

A Path Analysis of Innovative Leadership Practices, Management Styles, and School Head Performance

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Abstract	Article Info
This study examined the innovative leadership practices, management styles, and performance of school heads in Ayungon Districts 1 and 2, Negros Oriental. It also tested whether management styles mediated the relationship between innovative leadership practices and school head performance. A descriptive-correlational design with path analysis was employed among 36 school administrators selected through total enumeration. Data were gathered using a researcher-adapted questionnaire, while school head performance was based on the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form. Frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Pearson correlation, and path analysis were used. Findings showed that innovative leadership practices and management styles were both very highly practised, while school head performance was very high. Innovative leadership practices were significantly related to management styles and school head performance. Management styles were also significantly related to school head performance. However, management styles did not significantly mediate the relationship between innovative leadership practices and school head performance. The findings highlight innovative leadership as an important contributor to school head effectiveness.	Keywords: Innovative Leadership Practices, Management Styles, School Head Performance, Path Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The demand for stronger school leadership has intensified as education systems pursue Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. UNESCO's SDG 4 platform frames educational progress not only in terms of access, but also in terms of the quality of teaching, learning environments, and school governance. In the same vein, the 2024/2025 Global Education Monitoring Report identifies leadership in education as a central condition for "leading for learning," while UNESCO's quality-monitoring framework emphasizes that quality education cannot be reduced to learning outcomes alone because it also depends on trained teachers, supportive school conditions, and effective institutional leadership. In this context, school heads occupy a critical position because they translate policy, vision, and resources into everyday school improvement processes (UNESCO, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c).

Within this policy environment, innovative leadership practices have become increasingly important. Contemporary school heads are expected to think strategically, respond to educational change, process diverse knowledge, and sustain adaptive interpersonal relations in order to address complex instructional and organizational demands. Recent scholarship shows that educational leadership is no longer viewed simply as administrative control; rather, it is increasingly understood as a driver of creativity, risk-taking, innovation, and school improvement. Hojeij (2024), for instance, argued that instructional, distributed, and transformational leadership can foster innovation and entrepreneurship in education, while Hsieh, Tai, and Li (2024) found that school leadership significantly shapes teacher innovativeness. At a broader level, Wu and Shen's (2022) meta-meta-analysis also confirmed that principal leadership has a statistically significant positive relationship with student achievement, reinforcing the importance of leadership quality in school outcomes.

However, innovative leadership practices are most consequential when they are translated into concrete management styles. In schools, leadership is operationalized through instructional guidance, democratic decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and fiscal stewardship. These managerial expressions matter because they influence how goals are implemented, how teachers and stakeholders are involved, and how accountability is maintained. Hoque and Raya (2023) found that democratic leadership was positively associated with teachers' emotional behavior and perceived responsiveness, while Sariakin et al. (2025) showed that both principal leadership and school management practices significantly contributed to teacher performance. This managerial dimension also aligns with SDG 16, which emphasizes effective, accountable, and transparent institutions as well as participatory decision-making, and SDG 17, which highlights multi-stakeholder partnerships and shared resources as essential for sustainable development. Thus, management styles may serve as the practical mechanism through which innovative leadership becomes visible in school operations and performance.

The third variable, performance of the school head, represents the cumulative effectiveness of leadership and management in actual school practice. Although leadership literature consistently suggests that principal actions matter for school functioning, much of the recent empirical work has concentrated on teacher-level outcomes such as teacher performance, classroom practices, motivation, self-efficacy, and behavior rather than on the performance of school heads themselves. For example, Elfira et al. (2024) examined instructional leadership in relation to teacher self-efficacy and teacher performance, while Sariakin et al. (2025) modeled leadership, management practices, teacher motivation, and teacher performance. In the Philippine setting, Damasco and Villocino (2024) focused on instructional leadership and teacher performance, Padasas and Escote (2025) examined innovative and instructional leadership in relation to teachers' classroom practices, and Uy (2024) analyzed school heads' leadership styles in relation to teachers' performance. These studies are valuable, but they show that the dominant outcome variables remain teacher-centred rather than school-head-centred.

A clearer research gap emerges from this recent literature. First, studies on innovative leadership commonly examine innovation-related outcomes such as teacher innovativeness or classroom practice, rather than linking innovation-oriented leadership to the school head's own performance. Second, studies on management styles often examine direct associations with teacher behavior or teacher performance, but do not test whether management styles function as an intervening mechanism between leadership and school-head performance. Third, recent mediation studies in educational leadership have tended to use variables such as teacher self-efficacy or teacher motivation as mediators, not management styles. Moreover, several recent studies were

conducted in specific local contexts, and themselves acknowledged limitations in scope and generalizability, suggesting the need for more context-sensitive and integrative modelling of leadership processes. Taken together, the literature remains fragmented, and there is limited empirical evidence—particularly in Philippine basic education—on whether innovative leadership practices shape school head performance directly or indirectly through management styles (Elfira et al., 2024; Hojeij, 2024; Padasas & Escote, 2025; Sariakin et al., 2025).

This study addresses that gap by examining the direct relationship of innovative leadership practices with the performance of the school head and by testing whether management styles mediate that relationship. Conceptually, the study assumes that innovation-oriented leadership tendencies should shape how school heads manage instruction, democratic participation, stakeholders, and fiscal responsibilities, and that these management styles may, in turn, influence overall performance. By integrating these three variables into one explanatory model, the study contributes a more coherent account of school leadership that is aligned with SDG 4's concern for quality education, SDG 16's emphasis on accountable and participatory institutions, and SDG 17's call for collaborative partnerships. In doing so, it responds to the need for a more integrated and context-grounded understanding of how leadership works in schools.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to examine the innovative leadership practices, management styles, and performance of school heads, and to determine the relationships among these variables as well as the mediating role of management styles.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

- 1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:**
 - 1.1 sex;
 - 1.2 age bracket;
 - 1.3 educational attainment;
 - 1.4 Current Position
 - 1.5 total years in teaching service;
 - 1.6 years assigned in current position; and
 - 1.7 Learning Area?
- 2. What relevant trainings have the respondents attended in the last three years?**
- 3. What is the extent of the innovative leadership practices of school heads in terms of:**
 - 3.1 Strategic thinking
 - 3.2 innovative thinking;
 - 3.3 action patterns; and
 - 3.4 Interpersonal Skills?
- 4. What is the extent of the management styles of school heads in terms of:**
 - 4.1 instructional leadership;
 - 4.2 democratic style;
 - 4.3 stakeholder management; and
 - 4.4 Fiscal Management?
- 5. What is the level of performance of the school head based on the DPCR?**
- 6. Is there a significant relationship between:**
 - 6.1 Innovative leadership practices and management styles;
 - 6.2 innovative leadership practices and performance of the school head; and
 - 6.3 management styles and performance of the school head?
- 7. Does management style significantly mediate the relationship between innovative leadership practices and the performance of the school head?**

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a **descriptive-correlational design** with **path analysis** as the main analytic approach. This design was deemed appropriate because the study aimed to determine the levels of innovative leadership

practices, management styles, and school head performance, and to examine the relationships among these variables without manipulating the study conditions or introducing experimental treatment (Devanadera & Ching, 2023).

The study was conducted in Ayungon Districts 1 and 2, Negros Oriental, during the School Year 2023–2024. The locale was selected on the premise that school leadership is context-sensitive and must be understood within the structural, cultural, and organizational realities in which school heads operate; hence, the inclusion of these districts offered an appropriate setting for examining leadership and management practices in actual school environments (Mincu, 2022; Huber & Pruitt, 2024).

The respondents were the 36 school administrators from Ayungon Districts 1 and 2, specifically principals and school heads. Their inclusion was based on their direct involvement in school leadership, decision-making, management, and performance processes, making them the most appropriate source of data for the variables under investigation. Because the accessible population was small and clearly defined, the study employed total enumeration of all eligible respondents (Stratton, 2024; Ahmed, 2024).

Research Instrument

The study used an adapted survey questionnaire as the primary data-gathering instrument, which was based on the study of Hernandez, M. M., Mendoza, S. D. C., & Pacheco, M. M. (2023). Innovative leadership practices and management styles of school heads in the Schools Division of Bulacan. The questionnaire consisted of four parts: respondent profile, relevant trainings attended in the last three years, innovative leadership practices and management styles measured on a 4-point scale. The performance of the school head was based on the Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) under the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) of the Department of Education (DepEd, 2015).

The validity of the questionnaire was established through expert content validation using the Good and Scates criteria. Content validity refers to the extent to which the items of an instrument adequately represent the construct to be measured in terms of relevance, clarity, importance, and comprehensiveness, and this is commonly determined through expert evaluation (Liu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). In the present study, the instrument obtained a mean expert validity rating of 4.80, which indicates that the questionnaire was very highly valid and suitable for administration.

The reliability of the instrument was established through the test-retest method among 30 school heads from Jimalalud Districts 1 and 2, who were not included in the final respondents of the study. Test-retest reliability determines the consistency of an instrument over time through repeated administration of the same questionnaire to the same group of respondents (Liu et al., 2024; Meijer et al., 2024). The test-retest coefficient of 0.83 indicated that the questionnaire had good reliability, signifying that the instrument produced stable and consistent results across repeated measurements.

Data Gathering Procedure

The conduct of the study was initiated through the Negros Oriental Schools Division Office. Subsequently, letters of information and permission were transmitted to the concerned schools in Ayungon Districts 1 and 2 to facilitate the orderly conduct of data gathering.

Upon receipt of approval from the appropriate authorities, the respondents were informed of the purpose, nature, and significance of the study through personal communication and formal coordination. The survey instrument was then administered to the identified school administrators, and the accomplished questionnaires were retrieved after completion.

All retrieved questionnaires were examined for completeness, compiled systematically, and kept in a secure manner to maintain confidentiality. The gathered data were then encoded, classified, tabulated, and endorsed for statistical analysis to serve as the basis for the interpretation of results and the discussion of findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical standards by informing the respondents of the purpose of the research and by ensuring that participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the process, and all gathered information was used strictly for academic and research purposes only.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Frequency and percentage were used to describe the profile of the respondents and the relevant trainings they attended, while mean and standard deviation were used to determine the extent of innovative leadership practices, management styles, and the level of school head performance. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test the significant relationships among the variables, and path analysis was employed to determine whether management styles significantly mediated the relationship between innovative leadership practices and school head performance.

DISCUSSION

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents (N = 36)

Variable	Category	n	%
Sex	Female	21	58.3
	Male	13	36.1
	Prefer not to say	2	5.6
Age Bracket	20–29	7	19.4
	30–39	18	50.0
	40–49	8	22.2
	50–59	3	8.3
Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	13	36.1
	With Master's Units	16	44.4
	Master's Graduate	7	19.4
Current Position	TIC	3	8.3
	Head Teacher	15	41.7
	Principal I	12	33.3
	Principal II	5	13.9
	Principal	1	2.8
Total Years in Teaching Service	0–5	16	44.4
	6–10	13	36.1
	11–15	4	11.1
	16–20	2	5.6
	21 and above	1	2.8
Years Assigned in Current Position	0–2	11	30.6
	3–5	5	13.9
	6–10	13	36.1
	11 and above	6	16.7
	0–5	1	2.8
Learning Area	Other-General	17	47.2
	English	4	11.1
	Math	3	8.3
	Science	2	5.6
	TLE	2	5.6
	AP	1	2.8
	Filipino	1	2.8
	Filipino/MAPEH	1	2.8
	English/Filipino	1	2.8
	English, Filipino	1	2.8
	TLE, MAPEH	1	2.8
	Filipino/AP	1	2.8
	AP/TLE	1	2.8

Table 1 presents the demographic and professional profile of the 36 respondents. In terms of sex, the majority were female ($n = 21$, 58.3%), followed by male respondents ($n = 13$, 36.1%), while two respondents (5.6%) preferred not to disclose their sex. With respect to age, respondents had a mean age of 36.94 years ($SD = 7.45$), with ages ranging from 24 to 54 years. Most respondents belonged to the 30–39 age bracket ($n = 18$, 50.0%), followed by those aged 40–49 years ($n = 8$, 22.2%), 20–29 years ($n = 7$, 19.4%), and 50–59 years ($n = 3$, 8.3%).

Regarding educational attainment, the largest proportion had with Master's units ($n = 16$, 44.4%), followed by those with a Bachelor's degree ($n = 13$, 36.1%) and Master's graduates ($n = 7$, 19.4%). In terms of current position, most respondents were Head Teachers ($n = 15$, 41.7%), followed by Principal I ($n = 12$, 33.3%), Principal II ($n = 5$, 13.9%), and Teacher-in-Charge ($n = 3$, 8.3%). One respondent (2.8%) reported the position as Principal.

As to teaching experience, a plurality of respondents had 0–5 years of teaching service ($n = 16$, 44.4%), followed by 6–10 years ($n = 13$, 36.1%), 11–15 years ($n = 4$, 11.1%), 16–20 years ($n = 2$, 5.6%), and 21 years and above ($n = 1$, 2.8%). For years assigned in their current position, the most common category was 6–10 years ($n = 13$, 36.1%), followed by 0–2 years ($n = 11$, 30.6%), 11 years and above ($n = 6$, 16.7%), and 3–5 years ($n = 5$, 13.9%). One respondent (2.8%) reported 0–5 years in the current post.

In relation to learning area, nearly half of the respondents were classified under Other-General ($n = 17$, 47.2%). This was followed by English ($n = 4$, 11.1%), Math ($n = 3$, 8.3%), and both Science and TLE with two respondents each (5.6%). The remaining learning areas, including AP, Filipino, and combined subject assignments, were represented by one respondent each (2.8%).

Table 2. Relevant Trainings Attended in the Last 3 Years (Multiple Response, $N = 36$)

Training	n	% of Respondents
Instructional Leadership	15	41.7
None	10	27.8
SBM	8	22.2
Research	7	19.4
Strategic Planning	6	16.7
Stakeholder Engagement	1	2.8
Financial Management	1	2.8

Table 2 shows that Instructional Leadership was the most frequently attended training among the respondents ($n = 15$, 41.7%), followed by School-Based Management (SBM) ($n = 8$, 22.2%), Research ($n = 7$, 19.4%), and Strategic Planning ($n = 6$, 16.7%). By contrast, Stakeholder Engagement and Financial Management were the least attended areas, with only one respondent each (2.8%), while 10 respondents (27.8%) reported having attended no relevant training in the last three years. The prominence of instructional leadership training may be viewed as consistent with current literature emphasizing that school leadership exerts its strongest effects when attention is directed toward teaching, learning, and school climate. Recent evidence has shown that effective principals influence student achievement, teacher outcomes, and school improvement through sustained attention to instructional processes and organizational conditions, which explains why instructional leadership remains a dominant focus of school leader development initiatives (Tatoy, 2024; Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). At the same time, the relatively high proportion of respondents who reported no training at all indicates that access to leadership development may still be uneven, a concern reinforced by recent work showing that school leadership development is most effective when it is continuous, coherent, and supported through multiple forms of professional learning rather than isolated activities (Hojeij, Alsuwaidi, & Ahmed, 2024; Huber & Pruitt, 2024).

The moderate representation of SBM, research, and strategic planning training suggests that respondents had some exposure to broader school improvement functions, although these areas were not as emphasized as instructional leadership. This pattern is noteworthy because recent literature has indicated that SBM contributes more effectively to school performance when it is accompanied by strong leadership, community participation, and capacity-building mechanisms rather than being treated as a purely procedural reform (Nurhayati, 2025). Similarly, strategic planning has been shown to be most effective when it is data-based, participatory, and responsive to contextual needs, implying that the modest training exposure observed in this area may limit the extent to which school heads can systematically align school goals, resources, and improvement efforts (Rosita & Kurniatun, 2025).

The very low attendance in stakeholder engagement and financial management training may indicate a potential capacity gap in two leadership domains that are increasingly regarded as indispensable to effective school governance. Stakeholder engagement has been identified as a critical but often underdeveloped component of

school leadership, with recent review evidence showing that participation frequently remains procedural rather than genuinely transformative unless leaders are intentionally prepared to cultivate trust, shared agency, and participatory decision-making structures (Tayanes, Lozarito, & Escarlos, 2025). In the same manner, financial management has been recognized as an accountability-sensitive area in which weak preparation may expose schools to inefficiency and compliance problems, especially when principals are expected to balance administrative authority with transparency, lawful procedures, and stewardship of public resources (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2021). Taken together, the findings imply that while the respondents were more commonly trained in instructional leadership, a more balanced training portfolio that also strengthens SBM, strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, research capability, and financial management may be necessary to support holistic school leadership performance.

Table 3. The Mean Scores of the Innovative Leadership Practices of School Heads (N = 36)

Category	Indicator	M	SD	Interpretation
Strategic Thinking	1. Formulate long-term plan	3.50	0.56	Very Highly Practiced
	2. Spearhead comprehensive action planning	3.53	0.56	Very Highly Practiced
	3. Ensure competitive advantage	3.58	0.55	Very Highly Practiced
	4. Active participation of stakeholders	3.58	0.60	Very Highly Practiced
	5. Maximize resources	3.72	0.51	Very Highly Practiced
Innovative Thinking	1. Include current trends in education	3.39	0.64	Very Highly Practiced
	2. Create a fusion of reality and creativity in leadership	3.44	0.69	Very Highly Practiced
	3. Introduce new craft in management and supervision	3.47	0.61	Very Highly Practiced
	4. Process diverse forms of knowledge	3.50	0.56	Very Highly Practiced
	5. Formulate new ideas at supervisory and managerial levels	3.50	0.61	Very Highly Practiced
Action Patterns	1. Consistent on practical managerial and supervisory actions	3.39	0.77	Very Highly Practiced
	2. Consistent with planning and actions	3.47	0.70	Very Highly Practiced
	3. Filter impactful actions on management and supervision	3.44	0.65	Very Highly Practiced
	4. Lead with intensive propriety	3.50	0.61	Very Highly Practiced
Interpersonal Skills	1. Show self-confidence	3.67	0.53	Very Highly Practiced
	2. Adhere to effective communication systems	3.53	0.70	Very Highly Practiced
	3. Show a positive attitude and respect for subordinates' ideas	3.58	0.65	Very Highly Practiced
	4. Show greater empathy	3.61	0.64	Very Highly Practiced
	5. Maintain openness and feedback	3.64	0.64	Very Highly Practiced

Note. Interpretation is based on the following scale: 3.26–4.00 = Very Highly Practiced; 2.51–3.25 = Highly Practiced; 1.76–2.50 = Less Practiced; 1.00–1.75 = Not Practiced. Items with the same mean share the same rank.

Note. Interpretation is based on the following scale: 3.26–4.00 = Very Highly Practiced; 2.51–3.25 = Highly Practiced; 1.76–2.50 = Less Practiced; 1.00–1.75 = Not Practiced. Items with the same mean share the same rank.

Table 3 The findings indicate that the innovative leadership practices of school heads were very highly practiced across all indicators, with mean scores ranging from 3.39 to 3.72. This pattern suggests that the respondents perceived school heads as consistently demonstrating strategic, innovative, action-oriented, and interpersonal leadership behaviors, which is comparable to the findings of Hernandez, Mendoza, and Pacheco (2023), who likewise reported that school heads consistently practiced innovative leadership in terms of strategic thinking, innovative thinking, action patterns, and interpersonal skills.

Among the indicators, “maximize resources” obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.51$), followed by “show self-confidence” ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.53$) and “maintain openness and feedback” ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.64$). These results imply that the innovative leadership of school heads was most strongly manifested in resource stewardship and relational leadership, which is consistent with the view that educational leadership for innovation requires goal-setting, collaboration, and adaptive leadership behaviors that enable schools to respond effectively to changing demands (Hojeij, 2024).

The strong ratings in interpersonal skills, particularly in self-confidence, empathy, and openness, further suggest that innovation was not perceived merely as technical or managerial competence, but also as a relational practice. This interpretation is supported by evidence that democratic and people-centered leadership behaviors are associated with more positive teacher responses and that communication, collaboration, care,

and empathy are central features of effective contemporary school leadership (Hoque & Raya, 2023; Striepe & Kafa, 2025).

However, the comparatively lowest means were found in “include current trends in education” and “consistent on practical managerial and supervisory actions” (both $M = 3.39$), although these remained within the very highly practiced range. This suggests that while the school heads were generally perceived as innovative, further strengthening may still be needed in translating awareness of emerging educational trends into sustained managerial and supervisory practice, especially since leadership has been shown to influence innovativeness through both direct and indirect pathways in school settings (Hsieh, Tai, & Li, 2024).

Table 6. The Mean Scores of the Management Styles of School Heads ($N = 36$)

Category	Indicator	M	SD	Interpretation
Instructional Leadership	1. Advocate research-based activities	3.53	0.56	Very Highly Practiced
	2. Student-centered management approach	3.64	0.59	Very Highly Practiced
	3. Direct use of modern and current teaching methods	3.53	0.65	Very Highly Practiced
	4. Draw a positive and supportive environment for teachers	3.64	0.59	Very Highly Practiced
Democratic Style	1. Solidified knowledge anchored on vision and mission	3.69	0.52	Very Highly Practiced
	2. Righteous and courageous in dispensing leadership functions	3.61	0.64	Very Highly Practiced
	3. Maintain integrity	3.67	0.53	Very Highly Practiced
	4. Set high standards	3.64	0.54	Very Highly Practiced
Stakeholder Management	1. Invite the participation of stakeholders	3.58	0.65	Very Highly Practiced
	2. Draw significant insights from stakeholders	3.53	0.65	Very Highly Practiced
	3. Establish strong ties with stakeholders	3.53	0.65	Very Highly Practiced
	4. Total participation of stakeholders	3.61	0.55	Very Highly Practiced
Fiscal Management	1. Show transparent financial management	3.75	0.50	Very Highly Practiced
	2. Abide by lawful financial and usual auditing procedures	3.72	0.51	Very Highly Practiced
	3. Create comprehensive financial planning	3.69	0.62	Very Highly Practiced
	4. Comprehensive and accountable financial management	3.75	0.50	Very Highly Practiced
	5. Maintain stringent obedience to financial rules and regulations	3.75	0.50	Very Highly Practiced

Note. Interpretation is based on the following scale: 3.26–4.00 = Very Highly Practiced; 2.51–3.25 = Highly Practiced; 1.76–2.50 = Less Practiced; 1.00–1.75 = Not Practiced. Items with identical mean scores share the same rank.

Table 6 presents the findings show that all indicators of the management styles of school heads were rated very highly practiced, with mean scores ranging from 3.53 to 3.75. This indicates that the respondents perceived school heads as consistently effective across the domains of instructional leadership, democratic style, stakeholder management, and fiscal management, with the strongest ratings concentrated in fiscal management, particularly in transparent financial management, comprehensive and accountable financial management, and obedience to financial rules and regulations (all $M = 3.75$). By contrast, the relatively lower, though still very high, ratings for advocating research-based activities, drawing significant insights from stakeholders, and establishing strong ties with stakeholders (all $M = 3.53$) suggest that these areas may still be further strengthened.

This pattern suggests that the management competence of school heads was anchored most strongly in governance, accountability, and operational stewardship. The high ratings in instructional leadership are consistent with Tatoy (2024), who reported that instructional leadership and collaboration were significantly associated with school head performance. The strong results for democratic style also align with Hoque and Raya (2023), who found that democratic leadership showed a significant relationship with teachers' emotional behavior and positive responsiveness. Likewise, the favorable ratings for stakeholder management support Qaralleh's (2021) finding that school leaders strengthen school-community partnerships through active councils, communication channels, and community involvement. Finally, the dominance of fiscal management indicators is congruent with Yasin and Mokhtar's (2022) conclusion that accountability, transparency, and compliance with procedures are central to effective school financial management; similarly, Viray-Castillejos (2025) found that school heads demonstrated very high democratic leadership and distinguished management competency, particularly in resource-related areas.

Table 7. Mean Score of the Performance of the School Head (N = 36)

Variable	n	M	SD	Interpretation
Performance of the School Head	36	4.36	0.14	Very High

Note. This interpretation uses a common 5-point scale: 4.21–5.00 = Very High; 3.41–4.20 = High; 2.61–3.40 = Moderate; 1.81–2.60 = Low; 1.00–1.80 = Very Low. If your study uses a different verbal scale such as Outstanding or Very Satisfactory, the mean of 4.36 would still fall within the highest descriptive level.

Table 7 presents the mean score of **4.36** (SD = 0.14) indicates that the **performance of the school head was very high**, suggesting that the respondents generally viewed the school head as consistently effective across the performance indicators measured. The small standard deviation further implies a high level of agreement among respondents, which strengthens the interpretation that school head performance was not only favorable but also stable across raters.

This finding is congruent with recent studies showing strong performance-related outcomes among school leaders. In the Philippine setting, **Tatoy (2024)** reported that school heads' performance was very satisfactory overall, while **Labindao (2024)** found that school heads generally demonstrated **very high levels of leadership effectiveness**. Similarly, **Alagos (2024)** reported that school heads exhibited **high levels of leadership competence and productivity**, reinforcing the view that effective school leadership is commonly associated with strong managerial and organizational performance. Taken together, these studies support the present finding that school heads who demonstrate effective leadership and administrative capability are more likely to be perceived as high-performing educational leaders.

Table 8.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Innovative Leadership Practices	3.53	0.51	—		
2. Management Styles	3.64	0.48	.915**	—	
3. Performance of the School Head	4.36	0.14	.503**	.459**	—

Table 8 shows that innovative leadership practices had a very strong positive significant relationship with management styles ($r = .915$, $p < .01$). This finding suggests that school heads who were perceived as more strategic, innovative, action-oriented, and interpersonally effective were likewise perceived as more competent in instructional, democratic, stakeholder, and fiscal management. This result is consistent with recent evidence that school leadership significantly shapes innovation-oriented practices in schools and that leadership and management practices tend to operate in a closely connected manner rather than as isolated constructs (Hsieh, Tai, & Li, 2024; Sariakin et al., 2025).

The table further indicates that innovative leadership practices had a moderate positive significant relationship with school head performance ($r = .503$, $p < .01$), while management styles also had a moderate positive significant relationship with school head performance ($r = .459$, $p < .01$). These findings imply that both innovation-oriented leadership and effective management are important correlates of stronger performance among school heads. The pattern supports prior studies showing that school heads' managerial roles are positively associated with organizational performance and that principal leadership has a meaningful positive association with school outcomes more broadly (Devanadera & Ching, 2023; Wu & Shen, 2022).

Table 9. Path Analysis of Innovative Leadership Practices, Management Styles, and Performance of the School Head in Ayungon District 1 and 2

Path	B	SE	β	t	p	R ²
Management Styles $\leftarrow$ Innovative Leadership Practices	0.869	0.066	.915	13.25	< .001	.838
Performance $\leftarrow$ Innovative Leadership Practices (total effect)	0.134	0.040	.503	3.39	.002	.253
Performance $\leftarrow$ Management Styles	-0.002	0.105	-.006	-0.02	.987	.253
Performance $\leftarrow$ Innovative Leadership Practices (direct effect)	0.136	0.100	.508	1.36	.183	.253

Table 9 showed that innovative leadership practices significantly predicted management styles ($\beta = .915$, $p < .001$), explaining 83.8% of the variance in management styles. This result suggests that the innovative capacities of school heads, such as strategic thinking, adaptive action, and interpersonal competence, are strongly translated into concrete managerial behaviors. A similar pattern was reported by Hernandez, Mendoza, and Pacheco (2023), who found that school heads with stronger innovative leadership practices also demonstrated stronger management styles, indicating that leadership innovation and managerial execution tend to operate in tandem.

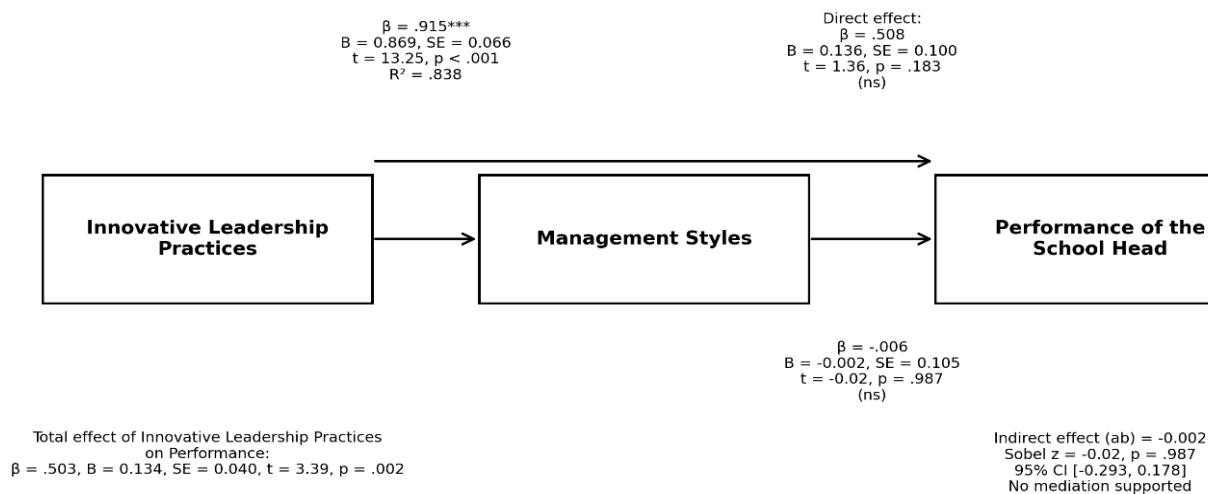
The findings further revealed that innovative leadership practices had a significant total effect on school head performance ($\beta = .503$, $p = .002$), which implies that innovation-oriented leadership contributes positively to overall leadership effectiveness. This is consistent with recent evidence showing that leadership exerts a direct positive influence on performance-related outcomes in schools, particularly when leaders create supportive, goal-oriented, and improvement-driven environments (Elfira et al., 2024).

However, management styles did not significantly predict performance when entered into the full model ($\beta = -.006$, $p = .987$), and the direct effect of innovative leadership practices on performance likewise became nonsignificant ($\beta = .508$, $p = .183$). This means that management styles did not mediate the relationship between innovative leadership practices and school head performance in this sample. A related explanation may be drawn from recent path-based studies showing that not all management-related pathways remain significant in multivariate models; rather, more proximal mediators such as self-efficacy, motivation, or teacher performance often carry leadership effects more effectively than broad administrative style variables (Papadakis et al., 2024; Sariakin et al., 2025).

Figure 1. Path analysis model showing the direct and indirect effects of innovative leadership practices on performance of the school head through management styles. Innovative leadership practices significantly predicted management styles, but management styles did not significantly predict performance, indicating that mediation was not supported.

Path Analysis Diagram

Model: Innovative Leadership Practices $\rightarrow$ Management Styles $\rightarrow$ Performance of the School Head



*** $p < .001$; ns = not significant

CONCLUSION

This study examined the innovative leadership practices, management styles, and performance of school heads in Ayungon Districts 1 and 2 and further tested the mediating role of management styles in the relationship between innovative leadership practices and school head performance. The findings showed that the respondents were predominantly female, mostly within the 30–39 age bracket, commonly with Master's units, and largely occupying the positions of Head Teacher and Principal I. Instructional leadership emerged as the most frequently attended training, although a notable proportion of respondents reported no relevant training exposure in the last three years.

The results further revealed that the innovative leadership practices of school heads were very highly practiced across the dimensions of strategic thinking, innovative thinking, action patterns, and interpersonal skills. Likewise, management styles were also rated very highly practiced, particularly in the area of fiscal management, where transparency, accountability, and compliance with financial regulations received the highest ratings. Moreover, the performance of the school head was assessed as very high, indicating that the respondents generally perceived school heads as effective in carrying out their professional roles and responsibilities.

Correlation analysis demonstrated that innovative leadership practices had a very strong positive significant relationship with management styles and a moderate positive significant relationship with school head performance. Similarly, management styles were found to have a moderate positive significant relationship with school head performance. These findings suggest that innovative leadership and effective management are both important correlates of stronger school head performance.

However, the path analysis showed that while innovative leadership practices significantly predicted management styles and had a significant total effect on school head performance, management styles did not significantly predict performance when entered into the full model. Consequently, management styles did not significantly mediate the relationship between innovative leadership practices and school head performance. This indicates that although innovative leadership contributes to both management competence and performance, the effect of innovative leadership on performance may not operate through management styles alone. Other intervening variables may therefore explain how innovative leadership is translated into school head performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are advanced:

The school heads may be encouraged to sustain and further strengthen their innovative leadership practices, particularly in the areas of integrating current educational trends and maintaining consistent practical managerial and supervisory actions, since these indicators obtained comparatively lower mean scores despite remaining within the very highly practiced range.

Besides, the Department of Education and school division leaders may design and implement a more balanced leadership development program that extends beyond instructional leadership and includes stronger capacity-building in stakeholder engagement, financial management, strategic planning, and research-based school governance.

The professional development activities for school heads may be made more continuous, equitable, and needs-based, especially for those who reported no relevant training exposure in the last three years, in order to ensure that leadership growth is systematically supported across all domains of school management.

Based on the management styles did not significantly mediate the relationship between innovative leadership practices and school head performance, future researchers may examine other possible mediating or explanatory variables, such as self-efficacy, decision-making quality, organizational climate, teacher motivation, or institutional support, in order to clarify the pathways through which innovative leadership influences leadership performance.

Nonetheless, similar study may be conducted in other divisions or larger educational contexts using a bigger sample size and additional analytical models to improve generalizability and to validate whether the same pattern of relationships and non-mediation holds in other school settings.

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