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Synergism of School Leadership Practices, Teacher Engagement, and Learning Environment: Basis for a Strategic Instructional Governance Program

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships of school leadership practices and teacher engagement with the learning environment in selected public secondary schools in District I, Schools Division of the City of Naga, Cebu, during School Year 2025–2026, as a basis for a proposed Strategic Instructional Governance Program. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, the study involved 100 respondents, comprising six school heads and 94 teachers from six purposively selected schools, with teachers selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson product–moment correlation. Findings revealed favorable assessments of school leadership practices, teacher engagement, and learning environments. However, shared decision-making, teacher participation in planning and program monitoring, and physical learning conditions emerged as comparatively lower-rated areas. School leadership practices demonstrated a significant positive relationship with the learning environment ($r = .628$, $p < .001$), while teacher engagement exhibited a significant positive relationship ($r = .695$, $p < .001$). These findings indicated that stronger perceived leadership practices and teacher engagement were associated with more favorable learning environments. The study recommended strengthening participatory governance, instructional support, teacher involvement, and physical learning facilities while sustaining collaborative practices. Its limitations included the restricted geographic coverage, reliance on self-reported perceptions, and inability to establish causal relationships. The findings provided an empirical foundation for the proposed Strategic Instructional Governance Program, supporting evidence-informed institutional planning and targeted school improvement initiatives.

Keywords: *Instructional Leadership, Learning Environment, Participatory Governance, Public Secondary Schools, School Leadership, Teacher Engagement*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Context of the Study

Quality basic education depends not only on curriculum delivery but also on the organizational conditions that enable teachers and learners to succeed. School leadership establishes priorities, coordinates instructional support, develops personnel, and creates opportunities for collaborative improvement. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2024) identified setting expectations, focusing on learning, fostering collaboration, and developing people as central dimensions of effective educational leadership. These responsibilities remain relevant as schools respond to changing learner needs, curriculum expectations, and demands for inclusive and supportive learning environments. Teacher engagement is equally important because educators translate institutional priorities into classroom and schoolwide practices. Engagement includes participation in school planning, professional collaboration, and involvement in improvement initiatives. Cai et al. (2023) linked distributed leadership with teacher work engagement through teacher efficacy and interpersonal trust, while Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2023) associated a supportive collective teacher culture with teacher efficacy and engagement. These findings emphasized the organizational, rather than exclusively individual, nature of meaningful teacher participation. The learning environment extends beyond classroom facilities. Its physical dimension encompasses appropriate spaces and resources; its instructional dimension concerns opportunities and support for teaching and learning; and its psychosocial dimension involves belonging, respectful relationships, inclusion, and emotional safety. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2023) documented the importance of school safety, teacher support, and belonging in students' school experiences. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2023) identified positive learning environments, learner well-being, and teacher support within its MATATAG agenda. Against this background, the study examined school leadership, teacher engagement, and learning conditions in selected public secondary schools in District I, Schools Division of the City of Naga, Cebu.

1.2. Research Problem

School improvement policies identify leadership, professional participation, and supportive learning conditions as related priorities, yet their implementation depends on the circumstances of individual schools. The Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads establish expectations for strategic leadership, attention to teaching and learning, personnel development, and stakeholder connections (DepEd, 2020). These standards, however, do not by themselves explain how leadership practices and teachers' participation are associated with the physical, instructional, and psychosocial environments experienced within particular school settings. Philippine evidence illustrated the need for closer examination. Gabutan et al. (2024) reported relationships among school heads' leadership quality, organizational climate, learning environment, and teacher innovativeness. Adlawan and Quines (2025) examined instructional leadership, school climate, and teacher engagement in public elementary schools in Region XII. Beyond the Philippines, Collie (2023) identified autonomy-supportive leadership and positive professional relationships as relevant resources for teachers' well-being and engagement. Although informative, these studies addressed different populations, variable combinations, or outcomes. Thus, the combined levels of leadership practices and teacher engagement, their respective relationships with the learning environment, and their implications for governance warranted focused investigation in selected public secondary schools in District I, City of Naga, Cebu.

1.3. Research Gap

Existing research provides important evidence about particular connections among school leadership, teacher engagement, organizational climate, and educational outcomes. Cai et al.

(2023) examined distributed leadership and teacher work engagement, emphasizing teacher efficacy and interpersonal trust. Gabutan et al. (2024) investigated leadership quality, organizational climate, and the learning environment as predictors of teacher innovativeness. Adlawan and Quines (2025) analyzed instructional leadership, school climate, and teacher engagement among public elementary teachers in Region XII. These studies provided insights into related educational variables across different contexts, while the present study focused on the specific leadership, engagement, and learning-environment dimensions examined in selected public secondary schools in District I, City of Naga, Cebu. The study addressed this contextual and operational gap by describing strategic leadership, instructional leadership, and shared decision-making; examining teachers' participation in planning, professional collaboration, and school improvement initiatives; and assessing physical, instructional, and psychosocial learning environments. It also tested two specified relationships with the learning environment and used the resulting evidence as the basis for a proposed Strategic Instructional Governance Program.

1.4. Purpose and Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to examine the relationships of school leadership practices and teacher engagement with the learning environment in selected public secondary schools in District I, Schools Division of the City of Naga, Cebu, during School Year 2025–2026. It examined respondents' age, gender, educational attainment, length of service, position or designation, and relevant training. It assessed strategic leadership, instructional leadership, and shared decision-making and collaboration; teachers' participation in planning, professional collaboration, and school improvement initiatives; and physical, instructional, and psychosocial learning conditions. It also tested the relationships between leadership practices and the learning environment and between teacher engagement and the learning environment. The findings served as the basis for proposing a Strategic Instructional Governance Program.

1.5. Significance and Practical Contribution of the Study

The study was designed to provide school-level evidence that could support leadership development, teacher participation, and more responsive learning conditions in the City of Naga division. For school heads and division personnel, the findings could identify priorities for technical assistance, professional learning, collaborative planning, and monitoring. For teachers, they could inform opportunities for professional voice, shared responsibility, and participation in school improvement. Learners and communities could benefit indirectly from governance measures directed toward safer learning spaces, instructional support, and inclusive school relationships. The proposed Strategic Instructional Governance Program was intended to translate the identified needs and relationships into practical, evidence-informed priorities without assuming that any single leadership practice would improve every dimension of schooling.

1.6. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Alignment

The study was aligned with SDG 4: Quality Education through its examination of instructional support, teacher engagement, and physical and psychosocial learning conditions. These dimensions relate to the goal's commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education, particularly its emphasis on safe, inclusive, and effective learning environments. The study was also aligned with SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions through its focus on shared decision-making, collaboration, and school governance. These practices correspond to the goal's emphasis on effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions and participatory decision-making (United Nations, n.d.). The proposed Strategic Instructional Governance Program was intended to identify school-level governance priorities relevant to both goals without presuming that the study directly measured progress toward national SDG indicators.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to examine school leadership practices, teacher engagement, and the learning environment in selected public secondary schools. Descriptive analysis characterized respondents and measured strategic leadership, instructional leadership, shared decision-making and collaboration, teachers' participation in planning, professional collaboration, engagement in school improvement, and physical, instructional, and psychosocial learning conditions. Correlational analysis assessed associations between leadership practices and the learning environment and between teacher engagement and the learning environment. The design examined statistical relationships rather than causation.

2.2. Research Locale, Population, and Respondents

The research covered six public secondary schools in District I of the Department of Education Schools Division of the City of Naga, Cebu, Philippines. District I comprised ten secondary schools; six near the district and division offices were selected. These were Tangke National High School, Naga National High School–Senior High School, Calavera National High School, South Poblacion National High School, Naga National High School–Junior High School, and Don Emilio Canonigo Memorial National High School. The 100 respondents consisted of six school heads and 94 teachers. Corresponding school totals were 16, 21, 11, 16, 21, and 15 respondents.

2.3. Sampling Technique and Sample Determination

The study employed a two-stage sampling approach. Six secondary schools were selected purposively, after which complete faculty rosters were obtained and simple random sampling was applied to select teachers. Teacher allocations across the six schools were 15, 20, 10, 15, 20, and 14, respectively. One school head from each participating school was included. The sample totaled 100 school heads and teachers. Teacher selection was described as simple random sampling, although the total faculty population, sample-size calculation, sampling fraction, and specific randomization procedure were not detailed.

2.4. Research Instrument and Validation

The study used a structured, adapted questionnaire contextualized for Philippine public secondary schools. School leadership items were adapted primarily from the Distributed Leadership Inventory by Hulpia, Devos, and Rosseel (2009); teacher engagement items from the Engaged Teachers Scale by Klassen, Yerdelen, and Durksen (2013); and learning-environment items were informed by the Revised School-Level Environment Questionnaire validated by Johnson, Stevens, and Zvoch (2007). Respondent profiles covered age, sex, highest educational attainment, length of service, and position or designation. The constructs were assessed using a five-point Likert scale. Expert validation and pilot testing were described as preparatory steps before questionnaire administration. However, numerical validation results and reliability coefficients were not documented in the study.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure began with seeking permission from the district head. Before distributing questionnaires, the researcher explained the study's purpose and addressed questions from school heads and teachers. Questionnaire administration followed schedules agreed upon with participating schools, with instructions provided to respondents. Completed instruments were retrieved and checked for completeness; missing or unusable responses were reviewed before the data were organized for statistical analysis. The resulting findings provided the basis for developing the proposed Strategic Instructional Governance Program.

2.6. Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Frequency and percentage described respondents' demographic profiles. Weighted means summarized school leadership practices, teacher engagement, and learning-environment assessments, while standard deviations described response variability. Pearson product-moment correlation (r) tested the associations of leadership practices and teacher engagement with the learning environment at the 0.05 significance level. The five-point scale was interpreted as follows: 4.20–5.00, Strongly Agree; 3.40–4.19, Moderately Agree; 2.60–3.39, Agree; 1.80–2.59, Fairly Agree; and 1.00–1.79, Less Agree. The statistical treatment supported interpretation of the findings and formulation of the proposed governance program.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

The ethical procedures described in the study included seeking district-level permission, explaining the research objectives to respondents, and addressing their questions before questionnaire administration. The responses were handled confidentially and reported in aggregate form. Details regarding institutional ethics-review approval, documented individual informed consent, withdrawal arrangements, and specific data-storage safeguards were not specified.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Demographic and Professional Profiles of the Respondents

The profile data described the age, gender, educational attainment, service length, position or designation, and relevant training of the six school heads and 94 teachers. These characteristics situated the perceptions reported in the succeeding analyses and indicated the types of professional learning that a school governance initiative may need to accommodate.

The largest teacher age category was 26–30 years (23 teachers, 25%), followed by 36–40 years (19, 20%) and 31–35 years (18, 19%). Four of the six school heads were aged 41–50, divided equally between the 41–45 and 46–50 categories (two respondents, 33% each). The two remaining school heads were aged 36–40 and 51–55 years (one respondent, 17% in each group). Among teachers, 16 (17%) were aged 41–45, 10 (11%) were aged 46–50, and four each (4%) were aged 51–55 or 56–60; no teacher was aged 21–25. The two groups therefore represented different age distributions, although these descriptive results do not establish differences in leadership or teaching performance by age. Regarding gender, female respondents constituted five of six school heads (83%) and 74 of 94 teachers (79%). Eighteen teachers (19%) identified as male; one school head (17%) and two teachers (2%) preferred not to disclose gender. These findings described gender representation among respondents in the participating schools and did not establish differences in professional competence or governance effectiveness based on gender.

The educational attainment data indicated substantial graduate-level educational participation. Among school heads, three (50%) held master's degrees with doctoral units and two (33%) held doctoral degrees. The remaining school head held a bachelor's degree (one respondent, 17%). Among teachers, the largest category consisted of 65 respondents (69%) holding bachelor's degrees with master's units; 15 (16%) held bachelor's degrees, eight (9%) held master's degrees, three (3%) held master's degrees with doctoral units, and three (3%) held doctoral degrees. Educational advancement may provide a platform for instructional inquiry and school planning, but qualification categories were not tested against any outcome in the present findings. Length of service also varied. Three school heads (50%) reported 11–15 years of service, and two (33%) reported 21 years or more. Teachers were more widely distributed: 27 (29%) had served five years or less, 26 (28%) had served 11–15 years, and 23 (24%) had served 6–10 years. This combination

of relatively new and experienced personnel creates a practical basis for differentiated learning activities and peer mentoring, without implying that years of service determine effectiveness.

The position distribution showed that four school heads (67%) occupied principal positions and two (33%) had other designations. Among teachers, Teacher III was most common (36, 38%), followed by Teacher I (29, 31%) and Master Teacher (13, 14%). Seven teachers (8%) were Teacher V, four (4%) Teacher VI, three (3%) Teacher II, and two (2%) held other designations; none was Teacher IV. Thus, the responses reflected a range of formal and classroom-based responsibilities relevant to governance participation and the implementation of school improvement initiatives. The training profile identified the levels of relevant seminars and training attended. Four school heads reported regional training, and two reported national training. Among teachers, division-level training predominated (59), followed by regional (20), school (10), and national (5) training. No respondents were recorded in the international category. The pattern suggests that existing education-system structures were major channels for professional development; however, participation counts do not measure the quality, application, or effectiveness of the training received. Taken together, the profiles reflected a professionally diverse group of respondents with varied educational qualifications, school responsibilities, and training experiences. The need to link such diversity to differentiated professional learning is consistent with the emphasis on teacher participation and development in OECD (2025) and the professional learning community perspective discussed by Admiraal et al. (2021). Accordingly, the proposed Strategic Instructional Governance Program may prioritize mentoring, targeted capability development, and opportunities to apply training in classroom and school-improvement practices.

3.2. School Leadership Practices Across Three Governance Dimensions

School leadership practices were assessed through strategic leadership, instructional leadership, and shared decision-making and collaboration. Across the indicators, both respondent groups provided Strongly Agree ratings. The individual indicators and dimension summaries clarify the areas of greatest perceived strength and the comparatively lower-rated practices that may warrant attention. In strategic leadership, the alignment of school plans and programs with identified learner and school needs received a weighted mean of 4.67 among school heads and 4.68 among teachers. Teachers rated the regular review and adjustment of priorities at 4.70, their highest strategic leadership item. By contrast, school heads gave the use of school data in strategic decisions and the review of school priorities the joint-lowest means of 4.33. Although these remained favorable assessments, the pattern points toward strengthening systematic data use and adaptive monitoring rather than assuming that positive planning perceptions automatically establish effective follow-through. The instructional leadership ratings were also favorable. Teachers rated the school head's focus on improving teaching and learning at 4.70, while school heads assigned 4.67 to encouraging the use of assessment results and learner data. The lowest school-head item was regular classroom monitoring and constructive feedback (4.33), compared with teachers' rating of 4.68 for the same indicator. This difference in reported ratings is descriptive and was not subjected to a statistical group-comparison test. It nevertheless suggests that consistent feedback cycles, coaching, and observation practices would be appropriate priorities for program development. Shared decision-making and collaboration showed strong support for participatory structures. School heads rated meaningful opportunities for teacher involvement in decisions at 4.67, whereas teachers rated encouragement to collaborate on school and learner concerns at 4.69. The

teacher item on consideration of professional ideas in school planning was comparatively lowest (4.53), while school heads' ratings for shared responsibilities and open communication were both 4.33. These findings distinguish the presence of collaborative activities from the extent to which teacher perspectives shape formal decisions. Ma and Marion (2024) similarly associated distributed leadership with teacher collaboration in the context of professional learning and an innovative school climate. The dimension-level results confirmed favorable perceptions across all three leadership domains. Among school heads, strategic leadership ranked highest (WM = 4.53, SD = 0.5074), followed by instructional leadership (WM = 4.50, SD = 0.5085) and shared decision-making and collaboration (WM = 4.47, SD = 0.5074). Among teachers, strategic leadership (WM = 4.67, SD = 0.5526) and instructional leadership (WM = 4.67, SD = 0.5564) shared the highest mean, whereas shared decision-making and collaboration received WM = 4.60 (SD = 0.6496). The comparatively lower summary ratings for participatory governance suggested that the proposed program should strengthen structured consultation, shared responsibilities, and mechanisms for incorporating and documenting teacher input in school plans.

The overall pattern supports an integrated view of school leadership: clear direction and instructional supervision were well regarded, while opportunities remained to deepen shared governance and evidence-based review. UNESCO (2024) emphasizes the interconnected tasks of setting expectations, focusing on learning, fostering collaboration, and developing people. On this basis, practical priorities include periodic school improvement reviews, structured instructional coaching, consultative planning processes, and shared accountability arrangements.

3.3. Teacher Engagement in Planning, Collaboration, and School Improvement

Teacher engagement was examined through participation in school planning and decision-making, professional collaboration, and engagement in school improvement initiatives. The results indicated consistently positive perceptions, alongside comparatively lower teacher ratings for influencing school decisions and evaluating improvement efforts. For participation in school planning and decision-making, school heads rated all five indicators at 4.67. Teachers' highest mean concerned accepting responsibility for collectively developed decisions and plans (4.56), while the lowest concerned contributing ideas and suggestions during decisions about school programs (4.38). This pattern indicates that teachers perceived a strong willingness to implement jointly developed decisions but rated their own voice in formulating those decisions somewhat less favorably. The findings point to the value of teacher-led agenda setting, consultation, and feedback loops that enable participation at earlier stages of planning. The professional collaboration findings showed strong collegial engagement. School heads gave a consistent rating of 4.67 across the five statements. For teachers, collaborative problem-solving concerning learners and the school was rated highest (4.65), followed by regular collaboration on teaching and learning concerns (4.63). Seeking and providing constructive professional feedback received the comparatively lowest teacher rating (4.60), although this remained Strongly Agree. The small spread in teacher ratings suggests broadly positive collaborative perceptions rather than a sharply differentiated set of practices. Admiraal et al. (2021) described how professional learning communities can provide collective opportunities for continued teacher development, supporting the relevance of structured peer learning to these findings.

Regarding engagement in school improvement initiatives, active participation in programs or projects intended to improve learner outcomes obtained the highest item ratings in this domain for both school heads (4.83) and teachers (4.72). In contrast, teachers rated participation in monitoring or reviewing school programs at 4.46, the lowest of the five items. This contrast suggested greater perceived involvement in implementing school improvement initiatives than in monitoring and evaluating their outcomes. The finding supports making progress monitoring, evaluation meetings, and shared review of intervention results regular features of school improvement work. At the dimension level, school heads rated engagement in school improvement initiatives highest (WM = 4.70, SD = 0.4661), compared with participation in planning (WM = 4.67, SD = 0.4795) and professional collaboration (WM = 4.67, SD = 0.4795). Teachers rated professional collaboration highest (WM = 4.62, SD = 0.5362), followed by school improvement initiatives (WM = 4.59, SD = 0.5568), while planning and decision-making was lowest (WM = 4.46, SD = 0.5995). This summary reinforces the distinction between collaborative collegial work and meaningful participation in institutional decisions. It is consistent with OECD (2025), which highlights professional participation and supportive organizational arrangements, and with Bakker et al. (2023), whose Job Demands–Resources perspective emphasizes the importance of organizational resources for engagement.

Overall, the engagement results portray a positive foundation for joint work, with targeted opportunities to deepen teacher voice and participation in evaluating outcomes. A governance program grounded in these findings may maintain professional collaboration through Learning Action Cells, peer mentoring, and lesson study while formally including teachers in planning, review, and school improvement decision processes.

3.4. Physical, Instructional, and Psychosocial Learning Environments

The learning environment was assessed through physical, instructional, and psychosocial dimensions. Respondents rated all three favorably, but the relative ordering of the dimensions identifies areas for balanced governance attention, especially the provision and upkeep of physical learning conditions. The findings on the physical learning environment showed that school heads assigned a mean of 4.33 to each physical learning environment indicator. Teachers' highest rating concerned the adequacy of classroom space (4.62). Their lowest concerned classroom lighting, ventilation, and other basic conditions (4.19), followed by organization and maintenance of safe, accessible learning spaces (4.23). Most of these ratings fell within the Strongly Agree category, whereas the mean of 4.19 for classroom lighting, ventilation, and other basic conditions was classified as Moderately Agree. These findings highlighted the importance of addressing physical learning conditions alongside instructional and psychosocial priorities. The findings reflected school personnel's reported perceptions of the physical learning environment. For the instructional learning environment, school heads most highly rated adjusting instructional practices to learners' needs and abilities (4.67). Teachers rated both differentiated instruction and the use of assessment results to identify learning needs at 4.64, while academic interventions for learners experiencing difficulty received the lowest teacher rating in this dimension (4.57). School heads rated access to appropriate instructional resources at 4.33, their lowest item. The pattern supports maintaining differentiated and assessment-informed teaching while improving the accessibility and systematic evaluation of remediation and instructional support. Such priorities accord with UNESCO's (2024) emphasis on leadership that centers teaching and learning. The psychosocial learning environment was assessed favorably. Teachers assigned 4.78 to promoting belonging

and inclusion, with the other four indicators each rated 4.77. School heads rated respect, emotional safety, supportive relationships, and safe expression at 4.67, while the promotion of belonging and inclusion was 4.50. These uniformly positive assessments indicate that respondents perceived supportive interpersonal conditions in the participating schools. However, because the evidence came from school personnel, the findings cannot be treated as direct accounts of learners' own emotional safety or sense of belonging. OECD (2023) emphasizes the value of supportive school conditions for educational experiences, while OECD (2025) discusses positive school and professional conditions as components of professional functioning.

Comparison of the three learning-environment dimensions showed that psychosocial conditions received the highest mean from school heads (WM = 4.58, SD = 0.4983) and teachers (WM = 4.77, SD = 0.4400). The instructional learning environment followed among school heads (WM = 4.50, SD = 0.5085) and teachers (WM = 4.61, SD = 0.5532), while the physical learning environment was lowest among school heads (WM = 4.33, SD = 0.4795) and teachers (WM = 4.34, SD = 0.7349). The ordering was the same across the two groups. Accordingly, the most salient development need suggested by these ratings is closer attention to facilities, maintenance, and basic classroom conditions, while instructional supports and inclusive relationships should be sustained. In synthesis, a favorable psychosocial climate and instructional support were perceived as strengths, whereas physical resources were relatively lower rated. The proposed Strategic Instructional Governance Program should therefore combine facilities assessment and needs-based resource allocation with learner-support systems, instructional monitoring, and initiatives that promote respect, inclusion, and emotional safety.

3.5. Relationship Between School Leadership Practices and the Learning Environment

The study tested the relationships of school leadership practices and teacher engagement with the learning environment using two-tailed Pearson product–moment correlation at $\alpha = .05$. Each major variable was represented by the mean of its 15 questionnaire items, and the analysis included 100 respondents. The two hypothesized relationships were examined using the same set of respondents. School leadership practices were positively and significantly related to the learning environment ($r = .628$, $p < .001$), leading to rejection of H_{01} at the stated significance level. Respondents who perceived stronger strategic leadership, instructional leadership, and shared decision-making tended also to rate the physical, instructional, and psychosocial learning environment more favorably. The positive coefficient describes an association across the measured perceptions; it does not establish that leadership practices caused changes in learning conditions. The finding aligns with UNESCO (2024), which connects effective educational leadership with clear expectations, a focus on learning, collaboration, and the professional development of personnel. In the present schools, the association provides a rationale for examining how leadership planning, instructional support, and collaborative governance coexist with learning-environment conditions. Because the analysis was correlational and drew on questionnaire responses, it does not establish a temporal sequence or identify an independent causal contribution of any particular leadership domain. Program implications therefore concern coordinated improvement and subsequent evaluation rather than a claim of proven causal impact.

3.6. Relationship Between Teacher Engagement and the Learning Environment

In the second relationship analysis, teacher engagement showed a positive, statistically significant association with the learning environment ($r = .695$, $p < .001$), resulting in rejection of H_{02} at $\alpha = .05$. Respondents who perceived greater participation in planning, professional collaboration, and engagement in school improvement also tended to report more favorable learning environments. The finding is consistent with Admiraal et al. (2021), who emphasized collective professional learning, and with Bakker et al. (2023), whose Job Demands–Resources perspective relates engagement to supportive organizational resources. The correlation between teacher engagement and the learning environment ($r = .695$) was numerically higher than the correlation between school leadership practices and the learning environment ($r = .628$). However, the analyses did not establish whether the difference between these correlation coefficients was statistically significant. Neither correlation demonstrates causality, and the pooled analysis does not establish separate patterns for school heads and teachers. Collectively, the findings support a Strategic Instructional Governance Program that integrates evidence-informed school planning, instructional coaching, participatory governance, professional collaboration, teacher involvement in monitoring and evaluation, and improvement of classroom facilities and learner-support conditions. These elements are grounded in the relatively lower-rated indicators and statistically significant associations reported by the respondents. The effectiveness of these proposed interventions requires evaluation following implementation. The results therefore provide a coherent empirical basis for program design without overstating what the descriptive and correlational evidence can establish.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicated that school heads and teachers reported favorable perceptions of school leadership practices, teacher engagement, and the learning environment in selected public secondary schools in District I, Schools Division of the City of Naga, Cebu, during School Year 2025–2026. Strategic and instructional leadership were rated favorably, while shared decision-making and collaboration presented comparatively greater opportunities for improvement. Teacher engagement was also strong, particularly in professional collaboration and school improvement initiatives, although teachers' involvement in planning, decision-making, and program monitoring warranted further attention. The psychosocial and instructional dimensions of the learning environment received favorable assessments, whereas physical facilities and learning resources emerged as relative priorities. The significant positive relationships of both school leadership practices and teacher engagement with the learning environment underscored the relevance of these interconnected areas in the participating schools. Collectively, the findings provided an empirical foundation for developing a Strategic Instructional Governance Program responsive to the identified institutional priorities.

School heads and teachers should consider the proposed Strategic Instructional Governance Program as a framework for addressing the priority areas identified in the study. Particular attention should be given to strengthening shared decision-making by providing teachers with greater opportunities to participate in school planning, governance discussions, and program monitoring. School administrators should sustain effective strategic and instructional leadership practices while reinforcing professional collaboration and active involvement in school improvement initiatives. Participating schools should prioritize improvements in physical facilities and learning resources, which received comparatively lower assessments, while maintaining favorable psychosocial conditions and instructional practices. The proposed program should incorporate activities that respond to the identified needs of school heads and teachers, supported by regular assessments of implementation and stakeholder participation.

Furthermore, future researchers may examine similar relationships in other public secondary schools to determine whether the identified patterns and institutional priorities are consistent across different educational settings.

The study was limited to 100 respondents, comprising six school heads and 94 teachers, from selected public secondary schools in District I, Schools Division of the City of Naga, Cebu, during School Year 2025–2026. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent schools in other districts or divisions. The use of a structured survey questionnaire reflected respondents' reported perceptions of leadership practices, teacher engagement, and learning environments. Furthermore, the descriptive-correlational design established significant associations without determining causal relationships. Future studies may include broader school populations, additional geographic settings, and complementary research methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships examined.

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