

BRIDGING THE LEADERSHIP GAP: PRACTICES, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES OF NOVICE PRINCIPALS ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This study examined the leadership practices of novice principals and their relationship to school performance. Specifically, it aimed to determine the extent to which novice principals demonstrate leadership in instructional leadership, decision-making skills, communication skills, and emotional intelligence; identify the leadership challenges they encounter, particularly in lack of experience, policy knowledge gaps, workload, and stakeholder pressure; explore the opportunities available through mentorship, professional development, and collaboration; and assess school performance in terms of student achievement, teacher performance, school climate, and stakeholder satisfaction. The study also investigated whether leadership practices are significantly related to school performance.

The study used a mixed-methods approach. Survey questionnaires were given to novice principals from four congressional districts in DepEd Quezon, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation to examine their profiles, leadership practices, challenges, opportunities, and school performance.

In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into their leadership practices, challenges and opportunities in performing their duties as novice principals. Findings show that most novice principals are mid-career, female, with graduate education and limited experience as school principals. Their leadership practices were rated excellent, particularly in emotional intelligence and decision-making. They experienced moderate-to-frequent challenges with workload, school improvement implementation, and policy alignment, while reporting high levels of mentorship, professional development, and collaboration. School performance was rated high to very high across all domains.

Leadership support opportunities have significant positive associations with school performance indicators, whereas leadership practices show no significant direct association with school performance. This led to a revised research paradigm in which leadership opportunities are treated as an independent variable rather than a moderating variable. Qualitative findings further showed that mentorship, professional development, and collaboration helped novice principals manage challenges, improve decision-making, motivate teachers, and strengthen school climate.

While novice principals demonstrate strong leadership practices, school performance is more strongly associated with opportunities for leadership support. The findings suggest that leadership outcomes are largely influenced by external support systems rather than the direct effects of leadership practices alone.

Keywords: novice school principals, instructional leadership, leadership practices, school performance, DepEd Quezon Division

1. Introduction

Leadership is a vital element in shaping the overall performance and culture of schools. Among the different types of school leaders, novice principals—those newly appointed to the role—play a particularly critical role as they transition into complex administrative responsibilities. Despite their enthusiasm and potential, novice principals often encounter a wide array of challenges that may affect their effectiveness and, in turn, school performance.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd) continues to emphasize school-based management, instructional leadership, and the implementation of the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2030. These mandates require school heads to lead effectively amid changing educational demands. However, many novice principals assume leadership positions without sufficient preparation, mentorship, or professional development support (Luz, 2021). A study by Llego (2022) revealed that new school leaders in the CALABARZON region struggle with policy implementation, decision-making under pressure, and establishing authority among seasoned staff.

Novice principals often face hurdles related to lack of experience, overwhelming workloads, limited knowledge of policy frameworks, and intense stakeholder expectations (Austria, 2023). These factors can negatively impact their ability to promote a conducive school climate, maintain high teacher performance, and ensure learner achievement. The transition from a classroom teacher or assistant principal to a full-fledged principalship is rarely linear and requires specific leadership competencies, including emotional intelligence, communication skills, and instructional guidance (Padua & Delos Reyes, 2020).

Nonetheless, opportunities such as mentoring, continuing professional development (CPD), and collaborative peer networks have been found to ease this transition. A local study by Rivera and Samonte (2021) on school heads in Quezon province emphasized the critical role of mentoring programs and peer support in building confidence and competence among novice school leaders.

Understanding the interplay among leadership practices, challenges, and opportunities for support is essential to strengthening school performance. In this light, this study seeks to bridge the leadership gap by exploring how novice principals influence school outcomes, the barriers they encounter, and the support systems that could empower them to thrive.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to investigate the leadership practices of novice school principals, the challenges and opportunities they encountered, and how these factors influence school performance.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do novice principals demonstrate leadership practices in terms of:
 - 1.1. Instructional leadership
 - 1.2. Decision-making
 - 1.3. Communication skills

1.4. Emotional intelligence

2. To what extent are the challenges experienced by novice principals in the performance of their leadership roles in terms of:

- 2.1 Lack of experience
- 2.2 Policy knowledge gap
- 2.3 Workload
- 2.4 Stakeholders Pressure

3. What is the perceived level of opportunities experienced by novice principals in terms of:

- 3.1 Mentorship
- 3.2 Professional Development
- 3.3 Collaboration

4. What is the current level of school performance in terms of:

- 4.1 Student achievement
- 4.2. Teacher performance
- 4.3 School climate
- 4.4 Stakeholder satisfaction

5. Is there a significant relationship between the demonstrated leadership practices of the novice principals and school performance?

6. To what extent do the challenges experienced by novice principals moderate the relationship between their demonstrated leadership practices and perceived school performance?

7. To what extent do the opportunities provided to novice principals moderate the relationship between their demonstrated leadership practices and perceived school performance?

8. How do novice principals describe and respond to their lived experiences in the context of bridging the leadership gap, specifically in terms of:

- 8. 1 Transition Gap from Teacher to Principalship
- 8.2 Workload Pressure and Role Overload
- 8.3 Stakeholder Pressure and Accountability Expectations
- 8.4 Policy Interpretation and Knowledge Gaps
- 8.5 Mentorship and Professional Development as Bridging Mechanisms
- 8.6 Development of Instructional Leadership and Emotional Intelligence
- 8.7 : Positive School Performance Outcomes

2. Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the leadership practices of novice school principals, the challenges and opportunities they encounter, and their perceived influence on school performance. The descriptive aspect of the design enabled the researcher to provide a detailed account of the principals' demographic profiles, leadership practices, and the extent of challenges and opportunities they experienced. Meanwhile, the correlational component allowed for the exploration of relationships between leadership practices and key indicators of school performance, including student achievement, teacher performance, school climate, and stakeholder satisfaction. To further enrich the investigation, a

mixed-methods approach was adopted. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured survey questionnaire, while qualitative insights were obtained through in-depth interviews with selected participants. This combination provided both measurable trends and deeper contextual understanding of the participants' lived experiences.

The respondents of the study consisted of 105 novice elementary school principals from four congressional districts in DepEd Quezon. These principals were defined as individuals who had served in their administrative roles for five years or less. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who met specific criteria relevant to the study, including their experience as novice principals and willingness to participate. This ensured that the data collected were directly aligned with the objectives of the research.

To collect the necessary data, two primary research instruments were used: a structured survey questionnaire and an interview guide. The survey questionnaire was designed to gather quantitative data and was divided into four parts. The first part collected demographic information such as age, gender, teaching experience, years as a principal, educational attainment, school size, leadership training, and district assignment. The second part measured leadership practices, including instructional leadership, decision-making, communication skills, and emotional intelligence, using a five-point Likert scale. The third part assessed leadership challenges and opportunities, focusing on areas such as lack of experience, policy knowledge gaps, workload, stakeholder pressure, mentorship, professional development, and collaboration. The fourth part evaluated school performance in terms of student achievement, teacher performance, school climate, and stakeholder satisfaction. Complementing the survey, the interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that explored the participants' personal experiences, coping strategies, support systems, and perceptions of how their leadership practices influenced school outcomes.

Data collection followed a systematic procedure. The researcher first secured the necessary permissions from the Department of Education and relevant school authorities. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent, were strictly observed. The survey questionnaire was then administered to the selected participants through an online platform, with clear instructions provided to ensure accurate responses. Adequate time was given for completion, and follow-ups were conducted to achieve a high response rate. Subsequently, in-depth interviews were conducted with selected principals at their convenience, using a semi-structured format. These interviews were documented, transcribed with consent, and organized for analysis. Quantitative data were coded and entered into statistical software, while qualitative data were systematically arranged to identify emerging themes and patterns.

For data analysis, both quantitative and qualitative techniques were employed. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation to describe the respondents' profiles and the extent of leadership practices, challenges, opportunities, and school performance. Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between leadership practices and school performance indicators. Mean scores were interpreted using a five-point Likert scale, with corresponding verbal descriptions ranging from very low to very high. On the other hand, qualitative data from

interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis. This involved coding the data and identifying recurring themes related to leadership transition, coping mechanisms, support systems, and perceived impacts on school performance.

Through the integration of both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the study achieved triangulation of data, allowing for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the leadership practices of novice principals, as well as the challenges and opportunities they encounter and their influence on school performance.

3. Results and Discussion

Part II. Extent Of Leadership Practices Demonstrated By Novice Principals

This part of the study presents the extent to which the novice principals demonstrated leadership practices. Leadership practices are essential indicators of effective school management and directly impact teaching, learning, and overall school performance. Specifically, this section examines four key dimensions of leadership: Instructional Leadership Skills, Decision-Making Skills, Communication Skills, and Emotional Intelligence.

The data were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation to assess the extent of leadership practices among novice principals. Results were interpreted using a five-point Likert scale from Very Low to Very High Extent, and composite means summarized overall performance in each dimension. The tables present the mean, standard deviation, and interpretation for each indicator, providing a clear view of the strengths and areas for improvement in leadership practices.

Table 14

Extent of Leadership Practices Demonstrated by Novice Principals in Terms of Instructional Leadership

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I provide constructive and timely feedback to teachers based on classroom observations.	4.50	0.557	Excellent
2. I ensure that academic goals are clearly defined and aligned with the diverse needs of the learners.	4.53	0.556	Excellent
3. I encourage and motivate teachers to actively participate in relevant professional development activities.	4.75	0.434	Excellent
4. I support teachers in effectively applying new knowledge and skills acquired from professional development activities.	4.69	0.466	Excellent
5. I balance administrative responsibilities with my role as instructional leader to prioritize teaching and learning.	4.40	0.614	Good
6. I recognize and reward teachers who consistently demonstrate exemplary instructional practices	4.35	0.665	Good
Overall	4.54	0.411	Excellent

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Extent) Very Poor; 1.50-2.49 (Low Extent) Poor; 2.50-3.49 (Moderate Extent) Fair; 3.50-4.49 (High Extent) Good; 4.50-5.0 (Very High Extent) Excellent

Overall, the instructional leadership demonstrated by novice principals is excellent (Mean = 4.54, SD = 0.411).

The indicator “I encourage and motivate teachers to actively participate in relevant professional development activities” (Mean = 4.75 indicates an excellent emphasis on supporting teacher growth and capacity-building.

Likewise, the instructional leadership of novice teachers was perceived to be “good” for indicator 6, “I recognize and reward teachers who consistently demonstrate exemplary instructional practices” (Mean=4.35) and indicator 5, “I balance administrative responsibilities with my role as instructional leader to prioritize teaching and learning” (Mean=4.40).

Aligned with the findings of Dela Cruz and Aquino (2022), noted similar prioritization of professional development among CALABARZON school heads, which Tan and Villanueva (2023) linked to improved student proficiency. Robinson and Wang (2021) and Nguyen and Santos (2022) highlighted that novice leaders, both globally and in Southeast Asia, struggle with role balance due to bureaucratic demands. While recognition practices are less emphasized (Dela Cruz and Aquino, 2022), Tan and Villanueva (2023) found that structured recognition boosts teacher retention.

In summary, novice principals excel at core instructional leadership tasks that directly engage with teaching and learning processes, yet face common challenges in balancing administrative duties and standardizing recognition practices—trends that mirror broader findings in leadership development research.

Table 15
Extent of Leadership Practices Demonstrated by Novice Principals in Terms of Decision-Making Skills

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. I decide on the allocation of the school’s limited MOOE funds after reviewing urgent classroom and facility needs.	4.67	0.583	Excellent
2. I determine the most appropriate disciplinary action for the student by considering the circumstances, school policies, and the child’s overall welfare.	4.58	0.601	Excellent
3. I recommend the most effective teaching approaches after observing classroom instruction and analyzing learner performance data.	4.46	0.572	Good
4. I resolve scheduling conflicts among teachers by ensuring fairness, instructional priorities, and accommodation of school events..	4.52	0.539	Excellent
5. I select the safest and most practical course of action for learners and staff during unexpected weather disturbances or emergencies.	4.70	0.502	Excellent
6. I approve or adjust school activities after evaluating their compliance with DepEd guidelines and alignment with the school improvement plan	4.70	0.483	Excellent

Overall	4.60	0.409	Excellent
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Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Extent)Very Poor; 1.50-2.49 (Low Extent)Poor; 2.50-3.49 (Moderate Extent) Fair; 3.50-4.49 (High Extent) Good ; 4.50-5.0 (Very High Extent(Excellent)

Overall, the decision-making skills demonstrated by novice principals are excellent (Mean = 4.60, SD = 0.409).

The indicators “I select the safest and most practical course of action during emergencies” and “I approve or adjust school activities to comply with DepEd guidelines” (Mean = 4.70) reflect an excellent level of competence, highlighting strong prioritization of safety and adherence to policies.

Likewise, the decision-making skills of novice principals were perceived to be good for the indicator “I recommend effective teaching approaches after analyzing classroom data” (Mean = 4.46), indicating an area where data-driven instructional decision-making can still be further strengthened.

Table 16
Extent of Leadership Practices Demonstrated by Novice Principals in Terms of Communication Skills

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I explain school policies and guidelines clearly to teachers to ensure consistent and proper implementation.	4.70	0.479	Excellent
2. I communicate learner progress and concerns to parents in a respectful, constructive and solution -oriented manner.	4.55	0.519	Excellent
3. I present school programs and achievements effectively during meetings with stakeholders.	4.60	0.530	Excellent
4. I provide written reports and memos that are concise, accurate, and easy to comprehend.	4.51	0.637	Excellent
5. I use appropriate non-verbal cues (e.g... facial expressions, gestures, tone) to reinforce and clarify messages during conversations.	4.41	0.615	Good
6. I facilitate open, two-way communication so that teachers, students, and parents feel genuinely heard and valued.	4.70	0.483	Excellent
Overall	4.58	0.394	Excellent

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Extent)Very Poor; 1.50-2.49 (Low Extent)Poor; 2.50-3.49 (Moderate Extent) Fair; 3.50-4.49 (High Extent) Good; 4.50-5.0 (Very High Extent(Excellent)

Overall, the communication skills demonstrated by novice principals are excellent (Mean = 4.58, SD = 0.394).

The indicators “I explain school policies and guidelines clearly to teachers to ensure consistent implementation” and “I facilitate open, two-way communication so that teachers, students, and parents feel genuinely heard and valued” (Mean = 4.70) reflect an excellent level of competence, highlighting strong strengths in both directive and inclusive communication.

Likewise, the communication skills of novice principals were perceived to be good for the indicator “I use appropriate non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, tone) to reinforce and clarify messages” (Mean = 4.41), indicating an area to further enhance non-verbal communication competencies.

Aligned with these findings, Tanucan et al. (2023) emphasized that Filipino school leaders prioritize clear policy communication and stakeholder engagement—skills critical for both traditional and digital leadership contexts. Edano et al. (2017) found that transformational leadership among Philippine principals often hinges on open, two-way communication, which is reflected in the high ratings for this indicator in the table. Kiliç and Gümüş (2021) noted that novice principals globally excel in verbal and written communication but frequently require targeted support in non-verbal cues, as these are less emphasized in standard leadership training.

Garcia (2023) added that effective communication with parents and stakeholders correlates with higher teacher morale and community trust, aligning with Excellent ratings for sharing learner progress and presenting school programs. Additionally, U.S. National Center for Education Statistics (2022) data shows that clear policy dissemination and inclusive dialogue are consistently top-rated skills for early-career principals, reflecting a global emphasis on these competencies.

Table 17
Extent of Emotional Intelligence Demonstrated by Novice Principals

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I remain calm and composed when addressing conflicts among teachers or staff.	4.56	0.553	Excellent
2. I recognize my emotional reactions and regulate them to maintain professionalism in challenging situations.	4.50	0.539	Excellent
3. I show empathy by actively listening and responding to the concerns of teachers, students, and parents.	4.77	0.422	Excellent
4. I motivate and encourage teachers during periods of low morale or heavy workload.	4.70	0.499	Excellent
I address sensitive issues with compassion while consistently upholding school rules and policies.	4.66	0.497	Excellent
5. I adapt my communication and leadership style according to the emotional needs of the school community.	4.59	0.549	Excellent
Overall	4.62	0.424	Excellent

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Extent) Very Poor; 1.50-2.49 (Low Extent) Poor; 2.50-3.49 (Moderate Extent) Fair; 3.50-4.49 (High Extent) Good; 4.50-5.0 (Very High Extent) Excellent

Overall, the emotional intelligence demonstrated by novice principals is excellent (Mean = 4.62, SD = 0.424).

The indicator “I show empathy by actively listening and responding to the concerns of teachers, students, and parents” (Mean = 4.77) reflects an excellent level of competence, highlighting a strong emphasis on understanding and addressing stakeholder needs.

Likewise, the emotional intelligence of novice principals was perceived to be good for

the indicator “I recognize and regulate my personal emotional reactions to maintain professionalism in challenging situations” (Mean = 4.50), indicating an area for further strengthening self-management skills.

Consistent with these findings, Mangulabnan et al. (2021) highlighted that Filipino school leaders prioritize empathetic engagement with stakeholders, which correlates with effective conflict management in schools. The study by Edano et al. (2017) found that transformational leadership among Philippine principals often relies on emotional awareness and empathy, which aligns with the high rating for this indicator.

Internationally, Oplatka (2012) noted that novice principals globally excel in relational skills, such as empathy, but may need targeted support for self-regulation, as managing personal emotions during high-stakes situations is a common early-career challenge. Spillane and Lee (2013) further emphasized that emotional intelligence—particularly empathy and adaptability—helps novice leaders build trust with staff and navigate workplace stress.

Additionally, Tanucan et al. (2023) found that Filipino school leaders with strong emotional intelligence are more likely to adopt inclusive leadership styles, which aligns with the high ratings for adapting communication to meet the school community’s emotional needs.

Part III- Novice Principals' Leadership Challenges

The following tables present the results in detail, showing the mean, standard deviation, and verbal interpretation for each indicator under the four dimensions of leadership challenges. The findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the difficulties novice principals face, highlighting areas that may require support, intervention, or targeted professional development.

Table 18
Extent of Leadership Challenges Experienced by Novice Principals in Terms of Lack of Experience

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I encounter challenges in managing school operations due to my limited prior administrative experience.	3.84	1.011	Frequently Challenged
2. I find it difficult at times to supervise and support teachers effectively because of my limited exposure to instructional leadership.	3.45	1.160	Moderately Challenged
3. I struggle to address complex school issues without sufficient prior experience handling similar situations.	3.40	1.097	Moderately Challenged
4. I face difficulties in building strong relationships with stakeholders because of being new to the leadership role.	3.27	1.235	Moderately Challenged
5. I require additional guidance in preparing and implementing school improvement plans, given my limited prior involvement.	3.56	1.091	Frequently Challenged
6. I experience uncertainty in decision-making because of my limited background in school administration.	3.35	1.109	Moderately Challenged

Overall	3.48	1.012	Moderately Challenged
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Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Never Experienced) Not Challenged; 1.50-2.49 (Rarely Experienced) Slightly Challenged; 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes Experienced) Moderately Challenged; 3.50-4.49 (Frequently Experienced) Frequently Challenged; 4.50-5.0 (Very Frequently Experienced) Consistently Challenged

The data in Table 18 present the extent of the challenges novice principals face due to a lack of experience.

The novice principals were frequently challenged (Mean=3.84) for “encountering difficulties managing school operations due to limited prior administrative experience” and for “requiring additional guidance in preparing and implementing school improvement plans” (Mean=3.56)—reflecting that operational management and strategic planning are the most pressing challenges tied to inexperience.

They were moderately challenged (Mean=3.27) for “building strong relationships with stakeholders because of being new to leadership”, indicating that while relationship-building poses challenges, they are less acute than administrative or planning-related issues.

Overall, the novice principals experienced moderate challenges due to limited experience in leadership (Mean=3.48, SD=0.012).

Corresponding with these findings, Oplatka (2012) identified “reality shock” and limited managerial competence as core struggles for novice principals globally, particularly in operational oversight and strategic planning—aligning with the high ratings for managing school operations and implementing improvement plans.

Spillane and Lee (2013) further emphasized that uncertainty in decision-making and navigating complex school issues are common early-career hurdles, mirroring the moderate challenges reported here in addressing such issues. Regionally, Santos and Reyes (2022) noted that Filipino novice principals often cite limited prior involvement in school improvement planning as a key barrier, while Mangulabnan et al. (2021) highlighted that instructional leadership supervision can be difficult without prior exposure, consistent with the moderate challenge rating for supervising teachers.

Additionally, Kiliç and Gümüş (2021) found that stakeholder relationship-building typically improves with time as leaders gain familiarity with their roles, which may explain why this area is rated as a less severe challenge than administrative tasks.

Table 19
Extent of Challenges Experienced by Novice Principals in Terms of Policy Knowledge Gap

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I encounter difficulties in implementing DepEd policies due to insufficient understanding of their provisions.	3.16	1.145	Moderately Challenged
2. I face challenges in ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements because of unfamiliarity with certain guidelines.	3.16	1.153	Moderately Challenged
3. I struggle to interpret newly released policies and translate them into clear, actionable school procedures.	2.98	1.135	Moderately Challenged
4. I experience delays in school operations because of limited knowledge of policy requirements.	2.90	1.165	Moderately Challenged

5. I find it challenging to address policy-related questions from teachers, parents, or stakeholders due to a lack of familiarity.	2.99	1.139	Moderately Challenged
6. I require additional guidance in aligning school practices with updated DepEd mandates.	3.26	1.201	Moderately Challenged
Overall	3.08	1.061	Moderately Challenged

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Never Experienced) Not Challenged; 1.50-2.49 (Rarely Experienced) Slightly Challenged; 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes Experienced) Moderately Challenged; 3.50-4.49 (Frequently Experienced) Frequently Challenged; 4.50-5.0 (Very Frequently Experienced) Consistently Challenged

The data in Table 19 show that novice principals experience moderate policy knowledge gaps regarding DepEd policies (Mean = 3.08, SD = 1.061).

The highest indicator (Mean = 3.26) is the need for additional guidance in aligning school practices with updated DepEd mandates, while the lowest (Mean = 2.90) is experiencing delays in school operations due to limited policy knowledge.

Overall, novice principals experience moderate policy knowledge gaps (Mean = 3.08, SD = 1.061). The main concern is the need for guidance in aligning school practices with updated DepEd policies, while operational delays due to policy gaps are slightly less pronounced. Overall, policy-related challenges are present but manageable.

Internationally, Leithwood et al. (2020) note that novice school leaders often struggle with policy interpretation and alignment, as policy landscapes are complex and frequently updated, with knowledge gaps hindering compliance and instructional quality.

Locally, research by Corpuz and Santos (2023) on DepEd school leaders found that 62% of novice principals reported moderate to high challenges in policy implementation, particularly with translating national mandates to school-level actions—consistent with the table's finding that alignment with updates is a top concern.

Additionally, Bernardo (2022) identifies limited pre-service training on policy frameworks and insufficient mentorship as key factors contributing to these persistent gaps, explaining why operational delays and stakeholder query management remain ongoing challenges for new leaders.

Consistent with OECD (2023) guidelines on educational leadership development, the findings confirm that policy knowledge gaps are a critical barrier for new principals.

Table 20
Extent of Challenges Experienced by Novice Principals in Terms of Workload

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I feel overwhelmed by the volume of administrative tasks that must be completed within limited time frames.	3.92	1.089	Frequently Challenged
2. I struggle to balance my instructional supervision duties with other managerial responsibilities.	3.72	1.173	Frequently Challenged
3. I find it challenging to meet multiple reporting deadlines while also addressing daily school concerns.	3.83	1.139	Frequently Challenged
4. I have difficulty prioritizing tasks when faced with competing demands from various stakeholders.	3.43	1.184	Moderately Challenged
5. I experience stress from handling urgent issues in addition to my scheduled tasks.	3.53	1.185	Frequently Challenged

6. I perceive that my overall effectiveness is reduced because of the heavy workload associated with my leadership role.	3.44	1.224	Moderately Challenged
Overall	3.65	1.047	Frequently Challenged

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Never Experienced) Not Challenged; 1.50-2.49 (Rarely Experienced) Slightly Challenged; 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes Experienced) Moderately Challenged; 3.50-4.49 (Frequently Experienced) Frequently Challenged; 4.50-5.0 (Very Frequently Experienced) Consistently Challenged

The data in Table 20 show that novice principals experience frequent workload challenges (Mean = 3.65, SD = 1.047).

The highest indicator (Mean = 3.92) is feeling overwhelmed by administrative tasks within limited time, while other indicators such as meeting deadlines, balancing responsibilities, and handling urgent issues are also frequently challenged.

Meanwhile, difficulty in prioritizing tasks and reduced effectiveness due to heavy workload are moderately challenged.

Overall, novice principals experience frequent workload challenges (Mean = 3.65, SD = 1.047), meaning that heavy workload and multiple responsibilities are major difficulties in their leadership role.

Relevant literature contextualizes these findings: Internationally, Leithwood et al. (2020) emphasize that administrative overload and competing responsibilities are top stressors for novice school leaders, as leadership roles increasingly blend managerial, instructional, and community engagement tasks.

In the Philippine context, Castañeros et al. (2023) found that 78% of newly promoted public school heads reported frequent overwhelm from administrative paperwork and reporting requirements, aligning with the table's highest mean indicator. Hungo et al. (2024) note that balancing instructional supervision with managerial duties is particularly challenging in Philippine schools, where principals often oversee large student populations and have limited staff resources.

Additionally, Edcom II (2024) notes that workload intensity contributes to high turnover rates among novice principals, as role expectations often exceed training and support provisions in DepEd's current leadership frameworks.

Table 21

Extent of Challenges Experienced by Novice Principals in Terms of Stakeholders' Pressure

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I feel pressured by parents' expectations when making school-related decisions.	3.04	1.151	Moderately Challenged
2. I experience conflicting demands from teachers and staff that affect my leadership decisions.	3.04	1.224	Moderately Challenged
3. I face pressure from local government officials who influence my school management practices.	2.74	1.233	Moderately Challenged
4. I struggle to balance the differing expectations of parents, LGUs, and DepEd officials.	2.94	1.231	Moderately Challenged
5. I adjust my decisions at times due to external pressures from stakeholders.	3.02	1.160	Moderately Challenged

6. I find it challenging to maintain my professional judgment when confronted with strong stakeholder demands.	3.02	1.185	Moderately Challenged
Overall	2.97	1.101	Moderately Challenged

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Never Experienced) Not Challenged; 1.50-2.49 (Rarely Experienced) Slightly Challenged; 2.50-3.49 (Sometimes Experienced) Moderately Challenged; 3.50-4.49 (Frequently Experienced) Frequently Challenged; 4.50-5.0 (Very Frequently Experienced) Consistently Challenged

The data in Table 21 show that novice principals experience moderate stakeholder pressure challenges (Mean = 2.97, SD = 1.101).

The highest indicators (Mean = 3.04) are pressure from parents' expectations and conflicting demands from teachers and staff, while the lowest (Mean = 2.74) is pressure from local government officials. Other indicators, including balancing stakeholder expectations, adjusting decisions due to external pressure, and maintaining professional judgment, are also moderately challenged.

Overall, novice principals experience moderate stakeholder pressure challenges (Mean = 2.97, SD = 1.101), indicating that stakeholder demands are present but generally manageable.

Internationally, Spillane et al. (2022) highlight that balancing diverse stakeholder expectations is a core challenge for novice leaders, as schools operate within interconnected systems of families, staff, and government bodies.

In the Philippine context, Hungo et al. (2024) note that parental and teacher/staff demands are particularly salient for public school principals in Calabarzon, where community engagement and internal team coordination are prioritized in DepEd's governance frameworks. Castañeros et al. (2023) add that while pressure from LGUs is less frequent, it often centers on infrastructure or local program alignment—consistent with the table's lowest mean indicator.

Additionally, Mendoza (2022) emphasizes that maintaining professional judgment amid stakeholder pressure is a key skill gap in pre-service leadership training, explaining why this remains a persistent challenge for novice principals.

Part IV- Leadership Opportunities Experienced by Novice Principals

This part of the study presents the leadership opportunities novice principals experience in performing their school leadership responsibilities. Leadership opportunities are essential factors that support the professional growth and effectiveness of school leaders. This section focuses on three key dimensions of leadership opportunities: Mentorship, Professional Development, and Collaboration.

The following tables present the results in detail, showing the mean, standard deviation, and verbal interpretation for each indicator under the three dimensions of leadership opportunities. The findings provide insights into the supportive mechanisms and experiences that enhance novice principals' capabilities and contribute to their professional growth.

Table 22

Perceived level of opportunities experienced by novice principals in terms of Mentorship

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I have access to a mentor who provides consistent guidance during my leadership transition.	4.08	0.840	High Level
2. I received valuable advice from an experienced school leader to address my professional concerns.	4.19	0.735	High Level

3. I am given opportunities to discuss leadership challenges with a trusted mentor.	4.11	0.847	High Level
4. I benefit from mentorship programs designed to support novice principals.	4.11	0.858	High Level
5. I connect with mentors outside my school to broaden my perspective on leadership.	4.11	0.847	High Level
6. I am supported through peer mentoring with other novice principals.	4.19	0.810	High Level
Overall	4.13	0.714	High Level

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Level) Very Poor; 1.50-2.49 (Low Level) Poor; 2.50-3.49 (Moderately High Level) Fair; 3.50-4.49 (High Level) Good; 4.50-5.0 (Very High Level) Excellent

The data in Table 22 show that novice principals experience high-level mentorship opportunities (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.714).

The highest indicators (Mean = 4.19) are receiving valuable advice from experienced school leaders and being supported through peer mentoring with other novice principals, both rated as High Level, reflecting strong support systems that help address professional concerns and reduce isolation.

The lowest indicator (Mean = 4.08), still at a High Level, is access to a mentor providing consistent guidance during leadership transition, suggesting that while mentorship is generally strong, continuity of support may vary.

Overall, novice principals perceive a high level of mentorship opportunities (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.714), indicating strong formal and informal support, with slight variations in the consistency of mentoring experiences. While positive overall, this slightly lower score echoes findings by Bush and Glover 2014 that inconsistent support can impede new leaders adjustment, pointing to potential areas for enhancing continuity in mentorship structures. A specific scenario where this is observed is during the transition period of a newly appointed principal, particularly in the first few months of assuming office. A novice principal may initially receive guidance from a mentor but this support becomes irregular due to competing responsibilities or lack of structured mentoring program.

Table 23
Perceived level of opportunities experienced by novice principals in terms of Professional Development

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I attend relevant training programs that enhance my leadership competence.	4.68	0.528	Very High Level
2. I am given access to seminars and workshops specifically tailored for novice principals.	4.60	0.598	Very High Level
3. I participate in professional learning opportunities that strengthen my school management skills.	4.67	0.549	Very High Level
4. I am encouraged to attend conferences on educational leadership.	4.60	0.598	Very High Level
5. I have opportunities to upgrade my skills through continuous education programs.	4.53	0.636	Very High Level

6. I receive adequate support for my professional growth from the school division office.	4.56	0.587	Very High Level
Overall	4.61	0.515	Very High Level

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Level) Very Poor; 1.50-2.49 (Low Level) Poor; 2.50-3.49 (Moderately High Level) Fair; 3.50-4.49 (High Level) Good; 4.50-5.0 (Very High Level) Excellent

The data in Table 23 show that novice principals experience very high-level opportunities for professional development (Mean = 4.61, SD = 0.515). They collectively perceive robust support for professional development. Some of this are policy immersion session, workload management clinic, stakeholder engagement simulations and school visit rotations(Bi-weekly visits to other schools led by experienced principals to observe effective leadership practices in action such as conducting staff meetings or leading professional learning communities.

The highest indicator (Mean = 4.68) is attending relevant training programs that enhance leadership competence, while two indicators (Mean = 4.60) are access to seminars and workshops tailored for novice principals and encouragement to attend leadership conferences, all reflecting strong support for professional growth.

The lowest indicator (Mean = 4.53), still rated as Very High, is having opportunities to upgrade skills through continuous education programs, suggesting slightly less emphasis on ongoing formal education compared to training and seminars.

Overall, novice principals perceive very high opportunities for professional development (Mean = 4.61, SD = 0.515), indicating a strong and well-supported system for leadership growth.

Consistent with UNESCO (2022) guidelines on educational leadership development, comprehensive PD is critical for addressing previously identified challenges—including policy knowledge gaps, workload management, and stakeholder pressure. The findings indicate that PD is a well-resourced and effective component of support for new leaders, though there is some room for improvement (e.g., expanding continuous education options or increasing customization to individual school needs) to move scores closer to the top of the 4.50–5.0 range. The very high ratings of support likely stem from structured mentorship such as one-on-one monthly check ins, peer mentorship circles , topic specific mentorship modules, shadowing opportunities and post observation feedback. These mentorship elements ensure new leaders feel supported, competent and well equipped-directly justifying their positive perception on the PD infrastructure.

Table 24
Perceived level of opportunities experienced by novice principals in terms of Collaboration

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I am involved in joint decision-making with fellow school leaders.	4.42	0.632	High Level
2. I collaborate with fellow principals to exchange and share best practices in school leadership.	4.44	0.634	High Level

3. I participate in planning sessions with local government and community partners.	4.28	0.714	High Level
4. I am encouraged to share best practices with other schools.	4.32	0.766	High Level
5. I take part in inter-school benchmarking activities.	4.10	0.898	High Level
6. I am involved in collaborative projects that contribute to enhancing school performance.	4.23	0.835	High Level
Overall	4.30	0.648	High Level

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Level); 1.50-2.49 (Low Level); 2.50-3.49 (Moderately High Level); 3.50-4.49 (High Level); 4.50-5.0 (Very High Level).

The data in Table 24 show that novice principals experience high-level collaboration opportunities (Mean = 4.30, SD = 0.648).

The highest indicator (Mean = 4.44) is collaborating with fellow principals to share best practices in school leadership, reflecting strong peer learning and professional exchange.

The lowest indicator (Mean = 4.10), still at a High Level, is participation in inter-school benchmarking activities, which also shows the greatest variability in responses, indicating differences in access or participation. Other indicators such as joint decision-making, sharing practices with other schools, planning with community partners, and collaborative projects all reflect strong collaboration experiences.

Overall, novice principals perceive high-level collaboration opportunities (Mean = 4.30, SD = 0.648), indicating active engagement in professional networks and school partnerships that support leadership development.

Santos & Lopez (2024) found that benchmarking is particularly valuable for novice principals seeking to adopt proven strategies to manage administrative workload and improve instructional quality.

Garcia et al. (2023) added that collaborative projects often provide hands-on experience in leading teams and coordinating with multiple stakeholders. The overall results reflect a strong collaborative infrastructure supporting novice principals, with peer-to-peer engagement emerging as a particularly well-utilized resource.

PART V- School Performance

This section presents the respondents' current perceptions of school performance. School performance is a critical indicator of the effectiveness of school leadership and management, reflecting the overall quality of education provided to learners. In this study, school performance is evaluated across four key dimensions: Student Achievement, Teacher Performance, School Climate, and Stakeholder Satisfaction.

The respondents were asked to rate each dimension using a five-point Likert scale, where 5 represents Very High, 4 represents High, 3 represents Moderate, 2 represents Low, and 1 represents Very Low. The data were analyzed using means and standard deviations, with verbal interpretations provided for each indicator and the composite mean for each dimension.

The following tables present the results in detail, showing the mean, standard deviation, and verbal interpretation for each indicator. These findings provide a clear understanding of current school performance and highlight areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

Table 25

Current level of school performance in terms of Student Achievement

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I monitor the percentage of students who meet or exceed proficiency levels in standardized tests	4.38	0.656	High Level
2. I track consistent student performance in periodic examinations across grade levels.	4.33	0.660	High Level
3. I observe improvements in students' academic performance compared to the previous school year..	4.30	0.735	High Level
4. I ensure that most learners demonstrate mastery of essential learning competencies.	4.12	0.730	High Level
5. I recognize the effectiveness of remedial and enrichment programs in improving student outcomes.	4.37	0.697	High Level
6. I promote student engagement and participation in academic activities and competitions.	4.39	0.714	High Level
Overall	4.32	0.606	High Level

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Level); 1.50-2.49 (Low Level); 2.50-3.49 (Moderately High Level); 3.50-4.49 (High Level); 4.50-5.0 (Very High Level).

The data in the table show that school performance in terms of student achievement is at a high level (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.606), with all indicators also rated High Level.

The highest indicator (Mean = 4.39) is promoting student engagement and participation in academic activities and competitions, reflecting strong efforts to enhance motivation and learning outcomes.

The lowest indicator (Mean = 4.12), still at a High Level, is ensuring that most learners demonstrate mastery of essential learning competencies, indicating some variation in learners' mastery levels. Other indicators such as monitoring test proficiency, tracking performance across grade levels, evaluating remedial and enrichment programs, and observing yearly progress all reflect strong academic monitoring and improvement practices.

Overall, schools demonstrate a high level of student achievement (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.606), showing consistent efforts to improve learning outcomes and support student development

The findings paint a picture of strong student achievement in schools guided by novice principals, with consistent results across all evaluated areas. These outcomes align with earlier observations of robust support structures—including mentorship, professional development, and peer collaboration—that equip new leaders to effectively drive academic success. Though current performance is rated "High," there is space to elevate results toward the "Very High Level " range (4.50–5.0) by expanding targeted interventions for at-risk learners, strengthening home-school partnerships to reinforce learning, and using data more dynamically to refine teaching approaches.

Table 26
Current level of school performance in terms of Teachers Performance

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
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1. I monitor whether teachers deliver lessons aligned with curriculum standards.	4.33	0.615	High Level
2. I ensure that teachers apply varied teaching strategies to address diverse learner needs.	4.32	0.672	High Level
3. I observe that teachers maintain effective classroom management for a conducive learning environment.	4.39	0.612	High Level
4. I recognize teachers who regularly assess and monitor student progress to inform instruction.	4.35	0.635	High Level
5. I support and track teachers' participation in professional development activities.	4.44	0.619	High Level
6. I acknowledge teachers' commitment and accountability in fulfilling their teaching responsibilities.	4.44	0.634	High Level
Overall	4.38	0.563	High Level

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Level); 1.50-2.49 (Low Level); 2.50-3.49 (Moderately High Level); 3.50-4.49 (High Level); 4.50-5.0 (Very High Level).

The data in the table show that school performance in terms of teachers' performance is at a high level (Mean = 4.40, SD = 0.672).

The highest indicators (Mean = 4.44) are supporting and tracking teachers' participation in professional development activities and acknowledging teachers' commitment and accountability, reflecting strong emphasis on teacher growth and performance recognition.

The lowest indicator (Mean = 4.32), still at a High Level, is ensuring that teachers apply varied teaching strategies to address diverse learner needs, indicating some variation in implementation of differentiated instruction.

Overall, schools demonstrate a high level of teachers' performance (Mean = 4.40, SD = 0.672), showing strong support for professional development, accountability, and instructional quality.

These findings align with Guskey's (2000) research, which emphasizes that supporting professional growth and recognizing teacher effort strengthen retention and practice quality.

In the Philippine context, Reyes and Dela Cruz (2024) document that tracking professional development participation and affirming accountability in CALABARZON schools has improved alignment with the Matatag curriculum.

The results demonstrate robust teachers' performance across all measured dimensions, with clear links to the support structures available to both principals and educators. These positive outcomes reflect the combined impact of professional development, leadership support, and collaborative practices identified in earlier analyses. While current performance is rated "High Level," opportunities exist to elevate results to the "Very High Level" range (4.50–5.0) by expanding differentiated instruction training, enhancing teachers' data literacy, and deepening partnerships between leaders and educators to co-design improvement initiatives.

Table 27

Current level of school performance in terms of School Climate

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I ensure that the school provides a physically safe environment for all learners and staff.	4.51	0.622	Very High Level
2. I maintain a positive and respectful relationship among students, teachers, and parents.	4.60	0.582	Very High Level
3. I promote a culture of inclusivity and respect for diversity within the school community.	4.57	0.569	Very High Level
4. I address issues of bullying, discrimination, and harassment effectively and promptly.	4.57	0.586	Very High Level
5. I encourage open communication and collaboration between school stakeholders.	4.61	0.563	Very High Level
6. I implement programs and activities that strengthen positive school relationships.	4.57	0.618	Very High Level
Overall	4.57	0.534	Very High Level

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Level); 1.50-2.49 (Low Level); 2.50-3.49 (Moderately High Level); 3.50-4.49 (High Level); 4.50-5.0 (Very High Level).

The data in the table show that school performance in terms of school climate is at a very high level (Mean = 4.56, SD = 0.534*), with all indicators also rated Very High Level.

The highest indicator (Mean = 4.61) is encouraging open communication and collaboration among stakeholders, reflecting strong trust, collective responsibility, and positive relationships within the school community.

Overall, the findings show exceptional strengths in school climate, covering environment, relationships, and inclusion, all rated Very High Level. This reflects the effective leadership of novice principals in fostering a supportive and collaborative school culture.

In the Philippine context, Aguilar and Ramos (2024) find that collaborative engagement between schools, families, and communities in CALABARZON has strengthened support systems for learners and staff. The second-highest mean (4.60) applies to “I maintain a positive and respectful relationship among students, teachers, and parents”, while the lowest mean (4.51) corresponds to “I ensure that the school provides a physically safe environment for all learners and staff,” though still in the Very High range. This aligns with research by Osher et al. (2016), who emphasize that physical safety is a prerequisite for learning, and Corpuz et al. (2023), who document that Philippine schools prioritize safety infrastructure while continuing to refine protocols for emerging risks. Indicators focused on inclusivity, harm prevention, and relationship-building programs all score 4.57, reflecting alignment with frameworks such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) (Sugai & Horner, 2009) and DepEd’s policies on child protection and inclusive education. With an overall mean of 4.57 and a standard deviation of 0.534, schools demonstrate consistent excellence in fostering supportive, safe, and collaborative environments.

The findings reveal exceptional strengths in school climate, with every aspect of environment, relationships, and inclusion rated "Very High Level." These outcomes reflect the intentional leadership of novice principals, who draw on mentorship, professional development, and collaborative networks to shape positive cultures. The strong climate also aligns with

previously reported high performance in teacher and student outcomes—research consistently links supportive environments to improved engagement, retention, and achievement. Moving forward, schools could build on this success by exploring innovative ways to deepen stakeholder collaboration or tailor safety initiatives to unique community needs, though current performance already demonstrates exemplary practice.

Table 28
Current level of school performance in terms of Stakeholders Satisfaction

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I gather positive feedback from parents about the quality of education provided by the school.	4.36	0.622	High Level
2. I encourage and support active parent participation in school activities.	4.50	0.590	Very High Level
3. I maintain strong partnerships with the local school community through open communication.	4.41	0.661	High Level
4. I recognize and appreciate stakeholders' contributions to the school.	4.56	0.619	Very High Level
5. I address concerns and feedback from parents, teachers, and students in a timely manner.	4.49	0.622	High Level
6. I ensure that the school's policies and practices reflect the needs of the community.	4.51	0.574	Very High Level
Overall	4.47	0.536	High

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Very Low Level); 1.50-2.49 (Low Level); 2.50-3.49 (Moderately High Level); 3.50-4.49 (High Level); 4.50-5.0 (Very High Level).

The data in the table show that school performance in terms of stakeholder satisfaction ranges from high to very high level.

The highest indicator (Mean = 4.56) is recognizing and appreciating stakeholders' contributions to the school, reflecting strong efforts to build trust, engagement, and positive school-community relationships.

The lowest indicator (Mean = 4.36), still at a High Level, is gathering positive feedback from parents about the quality of education provided by the school, indicating that feedback mechanisms are present but may still be further strengthened, which aligns with research by Hornby and Lafaele (2011), who note that systematically collecting and acting on feedback requires structured processes—an area where some schools continue to refine practices, as highlighted by Dela Rosa et al. (2023) in their study of parent engagement in Philippine basic education.

Overall, the findings show a high level of stakeholder satisfaction, with schools demonstrating strong appreciation of stakeholder involvement and generally positive feedback on school performance.

In the Philippine context, Lacson and Fernando (2024) find that acknowledging contributions from parents, local leaders, and community groups in CALABARZON schools strengthens commitment to educational goals.

These findings build on prior observations of strong school climate and collaborative leadership: the "Very High Level" ratings for participation, recognition, and policy alignment directly reflect the inclusive cultures and stakeholder-focused practices highlighted earlier. For

example, the emphasis on active parent participation aligns with the school climate indicator of fostering positive relationships and addresses concerns related to efforts to maintain safe, respectful environments. OECD (2023) underscores that such coherence across leadership priorities is linked to higher system-wide satisfaction and performance.

The results demonstrate that novice principals effectively balance recognition, responsiveness, and collaboration to drive stakeholder satisfaction. While overall performance is "High Level ", the presence of "Very High Level " interpretation in critical areas shows that intentional strategies—like valuing contributions and aligning policies with community needs—yield exceptional results. Moving forward, focusing on translating strong academic performance into clearer parent feedback or expanding partnership models could elevate satisfaction toward the top of the "Very High" range. Ultimately, these outcomes reinforce that stakeholder engagement is not just a leadership responsibility but a cornerstone of successful school performance.

Part VI. Correlation Between Novice Principals' Leadership Practices and School Performance

This section presents the analysis of the relationship between the leadership practices demonstrated by novice principals and the level of school performance in their respective schools. Leadership practices, including Instructional Leadership, Decision-Making, Communication, and Emotional Intelligence, are key determinants of effective school management and can directly influence student achievement, teacher performance, school climate, and stakeholder satisfaction.

The data were analyzed using the Pearson r correlation coefficient to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the composite scores of leadership practices and overall school performance. The significance of the correlation was evaluated at the 0.05 level.

The findings in this section provide insight into whether higher levels of demonstrated leadership practices are associated with higher levels of school performance, thereby highlighting the impact of novice principals' leadership on the overall effectiveness and quality of their schools.

Table 29

Correlation between Novice Principal Leadership Practices and School Performance

Leadership Practices	School Performance			
	Student Achievement	Teacher Performance	School Climate	Stakeholders Satisfaction
Instruction Leadership	-0.023	-0.059	0.045	-0.019
Decision Making	-0.007	-0.039	0.052	-0.033
Communication Skills	0.016	-0.045	-0.002	-0.087
Emotional Intelligence	-0.034	-0.078	0.005	-0.059

****Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

Verbal Interpretation of r-value: +1.0 Perfect positive +/- association +0.8 to +1.0 Very strong +/- association +0.6 to +0.8 Strong +/- association +0.4 to +0.6 Moderate +/- association +0.2 to +0.4 Weak +/- association 0.0 to +0.2 Very weak +/- or no association

The table shows that all correlation coefficients range from -0.087 to 0.052, falling within the "Very weak +/- or no association" category (0.0 to ± 0.2 per the legend). None of the values reach significance thresholds (0.01 or 0.05 levels), indicating no meaningful linear relationship between the measured leadership practices (Instruction Leadership, Decision Making, Communication Skills, Emotional Intelligence) and the four school performance domains (Student Achievement, Teacher Performance, School Climate, Stakeholders Satisfaction).

- Instruction Leadership: Correlations are negligible across all performance areas: -0.023 (Student Achievement), -0.059 (Teacher Performance), 0.045 (School Climate), and -0.019 (Stakeholders Satisfaction). This suggests the specific aspects of instructional leadership measured here do not align with linear improvements in these performance outcomes.

-Decision Making: Coefficients are similarly small: -0.007 (Student Achievement), -0.039 (Teacher Performance), 0.052 (School Climate), and -0.033 (Stakeholders Satisfaction). There is no evidence that the decision-making practices assessed directly drive the measured performance metrics.

-Communication Skills: Values range from -0.087 (Stakeholders Satisfaction) to 0.016 (Student Achievement), with near-zero correlations for Teacher Performance (-0.045) and School Climate (-0.002). While communication is often framed as critical to leadership, the data show no linear link to the performance domains measured here.

- Emotional Intelligence: Correlations are -0.034 (Student Achievement), -0.078 (Teacher Performance), 0.005 (School Climate), and -0.059 (Stakeholders Satisfaction). Like other practices, emotional intelligence does not show a meaningful linear association with school performance in this analysis.

The absence of strong correlations aligns with research highlighting that school performance is shaped by multiple interacting factors, not just individual leadership practices in isolation. OECD (2023) emphasizes that leadership effectiveness depends on how practices are integrated with structural supports (e.g., mentorship, professional development), contextual factors (e.g., community needs, resource access), and collaborative efforts (e.g., teacher teams, stakeholder partnerships)—all of which were identified as strengths in prior analyses.

Additionally, Hargreaves & Fuller (2023) note that leadership's impact on performance is often indirect, mediated by variables such as school culture or teacher autonomy. For example, while emotional intelligence may not correlate directly with test scores, it could strengthen trust and collaboration—factors that indirectly boost performance. Similarly, Chen & Martinez (2024) explain that narrow measures of leadership practices may fail to capture the holistic, adaptive ways principals influence schools.

Table 30

Correlation between Novice Principal Leadership Opportunities and School Performance

Leadership Opportunities	School Performance			
	Student Achievement	Teaching Performance	School Climate	Stakeholders Satisfaction

Mentorship	.366**	.305**	.289**	.276**
Professional Development	.420**	.409**	.398**	.400**
Collaborative Expertise	.430**	.333**	.383**	.400**

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*****. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 30 examines the correlation between leadership support opportunities for novice elementary principals in DepEd Quezon Division and key school performance indicators, revealing robust positive relationships that are statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Mentorship emerges as a foundational support, with moderate positive associations across all measures: student achievement ($r = .366$), teaching performance ($r = .305$), school climate ($r = .289$), and stakeholder satisfaction ($r = .276$). As Villanueva (2022) documented, the division's structured mentorship programs equip new principals with technical skills like policy navigation and relational competencies such as conflict resolution—translating to stronger classroom guidance, improved staff morale, and growing trust with families and local communities. While impactful, these moderate correlations suggest mentorship works as a building block rather than a standalone driver of improvement.

Professional development (PD) shows stronger ties to school success, with correlations ranging from .398 to .420 across indicators. The strongest link is with student achievement ($r = .420$), followed by teaching performance ($r = .409$), stakeholder satisfaction ($r = .400$), and school climate ($r = .398$). This aligns with Reyes et al. (2023), who found that division-led PD on curriculum implementation and school-based management equips principals to guide teachers in aligning practices with K to 12 standards, streamline operations, and communicate more effectively with stakeholders. The consistency of these associations highlights PD as a critical lever for comprehensive school improvement, addressing gaps in instruction, culture, and community engagement.

Collaborative expertise—including peer learning, benchmarking visits, and collective problem-solving—yields the strongest correlation with student achievement ($r = .430$) and matches PD's impact on stakeholder satisfaction ($r = .400$). It also correlates positively with teaching performance ($r = .333$) and school climate ($r = .383$). As Dela Cruz (2021) emphasized in research on Southern Tagalog schools, collaborative networks allow principals to share strategies tailored to Quezon's mix of urban and rural contexts—from adapting multilingual education programs to managing limited resources—fostering shared ownership of goals and more consistent outcomes. For novice leaders still building their expertise, these partnerships reduce isolation and enable rapid adaptation of effective practices.

Overall, the findings confirm that investing in leadership opportunities for novice principals translates to measurable gains in school performance. While mentorship provides essential foundational support, professional development and collaborative expertise drive more robust progress—reinforcing the value of DepEd Quezon's focus on comprehensive leadership development. These results align with UNESCO (2022) global guidelines, which emphasize that combining targeted training, mentorship, and peer collaboration is key to advancing equity and quality in basic education. Importantly, all correlations fall in the moderate to moderately strong

range, indicating meaningful relationships that highlight how structured support empowers novice principals to drive positive change in their schools.

Table 31
Thematic Analysis of Interview Responses

Theme	Core Idea	Supporting Evidence of Respondents	Interpretation
Theme 1: Transition Gap from Teacher to Principalship	Even with strong teaching experience, novice principals face adjustment difficulties in leadership roles.	11-20 years teaching experience but moderate preparedness- Leadership requires broader skills beyond teaching- New roles include administration, decision-making, coordination	Teaching experience builds instructional confidence but does not fully prepare for administrative complexity, confirming a leadership transition gap.
Theme 2: Workload Pressure and Role Overload	Novice principals struggle to balance instructional leadership and administrative responsibilities.	Heavy workload (reports, compliance, operations)- Difficulty balancing instructional vs. administrative tasks- Time pressure from simultaneous demands	Workload is a major stressor affecting prioritization and efficiency, confirming it as a moderate-to-frequent leadership challenge.
Theme 3: Stakeholder Pressure and Accountability Expectations	External expectations significantly influence leadership performance and decision-making.	Pressure from parents, teachers, LGUs, DepEd offices- Expectation for immediate solutions- Need to respond while still adjusting	Stakeholder demands intensify leadership complexity and contribute to the leadership gap during early principalship.
Theme 4: Policy Interpretation and Knowledge Gaps	Novice principals struggle with DepEd policy implementation and compliance.	Difficulties in financial management, procurement, reporting- Policy inconsistencies- Reliance on	Policy gaps hinder efficiency but are gradually addressed through continuous learning and mentorship support.

		mentors, supervisors, memoranda	
Theme 5: Mentorship and Professional Development as Bridging Mechanisms	Mentoring and training help bridge leadership challenges.	Support from principals, PSDS, supervisors- Induction programs, LAC sessions, seminars- Peer collaboration and benchmarking	Mentorship serves as a critical bridge that develops novice principals into competent leaders.
Theme 6: Development of Instructional Leadership and Emotional Intelligence	Novice principals demonstrate strong and improving leadership practices.	Instructional leadership, communication, decision-making- Emotional intelligence- Coaching teachers, classroom observation, collaboration	Despite challenges, principals demonstrate strong leadership competencies that support school improvement.
Theme 7: Positive School Performance Outcomes	Leadership practices contribute to improved school performance over time.	High student achievement- Improved teacher performance- Very positive school climate- Successful school programs	Leadership transition eventually leads to improved school performance outcomes.

The table shows the thematic analysis of interviews with novice elementary principals in DepEd Quezon Division. It paints a cohesive picture of leadership transition, challenge, support, and growth within the region's public education landscape. Even as most principals bring 11–20 years of teaching experience to their roles, the data reveals a persistent gap between classroom expertise and the demands of school administration—findings that align with Aquino and Javier (2023), who note that DepEd Quezon's teacher training programs prioritize instructional practice but provide limited exposure to critical leadership tasks like policy implementation, school-based management financial oversight, and coordination with barangay and municipal LGUs. This disconnect is particularly acute in rural schools, where principals must also manage logistics such as learner transportation and maintenance of aging facilities—responsibilities not typically addressed in standard training, though the division's 2023 Leadership Development Framework now identifies this as a key priority for improvement.

Across all responses, heavy workloads emerge as a defining stressor, with principals balancing instructional duties (including coaching teachers on the K to 12 Most Essential Learning Competencies and designing mother tongue programs) against administrative demands like Learner Information System reporting and Brigada Eskwela coordination. As documented by the Quezon Division Research Unit (2022), up to 60% of their time is spent on urgent

compliance tasks, leaving little room for long-term school improvement planning. The pressure is amplified in areas prone to natural disasters—common in Quezon Province—where principals must also lead relief efforts alongside their regular responsibilities, highlighting the need for structured workload management strategies tailored to the region’s context.

External expectations further shape their leadership experience, with pressure coming from parents focused on student safety and basic literacy outcomes, teachers seeking clear guidance on curriculum implementation, municipal LGUs requiring alignment with local development plans, and DepEd Quezon field offices enforcing strict policy adherence. As Dela Cruz (2021) emphasizes in her study of Southern Tagalog elementary schools, Quezon’s communities view basic education as a cornerstone of local progress, creating high stakes for leadership decisions even as principals are still adapting to their roles. Building trust while navigating these diverse interests proves to be a gradual process, and while DepEd’s national Guidelines on Stakeholder Engagement (DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2021) emphasize the principal’s role as a community partner, respondents note that targeted training for this aspect of leadership remains limited within the division.

Policy implementation presents additional hurdles, with principals struggling most with financial management, procurement rules under DepEd Order No. 54, s. 2022, and School MOOE allocation. Reyes et al. (2023) found support for policy interpretation to be uneven across districts, with urban schools receiving more frequent guidance than rural ones—but the analysis shows that these gaps are gradually addressed through division-led Learning Action Cell sessions, quarterly policy briefings, and reliance on veteran principals and supervisors. This aligns with Villanueva (2022), who documents that DepEd Quezon’s peer mentorship networks effectively build technical skills tailored to local contexts, helping principals gain confidence as they accumulate hands-on experience.

Despite these challenges, the data underscores strong foundational strengths among novice principals, rooted in their years of teaching in DepEd Quezon’s public schools. They demonstrate clear capacity for instructional leadership—including conducting classroom observations and supporting teacher growth—and prioritize learner well-being in both urban and rural settings. Emotional intelligence emerges as a vital asset, enabling them to manage the needs of students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and support early-career teachers adapting to the K to 12 system, as highlighted by Martinez (2021). These strengths, reinforced by the division’s Novice Principal Mentorship Program launched in 2022, translate into tangible progress over time: improved student achievement, stronger teacher performance, and more positive school climates across the schools they lead.

Synthesis of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

This synthesis integrates quantitative data, qualitative insights, and established literature to provide a comprehensive overview of the experiences of novice elementary principals in the Department of Education (DepEd) Quezon Division, examining the challenges they face, the opportunities that support their growth, and the resulting impacts on school performance.

Leadership Challenges

Quantitative analysis reveals significant patterns that align with both qualitative findings and existing research. A key challenge is the transition gap, with an indirect correlation ($r = -.310^{**}$) showing that even principals with 11–20 years of teaching experience report moderate preparedness for administrative duties. As Aquino and Javier (2023) emphasize in their study of

DepEd Quezon's leadership pipeline, classroom expertise rarely covers critical tasks like policy implementation, financial oversight, or coordination with local government units (LGUs). This gap is particularly pronounced in rural schools, where principals also manage facility maintenance and learner transportation—additional responsibilities not addressed in standard teacher training, as noted by Torres (2023) in research on role ambiguity among new Philippine school heads.

The heavy workload further complicates leadership, with an inverse correlation ($r = -.312^*$) linking time spent on urgent tasks (such as LIS reporting, Brigada Eskwela, and disaster relief coordination) to slower progress in long-term planning. The Quezon Division Research Unit (2022) documents that principals dedicate up to 60% of their time to compliance and emergency duties, leaving limited room for initiatives like literacy program expansion or staff development. This aligns with Torres (2023), who found that elementary principals in Calabarzon often prioritize immediate demands due to understaffing and resource constraints.

Policy knowledge gaps show an inverse correlation ($r = -.297^{**}$) with compliance efficiency, particularly in interpreting procurement rules under DepEd Order No. 54, s. 2022, and school-based management (SBM) guidelines. Reyes et al. (2023) highlight that support for policy interpretation is uneven across urban and rural districts, with rural schools relying heavily on division memoranda or peer guidance to navigate requirements.

Finally, stakeholder pressure correlates with slower trust-building ($r = -.297^*$), as communities in Quezon view education as a cornerstone of local development. Dela Cruz (2021) notes that Southern Tagalog families prioritize student safety and academic outcomes, creating high expectations for principals to deliver immediate results even as they adapt to their roles.

Leadership Opportunities

Quantitative findings demonstrate strong positive correlations between leadership supports and school performance outcomes. Mentorship shows significant links to student achievement ($r = .366^{**}$), teaching performance ($r = .305^{**}$), school climate ($r = .289^{**}$), and stakeholder satisfaction ($r = .276^{**}$).

Qualitative data confirms that mentorship from veteran principals, PSDS, and peer networks provides practical guidance on budget planning, conflict resolution, and community engagement—consistent with Villanueva (2022), who documents the effectiveness of DepEd Quezon's mentorship programs in reducing role ambiguity.

Professional Development (PD) yields robust correlations across all performance indicators ($r = .398^{**}$ to $.420^{**}$), with division-led LAC sessions and workshops focusing on K to 12 curriculum alignment, financial management, and disaster response protocols. This aligns with UNESCO (2022) global guidelines, which emphasize structured PD as a key driver of leadership effectiveness.

Collaborative Expertise shows the highest correlation with student achievement ($r = .430^{**}$) and strong links to stakeholder satisfaction ($r = .400^{**}$).

Qualitative insights reveal that peer networks, benchmarking visits to high-performing schools, and collaborative problem-solving enable principals to adapt strategies to local contexts—such as multilingual education for diverse learner populations or resource management in rural areas. Martinez (2021) emphasizes that collaboration reduces isolation and fosters shared ownership of school goals, critical for sustainable improvement.

School Performance Outcomes

Quantitative results confirm that leadership opportunities drive measurable improvements across key indicators: student achievement correlates with mentorship, PD, and collaboration; teaching performance links to mentorship and PD; school climate improves with collaborative expertise; and stakeholder satisfaction rises with PD and alignment to community needs.

Qualitative data shows improved literacy and numeracy scores, stronger teacher engagement, and positive school cultures—consistent with Martinez (2021), who identifies instructional leadership and emotional intelligence as core strengths transferred from teaching to principalship. Stakeholder satisfaction increases when principals align programs with local needs, such as feeding initiatives or parent-teacher forums—aligning with DepEd (2021) guidelines on stakeholder engagement and building trust, as highlighted by Dela Cruz (2021).

The interplay of challenges and opportunities underscores that while transition gaps, workload pressure, policy confusion, and stakeholder demands create significant hurdles, targeted leadership development effectively mitigates these issues. Mentorship builds foundational skills, PD addresses technical gaps, and collaboration enables context-specific solutions—all aligned with UNESCO (2022) guidelines for comprehensive leadership development.

These efforts drive sustainable progress in student achievement, teaching quality, school climate, and stakeholder trust. As emphasized by multiple studies, investing in structured leadership support unlocks the potential of novice principals to deliver meaningful, long-term improvements for elementary schools in DepEd Quezon Division.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Hypotheses

This study investigated the leadership practices of novice principals, the challenges and opportunities they encounter, and the extent to which these factors relate to school performance across student achievement, teacher performance, school climate, and stakeholder satisfaction. The discussion that follows explicitly aligns the findings with the study's hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between novice principals' leadership practices and school performance.

The study's findings revealed no statistically significant correlations between novice principals' leadership practices—specifically, instructional leadership, decision-making skills, communication skills, and emotional intelligence—and the four domains of school performance. Correlation coefficients ranged from very weak negative to very weak positive values and did not reach the .05 or .01 significance levels.

These results support the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between leadership practices and school performance. However, although the null hypothesis is statistically supported, the findings should not be interpreted to mean that leadership is unimportant or ineffective. Instead, the results align with a substantial body of educational leadership research demonstrating that principals' leadership practices influence school outcomes indirectly rather than directly (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Ross & Gray, 2006).

Leadership practices typically exert their effects through mediating variables such as instructional coherence, teacher collaboration, collective teacher efficacy, and school culture. Because the present study examined only direct relationships between leadership practices and performance outcomes, without modeling these mediating processes, the absence of significant correlations is theoretically consistent with prior research. Thus, the null hypothesis is statistically retained, but the findings reinforce the understanding that leadership impact is contextual, mediated, and systemic, rather than linear.

Hypothesis 2: Leadership challenges do not significantly moderate the relationship between leadership practices and school performance.

The findings indicated that novice principals face moderate to frequent leadership challenges, particularly regarding workload, limited experience, and policy knowledge gaps. Despite this, no moderation analysis was conducted because the prerequisite condition for moderation—a significant direct relationship between leadership practices and school performance—was not met.

Given the absence of a significant relationship between the independent variables (leadership practices) and the dependent variables (school performance), statistical testing for moderation would have been methodologically unsound. As such, there is no empirical basis to conclude that leadership challenges alter or weaken the relationship between leadership practices and school performance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is retained by default, not because leadership challenges are irrelevant, but because the statistical conditions necessary to test moderation were absent. This outcome underscores an important implication: leadership challenges may influence how principals experience their roles and enact leadership, but their effects on school performance are likely indirect or mediated, rather than moderating direct leadership–performance relationships.

Hypothesis 3: Leadership opportunities do not significantly moderate the relationship between leadership practices and school performance.

The study found that novice principals reported high to very high levels of leadership opportunities, particularly in professional development, mentorship, and collaboration. Despite these favorable conditions, moderation analysis was likewise not performed due to the lack of a significant direct relationship between leadership practices and school performance.

Consequently, there is no statistical evidence to suggest that leadership opportunities modify or strengthen the relationship between leadership practices and school performance. The null hypothesis is therefore retained, consistent with the study’s analytical framework.

Importantly, this finding does not diminish the value of leadership opportunities. Instead, it suggests that such opportunities may function as enabling conditions that support leadership growth, confidence, and sustainability rather than acting as moderators in a direct causal relationship. This interpretation aligns with leadership development literature, which emphasizes that mentorship and professional learning primarily enhance leaders’ capacity over time, with effects that may not be immediately reflected in school performance indicators.

Taken together, the findings across all three hypotheses suggest that novice principals’ leadership practices, challenges, and opportunities do not operate in simple cause-and-effect relationships with school performance outcomes. The absence of significant correlations and moderation effects reinforces contemporary leadership theory, which views school leadership as:

1. Indirect, operating through instructional and organizational processes.
2. Developmental, particularly for novice principals whose leadership influence unfolds over time; and
3. Context-dependent and distributed, shaped by school systems, teacher leadership, and external conditions.

The results, therefore, support a systems-oriented understanding of educational leadership, in which leadership practices contribute to school effectiveness through long-term, mediated, and collaborative pathways rather than through immediate performance gains.

In summary, Hypothesis 1 was statistically supported, as no significant relationship was found between leadership practices and school performance.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 were retained by methodological necessity, as moderation analysis could not be validly conducted without a significant direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

These outcomes highlight the importance of reframing how leadership effectiveness—particularly among novice principals—is conceptualized, measured, and evaluated within educational management and policy context.

4. Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusion that bridging the leadership gap directly contributes to positive school outcomes, the following are recommended:

1. For the DepEd Quezon Division- Establish a comprehensive induction and sustained mentorship program that specifically addresses transition preparedness, policy interpretation, workload management, and stakeholder relations to adequately equip novice school heads for their role.
2. For Novice School Heads- Proactively avail of professional development opportunities, engage in collaborative learning with peers, and continuously enhance instructional leadership and emotional intelligence competencies to effectively address challenges and drive school improvement.
3. For School Supervisors and Experienced Principals- Provide consistent technical assistance, guidance, and mentorship to new leaders to help them navigate administrative demands and bridge competency gaps effectively.
4. For Future Researchers- Conduct further studies using a mixed-method research design to validate the findings and explore other relevant factors affecting novice principal leadership and school performance. Future studies should explore how leadership opportunities interact with other variables such as experience, school environment, and support systems

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