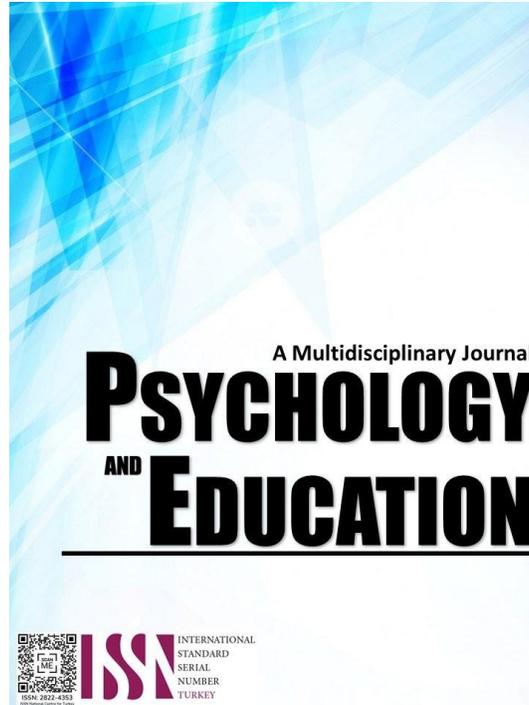


COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF LEADERSHIP APPROACHES BETWEEN RURAL AND URBAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR



PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

Volume: 50

Issue 9

Pages: 136-144

Document ID: 2025PEMJ4850

DOI: 10.70838/pemj.500204

Manuscript Accepted: 10-21-2025

Comparative Assessment of Leadership Approaches Between Rural and Urban School Administrator

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Abstract

This study assessed the leadership approaches of school administrators in rural and urban areas in Carcar City Division for the school year 2025-2026. This research employed a mixed-methods approach to achieve a thorough insight into the leadership approaches of administrators in rural and urban schools. The results revealed that the leadership approaches of school administrators, such as inspiring a shared vision, fostering a positive school culture, providing individualized support, encouraging innovation and risk-taking, and building trust and empowerment, were all rated as Strongly Agree by teachers in both rural and urban areas. The findings revealed no significant difference in the level of leadership approaches between the two contexts. However, a significant relationship was found between years of teaching experience and the administrators' leadership approaches in both settings. Additionally, in urban schools, age was significantly related to the ability to inspire a shared vision. Contextual factors in rural and urban schools influence leadership effectiveness by shaping the challenges, resources, and community dynamics administrators face. Emerging themes included participative, collaborative, and adaptive leadership; context-responsive and relationship-centered practices; as well as challenges in operations, human resources, and relational aspects. The findings also highlighted the importance of sustained, reflective professional development tailored to local contexts. Rural and urban school leaders face distinct challenges, yet both demonstrate strong commitment to student success. Effective leadership requires adaptability, context-awareness, and tailored development to meet each school's unique needs through a leadership development plan.

Keywords: *leadership approaches, urban and rural school administrators, mixed-method approach, Carcar city division, leadership development plan*

Introduction

In a worldwide context, school leaders oversee and guide educational organizations, ensuring the seamless operation of daily activities and future growth. This position involves supervising academic programs, establishing policies, managing personnel, overseeing budgets, and ensuring adherence to both local and global educational standards. According to OECD (2020), school leaders, including principals, headteachers, and educational leaders, are tasked with establishing a supportive learning atmosphere, promoting student success, and interacting with parents, communities, and stakeholders. The extent and characteristics of their responsibilities may differ depending on the nature of the schools they were assigned to; however, their fundamental purpose continues to be providing quality education and enhancing institutional efficiency.

School leaders and administrators within the Department of Education should exhibit effective leadership styles that notably impact academic achievement by molding school culture, enhancing teacher motivation, and improving overall learning environments. Urban school leaders might have greater access to training and support networks, enabling them to adopt more dynamic, resource-intensive leadership approaches. In contrast, leaders in rural schools typically depend on relational and adaptive leadership, overcoming challenges by cultivating robust community connections and utilizing local resources (Leithwood et al., 2020). This underscores the necessity of leadership development that is sensitive to context, enabling all school leaders to lead effectively and fairly (Benjamin, 2019).

In the Carcar City Division, school leaders in rural and urban schools face distinct challenges that shape their leadership approaches. Rural school leaders often deal with limited professional development opportunities, insufficient digital resources, and heavy workloads, which require flexible, community-focused management styles. In contrast, Walker and Qian (2022) argue that urban administrators face overcrowded classrooms, high teacher turnover, and increased pressure to meet performance goals, leading to a greater reliance on structured leadership methods. These different contexts affect how leaders motivate staff, manage resources, and implement policies. Despite these differences, both rural and urban leaders share common needs such as improved ICT support and leadership training. Understanding these challenges can guide the development of targeted capacity-building programs that reflect the realities of both settings.

The research aligned the theory, practice, and policy within the Department of Education. It is theoretically based on leadership models shown the importance of school leaders in shaping school culture, enhancing teacher performance, and impacting student results. This research by Sandoval (2023) offers insight into how school leaders modify their leadership approaches according to their specific environments, whether rural or urban, emphasizing issues such as resource constraints, teacher retention, and community engagement. Regarding policy, it aligns with the objectives of DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, which encourages the development of leadership according to the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). By pinpointing leadership needs specific to the context, the research can guide more fair and focused leadership training programs and capacity-development efforts. This study ultimately

makes certain that educational leadership policies address the varied realities of schools nationwide, fostering effective school governance in both urban and rural environments.

Thus, this research compares the leadership approaches of school heads in rural and urban settings in Carcar City Division for the school year 2025-2026, emphasizing their effects on school performance. Rural leaders frequently employ adaptive, community-oriented strategies, whereas urban leaders tend to adopt more organized, performance-centric methods. Regardless of their differences, both encounter obstacles in school leadership across instruction and administration. The research highlights the importance of customized leadership development and strategies to enhance efficient school administration in various settings.

Research Questions

This study assessed the leadership approaches of school administrators in rural and urban areas of Carcar City Division for the school year 2025-2026 as a basis for a leadership development plan. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the demographic profile of the rural and urban respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. sex;
 - 1.3. educational attainment;
 - 1.4. area of specialization; and
 - 1.5. years of teaching experience?
2. What is the level of leadership approaches of school administrators in rural and urban areas as described in the following indicators:
 - 2.1 inspiring a shared vision;
 - 2.2 fostering a positive school culture;
 - 2.3 encouraging innovation and risk-taking; and
 - 2.4 building trust and empowerment?
3. Is there a significant difference between the level of leadership approaches of school administrators in rural and urban areas?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile and administrator's leadership approaches in rural and urban areas?
5. How do rural and urban school administrators' contexts influence leadership approaches and effectiveness?

Literature Review

Sandoval (2023) states that leadership approaches are crucial for enabling teachers to apply effective teaching methods and connect meaningfully with students. Among these, leadership approaches had proven to be especially effective, as it fostered innovation, cultivated a common vision, and encouraged professional growth, essential factors for enhancing student outcomes. In DepEd Order No. 42, series of. 2017 highlights the need to enhance leadership practices by motivating school leaders to embrace strong leadership approaches that promote collaboration, ongoing learning, and elevated academic standards. Examined across rural and urban settings, leadership strategies can differ due to varying resources, community demands, and challenges.

School leaders face various challenges in overseeing school dynamics based on whether their institutions are situated in rural or urban environments. In rural areas, principals encounter multiple roles, inadequate staffing, and professional isolation, all of which reduce the likelihood of collaboration and collective decision-making, crucial for fostering a dynamic school atmosphere (Palmes, 2023). In contrast, leaders of urban schools face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, significant student diversity, and constant teacher turnover, factors that hinder instructional consistency and undermine collaborative leadership initiatives (Saunders, 2022). These circumstances isolate leaders in rural areas and disjointed teams in urban settings, greatly hindering the creation of a cohesive school culture and obstructing ongoing professional development.

Walker and Qian (2022) highlight that urban school leaders implement instructional leadership to drive change, utilize research-informed strategies, and provide resource support for innovative teaching, capitalizing on their intricate organizational resources to enhance student success. Brauckmann et al. (2020) emphasize that effective urban school leaders practice entrepreneurial leadership by forming alliances and working with neighboring schools and communities, promoting a culture of ongoing enhancement and collective resources. In the same vein, Martinez-Garcia et al. (2025) characterize successful urban school principals as servant leaders who adeptly tackle challenges, exhibit enthusiasm and lofty expectations, and cultivate teacher commitment and cooperative teamwork in extensive school districts.

A 2025 study emphasizes that urban principals prioritize instructional leadership by integrating data-driven decision-making, overseeing teaching and learning, and offering extensive professional development opportunities. These factors are linked to improved instructional quality and increased teacher effectiveness via defined objectives, feedback, and resource distribution (Hallinger, 2025). A separate study highlights that urban principals improve educational outcomes by promoting collaborative school environments, establishing clear instructional objectives, and providing teachers with essential resources and training, thereby increasing teacher job satisfaction and enhancing the school climate (Guo, 2025).

Rural principals are noted for prioritizing the development of teachers' skills and fostering a collaborative environment, even amid challenges such as teacher turnover and limited professional resources. Frameworks for adaptive leadership that encourage distributed leadership and policies attuned to community needs are essential for ongoing school enhancement in rural settings (Hallinger, 2025; Guo, 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

This research employed a mixed-methods approach to gain a thorough understanding of administrators' leadership approaches in rural and urban schools. The quantitative study used a descriptive-correlational approach to investigate the relationship between administrators' demographic characteristics and their leadership approaches. This assisted in recognizing trends and patterns in leadership behavior in various school environments. Simultaneously, the qualitative aspect employed thematic analysis, based on the framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006), to investigate in depth how school administrators in rural and urban areas understand and address their unique contextual challenges.

Respondents

The respondents of the study were the 33 elementary school teachers from rural schools and 62 from urban schools in the Carcar City Division. This research employed a simple random sampling method to select respondents, ensuring that each teacher in the target group had an equal opportunity to be included, thereby improving representativeness and minimizing selection bias. They were chosen based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The criteria for inclusion were: (1) they are teachers at the elementary level in the Carcar City division, (2) presently having an advisory class, and (3) serve as classroom teachers for the 2024-2025 school year. The exclusion criteria are as follows: (1) not elementary school teachers within the Carcar City division, (2) not managed by the division, and (3) not presently serving as classroom teachers.

Instrument

In this study, the researchers utilized a research instrument adapted from Rodriguez and Santos (2025). The validity of the adapted instrument was established through expert evaluations and factor analysis, demonstrating robust content and construct validity, with numerous items demonstrating significant factor loadings. Model fit indices, including Cronbach's Alpha for consistency, indicated high reliability coefficients, generally exceeding 0.9, indicating that the instrument reliably measures the intended leadership constructs. Moreover, the tool consists of three parts. Part 1 pertains to the demographic profile in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, area of specialization, teaching position, and years of teaching experience. Part 2 contains statements on the administrator's leadership approaches to school performance, including inspiring a shared vision, fostering a positive school culture, providing individualized support, encouraging innovation and risk-taking, and building trust and empowerment. Part 3 contains the qualitative question: How do the contexts of rural and urban school administrators influence leadership approaches and effectiveness?

Procedure

The data collection process required obtaining ethical approval and consent from the Dean of Graduate Studies at CTU-Barili and the Schools Division Superintendent of the Carcar City Division. All study participants provided informed consent to confirm that they comprehended their voluntary involvement. After obtaining institutional review board approval, the researcher began data collection as planned. Questionnaires were circulated and collected via multiple platforms, with assistance offered to participants as required. Post-collection, the data were safely stored, analyzed with suitable statistical techniques, and kept in a locked cabinet for a minimum of one year.

Data Analysis

Percentages and frequency counts were utilized to display and examine the characteristics of the teacher respondents. A weighted mean was used to assess the effect of school leaders' leadership styles across rural and urban institutions. Thematic analysis was performed to illustrate how the environments of rural and urban school leaders impacted their leadership styles and effectiveness. Pearson's *r* was used to assess the extent of the relationship between the demographic profile and administrators' leadership styles regarding school performance. This statistical test was selected due to the data being measured on an ordinal scale.

Ethical Considerations

In carrying out this research, the study placed significant emphasis on ethical considerations for the following reasons: the researcher strongly supports the objectives of academic research, including the expansion of knowledge through the sharing of the study's findings. The researcher upholds the principles essential for teamwork, including respect for one another and equity. This is crucial as research outcomes rely on the teamwork between the researcher and the participants. Therefore, the researcher is responsible for their actions and closely adheres to ethical principles, ensuring no one is harmed. The study has given significant attention to his duty to uphold and safeguard the respondents' rights, to avoid causing harm, and to ensure that the respondents face no form of harm. Therefore, the study will embody compassion and supreme generosity that will showcase advantages among the participants.



Results and Discussion

This part provides, examines, and deliberates on information derived from participants' responses to particular issues in the research study. The results of the research were clearly displayed in a table accompanied by interpretation and analysis. After the data analysis, the findings were examined and debated concerning the study's objectives and existing research.

Table 1. *Age Profile of the Respondents*

Age	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
≤30	13	13.69
31 – 40	30	31.58
41 – 50	38	40.00
51 – 60	5	5.26
61≥	9	9.47
Total	95	100.00

Table 2. *Sex Profile of the Respondents*

Sex	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Male	11	11.58
Female	84	88.42
Total	95	100.00

Table 3. *Educational Attainment Profile of the Respondents*

Educational Attainment	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
BS Degree	35	36.84
MA Academic Requirement	45	47.37
MA Degree	8	8.42
Doctorate Academic Requirement	2	2.11
Doctorate degree	1	1.05
Others	4	4.21
Total	184	100.00

Table 4. *Area of Specialization Profile of the Respondents*

Area of Specialization	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
General Education	50	52.63
Science	10	10.43
Math	7	7.37
Araling Panlipunan	4	4.21
HELE	17	17.90
Pilipino	2	2.11
Others (DPE)	5	5.26
Total	95	100.00

Table 5. *Years of Teaching Experience*

Years of Teaching	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 year	3	3.16
1-3	6	6.31
4-6	21	22.11
7-10	30	31.58
More than 10 years	35	36.84
Total	95	100.00

Table 6. *Leadership Approaches Of School Administrators In Rural And Urban Areas*

Indicators	Rural		Urban	
	\bar{wX}	VD	\bar{wX}	VD
Inspiring a Shared Vision	4.35	SA	4.33	SA
Fostering a Positive School Culture	4.33	SA	4.32	SA
Providing Individualized Support	4.44	SA	4.38	SA
Innovation and Risk-Taking	4.39	SA	4.35	SA
Building Trust and Empowerment	4.37	SA	4.35	SA
Composite	4.38	SA	4.35	SA

As shown in Table 6, the information on school leaders' leadership approaches in rural and urban settings shows consistently high scores across all measures, with all weighted averages rated Strongly Agree. Teachers in both rural and urban settings view their school leaders as successful in creating a common vision, nurturing a supportive school environment, offering personalized assistance,



encouraging innovation and risk-taking, and fostering trust and empowerment. The consistently favorable views of school leadership in both rural and urban areas underscore that effective leadership strategies are crucial for achieving success in schools. This indicates that, regardless of the setting, school administrators who focus on a collective vision, support, personalized support, innovation, and trust can foster positive, empowering atmospheres that inspire teachers and improve overall school effectiveness (McEwan, 2023). It also suggests that leadership development initiatives must focus on these essential skills to enhance schools in various settings.

Table 7. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Leadership Approaches of School Administrators in Rural and Urban Areas

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision	Result
Rural vs Urban	0.851*	0.081	Failed Reject Ho	Not Significant

*significant at p<0.05 (two-tailed)

The results in Table 7, which indicated a significant relationship among leadership approaches among school administrators in rural and urban areas, reported a p-value of 0.081, exceeding the usual significance level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis was retained, suggesting that there is no statistically significant difference in leadership styles between rural and urban school leaders. This indicates that, irrespective of geographic area, school leaders exhibit comparable leadership traits and practices. The results suggest that effective leadership principles are uniformly implemented across both environments, supporting the notion that robust leadership transcends contextual differences between rural and urban schools.

Table 8. Significant Relationship Between the Demographic Profile and Administrator's Leadership Approaches in Rural Area

Variables	x2	p-value	Decision	Remark
Age and Leadership Approaches	1.87	0.434	Failed to reject Ho	Not Significant
Sex and Leadership Approaches	1.93	0.520	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Educational Attainment and Leadership Approaches	2.89	0.417	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Area of Specialization and Leadership Approaches	1.71	0.099	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Years of Teaching Position and Leadership Approaches	1.12	0.009	Reject Ho	Significant

Alpha level = 0.05

As shown in Table 8, only the demographic characteristics of rural school leaders indicated that Years of Teaching Experience exhibited a notable connection with their leadership approaches. School heads with greater teaching experience demonstrated stronger skills in essential leadership areas, such as motivating a shared vision, nurturing a positive school environment, offering personalized support, promoting innovation and risk-taking, and fostering trust and empowerment. This indicates that gained teaching experience improves administrators' ability to demonstrate and apply key leadership traits (Liu et al., 2022). It emphasizes the importance of hands-on classroom experience as a basis for effective school leadership in rural areas.

Table 9. Significant Relationship Between the Demographic Profile and Administrator's Leadership Approaches in Urban Area

Variables	x2	p-value	Decision	Remark
Age and Leadership Approaches	1.49	0.383	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Sex and Leadership Approaches	2.45	0.728	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Educational Attainment and Leadership Approaches	1.87	0.823	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Area of Specialization and Leadership Approaches	1.91	0.613	Fail to reject Ho	Not significant
Years of Teaching Position and Leadership Approaches	1.62	0.004	Reject Ho	Significant

Alpha level = 0.05

As a result of the significant relationship between the demographic characteristics and leadership approaches of urban administrators and school heads, important connections emerged in two main areas. Age demonstrated a significant correlation with the leadership aspect of Inspiring a Shared Vision, with a p-value of 0.001, suggesting that older administrators are more likely to exhibit visionary leadership. Second, extensive years of teaching experience were significantly associated with all six assessed leadership approaches, including inspiring a shared vision, fostering a positive school culture, providing individualized support, encouraging innovation and risk-taking, and building trust and empowerment, as indicated by p-values below 0.05. These findings led to rejection of the null hypothesis and indicate that age and professional experience significantly influence effective leadership behaviors in urban school environments. This underscores the significance of experience-driven growth in leadership training programs, stressing that more experienced administrators might have a richer understanding and the abilities required to manage intricate, evolving school settings (Anderson & Reynolds, 2023).

Qualitative Analysis On How Do Rural And Urban School Administrators' Contexts Influence Leadership Approaches And Effectiveness

Table 10. What are the prevailing leadership approaches used by rural and urban school administrators?

Types of Schools	Responses	Themes
Rural Schools	"The principal of our school regularly solicits input from teachers and staff prior to making significant decisions, guaranteeing that all voices are acknowledged and engaged in developing	Participative Leadership



	school policies” (T1)	
	“Our principal fosters a robust teamwork culture, promoting collaboration and making decisions through collective discussions and mutual understanding.” (T2)	
	The school leader promotes an atmosphere where teachers and staff freely exchange ideas and issues, resulting in joint decision-making that advantages the whole school community. (T3)	Collaborative Leadership
	“Our principal thinks that engaging staff in the decision-making process fosters trust and encourages a feeling of accountability among all school members.” (T4)	
	“Through promoting consensus, our school leader guarantees that decisions mirror the varied viewpoints in the school, aiding in the development of more successful and broadly endorsed initiatives.” (T5)	
Urban Schools	“Our principal regularly conducts open forums and staff meetings that actively invite input, ensuring decisions are clear and reflective of the team’s perspectives.” (T1)	Participative Leadership
	“A collaborative leadership model exists in which our school leader encourages teachers to take initiative and make significant contributions to the overall objectives and policies of the school” (T2)	
	“The principal stresses the importance of communication and teamwork, holding the view that the optimal solutions arise from collective effort and appreciating everyone’s knowledge” (T3)	Collaborative Leadership

Participative Leadership

Teachers highlight the principal's active role in engaging them in the decision-making process, ensuring that contributions from every staff member are solicited and appreciated before finalizing significant school policies. This illustrates a collaborative leadership approach, acknowledged in contemporary educational leadership studies as essential for promoting inclusive school atmospheres and improving organizational efficiency. As Northouse (2022) states, participative leadership focuses on distributing decision-making power and motivating group members to share their thoughts and recommendations. This method enhances decision quality and boosts staff commitment and satisfaction, as they sense their opinions are truly acknowledged and valued. The teacher's responses clearly demonstrate this principle, indicating that the principal’s leadership methods foster shared accountability and openness. In the same vein, Glover (2020) emphasized that participative leadership in schools fosters a democratic environment in which collaboration and consultation play crucial roles. They claim that this approach fosters improved communication, increased morale, and a greater sense of professional responsibility among educators. By seeking input before making major decisions, as the teachers mentioned, the principal cultivates trust and shared ownership, which are crucial for effective school governance.

Collaborative Leadership

The teachers’ responses clearly reflect the principles of collaborative leadership, emphasizing how the principal actively cultivates a culture of teamwork, open communication, and mutual understanding. Recent literature on educational leadership underscores the importance of such practices, noting that principals who engage teachers as partners rather than subordinates promote greater collective efficacy and shared responsibility for student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2020; Harris, 2021). By fostering an environment where dialogue is encouraged and diverse perspectives are valued, the principal not only supports professional growth but also enhances the school community’s cohesion and resilience, aligning with contemporary views that collaborative leadership is key to sustainable school improvement.

Table 11. *How do contextual factors like resources, staff dynamics, community involvement influence the leadership approaches in rural and urban schools?*

<i>Types of Schools</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Rural Schools	“I have noticed in rural schools like ours, scarce resources typically compel me to be more innovative and adaptable to the leadership approaches of my school head” (T1)	Adaptive Leadership in Response to Contextual Realities
	“I’ve observed that dynamics dynamics in rural schools often feel more cohesive, so our school head prioritizes personal relationships and building trust” (T2)	
	“Our school heads engage with community activities which has significantly influences her leadership approaches. Se strive to connect more diverse and occasionally fragmented communities to build support.” (T3)	
Urban Schools	“The school head adjusts leadership strategies based on available resources, often demonstrating creativity and flexibility in resource-limited rural settings” (T4)	Context-Responsive and Relationship-Centered Leadership
	“Recognizing the differences in staff dynamics, the leader builds close, trust-based relationship while promoting structured collaboration in more complex urban environments” (T5)	
	Community involvement is approached adaptively, with the head engaging closely with tight-knit rural communities and strategically building connections in diverse urban contexts to foster broader support. (T7)	



Based on the responses from the interview, the question of how contextual factors like resources, staff dynamics, and community involvement influence leadership approaches in rural and urban schools led to the formulation of two themes: adaptive leadership in response to contextual realities and context-responsive, relationship-centered leadership.

Adaptive Leadership in Response to Contextual Realities

This theme illustrates how different conditions, such as resource access, team dynamics, and community engagement, affect leadership styles, necessitating that principals adjust their methods to meet the specific needs of rural and urban school settings. Leithwood et al. (2020) highlighted that successful school leadership is influenced by context and that principals need to adapt their leadership approaches to the distinct challenges and resources of their settings. It emphasizes that effective leadership is most evident when it adapts to contextual factors, such as the school's resources, teachers' engagement, and the degree of community engagement. School leaders in rural and urban environments encounter different challenges, necessitating that their leadership strategies, ranging from cooperative methods to strategic resource allocation, be customized to enhance school performance and student success.

Context-Responsive and Relationship-Centered Leadership

This theme illustrates how the school leader purposely modifies leadership approaches to meet the specific needs of each environment, whether rural or urban, by being resourceful, attuned to staff relationships, and actively involved with the community. It emphasizes a leadership approach based on comprehending context and appreciating relationships as essential factors for successful school administration. Clarke and Wildy (2021) found that principals in varied school settings need to show contextual responsiveness, which involves strong connections, modifying leadership approaches to maintain relevance and effectiveness, and building strong bonds with students and the community.

Table 12. What are the common leadership challenges encountered by school administrators in rural and urban settings?

Types of Schools	Responses	Themes
Rural Schools	One major challenge is the lack of sufficient resources, such as teaching materials, technology, and funding, which affects both instruction and school operations." (T1) "We often struggle with teacher shortages, especially in specialized subjects, which increases workloads and affects student learning." (T2) "Balancing instructional leadership with heavy administrative tasks like paperwork and compliance reporting can be overwhelming." (T3) "Teachers have varying levels of experience, motivation, and expectations, which makes it challenging to lead effectively while meeting everyone's needs." (T4) "Handling frequent behavioral issues among students, especially without enough support staff, adds pressure to leadership responsibilities." (T5)	Operational and Human Resource Challenges in School Leadership
Urban Schools	"Introducing new policies or innovations frequently encounters pushback from employees who are used to conventional methods." (T6) "Amid numerous competing demands, consistently finding sufficient time to concentrate on instructional leadership and teacher development remains a continual challenge." (T7) "Maintaining staff motivation and morale, particularly during times of crisis or change, can be quite challenging." (T8)	Relational and Adaptive Challenges in Educational Leadership

Operational and Human Resource Challenges in School Leadership

This theme highlights the considerable daily challenges that school leaders encounter due to limited resources, insufficient staffing, uneven workloads, managing varied personnel, and dealing with student behavior, all of which affect their effectiveness in leadership and the maintenance of instructional standards. It highlights the practical and staff-related challenges that prevail in school leadership environments. This was supported by Rodelio (2023) indicates that school leaders encounter substantial daily challenges that affect their leadership effectiveness and the preservation of instructional quality. Insufficient resources and a lack of teachers result in uneven workloads, while the challenges of overseeing varied personnel add further pressure. Furthermore, student disruptive behavior requires significant attention, often pulling leaders away from teaching priorities.

Relational and Adaptive Challenges in Educational Leadership

Educational leaders frequently encounter relational and adaptive challenges that demand more than merely technical solutions. Relational difficulties entail managing complex interpersonal dynamics among employees, learners, and the community, whereas adaptive issues require leaders to promote changes in attitudes, culture, and procedures in times of uncertainty. Heifetz and Linsky's (2023) adaptive leadership framework suggests that successful leaders should involve stakeholders cooperatively to manage these changing dynamics rather than relying exclusively on authority or expertise. Day et al. (2019) found that leaders who foster strong relationships and develop adaptive capacity are more equipped to address changing educational needs, maintain teacher motivation, and enhance school performance. Nonetheless, neglecting these relational and adaptive elements often leads to resistance, diminished



morale, and stalled reform initiatives, underscoring their essential role in the success of educational leadership.

Table 13. *How can leadership development programs be improved to support school heads in both contexts more effectively?*

<i>Types of Schools</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Rural Schools	“Programs for leadership development need to be tailored to the specific contexts, tackling the distinct challenges that school leaders encounter in various settings, instead of relying on a generic model” (T1) “School leaders ought to connect with networks of colleagues to exchange experiences and solutions” (T2) “Guidance from seasoned leaders may assist newer school principals in developing more rapidly” (T3)	Operational and Human Resource Challenges in School Leadership
Urban Schools	“The growth of leadership should be continuous. Single-instance workshops are insufficient” (T6) “There ought to be follow-ups, coaching meetings, and learning groups where leaders can reflect and develop gradually” (T7)	Relational and Adaptive Challenges in Educational Leadership

The theme “Contextualized and Collaborative Leadership Development” highlights the need to create leadership initiatives that cater to the unique socio-cultural, geographic, and institutional settings in which school leaders operate, while also encouraging ongoing collaboration through peer networks and mentoring. Recent studies reinforce this perspective, indicating that tailored leadership training enhances school leaders’ ability to manage specific challenges and effectively drive instructional improvement (Almulla, 2024). Research highlights that professional networks and mentorship promote reflective practice, accelerate professional development, and improve decision-making in complex educational settings (Hadi & Kusumawardani, 2023). In addition, collaborative and distributed leadership approaches have been shown to enhance school improvement results by fostering shared responsibility among educators and encouraging innovation in teaching and learning.

Sustained and Reflective Professional Development

These themes stressed the importance of ongoing, extended learning for school leaders, moving beyond standalone workshops to incorporate structured coaching, team discussions, and reflective practices. Knight (2018) emphasizes that ongoing professional learning integrated into daily leadership activities is most impactful, noting that coaching greatly increases the likelihood of successfully implementing new strategies. This method promotes enhanced learning, flexibility, and significant transformation in leadership conduct.

Conclusions

The research uncovered notable disparities in leadership styles among school administrators in the rural and urban regions of Carcar City Division. City administrators often embrace more collaborative and leadership approaches, fostering teamwork and creativity among teachers. Conversely, rural teachers frequently rely on more conventional, authoritative methods due to scarce resources and unique community dynamics. Despite these distinctions, both groups demonstrate a strong commitment to improving student outcomes and school effectiveness. Rural school heads face challenges such as limited resources and infrastructure, which shape their leadership approach and decision-making. Urban school leaders gain increased access to professional development and technology, facilitating more advanced leadership practices. In both environments, successful leadership depends on adaptability and responsiveness to the distinct needs of each school community. The research highlights the importance of customized leadership development and support in improving educational administration across varied settings.

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