

# Shaping Leadership Competence through Sociocultural-Political Awareness and Resilient Grit

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## ABSTRACT

Leadership competence is crucial for the success of schools and the achievement of educational outcomes, requiring leaders to navigate complex administrative and instructional demands. This study investigated the relationship between sociocultural-political influences, grit, and leadership competence among school leaders in the Division of Valencia City during the second quarter of the school year 2024-2025. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected from 115 school leaders through validated instruments, including the Sociocultural-Political Influence Scale, the Grit Scale, and the Leadership Competence Inventory.

The findings revealed that sociocultural-political influences significantly shaped leadership practices, with social influences, cultural cohesion, and political dynamics playing key roles. However, social influences occasionally posed challenges, requiring careful management. Grit, particularly resilience, perseverance of effort, and long-term commitment, emerged as critical traits that empower leaders to adapt and persist despite challenges. Leadership competence was high across areas such as decision-making, rapport-building, and strategic thinking, aligning closely with intrinsic grit and external sociocultural contexts. Correlation analysis confirmed that grit had the strongest positive relationship with leadership competence, followed by cultural cohesion and political influences. Resilience was identified as the strongest predictor of leadership competence, emphasizing the importance of fostering intrinsic traits to enhance effectiveness.

The study underscored the interplay between external sociocultural-political dynamics and internal resilience in shaping leadership competence. Recommendations include targeted training on sociocultural responsiveness, resilience-building workshops, professional development in strategic leadership areas, and support mechanisms for managing societal expectations. These findings contribute to the growing literature on leadership in education and highlight the need for holistic approaches to leadership development in diverse and dynamic educational environments.

**Keywords:** leadership competence, sociocultural-political influences, grit, resilience

## INTRODUCTION

In today's educational landscape, effective leadership is crucial for the success of schools and the achievement of student outcomes. Leadership competence, which encompasses both administrative and instructional leadership, is vital for guiding schools through the complexities of the educational arena. School leaders including school heads, department heads, and master teachers, are tasked with creating conducive learning environments, managing staff, and ensuring the delivery of high-quality education. As demands on schools grow, the competence of these leaders plays an increasingly significant role in achieving educational goals.

However, there are notable gaps in leadership competence that need to be addressed. Studies have shown that many school leaders struggle to meet the demands of both instructional leadership and administrative duties, often lacking the training or support needed to excel in both areas (Bush, 2018; Gurr & Drysdale, 2020;

Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021). In addition, the research of Wenceslao et al. (2018) indicates that effective leadership requires a blend of competencies that are often not sufficiently developed in current training programs. The sociocultural and political context in which they operate can further complicate their ability to lead effectively (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Harris & Jones, 2019). The growing complexity of school environments, characterized by diverse cultural expectations and political pressures, can limit the effectiveness of leadership practices. Leadership competence is not just about technical knowledge, but also about navigating these external forces, which can vary significantly depending on the specific context in which the leader works. As a result, many school leaders face challenges in addressing these sociopolitical dynamics while also contending with their own internal resilience.

The study introduces two key independent variables: sociocultural-political influences and grit. Sociocultural and political factors significantly shape how school leaders perform their roles, influencing their interactions with various stakeholders, decision-making processes, and their ability to implement programs, projects, policies and activities. At the same time, grit, defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Credé, Tynan, & Harms, 2017), may empower leaders to maintain resilience and overcome challenges. Understanding how these two factors contribute to leadership competence is essential in designing programs that support school leaders in both administrative and instructional domains. Previous research has indicated the importance of sociocultural factors in shaping leadership styles (Harris & Jones, 2019, Dimmock & Walker, 2005), as well as the role of grit in achieving long-term success (Duckworth et al., 2007). However, there is limited research examining how these variables interact specifically within the context of school leadership. This study seeks to fill that gap, contributing to the growing body of literature on leadership in education by analyzing the interplay of sociocultural-political influences and grit on leadership competence. The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship of sociocultural-political influences and grit on the leadership competence of school leaders in the Division of Valencia City. By doing so, the study aimed to provide insights into the factors that influence effective leadership in schools and to propose strategies for developing leadership competence. The research was conducted in the Division of Valencia City during the second quarter of the school year 2024-2025. School leaders from various schools in the division served as the participants of this study, providing a comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics within this specific educational context.

## Objectives

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship of sociocultural-political influences and grit on the leadership competence of school leaders in the Division of Valencia City. Specifically, this sought to:

1. infer the degree of sociocultural-political influences among school leaders in terms of:
  - a. social influences,
  - b. cultural influences,
  - c. political influences, and
  - d. cultural conflicts and cohesion.
2. gauge the level of grit among school leaders in the aspects of:
  - a. perseverance of effort
  - b. consistency of interest
  - c. long-term commitment, and
  - d. resilience.
3. determine the level of leadership competence among school leaders in the Division of Valencia City in the fields of:
  - a. strategic and creative thinking,
  - b. leadership and decision-making,
  - c. development and change management,
  - d. implementation and improvement,
  - e. communication and presentation, and
  - f. building rapport and support
4. correlate sociocultural-political influences, grit and leadership competence of school leaders.
5. identify, singly or in combination, the variables that best predict leadership competence.

## Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant correlation among sociocultural-political influences, grit, and leadership competence of school leaders.

H<sub>02</sub>: None of the variables, singly or in combination, significantly predict leadership competence among school leaders.

## METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to explore the relationship between sociocultural-political influences, grit, and leadership competence among the school leaders in the Division of Valencia City during the second quarter of the school year 2024-2025. The descriptive-correlational design was deemed appropriate as it allowed for the systematic examination of relationships between variables without manipulating them, making it suitable for capturing the naturally occurring dynamics among sociocultural-political influences, grit, and leadership competence.

A convenient sampling method was employed to select the 115 respondents comprising of school heads, department heads, and master teachers who were accessible and willing to participate, ensuring the feasibility of data collection within the given timeframe. Data were gathered using three validated instruments: the Sociocultural-Political Influence Scale, the Grit Scale, and the Leadership Competence Inventory, which demonstrated high reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.982. Descriptive statistics described the variables, Pearson correlation examined their relationships, and multiple regression analysis identified predictors of leadership competence. Ethical protocols, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly followed to ensure the integrity of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table I. Degree of Socio-cultural Political Influences of School Leaders**

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Social Influences	4.43	0.25	Agree	High Influence
Cultural Influences	4.11	1.00	Agree	High Influence
Cultural Conflicts and Cohesion	3.93	1.01	Agree	High Influence
Political Influences	3.82	1.02	Agree	High Influence
Overall Mean	4.07	0.71	Agree	High Influence

Table I showed the degree of sociocultural-political influences that affect school leaders in the Division of Valencia City. Social influences received the highest rating (M=4.43), followed closely by cultural influences (M=4.11), cultural conflicts and cohesion (M=3.93), and political influences (M=3.82), all indicating a high level of influence on school leaders' actions and decisions, as reflected by an overall mean of 4.07.

These results suggest that school leaders frequently agree on the substantial role socio-cultural and political contexts play in their leadership responsibilities. School leaders are conscious of the social, cultural, and political contexts they operate in, which are likely to influence their leadership approaches and decision-making processes. The high influence of social aspects indicated that external social pressures or norms may

guide school leaders' decision-making and management styles. Political influences were comparatively lower but still significant, highlighting that local political context impact leadership approaches to some extent.

These further imply that the socio-cultural and political dynamics of Valencia City shape school leaders' interactions with their communities and their approaches. This could affect how they interact with their communities, implement policies, programs, projects and activities, and handle cultural or political conflicts within the school environment. The variability in standard deviations, especially in cultural and political influences, suggest differing degrees of political pressures or influences based on specific contexts or personal perceptions with local governance structures among school leaders. The substantial influence of socio-cultural and political factors on school leadership aligns with both local and international literature. Lipke and Manaseri (2019) emphasized the impact of community context on school leadership preparation, arguing that understanding local social and cultural dynamics is essential for effective leadership. In line with this, Da'as and Ali (2021) examined how sociopolitical challenges shape educational leaders' strategic thinking, suggesting that leaders must navigate complex cultural and political contexts to develop effective solutions.

Moreover, the integrative literature review of Uy et al. (2024) underscores the vital importance of culturally responsive leadership in creating inclusive and equitable learning spaces, overcoming communication challenges, and enhancing collaboration among stakeholders. Additionally, Capper, Young, and Frattura (2020) found that social and cultural dynamics greatly influence educational leaders' effectiveness, often affecting decision-making processes. Filipino leaders who actively engage in bayanihan (community spirit), further influence their decisions and actions within school settings (Brillantes & Fernandez, 2014). The recognition of political factors, as noted by Xu (2016), reveals that the political environment and governance play an equally important role in shaping school leaders' strategies and interactions with the community.

**Table II. Level of Grit of School Leaders**

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Perseverance of Effort	4.53	0.64	Always	Exceptional Grit
Resilience	4.45	0.66	Often	Established Grit
Long-Term Commitment	4.37	0.72	Often	Established Grit
Consistency of Interest	3.80	0.74	Often	Established Grit
Overall Mean	4.29	0.60	Often	Established Grit

Table II revealed that school leaders in the Division of Valencia City demonstrated an established grit, with an overall mean score of 4.29. Notably, perseverance of effort was scored the highest (M=4.53), indicating that school leaders consistently exhibit commitment and hard work towards achieving their goals. Resilience (M=4.45) and long-term commitment (M=4.37) also had high scores, suggesting that school leaders consistently show a strong work ethic, adaptability, and dedication.

These scores indicate that school leaders in Valencia City possess high levels of personal resilience and commitment. Perseverance, the highest-rated component, reflects the leaders' ability to maintain focus and effort toward long-term goals despite obstacles. This trait is crucial in educational leadership, where challenges are frequent and can vary in intensity.

These scores align with existing research on grit and leadership. Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly (2007) emphasized that grit is crucial for leadership roles that require sustained effort, which aligns with the pressures and challenges faced by school leaders (AASA, The School Superintendents Association, 2023). Eskreis-Winkler et al. (2014) further support this notion, suggesting that resilience and long-term commitment

predict success across high-stakes settings. This is particularly relevant considering the potential for crises in educational environments (Miller, Hancell, & Jones, 2022).

The high perseverance score reflects the leaders' ability to maintain focus and effort toward long-term goals despite obstacles. This trait is crucial in educational leadership, where challenges are frequent and can vary in intensity. The established grit level suggests that school leaders are equipped with mental stamina to navigate the pressures of their roles effectively. This persistence may contribute to their ability to inspire teams, manage crises, and pursue improvement despite setbacks. Grit, particularly resilience, may be a crucial trait in adapting to the socio-cultural and political factors identified in Table I. Lucas, Kim, & Hofmann (2020) highlighted that leaders with high grit levels are often more resilient in the face of socio-political challenges.

**Table III. Leadership Competence of School Leaders**

Indicators	Mean	SD	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
Leadership and Decision-Making	4.43	0.70	Often	Highly Competent
Building Rapport and Support	4.42	0.73	Often	Highly Competent
Strategic and Creative Thinking	4.38	0.69	Often	Highly Competent
Communication and Presentation	4.37	0.75	Often	Highly Competent
Development and Change Management	4.30	0.75	Often	Highly Competent
Implementation and Improvement	4.30	0.78	Often	Highly Competent
Overall Mean	4.37	0.65	Often	Highly Competent

The results in table III showed that school leaders rate themselves as highly competent in various leadership areas, with an overall mean of 4.37. Competencies such as leadership and decision-making (M=4.43), building rapport and support (M=4.42), and strategic thinking (M=4.38) were rated particularly high, indicating that school leaders are well-equipped in these essential skills. These findings suggest that school leaders feel confident in their abilities to make decisions, build relationships, and think strategically- key competencies that support effective leadership in educational settings. The emphasis on rapport-building aligns with the socio-cultural expectations in the Philippines, where collaborative and relational leadership is often prioritized.

These findings imply that high competence in leadership may be a product of both individual grit and the influence of socio-cultural factors, which demand that leaders possess diverse skills. Competence in communication and rapport-building, for instance, may reflect adaptability to socio-cultural influences, and may enable leaders to navigate community expectations effectively, ensuring that they meet both organizational goals and community needs while strategic thinking might indicate an internal commitment to long-term educational goals. Various studies supported the result presented. Leith wood et al. (2019) emphasized that leadership competence, particularly in decision-making and communication, is critical for managing socio-cultural complexities, while Hallinger and Wang (2015) highlighted that decision-making and strategic thinking are fundamental to effective school leadership, especially in politically and culturally diverse environments. Youngs and King (2016) also underscored that relationship-building is a core competency for educational leaders, a view echoed by Ayitey (2023) who found that emotional intelligence, an aspect of relationship-building, is crucial in determining the effectiveness of leadership. Furthermore, a study by Robinson et al. (2017) supports the notion that skilled leadership directly impacts organizational effectiveness in schools.

**Table IV. Correlation of Socio-cultural Political Influences and Grit on Leadership Competence**

Independent Variables	Pearson Coefficient (r- value)	Probability (p- value)
Grit	0.814	.000**
Resilience	0.795	.000**
Perseverance of Effort	0.755	.000**
Long-Term Commitment	0.725	.000**
Consistency of Interest	0.566	.000**
Socio-cultural Political Influences	0.404	.000**
Cultural Conflicts and Cohesion	0.435	.000**
Political Influences	0.377	.000**
Cultural Influences	0.369	.000**
Social Influences	-0.190	.045*

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.0 level (2-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlation analysis in table IV showed significant correlations between socio-cultural political influences, grit, and leadership competence. Grit ( $r = 0.814$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) had the strongest positive correlation, with resilience ( $r = 0.795$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), perseverance of effort ( $r = 0.755$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and long-term commitment ( $r = 0.725$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) having strong positive correlation suggesting that these are essential to effective leadership.

On the other hand, among socio-cultural factors, cultural cohesion ( $r = 0.435$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and political influences influence ( $r = 0.377$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) also showed moderate positive correlations, indicating that cultural and political dynamics can positively contribute to leadership competence. However, social influences had a small but negative correlation with leadership competence ( $r = -0.190$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), marking an interesting contrast to the other socio-cultural influences.

The strong correlation between grit and leadership competence suggests that intrinsic qualities like resilience and perseverance are critical to leadership effectiveness. The positive correlations with cultural cohesion and political influences indicate that these external socio-cultural factors may support leaders by providing structure and a sense of shared identity within the community. In contrast, the negative correlation with social influences implies that certain societal pressures or expectations may detract from, rather than support, a leader's competence. This could suggest that the expectations imposed by the community sometimes conflict with leadership goals or practices, potentially limiting leaders' autonomy or flexibility in decision-making.

The negative correlation between social influences and leadership competence may indicate that excessive societal pressures or community expectations could impede leaders' effectiveness. In the Philippine context, where school leaders are often deeply embedded in their communities, there may be cultural expectations to prioritize relational harmony, sometimes at the expense of objective decision-making. This could result in leaders feeling compelled to meet community demands, which may limit their ability to make unbiased decisions or implement necessary changes. The impact of this negative correlation might be that school leaders struggle with balancing professional responsibilities with community expectations, leading to potential

challenges in maintaining consistent leadership standards. While community influence can enhance leadership by fostering support, it may also constrain leaders if they feel obligated to conform to external expectations that do not align with best practices in education.

Research supports these nuanced relationships between socio-cultural factors, grit, and leadership competence. Seligman (2019) argued that perseverance can counterbalance negative social influences, allowing leaders to maintain competence even when navigating conflicting expectations. These findings suggest that, while grit and resilience are crucial in overcoming external pressures, the influence of societal expectations needs careful management to avoid potential conflicts with educational objectives. This understanding can help school leaders become more aware of the ways social dynamics shape their roles and enable them to develop strategies to mitigate the restrictive aspects of these influences.

Grit is considered a personal quality common in leaders, and an important antecedent of success and excellence in every domain regardless of giftedness or talent (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015). Resilient school leaders are characterized by their ability to confront challenges without making excuses, demonstrating strength and perseverance in the face of adversity, much like a tree enduring a storm or a flower blooming in harsh conditions. This type of leadership involves a strong commitment to overcoming both internal and external obstacles, actively seeking innovative solutions despite the presence of difficult circumstances (Ozmusul, 2017). The findings further aligned with the study of Hill-Berry and Burris-Melville (2024) which emphasized the critical role of resilience for educational leaders to enhance their ability to navigate crises successfully.

**Table V. Regression Analysis of Variables that Best Predict Leadership Competence**

Predictor Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.433	0.252		1.720	0.088
Grit					
Resilience	0.453	0.084	0.461	5.381	0.000
Perseverance of Effort	0.240	0.096	0.236	2.514	0.013
Long-Term Commitment	0.191	0.077	0.212	2.469	0.015
R= 0.836	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.698		F= 85.672	p-value= 0.000	

Table V presented the multiple regression analysis on the sub-variables under sociocultural-political influences, grit and leadership competence. Among the sub-variables included, regression analysis revealed that resilience (B= 0.453), perseverance of effort (B= 0.240), and long-term commitment (B= 0.191) are significant predictors of leadership competence at F= 85.67, p < 0.000.

From the preceding analysis, the equation useful in predicting leadership competence (Y) is illustrated as follows:

$$Y = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + B_3X_3$$

$$Y = 0.433 + 0.453X_1 + 0.240X_2 + 0.191X_3$$

where:  
Y = Leadership Competence

X<sub>1</sub>= Resilience

X<sub>2</sub>= Perseverance of Effort

X<sub>3</sub>= Long-term Commitment

The result of the analysis clarified that resilience had the highest degree of influence on leadership competence considering its beta weight of 0.453. Moreover, this model ( $R^2 = 0.698$ ) explains 69.8% of the variance in leadership competence, underscoring the critical role of grit, especially resilience, perseverance of effort and long-term commitment, in predicting effective leadership. These findings further imply that resilience, perseverance, and commitment are key qualities for school leaders, aligning with the demands of long-term school leadership. Leaders with these traits are likely more effective in maintaining leadership competence, adapting to socio-cultural dynamics, and meeting the learning community's needs.

Several studies reinforce these findings. Duckworth et al. (2016) support the strong relationship between resilience and leadership competence, a finding echoed by Southwick and Charney (2015) who noted that resilience fosters sustained competence in demanding roles. Additionally, research has shown that grit, particularly perseverance and passion, is essential for effective leadership (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). This aligns with the findings of the current study, which highlight the importance of these traits in predicting leadership competence.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study provided valuable insights into the factors shaping leadership competence among school leaders in the Division of Valencia City. Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were derived:

The sociocultural-political influences significantly affect school leaders in the Division of Valencia City. Among these, social influences were observed to have the most substantial impact, followed by cultural influences, cultural conflicts and cohesion, and political influences. Collectively, these factors demonstrated a high influence on the actions and decision-making processes of school leaders. The study identified an established level of grit among school leaders, with perseverance of effort, resilience, and long-term commitment standing out as key attributes. These traits enable leaders to persist and adapt effectively despite challenges. School leaders demonstrated high competence across areas such as leadership and decision-making, building rapport and support, and communication and presentation, with these competencies aligning closely with their intrinsic grit and sociocultural contexts.

The study confirmed that grit, particularly resilience and perseverance of effort, had the strongest positive correlation with leadership competence, followed by cultural cohesion and political influences. On the other hand, social influences, while negatively correlated, suggested the potential challenges posed by societal expectations highlighting the need for careful management of these pressures. Resilience emerged as the strongest predictor of leadership competence, followed by perseverance of effort and long-term commitment. These results underscore the importance of fostering intrinsic qualities to enhance leadership effectiveness. The interplay of sociocultural-political dynamics and intrinsic traits significantly shapes leadership competence. Effective leadership in educational settings is not only about technical skills but also about navigating external contexts and leveraging personal grit to achieve sustainable success.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested to enhance leadership competence among school leaders:

To address the significant influence of sociocultural-political factors on leadership competence, school leaders may undergo targeted training programs focused on programs for navigating social expectations, fostering cultural cohesion, and addressing political dynamics constructively. Additionally, initiatives to promote culturally responsive leadership practices may help school leaders align their actions with the diverse sociocultural contexts of their communities, ensuring that they effectively meet the needs of stakeholders. Given the established level of grit among school leaders, particularly in perseverance, resilience, and long-term



commitment, workshops aimed at enhancing these traits may be prioritized. Resilience-building activities and mentorship programs may also help leaders maintain focus and adapt effectively to challenges. The development of peer-support networks may also provide opportunities for leaders to share insights and strategies for strengthening their intrinsic qualities, fostering a culture of mutual learning and professional growth.

To further enhance leadership competence, professional development opportunities may focus on strengthening key areas such as decision-making, rapport-building, and communication. Training modules may incorporate practical exercises, such as scenario-based activities and case studies, to prepare school leaders for real-world challenges. Programs emphasizing strategic thinking may also be considered to enable leaders to make informed decisions that align with both organizational goals and community expectations. To manage the challenges posed by social influences, it is recommended to establish support mechanisms that may help school leaders balance societal pressures with professional responsibilities. Community engagement workshops may foster collaboration and mutual understanding between school leaders and stakeholders, reducing conflicts and aligning community expectations with educational objectives.

Given the finding that resilience, perseverance of effort, and long-term commitment are strong predictors of leadership competence, policies and institutional frameworks may be developed to integrate these qualities into leadership training programs. Schools and education authorities may provide resources and tools to support leaders in building these intrinsic traits. Additionally, structured programs that reinforce these predictors may help sustain leadership competence and adaptability in dynamic educational environments. Finally, further research may be conducted to explore additional strategies for mitigating the negative effects of social influences on leadership. Studies investigating the long-term impact of fostering grit and resilience may also provide deeper insights into their contribution to school performance and leadership sustainability.

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