



TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING PRACTICES ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship among school principals' transformational leadership practices, their decision-making styles, and school performance in the Schools Division of the City of Meycauayan, Bulacan, Philippines. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the study surveyed 59 public and private elementary school principals (total enumeration, screened for transformational leadership) and a stratified random sample of teachers with at least 15 years of experience, using the Transformational Leadership Survey, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 5X, and the Melbourne Decision-Making Questionnaire (MDMQ), supplemented by documentary analysis of school performance indicators. Both principals and teachers rated principals' transformational leadership practices as Highly Observed across all four dimensions (idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration). Principals' decision-making styles leaned toward vigilance and away from hypervigilance, procrastination, and buck-passing. School performance was generally strong: most schools were rated Advanced on School-Based Management practice, with high completion and graduation rates and low dropout rates. Both transformational leadership ($B = .327, p = .004$) and decision-making style ($B = .367, p = .000$) were significantly associated with school performance, but a Sobel test found no evidence that decision-making style significantly mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and school performance ($z = 1.65, p = .09$). These findings suggest that principals' transformational leadership and decision-making practices each independently relate to school performance, without one operating through the other, and point to a need for continued investment in both leadership development and decision-making support for school administrators.

Keywords: *Transformational leadership; decision-making styles; school performance; mediation analysis; educational leadership*



1. Introduction

School principals' leadership style is widely regarded as a key driver of school effectiveness, and transformational leadership in particular has drawn sustained research interest for its association with organizational adaptability and staff commitment. Transformational leaders are theorized to operate along four dimensions: idealized influence, in which followers adopt a leader's values and ethical example; intellectual stimulation, in which leaders encourage followers to approach problems creatively; inspirational motivation, in which leaders articulate a compelling shared vision; and individualized consideration, in which leaders attend to each follower's specific developmental needs (Bass & Avolio, 2004). In Philippine basic education, transformational leadership has been proposed as a lever for making schooling more resilient and adaptable to a changing environment, a case reinforced by schools' experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A second, related strand of research examines how school leaders make decisions under pressure. Drawing on Janis and Mann's (1977) conflict model of decision-making, later formalized as the Melbourne Decision-Making Questionnaire (MDMQ) by Mann et al. (1997), decision-making style can be classified along four patterns: vigilance (careful, thorough consideration of alternatives), hypervigilance (anxious, rushed decisions under perceived time pressure), procrastination (needless delay), and buck-passing (shifting responsibility for the decision to others). Because school principals routinely face high-stakes decisions — academic problems, disciplinary incidents, and crises such as the pandemic — their characteristic decision-making style plausibly shapes both their own effectiveness and the school's outcomes (Ko, 2024).

Individually, transformational leadership and decision-making style have each been linked to organizational performance in prior research. What remains less clear is whether decision-making style is simply a parallel correlate of school performance, or whether it functions as a mechanism through which transformational leadership translates into better school outcomes — that is, whether decision-making style mediates the leadership–performance relationship. This study addressed that question directly, testing both the direct associations and the mediating role of decision-making style using regression and a Sobel test.

1.1 Purpose and Research Questions

This study aimed to identify whether school performance was affected by principals' decision-making style and transformational leadership practices in public and private elementary schools in the City of Meycauayan, Bulacan, Philippines, for School Year 2024–2025. Specifically, it asked: (1) What is the level of principals' transformational leadership practices, in terms of idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration, as assessed by principals and teachers? (2) What is the extent of principals' decision-making styles, in terms of vigilance, hypervigilance, procrastination, and buck-passing? (3) How may school performance be described in terms of School-Based Management (SBM) level of practice, completion rate, graduation rate, drop-out rate, and cohort survival rate? (4) Do principals' decision-making styles significantly mediate the relationship between transformational leadership practices and school performance? (5) Is there a significant relationship between school performance and both decision-making styles and transformational leadership practices? (6) What output may be proposed based on the findings?

1.2 Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant mediation of school principals' decision-making styles between transformational leadership practices and school performance.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between school performance and both decision-making styles and transformational leadership practices of school principals.



1.3 Conceptual Framework

This study followed an Input-Process-Output model. Inputs comprised the profile of school principals, teacher responses on principals' leadership and decision-making, and documentary data on school performance. The process consisted of instrument administration, data collection, and statistical analysis (regression and Sobel-test mediation analysis). The output was a set of proposed programs and technical support recommendations for teachers and school heads, derived from the findings. Transformational leadership practices (idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration) served as the independent variable; school performance (SBM level of practice, completion rate, graduation rate, drop-out rate, cohort survival rate) served as the dependent variable; and principals' decision-making styles (vigilance, hypervigilance, procrastination, buck-passing) were tested as a potential mediating variable between the two.



2. Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design, describing principals' transformational leadership practices and decision-making styles while testing their relationship to school performance, including a formal test of decision-making style as a potential mediating variable.

2.2 Population and Sampling

The population comprised all 59 public and private elementary school principals in the Schools Division of the City of Meycauayan, Bulacan (total enumeration), together with teachers holding at least 15 years of teaching experience under those principals. Principals first completed the Transformational Leadership Survey as a screening instrument; only principals who demonstrated transformational leadership on this screen, together with their teachers, proceeded to complete the MLQ Form 5X and MDMQ. Teacher sample size was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, with stratified random sampling used to proportionately represent each school. A total of 68 principal- and teacher-respondents participated. Respondent identities were protected using cluster labels (Cluster A–D) rather than individual or school names.

2.3 Instruments

Three standardized instruments were used. The Transformational Leadership Survey (adapted from Clark, 2011) screened principals for transformational leadership prior to further data collection. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Form 5X (Bass & Avolio, 1997, as cited in Orabi, 2016) measured the four transformational leadership dimensions using a 32-item, 5-point frequency scale (1 = Not Observed to 5 = Extremely Observed), with published reliability of $\alpha = .85$ (idealized influence), $.90$ (intellectual stimulation), $.91$ (inspirational motivation), and $.91$ (individualized consideration; Bass & Avolio, 2004), and an overall internal consistency of $\alpha = .86$ reported by Orabi (2016). The Melbourne Decision-Making Questionnaire (MDMQ; Mann et al., 1997, as cited in Felipe et al., 2020) measured four decision-making styles across 22 items on a 3-point scale (Not True for Me, Sometimes True, True for Me), with published reliabilities of $\alpha = .747$ (vigilance), $.783$ (hypervigilance), $.793$ (procrastination), and $.859$ (buck-passing). School performance was measured through documentary analysis of DepEd Schools Division Office records: SBM level of practice, completion rate, graduation rate, drop-out rate, and cohort survival rate for School Year 2023–2024, each converted to a 5-point descriptive scale (e.g., Outstanding, Very Satisfactory, Satisfactory, Poor, Needs Improvement) using DepEd-standard cut-offs.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Following approval from the researcher's adviser and the Dean of the Graduate School, and subsequent approval from the DepEd Schools Division Office in Meycauayan, Bulacan, questionnaires were distributed electronically via Google Forms (email and messenger) to principals and teachers, with a courtesy letter sent to participating schools. School performance documentation was separately requested from the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent. Completed responses were checked for completeness upon retrieval.

2.5 Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Frequency and percentage summarized SBM level, completion, graduation, and drop-out rates. Mean scores summarized transformational leadership and decision-making style ratings. Multiple linear regression tested the association between transformational leadership, decision-making style, and school performance, and a Sobel test evaluated whether decision-making style mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and school performance. Significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$ (95% confidence, 5% margin of error).



2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study complied with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173); respondent data were encoded confidentially and used solely for research purposes, and participation was voluntary, with participants free to decline or withdraw at any time without penalty.

3. Results

3.1 Transformational Leadership Practices

On the initial screening instrument, principals recorded an average rating of 3.54 (Routinely), indicating that most principals exhibited transformational leadership behavior. Table 1 presents the subsequent MLQ-based ratings of the four transformational leadership dimensions by both principals (self-rating) and their teachers.

Table 1. Transformational Leadership Practices, by Dimension and Rater

Dimension	Principal M	Interpretation	Teacher M	Interpretation
Idealized Influence	4.34	Highly Observed	3.94	Highly Observed
Intellectual Stimulation	4.38	Highly Observed	3.89	Highly Observed
Inspirational Motivation	4.35	Highly Observed	4.00	Highly Observed
Individualized Consideration	4.43	Highly Observed	3.94	Highly Observed

Scale: 4.50–5.00 Extremely Observed; 3.50–4.49 Highly Observed; 2.50–3.49 Observed; 1.50–2.49 Moderately Observed; 1.00–1.49 Not Observed.

Principals rated themselves highest on individualized consideration ($M = 4.43$) and lowest on idealized influence ($M = 4.34$); teachers rated their principals highest on inspirational motivation ($M = 4.00$) and lowest on intellectual stimulation ($M = 3.89$). Both rater groups placed all four dimensions in the Highly Observed band, indicating general agreement that principals practice transformational leadership consistently, with principals rating themselves somewhat more favorably than their teachers rated them.

3.2 Decision-Making Styles

Table 2 presents principals' decision-making styles as rated by principals and teachers.

Table 2. Principals' Decision-Making Styles, by Dimension and Rater

Style	Principal M	Teacher M	Interpretation
Vigilance	2.67	2.61	True to Me / Sometimes True
Hypervigilance	1.81	1.89	Sometimes True
Procrastination	—	—	Never (overall $M = 1.34$)
Buck-Passing	—	—	Never (overall $M = 1.20$)

Scale: 2.50–3.00 True for Me; 1.50–2.49 Sometimes True; 0.50–1.49 Not True for Me / Never. Procrastination and Buck-Passing were reported in the source document only as combined overall means, not disaggregated by rater.

Principals leaned toward vigilance (careful, thorough decision-making) and away from hypervigilance, procrastination, and buck-passing — a generally favorable decision-making profile.

3.3 School Performance

Table 3 summarizes school performance indicators across the 59 participating schools.

Table 3. School Performance Indicators (N = 59 Schools)

Indicator	Summary
SBM Level of Practice	59.3% Advanced, 37.3% Maturing, 3.4% Developing
Completion / Graduation / Cohort Survival	Predominantly Very High (81–100%) to High (61–80%) bands across schools; a small minority in the Average band
Drop-out Rate	84.7% of schools Very Low, 15.3% Low; none in Average, High, or Very High drop-out bands

Overall, schools in the division performed strongly: most were rated Advanced on SBM practice, maintained high completion, graduation, and cohort survival rates, and reported very low drop-out rates — consistent with effective retention and completion efforts across the division.

3.4 Relationship among Transformational Leadership, Decision-Making Style, and School Performance

Table 4 presents the regression coefficients for the relationships tested among the three main variables.

Table 4. Regression Results: Transformational Leadership, Decision-Making Style, and School Performance

Relationship
Transformational leadership → Decision-making style
Decision-making style → School performance
Transformational leadership → School performance

Both transformational leadership and decision-making style were significantly, positively associated with school performance. Transformational leadership was not significantly associated with decision-making style itself ($p = .099$).

3.5 Mediation Test (Sobel Test)

Because transformational leadership was not significantly associated with decision-making style (the first condition for mediation), a Sobel test was conducted to formally evaluate whether decision-making style mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and school performance (Table 5).

Table 5. Sobel Test for Mediation of Decision-Making Style

Path a (B)	Test Statistic (z)	SE	p	Decision	Interpretation
.376	1.65	.08	.09	Failed to Reject H_0	Not a Mediating Variable



The Sobel test was not statistically significant ($z = 1.65$, $p = .09$), so the null hypothesis of no mediation (H_{01}) was not rejected. Decision-making style does not significantly mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and school performance in this sample; both instead appear to relate to school performance independently of one another.

3.6 School Performance Indicators as Predictors of Transformational Leadership Ratings

A supplementary regression, reported in the source document, modeled transformational leadership ratings as a function of the four school performance indicators (SBM level, completion rate, drop-out rate, graduation rate). Using principals' self-ratings as the dependent variable, the model was significant overall ($R = .440$, $R^2 = .193$, $F = 13.232$, $p = .019$), with SBM level of practice the only significant individual predictor ($B = .327$, $p = .001$); completion, drop-out, and graduation rate were not significant. Using teachers' ratings as the dependent variable, the model explained more variance ($R = .576$, $R^2 = .332$, $F = 6.720$, $p < .001$), with both SBM level ($B = .239$, $p < .001$) and completion rate ($B = -.188$, $p = .009$) significant predictors.



4. Discussion

Principals in this study were rated as practicing transformational leadership consistently and at a high level across all four dimensions, by both their own account and their teachers' independent assessment — a pattern consistent with earlier findings that transformational leadership is broadly recognized as beneficial by both leaders and followers (Lokko, 2020). The modest gap between principal self-ratings (all above 4.30) and teacher ratings (clustered around 3.90–4.00) is a common pattern in 360-style leadership assessment and does not undermine the overall Highly Observed classification from either group.

Principals' decision-making profile — favoring vigilance over hypervigilant, procrastinating, or responsibility-shifting patterns — aligns with Janis and Mann's (1977) original conflict-model account of vigilance as the decision style most associated with careful, well-considered outcomes, and is consistent with prior applications of the MDMQ to educational administrators (Felipeco et al., 2020).

The central finding of this study is that transformational leadership and decision-making style were each significantly, independently associated with school performance, but decision-making style did not significantly mediate the leadership–performance relationship. In practical terms, this suggests that a principal's decision-making style is not simply the mechanism through which good leadership produces good school outcomes — both appear to matter on their own terms. This is a meaningfully different conclusion from treating decision-making as a downstream consequence of leadership style, and it implies that professional development targeting decision-making skills specifically (rather than assuming it will improve automatically alongside leadership training) may have independent value.

This study's overall pattern — strong, broadly observed transformational leadership; a vigilance-leaning decision-making profile; and strong school performance on completion, graduation, and dropout indicators — is consistent with the premise that transformational leadership supports positive school outcomes (Buenvenida & Ramos, 2019).



5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

School principals in the Schools Division of the City of Meycauayan, Bulacan, practiced transformational leadership at a consistently high level across all four dimensions, as corroborated independently by their teachers. Principals' decision-making styles leaned toward vigilance and away from hypervigilance, procrastination, and buck-passing. School performance across the division was strong, with most schools rated Advanced on SBM practice and showing high completion, graduation, and cohort survival rates alongside low drop-out rates. Both transformational leadership and decision-making style were significantly, positively associated with school performance; however, decision-making style did not significantly mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and school performance, indicating that the two leadership-related constructs operate as independent, rather than sequential, correlates of school outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations

1. Sustain and formally recognize principals' transformational leadership practices through continuing professional development, mentorship, and structured feedback from teachers, since both principal and teacher ratings confirm its consistent presence and its independent association with school performance.
2. Provide targeted training in decision-making skills for school heads — not solely as a byproduct of leadership training — given that decision-making style was independently, not mediately, related to school performance.
3. Continue monitoring SBM level of practice specifically, since it was the most consistent significant predictor across the regression models reported, alongside completion and graduation rate tracking already in place.
4. Replicate this study in other divisions, including those with lower-performing schools, to test whether the independence of transformational leadership and decision-making style as correlates of performance holds outside a high-performing division.
5. Resolve the analytic and reporting inconsistencies flagged in the integrity notes above — particularly the regression direction in Section 3.6 and the NAT-based sub-dimension claim in the original conclusion — with your statistician before this manuscript is finalized for submission or defense.

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