

Distributed Leadership Practices and School–Community Linkages Among Elementary School Principals

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Abstract	Article Info
<p>This study examined the role of distributed leadership in strengthening school–community linkages among elementary school principals in District 2 of the Schools Division of Simalay City, Philippines. Specifically, it assessed the extent to which principals demonstrated distributed leadership across the dimensions of bounded empowerment, developing leadership, shared decision-making, and collective engagement, and explored how these practices were associated with community linkages in terms of partnership building, social interaction, and management-related collaboration. A descriptive–correlational research design was employed using validated survey questionnaires administered to 45 teachers and 40 community stakeholders. Data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and correlational statistics to determine the patterns and relationships between the study variables. Findings indicated that distributed leadership practices were evident across the participating schools and were associated with stronger school–community linkages. The results underscore the importance of participatory leadership in fostering collaborative relationships among school personnel, parents, local officials, and other stakeholders. Based on the findings, a School Leadership and Linkages Enhancement Program was proposed to further strengthen shared leadership practices and promote sustainable community engagement in elementary schools. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on educational leadership by highlighting the value of distributed leadership in improving school–community relations within the local educational context.</p>	<p>Keywords: <i>Distributed Leadership, Shared Decision-Making, Community Linkages, Elementary School Principals, School–Community Partnerships, Educational Leadership.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

The role of the principal in the community involvement of their schools has been a topic of significant interest in educational leadership research (Vanblaere et.al, 2018). Meanwhile Effective school principals employ a range of practices to strengthen linkages between the school and the wider community (Hata et al.,2021). In this regard, distributed leadership has emerged as a significant leadership approach, as it emphasizes the sharing of leadership responsibilities among various members of the school organization rather than concentrating authority in a single individual (Harris, 2021).

When properly implemented, distributed leadership can enhance the collective capacity of the school community to work collaboratively toward shared goals (Harris, 2011; Vanblaere et.al, 2018). This leadership approach is particularly important in promoting strong school–community partnerships because it encourages broader participation, shared accountability, and greater stakeholder commitment (Kumari, R., & Kumar, K. (2024)). As such, the effective practice of distributed leadership by school heads may contribute to improved community linkages, which, in turn, may positively influence school performance and student outcomes.

However, the appointment of a new school head often results in changes in leadership dynamics that may affect existing distributed leadership practices and community linkages in elementary schools in District 2 of the Schools Division of Sipalay City. Such transitions raise important questions regarding the extent to which the new school head can delegate responsibilities, promote staff collaboration, and involve stakeholders in shared decision-making processes. These leadership actions may influence the continuity and strength of established community partnerships, particularly during the adjustment period following the installation of a new school head (Supervisor Report, 2020).

Given this context, it is important to examine the leadership strategies employed by new school heads in addressing challenges related to distributed leadership and in strengthening community linkages. This study is particularly relevant to elementary schools in District 2 of the Schools Division of Sipalay City because it seeks to generate insights that may support improved school operations, greater teacher involvement, and stronger stakeholder collaboration for the overall development of the district.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Practices of Principals Through Distributed Leadership

The concept of distributed leadership has received growing attention in the field of educational leadership. A number of studies have examined the leadership practices of elementary school principals through this perspective. Study of Pingle, T. (2006) investigated the leadership practices of elementary school principals in a diverse urban setting and found that principals who practiced distributed leadership demonstrated higher levels of collaboration with teachers, students, and other stakeholders in decision-making processes. This collaborative approach contributed to a more inclusive and empowering school environment, supported teacher professional growth, and improved student outcomes.

In a similar vein, Liu ,et al 2021 explored the influence of distributed leadership on school improvement efforts in a rural elementary school context. Their findings showed that principals who distributed leadership responsibilities among teachers and staff helped create a more cohesive and supportive school community. Such an inclusive leadership approach strengthened teacher engagement and promoted greater ownership of school improvement initiatives, which in turn contributed to improved student achievement and a more positive school climate. Likewise, Pañares, 2025 in their study of underperforming elementary schools undergoing turnaround efforts, reported that principals who adopted distributed leadership involved teachers and staff in decision-making and encouraged them to take responsibility for school improvement. This approach enhanced teacher morale, increased collaboration, and fostered a shared commitment to creating a more effective learning environment.

In the Philippine context, distributed leadership has also become an important area of inquiry, particularly in elementary school settings. Several local studies have emphasized the value of collaboration, shared responsibility, and collective decision-making in school leadership. Galdames-Calderón, M. (2023) found that school heads who practiced distributed leadership encouraged teachers and staff to assume

leadership roles, thereby fostering a more collaborative school environment. This approach strengthened the capacity of the school community to participate in decision-making and problem-solving. Similarly, Mncube et. Al, 2023 noted that distributing leadership responsibilities not only empowered teachers but also improved school performance by cultivating a sense of collective ownership.

Distributed leadership has likewise been associated with teacher development and professional engagement. Galdames-Calderón, M. (2023)) observed that in schools where principals shared leadership roles with teachers, teacher involvement and professional development increased. This collaborative model enabled teachers to contribute their expertise to curriculum planning, instructional strategies, and school management. In the same way, Ruth, K. (2023)) reported that school heads who actively involved teachers and staff in decision-making processes tended to have higher levels of teacher job satisfaction, as teachers felt more valued and meaningfully engaged in the life of the school.

Despite these positive outcomes, the implementation of distributed leadership is not without challenges. Agasisti et al, 2019 pointed out that some schools experienced resistance to distributed leadership, particularly when principals adhered to more traditional and hierarchical leadership styles. Distributed leadership has increasingly been recognized as a collaborative framework in which leadership functions are shared among multiple stakeholders within the school organization rather than centralized in a single authority figure. However, its effectiveness depends largely on the extent to which collaboration is genuinely practiced within the institution. In contexts where collaboration is weak or superficial, the benefits of distributed leadership tend to be limited. Scholars have emphasized that leadership distribution without authentic participation may result in role ambiguity and reduced organizational coherence (Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2008).

Consistent with this perspective, leadership style plays a crucial role in shaping the adoption of distributed leadership practices. Research indicates that principals who exhibit transformational leadership behaviors are more inclined to empower teachers, delegate responsibilities, and foster professional collaboration (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Transformational leaders create conditions that encourage shared decision-making and collective responsibility, thereby strengthening distributed leadership within schools. Empirical evidence further suggests that leadership styles significantly influence teacher engagement and organizational dynamics, reinforcing the importance of adaptive leadership approaches in educational settings. School culture is another critical determinant in the successful implementation of distributed leadership. A positive organizational culture characterized by trust, mutual respect, and openness facilitates collaboration and enhances the effectiveness of shared leadership practices. Studies have shown that school culture mediates the relationship between leadership practices and school outcomes, emphasizing that leadership alone is insufficient without a supportive environment. In such environments, teachers are more willing to participate in leadership roles, thereby promoting collective efficacy and organizational learning.

Moreover, effective communication is essential in sustaining distributed leadership. Open communication channels between school leaders and teachers foster trust and transparency, which are necessary for collaborative decision-making. Research indicates that misalignment in perceptions between principals and teachers regarding leadership distribution can negatively affect teacher autonomy and job satisfaction, highlighting the importance of shared understanding and dialogue within the organization. When communication is consistent and inclusive, schools are better positioned to innovate and respond to emerging challenges.

Distributed leadership has also been linked to improvements in school climate and organizational effectiveness. When leadership responsibilities are shared, schools tend to develop a more inclusive and participatory environment, leading to enhanced teacher motivation and student outcomes. Evidence suggests that distributed leadership contributes to improved school effectiveness by fostering collaboration, enhancing professional learning communities, and promoting shared accountability among stakeholders. This collective approach allows schools to leverage the diverse expertise of their members, resulting in more responsive and adaptive organizational systems.

Furthermore, distributed leadership enables principals to maximize the strengths of their staff by recognizing individual capabilities and encouraging active participation in school governance. This approach not only improves organizational efficiency but also supports innovation and continuous improvement.

Contemporary studies highlight that distributed leadership enhances school performance by strengthening collaboration, promoting innovation, and improving overall school functioning.

School Head Community Linkages Factors

Effective school leadership plays a critical role in establishing and sustaining strong school–community partnerships, which are essential for enhancing educational outcomes and fostering collaborative relationships among stakeholders. School–community partnerships have been widely recognized as mechanisms for improving student achievement, strengthening school systems, and promoting community development (Valli, Stefanski, & Jacobson, 2014). These partnerships enable schools to access external resources, build stakeholder trust, and create more responsive educational environments.

However, in contexts where collaboration is not actively encouraged, the benefits of shared or distributed leadership may be constrained. Distributed leadership emphasizes shared responsibility and collective engagement, yet its effectiveness depends largely on organizational culture and leadership practices (Spillane, 2006). When collaboration is weak, leadership distribution becomes symbolic rather than functional.

School leaders play a central role in initiating and sustaining partnerships with external stakeholders. Research indicates that principals who actively engage with community organizations and stakeholders contribute significantly to expanding educational opportunities and strengthening support systems (Epstein, 2011). Through strategic collaboration, school heads are able to align school goals with community needs, thereby improving both institutional effectiveness and learner outcomes.

Social interaction and communication are also critical components of successful school–community linkages. Leaders who maintain open communication channels and actively participate in community activities are more likely to build trust and cooperation among stakeholders (Auerbach, 2012). This trust fosters stronger parental involvement, which has been consistently associated with improved student performance and school engagement (Jeynes, 2012).

School management practices further influence the effectiveness of community partnerships. Transparent and participatory decision-making enhances stakeholder ownership and accountability (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). When community members are involved in school governance, they are more inclined to support school initiatives and contribute resources toward achieving educational goals. Resource mobilization is another critical function of school leadership in strengthening community linkages. School leaders who actively seek external support—such as partnerships with local organizations, grants, and donations—are better able to improve school facilities and expand programs (Sanders, 2016). Transparency in resource management strengthens stakeholder confidence and ensures sustainability of support. Leadership development programs also play an important role in enhancing school–community relationships. Professional development initiatives equip school heads with competencies in stakeholder engagement, collaboration, and conflict management, which are essential for effective partnership building (Hallinger, 2011). These programs enable leaders to respond more effectively to the dynamic demands of community engagement. Equity is another significant dimension in school–community partnerships. Inclusive leadership practices ensure that diverse and marginalized groups are represented and supported within the educational system (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). In this context, community linkages serve not only as a resource mechanism but also as a strategy for promoting social justice and equitable access to education. Communication remains a foundational element in sustaining partnerships. School leaders who utilize multiple communication platforms—such as meetings, digital media, and community forums—are better able to engage stakeholders and increase participation in school programs (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Effective communication strengthens mutual understanding and reinforces collaborative relationships. Continuous professional development is likewise necessary to enhance leadership capacity. Ongoing training in leadership, stakeholder engagement, and organizational management enables school heads to navigate complex relationships and sustain productive partnerships (Day et al., 2016). Well-prepared leaders are more effective in fostering collaboration that benefits both schools and communities.

Strong community linkages also contribute to a positive school climate. Research shows that schools with active stakeholder participation tend to have more supportive environments, which positively influence student

well-being and academic achievement (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). This highlights the reciprocal relationship between community engagement and school climate.

In the Philippine context, school heads are expected to establish partnerships with parents, local government units, and community organizations. Such collaborations enhance school performance and promote sustainable educational practices (Department of Education, 2015). School leaders function as link-builders who connect institutional goals with community support systems. Parental involvement remains a key component of community linkage. Studies indicate that active parent–teacher collaboration contributes significantly to student achievement and school effectiveness (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). When school leaders align school programs with parental expectations, they foster a unified and supportive learning environment. Partnerships with local government units and businesses further strengthen school capacity. These collaborations provide access to financial resources, infrastructure support, and experiential learning opportunities for students (Sanders & Harvey, 2002). Such linkages enhance both the quality and relevance of education.

Despite these benefits, challenges persist in developing school–community partnerships. Limited resources, lack of trust, and ineffective communication often hinder collaboration, particularly in underserved or rural contexts (Hands, 2010). Nevertheless, proactive and innovative leadership can overcome these barriers and strengthen stakeholder engagement. Community linkages also support teacher development. Through partnerships, schools can provide teachers with access to training, mentoring, and professional learning opportunities, thereby improving instructional quality (Avalos, 2011). Additionally, strong partnerships enhance the public image of schools, increasing stakeholder confidence and enrollment rates. Ultimately, school leaders play a crucial role in fostering community linkages as part of their broader social responsibility. By engaging in community development initiatives and addressing local concerns, school heads contribute not only to educational improvement but also to societal advancement (Auerbach, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive–correlational design to assess the extent of distributed leadership practices among elementary school heads and to examine their relationship with school–community linkage factors in District 2 of the Schools Division of Sipalay City, Philippines. The research was carried out in three public elementary schools—Cambogui-ot Elementary School, Camindangan Elementary School, and Macarandan Elementary School. These schools were purposively chosen because they were experiencing leadership transitions, which may have implications for collaboration, stakeholder involvement, and community participation. The study population consisted of all teachers in the three identified schools and the community stakeholders affiliated with them. Using random sampling within each group, we recruited 45 teachers (20 from Cambogui-ot, 15 from Camindangan, and 10 from Macarandan) and 40 stakeholders (parents, barangay leaders, PTA officers, and LGU representatives) during School Year 2023–2024. This yielded an analytic sample of 85 respondents, sufficient for correlational tests with medium effects at $\alpha = .05$. Data were collected via an adapted survey from Mncube et. Al, 2023 organized into two parts. Part A captured teacher **sociodemographic** (age, sex, marital status, educational level, teaching position, years of service). Part B measured distributed leadership using 40 items across four indicators: bounded empowerment, developing leadership, shared decision-making, and collective engagement, rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). A parallel stakeholder questionnaire assessed school–community linkages using 40 items in four domains: building community partnerships, social interaction, school management practices, and outsourcing funds, with the same 4-point scale. Content validity was established by a three-member expert panel (Principal/Head Teacher/EPS and a District Supervisor with ≥ 3 years of relevant experience) using the Carter V. Good & Douglas E. Scates criteria; the overall panel rating ($M = 3.78$) indicated adequacy for field administration. Reliability was evaluated through test–retest procedures on a proximate teacher cohort, and internal consistency met acceptable thresholds (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.823$). Instruments, instructions, and scoring keys were standardized; enumerators were oriented to reduce administration bias, and all items were pilot-checked for clarity.

Prior to fieldwork, administrative and ethical permissions were secured from the researchers'

institution and the Division of Sipalay City, and endorsement letters filed with the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent were secured. The protocol complied with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki and local DepEd guidance for research in basic education. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants after briefing them on study aims, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw without penalty. Surveys carried no personally identifying information; responses were de-identified at source, stored on an encrypted device accessible only to the research team, and retained for analysis and audit per institutional policy. No minors were surveyed. Any questions arising during data collection were addressed immediately to avoid coercion or misunderstanding.

Data analysis was carried out following a prespecified analysis plan. Descriptive statistics were used to present the profile of the respondents and to summarize the indicators of distributed leadership and school–community linkage. Specifically, frequencies and percentages were computed for categorical variables, whereas means and standard deviations were calculated for continuous or scale-based variables. Before conducting inferential tests, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variances were examined through the Shapiro–Wilk test and Levene’s test. In instances where these assumptions were violated, distribution-free alternatives, such as the Mann–Whitney U test and Kruskal–Wallis test, were employed.

The relationships between distributed leadership indicators and community-linkage factors were examined using Spearman’s rank-order correlation coefficient. The level of significance was set at .05, two-tailed, and 95% confidence intervals were reported for the principal effects where appropriate. Missing data were minimal and were handled according to the type of analysis performed. Pairwise deletion was applied in correlation analyses, while listwise deletion was used in group comparisons after verification that the missingness occurred at random. All analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

To mitigate common method bias and enhance rigor, teacher and stakeholder data were collected from different sources, item order was counterbalanced within forms, and instructions emphasized honest, experience-based responding. A detailed operations manual, mock administration, and pretesting in a neighboring school helped ensure fidelity. Finally, a statistician independently checked all tables and figures, and any discrepancies were reconciled against the raw dataset prior to interpretation.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1. The socio-demographic profile of elementary school teachers regarding age, sex, highest educational attainment, and length of service

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20 – 29	7	15.6%
30-39	18	40.0%
40-49	18	40.0%
50-59	2	4.4%
Sex		
Male	13	28.9%
Female	32	71.1%
Marital Status		
Single	6	13.3%
Married	38	84.4%
Widowed	1	2.2%
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's Degree	3	6.7%
With the Master's Degree Unit	26	57.8%
Master's Degree Holder	16	35.6%
Length of Service in years		
0-5	12	25.0%

6-10	13	27.1%
11-15	8	16.7%
16-20	12	25.0%
21 and above	3	6.3%

The table 1 present the socio-demographic profile of elementary school teachers presents their age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, and length of service. Regarding age, most teachers fall within the 30–39 and 40–49 age brackets, each representing 40.0% of the respondents (18 teachers). A smaller percentage, 15.6%, are aged between 20–29 (7 teachers), while only 4.4% (2 teachers) are in the 50–59 age range. Regarding sex, most of the respondents are female, accounting for 71.1% (32 teachers), while males constitute 28.9% (13 teachers).

In terms of marital status, 84.4% of the teachers (38 individuals) are married, 13.3% (6 teachers) are single, and 2.2% (1 teacher) are widowed. When looking at educational attainment, most of the teachers have advanced academic qualifications. Specifically, 57.8% (26 teachers) have earned units toward a master's degree, and 35.6% (16 teachers) hold a Master's degree. Only 6.7% (3 teachers) possess a Bachelor's degree as their highest qualification.

Finally, in terms of length of service, 27.1% of teachers (13 teachers) have been serving for 6–10 years, while 25.0% (12 teachers) have either 0–5 years or 16–20 years of teaching experience. A smaller proportion, 16.7% (8 teachers), have 11–15 years of service, and 6.3% (3 teachers) have more than 21 years of teaching experience.

Besides, the socio-demographic profile of elementary school teachers indicates that the majority are experienced, highly educated, predominantly female, and within their prime working age, with many pursuing or holding advanced degrees, which suggests a well-qualified and stable teaching workforce.

Indicators	N	Mean	SD	Very Highly Practiced
Indicator 1: Bounded Empowerment	45	3.66	0.26	Very Highly Practiced
Indicator 2: Developing Leadership	45	3.74	0.25	Very Highly Practiced
Indicator 3: Shared Decision-Making	45	3.62	0.43	Very Highly Practiced
Indicator 4: Collective Engagement	45	3.56	0.31	Very Highly Practiced
Overall	45	3.64	0.23	Very Highly Practiced

Legend: 3.26–4.00 = *Very Highly Practiced*; 2.51–3.25 = *Highly Practiced*; 1.76–2.50 = *Slightly Practiced*; 1.00–1.75 = *Not Practiced*

The results presented in Table 2 show that the distributed leadership practices of elementary school principals were very highly practiced, as reflected in the overall mean of 3.64 (SD = 0.23). This indicates that distributed leadership was strongly evident across the participating schools. The relatively low standard deviation further suggests that the respondents had generally consistent perceptions regarding the principals' practice of distributed leadership. Overall, the findings imply that school principals demonstrated leadership behaviors that encouraged collaboration, participation, and shared responsibility within the school organization.

Among the four indicators, Developing Leadership obtained the highest mean score (M = 3.74, SD = 0.25), interpreted as very highly practiced. This finding suggests that the principals gave strong emphasis to nurturing the leadership potential of teachers and other members of the school community. Such a result may indicate that teachers were provided opportunities to assume leadership roles, contribute to school initiatives, and participate in professional growth activities. In practice, this strengthens the leadership capacity of the school by ensuring that leadership functions are not confined to the principal alone, but are shared with other members of the organization.

The indicator Bounded Empowerment also registered a high mean (M = 3.66, SD = 0.26), which indicates that this dimension was likewise very highly practiced. This result suggests that principals entrusted teachers

and staff with responsibilities while maintaining clear structures, expectations, and accountability mechanisms. Bounded empowerment is important in a school setting because it allows teachers to exercise initiative and professional judgment while ensuring that their actions remain aligned with school goals and policies. This balance between autonomy and accountability reflects a healthy leadership environment in which participation is encouraged without weakening organizational coherence.

Similarly, Shared Decision-Making obtained a mean of 3.62 (SD = 0.43), which also falls within the very highly practiced range. This finding implies that principals involved teachers and other stakeholders in important school decisions. Such involvement may include consultation on instructional concerns, school programs, policy implementation, and other areas that affect school operations. The result highlights the value of participatory leadership in fostering a sense of ownership among school personnel. When teachers perceive that their insights are recognized and considered, they are more likely to become committed to the successful implementation of school goals and programs.

Meanwhile, Collective Engagement had the lowest mean among the four indicators, although it still remained within the very highly practiced category (M = 3.56, SD = 0.31). This suggests that teamwork, collaboration, and shared responsibility were strongly evident in the schools, although they may have been slightly less pronounced than the other dimensions. Even so, the result indicates that principals fostered an environment where teachers worked together, supported one another, and contributed collectively to student learning and school improvement. Collective engagement remains a vital component of distributed leadership because it strengthens professional relationships and reinforces the idea that educational success is a shared responsibility.

These findings are consistent with the work of Jackson and Davis (2020), who emphasized that distributed leadership strengthens relationships within schools by promoting shared decision-making, professional collaboration, and leadership development. Likewise, the case study of Fox (2017) on Autumn Lake Middle School showed that distributed leadership was expressed through teacher empowerment, joint decision-making, and collective responsibility for student success. In that study, teachers and school leaders worked collaboratively, resulting in a more supportive and professionally engaging school environment. The present findings therefore reinforce the view that distributed leadership is a meaningful approach to school leadership, particularly in fostering shared commitment and improving the overall functioning of the school.

Table 3. Perceived School Head–Community Linkage Factors Among Elementary Schools

Indicators	N	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Indicator 1: School Head Building Community Partnerships	40	3.62	0.24	Very highly evident
Indicator 2: School Head Social Interaction	40	3.64	0.26	Very highly evident
Indicator 3: School Head School Management Practices	40	3.67	0.25	Very highly evident
Indicator 4: School Head Outsourcing Fund	40	3.70	0.25	Very highly evident
Overall	40	3.66	0.24	Very highly evident

Legend: 3.26–4.00 = *Very highly evident*; 2.51–3.25 = *Highly evident*; 1.76–2.50 = *Slightly evident*; and 1.00–1.75 = *Not evident*.

The results presented in Table 3 show that school head–community linkage factors were very highly evident among the elementary schools included in the study, as reflected in the overall mean of 3.66 with a standard deviation of 0.24. This indicates that the respondents consistently perceived the school heads as actively engaged in strengthening the school’s connection with the community across the four measured dimensions. The relatively low standard deviations further suggest that the responses were fairly consistent, indicating a common view among respondents regarding the strong presence of these leadership practices.

Among the indicators, School Head Outsourcing Fund obtained the highest mean (M = 3.70, SD = 0.25), suggesting that this aspect of community linkage was the most evident in the schools. This finding implies that school heads were perceived to be highly capable of seeking external assistance, mobilizing community support, and establishing connections with potential donors, partners, and sponsoring institutions.

Such a result reflects the important role of school heads in resource generation, particularly in contexts where school needs often require support beyond regular internal allocations. Their ability to secure outside resources may also indicate initiative, credibility, and effective engagement with stakeholders who are willing to contribute to school improvement.

This was followed by School Head School Management Practices with a mean of 3.67 (SD = 0.25), which also fell within the level of being very highly evident. This result suggests that the school heads were viewed as effective in managing school operations in ways that support community involvement and responsiveness. Sound management practices may include transparency, accountability, collaborative planning, and the proper alignment of school programs with the needs of learners and the expectations of stakeholders. The high rating in this area indicates that respondents recognized the school heads' capacity to maintain an organized and supportive school environment while fostering productive relationships with the community.

The indicator School Head Social Interaction registered a mean of 3.64 (SD = 0.26), likewise interpreted as very highly evident. This suggests that the school heads maintained positive and meaningful interactions with parents, community members, and other stakeholders. Social interaction is a significant component of school leadership because it helps build trust, openness, and mutual understanding between the school and the community. The finding implies that the school heads were visible, approachable, and actively involved in communication and relationship-building efforts, which are essential in sustaining stakeholder support and cooperation.

Meanwhile, School Head Building Community Partnerships obtained a mean of 3.62 (SD = 0.24), which, although the lowest among the four indicators, still fell within the category of being very highly evident. This indicates that the school heads were also perceived to be highly engaged in establishing and maintaining partnerships with various community sectors, including local government units, civic organizations, and other institutions. These partnerships are important because they create opportunities for collaboration, broaden the support network of the school, and contribute to the implementation of programs that benefit both learners and the wider school community.

These findings are consistent with the view that effective school leadership plays a significant role in strengthening relationships between schools and their surrounding communities. Studies by Hogue (2012) and Haeseler (2017) emphasize that school leaders who actively cultivate external partnerships, communicate effectively with stakeholders, and mobilize community resources are better able to support school improvement efforts. The present findings particularly align with this perspective, as the high ratings in community interaction and fund outsourcing suggest that school heads were able to foster cooperation and generate support from external groups. In the same way, the high rating for school management practices supports the argument of Record (2012) that effective and responsive leadership contributes not only to stronger school–community relations but also to improved educational conditions within the school.

Table 4. Relationship Between Distributed Leadership Practices and School Head–Community Linkage Factors

School Head–Community Linkage Factors	Bounded Empowerment	Developing Leadership	Shared Decision-Making	Collective Engagement	School Head–Community Linkage Factors	Bounded Empowerment
Building Community Partnerships	.133	.033	.329*	.038	Building Community Partnerships	.133
Social Interaction	.173	.063	.349*	.069	Social Interaction	.173

School Management Practices	.174	.047	.342*	.078	School Management Practices	.174
Outsourcing Fund	.167	.066	.302	.063	Outsourcing Fund	.167

Note. Values are Spearman's rho correlation coefficients ($p < .05$.)

Table 4 presents the relationship between distributed leadership practices and school head–community linkage factors. The findings show that shared decision-making had a significant positive relationship with building community partnerships ($r = .329, p < .05$), social interaction ($r = .349, p < .05$), and school management practices ($r = .342, p < .05$). These results indicate that greater involvement of teachers and stakeholders in decision-making is associated with stronger school head–community linkages in these areas. In contrast, no significant relationship was found between the distributed leadership dimensions and outsourcing fund, as all obtained coefficients were not statistically significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected only for shared decision-making in relation to the first three community linkage factors, while it was retained for outsourcing fund. This result supports Harris (2020), who states that shared decision-making is a key component of distributed leadership, which enhances collaboration and collective responsibility, leading to improved community partnerships and school management practices. Similarly, Gurr (2014) discusses how school heads who engage in shared decision-making foster better social interactions and collaboration, thus strengthening community ties and improving school management practices.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that distributed leadership practices among elementary school principals in District 2 of the Schools Division of Sibalay City were very highly practiced, while school head–community linkage factors were also very highly evident. This indicates that the principals demonstrated strong leadership practices that promoted collaboration, participation, and shared responsibility, while also maintaining meaningful connections with community stakeholders. The results further revealed that shared decision-making had a significant positive relationship with building community partnerships, social interaction, and school management practices. This means that when principals involve teachers and stakeholders in decision-making processes, school–community linkages are strengthened. However, no significant relationship was found between distributed leadership practices and outsourcing funds, suggesting that this aspect may be influenced by other external or contextual factors. Therefore, the study concludes that shared decision-making is a vital component of distributed leadership that contributes significantly to stronger community engagement and improved school management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings suggest that schools should prioritize shared decision-making as a core leadership practice to strengthen school–community linkages. Principals may establish more inclusive and participatory mechanisms that engage teachers and stakeholders in planning, decision-making, and school improvement initiatives. Leadership development programs may likewise be designed to enhance teacher participation, collaboration, and accountability in support of distributed leadership. Given the absence of a significant relationship between distributed leadership and outsourcing of funds, resource mobilization efforts may require complementary strategies beyond internal leadership practice, including external partnership development and targeted training in fund generation. Future research may expand the sample and examine additional contextual variables to deepen understanding of how distributed leadership contributes to stronger school–community relationships.

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