewhat less consistently in formal goal-setting. The strong emphasis on strength-based delegation reflects distributed leadership, in which responsibilities are allocated according to staff competencies to improve organizational effectiveness (Spillane, 2006; Gronn, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; Harris, 2004). The relatively lower involvement of teachers in goal-setting is consistent with Russell et al. (1992) and Ferrara and Repa (1993), who observed that participation may remain partly administrator-driven. Overall, the high level of initiative reflects empowering leadership through autonomy, participation, and shared goal-setting (Arnold et al., 2000; Hallinger & Kovačević, 2022; Zhu et al., 2019).

3.1.3 Pursuit of Excellence

Pursuit of excellence was very highly demonstrated, with an overall weighted mean of 4.51. Setting challenging personal goals and working hard to achieve them received the highest mean ($M = 4.55$), followed by continuously seeking to improve academic performance ($M = 4.53$) and setting high leadership standards ($M = 4.51$). Preference for tasks in which outcomes depend on personal ability rather than luck was lowest ($M = 4.48$), although it remained highly demonstrated. The strong emphasis on difficult goals reflects the Goal-Setting Theory of Locke and Latham (2002), which emphasizes that challenging and specific goals increase effort and persistence. The lower rating for dependence on personal ability is consistent with the locus of control concept developed by Julian B. Rotter (1966), in which outcomes may be attributed to either personal actions or external circumstances (Rotter, 1966). Overall, principals' strong pursuit of excellence reflects continuous improvement and high performance standards, consistent with Mincu's (2015) study. Mincu (2015) highlighted that effective principals continually refine instructional practices and promote cultures of improvement.

3.1.4 Overall Need for Achievement

Overall need for achievement was very highly demonstrated, with a grand mean of 4.50. Pursuit of excellence received the highest mean ($M = 4.51$), followed by drive to succeed ($M = 4.50$), while taking initiative was slightly lower ($M = 4.49$). These findings show that principals generally possess strong goal orientation, motivation for accomplishment, commitment to improvement, and high leadership standards. The prominence of excellence is consistent with de Deus (2025), who emphasized leadership as an important driver of continuous organizational improvement. The strong drive to succeed is also supported by Daulay, Haidir, and Firmansyah (2024), who found that achievement motivation contributes to leadership effectiveness and school performance. The slightly lower rating for initiative suggests that organizational and situational conditions may influence principals' ability to initiate change, consistent with Mavrogordato et al. (2023).

3.1.5 Avoiding Risk

Fear of failure as reflected in avoiding risk was moderately demonstrated, with an overall weighted mean of 3.05. Concern about making mistakes in decision-making received the highest mean ($M = 3.25$), whereas delaying decisions when outcomes were uncertain received the lowest mean ($M = 2.82$). The findings indicate moderate caution and concern about adverse outcomes, although principals generally remained capable of making decisions under uncertainty. Concern about mistakes is consistent with Atkinson (1957), who explained that fear of failure may generate anxiety and influence risk-taking. The lower tendency to postpone decisions aligns with Conroy, Willow, and Metzler (2002), who associated fear of failure with avoidance and procrastination when outcomes are uncertain. Overall, moderate risk avoidance indicates that caution may sometimes influence principals' decisions without preventing them from performing their responsibilities, consistent with Atkinson (1957). Elliot and McGregor (2001) likewise explained that performance-avoidance tendencies may produce anxiety and hesitation in evaluative or high-stakes situations.

3.1.6 Protecting One's Image

Protecting one's image was highly demonstrated, with an overall weighted mean of 3.87. Concern about criticism of leadership decisions and hesitation to introduce potentially unsuccessful innovative programs both obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.44$). Anxiety when performance was evaluated by others received the lowest mean ($M = 2.93$). These findings show that principals are highly conscious of professional reputation and possible criticism, although evaluation-related anxiety itself is only moderate. The concern for reputation is consistent with the multidimensional model of fear of failure of Conroy, Willow, and Metzler (2002), which links fear of failure with concern about negative evaluation. The moderate anxiety associated with formal evaluation is consistent with Conley and Glasman's (2008) study, suggesting that such anxiety can be managed without substantially interfering

with professional responsibilities. The overall high rating further suggests that internal pressures can be managed through adaptive and collaborative leadership, consistent with Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009).

3.1.7 Seeking Security in a Short Period of Time

Seeking short-term security was highly demonstrated, with an overall weighted mean of 3.58. Avoiding major leadership decisions until success seemed likely received the highest mean ($M = 4.50$), while preferring familiar strategies even when less effective had the lowest mean ($M = 2.95$). Principals therefore showed a strong preference for reducing uncertainty in major decisions while retaining some openness to alternative approaches. The reluctance to make major decisions without confidence in success is consistent with Atkinson's (1957) Risk-Taking Model of Achievement Motivation. The comparatively low dependence on familiar strategies suggests some adaptability, consistent with March's (1991) organizational learning theory and Leithwood (2019). The overall pattern indicates that principals balance security with structured planning and adaptation rather than becoming immobilized by uncertainty, consistent with Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow (2009).

3.1.8 Overall Fear of Failure

Overall fear of failure was highly demonstrated, with a grand mean of 3.50. Protecting one's image was the strongest component ($M = 3.87$), followed by seeking security in a short period of time ($M = 3.58$), while avoiding risk was only moderately demonstrated ($M = 3.05$). Thus, principals displayed fear-of-failure tendencies, particularly concerning reputation and uncertainty, but these tendencies did not appear to prevent them from carrying out their leadership responsibilities. This finding is supported by Elliot (1997), who explained that fear of failure does not necessarily prevent effective performance, and Brandmo, Tiplic, and Elstad (2014), who found that principals may remain effective despite avoidance-related motives. The prominence of image protection is consistent with Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory and Leary (1995), which emphasize management of public impressions and credibility. Preference for structured and predictable decisions is consistent with Locke and Latham (1990), while moderate risk avoidance reflects the cautious decision-making expected in high-accountability environments described by Starr (2012).

3.2 Leadership Styles of School Principals

3.2.1 Achievement-Oriented Leadership

Achievement-oriented leadership was very highly demonstrated, with an overall weighted mean of 4.51. Emphasizing excellence and continuous improvement received the highest mean ($M = 4.62$), followed by recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance ($M = 4.61$). Other highly rated practices included promoting innovation and creativity ($M = 4.52$), setting high performance standards for oneself and others ($M = 4.52$), and expressing confidence in teachers' abilities ($M = 4.50$). The strong emphasis on excellence and recognition is consistent with House's (1971) Path-Goal Theory of leadership, which associates achievement-oriented leadership with challenging goals, high expectations, and motivation. Hallinger and Murphy (1985, 2013) similarly emphasized strong goal-setting and performance expectations in effective instructional leadership. The overall pattern is further supported by House (1971), Brandmo, Tiplic, and Elstad (2014), and Locke and Latham (1990), who associated achievement goals and goal-oriented leadership with motivation, leadership effectiveness, and improved performance.

3.2.2 Directive-Oriented Leadership

Directive-oriented leadership was highly demonstrated, with an overall weighted mean of 4.47. Clearly explaining expectations to teachers and non-teaching staff received the highest mean ($M = 4.66$), followed by regularly monitoring progress ($M = 4.53$) and giving specific instructions ($M = 4.52$). Preference for structured procedures over spontaneous actions received the lowest mean ($M = 4.36$), suggesting strong structure while retaining some flexibility. The emphasis on task clarification, expectations, and monitoring is consistent with Northouse (2021). The lower preference for rigidly structured procedures suggests that principals may adapt directive practices to contextual demands, consistent with (Ralebese et al., 2025). Overall, directive leadership was characterized by organized guidance, close monitoring, rule implementation, and clear communication, practices that have been associated with effective task completion, classroom management, and organizational discipline (Saleem et al., 2020; MDPI, 2020–2021).

3.3 Relationships Between Achievement Motives and Leadership Styles

3.3.1 Achievement Motives and Achievement-Oriented Leadership

Drive to succeed had a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship with achievement-oriented leadership ($r = 0.184$, $p = 0.080$). In contrast, taking initiative ($r = 0.258$, $p = 0.008$) and pursuing excellence ($r = 0.218$, $p = 0.026$) showed positive and statistically significant relationships. Fear-of-failure dimensions were not significantly related to achievement-oriented leadership: avoiding risk yielded $r = -0.062$, $p = 0.532$; protecting one's image yielded $r = -0.026$, $p = 0.791$; and seeking short-term security yielded $r = 0.043$, $p = 0.664$. The findings indicate that initiative and pursuit of excellence are more closely connected to achievement-oriented leadership than drive to succeed alone. This is consistent with McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory, in which motivation is expressed through behavior when conditions allow it to be translated into action. The significant role of initiative

and excellence also follows the Path-Goal Theory emphasis on proactive goal clarification, high standards, and follower motivation. In contrast, fear-based tendencies showed little influence on achievement-oriented leadership, indicating that risk avoidance, image protection, and short-term security were not central determinants of this leadership approach.

3.3.2 Achievement Motives and Directive-Oriented Leadership

Directive-oriented leadership was significantly related to all three dimensions of need for achievement. Drive to succeed showed a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.341$, $p < 0.001$), taking initiative showed a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.241$, $p = 0.012$), and pursuit of excellence showed the strongest positive relationship ($r = 0.386$, $p < 0.001$). Among fear-of-failure dimensions, avoiding risk ($r = 0.028$, $p = 0.774$) and protecting one's image ($r = 0.159$, $p = 0.105$) were not significant, while seeking security in a short period of time showed a weak but statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.194$, $p = 0.047$). These findings suggest that principals with stronger success, initiative, and excellence motives are more likely to use directive behaviors involving clear expectations, instructions, monitoring, and control. Pursuit of excellence showed the strongest association, indicating that principals emphasizing high standards may rely on directive practices to ensure requirements are met. Short-term security was the only fear-of-failure dimension significantly associated with directive leadership, suggesting that some principals may employ stronger control and structure to reduce uncertainty.

3.4 Differences in Achievement Motives and Leadership Styles According to Profile

3.4.1 Sex

No statistically significant differences were found between male and female principals in drive to succeed ($t = 1.636$, $p = 0.105$), taking initiative ($t = 1.759$, $p = 0.081$), pursuing excellence ($t = 0.987$, $p = 0.326$), avoiding risk ($t = 0.283$, $p = 0.778$), protecting one's image ($t = -0.191$, $p = 0.849$), seeking short-term security ($t = -0.616$, $p = 0.539$), achievement-oriented leadership ($t = 0.317$, $p = 0.752$), or directive-oriented leadership ($t = 1.693$, $p = 0.093$). The null hypothesis was therefore accepted for all indicators. The results indicate that sex did not substantially differentiate principals' achievement motives or leadership practices. This is consistent with (McClelland, 1961), which emphasizes socialization, experience, and organizational influences on achievement motivation, and Northouse (2021), who emphasized professional roles and institutional expectations rather than gender alone. Similar leadership behavior among male and female educational leaders has also been reported (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hallinger, 2018).

3.4.2 Type of School

Significant differences between elementary and secondary school principals were found in drive to succeed ($t = 2.221$, $p = 0.029$), taking initiative ($t = 1.930$, $p = 0.050$), pursuit of excellence ($t = 3.134$, $p = 0.002$), protecting one's image ($t = 3.994$, $p = 0.000$), and directive-oriented leadership ($t = 2.654$, $p = 0.009$). Elementary principals had higher mean scores in each of these areas. No significant differences were found for avoiding risk, seeking short-term security, or achievement-oriented leadership. The findings suggest that school level is associated with differences in motivational patterns and directive leadership practices. This corroborates Hallinger and Murphy (1985), who identified different leadership requirements across elementary and secondary schools. Leithwood et al. (2020) likewise noted that elementary settings may require closer instructional oversight and more structured leadership, potentially strengthening achievement motivation, initiative, and directive behaviors.

3.4.3 Educational Attainment

Educational attainment produced significant differences in pursuit of excellence ($F = 2.877$, $p = 0.040$) and achievement-oriented leadership ($F = 3.353$, $p = 0.022$). Principals with doctoral degrees or doctoral units obtained the highest mean scores in these areas. No significant differences were observed for drive to succeed, taking initiative, avoiding risk, protecting one's image, seeking short-term security, or directive-oriented leadership. The findings indicate that higher educational attainment is associated particularly with commitment to excellence and achievement-oriented leadership. Human capital theory (Becker, 1993) explains that higher education can strengthen strategic thinking and leadership capability. Fullan (2014) likewise linked advanced professional learning with stronger vision, goal orientation, and performance expectations, while school leadership research has associated postgraduate education with improved instructional and organizational outcomes (Bush, 2018).

3.4.4 Trainings Attended

Significant differences according to training attendance were found in drive to succeed ($F = 2.969$, $p = 0.035$), pursuit of excellence ($F = 2.994$, $p = 0.034$), achievement-oriented leadership ($F = 3.929$, $p = 0.011$), and directive-oriented leadership ($F = 2.662$, $p = 0.049$). Principals who attended five or more trainings generally obtained higher mean scores, particularly in leadership styles. Taking initiative and all three fear-of-failure indicators showed no significant differences according to training attendance. The findings suggest that continuous professional development contributes to stronger achievement motivation and leadership behavior. According to Desimone and Garet (2015), administrators' instructional and organizational leadership is enhanced by consistent and intensive leadership training. In a similar vein, Robinson (2011) confirmed that formal training and reflective practice enhance leadership capacity.

3.4.5 Leadership Experience

Years of leadership experience did not significantly differentiate any of the achievement motives or leadership styles because all p-values exceeded 0.05. The results included drive to succeed ($F = 1.842, p = 0.127$), taking initiative ($F = 1.337, p = 0.262$), pursuit of excellence ($F = 1.364, p = 0.252$), avoiding risk ($F = 1.057, p = 0.382$), protecting one's image ($F = 0.545, p = 0.703$), seeking short-term security ($F = 0.753, p = 0.559$), achievement-oriented leadership ($F = 0.884, p = 0.477$), and directive-oriented leadership ($F = 1.999, p = 0.100$). Although more experienced principals showed somewhat higher means in selected areas, the differences were not statistically significant. This finding is consistent with Day et al. (2016), who contended that leadership effectiveness may plateau without continued learning. Thus, experience alone may not necessarily increase motivation or leadership adaptability, underscoring the value of continuing professional development even among long-serving school principals.

3.5 Basis for the School Leader Development Program

The findings provided the basis for the proposed ACHIEVE-LEAD Program as part of continuing professional development for school principals. The results indicated the need for sustained leadership training, differentiated development opportunities for elementary and secondary principals, and encouragement for school leaders to pursue advanced studies. The proposed program was intended to strengthen areas associated with motivation and leadership performance identified in the study. Overall, principals in Olutanga Island District Schools demonstrated high achievement motivation and strong achievement-oriented and directive leadership practices. Initiative and pursuit of excellence were particularly important in relation to leadership style, while most fear-of-failure dimensions showed weak or insignificant relationships. These results support leadership development efforts centered on proactive behavior, continuous improvement, professional learning, and growth-oriented leadership.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that school principals in Olutanga Island District Schools demonstrated very high achievement motivation in terms of drive to succeed and pursuit of excellence, while taking initiative was highly demonstrated. Fear of failure was generally manageable: avoiding risk was moderately demonstrated, while protecting one's image and seeking short-term security were highly demonstrated. Achievement-oriented leadership was very highly demonstrated and directive-oriented leadership was highly demonstrated, indicating strong and balanced leadership practices. Significant relationships were identified between taking initiative and pursuing excellence and leadership styles, whereas drive to succeed and the fear-of-failure dimensions were reported as having no significant relationships. Achievement motives and leadership styles did not significantly differ according to sex and years of leadership experience but differed according to school type, educational attainment, and training attended, with stronger results particularly among elementary principals, those with higher educational attainment, and those who had attended more leadership training. Overall, the findings emphasized the importance of structured and continuous capacity-building to strengthen principals' motivation, leadership practices, and school performance.

The study recommends that the Department of Education establish sustained and evidence-based leadership development programs emphasizing initiative-taking, innovation, adaptive leadership, participative decision-making, performance management, strategic goal-setting, and school-based innovation, while providing differentiated training for elementary and secondary principals and strengthening incentives or scholarships for postgraduate education. School heads should sustain their commitment to excellence and continuous improvement, strengthen teacher participation in the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) and School Improvement Plan (SIP), introduce school-based innovations, and develop adaptive leadership practices. Master Teachers and Head Teachers should support instructional supervision, school improvement planning, curriculum implementation, and technical assistance to teachers, while teachers should participate actively in school planning, decision-making, school programs, and continuing professional development. Future researchers are encouraged to replicate the study in other divisions or regions and examine additional factors such as student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and school culture.

The study was limited to public elementary and secondary schools in Olutanga Island District Schools during school year 2025–2026 and did not include private school principals or principals from other districts or divisions. It focused only on need for achievement and fear of failure and examined only achievement-oriented and directive-oriented leadership, excluding other motivational factors such as affiliation and power and other Path-Goal leadership styles such as supportive and participative leadership. Data were collected through survey questionnaires, which may not capture leadership behavior as deeply as direct observation or interviews, and the findings reflected conditions within a single academic year.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards for research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, the research underwent review and approval by the University's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC), and the necessary permissions were obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent of Zamboanga Sibugay and the respective district supervisors. All respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, its procedures, potential risks and benefits, and their right to voluntarily participate or withdraw at any time without consequence. Informed consent was obtained before the administration of the survey questionnaire. The confidentiality and privacy of the head teachers, master teachers, and school heads/school principals were strictly protected, and disclosure of respondents' names was optional. The study employed non-invasive survey procedures and maintained secure data-management practices: completed questionnaires and consent forms were stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher, while electronic records were kept on a password-protected computer. Access to the collected data was restricted to the researcher and used solely for the purposes of the study. Upon completion of the research and submission of the final report, physical records were shredded and electronic files were permanently deleted to prevent unauthorized access to identifiable information. These procedures ensured the protection of participants' rights, welfare, confidentiality, and data integrity throughout the research process.

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