

Original Article

The Role of School Leadership in Strengthening Teacher Loyalty

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Abstract. School leadership shapes teachers' motivation, retention, and willingness to go beyond compliance, which makes it a practical lever for improving school performance in resource-constrained systems. However, Philippine evidence that links specific National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads-aligned leadership domains to the three components of teacher commitment in terms of affective, continuance, and normative remains limited, especially in public secondary schools outside major urban centers. This study examined the extent to which school heads' leadership practices predict teachers' organizational commitment among public secondary teachers in Northern Luzon, Philippines. Using a quantitative descriptive–correlational–predictive design, 275 teachers from five public secondary schools completed an adapted leadership practices questionnaire and the Meyer and Allen organizational commitment scale. Descriptive statistics, Pearson *r*, and linear regression were used to analyze the data. Results indicate that teachers perceived leadership practices as strong overall, with instructional support rated comparatively lower than systems alignment and ethics-related practices. Teachers reported generally strong commitment, but their attachment tended to be driven more by continuance and normative considerations than by affective connection. Leadership practices showed a moderate positive association with overall commitment and significantly predicted commitment, with stronger effects on affective and normative commitment. These findings suggest that targeted leadership development, particularly in instructional supervision, ethical decision-making, and stakeholder collaboration, can strengthen teacher loyalty and support retention-oriented school improvement and policy initiatives.

Keywords: Leadership practices; Organizational commitment; School heads; Secondary teachers; Transformational leadership.

Effective leadership in educational institutions is a cornerstone of school success. Globally, leadership practices are linked to improving teacher morale, student outcomes, and institutional performance (Ahmed, 2023; Somerville et al., 2021). In public school systems, these effects matter because teacher stability and commitment support continuity of instruction and sustained implementation of reform. In the Philippines, school heads are expected to champion reforms, uphold educational goals, and manage institutions amidst resource constraints and evolving policy demands. The importance of school leadership has been acknowledged in institutional frameworks such as the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads (NCBSSH), which highlight leadership competencies aligned with organizational development and teacher performance (DepEd, 2016a). Leadership is not limited only to providing a clear vision but also to influencing strategically, involving

interpersonal dynamics, and unwavering ethical governance (Wynne, 2014). Leadership lies in the ability of leaders to inspire and motivate members to pursue a specific goal. They are expected to set directions, motivate, and foster open communication in any organization. Similarly, the effectiveness of leaders in the education sector indirectly influences students' achievement. This highlights the importance of giving direct focus to the processes of leadership rather than solely on its outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2010).

The study by Akomolafe and Ogunmaking (2013) revealed that school heads' leadership practices are significantly positively correlated with teachers' well-being and commitment. Specifically, leaders' abilities in vision-setting and providing clear ethical guidance to teachers increased teachers' satisfaction and organizational loyalty. These are supported by evidence from Prempeh and Kin (2022), who demonstrated the importance of leadership support mechanisms in fostering teachers' commitment in developing countries. As defined by Luthan (2019), organizational commitment is the psychological attachment and loyalty of employees' feelings toward their organization, which deepens teachers' retention, engagement, and productivity, all of which are crucial in the teaching profession. Teacher loyalty, conceptualized here as organizational commitment, reflects a teacher's psychological attachment to the school and intention to remain and contribute (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Commitment includes affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (perceived costs of leaving), and normative commitment (sense of obligation). When leadership strengthens affective and normative commitment, teachers are more likely to sustain motivation and engagement beyond minimum expectations.

Prior studies report that leadership practices, especially transformational and instructional leadership, are positively associated with teachers' job attitudes and commitment (Aldosiry, 2020; Nguni et al., 2006; Leithwood et al., 2020). Leaders who communicate a shared vision, provide instructional guidance, and demonstrate ethical conduct can foster a sense of belonging and professional dedication. However, many studies examine leadership as a broad style rather than as specific, policy-relevant domains. Existing Philippine research on school leadership and teacher commitment remains uneven across regions and often does not test which leadership domains best predict each commitment component. This creates a practical gap for leadership development because systems need evidence on which leadership practices most directly strengthen teacher loyalty and retention. As such, this study sought to answer: (1) What is the level of school heads' leadership practices across six domains? (2) What is the level of teachers' organizational commitment across affective, continuance, and normative components? (3) Is there a significant relationship between leadership practices and organizational commitment? Moreover, (4) Do leadership practices significantly predict teachers' organizational commitment?

It further aimed to determine the relationship and predictive influence of school heads' leadership practices on teachers' organizational commitment in selected public secondary schools in Northern Luzon, Philippines. Findings can inform school-based leadership coaching, guide Department of Education (DepEd) and division-level capacity-building priorities, and help school leaders design strategies that strengthen affective attachment and professional obligation – two levers linked to long-term teacher loyalty.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational-predictive design to examine associations between school heads' leadership practices and teachers' organizational commitment and to test whether leadership practices predict commitment outcomes. This design is appropriate for estimating relationships among measured variables in a field setting.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The research was conducted in five public secondary schools in Northern Luzon, Philippines, which were purposively selected based on enrollment size (large or medium) and stable administrative leadership, and on their accessibility for data collection. Teacher-participants were eligible if they were (a) full-time public secondary teachers (junior or senior high school), (b) assigned to the selected schools during data collection, and (c) had at least one year of continuous service in the school to ensure adequate exposure to the school head's leadership practices. Teachers on extended leave during data collection were excluded. Quota sampling was used to ensure representation from each participating school. The final sample consisted of 275 teachers, distributed across the five schools according to their faculty sizes.

Research Instrument

The leadership instrument was adapted from competency frameworks aligned with the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads (NCBSSH) and related leadership standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013; DepEd, 2016b). Items were organized into six domains: (1) vision, mission, and goals; (2) teaching and learning; (3) organizational systems and safety; (4) collaboration with families and stakeholders; (5) ethics and integrity; and (6) education system alignment. On the other hand, teachers' commitment was measured using an adapted version of Meyer and Allen's three-component model covering affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Items were reviewed for clarity and contextual relevance to Philippine public secondary schools.

Response format and measurement quality. Both instruments used a 4-point Likert scale. Subject-matter experts conducted content validation, and a pilot test with 30 teachers from non-participating schools produced Cronbach's alpha coefficients above .80, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

Requests and clearances were secured from school authorities and school heads prior to data collection. Participants were briefed on the purpose of the study, confidentiality safeguards, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw. Written informed consent was obtained. Questionnaires were administered during agreed-upon schedules that did not disrupt classes. Teachers completed the instruments individually and returned them in sealed envelopes or designated drop boxes to minimize social desirability and perceived pressure. Returned questionnaires were checked for completeness, coded without personal identifiers, and stored securely. Data collection was completed within a two-week window. School heads were not informed of which teachers participated. Only aggregated results were reported.

Data Analysis Procedure

Means and standard deviations were reported for leadership practices and organizational commitment. Pearson's r was used to test the relationship between the variables. Linear regression examined whether leadership practices predict teachers' organizational commitment.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Data were de-identified, encrypted, and stored in password-protected files; hard copies were kept in a locked cabinet. Procedures were aligned with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173).

Results and Discussion

Leadership Practices of School Heads

The overall weighted mean of 3.30 ($SD=0.60$) reflects a "very high" rating, indicating the teachers perceived their school heads as exhibiting strong and consistent leadership across all evaluated domains. Among the domains, the highest score was observed in the Education System ($M=3.38$, $SD=0.53$), suggesting that school heads actively align school priorities with DepEd policies and national standards, reflecting an adaptive, context-aware leadership style. This supports recent research by Saiti (2021), who emphasized that strategic and sustainable leadership in education are complementary and interdependent concepts, with effective leadership relying on efficient resource use and on the implementation of strategic and sustainable leadership.

Table 1. Summary of Leadership Practices of School Heads per Dimension

| Leadership Practices | Mean | SD | Qualitative Description |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Vision, Mission, Goals | 3.34 | 0.58 | Very High |
| Teaching and Learning | 3.20 | 0.50 | High |
| Organizational System and Safety | 3.26 | 0.60 | Very High |
| Families and Stakeholders | 3.30 | 0.60 | Very High |
| Ethics and Integrity | 3.32 | 0.60 | Very High |
| Education System | 3.38 | 0.53 | Very High |
| Total Mean | 3.30 | 0.60 | Very High |

Similarly, Vision, Mission, and Goals ($M=3.34$, $SD=0.58$), ranked very high, indicating that school heads effectively communicated and modelled shared educational objectives. This is consistent with the findings of Chin (2024), who argued that visionary leadership fosters clarity of purpose and unites teachers around common goals, thus

enhancing collective efficacy. The high rating for Teaching and Learning ($M=3.20, SD=0.50$) points to a somewhat less robust implementation of instructional leadership practices. Although still favorable, this suggests that some school heads may need to strengthen their support for curriculum implementation, classroom observations, and professional development. Multiple studies show that effective instructional leadership by principals and school heads significantly predicts and enhances teacher professional development, competence, and empowerment (He et al., 2024; Gabion & Despi, 2025; Kilag & Sasan, 2023; Yalçın et al., 2025).

Overall, the results point to multidimensional leadership that is visible to teachers. For school improvement, strengthening instructional support while sustaining ethical and systems leadership may yield the greatest gains in teacher motivation and loyalty.

Level of Organizational Commitment of Teachers

The table below summarizes teachers' levels of organizational commitment. It can be gleaned that teachers have a high level of organizational commitment ($M=2.91, SD=0.66$), including in the three specific dimensions: affective ($M=2.70, SD=0.56$), continuance ($M=3.07, SD=0.56$), and normative ($M=2.95, SD=0.66$). The continuance commitment domain, with the highest mean score, indicates that teachers acknowledge a tangible siege on years of service, benefits, and tenure security, which play significant roles in staying in their jobs. This aligns with Ahmad et al. (2013), who note that subordinates are more likely to remain in the organization when benefits or work preferences are limited. Job security and financial stability were of great importance to teachers' decisions about staying in their jobs, particularly in the public-school arena.

Table 2. Summary of the Organizational Commitment of Teachers

| Organizational Commitment | Mean | SD | Qualitative Description |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Affective Commitment | 2.70 | 0.56 | High |
| Continuance Commitment | 3.07 | 0.56 | High |
| Normative Commitment | 2.95 | 0.66 | High |
| Total Mean | 2.91 | 0.66 | High |

Thus, a high rating in normative commitment suggests a moral obligation among teachers to continue and render their service. This may be due to the culture of service in public education, particularly in the Philippine context, when teaching is seen as a vocation rather than a mere profession. Normative commitment can be nurtured through ethical leadership, shared values, and a strong sense of professional community. These are also the factors that were rated highly in the leadership practices of school heads in this study. Meanwhile, affective commitment, although still rated highly, had the lowest mean. This dimension measures emotional attachment and identification with the organization. Affective commitment is critical for intrinsic motivation and long-term engagement. The relatively lower score may point to areas where emotional connection and alignment with the school's mission can be strengthened. Do Thi Y (2025a) found that affective commitment improves when teachers perceive supportive leadership, recognition, and opportunities for growth.

This pattern suggests that teachers may stay in their roles more out of necessity or moral obligation than out of emotional connection. While job security and cultural values are helping maintain retention, educational leaders must invest more in strategies that foster emotional engagement, such as inclusive decision-making, recognition programs, and opportunities for career advancement. These findings reinforce Meyer and Allen's (1991c) three-component model of commitment, confirming its relevance in the contemporary educational context. Moreover, they align with recent studies, such as Sarona and Doble (2025), who found that Filipino teachers' organizational commitment is most influenced by supportive leadership, professional development, and ethical school climate.

These results call for targeted leadership interventions that foster affective commitment. School heads may move beyond compliance-based retention and cultivate an environment where teachers feel valued, supported, and emotionally invested in the institution's success. The Department of Education may consider integrating affective engagement indicators into its school-based management evaluations and developing capacity-building programs to equip school leaders with tools to enhance emotional engagement and teacher well-being.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3 presents the computed Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.51$), indicating a moderate positive relationship between school heads' leadership practices and teachers' organizational commitment. With a p -value of 0.001, the result is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, suggesting that leadership practices improve, and teachers' organizational commitment tends to increase as well. This finding substantiates the growing body of literature that underscores the critical role of school leadership in shaping teachers' professional attributes and workplace loyalty. According to Hao and Yazdanifard (2015), transformational leadership enhances employees' sense of purpose and organizational belonging, both of which are components of organizational commitment. Similarly, the result implies that effective leadership cultivates performance and commitment. This is supported by the study by Leithwood et al. (2020a), which found that instructional leadership style substantially affects teachers' motivation and retention when school heads provide clear goals, feedback, and support for professional development among subordinates. These kinds of leadership actions influence teachers to remain in the organization longer.

Table 3. Relationship Between Leadership Practices of School Heads and Organizational Commitment of Teachers

| | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------|
| Leadership Practices of School Heads and Organizational Commitment of Teachers | Correlation | 0.514 |
| | Significance (2-tailed) | 0.001 |
| | df | 274 |

Further, the findings where there is a positive correlation speak up that leadership styles set in collaboration, vision, and support direct a higher emotional and moral commitment in schools (Do Thi Y, 2025b). Although the correlation does not play a major role in the study, it underscores the crucial role of leadership development across sectors of public education in advancing leadership programs in schools. The study suggests the need for strategic leadership development campaigns grounded in the core dimensions of the Deped vision-mission, instructional support, ethical behavior, and stakeholders' engagement and participation. Addressing these areas of concern would uplift organizational efficiency and resilience among teachers in the workplace. In addition, the correlation suggests a further need for experimental studies that account for a range of factors affecting teachers' organizational commitment.

Regression Analysis

The table below presents the regression analysis predicting teachers' organizational commitment from school heads' leadership practices. Findings revealed that school heads' leadership practices significantly influence teachers' organizational commitment, yielding a p -value of .001 and a moderate positive correlation of .514. This result corroborates Leithwood et al.'s (2020b) contention that when a leader is visionary, upholds ethical conduct, and provides support, this may enhance teachers' morale and professional commitment. Dynamic, consistent educational leadership practices may foster collaboration and increase teacher retention within the educational institution.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Predicting Organizational Commitment from Leadership Practices

| Predictor | B | SE B | β | t |
|----------------------|------|------|---------|------|
| (Constant) | 1.25 | 0.22 | - | 5.68 |
| Leadership Practices | 0.50 | 0.07 | .514 | 7.32 |

Additionally, the regression model reveals that leadership practice increases organizational commitment by approximately 0.50 units. This highlights the transformative effect of leadership practices on the affirmative and normative dimensions of teachers (Do Thi Y, 2025c). The beta value implies that teachers working under transformative leaders display a higher level of affirmative and normative dimensions of teachers. This suggests a possible increase in institutional trust, job stability, and shared purposes among teachers when school heads' leadership practices are implemented within the school.

Conclusion

This study shows that teachers strongly perceive school heads' leadership practices and that these practices are meaningfully associated with teachers' organizational commitment. Leadership practices significantly predicted commitment, highlighting leadership as a practical lever for strengthening teacher loyalty in public secondary schools. By examining NCBSH-aligned leadership domains alongside the three-component commitment model, the study provides context-specific evidence that strengthening leadership practices can deepen teachers' motivation to remain and contribute—especially through affective and normative commitment.

It is recommended that school heads strengthen instructional leadership routines (e.g., regular learning walks, coaching conversations, and feedback cycles) to improve the teaching-and-learning domain. Second, sustain ethics and integrity through transparent decision-making, fair recognition systems, and consistent professional standards. Third, deepen collaboration with families and stakeholders to build shared accountability and support structures that reinforce teachers' professional obligation and belonging. Division and DepEd leadership programs may incorporate competency-based coaching that targets instructional supervision and ethical decision-making, and monitoring systems may include indicators of teacher affective engagement alongside performance indicators.

Future studies may use longitudinal or multilevel designs to examine how leadership practices interact with school climate, teacher self-efficacy, workload, and job satisfaction over time. Qualitative follow-up studies can clarify why affective commitment lags behind continuance and normative commitment, and identify the leadership behaviors that teachers perceive as most supportive.

Contributions of Authors

Author 1: conceptualization, data gathering, data curation, writing original draft, funding

Author 2: conceptualization, data analysis, interpretation, review, and editing

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Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest.

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