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Principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership as predictors of teachers job performance: An explanatory sequential design

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Abstract
This study investigated the influence of principals' decision-making styles and ethical leadership on teachers' job performance. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the research first gathered quantitative data to determine the levels of principal decision-making styles, ethical leadership, and teachers' job performance among public secondary school teachers in Region XI, followed by qualitative inquiry to further explain and validate the quantitative findings. A purposive sampling technique was utilized in selecting the teacher-respondents for the survey, which served as the quantitative phase. Subsequently, in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussion (FGD) were conducted to substantiate and clarify the salient quantitative results. The quantitative data were analyzed using mean and regression analyses, while the qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings revealed that principals' decision-making styles were rated high, indicating that they were oftentimes evident; ethical leadership was rated very high, signifying that it was always manifested; and teachers' job performance was also rated very high, meaning it consistently met expectations. Moreover, the combined effect of principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership was found to significantly influence teachers' job performance. The qualitative phase confirmed the quantitative results, highlighting the consistent high and very high ratings and reaffirming the significant combined influence of the two independent variables. Data integration was characterized by connecting-confirmations, wherein the qualitative findings reinforced and elaborated on the quantitative outcomes.

Keywords: Principal decision-making styles, ethical leadership, job performance, explanatory sequential, Philippines

Introduction
Teachers' job performance refers to their ability to meet professional development standards by demonstrating essential knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills [23], while also motivating students, creating meaningful learning experiences, and pursuing continuous professional growth [10, 11]. Despite these expectations, studies report persistent challenges. In the U.S., over 40 percent of teachers in traditional public schools were rated as underperforming [14]. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, unclear curriculum design and inconsistent pedagogy contributed to declining teacher performance [41], while in Uganda, high absenteeism, inadequate training, and limited professional growth hindered effectiveness [1]. In Australia, 38 percent of teachers were rated "Developing" or "Unsatisfactory," highlighting systemic issues in maintaining teaching quality [21].

In the Philippines, teacher performance concerns are also evident. Students at Batangas State University rated their teachers' performance as only "satisfactory," pointing to poor instructional delivery [42]. Likewise, students in Mindanao reported that many teachers struggled with classroom management, student engagement, and building connections with learners [38]. Overall, most teachers perform at low to medium-low levels due to weak teaching strategies and limited student engagement, which can negatively affect learning outcomes [49]. These findings emphasize the need to explore factors that influence teacher performance to improve educational quality.

School leadership is a critical determinant of teacher performance. Principal decision-making refers to deliberate choices that shape school operations, teacher support, and student

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learning [46]. Ethical leadership, grounded in honesty, fairness, and accountability, fosters trust, equitable decision-making, and a positive organizational climate [26,27,31,34]. Teachers' performance reflects classroom effectiveness, professional growth, and the creation of supportive learning environments [5-7,12,24]. While prior studies have examined leadership styles from principals' perspectives [28-30,36,39,40] and factors affecting job performance, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, self-efficacy, and motivation [13,33,39,40,47,48], no study has explored the combined effect of principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership on the job performance of secondary public-school teachers in Region XI.

Materials and Methods

This research utilized a sequential explanatory mixed method design to examine the influence of principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership on teachers' job performance in public sector secondary schools. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how principals' leadership practices affect teachers' professional effectiveness, classroom performance, and overall contribution to student learning, offering deeper insights than either method alone [44].

Locale and Participants

The study involved junior and senior high school teachers from eleven school divisions in the Davao Region: Davao City, Island Garden City of Samal (IGaCoS), Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Oriental, Davao Occidental, Digos City, Mati City, Tagum City, Panabo City, and Davao de Oro. These divisions were selected for their large teacher populations and high population density, facilitating data collection. To ensure representation, participants were drawn from all five provinces and six major cities, providing a comprehensive view of factors influencing public secondary school teachers' job performance. The sample included 371 teachers from Region XI, determined using the Raosoft online Sample Size Calculator, which estimated the required size for a 5 percent margin of error and 95 percent confidence level based on a total population of 10,520 teachers [9].

Participants met clear inclusion criteria: only regular, permanent public-school teachers with at least three years of teaching experience in Region XI were selected, as the region's mix of urban and rural settings allowed examination of socio-economic and resource-related influences on job performance. Teachers from other regions were excluded. From the 371 teachers, 17 were further selected for qualitative data collection through In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives.

Research Instruments

Three standardized survey instruments were utilized to measure the study variables. Each instrument was adapted with permission and subjected to content validation by a panel of experts [19]. A pilot test involving 30 public secondary school teachers confirmed clarity and reliability of the items. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.86 to 0.93, indicating high internal consistency across all constructs. A summary of the instruments, their sources, and reliability indices is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of Research Instruments and Reliability Indices

Variable	Instrument Source	Dimensions / Example Indicators	No. of Items	Cronbach's α
Principal Decision-Making Styles	Hengpiya[21]	Autocratic, Delegation, Participative	19	0.86
Ethical Leadership	Khan and Javed	Moral Person, Moral Manager	18	0.93
Teachers' Job Performance	Ali and Zubair	Instructional Qualities, Professional Qualities, Personal Qualities	24	0.87

As shown in Table 1, all instruments demonstrated strong reliability, supporting their suitability for use in the Philippine educational context. The subscales collectively captured the multidimensional nature of principal decision-making styles, ethical leadership, and teachers' job performance within public secondary schools in Region XI.

Data Collection Procedure

Before data collection, formal approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Dean of the Graduate School of the University of the Immaculate Conception (UIC), and ethical clearance was secured from the UIC Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC) prior to administering the validated instruments. Formal permission was then requested from the heads of the participating schools. Upon approval, teachers who met the inclusion criteria were invited to participate. Each participant received an information sheet detailing the study objectives, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of participation. Questionnaires were distributed in printed form to ensure accessibility and ease of completion during faculty meetings or designated breaks, and completed forms were collected on the same day to maintain a high retrieval rate and ensure data integrity.

All responses were subsequently encoded and checked for completeness, accuracy, and consistency. Data preparation included reverse scoring of negatively worded items and the computation of composite scores for each construct. Only fully completed questionnaires were retained for statistical analysis, resulting in a final dataset of 371 valid responses.

Statistical Treatment of Data

- **Quantitative Strand:** Quantitative data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and multiple regression analysis. The mean assessed the status of principal decision-making styles, ethical leadership, and teachers' job performance, while the standard deviation measured data dispersion. Multiple regression determined the significance of the influence of principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership on teachers' job performance.

- **Qualitative Strand:** For the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was used to interpret data from IDIs and FGD, following a six-phase framework: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and refining themes, and reporting findings [16]. Interviews were recorded to aid coding, and member checking was conducted to verify the accuracy, authenticity, and relevance of the analyzed data.

Ethical Considerations

The study complied fully with institutional and national ethical research standards. Ethical approval was secured from the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC) before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all data were handled with strict confidentiality. Participants were assured that their responses would be used exclusively for academic purposes and reported only in aggregate form.

Results

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the findings of the study, encompassing both the quantitative data gathered through surveys and the qualitative insights obtained from interviews and focus group discussions.

Levels of the Variables of the Study

Table 2 shows the consolidated results on the levels of principal decision-making styles, ethical leadership, and teachers' job performance as perceived by the respondents. The principals' decision-making styles obtained an overall mean of 3.79, described as high, indicating that such leadership practices are oftentimes evident among school heads, with a small standard deviation of 0.53 showing closely clustered responses. Meanwhile, ethical leadership recorded an overall mean of 4.32, interpreted as very high, suggesting that principals consistently demonstrate ethical behavior in their leadership roles, supported by a standard deviation of 0.68, which reflects minimal variability in teachers' perceptions. Lastly, teachers' job performance attained an overall mean of 4.59, also described as very high, signifying that teachers consistently perform their duties effectively and professionally, with a standard deviation of 0.37 indicating strong agreement among the respondents.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Principal Decision-Making Styles, Ethical Leadership and Teachers Job Performance

Variable	Mean	SD	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
Principal Decision-Making Styles	3.79	0.53	High	This indicates that decision-making is oftentimes evident reflects that such practices are consistently demonstrated in various aspects of school management, whether in instructional supervision, staff collaboration, or administrative planning [39,40].
Ethical Leadership	4.32	0.68	Very High	This indicates that Principals with a very high level of ethical leadership demonstrate fairness, integrity, and transparency in their decisions and interactions with teachers and students [43].
Teachers Job Performance	4.59	0.37	Very High	This indicates that teachers consistently demonstrate competence, dedication, and effectiveness not only in lesson delivery, classroom management, and student engagement but also in fulfilling tasks such as lesson preparation, timely reporting, professional development, and ethical conduct [8].

The results reveal that principals demonstrate high levels of decision-making and very high ethical leadership, while teachers exhibit very high job performance. These findings suggest a generally positive school environment characterized by effective leadership and strong teacher commitment, providing a solid basis for further inferential analysis on the relationship among these variables.

Significance of the Influence of Independent Variables on Dependent Variable of the Study

Reflected in Table 3 are the results of the regression analysis, showing the influence of principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership on the job performance of teachers. The results indicate that all independent variables were found to be significant predictors of job performance ($p < .05$).

Table 3: Significance of the Influence of Principal Decision-Making Styles (PDMS) and Ethical Leadership (EL) on Teachers Job Performance of Public Secondary Teachers

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t-value	p-value	Remarks
(Constant)	3.354	0.136	——	24.599	0.000	
PDMS	0.106	0.037	0.151	2.821.	0.005	Significant
EL_	0.194	0.029	0.358	6.690	0.000	Significant

The regression analysis revealed that Principal Decision-Making Styles significantly predict teachers' job performance ($\beta = .151$, $p < .05$), indicating that a one-unit increase in decision-making styles corresponds to a .151 increase in job performance. This suggests that participative and delegation-oriented practices among principals contribute to enhancing teachers' performance. Likewise, Ethical Leadership also significantly predicts teachers' job performance ($\beta = .358$, $p < .05$), showing a stronger positive influence compared to decision-making styles. This implies that when principals consistently demonstrate fairness, integrity, and trustworthiness, they inspire teachers to perform their duties with greater commitment, motivation, and effectiveness.

Standpoint of the Participants

Revealed in Table 4 are the standpoints of the participants during the in-depth interviews (IDIs) and the focus group discussion (FGD) on the salient points of the quantitative results of the study, showing the level, the essential themes, and the corresponding typical reasons.

Table 4: Standpoints of the Participants on the Salient Points of the Quantitative Result

Level	Essential Theme	Typical Reasons
Decision-Making Styles	Confirmed high level of Decision-Making Styles	Consulting teachers and coordinators before finalizing decisions.
		Empowering teachers by assigning responsibilities based on potential.
		Balancing authority with openness to teacher input.
		Protecting teachers by ensuring support when procedures are followed.
		Delegating through regular meetings and structured systems.
		Taking risks while justifying and standing by decisions.
Ethical Leadership	Confirmed very high level of Ethical Leadership	Showing fairness while balancing personal biases in decisions.
		Demonstrating trustworthiness through consistent consultation and transparency.
		Rewarding teachers with tokens, recognition, and appreciation.
		Disciplining calmly and professionally without raising voice.
		Maintaining a happy and motivating school environment.
		Empowering teachers by recognizing efforts and supporting growth.
Teachers' Job Performance	Confirmed very high level of Teachers' Job Performance	Implementing lesson plans beyond compliance to ensure clear student understanding.
		Aligning motivational strategies with lessons to boost learning impact.
		Utilizing available school resources to enhance effective learning.
		Practicing punctuality and preparedness as core teaching principles.
		Considering student capacity when preparing lessons for better outcomes.
		Anchoring lessons on competencies while addressing diverse learning styles.
Significant Influence of Decision-Making Styles and Ethical Leadership to Teachers' Job Performance	Confirmed Significant Influence of Decision-Making Styles and Ethical Leadership to Teachers' Job Performance	Clarifying decisions to motivate teachers and build confidence in their work.
		Providing fair, consistent, and inspiring leadership that directs teacher performance.
		Serving as a moral compass in running the school and shaping its culture.
		Modeling supportive and hardworking leadership that encourages teacher participation.
		Exercising ethical leadership that balances administrative tasks with compassion.
		Acting as the "captain of the ship," guiding both teachers and students toward shared goals.

The participants expressed positive standpoints regarding principal decision-making styles, ethical leadership, and teachers' job performance. They observed that principals consistently practice participative decision-making by consulting teachers and coordinators before finalizing decisions, delegating tasks suited to teachers' strengths, and balancing authority with openness to feedback. Principals were also described as ethical leaders who uphold fairness, transparency, and trustworthiness, reward and recognize teachers' efforts, address disciplinary matters calmly, and foster a motivating school environment. Likewise, teachers were seen to demonstrate strong job performance by preparing well-structured lessons, using motivational strategies, utilizing available resources, maintaining punctuality and preparedness, and aligning instruction with students' needs and competencies to promote effective learning outcomes.

Standpoints of the Participants on the Significance of the Influence
The combined significant influences of the two independent variables on teachers' job performance are confirmed. Participants emphasized that principals play a vital role by clarifying decisions to motivate teachers and build their

confidence; providing fair, consistent, and inspiring leadership that directs teacher performance; serving as a moral compass in managing the school and shaping its culture; modeling supportive and hardworking leadership that fosters teacher participation; exercising ethical leadership that balances administrative responsibilities with compassion; and acting as the "captain of the ship," guiding both teachers and students toward shared goals. Thus, across the divisions of the whole region XI, teachers described principals as fair and inspiring leaders when decision-making and ethical leadership were practiced together.

Discussion

The findings revealed a high level of principal decision-making styles among public secondary school teachers, indicating that principals are actively involved in school management and consistently demonstrate participative and structured leadership. Such practices foster collaboration, shared responsibility, and clear direction, resulting in motivated and empowered teachers. This finding aligns with previous studies [2,39,40,45] which found that strong decision-making enhances teacher productivity and professional commitment. Likewise, effective decision-making from school leaders is a key determinant of teacher performance [3].

Ethical leadership was found to be at a very high level, suggesting that principals consistently uphold fairness, integrity, and transparency in their interactions. Such ethical conduct fosters trust, respect, and a positive school climate that encourages teachers to perform with commitment and enthusiasm. This result echoes the findings of previous researches [20,37,43] which all concluded that ethical leadership enhances teachers' motivation and job satisfaction. Similarly, maintaining high ethical standards cultivates dedication and morale among teachers [4,25].

The study also revealed a very high level of teachers' job performance, implying that teachers consistently demonstrate competence, diligence, and professionalism in their work. This can be attributed to the strong decision-making and ethical leadership of principals, which create supportive environments that enhance teacher accountability and effectiveness. These results are consistent with previous works [8,18,32] which emphasized that principled and participative leadership contributes to high teacher performance and positive school outcomes.

Regression analysis showed that both principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership significantly influence teachers' job performance, with ethical leadership exerting a stronger effect. This implies that effective and moral leadership jointly predict teachers' success in performing their duties. Participative decision-making enhances teacher empowerment, collaboration, and innovation. Additionally, it was found that participative school management in Southeast Asia directly improved instructional quality and teacher morale [28-30].

Qualitative findings from In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) confirmed these results. Teachers described their principals as inclusive and consultative, involving them in decision-making processes and recognizing their contributions. They also portrayed their principals as ethical role models who maintain fairness, transparency, and professionalism. These accounts mirror the ethical leadership framework [17] and the meta-analysis [15], both highlighting that ethical leaders strengthen trust

and commitment through moral behavior and consistent fairness.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data revealed a strong convergence, showing that participative decision-making and ethical leadership are not only statistically significant but also deeply experienced in daily school life. Teachers emphasized that principals who communicate clearly, decide transparently, and act ethically foster a culture of trust and shared purpose. Such leadership motivates teachers to perform beyond compliance, cultivating collaboration and sustained professional growth.

Finally, the study confirms that principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership are significant predictors of teachers' job performance, with ethical leadership having a stronger influence. These findings support the concept of moral leadership [22] and the assertion that participative and ethical practices [35] enhance trust and performance. Principals who lead both strategically and morally create empowered, motivated, and high-performing teachers, thereby ensuring sustained organizational excellence and educational success.

Conclusion

Principal decision-making styles were oftentimes evident, which means that school leaders in the study context regularly involved teachers in decisions, delegated responsibilities according to competence, and balanced authority with consultation. This finding signifies that principals demonstrated participative and delegation-oriented approaches that promoted shared accountability, collaboration, and empowerment among teachers.

Ethical leadership was always manifested, which means that principals served as moral persons and moral managers, modeling fairness, trustworthiness, and professional integrity. They ensured that ethical standards were upheld through calm discipline, recognition of teachers' efforts, and consistent transparency.

Additionally, teachers' job performance was always manifested, which implies that teachers exhibited strong instructional, professional, and personal qualities, such as punctuality, preparedness, honesty, and creativity, resulting in highly effective teaching performance and professional commitment.

Principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership both contributed positively to teachers' job performance. Individually and collectively, they significantly influenced how teachers performed their duties. The regression model revealed that about one-fifth of the variability in teachers' job performance could be explained by the principals' decision-making and ethical leadership behaviors. This implies that teachers' performance is strengthened when they are guided by inclusive, transparent, and value-driven leadership. However, other factors beyond these two variables may also contribute to variations in job performance, such as school climate, workload management, and teacher motivation systems.

From the perspectives of teachers gathered through the IDIs and FGD, the presence of participative decision-making and ethical leadership created a culture of trust, collaboration, and empowerment. Teachers expressed appreciation for principals who sought their input before finalizing decisions, empowered them through delegation, and recognized their achievements. They further described their principals as moral role models, leaders who balanced accountability with

compassion, and authority with fairness. These leadership practices inspired teachers to perform better, aligning with the idea that clarity of decisions, professional support, and moral consistency elevate job performance and foster collegial relationships among staff.

The integration of the quantitative and qualitative results confirmed the significant influence of principal decision-making styles and ethical leadership on teachers' job performance. The connecting-confirmation link demonstrated that participative and ethical leadership behaviors not only correspond with statistical results but are also experienced by teachers as strong motivators for professional excellence. The combined influence of these two leadership dimensions promotes an environment of collaboration, mutual respect, and shared vision, key elements that drive high teacher performance. Among the two predictors, ethical leadership emerged as the stronger influence, as teachers deeply valued principals' fairness, moral example, and integrity. Overall, this suggests that the performance of teachers in the school setting is largely determined by the quality of leadership that embodies inclusiveness, ethical responsibility, and moral stewardship.

Acknowledgments

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