

Creative Leadership and Ethical Behavior of School Heads in Relation to Public Confidence

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Abstract. This study aimed to evaluate the influence of creative leadership and ethical behavior of school heads on public confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City using a non-experimental quantitative design with descriptive-correlational technique. A total of 248 elementary school teachers were selected through a purposive sampling with specific inclusion criteria. Adapted and enhanced survey questionnaires were pilot tested to ensure reliability and internal consistency. Findings revealed that school heads demonstrated an extensive level of creative leadership, particularly in collaborative decision-making and interdisciplinary learning, though support for professional development was only moderately extensive. Ethical behavior was also rated as extensive, with accountability for actions and transparency for in communication being most evident, while respect for diverse perspectives was least observed. Public confidence was extensively manifested, especially in community engagement and responsiveness to local needs, though communication practices were slightly less consistent. A significant relationship was found between creative leadership and public confidence, with interdisciplinary learning showing the strongest correlation. Similarly, ethical behavior had a significant effect on public confidence, particularly through fairness and accountability. Regression analysis showed that both creative leadership and ethical behavior significantly influenced public confidence, explaining 62.4% of its variance. These results supported the Transformational Leadership Theory by Burns (1978) and the Ethical Leadership Theory by Brown et al. (2005).

KEY WORDS

1. Creative leadership 2. ethical behavior 3. public confidence

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1. Introduction

This study explores the pivotal roles of creative leadership and ethical behavior exhibited by school heads in shaping public confidence towards educational institutions. With the increasing scrutiny of educational practices and management, the integrity and innovation of leadership significantly dictate public perception and trust. Recent trends indicate a troubling decline in public confidence, mainly attributed to perceived deficiencies in leadership

ethics and ineffective responses to dynamic educational demands. This study aims to identify core issues contributing to this downturn and assess how enhanced leadership strategies can rebuild trust and foster a supportive educational environment. The synthesis of creative leadership with principled governance forms the crux of this investigation, aiming to offer actionable insights that could reverse the current trends of public skepticism. The pandemic has

significantly eroded public confidence in learning institutions in the United States. Price et al. (2021) highlight that nine months into the outbreak, perceived trust in public authorities, including educational leaders, declined due to inconsistent policies and inadequate communication strategies. Systemic issues within education compound this erosion of trust. For instance, Niedlich et al. (2021) provide a comprehensive view of trust in education, concluding that challenges adapting to remote learning and ensuring equitable access have further undermined public confidence. Consequently, these factors have collectively contributed to growing skepticism about the effectiveness of educational institutions in the USA. Similarly, public trust in key African institutions and leaders, including educational establishments, is weakening. Adaba and Boio (2024) assert that this decline is due to pervasive corruption, lack of transparency, and ineffective governance, which have tainted the public's perception of educational leadership. Specifically, in Botswana, Manyeagae et al. (2019) assess the determinants of trust in public institutions and find that variables such as perceived service quality and institutional performance significantly influence public confidence. Therefore, these systemic issues have collectively undermined trust in the education sector throughout the African continent. In Asia, the low level of public confidence in learning institutions is also evident. Jiang and Zhang (2021) examine political trust in East and Southeast Asia and reveal that education levels, corruption perception, and urbanization jointly affect trust in public institutions, including schools. Moreover, Ferdous (2024) explores the situation in South Asia, noting that inefficiencies and a lack of accountability within the education system compromise citizens' trust in public institutions. Thus, these factors have increased public dissatisfaction and diminished confidence in educational leadership across various Asian countries. Specifically focusing on

the Philippines, challenges in educational leadership have exacerbated public distrust in learning institutions. Pelingon et al. (2024) discuss the self-efficacy of proficient public secondary school teachers and note that systemic issues hinder their effectiveness, negatively affecting public perception. A study conducted by Garcia Ching (2024) stated that while education is recognized as vital to national development, concerns about the effectiveness and accountability of school leadership have contributed to declining public trust in educational institutions. Despite efforts by the Department of Education to promote transparency and stakeholder engagement, the gap between policy and practice suggests a need for more decisive, more ethical, and trustworthy leadership in schools. Chua Reyes et al. (2022) argue that specific educational reforms have worsened conditions, as school leaders struggle to respond effectively to poverty, disasters, and ongoing cultural crises within the education system. This is supported by a study conducted by Estacio Estacio (2022), noting that while annual recognition is given to educators and administrators for exemplary service, the strict emphasis on morality, integrity, and public respect highlights an underlying concern—growing doubts about the ethical standards of school leaders. This suggests a broader issue of declining public trust in the education system, where recognition programs aim to reinforce values that may no longer be consistently observed. Consequently, these challenges have significantly contributed to declining public confidence in the Philippine educational institutions. Despite extensive global research on declining public confidence in educational institutions, there is a notable gap in studies focusing on how school heads' creative leadership and ethical behavior directly influence public trust at the local level in Tugbok District, Davao City. Previous studies have highlighted systemic issues affecting trust in education in the United States and various African and Asian regions. Still,

these findings may not fully capture the Philippines' unique cultural and institutional contexts. Specifically, while challenges in educational leadership have been documented in broader Philippine settings, there is limited empirical evidence examining this relationship within the Tugbok District. This gap underscores the need for localized research to understand the specific factors that impact public confidence in this region's learning institutions. The potential repercussions of declining public trust on educational outcomes and community support heighten the urgency to conduct this study in the researcher's setting. With the Philippines facing poverty, disasters, and cultural crises affecting education, understanding how school heads' leadership styles influence public confidence is critical. Addressing this gap is essential for developing strategies to enhance ethical practices and foster innovative leadership within schools, which can, in turn, rebuild public trust and improve the overall effectiveness of educational institutions in Tugbok District. Consequently, this study aims to fill a critical void in the literature and provide actionable insights for policymakers and academic leaders in the local context.

1.1. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework of the Study—This study is anchored on Transformational Leadership Theory by Burns (1978). Transformational Leadership Theory posits that leaders can inspire and motivate followers to exceed their self-interests for the sake of the organization by fostering an environment of intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. This theory emphasizes the leader's role in creating significant change by aligning the followers' values and goals with those of the organization. This theory is appropriate as it underscores the importance of creative leadership in influencing public confidence in learning institutions. School heads who adopt transformational leadership can foster innovation and

adaptability, addressing the unique challenges faced by schools in Tugbok District. In addition, the study is supported by Ethical Leadership Theory by Brown et al. (2005). Ethical Leadership Theory suggests that leaders who demonstrate normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and promote such conduct among followers, can positively influence organizational outcomes (Brown, Treviño, Harrison, 2005). The theory highlights the significance of leaders being ethical role models and setting ethical standards within the organization. This theory is appropriate because the ethical behavior of school heads is directly linked to public confidence in educational institutions. By embodying ethical principles, school leaders can enhance trust and credibility with stakeholders in Tugbok District. Implementing ethical leadership practices can mitigate issues related to corruption and governance, thereby improving the public's perception of learning institutions. Lastly, the study builds its foundation on the Creative Leadership Theory by Puccio, Mance, and Murdock (2011), emphasizing the importance of innovation and flexibility in guiding teams toward achieving shared goals. It highlights how leaders can foster a culture of creativity by encouraging diverse perspectives, collaborative problem-solving, and continuous learning. This theory is highly relevant to examining how creative leadership and ethical behavior of school heads can boost public confidence, as it underscores the proactive generation of novel strategies to address complex educational challenges. By applying Creative Leadership Theory, school heads can develop transparent and ethical decision-making processes that encourage trust and credibility in their institutions. Thus, integrating creative and ethical leadership principles aligns with the goal of establishing stronger public confidence in learning institutions through responsible and forward-thinking governance. This study is composed of three

variables, as shown in Figure 1. The first independent variable is creative leadership or the ability to innovate, inspire, and foster an educational environment that encourages creative thinking and problem-solving among both staff and students. The measures of creative leadership are facilitating interdisciplinary learning or the ability to initiate and manage collaborative projects that involve multiple disciplines or departments; visionary thinking or the ability of school heads to articulate a clear and inspiring vision for the school's future; collaborative decision-making or the practice of involving teachers in the decision-making process, valuing their input and expertise; and support for professional development or the active encouragement of ongoing training and development opportunities for teachers.. The second independent variable is ethical behavior or the adherence to moral principles and standards in decision-making, interactions, and leadership practices within the educational setting. The indicators for ethical behavior are transparency in communication or the openness and clarity with which school heads share information regarding school policies, decisions, and changes;

fairness in resource allocation or the equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and support among all staff members; accountability for actions or the willingness of school heads to take responsibility for their decisions and the outcomes of their leadership; and respect for diverse perspectives or the recognition and appreciation of different viewpoints and backgrounds within the school community. The dependent variable is public confidence or the trust and belief that the general public holds in the educational system's ability to provide quality education and effectively manage its operations. The measures of public confidence for learning institutions are engagement in community events or the active participation of school leaders and staff in local events, fostering relationships with community members; open channels of communication or the establishment of clear and accessible means for community members to communicate with school officials; and responsive to community needs or the ability of educational institutions to identify and address the specific needs and concerns of the community they serve.

2. Methodology

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the research design, including details on the research respondents, ethical considerations, research instruments, and procedural steps. It also outlines the methods for data collection and analysis, ensuring a clear framework for the study.

2.1. Research Design—In the context of this study, the researcher opted for a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. Quantitative research design involved the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena through statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques. The objective was to develop and employ mathematical models, theories, and hypotheses pertaining to phenomena (Watson, 2015). For the study on the influence of creative leadership and ethical behavior on

public confidence in Tugbok District, a quantitative research design was deemed appropriate because it allowed for the precise measurement of relationships between variables. By employing statistical methods to analyze data collected through surveys or other instruments, the researcher quantified the extent to which leadership styles affected public confidence. This design facilitated objective conclusions that could be generalized to similar educational contexts, providing a robust basis for policy and training

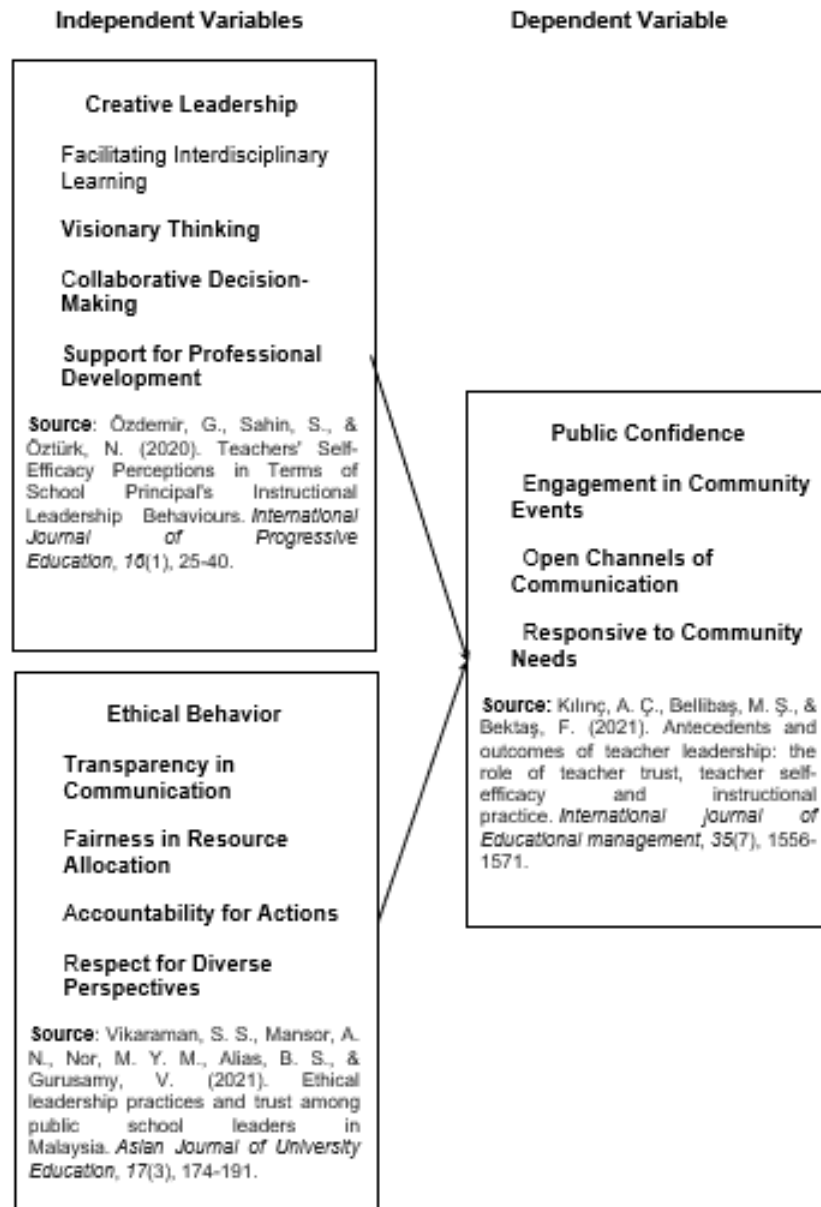


Fig. 1. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

programs. Additionally, a descriptive research approach was used to obtain an accurate profile of people, events, or situations through the collection of data and reporting of the characteristics of the subject population. It was concerned primarily with the description of the distribution of variables without placing much emphasis on cause-and-effect relationships (Rahi, 2017). In the context of this study, the descriptive approach was suitable for cataloging the current states of creative leadership, ethical behavior, and public confidence within schools in Tugbok District. It provided detailed insights into how school heads perceived their roles and how these perceptions aligned with community expectations and confidence levels. Utilizing descriptive statistics helped outline specific areas where improvements were needed and tracked changes over time, aiding in the effective monitoring of leadership development initiatives. Moreover, the correlational approach examined the relationship between two or more variables to determine the strength and direction of their association. This method did not imply causation but rather indicated the extent to which variables changed together (Lau, 2017). Adopting a correlational approach for this study was particularly useful in identifying and measuring the strength of relationships between the leadership behaviors of school heads and public confidence in educational institutions. By statistically analyzing the correlation coefficients, the researcher inferred the potential impact of creative and ethical leadership on enhancing public trust. This approach also assisted in predicting future trends based on current data, serving as a predictive tool for understanding how changes in leadership styles might influence public perceptions moving forward.

2.2. Ethical Consideration—The researcher strictly followed the established protocols outlined in the standard guidelines for conducting the research, paying close attention to the specified criteria for managing both

the population and the data. The survey questionnaires, along with other related materials, were submitted for evaluation and approval. Upon receiving clearance from the RMC-Ethics Committee, the researcher proceeded to the subsequent phase of the study.

Social Value

The study on the influence of creative leadership and ethical behavior of school heads on public confidence in learning institutions within Tugbok District, Davao City, provided substantial social value by addressing key issues that affected educational outcomes and community trust. By focusing on leadership qualities that promoted ethical behavior and creativity, the research contributed to the development of more effective, transparent, and responsive educational environments. The findings of this research had the potential to inform educational policies and leadership training programs, thereby benefiting students, teachers, and the wider community through the promotion of equitable practices and higher standards of learning.

Informed Consent

In conducting this study, the researcher prioritized obtaining informed consent from all respondents, ensuring that they were made aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential impacts before agreeing to participate. Before data collection, the researcher provided a detailed information sheet outlining the study's objectives, the nature of respondent involvement, and the types of questions to be asked. This transparency ensured that respondents could make informed decisions about their participation, understanding both the benefits and any minimal risks involved. Likewise, the researcher emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and that respondents had the right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences or liabilities. This assurance fostered a sense of autonomy and respect for the personal and professional boundaries of the

respondents. By clearly communicating this, the researcher created a safe and comfortable environment for the respondents to share honest perspectives on the leadership and ethical behaviors of their school heads. In addition, the informed consent process included opportunities for respondents to ask questions and seek clarifications. The researcher remained available to address concerns and provided further information as needed to ensure that respondents felt confident and secure in their decision to participate. This comprehensive process underscored the researcher's commitment to ethical standards and the protection of respondents' rights, thereby enhancing the integrity and credibility of the study.

Vulnerability of Research Respondents

Respondents in this study, including school heads and teachers, were considered potentially vulnerable due to the sensitivity of discussing leadership behaviors and ethical practices, which could impact their careers or reputations. To address this, the study employed confidential and anonymous data collection methods. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, the use of the data, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Assurance was given that all data would be handled with strict confidentiality and only aggregate results would be published to prevent the identification of individual responses. The research also adhered to ethical guidelines designed to protect the psychological well-being of respondents. This included ensuring that no undue stress or discomfort was caused by the survey or interview process. A neutral and respectful approach was maintained throughout the research, and all methods were reviewed by an ethics committee to ensure compliance with ethical standards. Additionally, respondents were provided access to support services should they experience any distress as a result of participating in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of respondents was paramount in this study, and the researcher strictly adhered to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 to ensure secure handling of all personal information. Personal identifiers such as names and school affiliations were removed or coded to protect respondent anonymity. This anonymization process ensured that responses could not be traced back to individual participants. Along with data anonymization, the researcher implemented secure data storage protocols for both digital and physical materials. Digital data were stored in password-protected, encrypted files accessible only to the researcher and authorized personnel. Printed documents such as survey forms and consent sheets were kept in locked cabinets within a secured location, unavailable to unauthorized individuals. These safeguards ensured confidentiality and protection against data breaches. Upon study completion, the researcher ensured the proper disposal of all collected data in accordance with ethical and legal standards. Soft copies were permanently deleted, and hard copies were shredded to eliminate any risk of future data retrieval. This final step in data management reaffirmed the researcher's commitment to protecting respondent privacy even after the study concluded.

Risk, Benefits, and Safety The primary risks in this study involved the possibility of emotional discomfort among respondents as they reflected on professional practices involving leadership and ethics. There was also a risk of breach of confidentiality, which could have implications for participants' professional standing. To mitigate these risks, data were coded, confidentiality protocols were strictly followed, and data access was restricted to the research team. The study offered significant benefits for the educational sector in Tugbok District. By identifying leadership attributes that enhance public confidence, the findings informed professional development strategies and policy re-

forms that aim to improve leadership practices. Moreover, the study provided empirical evidence that can support initiatives designed to build community trust and improve educational environments. Ensuring respondent safety remained a priority throughout the research process. This included protecting both the physical and psychological well-being of participants. Ethical guidelines were observed, and all data collection activities took place in non-threatening, secure environments. Feedback was gathered in settings that protected participant identity, and any concerns were promptly addressed. These measures ensured that participants experienced no harm as a result of their involvement in the study.

Justice

The principle of justice was upheld by ensuring an equitable selection of respondents for the study. The researcher included a diverse group of teachers from various schools within the Tugbok District, avoiding any form of bias or discrimination. This inclusive approach guaranteed that all eligible teachers had an equal opportunity to contribute to the research, thereby distributing the benefits and burdens of the study fairly. By doing so, the researcher ensured that the findings were representative of the entire teacher population in the district, enhancing the validity and applicability of the study's outcomes.

Transparency

Transparency was a cornerstone of the research process, ensuring that all aspects of the study were conducted openly and honestly. The researcher clearly communicated the study's objectives, methodology, and potential outcomes to all respondents before their participation. Detailed information sheets and consent forms were provided, outlining the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and the rights of the respondents. By maintaining open lines of communication, the researcher fostered trust and accountability, ensuring that respondents

were fully informed and comfortable with their involvement in the study. Additionally, the researcher was transparent about how the data would be used, stored, and reported, ensuring that respondents had a clear understanding of the research process and its implications.

Qualification of the Researcher

The researcher who conducted this study was equipped with the necessary qualifications, including advanced training in educational leadership, ethics, and research methodologies. This background ensured a thorough understanding of the complex dynamics involved in educational settings and the ethical considerations necessary when dealing with human subjects. The researcher's competence was further supported by prior experience in similar studies, which provided a strong foundation for addressing the challenges of researching leadership and ethics in education. Additionally, the researcher had undergone training in handling sensitive data and managing the emotional and psychological needs of respondents during the research process. This included certification in ethical research practices and data protection. The researcher's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of research integrity and ethics was evident in all aspects of the study, from data collection through analysis and reporting, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines and contributing valuable insights to the field of educational leadership.

Conflict of Interest

The researcher proactively identified and addressed any potential conflicts of interest to maintain the integrity of the study. If the researcher held any position or had relationships within the schools of Tugbok District that could influence the research outcomes, these were openly disclosed to the respondents and relevant authorities. By acknowledging such connections, the researcher ensured that personal interests did not compromise the objectivity of the study or the welfare of the respondents. This transparency was crucial in maintaining

trust and upholding ethical standards. Additionally, the researcher avoided situations where personal or financial interests could have been perceived as influencing the research process or findings. This included refraining from accepting any gifts, favors, or incentives from parties that could benefit from the study's outcomes. The researcher adhered strictly to institutional policies regarding conflicts of interest and sought guidance from ethics committees when necessary. By implementing these measures, the researcher upheld ethical standards and maintained the trust of the respondents and the wider educational community.

Adequacy of Facilities

The researcher utilized adequate facilities to ensure the study was conducted efficiently and securely. Data collection was facilitated through secure, accessible environments, such as designated rooms within the schools that provided privacy and comfort for the respondents. These spaces were arranged to minimize disruptions to the respondents' schedules and to create a conducive atmosphere for honest and thoughtful participation. If online surveys or interviews were employed, secure and user-friendly platforms were used to accommodate the respondents' technological capabilities and ensure data integrity. In terms of data management, the researcher employed reliable technological resources to store and analyze the collected data. Secure servers and password-protected databases were used to safeguard digital information, in line with data protection laws and ethical guidelines. Additionally, any physical documents were stored in locked cabinets within secure office spaces, accessible only to authorized personnel. These facilities and resources ensured that the study was conducted smoothly while maintaining the integrity and security of the data. By ensuring the adequacy of facilities, the researcher upheld the respondents' rights to privacy and confidentiality throughout the research process.

Community Involvement

Engaging the community was a vital aspect of the research, and the researcher actively involved school administrators, teachers, and relevant stakeholders throughout the study. Initial meetings were held with school leaders to explain the purpose of the research, its potential benefits, and how it aligned with the community's educational goals. This collaborative approach fostered support and facilitated smoother implementation of the study within the schools. Additionally, the researcher sought input from community members to ensure that the study was culturally sensitive and addressed relevant local issues. By involving the community, the researcher not only enriched the quality of the research but also promoted a sense of shared ownership and commitment to improving educational outcomes within the district.

2.3. Research Respondents—The sample for this study comprised 248 elementary school teachers from the Tugbok District, Davao City. Utilizing Yamane's formula, the sample size was determined from a total population of 654 teachers within the district, with a margin of error set at 0.05, which resulted in precisely 248 respondents. To generate a random and representative sample, several steps were followed. First, the entire population of 654 teachers was listed, with each teacher assigned a unique identifier from 1 to 654. Next, random numbers were generated using statistical software or a random number table to select 248 identifiers corresponding to the participating teachers. In this study, the researcher used purposive random sampling and established specific inclusion criteria to ensure relevance and accuracy in selecting teacher respondents. The criteria included teachers who were currently employed full-time at any public elementary school within the district, ensuring their direct exposure to the leadership practices under investigation. Additionally, respondents were required to have at least one year of teaching experience in their current

schools to ensure they had sufficient familiarity with the leadership behaviors of their school heads. This criterion ensured that teachers could provide informed perceptions and reflections on the influence of leadership on school operations and public confidence. Furthermore, the selection aimed to achieve representation across various grade levels and subject areas to ensure the depth and generalizability of the study's findings. Following the determination of the sample size, the study employed simple random sampling to select the respondents. This probability sampling technique ensured that each teacher in the population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby reducing selection bias and enhancing sample representativeness, as supported by Noor et al. (2022). Each teacher was assigned a unique identifier, and a random number generator was used to determine the final list of 248 respondents. This method reinforced the objectivity of the sampling process and upheld

the reliability and validity of the study by reflecting the demographic diversity of the district's teaching population.

2.4. Research Instrument—For the present study, the researcher made use of a survey questionnaire that was adapted and enhanced to suit the context of the investigation. The questionnaire was divided into three distinct sections. The first part focused on the creative leadership of school heads, which included indicators such as facilitating interdisciplinary learning, visionary thinking, collaborative decision-making, and support for professional development. The Cronbach alpha value for this instrument was 0.788, described as acceptable, indicating reliability. Responses were collected using a 5-point Likert scale to assess the extent of agreement or disagreement with each statement, with subsequent analysis based on predefined ranges of means that categorized the data effectively.

Range of Mean, Description, and Interpretation on Creative Leadership

Range of Mean	Description	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very Extensive	Creative leadership is always demonstrated by the school heads.
3.40 – 4.19	Extensive	Creative leadership is oftentimes demonstrated by the school heads.
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Extensive	Creative leadership is sometimes demonstrated by the school heads.
1.80 – 2.59	Less Extensive	Creative leadership is seldom demonstrated by the school heads.
1.00 – 1.79	Not Extensive	Creative leadership is never demonstrated by the school heads.

The second part of the instrument focused on the ethical behavior of school heads. This section of the questionnaire was designed to evaluate the domains of transparency in communication, fairness in resource allocation, accountability for actions, and respect for diverse

perspectives. The Cronbach alpha value for this instrument was 0.827, described as good, indicating reliability and consistency of the items. Data collection utilized a 5-point Likert scale, allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.

The gathered responses were analyzed using predefined mean ranges to systematically categorize the data.

Range of Mean, Description, and Interpretation on Ethical Behavior of School Heads

Range of Mean	Description	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very Extensive	Ethical behavior of school heads is always manifested.
3.40 – 4.19	Extensive	Ethical behavior of school heads is oftentimes manifested.
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Extensive	Ethical behavior of school heads is sometimes manifested.
1.80 – 2.59	Less Extensive	Ethical behavior of school heads is seldom manifested.
1.00 – 1.79	Not Extensive	Ethical behavior of school heads is never manifested.

The third part of the instrument focused on public confidence. This section of the questionnaire was designed to assess the domains of engagement in community events, open channels of communication, and responsiveness to community needs. The Cronbach alpha value for this instrument was 0.809, described as good, indicating reliability and consistency of the items. Responses were gathered using a 5-point Likert scale to precisely measure agreement or disagreement with each item. These data were then analyzed using predefined mean ranges to effectively categorize and interpret the results.

Range of Mean, Description, and Interpretation on Public Confidence

Range of Mean	Description	Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	Very Extensive	The public confidence is always evident.
3.40 – 4.19	Extensive	The public confidence is oftentimes evident.
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Extensive	The public confidence is occasionally evident.
1.80 – 2.59	Less Extensive	The public confidence is rarely evident.
1.00 – 1.79	Not Extensive	The public confidence is never evident.

2.5. Data Gathering Procedure—Permission to Conduct the Study

The first step in obtaining permission to conduct the study was for the researcher to secure an endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate

School at The Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc., Davao City. This endorsement officially recognized and supported the research project, confirming its academic value and relevance to the institution's research goals. After this, the re-

searcher sought ethical clearance from the Graduate School RMC–Research Ethics Committee (GSRMC–REC). Obtaining this clearance was essential as it confirmed that the study met the necessary ethical standards, particularly regarding confidentiality, informed consent, and respondent welfare. Once the endorsement and ethical clearance were secured, the researcher requested permission from the Schools Division Superintendent in Davao City to conduct the study within the schools of Tugbok District. This request included the endorsement letter from the Dean and the ethical clearance certificate to demonstrate compliance with academic and ethical guidelines. Upon approval, the researcher coordinated with the school principals in Tugbok District. During this stage, the researcher explained the study’s objectives, its potential benefits for the educational community, and the responsibilities expected from participating schools and teachers. This step ensured clarity of roles and promoted cooperative participation.

Distribution and Retrieval of the Questionnaire

The initial step in the distribution process involved selecting research respondents based on established inclusion criteria, ensuring that all participants were elementary school teachers in Tugbok District, Davao City. A pilot test was conducted on a small group of respondents to evaluate the clarity and reliability of the instrument. This pilot testing phase helped identify ambiguities or biases in the items and allowed for necessary revisions to improve the questionnaire’s effectiveness. Following the successful pilot test, the main distribution of the survey questionnaires was carried out. The selected respondents were given ample time to complete the instrument to ensure thoughtful and accurate responses. They were allowed to choose their preferred method of completion—either face-to-face or online—depending on their convenience and comfort. This flexible approach encouraged

a higher response rate and accommodated varied schedules, contributing to the quality and completeness of the data collected. The final stage involved retrieving the completed questionnaires. The researcher established and communicated a clear submission deadline at the time of distribution. Respondents submitted their responses through either physical return or electronic submission, depending on the method initially chosen. Once all responses were collected, the researcher proceeded with the data analysis to examine the influence of creative leadership and ethical behavior of school heads on public confidence.

Collation and Statistical Treatment of Data

After the survey questionnaires were collected, the first step was to organize and tally the data. Each response was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and categorized by key variables, including creative leadership, ethical behavior of school heads, and public confidence. Accurate data organization was crucial for ensuring the reliability of the subsequent analysis. Excel enabled the researcher to sort and filter the data efficiently, streamlining preparation for in-depth statistical procedures. The researcher then performed descriptive statistical analysis to establish an initial understanding of the responses. This included calculating the mean for each variable to determine overall trends and common perceptions. These average values revealed the general views of the respondents concerning leadership practices and their effects on school-community relations. Lastly, inferential statistical tests were employed to analyze the relationships outlined in the research objectives. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (Pearson’s R) was used to measure the strength and direction of associations among creative leadership, ethical behavior of school heads, and public confidence. Following this, regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which the independent variables predicted changes in public confidence. This an-

alytical approach provided empirical evidence to support or refute hypothesized relationships and informed future policy and leadership development initiatives in the educational sector.

2.6. Data Analysis—The following statistical tools will be utilized by the researcher in processing the gathered data:

Mean. This referred to the average score of teacher responses on creative leadership, ethical behavior of school heads, and public confidence, providing a general indication of trends within the data. It helped summarize the overall perceptions of the respondents in key areas related to school management practices.

Pearson’s Moment Product Correlation.

This statistical tool was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between creative leadership and ethical behavior of school heads on public confidence. It helped the researcher understand whether a positive or negative correlation existed between these variables.

Regression Analysis.

Regression analysis was employed to determine the influence of creative leadership and ethical behavior of school heads on public confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results generated from the data gathered. It is sequenced based on the objectives of the study as presented in the first chapter. Thus, it presents the extents of creative leadership, ethical behavior of school heads, and public confidence; the significant relationship among these variables; and the influence of creative leadership and ethical behavior of school heads on the public confidence within Tugbok District, Davao City.

3.1. Creative Leadership of School Heads—Among the four indicators, collaborative decision-making obtained the highest mean of 3.55 or extensive, highlighting that school heads frequently involved teachers and staff in shared governance and participatory planning. Conversely, support for professional development registered the lowest mean of 3.34 or moderately extensive, suggesting that opportunities for continuous learning and teacher development

were only sometimes emphasized. This finding aligns with Ertürk and Nartgün (2019), who emphasize that while strategic collaboration is vital, sustained investment in teacher capacity-building is equally crucial for long-term school improvement. Therefore, while creative leadership practices were generally present, enhancing professional growth opportunities may further strengthen the overall leadership effectiveness in the district.

3.2. Ethical Behavior of School Heads—Among the indicators, accountability for actions recorded the highest mean at 3.52 or extensive, showing that school heads were frequently taking responsibility for both successes and challenges in their leadership roles. On the other hand, respect for diverse perspectives received the lowest mean at 3.27 or moderately extensive,

suggesting that inclusive practices and recognition of cultural and individual differences were only sometimes emphasized. This result aligns with Ferrando and Guhao (2024), who assert that ethical leadership must actively incorporate diversity and respect to foster equity and cohesion within educational settings. Thus, while ethical leadership was generally demonstrated,

Table 1. Summary on Creative Leadership of School Heads in Tugbok District, Davao City

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Facilitating Interdisciplinary Learning	3.51	Extensive
Visionary Thinking	3.42	Extensive
Collaborative Decision-Making	3.55	Extensive
Support for Professional Development	3.34	Moderately Extensive
Overall	3.46	Extensive

Legend: Very Extensive = Always Demonstrated; Extensive = Oftentimes Demonstrated; Moderately Extensive = Sometimes Demonstrated; Less Extensive = Seldom Demonstrated; Not Extensive = Never Demonstrated.

there remains a need to strengthen inclusive community are heard and valued. practices to ensure all voices within the school

Table 2. Summary on Ethical Behavior of School Heads in Tugbok District, Davao City

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Transparency in Communication	3.45	Extensive
Fairness in Resource Allocation	3.43	Extensive
Accountability for Actions	3.52	Extensive
Respect for Diverse Perspectives	3.27	Moderately Extensive
Overall	3.42	Extensive

Legend: Very Extensive = Always Manifested; Extensive = Oftentimes Manifested; Moderately Extensive = Sometimes Manifested; Less Extensive = Seldom Manifested; Not Extensive = Never Manifested.

3.3. *Public Confidence*—Lastly, the overall mean for public confidence in school leadership in Tugbok District is 3.49, which corresponds to an Extensive descriptive rating. This indicates that school heads oftentimes manifest behaviors that promote trust, transparency, and responsiveness in their interactions with the school community. The consistent demonstration of practices that engage the public and address community concerns reflects a strong commitment to fostering positive school-community relations. As Deraney (2022) assert, public confidence in school leadership is built upon relational trust, which is nurtured through openness, respect, and shared responsibility. The findings suggest that school leaders in Tugbok District have created an environment where community members feel valued and actively involved in educational initiatives. Among the three indicators, engagement in community events and responsive to community needs both received the highest mean of 3.50 or extensive, indicating that school heads are highly engaged in outreach efforts and responsive programming that aligns with local priorities and values. Meanwhile, open channels of communication scored

slightly lower with a mean of 3.47 or extensive, though still within the same descriptive level. This suggests that while communication efforts are frequent, there may still be room for improvement in ensuring consistent, inclusive, and accessible information flow. According to Khan et al. (2021), effective school-community

partnerships require both meaningful engagement and sustained communication to cultivate long-term public trust. Strengthening feedback mechanisms and increasing transparency can further enhance public confidence and reinforce collaborative relationships in the Tugbok District.

Table 3. Summary on Public Confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City

Indicators	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Engagement in Community Events	3.50	Extensive
Open Channels of Communication	3.47	Extensive
Responsive to Community Needs	3.50	Extensive
Overall	3.49	Extensive

Legend: Very Extensive = Always Manifested; Extensive = Oftentimes Manifested; Moderately Extensive = Sometimes Manifested; Less Extensive = Seldom Manifested; Not Extensive = Never Manifested.

3.4. Relationship Between Creative Leadership of School Heads and Public Confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City—The results on the analysis on the relationship between creative leadership of school heads and public confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City are presented. Bivariate correlation analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation was utilized to determine the relationship between the variables mentioned. The results of the correlation analysis revealed a significant and strong positive relationship between the overall creative leadership of school heads and public confidence, with an r -value of 0.727 and a p -value of 0.000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that higher levels of creative leadership are strongly associated with increased public trust in school leadership across Tugbok District, Davao City. As Wijaya et al. (2022) emphasize, creative leadership fosters innovation, responsiveness, and collaboration—factors that contribute to building public support and engagement. Therefore, school heads who demonstrate creative leadership be-

haviors are more likely to gain the confidence of stakeholders, reinforcing the importance of dynamic and participatory leadership in educational settings. At the indicator level, facilitating interdisciplinary learning recorded the strongest relationship with public confidence ($r = 0.689$, $p = 0.000$), followed by collaborative decision-making ($r = 0.452$, $p = 0.000$) and support for professional development ($r = 0.437$, $p = 0.000$), all of which led to rejection of the null hypothesis. These findings highlight that visible and collaborative practices have a greater impact on stakeholder trust. Visionary thinking, although still statistically significant ($r = 0.265$, $p = 0.000$), showed the weakest correlation, suggesting that abstract strategic vision alone may not substantially influence public perception without concrete implementation. This supports Fix's et al. (2021) argument that leadership must be actionable and inclusive to meaningfully affect outcomes. Hence, school heads are encouraged to prioritize integrative, collaborative, and development-focused leadership strategies to further strengthen public con-

fidence.

Table 4. Relationship Between Creative Leadership of School Heads and Public Confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City

Creative Leadership	r-value	p-value
Facilitating Interdisciplinary Learning	.689**	0.000
Visionary Thinking	.265**	0.000
Collaborative Decision-Making	.452**	0.000
Support for Professional Development	.437**	0.000
Overall Creative Leadership of School Heads	.727**	0.000

***Significant @ $p < 0.05$**

Legend: Perfect Correlation for $r = 1.00$; Strong Correlation for $0.7 \leq r < 1.00$; Moderate Correlation for $0.3 \leq r < 0.7$; Weak Correlation for $0.00 < r < 0.3$; No Correlation for $r = 0.00$

3.5. Relationship Between Ethical Behavior of School Heads and Public Confidence— The results on the analysis on the relationship between ethical behavior of school heads and public confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City are presented. Bivariate correlation analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation was utilized to determine the relationship between the variables mentioned. The results revealed a significant and strong positive relationship between the overall ethical behavior of school heads and public confidence, as indicated by an r-value of 0.740 and a p-value of 0.000, thus leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that when school heads consistently demonstrate ethical behaviors—such as transparency, fairness, accountability, and inclusiveness—the public develops stronger trust and confidence in their leadership. As noted by Daliri-Ngametua et al. (2022), ethical leadership enhances organizational integrity and credibility, which in turn cultivates respect and confidence from stakeholders. Therefore,

ethical leadership is a key determinant in reinforcing public trust in school governance. Among the indicators, fairness in resource allocation showed the strongest correlation with public confidence ($r = 0.838$, $p = 0.000$), highlighting the community's high regard for equity and objectivity in the distribution of educational resources. This was followed by accountability for actions ($r = 0.583$, $p = 0.000$) and transparency in communication ($r = 0.482$, $p = 0.000$), both of which also had statistically significant moderate relationships, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses. Respect for diverse perspectives, though significant, exhibited the weakest relationship ($r = 0.263$, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that while inclusivity matters, it may not be as immediately visible or impactful to public perception unless actively promoted. These findings support the view of Polat and Turhaner (2024) that ethical leadership must be consistently demonstrated through fair decision-making, open communication, and inclusive practices to positively influence public confidence.

Table 5. Relationship Between Ethical Behavior of School Heads and Public Confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City

Ethical Behavior of School Heads	r-value	p-value
Transparency in Communication	.482**	0.000
Fairness in Resource Allocation	.838**	0.000
Accountability for Actions	.583**	0.000
Respect for Diverse Perspectives	.263**	0.000
Overall Ethical Behavior of School Heads	.740**	0.000

***Significant @ $p < 0.05$**

Legend: Perfect Correlation for $r = 1.00$; Strong Correlation for $0.7 \leq r < 1.00$; Moderate Correlation for $0.3 \leq r < 0.7$; Weak Correlation for $0.00 < r < 0.3$; No Correlation for $r = 0.00$

3.6. *Influence of Creative Leadership and Ethical Behavior of School Heads on the Public Confidence*—The influence of policy implementation fidelity and accountability in school operations on the public confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City presents significant insights, as evidenced by regression analysis results shown in the provided table. The results of the regression analysis revealed that creative leadership of school heads significantly influenced public confidence, as shown by a B-value of 0.532, Beta of 0.405, and p-value of 0.000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates that for every one-unit increase in creative leadership, public confidence increased by 0.532 units, demonstrating the strong predictive capability of dynamic leadership practices. These findings affirm the principle of Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978), which emphasizes the leader's role in inspiring, motivating, and engaging stakeholders through visionary and innovative practices. Creative leadership, as operationalized in this study, fosters trust and connection with the community by promoting collaboration, interdisciplinary initiatives, and professional growth among educators. Similarly, the ethical behavior of school heads also showed a significant and positive influence on public confidence, with a B-value of 0.490, Beta of 0.450, and p-value of 0.000, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This suggests that a one-unit increase in ethical behavior corresponded to a 0.490-unit increase in public confidence, underscoring the importance of moral integrity, fairness, and transparency in school leadership. These findings support the Ethical Leadership Theory by Brown et al. (2005), which posits that leaders who demonstrate honesty, accountability, and respect for stakeholders cultivate a culture of trust. When school heads practice ethical behavior, they reinforce their credibility and legitimacy, which translates into stronger stakeholder confidence and institutional support.

At a holistic level, the adjusted R^2 value of 0.624 indicates that 62.4% of the variance in public confidence could be explained by the combined influence of creative leadership and ethical behavior. The F-value of 206.249 with a p-value of 0.000 further confirmed the model's overall significance and explanatory power, affirming that the predictors jointly had a statistically meaningful impact on public confidence. This high level of explanatory value suggests that the integration of both innovative and ethical leadership traits plays a criti-

Table 6. Influence of Creative Leadership and Ethical Behavior of School Heads on the Public Confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City

Variables	B	Beta	S.E.	p-value	Decision
Creative Leadership of School Heads	.532	.405	.073	0.000	Reject H_0
Ethical Behavior of School Heads	.490	.450	.061	0.000	Reject H_0
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.624$					
F-value = 206.249**					
p-value = 0.000					

***Significant at $p < 0.05$**

cal role in shaping public perception and trust in the education system. The results demonstrate that public confidence is not merely a reflection of administrative function but is deeply rooted in how school heads lead with creativity and ethics. In summary, the findings strongly support both the Transformational Leadership Theory and Ethical Leadership Theory, emphasizing that visionary, collaborative, and morally grounded leadership positively impacts public trust in schools. Creative leadership mobilizes

collective engagement, while ethical leadership strengthens integrity and fairness—both essential for sustaining community confidence. These results suggest that educational leaders should cultivate both transformative and ethical practices in leadership development programs. As schools navigate complex social and institutional challenges, leadership approaches that combine innovation with integrity will be vital in maintaining stakeholder trust and achieving long-term educational effectiveness.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This part of the paper presents the conclusion and recommendation of the researcher. The discussion is supported by the literature presented in the first chapters and the conclusion is in accordance with statements of the problem presented in this study.

4.1. Findings—The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of creative leadership and ethical behavior of school heads on the public confidence within Tugbok District, Davao City utilizing non-experimental quantitative design using descriptive-correlation technique. The researcher selected the 248 elementary school teachers within Tugbok District, Davao City as the respondents through simple random sampling method. The researcher made use of modified and enhanced adapted

survey questionnaires which was pilot tested in a nearby school to ensure high reliability and internal consistency of the items in the instrument. The result of the study is summarized as follows: School heads demonstrates an extensive level of policy implementation fidelity, indicating frequent adherence to institutional directives and reform strategies. Collaborative decision-making was the most evident leadership behavior, followed by facilitating interdisciplinary learning and visionary thinking.

Support for professional development was the least observed, suggesting a need for more structured capacity-building initiatives. The extent of accountability among school heads is extensive, reflecting ethical and transparent leadership practices. Accountability for actions was most consistently demonstrated, alongside fairness in resource allocation and transparency in communication. Respect for diverse perspectives was less frequently observed, pointing to an area for improvement in inclusive leadership. Public confidence in school leadership is extensively manifested across all indicators, indicating strong trust and engagement between schools and communities. Engagement in community events and responsiveness to community needs were the most practiced dimensions. Open channels of communication were also evident, though slightly less consistent, highlighting the importance of enhancing two-way communication mechanisms. Meanwhile, the study found a significant positive relationship between the overall creative leadership of school heads and public confidence in Tugbok District, Davao City. Among the indicators, facilitating interdisciplinary learning showed the strongest correlation, followed by collaborative decision-making and support for professional development. Although visionary thinking was also significant, it had the weakest correlation, suggesting that actionable leadership practices had greater impact on public trust. Similarly, there is a strong and significant relationship between the overall ethical behavior of school heads and public confidence. The indicator with the highest correlation was fairness in resource allocation, followed by accountability for actions and transparency in communication. Respect for diverse perspectives had the weakest correlation, indicating a need for more visible inclusivity practices to enhance stakeholder confidence. Finally, the regression analysis revealed that both creative leadership and ethical behavior significantly influenced public confi-

dence, with creative leadership showing slightly higher predictive power. The model accounted for 62.4% of the variance in public confidence, confirming a strong explanatory capacity. These findings support the relevance of transformational and ethical leadership in enhancing community trust in the education system.

4.2. Conclusions—Based on the findings of this study several conclusions were generated: The findings indicate that school heads consistently demonstrate policy implementation fidelity, particularly in collaborative and visionary leadership practices. This suggests a strong alignment between school leadership behavior and institutional goals. Strengthening support for professional development may further enhance implementation outcomes and sustain long-term instructional improvement. On one hand, school heads exhibited an extensive level of accountability, reflecting ethical conduct and responsible leadership in school governance. While fairness, transparency, and responsibility were strongly demonstrated, inclusivity remains a developing area. Enhancing respect for diverse perspectives can promote a more equitable school environment and deepen stakeholder trust. On the other hand, public confidence in school leadership is found to be strong, supported by consistent community engagement, open communication, and responsiveness to local needs. This reflects positively on school heads' efforts to build meaningful connections with the public. Maintaining and improving communication strategies can further strengthen stakeholder relationships and institutional credibility. The findings concludes that creative leadership of school heads had a significant and positive relationship with public confidence. Leadership practices such as facilitating interdisciplinary learning and collaborative decision-making contributed most strongly to building stakeholder trust. This implies that school heads should enhance visible, participatory, and development-focused leader-

ship strategies to effectively strengthen public engagement and support. The study concluded that the ethical behavior of school heads significantly influenced public confidence, particularly through fairness in resource allocation and accountability for actions. Although respect for diverse perspectives was significant, it had limited influence, suggesting a need for more proactive inclusivity. These findings imply that school heads should practice transparent and equitable leadership to foster stronger institutional credibility and trust among stakeholders. The regression results confirmed that both creative leadership and ethical behavior were significant predictors of public confidence in schools. The findings aligned with Burns' (1978) Transformational Leadership Theory and Brown et al.'s (2005) Ethical Leadership Theory, emphasizing that innovation and moral integrity in leadership foster higher public trust. This implies that professional development programs for school heads should integrate both transformational and ethical leadership dimensions to sustain stakeholder confidence and institutional effectiveness.

4.3. Recommendations—In light of the study's findings, the following recommendations are offered to inform policy, school leadership, teaching practice, and future research: To strengthen policy implementation fidelity, school heads should prioritize structured and sustained professional development programs. Although collaboration and visionary thinking are evident, there remains a need to enhance teachers' capacities to effectively translate policies into practice. Therefore, institutional investment in continuous learning will contribute to the long-term success of school-based reforms. Given the relatively lower demonstration of respect for diverse perspectives, school heads are encouraged to promote inclusive leadership

practices. Specifically, efforts must be made to actively engage underrepresented voices in school decision-making. By doing so, school leaders can cultivate equity, trust, and a more culturally responsive educational environment. While public confidence is generally extensive, the slightly lower performance in maintaining open communication channels suggests a need to strengthen stakeholder dialogue. Hence, school heads should institutionalize regular, accessible forums for community feedback and updates. Enhancing these two-way communication mechanisms will further reinforce transparency and collaboration. Despite all indicators being significant, visionary thinking exhibited the weakest correlation with public confidence. Thus, school heads should ensure that strategic visions are not only communicated but also operationalized through measurable and inclusive initiatives. Emphasizing the link between long-term goals and community expectations can make visionary leadership more tangible and impactful. As respect for diverse perspectives showed the weakest relationship with public confidence, school leaders should deepen their commitment to inclusivity. This can be achieved by embedding cultural sensitivity and equity in school programs, staffing, and stakeholder engagement. In doing so, leaders can foster a more trusting and supportive community climate. Although both variables significantly influenced public confidence, accountability demonstrated slightly less predictive strength. Therefore, school heads should reinforce accountability mechanisms by ensuring transparency in decisions and consistently evaluating leadership performance. Aligning ethical conduct with community values will further amplify the trust and support received from stakeholders.

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