

Original Article

Beyond Compliance: Managerial Discretion and the Implementation Gap in Decentralized Education - A Tri-Stakeholder Quantitative Study in Samar Island, Philippines

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Received: 27 August 2026; Revised: 01 October 2026;

Accepted: 10 October 2026; Published: 19 October 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66074/H8Q7M2F4T>

Abstract

Formal compliance with centralized education standards does not guarantee that policy intent reaches the classroom. This study examines this implementation gap by integrating Instructional Leadership Theory with Street-Level Bureaucracy to explain how managerial behavior shapes the translation of centralized policy into localized institutional performance. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design analyzed through one-way ANOVA with Scheffé post hoc tests, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple regression, the study analyzes multi-stakeholder data from 678 administrators, teachers, and students across the Schools Divisions of Samar Island, Philippines. The findings reveal significant divergence in stakeholder assessments of school conditions, particularly between administrators' evaluations and students' perceptions of the learning environment. More importantly, adaptive managerial behaviors—including decentralized decision-making, flexible problem-solving, and instruction-focused supervision—emerged as the strongest correlates of perceived managerial effectiveness within the competency framework, more so than tenure- or compliance-based indicators, although this association is partly definitional given that managerial effectiveness is itself derived from the same competency ratings. These findings challenge the assumption that successful decentralization can be inferred from administrative compliance with centrally prescribed standards. Instead, they indicate that the effectiveness of decentralized education systems depends on administrators'

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capacity to exercise adaptive discretion while maintaining instructional alignment. The study extends Instructional Leadership and Street-Level Bureaucracy perspectives by positioning managerial discretion and stakeholder perception as mechanisms through which policy intent is translated—or fails to translate—into school-level outcomes in resource-constrained settings.

Keywords: decentralized education, implementation gap, instructional leadership, managerial discretion, school-level performance, street-level bureaucracy

1. Introduction

Despite extensive policy reforms promoting decentralization in public education, a persistent implementation gap remains between centralized policy intent and observable school-level outcomes (Benavides et al., 2025), a concern echoed in broader policy commentary questioning whether education reforms translate into measurable outcomes without deliberate attention to on-the-ground execution (Gandal, 2026). This gap is consequential because decentralization does not, by itself, ensure that centrally formulated policies are translated consistently into effective instructional and administrative practice. Evidence from the Philippine education system similarly points to continuing challenges in policy implementation, monitoring, and the translation of formal policy requirements into improvements in educational quality (Mirasol et al., 2021). Within this policy environment, the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads (NCBS-SH), issued through DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2010, provides a formal competency framework for school leadership. Research examining the NCBS-SH has likewise demonstrated that leadership competencies and management-related factors are associated with school-head performance (Galleposo, 2021). Yet these formal standards do not fully explain why comparable policy structures may be associated with different school-level experiences and outcomes across institutional settings (Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2024; TeacherPH, 2024).

The unresolved issue is therefore not simply whether school administrators possess the competencies prescribed by formal standards, but how those competencies are exercised when centralized requirements must be adapted to local instructional and administrative realities. In decentralized and resource-constrained environments, school administrators operate between organizational expectations and the practical demands of their schools. Their capacity to make decisions, solve context-specific problems, supervise instruction, and respond to stakeholder needs may consequently shape how policy intent is translated into practice. Existing research provides important insights into instructional leadership and school leadership competencies,

but less is known about how managerial behavior and stakeholder perceptions jointly illuminate the implementation process and its relationship with school-level performance (Mirasol et al., 2021; Galleposo, 2021; Ulit, 2025).

To address this gap, the study integrates Instructional Leadership Theory and Street-Level Bureaucracy (SLB) Theory (Lipsky, 1980; Weatherley & Lipsky, 1977; Spillane et al., 2001; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019; Sebastian et al., 2017). Instructional Leadership Theory directs attention to administrators' instructional influence, including the supervision and coordination of teaching and learning, whereas SLB Theory provides a complementary perspective on how frontline actors exercise discretion when implementing formal policies under organizational constraints. Bringing these perspectives together provides a basis for examining implementation not simply as compliance with prescribed standards, but as a process in which managerial competencies and discretionary behavior shape the translation of policy into localized practice. This perspective is particularly relevant in the Philippine context, where continuing implementation and monitoring challenges make the relationship between formal policy structures and school-level practice an important empirical concern (Mirasol et al., 2021; Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II], 2024).

Accordingly, this research examines how the managerial competencies of public Senior High School administrators relate to institutional alignment and school-level performance in a decentralized education system. It further examines whether administrators', teachers', and students' perceptions of these competencies converge or diverge, thereby providing a multi-stakeholder perspective on the implementation process. Specifically, the study asks: How are administrators' managerial competencies associated with institutional alignment and school-level performance in decentralized school systems, and how do perceptions of these competencies differ among administrators, teachers, and students? Institutional alignment and school-level performance are examined here as they are perceived and reported by the three stakeholder groups, rather than through independent outcome measures such as standardized test results; this measurement distinction, and its implications for interpreting the findings, is addressed in the Methodology and revisited in Section 5.6.

The study contributes to the literature in three ways. Rather than proposing a new theoretical framework, its contribution is integrative and empirical: it tests two established but rarely combined theoretical lenses against tri-stakeholder data in a decentralized, under-researched setting, thereby extending the explanatory reach and empirical grounding of both theories rather than replacing them. First, it brings Instructional Leadership Theory and Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory into a unified empirical framework for examining the implementation gap between formal policy expectations and localized school practice. Second, it operationalizes managerial competencies, stakeholder perceptions, institutional alignment, and school-level performance through a tri-stakeholder research design, allowing implementation dynamics to be examined from multiple organizational perspectives rather than relying solely on administrator self-assessments. Third, it develops the conceptual insight

underlying Leadership–Management Integration (LMI) proposed by Briones (2026) by considering how instructional leadership intent and managerial execution may become connected through discretionary behavior under conditions of organizational constraint. In doing so, the study shifts attention from compliance with formal standards alone toward the managerial processes through which centralized policy is interpreted, adapted, and enacted at the school level.

1.1 Hypothesis

H1: Perceptual Divergence Across Stakeholder Groups. There is a significant difference in the perceived managerial competencies of senior high school administrators among administrators, teachers, and students.

SLB theory suggests that policy implementation is experienced differently across institutional roles. Accordingly, if school heads function as street-level bureaucrats, their discretionary actions are expected to produce statistically significant perceptual divergence across stakeholder groups.

H2: Adaptive Managerial Competencies and Managerial Effectiveness. There is a significant relationship between adaptive managerial competencies of senior high school administrators—specifically decentralized decision-making, flexible problem-solving, and instruction-focused supervision—and managerial effectiveness. Instructional Leadership theory posits that adaptive leadership behaviors are stronger predictors of managerial effectiveness than compliance-based competencies. This hypothesis tests whether specific behavioral dimensions explain variations in managerial effectiveness beyond standardized competency frameworks. Because Managerial Effectiveness is operationalized as the composite mean of the same eight NCBS-SH competency domains from which Management Competencies is derived, H2 is best understood as a test of internal consistency within the competency framework rather than a test of an independent predictive relationship; it is retained here for descriptive purposes, and its interpretive limits are addressed in Sections 4.5, 5.3, and 5.6.

H3a: Demographic Predictors of Managerial Effectiveness. Demographic variables—including age, educational attainment, length of service, and professional training exposure—significantly predict managerial effectiveness among senior high school administrators. Empirical evidence suggests that demographic and professional characteristics influence leadership adaptability, implementation capacity, and instructional leadership practice within decentralized educational systems (Gechere et al., 2025; Yongco, 2026).

H3b: Competency-Based Predictors of Managerial Effectiveness. Competency-based dimensions within the eight NCBS-SH domains significantly predict managerial effectiveness.

This distinction separates fixed demographic attributes from developable managerial competencies, providing empirical grounding for leadership development interventions. H3a and H3b are tested jointly within a single multiple regression model

(Table 6), which enters management competencies alongside two demographic predictors, training attended and length of service; this reflects the analytic decision to model demographic and competency-based predictors together within one equation rather than as separate models.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) is anchored in Instructional Leadership theory (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019) and Street-Level Bureaucracy (SLB) theory (Lipsky, 1980), which together conceptualize school heads as hybrid actors—instructional leaders improving teaching and learning, and street-level bureaucrats exercising discretion under contextual constraints. This dual role constitutes the theoretical foundation of the implementation gap examined here.

Within this perspective, Leadership–Management Integration (LMI) functions as a bridging mechanism explaining how leadership intent is translated into administrative execution under discretion and institutional constraints; managerial effectiveness is shaped not only by formal standards but also by adaptive leadership capacity, stakeholder perceptions, and contextual realities. Figure 1 traces this pathway as a directed model, detailed in the figure note below. Operationally, independent variables include respondent demographics and the eight NCBS-SH competency domains (DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2010), examined via descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA with Scheffé post hoc tests (H1), Pearson correlation (H2), and multiple regression (H3a, H3b), yielding an empirical assessment of the implementation gap interpreted through both Instructional Leadership and SLB theory.

1.2.1 Boundary Conditions

The model's explanatory scope is bounded by several conditions. First, NCBS-SH indicators assume standardized frameworks adequately represent leadership capacity, though SLB theory suggests enacted leadership may diverge from formal measures due to contextual discretion. Second, LMI's explanatory power assumes discretion and perceptions sufficiently capture leadership translation, though unobserved micro-political dynamics may also influence outcomes.

Boundary condition on LMI. A third boundary condition concerns LMI's empirical status. LMI is treated here as a theoretical bridging construct — not a directly measured mediator or moderator. Management competencies and discretionary behavior serve as its closest empirical proxies, but the mediating pathway itself (competencies → LMI → institutional alignment) was not formally modeled. Future research should operationalize LMI as a distinct, measured construct to test its proposed bridging role directly.

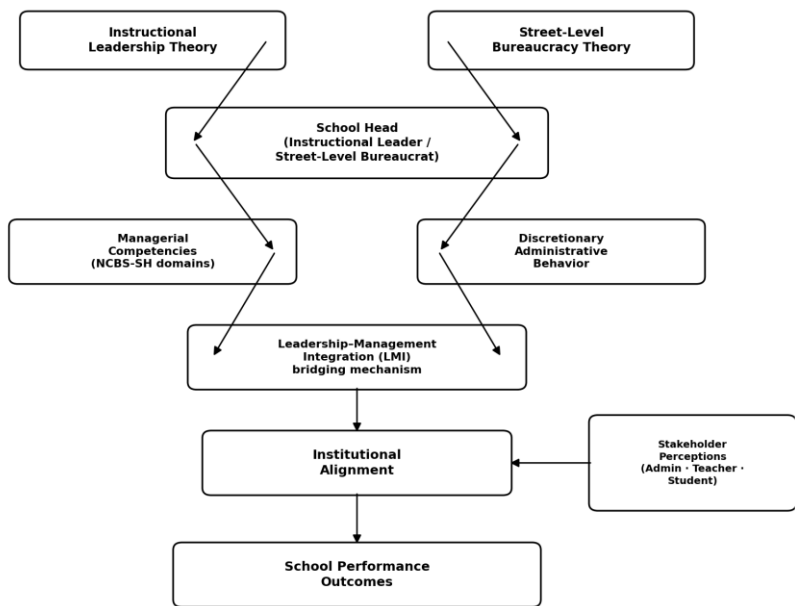


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study.

Note: The model traces the study's theoretical pathway: Instructional Leadership Theory and Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory jointly frame the school head as a dual-role actor, whose managerial competencies and discretionary administrative behavior converge through Leadership–Management Integration (LMI) as a bridging mechanism. LMI, together with tri-stakeholder perceptions (administrators, teachers, students), shapes institutional alignment, which in turn produces school performance outcomes.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational and comparative research design to examine the managerial attributes and competencies of public senior high school administrators across Samar Island, Philippines. Because the design is cross-sectional, the study does not claim causality; it tests theoretically predicted associations among variables measured at a single point in time. This design is highly appropriate for systematically describing respondent characteristics, comparing perceptions across distinct stakeholder groups, and analyzing predictive relationships among variables in a natural setting without experimental manipulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). Specifically, a tri-stakeholder survey

approach was utilized to capture and contrast the perspectives of Administrators, teachers, and students. Operationally, the descriptive component quantified the baseline levels of managerial competencies; the comparative component assessed variations in perceptions among the three stakeholder groups; and the correlational component identified significant predictors of overall managerial effectiveness. The eight competency domains were operationalized based on the NCBS-SH framework and adapted for this study's context.

2.2 Respondents and Sampling

The respondents consisted of public senior high school administrators, teachers, and students, with a total of 678 participants: 171 administrators, 249 teachers, and 258 students. Data were drawn from 17 public senior high schools, including Bagacay Integrated School, Calbayog Arts and Design School of Eastern Visayas, Calbayog City National High School, Catbalogan Comprehensive National High School, and Pangdan National High School, among others.

The study was conducted in the Schools Divisions of Samar Island—specifically Samar, Calbayog City, and Catbalogan City—which represent both urban and rural school contexts, providing a diverse and contextually rich setting for examining leadership practices in public senior high schools. Samar Division includes predominantly rural, geographically dispersed municipalities, whereas Calbayog City and Catbalogan City are designated component cities with more urbanized settings and higher population densities. This mix of urban and rural schools allows for variation in school size, access to resources, and leadership demands, strengthening the contextual diversity of the sample within the province. Whether these findings generalize to similar decentralized, resource-constrained education systems elsewhere in the Philippines or the wider Southeast Asian region is an empirical question requiring replication; such extrapolation is not claimed here. This sampling strategy aligns with studies showing that examining leadership across urban and rural public school contexts enriches understanding of how contextual factors shape leadership practices.

A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure that each stakeholder group was adequately and proportionally represented, thereby minimizing sampling bias and enhancing the sample's representativeness (Almussad, Almssad, & Yitmen, 2025).

To ensure an adequate sample size, a statistical power analysis was conducted using G*Power software. For multiple regression with three predictors (length of service, trainings attended, and management competencies), a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), an alpha level of 0.05, and a statistical power of 0.95, the minimum required sample size was 119. With 678 participants, the study exceeded this threshold by a wide margin, indicating strong statistical power and sufficient sensitivity to detect meaningful effects (Faul et al., 2007).

2.3 Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-made questionnaire validated by experts in educational management and research methodology. The instrument consisted of two parts. Part I captured demographic information, including age, sex, civil status, position, educational attainment, length of service, and training attended. Part II measured managerial competencies across eight domains: leadership, organizational management, communication, collaboration, empathy, problem-solving, decision-making, and student achievement orientation.

The eight competency domains were measured using items adapted from the NCBS-SH framework. Sample items included: 'The administrator inspires confidence and support among staff' (Leadership), 'The administrator manages financial resources effectively' (Organizational Management), 'The administrator communicates clearly with stakeholders' (Communication), 'The administrator collaborates with staff on program planning' (Collaboration), 'The administrator understands the needs of students and teachers' (Empathy), 'The administrator finds effective solutions to problems' (Problem Solving), 'The administrator makes decisions based on a shared vision' (Decision Making), and 'The administrator fosters student interest and academic success' (Student Achievement Orientation). All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The dependent variable in this study is Managerial Effectiveness, defined as the overall perceived competence of senior high school administrators across the eight NCBS-SH competency domains. It was measured as the composite mean score of the eight domains. This composite score serves as the outcome variable in the regression analysis (Table 6) and is used to test H2, H3a, and H3b. The instrument was adapted for student respondents using simplified, observable language (e.g., 'The principal communicates clearly' instead of 'The administrator demonstrates organizational management competency').

2.4 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review, resulting in refinements that improved clarity, relevance, and construct alignment. Reliability testing through pilot administration yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.783 to 0.915, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.929, indicating excellent internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). The instrument was adapted from the NCBS-SH framework and refined through expert review; exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis was not conducted to empirically verify the eight-domain structure in this study's context. Future research should conduct factor analysis to confirm the dimensional structure of the adapted instrument.

2.5 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, approvals were obtained from the Department of Education Regional Office VIII and the Schools Division Superintendents of Samar Island. Coordination with school heads facilitated the distribution and retrieval of questionnaires. Data were collected using a mixed-mode approach, combining face-to-face fielding of paper questionnaires with online administration via Google Forms; the two modes were used concurrently across schools rather than assigned to distinct respondent groups. Minor discrepancies in valid response counts for select demographic items (Position and Educational Attainment among administrators; see Table 1a) likely reflect this mixed-mode administration, as field-level optionality and response prompts differed slightly between the paper-based and online versions of the instrument. Completed instruments were screened, encoded, cleaned, and prepared for analysis. Confidentiality, anonymity, and data integrity were strictly observed throughout the process.

2.6 Statistical Analysis

Prior to analysis, assumptions for ANOVA and regression were checked following standard diagnostic procedures (Field, 2013). Levene's test was used for homogeneity of variance; VIF was used to assess multicollinearity. All assumptions were met. Descriptive statistics summarized respondent profiles and competency levels. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted mean, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Scheffé post hoc test (Scheffé, 1959), and multiple regression analysis. ANOVA tested differences among stakeholder groups, and multiple regression identified predictors of managerial effectiveness. Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), and the results indicated that no single factor accounted for the majority of the variance.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through coded data handling procedures. All data were used exclusively for academic purposes and securely managed throughout the research process. Approval was obtained from the Department of Education Regional Office VIII and the relevant institutional ethics review board. Parental consent was obtained for student participants.

3. Results

4.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1a. Profile of senior high school administrators (n = 171).

Variable	Category	<i>f</i>	%
Age	35 and below	11	6.4
	36–43	52	30.4
	44–51	55	32.2
	52–59	47	27.5
	60 and above	6	3.5
Sex	Total	171	100.0
	Male	56	32.7
	Female	115	67.3
Civil Status	Total	171	100.0
	Single	34	19.9
	Married	121	70.8
	Others	16	9.4
	Total	171	100.0
Position	Head Teacher I	4	2.8
	Head Teacher II	12	8.3
	Head Teacher III	7	4.8
	Head Teacher IV	4	2.8
	Teacher-in-Charge	5	3.4
	Principal I	1	0.7
	Principal II	23	15.9
	Others	89	61.4
	Total (valid)	145	100.0
	Total	171	100.0
Educational Attainment	Bachelor's	7	6.4
	Master's	98	89.9
	Doctoral	3	2.8
	Others	1	0.9
	Total (valid)	109	100.0
Length of Service	1–5 years	60	35.1
	6–10 years	29	17.0
	11–15 years	23	13.5
	16–20 years	7	4.1
	21–25 years	20	11.7
	26–30 years	23	13.5
	31+ years	9	5.2
	Total	171	100.0
Trainings Attended	1–10	87	50.9
	11–20	54	31.6
	21–30	18	10.5
	31+	12	7.0
	Total	171	100.0

Note: Percentages for Position and Educational Attainment are based on valid responses only; the lower valid counts for these two items reflect the mixed-mode (face-to-face and online) data collection procedure described in the Data Collection Procedure section. Percentages may not total exactly 100.0% because of rounding.

Table 1b. Profile of senior high school teachers (n = 249).

Variable	Category	f	%
Age	35 and below	30	12.0
	36–43	80	32.1
	44–51	85	34.1
	52–59	45	18.1
	60 and above	9	3.6
	Total	249	100.0
Sex	Male	70	28.1
	Female	179	71.9
	Total	249	100.0
Civil Status	Single	50	20.1
	Married	175	70.3
	Others	24	9.6
	Total	249	100.0
Educational Attainment	Bachelor's	50	20.1
	Master's	170	68.3
	Doctoral	29	11.6
	Total	249	100.0
Length of Service	1–5 years	90	36.1
	6–10 years	50	20.1
	11–15 years	35	14.1
	16–20 years	30	12.0
	21+ years	44	17.7
	Total	249	100.0
Trainings Attended	1–10	130	52.2
	11–20	75	30.1
	21+	44	17.7
	Total	249	100.0

Note: Percentages may not total exactly 100.0% because of rounding.

Table 1c. Profile of senior high school students (n = 258).

Variable	Category	f	%
Sex	Male	80	31.0
	Female	178	69.0
	Total	258	100.0
Age	15–17	120	46.5
	18–20	110	42.6
	21+	28	10.9
	Total	258	100.0

Note. Student demographic characteristics are limited to age and sex because educational attainment, length of service, and training attendance are not applicable to this stakeholder group.

The demographic profiles of the three stakeholder groups are presented separately in Tables 1a, 1b, and 1c. Administrators were predominantly female (67.3%) and married (70.8%). Among administrators with reported educational-attainment data, master's degree holders constituted the largest category (89.9%). Among valid responses for position, the largest category was "Others" (61.4%). The largest proportion of administrators had 1–5 years of service (35.1%) and had attended

1–10 trainings (50.9%). Teachers were similarly predominantly female (71.9%) and married (70.3%), with master's degree holders comprising the largest educational-attainment category (68.3%). Students were predominantly female (69.0%), with most respondents aged 15–20 years. Overall, the sample consisted of 171 administrators (25.2%), 249 teachers (36.7%), and 258 students (38.1%), for a total of 678 respondents.

The large “Others” category among administrators (61.4%) reflects the diversity of formal designations used across senior high schools in the Schools Divisions of Samar Island; the instrument did not require respondents to disaggregate this category, so it likely subsumes designations such as assistant or vice principals, officers-in-charge, department heads, and master teachers performing administrative functions, among others. Because position level plausibly correlates with decision-making authority and scope of stakeholder interaction, this collapsed category limits the extent to which the study's findings can be attributed to specific administrative roles rather than to administrators as an undifferentiated group. Future research should collect more granular position data to test whether the reported associations vary by formal administrative designation.

4.2 Common Method Bias Test

To determine the potential influence of common method variance, Harman's single-factor test was conducted using unrotated exploratory factor analysis on all measured variables. The results revealed multiple factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, indicating that the variance structure was distributed across several latent dimensions rather than concentrated within a single factor.

Furthermore, the first unrotated factor accounted for less than 50% of the total variance, suggesting that no single latent factor dominated the covariance among the measured constructs. These findings indicate that common method bias does not pose a serious threat to the validity of the study. This test, however, is designed to detect general common-method variance and does not specifically isolate variance attributable to the mixed-mode (face-to-face and online) administration described in the Data Collection Procedure; a null Harman result is therefore reassuring but does not fully rule out mode-specific variance. Consequently, the results support the robustness and credibility of the subsequent inferential analyses presented in this study, with this caveat in mind.

4.3 Level of Managerial Competencies of Administrators

Table 2. Managerial competencies of SHS administrators.

Domain	Mean	Std. Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
Leadership	4.03	0.52	High
Organizational Management	3.79	0.56	High
Communication	4.16	0.51	High
Collaboration	3.71	0.62	High
Empathy	4.00	0.58	High
Problem Solving	3.65	0.62	High
Decision Making	3.82	0.57	High
Student Achievement	3.72	0.58	High
Overall	3.86	0.46	High

As shown in Table 2, the overall mean score ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.46$) indicates that managerial competencies among senior high school administrators are generally perceived to be high. Among the competency domains, Communication had the highest mean score ($M = 4.16$), indicating it is the strongest managerial competency dimension. This finding suggests that administrators are perceived as effective in interpersonal interaction, information dissemination, and stakeholder engagement.

Conversely, Problem Solving registered the lowest mean score ($M = 3.65$), indicating a relative developmental gap in analytical and strategic decision-making capabilities. Although still interpreted positively, the comparatively lower rating suggests that administrators may encounter challenges in addressing complex institutional problems and the demands of adaptive leadership.

Overall, the findings presented in Table 2 imply that while managerial competencies are generally strong across domains, there remains a need to strengthen higher-order analytical, strategic, and problem-solving competencies to better address the increasingly complex demands of educational leadership.

4.4 Differences in Managerial Competencies Across Stakeholders

To evaluate whether perceptions of administrative managerial competencies vary significantly across the educational ecosystem, a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The independent variable comprised three stakeholder cohorts: school administrators ($n = 171$), teachers ($n = 249$), and students ($n = 258$), for a total sample of $N = 678$. The dependent variable was the composite mean score of perceived managerial competencies.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA results on perceived managerial competencies across stakeholder groups ($n = 678$).

Variable	df	F	p	Decision
Between Groups	2	42.23	< .001	Significant
Within Groups	675	—	—	—
Total	677	—	—	—

Note: df = degrees of freedom; F = Fisher's F -ratio; p = probability value. Significant at the 0.05 level.

As shown in Table 3, the omnibus one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in perceived managerial competencies across stakeholder groups, $F(2, 675) = 42.23, p < .001$. This finding indicates that perceptions of managerial competencies differ significantly depending on respondent classification. Since the omnibus test confirmed significant group differences, a post hoc analysis was conducted to determine where these differences specifically occurred.

Table 4a. Scheffé post hoc test results for pairwise stakeholder comparisons.

Group Comparison (I vs. J)	Mean Difference (I – J)	p	Interpretation
Administrators vs. Teachers	0.07	.152	Not Significant
Administrators vs. Students	0.41	< .001	Significant
Teachers vs. Students	0.34	< .001	Significant

Note. Mean differences are significant at the 0.05 level.

As shown in Table 4a, the Scheffé post hoc analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between administrators and teachers ($\Delta M = 0.07, p = .152$), indicating alignment in perceptions among internal professional stakeholders. However, statistically significant differences were observed between students and both administrators ($\Delta M = 0.41, p < .001$) and teachers ($\Delta M = 0.34, p < .001$).

Table 4b. Domain-level ANOVA results for collaboration across stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder group	n	M	SD	F	p
Administrators	171	3.91	0.76		
Teachers	249	3.71	0.61		
Students	258	3.50	0.49	24.39	< .001
Overall	678	3.71	0.62		

As shown in Table 4b, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated a significant difference in Collaboration scores across stakeholder groups, $F(2, 675) = 24.39, p < .001$. Post hoc Scheffé comparisons indicated a significant difference between administrators and teachers ($p = .004$). The domain-level result indicates that stakeholder perceptions of collaboration differed significantly, particularly between administrators and teachers.

These findings suggest that students evaluate managerial competencies differently compared to school personnel. The perceptual gap may reflect differences in stakeholder expectations, institutional experiences, and levels of interaction with school leadership processes. Administrators and teachers tend to evaluate leadership

effectiveness based on operational efficiency, organizational coordination, and policy implementation. In contrast, students are more likely to assess leadership in terms of responsiveness, accessibility, inclusiveness, and the quality of their educational experience.

Overall, the results underscore the importance of integrating student perspectives into leadership assessment and institutional improvement strategies within the senior high school system.

4.5 Correlation Analysis

To evaluate the internal operational dynamics of administrative behaviors, a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was executed across the core competency domains. This analysis maps how distinct management behaviors function alongside one another.

Table 5. Inter-correlation matrix for core managerial competency domains (N = 678).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
(1) Leadership	1.00							
(2) Organizational Management	.78**	1.00						
(3) Communication	.82**	.75**	1.00					
(4) Collaboration	.69**	.71**	.74**	1.00				
(5) Empathy	.66**	.68**	.72**	.76**	1.00			
(6) Problem Solving	.73**	.77**	.79**	.70**	.74**	1.00		
(7) Decision Making	.76**	.80**	.81**	.73**	.75**	.78**	1.00	
(8) Student Achievement	.78**	.79**	.82**	.71**	.70**	.74**	.77**	1.00

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the interrelationships among the eight managerial competency domains and their association with Student Achievement Orientation. It is important to clarify that Student Achievement Orientation, like the other seven domains, is a perceived competency item rated by administrators, teachers, and students, not an objective measure of student achievement; accordingly, the correlations reported below are interpreted as evidence of internal consistency among perceptual measures rather than as evidence of relationships with actual student outcomes.

As presented in Table 5, all competency domains demonstrated statistically significant positive correlations at the .01 level, indicating strong interdependence among leadership, managerial, and instructional competencies within the educational system. The strongest observed relationship was between Communication and Student Achievement Orientation ($r = .82$), followed by Organizational Management ($r = .79$) and Leadership ($r = .78$), suggesting that respondents who rate structured coordination and communication effectiveness highly also tend to rate student-achievement-oriented practice highly—a pattern of internal consistency among perceptual ratings, not a demonstrated link to actual student outcomes.

Moderate-to-strong correlations were also observed among interpersonal and cognitive domains such as Collaboration ($r = .71$) and Empathy ($r = .70$), indicating that relational competencies play a supportive but slightly less dominant role in this internal consistency pattern compared to structural and strategic competencies—again, a within-instrument association among self- and other-rated perceptions rather than evidence about actual student outcomes.

Importantly, although intercorrelations were consistently strong, none exceeded the multicollinearity threshold of $r = .90$, indicating that all constructs retain empirical distinctiveness despite their theoretical integration.

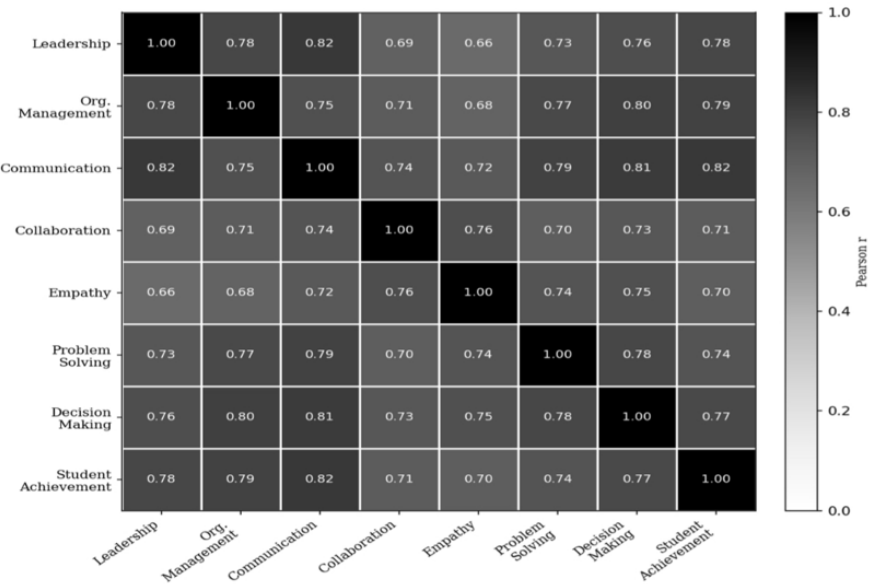


Figure 2. Correlation heatmap of managerial competency domains.

Note: All correlation coefficients are statistically significant at $p < .01$ (two-tailed; $N = 678$). Grayscale shading intensity corresponds to the absolute value of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r), indicating the strength of the linear relationship between variables.

The correlation heatmap visually reinforces the interdependence among managerial competency domains and Student Achievement Orientation, with coefficients ranging from approximately $r = .66$ to $r = .82$.

This visual pattern reinforces the interpretation offered above: structurally oriented competencies (communication, coordination, leadership) cluster toward the stronger end of the range, while interpersonal competencies (empathy, collaboration) cluster toward the lower end, though all domains remain positively associated with the self-rated Student Achievement Orientation item, consistent with a coherent perceptual construct rather than a tested link to objective student outcomes.

Overall, the pattern reflects a coherent but multidimensional competency structure, where both strategic-organizational and relational competencies cohere as a single perceptual construct within this instrument, consistent with their shared measurement basis rather than with an independently demonstrated effect on student achievement.

4.6 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 6. Regression results predicting managerial effectiveness.

Predictor	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
Length of Service	.21	6.84	< .001	Significant
Trainings Attended	.28	9.72	< .001	Significant
Management Competencies	.44	14.15	< .001	Significant

Model Summary: $R = .68$, $R^2 = .46$, Adjusted $R^2 = .45$, $F = 191.02$, $p < .001$

As shown in Table 6, the regression model is statistically significant and explains 46% of the variance in managerial effectiveness ($R^2 = .46$, $p < .001$), indicating moderate explanatory power.

Among the predictors, Management Competencies emerged as the strongest determinant of managerial effectiveness ($\beta = .44$, $t = 14.15$, $p < .001$), followed by Training Attended ($\beta = .28$, $t = 9.72$, $p < .001$) and Length of Service ($\beta = .21$, $t = 6.84$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that competency-related factors contribute more strongly to managerial effectiveness than tenure alone.

The results further imply that managerial effectiveness is influenced less by accumulated years of service and more by continuous competency development through training, professional learning, and organizational engagement. This finding reinforces the importance of competency-based leadership development programs within educational institutions.

Overall, the regression findings suggest that stronger managerial competencies and greater professional development participation are associated with higher leadership effectiveness in senior high school administration. Because the design is cross-sectional, these associations cannot establish causality; longitudinal research is needed to determine whether competency development produces improvements in managerial effectiveness over time.

4.7 Hypothesis Testing

Table 7. Summary of hypothesis testing results.

Hypothesis	Statistical Test	Key Statistic	p-value	Decision on H ₀
H1: Perceptual Divergence Across Stakeholder Groups	One-Way ANOVA with Scheffé Post Hoc Test	$F(2, 675) = 42.23; \Delta M = 0.41, 0.34$	$< .001$	Reject Null
H2: Adaptive Managerial Competencies and Managerial Effectiveness	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation	$r = .75-.82$	$< .001$	Not a Formal Hypothesis Test
H3a: Demographic Predictors of Managerial Effectiveness	Multiple Regression Analysis	$\beta = .21, .28; R^2 = .46$	$< .001$	Reject Null
H3b: Competency-Based Predictors of Managerial Effectiveness	Multiple Regression Analysis	$\beta = .44; F = 191.02; R^2 = .46$	$< .001$	Not a Formal Hypothesis Test

H1 and H3a were tested at the .05 level of significance using two-tailed tests (one-way ANOVA with Scheffé post hoc comparisons for H1; multiple regression for H3a), and both null hypotheses were rejected based on the statistical results. H2 and H3b are not reported as formal null-hypothesis tests: because Managerial Effectiveness is operationalized as the composite mean of the same eight competency domains from which Management Competencies is derived, the Pearson correlation and regression coefficient reported for H2 and H3b are partly built into the measurement itself. These statistics ($r = .75-.82$ for H2; $\beta = .44, F = 191.02, R^2 = .46$ for H3b) are retained in the table for completeness and are interpreted as evidence of internal consistency within the competency framework, not as independent tests of a predictive relationship; see Sections 2.8, 4.5, 5.3, and 5.6 for full discussion.

4. Discussion

The present findings empirically substantiate a persistent implementation gap within the decentralized Philippine senior high school system, where administrative compliance with centralized standards coexists with meaningful discontinuities in outcomes, particularly in student experience (Suyo-Vega et al., 2026). Formal bureaucratic compliance is insufficient to ensure meaningful improvements: although the overall mean competency score ($M = 3.86, SD = 0.46$) reflects consistent NCBS-SH proficiency, this does not uniformly translate into aligned outcomes across stakeholder groups.

Grounded in Instructional Leadership Theory and Street-Level Bureaucracy (SLB), this analysis conceptualizes school administrators as hybrid actors—instructional facilitators and street-level bureaucrats exercising discretionary authority under resource constraints (Lipsky, 1980). Leadership–Management Integration (LMI) is theorized as the bridging mechanism through which leadership intent is translated, or fails to be, into administrative execution; as noted in Section 2.9, LMI

itself was not directly measured or tested as a mediator here. This study builds on Briones' (2026) theory-building review, which characterizes LMI as a multilevel dynamic capability expressed through microfoundations including adaptive decision-making and flexible resource orchestration; this study's Problem Solving, Decision-Making, and Organizational Management domains correspond most directly to these, serving as indirect proxies for the mechanism LMI describes rather than a direct test of it. Findings are consistent with LMI's proposed logic that this translation is variable and structurally shaped by the interaction of competencies, perceptions, and institutional constraints.

A central finding is the statistically significant perceptual divergence across the tri-stakeholder sample ($p < .05$), particularly between students and administrators. One-way ANOVA, $F(2, 675) = 42.23$, $p < .001$, confirmed significant differences across respondent classifications; Scheffé post hoc analysis revealed this divergence is primarily driven by students, whose evaluations were significantly lower than administrators' ($\Delta M = 0.41$, $p < .001$) and teachers' ($\Delta M = 0.34$, $p < .001$), while administrators and teachers showed strong internal alignment ($\Delta M = 0.07$, $p = .152$). This is consistent with SLB theory's boundary condition of discretionary implementation: internal stakeholders evaluate performance using shared compliance frameworks, while students assess leadership through lived instructional experience—a reference compliance-oriented administration does not consistently address (Lipsky, 1980; Adorador, 2024). Institutional coherence at the administrative level thus does not guarantee experiential alignment at the learner level.

Consistent with the correlation findings, the results are consistent with the claim that adaptive managerial behaviors—specifically decentralized decision-making, flexible problem-solving, and instruction-focused supervision—are positively associated with perceived managerial effectiveness. Because Managerial Effectiveness is itself a composite of the eight competency domains, this association should not be read as evidence that adaptive behaviors drive independently measured school performance or operate apart from compliance-oriented practice; no independent measure of school performance, institutional alignment, or policy compliance was collected in this study. The multiple regression model ($R^2 = .46$, $F = 191.02$, $p < .001$) reveals that management competencies ($\beta = .44$) constitute the strongest predictor of managerial effectiveness, followed by training attended ($\beta = .28$) and length of service ($\beta = .21$).

Because management competencies and managerial effectiveness were measured concurrently through respondent perception, these associations are best read as consistent with — rather than direct evidence for — a competency-driven pathway; the causal ordering and its limitations are addressed in the limitation section.

These findings directly address H2, supporting the argument that adaptive leadership behaviors are more strongly reflected in perceived managerial effectiveness than passive, compliance-based competencies—an internal-consistency pattern consistent with, but not proof of, a causal effect on school performance. The relatively lower Problem Solving mean ($M = 3.65$) indicates a developmental gap in the very

competencies most associated with adaptive governance, suggesting current frameworks, adequate for compliance, may not sufficiently develop adaptive managerial capacities.

These findings align with decentralized decision-making, flexible problem-solving, and instruction-focused supervision as the perceptual dimensions most closely tied to managerial effectiveness ratings, relative to compliance-oriented practice. The strong Leadership–Communication correlation ($r = .82$) suggests effective instructional leadership is closely tied to transparent, contextually responsive communication, which mediates both stakeholder perception and institutional alignment.

Not every hypothesized pattern held: Scheffé analysis found no significant difference between administrators and teachers, though SLB theory would predict broader discretionary divergence. Because significant divergence is concentrated at the student level, this null result may instead mask a deeper experiential gap that role-based evaluation cannot detect—administrators and teachers may converge on shared vantage points about compliance and operations, not necessarily because their judgments track students' lived experience.

Beyond the broad pattern of stakeholder perceptual divergence, the findings reveal a more granular institutional challenge. While the overall mean difference between administrators and teachers was not significant, as noted above, domain-level analysis (Table 4b) revealed a significant perceptual difference specifically in collaboration ($p = .004$). This indicates that the overall alignment between administrators and teachers masks domain-specific divergence, particularly in collaborative decision-making and shared instructional leadership. This internal misalignment—occurring among institutional actors who otherwise demonstrate coherence in other competency domains—signals what this analysis conceptualizes as a Collaborative Chasm, in which formal coordination structures coexist with incomplete shared instructional decision-making and limited distributed pedagogical agency.

This extends the SLB-based explanation of the implementation gap to intra-institutional dynamics: the collaborative chasm represents a breakdown in translating leadership intent into collective execution: even clearly articulated intent is constrained by the structural conditions of decentralized, resource-constrained governance such as Samar Island's, consistent with comparative evidence that policy decoupling is most pronounced in such contexts (Rodrigues & De Lima, 2021; Widiastuti, 2025).

Why collaboration specifically diverges warrants attention. Unlike communication or planning, which can be enacted and rated as one-directional competencies, collaboration is inherently reciprocal: it requires that a teacher's input demonstrably shape a decision, not merely that an administrator solicit it. This structural asymmetry may make collaboration the domain most exposed to the discretionary authority SLB theory describes, compounded by differing implicit definitions across roles—administrators may equate it with consultation, teachers with

shared decision authority. If this pattern replicates, collaboration may be the most actionable intervention point identified in this study, since formal coordination structures and lived decision-making authority appear to diverge most sharply here.

Unlike resource constraints, which are difficult for individual schools to address, collaborative leadership practices are developable through targeted professional development—investing in distributed decision-making and authentic teacher participation in governance could yield measurable gains in perceptual alignment.

This study advances three theoretical contributions, best read as evidence from a single decentralized, Philippine senior-high-school context that extends Instructional Leadership and SLB theory to this setting rather than establishing generalizable laws. First, findings are consistent with, and extend, Instructional Leadership Theory: leadership effectiveness is not directly transmitted through formal credentials or compliance alone but shows patterns consistent with mediation by adaptive behavioral dispositions and implementation conditions, operationalizing the implementation gap through the NCBS-SH framework in a resource-constrained governance context.

Second, findings are consistent with, and extend, SLB theory: discretionary implementation under decentralized governance appears associated not only with school-level policy variation but also with structured internal perceptual alignment that, paradoxically, masks experiential divergence at the student level—offering bounded empirical grounding for the claim that street-level bureaucratic processes mediate policy-to-outcome relationships, though whether this generalizes to other decentralized systems remains open.

Third, the study offers a modest contribution to institutional theory: organizational legitimacy can remain stable administratively even as experiential legitimacy declines at the learner level. This distinction offers a more analytically precise way to operationalize the implementation gap than compliance-only frameworks, though its value beyond this sample has not yet been tested.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how managerial competencies of public Senior High School administrators relate to institutional alignment and school-level performance in a decentralized education system, using a tri-stakeholder sample ($N = 678$) from the Schools Divisions of Samar Island. Two conclusions follow.

First, formal administrative compliance is insufficient to ensure meaningful school-level outcomes: despite consistent NCBS-SH proficiency ($M = 3.86$), significant perceptual divergence across stakeholder groups ($p < .001$)—particularly between students and administrators—reveals a structural misalignment between institutionally evaluated performance and learner-perceived experience, substantiating a persistent implementation gap.

Second, adaptive managerial behaviors emerged as the strongest correlates of perceived managerial effectiveness within the competency framework, with management competencies ($\beta = .44$) the strongest single correlate—stronger than

seniority or credential accumulation, though partly definitional given that managerial effectiveness is itself derived from the same competency ratings (see Section 5.6). Because the design is cross-sectional, this cannot be read as evidence that competency development causes improved effectiveness; with that caveat, the finding suggests professional training targeting adaptive, instructionally integrated competencies may matter more than tenure-based progression.

Collectively, these conclusions affirm that effective governance in decentralized education systems requires shifting from compliance-centered administration toward adaptive, participatory, instructionally responsive leadership capable of closing the gap between institutional compliance and learner experience. This recommendation for adaptive, instructionally integrated competencies is grounded in Instructional Leadership Theory's emphasis on the school head's direct influence on teaching and learning, while the recommendation for distributed decision-making and authentic teacher participation is grounded in Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory's emphasis on discretionary behavior and policy decoupling; together, the two theories support leadership training that prioritizes adaptive, instructionally integrated competencies over compliance-oriented and seniority-based progression. Future research should examine whether these patterns hold in other regions and over time.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is subject to several limitations. The geographic scope is restricted to public senior high schools within the Schools Divisions of Samar Island, which, despite a contextually rich, multi-divisional sample ($N = 678$) spanning urban and rural contexts and exceeding the *a priori* power analysis minimum (Faul et al., 2007), may limit transferability to other regions. The cross-sectional quantitative design, while appropriate for descriptive and correlational purposes, precludes causal inference and fails to capture longitudinal shifts in managerial behavior, stakeholder perceptions, or policy implementation outcomes. This limitation extends specifically to the regression findings: because competency ratings and managerial effectiveness were measured concurrently through respondent perception, the observed associations are consistent with, but do not rule out, a reverse or reciprocal pathway in which raters who already perceive an administrator as effective subsequently rate that administrator's competencies more favorably (a halo effect), rather than competencies driving effectiveness as implied by the study's theoretical framing. Longitudinal or multi-wave designs would be required to establish temporal precedence and rule out this alternative explanation. This limitation is not unique to the present design: Briones' (2026) review similarly notes that cross-sectional designs limit causal inference across the LMI literature it synthesizes. An additional limitation concerns reliance on self-report measures across all three stakeholder groups, which may introduce over-reporting or socially desirable responding; future research should incorporate objective measures (e.g., NAT/PISA results, classroom observation) to complement perceptual data. A further limitation concerns model specification: the regression

analysis entered Management Competencies as a single composite predictor rather than testing the eight competency domains separately, which precludes identifying which specific domain (e.g., communication, decision-making, problem-solving) contributes most to managerial effectiveness. The domain-level descriptive statistics (Table 2) and inter-correlation matrix (Table 5) offer preliminary, exploratory insight into relative domain standing, but they do not substitute for domain-specific regression analysis; future research should enter each competency domain as a separate predictor to identify its relative predictive weight. Findings should accordingly be read as associations rather than causal claims.

The Management Competencies effect ($\beta = .44$), the strongest regression predictor, warrants similar caution: because both variables were rated by the same respondents at the same time, part of this association may reflect a halo effect despite Harman's test indicating no dominant common-method factor. Independent effectiveness ratings (e.g., supervisor evaluations) would help isolate this link from shared-rater bias. A related and more fundamental issue is definitional rather than rater-based: because Managerial Effectiveness is operationalized as the composite mean of the same eight competency domains from which Management Competencies is derived, the two are not fully independent constructs, and the regression coefficient linking them is partly built into the measurement itself rather than constituting independent empirical evidence. This circularity, distinct from the halo-effect concern above, means H2 and the associated regression finding are best read as evidence of internal consistency within the competency framework rather than as a substantive test of whether competencies drive effectiveness; an outcome measure constructed independently of the predictor competencies is needed to test this relationship directly.

Future research should adopt longitudinal and mixed-methods approaches to examine whether adaptive, LMI-aligned interventions produce sustained student-outcome improvements, extend comparisons across regional governance systems, and qualitatively investigate how LMI operates under varying conditions of discretionary governance.

Measurement limitations further qualify these findings: Managerial Effectiveness was operationalized as the composite mean of the eight competency domains, capturing perceived rather than objective performance; future research should link adaptive managerial behaviors to measurable student outcomes directly.

Sample composition introduces additional constraints: the large "Others" category in administrator position data (61.4%) precludes role-specific analysis, and student respondents were profiled only by age and sex, with no data on grade level, academic track, or socioeconomic background. Both factors may moderate the reported associations and limit examination of within-group variation; future research should collect more granular position and student demographic data to test whether these patterns hold uniformly across subgroups. Finally, while the study draws on recent and relevant literature, there is a reliance on localized and regional journals; future research should engage more broadly with international comparative literature

to test the generalizability of these implementation-gap dynamics across different decentralized education systems globally.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank the reviewers and editors for their valuable feedback, and Northwest Samar State University, where this research was conducted. The author would also like to thank Dr. Fritz Jeffry Z. Briones, whose Leadership–Management Integration (LMI) concept was utilized in this study. During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used Grammarly to assist with grammar, spelling, and language clarity checks. All suggested edits were reviewed and accepted or rejected by the author, who takes full responsibility for the content, accuracy, and originality of the published work.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Author Contributions: Errojo, W.; Study conceptualization, methodology design, data collection, formal analysis, original manuscript writing, critical review, and manuscript editing. The author read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agreed to be accountable for the integrity and accuracy of the work.