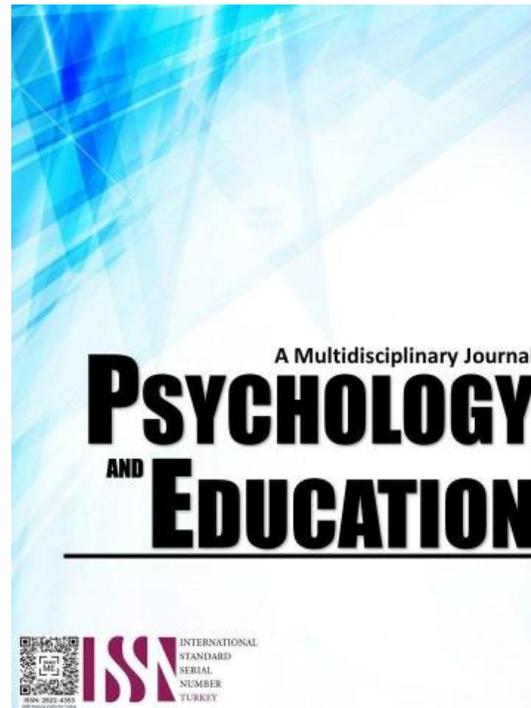


# **SCHOOL HEADS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT: SCHOOL- COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**



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## School Heads' Leadership Styles and External Stakeholders' Involvement: School-Community Partnership Program

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### Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between school heads' leadership styles, their interpersonal qualities, and the extent of external stakeholder involvement in the school-community partnership programs of Districts II and III in the Schools Division of Maasin City. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered from 34 school heads using standardized survey instruments. Findings revealed that democratic leadership was the most prevalent style, emphasizing collaborative and participatory practices, followed by transformational and transactional styles. Interpersonal competencies among school heads were generally high, particularly in initiating relationships and managing conflicts. Stakeholder involvement was rated moderately high, with most respondents recognizing meaningful community participation, although areas for greater consistency and depth were noted. Statistical analysis indicated a significant correlation between leadership style and stakeholder involvement, with transactional leaders demonstrating the highest levels of stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, a significant relationship was found between leadership style and interpersonal qualities, particularly with laissez-faire leaders exhibiting stronger interpersonal skills. Interestingly, certain interpersonal traits such as initiating relationships and conflict management showed negative correlations with stakeholder involvement, suggesting that overemphasis on these traits by school heads may inadvertently reduce stakeholder agency or participation. Based on these findings, a School-Community Partnership Program was proposed, aiming to enhance collaborative leadership, strengthen stakeholder engagement, and promote sustainable partnerships. The study emphasizes the need for targeted leadership development and structured stakeholder roles to foster more effective and inclusive educational outcomes.

**Keywords:** *leadership styles, interpersonal qualities, stakeholder involvement, school heads, educational leadership, school-community partnership, collaborative leadership, participative decision-making, empathy in education*

### Introduction

In the dynamic climate of education, school leadership emerges as a decisive factor in forging the academic as well as the social learning culture of schools. Of all the factors that go into making schools effective, school heads' style of leadership and interpersonal relationships have been found to be highly critical. School heads, particularly principals, are found to be core individuals in crafting a good school culture, enhancing teacher performance, and enhancing pupil achievement. Their leadership style not only prescribes how decisions are made but also influences how communication flows, how relationships are fostered, and how goals are accomplished within the school environment.

It is crucial to know about the leadership styles used by school heads since each style comes with distinct strengths and weaknesses. Transformational leaders, for instance, tend to energize and inspire their followers to a common vision, evoking innovation and cooperation. Conversely, authoritarian leadership, while occasionally necessary in situations of crisis, can suppress creativity and restrict teacher independence. Likewise, excessively permissive leadership can create a lack of direction and inconsistency in school procedures. The success of a leadership style is therefore not absolute but relative, dependent on internal dynamics as well as external community demands. No less critical are the interpersonal competencies of school leaders, such as emotional intelligence, empathy, active listening, and communication. These enable school heads to establish trust, mediate conflicts, and foster healthy relationships with staff and stakeholders alike. Interpersonal competence is critical in creating collaborative school cultures, particularly in environments where collaboration with the broader community is crucial to ensure students' overall development. Such leaders with strong interpersonal skills are better placed to connect stakeholders, traverse complicated social webs, and promote inclusive spaces.

While the recognition of these aspects of educational leadership has grown over the years, past research has tended to consider leadership styles, interpersonal skills, and stakeholder engagement in separable manners. There is a significant lack of literature that examines the impact of the interaction between leadership styles and interpersonal competencies on the effectiveness of school-community partnerships—particularly at the local or district level. This research attempts to fill that gap by examining how the leadership style and interpersonal traits of school administrators in Maasin City's Districts II and III affect their capacity to develop and maintain productive partnerships with external stakeholders.

Drawing on theoretical frameworks like Transformational Leadership Theory, Emotional Intelligence Theory, and Relational Leadership Theory, the research seeks to assess the effectiveness of school heads as leaders, determine their interpersonal strengths, and gauge the level of their interaction with community partners. Through this, the research also looks at how factors related to leadership either facilitate or impede the formation of partnerships with parents, local organizations, and other external stakeholders.

Eventually, this study aspires to develop a context-specific school-community partnership program grounded on leadership practices

and interpersonal competencies that match the requirements of the local learning environment. Through that, it intends to enhance school leaders' professional development, enable more effective collaboration among stakeholders, and better educate learners through upgraded leadership and relationship practices

### Research Questions

This research sought to identify school heads' leadership styles, interpersonal skills, and the involvement of external stakeholders in school-community partnership programs at Maasin City Schools Division District II and III, 2023-2024. Particularly, the research aimed to address the following questions:

1. What was the prevailing leadership styles shown by Maasin Districts II and III school heads?
2. What were the interpersonal traits of school heads in Districts II and III of Maasin?
3. How involved were the external stakeholders in school programs and activities in Districts II and III?
4. Was there any relationship between the involvement of the external stakeholders and school heads' leadership styles, and interpersonal traits?
5. What school-community partnership program could be recommended based on the study's outcome?

### Literature Review

In Mehmood et al., (2023) entitled "The Role of the Interpersonal Skills of the School Principals in Optimizing Positive School Climate: A Concept Paper" the article discusses the role of school principals' interpersonal skills in establishing a positive school climate. The review of literature determines the significance of communication, trust, empathy, and problem-solving ability in establishing a positive school climate. The research approach entails a comprehensive literature review, examining teachers' perceptions of the principal's interpersonal skills and how these impact the overall school climate. The paper successfully applies Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to provide an integrated view of the school climate and the systems that can affect it, both inside and outside the school. The article delivers good information regarding interpersonal skills necessary to improve school climate and impact on the work and learning environment.

De Castro and Jimenez (2022) research work titled "Influence of School Principal's Attributes and 21st-Century Leadership Skills on Teachers' Performance" explores the influence of school principals' attributes and 21st-century leadership skills on teachers' performance in the north area of the National Capital Region. The study concentrates on women educators in teacher I positions who hold 5-14 years of service and advanced studies. The teacher is distinguished by attributes such as openness, creativity, reliability, organization, and perseverance. The ability to communicate on the part of the school principal shapes their 21st-century leadership. The school head is available, offers concise information, joins discussions, considers teachers' proposals seriously, and maintains constant contact with personnel. Performance of teachers was considered satisfactory in 2019-2020. The study showed substantial differences in attributes, 21st-century leadership skills, and performance at work of school heads and teachers, categorized by school division office and years of experience. The study concluded that personal attributes and 21st-century leadership skills have a major impact on the performance at work of teachers.

According to Sarwar et al. (2022), in their study, which was focused on the effect of principals' leadership styles on college teachers' performance, valuable findings were achieved through data analysis acquired from 300 college teachers with the assistance of a self-administered questionnaire. The study identified that the majority of college principals employed the democratic leadership style at a high percentage, with a moderate percentage using the laissez-faire leadership style, and low levels of autocratic leadership in colleges. Notably, the study indicated a positive correlation between the greater percentage use of a democratic style of leadership by principals and enhancing teacher performance. The study emphasized the importance of the leadership style of principals in shaping teachers, and that a leadership style that is responsive to the specific needs and circumstances of the college and its teachers can greatly propel overall performance. The results show that the application of a flexible leadership approach, which can cope with various circumstances between colleges, is needed in establishing a setting favorable to teachers' growth and achievement.

Rehman et al. (2019) based their study on the school heads' attitudes towards their leadership style, applying a qualitative research method to analyze this complicated area of educational management. The research was conducted in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, with 10 male and 10 female head teachers selected for the sample. Based on semi-structured in-depth interviews, the research identified different leadership styles of the school heads, i.e., instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and moral leadership.

The study highlighted the adaptability of these principals, who applied different styles of leadership strategically in accordance with the specific needs of various situations that they encountered at work. This dynamic leadership view highlights the complexity of school management, and it is only such school principals who can adjust their leadership styles based on diverse challenges that prove effective. The results of this study have far-reaching implications, not only for school administration and teachers but also for researchers and policymakers. The knowledge derived from this study can be used in strategies for developing better leadership training programs, enhancing school management practices, and formulating policies that influence effective leadership patterns in schools, eventually leading to the general improvement of the education system.

Mendez (2023) sought to explore how the leadership behavior of school principals relates to stress levels among teachers. Implemented in Sta. Cruz District, Zambales, the research utilized a descriptive type of analysis employing a researcher-revised closed-ended survey questionnaire distributed to 232 elementary and secondary teachers. The study employed statistical parameters such as frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, and Pearson product-moment correlation in analyzing the quantitative data collected. The results showed some significant findings. Most Sta. Teachers were females, predominantly in their youth (31-40 years old), 1 to 10 years in service, and held the rank of Teacher I. Interestingly, most of them were master's degree holders, while the few were doctorates. Sta. Cruz District teachers experienced moderate work stress, the study revealed. The respondents widely perceived school heads to be authoritative, and there was some agreement with the democratic/participative style, whereas there was a very strong agreement with the laissez-faire/delegative style. Interestingly enough, the study revealed that an increase in the authoritative leadership style was correlated with higher levels of teachers' work stress. The democratic/participative and laissez-faire/delegative styles, however, were correlated with lower levels of stress to some extent. The study concluded that the leadership styles of school principals, particularly authoritative, democratic/participative, and laissez-faire/delegative, significantly influenced the levels of teachers' work stress, emphasizing the critical role of leadership styles in influencing the wellness of teachers in the educational setting.

Estacio & Estacio (2022) reported that their study tries to explore the leadership styles and best practices exemplified by school heads in the Department of Education in Bulacan, Philippines. As mandated by the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, each public elementary and secondary school, or a group of schools, shall have a head in school who shall be responsible for administrative and instructional supervision. The research seeks to evaluate the leadership skills required of school principals, based on three broad dimensions: educational leadership, people leadership, and strategic leadership. With a research design that encompasses qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, as categorized by Creswell (2014), the study employs comprehensive documentary analysis as its principal means of investigation. By exploring the multifaceted roles and responsibilities of school heads, the study aims to establish the impact of their leadership style on students' academic performance. The research will specifically investigate how effective leadership, as measured by the development of a clear vision and mission, enhances the general learning environment within schools. Through this critical examination, the research hopes to shed light on the best practices employed by school heads, thus making significant contributions to the practice of educational leadership and administration in the case of the Bulacan Department of Education.

Villar (2021) discussed how through their study, they discovered that social support was the most provided aspect of school climate, as both the school heads and teachers considered it so, with physical resources considered the least supported. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of addressing resource-related issues in schools to enhance general school climate. One of the key policy interventions arising from this research is to suggest that special training programs be developed. These need to specialize in cultivating critical skills in school-based management, which will help public school heads to respond more effectively to the diverse challenges of the school populations. Through school administrators' investment in their own professional development, education authorities are able to establish effective school environments, which, in turn, affect the quality of public education offered in the region.

According to Boniao et al. (2020), their research study investigated the school heads' and their leadership styles, rated both by themselves and the teachers in Dimiao, Lila, Sevilla, Loboc, and Loay districts. The study included 35 school heads and 315 public school teachers and utilized a quantitative standardized survey instrument to measure the school heads' leadership styles. The result showed that the majorities of the school heads were aged between 41 to 60 years, were female, married, possessed MA units, were Principal I, and had 11 to 15 years of service. Surprisingly, both teacher-rated and self-rated leadership styles indicated that most of the school heads were undergoing a transition phase in their leadership style, with some possessing delegative and authoritarian styles and none employing a participative style. The study established high correlations between the self-rated leadership styles and age and civil status of the school heads. However, no statistically significant correlations between leadership styles and gender, level of education, designation, and years of service were found. Moreover, while examining the teacher-rated leadership styles in relation to the profiles of the school heads, the study yielded statistically insignificant results. Against expectations, no correlation between the self-rated and teacher-rated leadership styles of the school heads was found. These results emphasize the complexities of leadership measurements within the educational context and the need to better understand different factors that affect the perception of leadership styles as well as judgments by various people in the community of the school.

School administrators, as per Gelizon et al. (2023), play a very critical role in schools since their leadership determines to a large extent the quality of the school climate and teacher morale. Their study aimed to evaluate the effect of school administrators' leadership styles on teacher morale in State Universities and Colleges in Eastern Visayas, Philippines. Their study identified various styles of leadership employed by school administrators, including transformational and transactional leadership, and periodic use of laissez-faire strategies. Much against expectation, the research determined that the morale of the teachers was not significantly affected by their school principals' behavior, attitude, or administrative practice. The evidence, even though contrary to expectation, reveals something about the complexity of the school administrators-teacher morale dynamic. Regardless of the variations in leadership tactics employed, teachers' overall morale did not shift. The research emphasizes the importance of continued study on a greater scale to investigate further the intricacy of the administrator-teacher work relationship. Studies of variables other than leadership style, i.e., organizational culture, communication methods, and support systems, could be helpful in understanding the intricacy of teacher morale in schools.

By carrying out more in-depth research, teachers and policymakers are able to gain a better appreciation of the influences that actually have an effect on teacher morale, setting the stage for effective approaches to improving educators' working relationships and overall quality of life within schools. Verbo et al. (2023) explained the rationale for which the authors carried out their research to identify the leadership styles the school heads employed in the implementation of school-based management (SBM) and the relationship of these styles with the prevailing practice of SBM.

The research was conducted in eleven public secondary schools in Mandaluyong City, among fifty-five responding teachers who were highly active members of their own SBM teams. The research used a mixed-method design encompassing correlational and qualitative measures. Correlational method was used to test the relationship between the leadership style and SBM level of practice, and the survey questionnaire determined the perceived practiced leadership styles undertaken by the principals in adopting SBM. In addition, interviews conducted via focus group discussions provided qualitative insight into how school heads' leadership styles influenced the SBM implementation process. Findings from the study indicated that Transformational, Transactional, Strategic, and Democratic were the dominant leadership styles used by the school heads in implementing SBM, based on the perception of the majority of SBM team members in the study schools. Notably, statistical analysis with the chi-square test revealed significant correlation between principals' leadership style and SBM level of practice status. Confirmation of the null hypothesis rejection proved that the leadership style of principals significantly influenced SBM outcomes. Researchers in the research emphasized that the intense leadership of a school head directly affected the performance of the SBM team overall, unlike situations where work tended to be delegated. The above observation accentuates the key role of effective leadership in pursuing successful SBM implementation and the importance of the active role and leadership of school heads in the SBM process. Cubay (2020) stated that their research examines the significant relationship between administrators' leadership styles, bases of power, and teacher job satisfaction in the context of public secondary schools of the First Congressional District of the Province of Bohol. The findings of the research revealed a significant relationship between administrators' leadership styles, bases of power, and teachers' job satisfaction.

This implies that the manner in which administrators lead and make use of their sources of power has a direct bearing on the degree of satisfaction being felt by teachers in their respective positions. Surprisingly, however, the study also found an interesting disparity regarding how administrators' leadership styles are viewed between administrators and teachers. This disparity emphasizes the value of communication and perception between these two. However, regarding administrators' power bases, there was perceptual agreement between administrators and teachers that mirrored mutual understanding of the bases of authority in the school environment. Based on these findings, the researcher reasoned that teachers' job satisfaction is dictated by administrators' power bases and leadership styles regardless of the specific style employed. Further, the study also emphasized the significance of administrators' self-awareness of their leadership styles and power dynamics to ascertain an understanding of teachers' perceptions and needs in developing a motivating and rewarding working environment. Such findings have far-reaching implications for school leadership practices and underscore the significance of good leadership in ensuring teacher satisfaction and, consequently, enhancing the overall learning experience of students. According to Parveen et al. (2022), the research findings revealed meaningful comprehension of the interaction between principal leadership styles and job performance of teachers. Notably, the results indicated that the difference in teacher job performance could be statistically accounted for by 59.3% through the interaction of the combined effect of principal autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Autocratic leadership was the most pervasive practice among principals that had a very strong and favorable impact on teachers' job performance.

Alternatively, the laissez-faire leadership style demonstrated adverse or unfavorable effects, underlining the fact that there needs to be a suitable balance among styles of leadership. The study highlights the need for the principals to adopt a sensitive and context-dependent style of leadership. Principals are encouraged to align various leadership styles suitably, considering the unique situation and problem of their individual schools. In this manner, principals can foster an effective work culture, enhance teachers' job performance, and contribute generally towards the improvement of the educational experience for students and teachers in Faisalabad city, Punjab, Pakistan's public secondary schools. Summary There are several similarities to be noted between the research by the researcher and the literature at hand. For instance, as with Sarwar et al. (2022), the study at hand identifies the positive link between some forms of leadership styles, e.g., democratic leadership, and performance improvement, necessitating that the leadership styles adapt to meet the needs of the learning environment. Additionally, as compared to Rehman et al. (2019), the research acknowledges flexibility in school principals, noting the dynamic nature of the styles of school leaders regarding different challenges and situations.

Additionally, in line with Mendez (2023), the research determines the significance of understanding the relationship between teachers' well-being and leadership styles, focusing on the central role of school principals' styles to the degree of stress and job satisfaction among teachers. While sharing similarities, the current research also differs from previous research in significant respects. Unlike Boniao et al. (2020), the current study does not solely rely on self-report or teacher-report of leadership styles. Instead, it employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to offer an elaborate understanding of the multifaceted nature of leadership in schools. Furthermore, unlike Gelizon et al. (2023), the study embarks on a deeper exploration of how leadership styles impact teacher performance.

The unique selling point with the current research is its new addition to knowledge in the field of educational leadership. By integrating several methods and exploring intricate relations among the leadership styles, teacher performance, and job satisfaction, the research presents a contextualized interpretation of the intricacies involved in education. The new method of the study, encompassing diverse

perspectives and incorporating a holistic analytical approach, presents novel insights into the complex relationships between leadership styles and the effects on teachers and the school environment. The focus of the study on the specific context of public secondary schools in Faisalabad city, Punjab, Pakistan, offers a specific dimension, offering localized findings that contribute to the broader debate surrounding educational administration and leadership.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This research utilized a descriptive correlational study design to determine and examine the correlations among the variables without manipulation or intervention. It aimed to specifically investigate the connections between school head interpersonal attributes, leadership behavior, and external stakeholders' involvement in school-community partnership programs in Districts II and III of the Schools Division in Maasin City during the school year 2023-2024. By employing a quantitative correlational design, the research makes use of numeric data to measure relations, determine patterns, and establish trends between these variables.

The quantitative approach is based on standardized questionnaires as the main data collection instrument. The questionnaires were crafted to collect precise information on leadership styles, school climate, stakeholder engagement, and their impact on student outcomes. This systematic method allowed for the collection and analysis of large datasets, which in turn enables the researcher to identify significant associations and trends within the sample. Quantitative research is best applied to this study in that it promotes a structured and systematic method of gathering data, making it possible for objective conclusions regarding the variables in question. Quantitative correlational study design is appropriately selected for, given that it would offer the total picture about the existing practices of leadership within the target districts as well as stakeholder engagement. Questionnaires permit data gathering from a general and representative pool of participants, specifically school heads, such that the results in the study effectively mirror the landscape of education at the district. Such a method allows the researcher to compare groups, detect differences in leadership styles, and determine the effects on stakeholder participation.

Ultimately, the use of this research design helped to shed more light on how leadership behaviors shape stakeholder engagement in school-community partnerships. It helps inform the creation of practical strategies for enhancing educational leadership and stakeholder collaboration, thereby improving the overall performance of the education system in Maasin District II and III.

### Respondents

For this research, the participants were 34 school principals of Maasin District II and III. These principals were chosen based on certain inclusion criteria such as tenure, experience, and existing leadership positions within their respective institutions. The participants included a cross-section of different leadership experiences that enabled a comprehensive review of leadership processes in the districts.

Table 1. *Focal Participants*

<i>District</i>	<i>Number of Schools</i>	<i>Number of School Heads</i>
Maasin II	15	15
Maasin III	19	19
Total	34	34

Total population sampling was determined to be the most appropriate method for this study given the specific attributes of the population of school heads in Maasin Districts II and III. The districts comprised schools that have different levels of size, academic levels, and socio-economic backgrounds, any of which may affect leadership styles and stakeholder involvement. By using total population sampling, all school leaders in both districts were included in the study and respond to the questionnaires.

This broad coverage ensured that the sample within each district adequately represents its population, enabling the analysis of leadership traits, interpersonal characteristics, and stakeholder engagement within different educational environments. Consequently, this approach provided a comprehensive insight into the dynamics in the educational settings of the districts, with consideration of the voices of schools with diverse resources and profiles.

### Instrument

This research made use of a standardized instrument to measure the leadership types, school heads' interpersonal traits and the level of participation of external stakeholders in programs and activities. The researcher used a two-component questionnaire format to obtain demographic data and data that answered the research questions of the study after data analysis. The initial section of the questionnaire was aimed at ascertaining the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and work experience. This served to give contextual background to understanding the leadership dynamics of the school heads.

The second section was comprised of standardized questions aimed at assessing the leadership styles, interpersonal traits of the school administrators and the level of external stakeholders' participation in programs and activities. These questions were particularly aimed at investigating how these traits affected the participation of external stakeholders in school programs, giving useful insights into the relationship between leadership practices and community involvement.

The tool was separated into two components. The first one collected the respondents' demographic information, such as age, sex, and number of years of work experience. These variables offered contextual information required for the interpretation of patterns in leadership behavior and stakeholder engagement. The second section of the questionnaire included 76 items divided into three subscales: (1) leadership styles, (2) interpersonal traits, and (3) external stakeholder engagement. The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale where the participants selected their agreement or perception on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This was suitable for the measurement of the extent to which participants witnessed or perceived the variables of interest.

Scoring entailed computation of the mean score for each subscale. The higher mean scores represented stronger agreement or a greater perceived existence of the measured trait or behavior. For example, a high score under the leadership styles subscale would capture a respondent's perception of good leadership behaviors practiced by the school head. The reliability index of the instrument, as measured through Cronbach's alpha, signifying high internal consistency. In this research, a pilot test was also done among a small sample of respondents with similar traits to the target population, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha, further validating the instrument's reliability.

### Procedure

Data collection in this research was carried out in a systematic and ethically sound way to ensure credibility and reliability of the results. Each step used careful planning and coordination to synchronize the procedures with the research purpose, protect participant confidentiality, and maintain academic integrity. The study used institutional data sources and primary survey tools to collect complete information from school administrators and concerned stakeholders in Maasin City's Districts II and III.

In the data collection stage, the researcher utilized the Department of Education Partnerships Database System (DPDS) to access in-depth information regarding school-community partnership programs in Districts II and III of the Maasin City Schools Division. DPDS was a centralized database containing information on partnerships, collaborations, and external stakeholders' involvement and was hence a rich source for the study. The information obtained assisted the researchers in understanding the extent, nature, and results of available collaborations and in determining the extent of external participants' involvement in these schemes. Data collection had three stages:

*Pre-Data Gathering.* In this phase, the researcher carefully planned and prepared to conduct the study. Major activities were writing the manuscript for submission to the university's Research Ethics Committee for technical and ethical review and securing approval letters from the school dean, superintendent, and principal to carry out a data survey in schools within Maasin Districts II and III. The investigator reprinted standard questionnaires intended for assessing the leadership style, interpersonal traits, and stakeholder engagement of school heads. A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to clarify the research framework and questions, making them consistent with prevailing theories. Ethical processes were made priority by defining informed consent procedures to ensure that participants' rights and confidentiality would be maintained. Finally, a representative sampling plan was completed to identify the diversity of the two districts.

*Gathering of Real Data.* In this step, the researcher carried out the intended measures of gathering data from chosen participants. Questionnaires were administered using surveys to school heads. Surveys were administered systematically, and responses were captured with caution. The researcher closely monitored the process of data gathering, addressing any difficulties that would arise in a timely manner. Throughout this period, the researcher was careful to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity, building up trust in order to inspire frank and candid answers. The researcher also furnished information on the DepEd Partnerships Database System (DPDS) for Maasin Districts II and III.

*Post Data Collection.* Following the completion of the data collection process, the researcher performed various post-data collection tasks, such as data cleaning, validation, and analysis. Raw data were carefully examined, verified for errors, and cleaned to eliminate inconsistencies. Validation procedures, such as cross-verifying responses and performing reliability tests, were carried out to ascertain the accuracy and integrity of the dataset. Sophisticated statistical methods were utilized to examine the quantitative data to determine patterns, correlation, and trends concerning leadership style and stakeholder engagement.

The researcher analyzed the findings and made significant conclusions that responded directly to the study's research questions and goals. These discoveries were summarized in a complete research report, which involved the study's methodology, outcomes, findings, conclusions, and suggestions.

To maintain ethical requirements and protect the data, actual names of the participants were substituted with code names, and all identifying details were strictly kept confidential. Electronic data was kept in a secure electronic database with limited access to authorized personnel. Paper copies of questionnaires were locked in a safe cabinet. All digital and physical data will be stored for one year after the study has been concluded or upon the release of the research results, whichever is later. Digital files will be irretrievably erased after this time, and physical copies will be destroyed by confidential shredding to meet data protection procedures and guard participants' confidentiality.

### Data Analysis

For the analysis of data, the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was employed to investigate the correlations among leadership styles, interpersonal attributes of school heads, and the level of external stakeholders' participation in school programs. The technique allowed

the researcher to determine the strength and direction of the linear relationships among the variables. Through the analysis of these correlations, the researcher was able to understand more deeply how leadership practices affected stakeholder engagement, uncovering significant patterns and trends. Further, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to compare differences in leadership style among school principals in different schools in Maasin Districts II and III. ANOVA was specifically useful in determining whether there were significant differences in leadership style according to different factors, such as school environment or stakeholder involvement outside the school. This method yielded useful insights into the effectiveness of various leadership styles, informing best practice for school heads in encouraging stakeholder engagement.

To supplement these analyses, other statistical measures like weighted mean, frequency analysis, and percentage analysis were also utilized. The weighted mean enabled a more subtle interpretation of the data by considering the different levels of significance of various variables. For instance, some leadership behaviors or stakeholder engagement factors were more impactful in determining outcomes, and the weighted mean gave a better indication of their effect. Frequency and percentage analyses provided a descriptive picture of the data, illustrating the prevalence and distribution of leadership styles and levels of stakeholder engagement in the sample. These analyses identified the most important trends and patterns, rendering the data clear and easier to understand. The results were beneficial for policymakers, administrators, and teachers in developing goal-oriented initiatives and measures to enhance school-community partnerships and leadership practices in Maasin Districts II and III.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The research was done with a rigorous focus on ethical principles to provide protection for participants' rights and privacy during the research process. Based on the principle of beneficence, the research focused on enhancing students', teachers', and community members' well-being through the school-Community Partnership Program while keeping potential harm at minimum and maximizing benefits. Ethical considerations were accorded importance with the endorsement of the University of Visayas Research and Ethics Committee with Reference No. 2024-080 dated March 20, 2024. Autonomy and dignity were respected through the respect for the rights, cultural diversity, and views of all parties involved in giving primary importance to inclusiveness in decision-making to ensure that the opinion of school leaders, teachers, students, and community members was given value. The concept of justice was reinforced by ensuring fair access to the program's benefits and rectifying any possible inequities or injustices through open policies and procedures. Transparency was central to trust-building, with open communication serving to ensure that information regarding the program's objectives, processes, and results was clearly communicated, supported by periodic updates and feedback mechanisms. Overall, the study followed ethical guidelines that protected participants' rights, with a scrupulous and respectful, open, and inclusive research process.

### **Results and Discussion**

This section presents the results of the data analysis and their corresponding discussion. The presentation follows the sequence of the research questions as stipulated in the statement of the problem.

#### **Demographic Profile of the Participants**

To better understand the leadership practices and stakeholder dynamics in Maasin Districts II and III, it is essential to first examine the demographic characteristics of the school heads who participated in the study. Their age, gender, educational attainment, years of service, and areas of specialization offer valuable content for interpreting their leadership behaviors and perspectives on community engagement. Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the 34 participating school heads, providing a foundation for subsequent analyses.

The demographic profile of the participants provides several significant insights with important implications for educational planning and school leadership. Among the 34 participants, the majority were female (61.76%), suggesting that school leadership in the sample is largely female. The gender distribution could impact leadership styles and decision-making in schools, emphasizing the need to consider gender-responsive leadership support systems and training. By age, the majority of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 46–55 years (58.82%), indicating a comparably mature population of school principals with rich life and work experience. This is also an indicator of the necessity for succession planning as these individuals move toward retirement.

In terms of professional positions, most of the participants are in the role of Principal 1 (52.94%), then the Head Teachers (41.18%), and a limited number in the Teachers-in-Charge position (5.88%). The result shows that the respondents are mainly taking up formal leadership positions, which can enrich the study with in-experienced-based insights into school administration. Years in service as school head also demonstrate a fairly even distribution, with 38.24% having served 11–15 years and 32.35% having served 1–5 years, which indicates a blend of both veteran and newer administrators. This diversity could offer insight into both long-established and developing leadership practices.

Academic qualifications-wise, most of the respondents have advanced studies, 29.41% at the MAED–CAR level and 23.53% with MAED units. But very few have doctorate degrees (2.94%), indicating a potential gap in opportunities or incentives for higher academic achievement among school heads. This may be a potential area for professional development interventions. The majority of the participants are specialized in either General Education (44.12%) or Educational Management (32.35%), with few specializations in

content areas like English, Math, or Science. This indicates that although administrative knowledge is prevalent, content-area leadership might be limited, which could affect the implementation of the curriculum and instructional supervision.

In general, the demographic information reveal that the participants in the study are mostly mature, highly qualified women in formal school leadership roles, with training mainly in general or administrative education. These profiles imply that whatever findings or recommendations are drawn from the study will most likely reflect the views of experienced educational leaders and can guide focused professional development programs, succession planning strategies, and support for higher academic endeavors.

Table 2. *Demographic Profile of the Participants*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender	Male	13	38.24
	Female	21	61.76
Age	36 - 40	4	11.76
	41 - 45	7	20.59
	46 - 50	10	29.41
	51 - 55	10	29.41
	56 - 60	3	8.82
Position	Teacher In Charge	4	5.88
	Head Teacher	14	41.18
	Principal 1	18	59.94
Years in Service as School Head	1 - 5 yrs.	11	32.35
	6 - 10 yrs.	7	20.59
	11 - 15 yrs.	13	38.24
	16 - 20 yrs.	3	8.82
Highest Educational Attainment	BEED	6	17.65
	BSED	1	2.94
	MAED with units	8	23.53
	MAED – CAR	10	29.41
	MAED Graduate	5	14.71
	PhD Units	1	2.94
	PhD CAR	2	5.88
	PhD Graduate	1	2.94
Field of Specialization	General	15	44.12
	Educ. Management	11	32.35
	English	2	5.88
	Math	2	5.88
	Filipino	2	5.88
	Natural Science	1	2.94
	TLE	1	2.94

### **Dominant leadership styles exhibited by school heads in Maasin Districts II and III**

Leadership style is a defining attribute of a school head's approach to management, communication, and decision-making. Understanding the dominant leadership styles among school heads can illuminate the nature of their interactions with both staff and external stakeholders. Table 3 identifies and ranks the leadership styles practiced by school heads in Maasin Districts II and III, as derived from their self-reported responses to the leadership style inventory.

Table 3. *Dominant leadership styles exhibited by school heads in Maasin Districts II and III*

<i>Leadership Style</i>	<i>Total Score</i>	<i>Mean Score</i>
Transformational	441	2.76
Democratic	457	2.86
Autocratic	256	2.67
Laissez-Faire	255	2.65

By reference to calculated mean scores, Democratic Leadership is the most pervasive form of leadership among school principals, and in second place is Transformational Leadership. Autocratic and Laissez-Faire styles have marginally lower scores, suggesting they are less used. Overall, the trend is in favor of participatory and collaborative practices of leadership.

These findings align with current research that highlights the significance of democratic and transformational leadership in enhancing school effectiveness, stakeholder participation, and teacher motivation. Democratic leadership, Huang and Liao (2021) state, strengthens team solidarity, quality of decision-making, and organizational trust—essential components for school-community partnerships. In the same way, transformational leadership has been proven to foster shared vision, empower employees, and encourage educational innovation (Kowalski & Branson, 2020).

Conversely, lower results in autocratic and laissez-faire leadership are consistent with contemporary leadership writings that caution

against overly directive or hands-off techniques in high-growth educational contexts. A survey by Çelik and Kayabaş (2022) prioritized the assertion that autocratic leadership can forestall teacher freedom and cooperation and that laissez-faire style frequently leads to ambiguous guidance and diminished accountability.

The preference for transformational and democratic leadership also complements the worldwide trend of shifting towards inclusive and participative school governance models. These models are linked with greater student achievement, better teacher retention, and more community engagement (Yilmaz & Altinkurt, 2023).

### Interpersonal Qualities of the school heads in Maasin Districts II and III

Beyond leadership style, a school head's interpersonal qualities significantly influence school climate and stakeholder relationships. These skills include their ability to initiate relationships, disclose personal information, assert displeasure, provide emotional support, and manage conflicts. Table 4 summarizes the interpersonal competencies of the school heads in Maasin Districts II and III based on the standardized assessment used in this study.

Table 4. *Interpersonal Qualities of the school heads in Maasin Districts II and III*

Category	Items	Category Mean	Descriptive Interpretation (DI)
Initiating Relationship	Items 1–9	3.76	I'm good at this
Disclosing Personal Info	Items 10–15	3.31	I'm ok at this
Asserting Displeasure	Items 16–23	3.63	I'm good at this
Providing Emotional Support	Items 24–32	3.64	I'm good at this
Managing Interpersonal Conflict	Items 33–40	3.68	I'm good at this

Overall Mean Score: 3.60

Overall Interpretation: I'm good at this

According to category means, the respondents scored highest in 'Initiating Relationship' with a mean of 3.76. The respondents scored lowest in 'Disclosing Personal Information' with a mean of 3.31. On average, respondents are interpersonally competent, particularly at handling interpersonal conflicts and offering emotional support. These findings indicate a general high level of interpersonal competence among the participants, indicating strengths in building relationships, empathy, and conflict resolution—abilities closely linked with positive work environments and effective school leadership (Yin, Lee, Zhang, & Jin, 2022). High competence in relationship initiation and conflict management facilitates collaboration and team cohesion, critical in educational environments (Wang et al., 2021).

The lower disclosure score on personal information could signify professional boundaries or cultural inclinations toward protective communication. Recent research indicates that although openness is responsible for more intensified relationships, teachers tend to govern individual disclosure to ensure authority and professionalism (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020). Additionally, the high marks in conflict management and emotional support indicate the increased significance of emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning skills in educational leadership. These relationship competencies are recognized to be associated with lower burnout and higher well-being in school staff (Park & Jang, 2023).

### Extent of Involvement of External Stakeholders as perceived by the School Heads

One of the central aims of the study is to evaluate the level of involvement of external stakeholders in school-community partnership programs. The extent of stakeholder engagement plays a pivotal role in the success of educational initiatives and school development. Table 5 illustrates the frequency distribution of school heads' perceptions regarding the degree of involvement of stakeholders in their respective schools.

Table 5. *Extent of Involvement of External Stakeholders as perceived by the School Heads*

Levels of Involvement	Frequency	Percent	Mean/SD	Description
Very High Involvement	0	0		
High Involvement	21	61.8	3.4	Moderate
Moderate Involvement	11	32.4	0.295	Involvement
Less Involvement	2	5.9		
No Involvement	0	0		
Total	34	100		

Note. 4.21-5.00= Very High Involvement 3.41-4.20= High Involvement 2.61-3.40= Moderate Involvement 1.81-2.60= Less Involvement 1.00-1.80= No Involvement

Based on the information shown, the degree of participation of external stakeholders perceived by school principals is largely classified as High Involvement with 61.8% of the respondents in favor of this level. Following this is Moderate Involvement at 32.4%, and 5.9% of school principals perceived Less Involvement. It is observed that there were no Very High or No Involvement responses.

The mean that has been computed as 3.40 at a standard deviation of 0.295 plots within the boundaries of Moderate Involvement by the provided scale, indicating while most of the responses indicate high involvement, overall average perception sits at the edge between Moderate and High involvement.

This means that although most school administrators acknowledge a high level of stakeholder involvement, this participation is not yet uniform enough to be rated very high overall. The medium mean score informs us that there could still be some stakeholders who need more defined roles, incentives, or encouragement to become more engaged in school-community partnership initiatives. Various reasons might impact these levels of participation, such as gaps in communication, muddled expectations, absence of incentives, or lack of available opportunities for participation.

These results resonate with the findings of Wanjue (2025), who highlighted that external stakeholder participation—such as that of parents, local government units, NGOs, and private organizations—is crucial in developing a supportive school-community environment. Yet, their research also indicated that such participation is largely dependent on school leadership, communication strategies, and inclusive approaches. When school leaders value collaboration, build solid interpersonal relationships, and convey the importance of stakeholder contributions, participation increases. (Culduz, 2023).

Hence, the present results indicate that although external stakeholder participation is evident and appreciated in the Maasin City municipalities, there is still potential for enhancement. School administrators need to play a more active role in establishing more formalized and purposeful opportunities for participation.

### Correlation Between Stakeholders' Involvement and School Heads' Interpersonal Qualities

Interpersonal qualities of school leaders are often considered key drivers of effective partnerships with external stakeholders. However, this study explores whether these qualities necessarily correlate with higher stakeholder engagement. Table 6 presents the correlation between school heads' interpersonal traits and the extent of stakeholder involvement, shedding light on how specific interpersonal behaviors may influence external collaboration.

Table 6. *Correlation Between Stakeholders' Involvement and School Heads' Interpersonal Qualities*

<i>Pair of Variables</i>	<i>Spearman rho</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Stakeholders' Involvement and Initiating Relationship	-.339*	.050	Reject Ho	Significant
Disclosing Personal Information	.049	.785	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Asserting Displeasure with Others	-.334	.053	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Providing Emotional Support	-.106	.550	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant
Managing Interpersonal Conflict	-.371*	.031	Reject HO	Significant

\*Correlation is significant at .05 level at  $df = 33$

The research also investigated the correlation between the presence of external stakeholders in school-community partnerships and interpersonal qualities of school heads, by employing Spearman's rho as a measure for the strength and direction of said correlations. Statistical analysis indicated two interpersonal qualities among school heads and stakeholder presence that had statistical significance: initiating relationships ( $\rho = -0.339$ ,  $p = .050$ ) and managing interpersonal conflict ( $\rho = -0.371$ ,  $p = .031$ ). The negative correlations, although significant, indicate that as school heads rate higher in these interpersonal characteristics, stakeholders' perceived participation somewhat diminishes. Although at first glance counterintuitive, this can indicate underlying problems in leadership dynamics or incongruent expectations in collaboration (Caballes & Panol, 2021). For instance, when school heads take over relationship-building or conflict management procedures, stakeholders may feel less empowered or less necessary, thus decreasing their active participation (Mehmood et al., 2023).

Conversely, stakeholder involvement did not have important correlations with the school heads' propensities to reveal personal data ( $\rho = .049$ ,  $p = .785$ ), express displeasure with someone ( $\rho = -0.334$ ,  $p = .053$ ), or offer emotional support ( $\rho = -0.106$ ,  $p = .550$ ). This suggests that although these interpersonal attributes can affect internal team dynamics, they might not have a significant impact on shaping how external stakeholders view or engage in partnership programs. (Fobbe & Hilletoft, 2021).

These are supported by Wang et al.'s (2022) study of trust and school leadership, highlighting that interpersonal skills only are not adequate in building effective external engagement. Rather, there needs to be balance between relational openness and collective responsibility. Unless school leaders undertake too much initiating or controlling in partnerships, stakeholders will feel passive or disconnected. Strong partnerships work best when leadership creates collaborative space, rather than being the sole initiator.

### Correlation Between Leadership Style and Stakeholders Involvement

To further explore the dynamics of stakeholder engagement, the study examines whether certain leadership styles are more effective at encouraging active participation from external partners. Table 7 shows the statistical relationship between the school heads' leadership styles and the level of stakeholder involvement, aiming to identify which leadership approaches foster greater community participation in school initiatives.

Transactional leaders are likely to facilitate stakeholders engagement more than the other type of leadership. The results in Table 4 show a statistically significant relationship between school heads' leadership styles and the level of external stakeholders' participation in school-community partnership programs, as reflected in the Chi-square value of 14.03 with  $p$ -value .029. Because the  $p$ -value is less than the .05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it indicates that leadership style is actually linked to the level of stakeholders' participation in school activities.

Table 7. Correlation Between Leadership Style and Stakeholders Involvement

Leadership Style	Stakeholders Involvement			Total	$\chi^2$	p-value	Decision
	Less Involved	Moderately Involved	Highly Involved				
Transactional	0	0	6	6	14.03	.029	Reject Ho
Democratic	2	10	6	18			
Autocratic	0	1	3	4			
Laissez Faire	0	0	6	6			
Total	2	11	21	34			

Of the four leadership styles—Transactional, Democratic, Autocratic, and Laissez-Faire—the statistics indicate that Transactional leadership is best suited to stimulate stakeholder participation. Of the six school heads who self-identified as transactional, all had stakeholders rated under "high involvement." This shows a trend whereby goal-driven, organized leadership with definite expectations and results supports greater stakeholder engagement. Transactional leaders generally provide incentives and recognition for active participation, which makes stakeholders feel their efforts are valued and noticed. (Khairy et al., 2023).

Surprisingly, Democratic leadership, commonly praised for its openness, had a more varied result, with stakeholders distributed between the "less involved," "moderately involved," and "highly involved" groups. While democratic leaders are renowned for promoting participation and collective decision-making, this approach may at times result in slower processes or watered-down accountability, which may account for the mixed levels of stakeholder involvement. In contrast, Laissez-Faire and Autocratic leaders had little representation, and while their stakeholders still exhibited evidence of involvement, the small sample size makes it challenging to make robust conclusions regarding their effectiveness. (Parveen et al., 2022).

These results are in line with Emma's (2024) research, which contended that transactional leadership, although perceived as more managerial, can be high in engagement when used with precision and regular follow-through. Within school environments, where time-sensitive outputs and quantifiable outcomes tend to be emphasized, stakeholders might be more responsive to leadership that defines clear roles, responsibilities, and reward.

Interpersonal qualities and leadership styles are often interlinked, with certain styles nurturing stronger relational skills. To investigate this interplay, Table 8 analyzes the relationship between the leadership style of school heads and their corresponding interpersonal competencies. This table seeks to determine whether particular leadership orientations tend to align with higher levels of interpersonal effectiveness.

Table 8. Correlation Between Leadership Style and Interpersonal Qualities

Leadership Style	Interpersonal Qualities				Total	$\chi^2$	p-value	Decision
	Poor	Fair	Very Good	Excellent				
Transactional	0	0	6	0	6	22.59	.007	Reject Ho
Democratic	2	4	10	2	18			
Autocratic	0	1	3	0	4			
Laissez Faire	0	0	1	5	6			
Total	2	5	14	7	34			

Leaders with laissez-faire leadership style tend to have better interpersonal qualities. There is a significant relationship between leadership style and interpersonal qualities. The investigation of the correlation between school heads' leadership styles and their interpersonal qualities revealed a Chi-square statistic value of 22.59 with a p-value of .007, showing that there is a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Because the p-value is much less than the conventional .05 benchmark, the null hypothesis is rejected, affirming that leadership style has a significant correlation with the quality of interpersonal traits exhibited by school heads.

A closer examination of the data identifies a significant trend: leaders who demonstrated a Laissez-Faire style of leadership were most often rated as having "excellent" interpersonal skills, with 5 of the 6 receiving this highest rating. While laissez-faire leadership has been criticized as being too hands-off and possibly lacking in structure, in this specific instance, it seems to provide more latitude for trust establishment, open communication, and relationship-oriented leadership. (Iqbal et al., 2021) Such autonomy that the style offers can empower school heads to build greater personal relationships and more substantial interactions with internal staff members as well as external stakeholders. (Goenaga, 2024).

Concurrently, Democratic leaders, who comprised the largest sample group, registered a more even distribution between "fair," "very good," and "excellent" ratings, with the majority of the responses falling under the "very good" bracket. This reflects the premise that democratic leadership, which is based on collaboration and participative decision-making, calls for and develops interpersonal skills such as active listening, empathy, and mutual respect. Somehow though, a few democratic leaders still did not receive the lower ratings, implying that having the style itself is not sufficient; the success hinges on how the leader deploys it in actual situations. (Sarong, 2024).

Interestingly, Transactional leaders, who consistently received "very good" ratings, did not attain "excellent" interpersonal quality scores. This may imply that although transactional leadership excels with regards to structured performance and task delegation, it does

not necessarily consider the interpersonal factor. This resonated with Ikart (2023), who posited that leadership effectiveness is not just based on strategy or discipline but greatly determined by emotional intelligence and interpersonal acumen.

## Conclusions

The study found significant correlations between school heads' leadership styles and stakeholder involvement. Transactional leadership showed a clear positive relationship with high stakeholder participation. Democratic leadership, though inclusive, had mixed results with stakeholders across varying levels of involvement. The interpersonal qualities of school heads also correlated with stakeholder involvement, particularly in relationship initiation and conflict management, where negative correlations suggest that school heads who dominated these areas might inadvertently decrease stakeholder participation.

To foster greater stakeholder involvement, it's recommended that school heads strategically leverage transactional leadership approaches, as these have demonstrably positive correlations with high participation. This could involve clearly defining roles, setting specific goals for stakeholder contributions, and offering recognition or incentives for their engagement. While democratic leadership is valuable for its inclusive nature, school heads should refine its implementation to ensure consistent and high levels of stakeholder participation across all involvement tiers. This might involve more structured feedback mechanisms or clearer pathways for democratic input to translate into tangible outcomes. Furthermore, school heads should critically assess their interpersonal qualities and how they influence stakeholder dynamics. Specifically, they should aim to empower stakeholders in relationship initiation and conflict management rather than dominating these processes. By adopting a more facilitative and less controlling stance in these interpersonal aspects, school heads can cultivate an environment where stakeholders feel genuinely valued and more inclined to participate actively.

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