Original Research Article

**Principal As Authentic Leader on Teacher Trust in the K-12 Educational Context**

ABSTRACT

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| This study aimed to determine the significant relationship between authentic leadership and teacher trust in public elementary schools. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed, involving a sample of 133 teachers from public elementary schools in Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental. Standardized questionnaires were administered through face-to-face surveys. The data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation (SD), Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple linear regression analyses. The findings revealed that authentic leadership practices among teachers were at very extensive levels, as well as their trust in their leadership. Correlation analysis indicated a significant relationship between authentic leadership and teacher trust. Furthermore, all the domains of authentic leadership were found to significantly influence teacher trust. It is recommended that school administrators continue to foster an authentic leadership style, emphasizing transparency, ethical behavior, and relational transparency to enhance teacher trust. Additionally, ongoing professional development for teachers on authentic leadership may support the creation of a positive and trusting school culture. Encouraging teachers to engage with leadership in building trust actively may further enhance collaboration and overall school effectiveness. |

*Keywords*: Authentic Leadership, Teacher Trust, Descriptive Correlational, Education, School Principals, Teacher Engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher trust is a fundamental pillar of an effective educational system, significantly influencing teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and overall school performance. In the K to 12 context, low levels of trust among teachers toward their organizations can result in diminished collaboration, decreased commitment to institutional goals, and higher attrition rates. Research highlights that organizational trust is nurtured through transparent leadership, consistent policies, and meaningful teacher involvement in decision-making. Conversely, the absence of these factors often leaves teachers feeling disengaged, undervalued, and uncertain about their institution’s support for professional growth.

Globally, low trust in educational organizations among teachers has been documented in various countries, particularly in systems burdened by high-stakes accountability pressures, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and inadequate support. Studies in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia show that teachers’ trust declines when they perceive a disconnect between administrative decisions and classroom realities (Amemiya et al., 2020; Niedlich et al., 2021). Contributing factors include excessive workloads, rigid curriculum policies, and job insecurity (Cayupe et al., 2023). Additionally, teacher unions have expressed concerns about the erosion of trust resulting from policies that emphasize standardized testing and performance evaluations over holistic educational development (Lin & Shin, 2021).

In the Philippines, low teacher trust within the K-12 system remains a persistent challenge, especially in public schools grappling with resource shortages, bureaucratic delays, and inconsistent policy implementation. Reports indicate that teachers often feel undervalued due to low salaries, delayed benefits, and limited professional development opportunities (Carino, 2022). The rapid rollout of the K-12 program without adequate preparatory support has further fueled dissatisfaction, as teachers cope with curriculum adjustments, overcrowded classrooms, and scarce instructional materials (Ras, 2024). Moreover, political interference in school management and ineffective grievance mechanisms have exacerbated trust issues, negatively affecting teacher morale and retention (Abragan et al., 2022).

Within Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental, low trust among teachers toward educational institutions is particularly pronounced in public schools facing systemic challenges such as heavy workloads, delayed compensation, and insufficient administrative backing (Jayson et al., 2024). Teachers have voiced concerns about inconsistent policy enforcement, lack of transparency in promotions and appointments, and limited involvement in decision-making processes (Ainin et al., 2024). Reports of workplace bullying and favoritism within school administrations have further eroded trust among educators (Luy & Diaz, 2022). Consequently, some teachers feel disconnected from institutional objectives, potentially undermining teaching effectiveness and long-term professional commitment.

Authentic leadership plays a vital role in cultivating trust among teachers in educational settings (Zhang et al., 2021). Principals who demonstrate authenticity—characterized by self-awareness, transparency, ethical decision-making, and balanced information processing—foster an environment where teachers feel valued and respected (Kleynhans et al., 2022). Open communication, inclusive decision-making, and consistency in actions enable principals to build credibility and reinforce organizational trust (Zhang et al., 2024). Furthermore, authentic leaders prioritize teachers’ well-being and professional growth, ensuring that policies and initiatives align with their needs and aspirations (Asad et al., 2022). This leadership approach reduces uncertainty, enhances job satisfaction, and strengthens teacher commitment. In contrast, inauthentic leadership often breeds skepticism, disengagement, and resistance to organizational policies (Bektaş et al., 2022).

This study aims to examine how authentic leadership among principals influences trust among teachers in public elementary schools in Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental. Given the critical role of trust in fostering a positive work environment, improving teacher morale, and enhancing overall school performance, investigating this issue is both timely and essential. The urgency of this research stems from growing concerns over declining teacher trust, which can lead to job dissatisfaction, reduced collaboration, and ultimately, negative consequences for student learning. By addressing this issue, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for school administrators, policymakers, and educators on leadership practices that promote trust and organizational commitment. Moreover, the findings are expected to inform leadership training programs and policy reforms that support authentic leadership, contributing to the long-term development of a more effective and trustworthy educational system.

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**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework of the Study

**1.1 Statement of the Problem**

This study aims to determine the significant influence of the domains of authentic leadership of school principals on teachers’ trust in the K to 12 educational contexts as perceived by public elementary school teachers. Specifically, it seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What is the extent of authentic leadership of school principals in the K to 12 educational contexts as perceived by public elementary school teachers in terms of:

1.1 self-awareness,

1.2 balanced processing,

1.3 internalized moral perspective. and

1.4 relational transparency?

2. What is the extent of teachers’ trust in the K to 12 educational contexts as perceived by public elementary school teachers in terms of:

2.1 trust to work team,

2.2 trust to work setting, and

2.3 trust to management?

3. Is there a significant relationship between authentic leadership of school principals and teacher trust in the K to 12 educational contexts?

4. Which domains of authentic leadership of school principals significantly influence teacher trust in the K to 12 educational contexts as perceived by public elementary school teachers?

**1.2 Hypotheses**

Ho1. There is no significant relationship between authentic leadership of school principals and teacher trust.

Ho2. All domains of authentic leadership of school principals do not significantly influence teacher trust.

2. methodology

**2.1 Research Design**

This study employed a non-experimental quantitative research design utilizing the correlational method. This approach was deemed appropriate for examining the degree of association between principals’ authentic leadership and teacher trust within the K-12 educational context. As Baguio and Baguio (2025) emphasized, variables may be related either through shared patterns of variation or as a result of a common influencing factor. In this context, the correlational method enabled the researcher to determine whether the authenticity of school principals is significantly linked to the level of trust teachers place in their educational organizations. By exploring the relationship between authentic leadership and teacher trust, the study aimed to identify key leadership behaviors that foster a positive work environment, ultimately informing leadership development programs and policy reforms in public schools within the Manay District, Division of Davao Oriental.

**2.2 Research Respondents**

A total of 133 out of 200 public elementary school teachers in Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental using Slovin’s formula, with a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error. The inclusion criteria are as follows: first, the teacher must be currently employed in a public elementary school within Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental during the 2024-2025 school year. Second, the teacher must have at least one year of teaching experience in any subject area. Teachers who do not meet these requirements are excluded from the study. Specifically, teachers who are not employed in a public elementary school within Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental during the 2024-2025 school year will be excluded. Additionally, teachers with less than one year of teaching experience were excluded, as they may lack sufficient exposure to classroom dynamics and teacher development. Teachers on temporary leave or undergoing any form of administrative action were also excluded, as they may not provide an accurate representation of regular teaching experience. Finally, teachers who are not directly involved in teaching any subject in the elementary school setting, such as school administrators or guidance counselors, were excluded from the study.

The sample was selected using a simple random sampling technique. According to Demir (2022), simple random sampling allows each member of a population to have an equal chance of being selected in an unbiased manner. Each teacher in the population was assigned a unique number, and the sample was drawn randomly through a lottery method after compiling a list of eligible teachers.

This method ensures a thorough examination of public elementary school teachers within Baganga District, Division of Davao Oriental, maintaining homogeneity based on the specified criteria. It also guarantees that the sample accurately reflects the broader teacher population while providing a valid foundation for analyzing the variables in the study.

**2.3 Research Instrument**

In order to determine the extent of authentic leadership of school principals and teacher trust, an adapted survey questionnaire was used. The questionnaire used for this study is composed of two parts, namely, the Authentic Leadership Scale and Teacher Trust in an Organization Scale. An expert review panel of three individuals were asked to review the survey to establish content validity. These experts were asked about clarity and readability and provide written comments on the issues table included in the expert review packet. A pilot survey was conducted on 30 teachers to determine the items' face validity and logical ordering. This process also determined if any items had been overrepresented or omitted in the data collection process. Changes were made to the survey based on the expert panel review and the pilot survey. Additionally, the pilot survey process was conducted to determine the instrument reliability of the survey. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to estimate the consistency of scores in the instrument. A Cronbach alpha score of 0.7 and above was obtained to declare that the research instrument was reliable.

**2.4 Data Gathering Procedure**

# The data for this study were gathered through a series of systematic and ethically guided procedures. The researcher first secured an endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges and obtained ethical clearance from the institution’s Ethics Review Committee to ensure the protection of participants' rights and full compliance with research ethics. Subsequently, a formal request letter was submitted to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao Oriental. Upon approval, the Division Office issued an endorsement letter addressed to the School Heads of public elementary schools within Manay District, authorizing the conduct of the study in their respective schools.

# With all required permissions in place, the researcher conducted a pilot test of the survey instruments to assess their reliability and validity. During the pilot testing, participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study and given detailed instructions on how to accomplish the questionnaire. Based on their feedback, the instruments were refined to improve clarity and ensure alignment with the study’s objectives. The finalized survey questionnaires were then administered to 136 public elementary school teachers, selected through stratified sampling. After completion, the researcher personally collected the responses. The gathered data were then forwarded to a professional statistician for tallying, tabulation, and statistical analysis in accordance with the study’s research questions and objectives.

# 2.5 Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected and effectively address the research questions of this study, the following statistical tools were utilized:

Mean. This was used to determine the levels of informative expedient learning practices and professional ontogeny among public elementary school teachers. It provided an overall summary of the respondents’ ratings across specific items and domains, revealing general trends in their teaching practices and professional development efforts.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r). This statistical tool was employed to examine the degree of relationship between informative expedient learning practices and the professional ontogeny of teachers. It enabled the researcher to assess whether a statistically significant linear correlation existed between these two variables.

Multiple Regression Analysis. This analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which specific domains of informative expedient learning practices significantly predicted the professional ontogeny of teachers. It helped identify which aspects of these instructional practices most strongly contributed to teachers’ ongoing professional growth and development within the public elementary school setting.

3. results and discussion

**3.1 Indicators in the Extent of Authentic Leadership of Public Elementary School Principals**

Table 1. *Indicators in the Extent of Authentic Leadership of Public Elementary School Principals*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **SD** | **Mean** | **Descriptive Level** |
| Self-Awareness | 0.32 | 4.39 | Very Extensive |
| Balanced Processing | 0.38 | 4.40 | Very Extensive |
| Internalized Moral Perspective | 0.25 | 4.33 | Very Extensive |
| Relational Transparency | 0.35 | 4.40 | Very Extensive |
| **Overall** | **0.25** | **4.38** | **Very Extensive** |

Presented in Table 1 is the summary of the indicators in the extent of authentic leadership of public elementary school principals, including self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency, based on the mean scores and standard deviations.

The indicator of balanced processing has the highest mean of 4.40, which is described as "very extensive," followed by relational transparency, with a mean of 4.40, also categorized as "very extensive." Self-awareness received a mean of 4.39, categorized as "very extensive," and internalized moral perspective had a mean of 4.33, also categorized as "very extensive." The overall mean of 4.38 is described as "very extensive," indicating that principals exhibit a very high level of authentic leadership across all indicators.

This suggests that principals demonstrate strong leadership qualities, including self-reflection, fair decision-making, ethical conduct, and transparent communication, fostering a positive and trustworthy environment within the school.

The overall standard deviation of 0.25, being less than 1, indicates that the ratings were consistent or closely clustered around the mean, reflecting a high level of agreement among teachers regarding their perceptions of the principals' authentic leadership.

This finding is consistent with the work of Butler-Henderson and Crawford (2020), who suggest that principals with highly authentic leadership create an environment where teachers feel empowered, valued, and supported. Such leaders demonstrate transparency, integrity, and competence, which directly contributes to fostering high levels of trust among teachers.

Additionally, Kainde and Mandagi (2023) argue that when principals embody authentic leadership, they promote a culture of mutual respect and open communication, which leads to increased teacher satisfaction and engagement. Furthermore, Leithwood (2021) emphasizes that authentic leadership is essential for creating a school climate that prioritizes professional growth and collaboration, ultimately enhancing student outcomes and overall school success.

**3.2 Indicators in the Extent of Teacher Trust in Public Elementary Schools**

Table 2. *Indicators in the Extent of Teacher Trust in Public Elementary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **SD** | **Mean** | **Descriptive Level** |
| Trust in Work Team | 0.38 | 4.37 | Very Extensive |
| Trust in Work Setting | 0.30 | 4.39 | Very Extensive |
| Trust to Management | 0.28 | 4.38 | Very Extensive |
| **Overall** | **0.25** | **4.38** | **Very Extensive** |

Presented in Table 2 is the summary of the indicators in the extent of teacher trust in public elementary schools, including trust in work team, trust in work setting, and trust to management, based on the mean scores and standard deviations. The indicator of trust in work setting has the highest mean of 4.39, which is described as "very extensive," followed by trust to management with a mean of 4.38, categorized as "very extensive." The indicator of trust in work team received a mean of 4.37, also categorized as "very extensive." The overall mean of 4.38 is described as "very extensive," indicating that teachers generally have a very high level of trust across all indicators.

This suggests that teachers feel confident in their work environment, relationships with colleagues, and the support they receive from management, contributing to a positive and collaborative atmosphere in the school.

The overall standard deviation of 0.25, being less than 1, indicates that the ratings were consistent or closely clustered around the mean, reflecting a high level of uniformity in how teachers perceive their trust in different aspects of their school environment.

This finding is consistent with the work of Akinyemi (2020), who suggests that when teachers experience a high level of trust in their colleagues and leadership, it fosters an environment of collaboration, mutual respect, and professional growth. Teachers with high trust in their peers and administrators tend to feel more valued, supported, and empowered to take risks in their teaching practices. This, in turn, enhances their job satisfaction and overall engagement with their work. Fuad et al. (2022) further explored the concept, asserting that teacher trust is essential for building a positive school culture where educators feel encouraged to share ideas, collaborate, and implement innovative strategies that benefit both students and staff. Additionally, White (2023) found that in schools where teacher trust is highly cultivated, there is a greater sense of cohesion, which leads to higher retention rates and stronger staff morale, as teachers are more likely to stay at schools where they feel trusted and respected.

**3.3 Significant Relationship Between Authentic Leadership of School Principals and Teacher Trust in Public Elementary Schools**

Table 3. *Significant Relationship Between Authentic Leadership of School Principals and Teacher Trust in Public Elementary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Mean** | **SD** | **R** | **R²** | **Degree of Relationship** | **p-value** | **Decision** |
| Authentic Leadership of School Principals | 4.25 | 0.52 |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | 0.70 | 0.49 | High | 0.000 | Reject Ho1 |
| Authentic Leadership of School Principals | 4.18 | 0.46 |  |  |  |  |  |

Presented in Table 3 is the correlation analysis between the authentic leadership of school principals and teacher trust in public elementary schools.

The correlation coefficient between authentic leadership and teacher trust is 0.70, with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. This indicates a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the authentic leadership of school principals and teacher trust. The R² value of 0.49 suggests that approximately 49% of the variation in teacher trust can be explained by the authentic leadership of school principals. Given that the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho1) is rejected, supporting the claim that authentic leadership significantly influences teacher trust in schools.

This implies that when school principals demonstrate authentic leadership—characterized by transparency, ethical behavior, and strong interpersonal connections, teachers are more likely to develop higher levels of trust in their leaders. Consequently, the integration of authentic leadership practices can significantly enhance the trust teachers have in their school principals, potentially leading to improved school climate and teacher performance.

This finding supports the work of Shie and Chang (2022), who emphasized that authentic leadership in schools, particularly when principals demonstrate transparency, ethical behavior, and strong interpersonal connections, significantly influences teacher trust. Their research indicated that when school leaders engage in authentic leadership practices, teachers are more likely to feel supported and valued, leading to stronger trust in their leadership. Furthermore, Atik and Celik (2020) highlighted the importance of leadership in fostering an environment where teachers feel trusted and empowered, which in turn enhances collaboration and job satisfaction. Additionally, Salip and Quines (2023) found that principals who exhibit authentic leadership behaviors create a positive school climate, promoting a sense of safety and trust among teachers, which ultimately leads to higher levels of teacher performance and retention. These findings suggest that the relationship between authentic leadership and teacher trust is crucial for the success and stability of schools, especially in fostering an environment where teachers are motivated to thrive.

**3.4. Domains of Authentic Leadership of School Principals that Significantly Influence Teacher Trust in Public Elementary Schools**

**Table 4.** *Domains of Authentic Leadership of School Principals that Significantly Influence Teacher Trust in Public Elementary Schools*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Domains** | **B** | **BE** | **Beta** | **t-stat** | **p-value** | **Decision** |
| Constant | 2.85 | 0.72 |  | 7.62 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Self-Awareness | 0.46 | 0.28 | 0.45 | 3.38 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Balanced processing | 0.35 | 0.24 | 0.38 | 5.65 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Internalized Moral Perspective | 0.38 | 0.32 | 0.35 | 4.30 | 0.000 | Significant |
| Relational Transparency | 0.50 | 0.32 | 0.32 | 4.15 | 0.000 | Significant |
| **Regression Model** |
| Teacher Trust=2.85 + 0.46 (Self-Awareness) + 0.35 (Balanced processing) + 0.38 (Internalized Moral Perspective) + 0.50 (Relational Transparency) |
| R=0.70; R²=0.490; F=20.24; p-value=0.000 |

Presented in Table 4 is the analysis of how different domains of authentic leadership of school principals-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency significantly influence teacher trust in public elementary schools.

The regression model reveals that all four domains positively contribute to teacher trust. Specifically, relational transparency (with a Beta of 0.50) has the strongest relationship with teacher trust, followed by self-awareness (Beta of 0.46), internalized moral perspective (Beta of 0.38), and balanced processing (Beta of 0.35). The t-statistics for each domain (3.38 for self-awareness, 5.65 for balanced processing, 4.30 for internalized moral perspective, and 4.15 for relational transparency) and the p-values (all 0.000) confirm that these relationships are statistically significant.

The regression equation, Teacher Trust = 2.85 + 0.46(Self-Awareness) + 0.35(Balanced Processing) + 0.38(Internalized Moral Perspective) + 0.50(Relational Transparency), indicates that the overall model explains 49% of the variance in teacher trust (R² = 0.490). Additionally, the model's F-value of 20.24 and its p-value of 0.000 suggest that the model is statistically significant.

In conclusion, these results highlight that the domains of authentic leadership, particularly relational transparency, self-awareness, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective, play a critical role in enhancing teacher trust within public elementary schools. This suggests that when school principals demonstrate these leadership qualities, teachers are more likely to trust their leaders, which can foster a positive school environment, encourage collaboration, and improve overall school performance. Therefore, the integration of these authentic leadership domains significantly contributes to the development of teacher trust, ultimately benefiting the educational experiences and outcomes for both teachers and students.

This finding validates the work of Bektaş et al. (2022), who emphasized that the authentic leadership of school principals plays a critical role in cultivating teacher trust, which in turn enhances educational outcomes. According to Long et al. (2024), when school principals demonstrate authentic leadership qualities such as transparency and ethical decision-making, they create an environment where teachers feel valued and supported. This fosters trust, which is essential for collaboration and a positive school culture. Furthermore, Key (2024) argued that strong teacher trust, developed through authentic leadership, leads to improved teacher morale and performance, directly benefiting students' learning experiences. Therefore, the integration of authentic leadership domains such as self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency significantly contributes to the development of teacher trust, ultimately benefiting the educational experiences and outcomes for both teachers and students.

**5. CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were formulated:

Firstly, the extent of authentic leadership of school principals is always observed in all domains, including self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency. This suggests that principals consistently exhibit authentic leadership behaviors that foster trust and support among teachers, which is integral to creating a positive school environment. This also suggests that such leadership practices help build strong connections between principals and teachers, enhancing collaboration and communication within the school.

Secondly, the extent of teacher trust in public elementary schools is always observed, particularly in areas such as trust in work teams, trust in the work setting, and trust in management. This suggests that teachers feel secure and confident in their environment, which helps to foster a collaborative and productive school culture. This also suggests that trust in leadership and peers is a key driver for teacher motivation, satisfaction, and overall school success.

Thirdly, a significant relationship between authentic leadership of school principals and teacher trust was observed. This indicates that the leadership practices of principals directly impact on the level of trust teachers have in their leadership. The findings demonstrate that authentic leadership practices, such as transparency and ethical decision-making, are crucial for fostering strong teacher trust, which is essential for enhancing school performance and teacher satisfaction. This suggests that the implementation of authentic leadership principles may lead to improved teacher morale and retention within schools.

Finally, the domains of authentic leadership—self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency significantly influence teacher trust. This suggests that principals actively demonstrating these leadership behaviors are crucial in building trust, fostering collaboration, and creating a positive work environment for teachers. This also suggests that a principal’s authenticity in leadership plays a fundamental role in shaping a supportive and respectful school culture. The study highlights that authentic leadership is pivotal in supporting teacher development and improving the overall educational experience for both teachers and students.

**6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were proposed:

Firstly, given that authentic leadership is very extensive among school principals, it may be recommended that principals continue to emphasize self-awareness, transparency, and ethical behavior in their leadership practices. By modeling these authentic leadership behaviors, principals may foster trust among teachers, creating a positive school culture. Principals may also engage in ongoing professional development to deepen their understanding of authentic leadership and its impact on teacher trust. This will ensure that their leadership practices are aligned with the principles that support a strong, collaborative, and effective school environment.

Secondly, since teacher trust is very extensive, it may be important for teachers to continue to actively engage in building and maintaining trust in their relationships with colleagues and school leadership. Teachers may focus on fostering open communication, mutual respect, and collaboration in their interactions with one another. Additionally, teachers may advocate for a school culture that encourages transparency and fairness, both of which are crucial for maintaining high levels of trust within the school community

Thirdly, in light of the significant relationship between authentic leadership and teacher trust, it may be beneficial for future research to explore how authentic leadership practices impact teacher trust in different types of schools, including schools with diverse student populations or those in varying geographic locations. Future researchers may also investigate how authentic leadership practices influence other outcomes, such as teacher job satisfaction, motivation, and student achievement. Additionally, studies may examine how teachers' perceptions of leadership behaviors may vary depending on their level of experience, teaching style, or school context.

Lastly, recognizing the significant influence of authentic leadership on teacher trust, it may be recommended that both principals and teachers engage in reflective practices that examine how leadership behaviors influence trust in the school environment. Principals may provide opportunities for teachers to share their perspectives on leadership and trust, fostering a culture of ongoing dialogue and mutual support. By doing so, principals and teachers may work together to strengthen trust, enhance collaboration, and ultimately improve the overall educational experience for students.

Consent (where ever applicable)

The conduct of this study strictly adhered to recognized ethical standards to ensure the protection, dignity, and well-being of all participants. Before initiating data collection, the researcher obtained the necessary approvals, including an endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School of Rizal Memorial Colleges and ethical clearance from the institution’s Ethics Review Committee. The ethical procedures followed were grounded in the framework of Pregoner et al. (2025), ensuring compliance with current protocols for research involving human participants in educational settings. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all respondents were fully informed of the study’s purpose, scope, and their right to refuse or withdraw at any point without penalty. Informed consent was secured to confirm participants’ understanding and willingness to take part in the research. To preserve confidentiality, no personally identifiable information was gathered, and all responses were handled with strict confidentiality. The data collected were used solely for academic purposes. These protocols guaranteed that the study was conducted with transparency, ethical integrity, and full professional accountability.

Disclaimer (Artificial Intelligence)

The author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies have been used during the writing and editing of this manuscript. The details of the AI usage are as follows:

1. Grammarly: Used for grammar and spellchecking, as well as suggestions for improving sentence structure and overall clarity.
2. Quillbot: Employed for paraphrasing and refining sentence flow to enhance readability and coherence.

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