

Transparency and Accountability of School Heads in Financial Management in Relation to School Climate

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive-correlational study examined the relationship between the financial transparency and accountability of school heads and school climate within a Schools Division in the Negros Island Region during the 2025–2026 school year. A stratified random sample of 144 permanent teachers from Districts II-A and II-B participated in the research. Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire validated by five Public Schools District Supervisors and confirmed reliable through Cronbach's Alpha analysis. Descriptive statistics indicated that respondents were predominantly female, middle-aged, held Teacher I and Teacher III ranks, and possessed graduate-level preparation. Results demonstrated that school heads exhibited very high levels of transparency and accountability, particularly in managing donations, while teachers perceived the school climate as very positive. Furthermore, Inferential analysis showed statistically significant, very strong positive associations between financial transparency and school climate ($r_s = .840$, $p < .001$) and between financial accountability and school climate ($r_s = .874$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that higher perceived levels of transparency and accountability were associated with more positive perceptions of school climate. The findings provide evidence of strong relationships among the study variables but do not establish causal effects. The study highlights the importance of financial communication, responsible financial management, stakeholder participation, trust, and perceived fairness as relevant considerations in understanding school climate..

Keywords: Financial Transparency; Financial Accountability; School Heads; School Climate; School Leadership; Descriptive-Correlational Study; Public School Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Transparency and accountability have become fundamental principles of effective educational leadership worldwide, particularly in the management of school financial resources. As schools are entrusted with public funds, stakeholders increasingly expect school heads to demonstrate integrity, openness, and responsible stewardship in budgeting, procurement, and resource utilization. Studies have shown that transparent financial management strengthens stakeholder trust, minimizes opportunities for financial mismanagement, and contributes to a more positive organizational environment where teachers and school personnel feel valued and respected. Moreover, school leadership practices that promote openness and accountability have been found to influence the overall school climate by fostering trust, collaboration, and shared responsibility among members of the school community (Veletić et al., 2023; Gaspar et al., 2022).

In the Philippines, transparency and accountability in school financial management are emphasized through the Department of Education's governance reforms and fiscal accountability policies. School heads are expected to ensure that government funds are utilized efficiently, responsibly, and in accordance with established regulations while maintaining open communication with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Despite these policies, studies have reported persistent challenges, including limited financial

management training, delays in budget releases, inadequate stakeholder participation, and difficulties in maintaining transparency throughout the budgeting process. These issues may affect not only the efficient use of school resources but also teachers' perceptions of fairness, trust, and organizational support, which are essential elements of a healthy school climate (Gaspar et al., 2022; Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2021).

At the local level, schools continue to operate under varying financial and organizational conditions, making transparency and accountability a critical concern for school communities. While some school heads consistently practice open financial reporting and stakeholder involvement, others face constraints related to limited resources, administrative workload, and compliance with financial regulations. Although previous studies have examined financial management, transparency, accountability, leadership, and school climate, an important empirical gap remains. Much of the existing literature has examined financial management practices in relation to organizational effectiveness, stakeholder trust, or school development, while other studies have investigated school climate primarily in relation to leadership and organizational factors. Fewer studies have directly examined the specific relationship between school heads' financial transparency and accountability and teachers' perceptions of school climate within a Philippine public-school context.

Moreover, the relationship may be understood through organizational processes involving trust, communication, stakeholder participation, and perceived fairness. However, these mechanisms have not been sufficiently integrated into discussions of financial transparency and accountability in local school settings. The present study therefore addresses this gap by examining the extent of financial transparency and accountability as perceived by teachers and determining their statistical relationships with school climate. By focusing on teachers from Districts II-A and II-B within a Schools Division in the Negros Island Region, the study provides localized evidence that may complement broader research on school leadership and financial governance.

The study consequently seeks to contribute empirical evidence on whether higher perceived levels of financial transparency and accountability are associated with more positive perceptions of school climate. The findings may provide school leaders and education stakeholders with evidence for strengthening financial communication, stakeholder participation, accountability mechanisms, and fairness in school resource management. The findings are expected to provide evidence that can guide school leaders, policymakers, and education stakeholders in strengthening financial governance while promoting a supportive and collaborative school environment (Veletić et al., 2023; Amos et al., 2021).

This study is anchored on organizational trust and social exchange perspectives, which provide a useful basis for understanding how financial transparency and accountability may be associated with school climate. Organizational trust emphasizes that members of an organization develop confidence in leaders when leadership practices are perceived as reliable, fair, competent, and consistent with organizational values. In the context of school financial management, transparent disclosure of financial information, accessible records, and clear communication may strengthen teachers' perceptions that school leaders are open and trustworthy.

The social exchange perspective further suggests that positive organizational relationships develop through reciprocal interactions characterized by fairness, trust, communication, and responsible behavior. When teachers perceive that school heads manage financial resources responsibly and communicate financial decisions openly, they may be more likely to perceive the school as fair, supportive, and participatory. Conversely, unclear financial practices or limited access to information may weaken perceptions of trust and organizational support.

In this study, financial transparency refers to the extent to which school heads openly communicate, disclose, document, and make financial information accessible to stakeholders. Financial accountability refers to the extent to which school heads comply with financial policies, maintain accurate records, document transactions, and demonstrate responsible stewardship of school resources. School climate refers to teachers' perceptions of the interpersonal, organizational, and leadership conditions within the school.

The theoretical framework proposes that transparency and accountability may be associated with school climate through several organizational processes. Transparency may be related to trust because access to understandable and timely financial information can reduce uncertainty regarding the use of school resources. It may also be associated with communication and participation because open financial discussions provide opportunities for stakeholders to understand and engage with school decisions. Accountability may be related to perceived fairness because consistent compliance with policies, proper documentation, and responsible allocation of resources may influence how teachers evaluate the fairness and integrity of school leadership. Collectively, these processes may be reflected in perceptions of a more supportive, collaborative, and trusting school climate.

The framework does not assume that transparency or accountability directly causes changes in school climate. Rather, consistent with the descriptive-correlational design of the study, it provides a theoretical explanation for why these constructs may be statistically associated with one another.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to describe the perceived levels of financial transparency, financial accountability, and school climate and to determine the statistical relationships among these variables without manipulating conditions. The design was appropriate because the study sought to examine naturally occurring associations among the variables rather than establish causal effects. Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationships between financial transparency and school climate and between financial accountability and school climate (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Miksza et al., 2023). The target population comprised 225 permanent teachers from District II-A and District II-B within a Schools Division in the Negros Island Region. Using Yamane's formula with a 0.05 margin of error, a sample size of 144 respondents was determined. To ensure proportional representation across all participating schools and minimize sampling bias, stratified random sampling was applied, followed by simple random sampling to select individual participants.

Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire developed specifically for the present study. The instrument consisted of four parts. Part I obtained the demographic profile of the respondents. Part II measured the perceived financial transparency of school heads in the management of donations and consisted of 15 items. Part III measured financial accountability and consisted of 15 items. Part IV measured school climate and consisted of 15 items. The three substantive sections therefore contained a total of 45 items.

The transparency dimension focused on the openness and accessibility of financial information, including the disclosure of donations, maintenance and accessibility of financial records, communication of financial information, reporting of expenditures, presentation of donation-funded projects, and opportunities for financial discussion. The accountability dimension focused on compliance with financial policies and procedures, timely reporting, documentation, monitoring, auditing requirements, ethical management, responsible use of funds, and fairness in the allocation of resources. The school climate dimension covered perceptions related to trust, respect, fairness, safety, administrative support, stakeholder responsibility, inclusivity, resource adequacy, school leadership confidence, supportive relationships, and school pride.

The items were developed based on the objectives of the study and relevant concepts identified in the literature concerning financial transparency, financial accountability, school leadership, organizational trust, and school climate. The wording of the items was reviewed to ensure that each statement was relevant to the construct being measured and understandable to the intended respondents.

Content validation was conducted by a panel of five Public Schools District Supervisors with relevant professional expertise. The validators assessed the relevance and essentiality of each item using Lawshe's content-validity procedure. All items were retained after validation, resulting in a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 1.00. The instrument was subsequently pilot-tested with respondents who were not included in the final study sample to assess the internal consistency of the scales.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients indicated excellent internal consistency across all three substantive dimensions. The transparency scale obtained an alpha coefficient of 0.995, the accountability scale obtained 0.997, and the school climate scale obtained 0.997. These coefficients indicate a high degree of internal consistency among the items within each scale. The validated instrument was then administered to the selected respondents using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5.

The responses were rated using a five-point Likert scale. Mean scores from 4.21 to 5.00 were interpreted as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low. The mean and standard deviation were used to summarize respondents' perceptions of financial transparency, accountability, and school climate.

The retrieved questionnaires were checked, encoded, and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools. Frequency and percentage distributions were calculated to describe the demographic profile of the respondents, while means and standard deviations were computed to evaluate the perceived levels of transparency, accountability, and school climate. Finally, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation was employed to test the significance of the relationships between the independent variables, transparency and accountability and the dependent variable, school climate

For the inferential analysis, Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationships between financial transparency and school climate and between financial accountability and school climate. The correlation coefficient (r_s), p-value, and corresponding effect-size interpretation were reported. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level. Because the study employed a correlational design, the correlation coefficients were interpreted as measures of association and were not treated as evidence of causation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents According to Profile.

Profile	Category	f	%
Age			
	30-39 years old	45	31.25
	40-49 years old	63	43.75
	60 years old and above	36	25.00
	Total	144	100.00
Sex			
	Male	16	11.11
	Female	128	88.89
	Total	144	100.00
Position/Role			
	SPET/SPED	5	3.47
	Teacher I	56	38.89
	Teacher II	16	11.11
	Teacher III	50	34.72
	Master Teacher I	7	4.86

	Master Teacher II	8	5.56
	Master Teacher III	1	.69
	Principal I	1	.69
	Total	128	100.00
Years of Service			
	10 years and below	54	37.50
	11-20 years	47	32.64
	21-30 years	31	21.53
	More than 30 years	12	8.33
	Total	144	100.00
Educational Attainment			
	Bachelor's Degree	45	31.25
	Postgraduate and Master's Degree Unit	46	31.94
	Master's Degree	44	30.56
	With Doctorate Degree Unit	6	4.17
	Doctorate	3	2.08
	Total	144	100.00

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents according to age, sex, position/role, years of service, and educational attainment.

In terms of age, the largest group of respondents belonged to the 40–49 years old category ($f = 63$, 43.75%), followed by those 30–39 years old ($f = 45$, 31.25%), while 60 years old and above accounted for ($f = 36$, 25.00%). This indicates that most of the respondents were in their middle adulthood years, representing educators who have likely accumulated substantial teaching experience while remaining actively engaged in professional practice. Their stage of career may contribute to greater confidence in handling instructional and administrative responsibilities, including financial management and school governance. Research suggests that educators in the middle stages of their careers often demonstrate higher levels of professional competence because of their accumulated experience and continuous professional development (OECD, 2023).

With regard to sex, the majority of the respondents were female ($f = 128$, 88.89%), whereas male respondents comprised only ($f = 16$, 11.11%). This finding reflects the continuing predominance of women in the teaching profession, particularly in public elementary schools. Although female respondents substantially outnumbered their male counterparts, the data still provide insights from both groups regarding transparency, accountability, and school climate. The predominance of female teachers is consistent with global trends showing that elementary education continues to be largely staffed by women, who play a significant role in promoting effective school leadership and learning environments (UNESCO, 2024).

Regarding position or role, Teacher I represented the largest proportion of the respondents ($f = 56$, 38.89%), followed closely by Teacher III ($f = 50$, 34.72%). Teacher II accounted for ($f = 16$, 11.11%), while Master Teacher II ($f = 8$, 5.56%), Master Teacher I ($f = 7$, 4.86%), and SPET/SPED teachers ($f = 5$, 3.47%) comprised smaller groups. Only one respondent each served as Master Teacher III and Principal I (0.69% each). These findings indicate that the study primarily captured the perspectives of classroom teachers, who are directly involved in implementing school policies and observing the financial management practices of

school heads. Their responses are valuable because they regularly interact with school administrators and are among the primary stakeholders affected by leadership practices within the school.

In terms of years of service, the largest group had 10 years and below of teaching experience ($f = 54$, 37.50%), followed by those with 11–20 years ($f = 47$, 32.64%) and 21–30 years ($f = 31$, 21.53%). Only ($f = 12$, 8.33%) had served for more than 30 years. This distribution suggests that the respondents consisted mainly of educators in the early and middle stages of their professional careers. These teachers are likely to possess current pedagogical knowledge while also having sufficient experience to assess leadership practices and the school environment. The presence of respondents across varying lengths of service also provides diverse perspectives on school governance and organizational climate.

With respect to educational attainment, the largest proportion had postgraduate or master's degree units ($f = 46$, 31.94%), followed closely by those holding a bachelor's degree ($f = 45$, 31.25%) and a completed master's degree ($f = 44$, 30.56%). Only a few respondents had doctorate units ($f = 6$, 4.17%) or had completed a doctorate degree ($f = 3$, 2.08%). These findings indicate that the majority of the respondents had pursued graduate education, reflecting their commitment to professional growth and lifelong learning. Higher educational attainment may enhance educators' understanding of leadership, accountability, and organizational practices, enabling them to provide informed assessments of school heads' financial management. Recent evidence indicates that teachers who participate in advanced professional learning are generally better equipped to contribute to school improvement initiatives and organizational effectiveness (OECD, 2023).

Overall, the respondents were predominantly female educators, mostly 40–49 years old, serving primarily as Teacher I and Teacher III, with 10 years or less of teaching experience, and possessing at least graduate-level academic preparation. These profile characteristics indicate that the respondents have sufficient professional knowledge and practical experience to provide credible assessments of school heads' transparency, accountability, and the prevailing school climate.

The findings also imply that the study reflects the perspectives of educators who are actively involved in school operations and organizational processes, thereby strengthening the relevance of the data gathered. These results are supported by the OECD (2023), which emphasized that teachers' professional experience and continuing education contribute to informed participation in school improvement efforts. Similarly, UNESCO (2024) noted that a well-qualified teaching workforce plays a critical role in strengthening school leadership, organizational effectiveness, and positive learning environments.

Level of Transparency of School Heads in the Management of Donations

Table 2. Level of Transparency of School Heads in the Management of Donations.

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Financial reports on donations are regularly shared with stakeholders	4.31	1.01	Very High
2. Records of donations are properly maintained and accessible	4.38	1.01	Very High
3. Stakeholders are informed about how donations are used	4.37	0.99	Very High
4. The school heads follows financial management policies	4.36	0.97	Very High
5. Donations and external funding are properly recorded and disclosed.	4.36	0.98	Very High
6. Teachers, parents and other stakeholders are informed about donations received by the school	4.32	0.99	Very High
7. Reports on projects funded by donations are presented during	4.42	0.97	Very High

school meetings.			
8. Financial information is communicated regularly.	4.25	0.96	Very High
9. The school head ensures accurate recording and reporting of donations.	4.34	0.99	Very High
10. Transparent management of donations builds trust among stakeholders.	4.43	0.94	Very High
11. Financial reports are regularly shared with teachers.	4.27	0.99	Very High
12. The amount of donations received is clearly disclosed.	4.30	1.00	Very High
13. The allocation of donated funds is clearly explained	4.28	1.00	Very High
14. Financial discussions are held in open forum.	4.21	1.04	Very High
15. Financial reports and expenses are posted in the transparency board.	4.35	1.03	Very High
Transparency Overall mean	4.33	0.93	Very High

Legend:(4.21-5.0)-Very High;(3.41 – 4.20)-High;(2.61-3.40) Moderate (1.81 – 2.60)-Low;(1.00 – 1.80)-Very Low

Table 2 presents the level of transparency of school heads in the management of donations as perceived by the respondents. Among the indicators, "Transparent management of donations builds trust among stakeholders" obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.94$), interpreted as Very High. This indicates that respondents strongly believe that openness in handling donations strengthens stakeholders' confidence in school leadership and reinforces positive relationships between the school and the community. Similarly, "Reports on projects funded by donations are presented during school meetings" ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.97$) received a Very High rating, suggesting that school heads regularly update stakeholders on the implementation of projects financed through donations. Likewise, "Records of donations are properly maintained and accessible" ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.01$) and "Stakeholders are informed about how donations are used" ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.99$) indicate that respondents consistently observe proper documentation and open communication regarding donated resources. The standard deviations, which are close to one, suggest that respondents generally shared similar perceptions of these transparency practices.

Other indicators also received very high ratings, including "The school head follows financial management policies" ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.97$), "Donations and external funding are properly recorded and disclosed" ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.98$), "Financial reports and expenses are posted on the transparency board" ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.03$), "The school head ensures accurate recording and reporting of donations" ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.99$), "Teachers, parents, and other stakeholders are informed about donations received by the school" ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.99$), and "Financial reports on donations are regularly shared with stakeholders" ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.01$). These findings suggest that school heads consistently comply with established financial management procedures and ensure that information related to donations is readily available to stakeholders. Such practices promote accountability and reinforce responsible stewardship of school resources. The remaining indicators, namely "The amount of donations received is clearly disclosed" ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.00$), "The allocation of donated funds is clearly explained" ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.00$), "Financial reports are regularly shared with teachers" ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.99$), and "Financial information is communicated regularly" ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.96$), also obtained Very High ratings. These results indicate that respondents generally agree that financial information is communicated clearly and consistently. Although these indicators received relatively lower means than the others, they still demonstrate that transparency is practiced to a very high extent across the participating schools.

Among all the statements, "Financial discussions are held in open forum" registered the lowest mean ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.04$), although it remained within the Very High descriptive level. The slightly higher standard deviation reflects a modest variation in responses, suggesting that opportunities for open financial discussions may differ across schools. This implies that while school heads generally promote transparency,

greater emphasis on conducting regular and inclusive financial forums could further strengthen stakeholder participation and shared decision-making. Overall, the transparency of school heads in the management of donations was rated Very High, with an overall mean of ($M = 4.33$ $SD = 0.93$). The relatively low standard deviation indicates that respondents had consistent perceptions regarding the transparent financial practices demonstrated by school heads.

These findings imply that school heads effectively uphold transparency through accurate record-keeping, regular financial reporting, proper disclosure of donations, and continuous communication with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Such practices contribute to greater stakeholder trust, strengthen accountability, and support effective school governance. The findings are consistent with OECD (2023), which emphasized that transparency in educational financial management enhances public confidence, promotes accountability, and improves institutional effectiveness. Likewise, UNESCO (2024) highlighted that transparent leadership and open communication are essential in fostering stakeholder engagement, integrity, and sustainable school improvement.

Level of Accountability of School Heads

Table 3. Level of Accountability of School Heads.

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
16. The school head ensures that financial transactions follow DepEd policies and guidelines.	4.31	1.05	Very High
17. The school head follows proper procedures in using school funds.	4.30	1.03	Very High
18. Financial reports are submitted on time.	4.34	0.98	Very High
19. The school head keeps complete and accurate financial records.	4.35	1.01	Very High
20. School funds are used only for approved school programs and activities.	4.31	0.93	Very High
21. Procurement and fund disbursement follow government regulations.	4.33	1.00	Very High
22. The school head ensures proper documentation of financial transactions.	4.33	1.02	Very High
23. Financial practices are regularly monitored for compliance.	4.31	1.01	Very High
24. The school head complies with auditing and accountability requirements.	4.38	1.00	Very High
25. Issues in financial management are address promptly.	4.34	0.96	Very High
26. The school head demonstrates honesty in managing school funds.	4.33	1.02	Very High
27. The school head promotes integrity in all financial transactions.	4.33	1.00	Very High
28. The school head ensures fair distribution and use of school funds.	4.22	1.08	Very High
29. The school head acts responsibly in managing donated resources.	4.32	1.00	Very High



30. The school head makes financial decisions that benefit the school community.	4.33 0.95	Very High
Accountability Overall mean	4.32 0.96	Very High

Legend:(4.21-5.0)-Very High;(3.41 – 4.20)-High;(2.61-3.40) Moderate (1.81 – 2.60)-Low;(1.00 – 1.80)-Very Low

Table 3 presents the level of accountability of school heads as perceived by the respondents.

Among the indicators, "The school head complies with auditing and accountability requirements" obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.00$), interpreted as Very High. This finding indicates that respondents strongly perceive school heads as consistently complying with established auditing procedures and accountability standards required by the Department of Education and other government agencies. Likewise, "The school head keeps complete and accurate financial records" ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.01$) and "Financial reports are submitted on time" ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.98$) also received Very High ratings, suggesting that school heads consistently fulfill their responsibilities in maintaining accurate financial documentation and ensuring timely submission of required reports. The relatively low standard deviations indicate that respondents generally shared similar perceptions regarding these accountability practices

Other indicators likewise received Very High ratings, including "Issues in financial management are addressed promptly" ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.96$), "Procurement and fund disbursement follow government regulations" ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.00$), "The school head ensures proper documentation of financial transactions" ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.02$), "The school head demonstrates honesty in managing school funds" ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.02$), "The school head promotes integrity in all financial transactions" ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.00$), and "The school head makes financial decisions that benefit the school community" ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.95$). These findings suggest that respondents recognize school heads as responsible financial managers who adhere to ethical standards, observe government regulations, and ensure that financial decisions support the needs and priorities of the school community.

Similarly, "The school head acts responsibly in managing donated resources" ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.00$), "The school head ensures that financial transactions follow DepEd policies and guidelines" ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.05$), "School funds are used only for approved school programs and activities" ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.93$), "Financial practices are regularly monitored for compliance" ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.01$), and "The school head follows proper procedures in using school funds" ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.03$) all obtained Very High descriptive ratings.

These results indicate that accountability is consistently practiced through compliance with financial policies, responsible allocation of school funds, and continuous monitoring of financial activities. The standard deviations, which are close to one point, further reflect a high degree of agreement among the respondents.

Among all the indicators, "The school head ensures fair distribution and use of school funds" received the lowest mean ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.08$), although it remained within the very high descriptive level. The slightly higher standard deviation suggests greater variation in respondents' perceptions regarding fairness in fund allocation. This may imply that while accountability is generally evident, some respondents perceive opportunities for further improvement in ensuring equitable distribution of financial resources across school programs and activities.

Overall, the accountability of school heads was rated very high, with an overall mean of 4.32 and a standard deviation of 0.96. The relatively low standard deviation indicates that respondents had consistent perceptions regarding the accountability practices demonstrated by school heads. These findings imply that school heads effectively fulfill their financial responsibilities by complying with government policies, maintaining accurate records, observing auditing requirements, and making responsible financial decisions

that benefit the school community. Strong accountability practices contribute to sound financial governance, strengthen stakeholder confidence, and promote the efficient utilization of school resources.

These findings are consistent with the study of Garcer et al. (2024), which found that effective financial accountability in public schools is achieved through compliance with financial regulations, proper documentation, internal controls, and ethical stewardship of school resources.

Likewise, Dijon (2024) reported that accountable financial management strengthens stakeholder trust by ensuring responsible use of school funds, timely financial reporting, and adherence to transparency and accountability standards.

Level of School Climate

Table 4. Level of School Climate.

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Transparency foster respect among staff and parents.	4.39	0.96	Very High
2. Transparency build trust among stakeholders.	4.41	0.98	Very High
3. The school head uses fund to solve school safety problem.	4.25	1.01	Very High
4. School funds are fairly used for safety needs.	4.24	1.01	Very High
5. School heads make action to maintain a safe environment	4.25	1.01	Very High
6. Financial responsibility is shared among stakeholders.	4.23	1.01	Very High
7. Fairness in financial management promotes harmony.	4.40	1.00	Very High
8. Teachers feel supported by the school administration.	4.19	1.03	High
9. Accountability provide a sense of security.	4.33	0.97	Very High
10. There is trust between teachers and school leaders.	4.28	0.99	Very High
11. The school provides adequate resources for teaching and learning.	4.12	1.07	High
12. Financial openness fosters inclusively	4.27	1.01	Very High
13. Confidence in school leadership increases	4.29	0.95	Very High
14. Accountability create supportive atmosphere.	4.35	0.98	Very High
15. Transparency and Accountability enhance school pride.	4.37	1.00	Very High
School Climate Overall mean	4.29	0.95	Very High

Legend:(4.21-5.0)-Very High;(3.41 – 4.20)-High;(2.61-3.40) Moderate (1.81 – 2.60)-Low;(1.00 – 1.80)-Very Low

Table 4 presents the level of school climate as influenced by the transparency and accountability of school heads, as perceived by the respondents

Among the indicators, “Transparency builds trust among stakeholders” obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 0.98$), interpreted as very high. This finding indicates that respondents strongly believe that transparent leadership strengthens trust and confidence among teachers, parents, and other members of the school community. Closely following was “Fairness in financial management promotes harmony” ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.00$) and “Transparency fosters respect among staff and parents” ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.96$), both interpreted as very high. These findings suggest that openness and fairness in financial management contribute to positive interpersonal relationships, mutual respect, and collaboration within the school. The

relatively low standard deviations indicate that respondents shared similar perceptions regarding these aspects of the school climate.

Other indicators also received very high ratings, including “Transparency and accountability enhance school pride” ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.00$), “Accountability creates a supportive atmosphere” ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.98$), “Accountability provides a sense of security” ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.97$), “Confidence in school leadership increases” ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.95$), “There is trust between teachers and school leaders” ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.99$), “Financial openness fosters inclusivity” ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.01$), “The school head uses funds to solve school safety problems” ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.01$), “School heads take action to maintain a safe environment” ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.01$), “School funds are fairly used for safety needs” ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.01$), and “Financial responsibility is shared among stakeholders” ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.01$). These findings indicate that respondents generally perceive transparency and accountability as contributing to a safe, inclusive, and collaborative school environment where stakeholders work together toward common educational goals.

Meanwhile, “Teachers feel supported by the school administration” obtained a mean of 4.19 ($SD = 1.03$), interpreted as high, while “The school provides adequate resources for teaching and learning” received the lowest mean of 4.12 ($SD = 1.07$), also interpreted as high. Although these indicators remained positively rated, their comparatively lower means and slightly higher standard deviations suggest that respondents' experiences regarding administrative support and the adequacy of instructional resources varied across schools. These findings imply that while school climate is generally favorable, additional efforts to strengthen teacher support systems and improve the availability of teaching resources could further enhance the overall school environment.

Overall, the level of school climate was rated Very High, with a mean of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 0.95. The results indicate that respondents generally perceived their schools as characterized by trust, respect, fairness, support, safety, collaboration, and stakeholder confidence. The relatively small standard deviation suggests generally consistent perceptions among respondents, although the variation observed in selected indicators indicates that experiences may differ across schools.

The high ratings for trust, fairness, respect, and supportive relationships are particularly relevant to the study's theoretical framework. These dimensions suggest that perceptions of school climate may be closely connected to how teachers experience leadership communication, fairness in resource use, and confidence in administrative practices. However, these descriptive findings alone do not demonstrate that financial transparency or accountability caused the favorable school climate. The subsequent correlational analysis provides evidence regarding the statistical association among the constructs.

These findings are consistent with the study of Aldridge and Fraser (2023), which reported that a positive school climate is strengthened by leadership practices that promote trust, fairness, collaboration, and shared responsibility among stakeholders. Similarly, OECD (2023) emphasized that transparent and accountable school leadership contributes to stronger school relationships, increased stakeholder engagement, and a more supportive learning environment that enhances overall school effectiveness.

Relationship Between the Level of Transparency Practices and the Level of School Climate

Table 5. Relationship Between the Level of Transparency Practices and the Level of School Climate.

Variable	Test Statistics (r_s)	P-value	Decision for Ho	Interpretation
Transparency Vs School Climate	.840**	<0.001	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 5 presents the relationship between the level of transparency practices and the level of school climate. The analysis revealed a Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (r_s) of 0.840 with a p-value of $< .001$, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This indicates a statistically significant, very strong positive relationship between transparency practices and school climate. The obtained correlation coefficient ($r_s = 0.840$) suggests that schools where school heads consistently demonstrate higher levels of transparency in financial management also tend to experience a more positive school climate. The positive direction of the relationship implies that as transparency practices improve, the quality of the school climate likewise increases. This finding highlights that transparent leadership, characterized by open communication, proper disclosure of financial information, accessible financial records, and stakeholder involvement in financial matters, contributes to building trust, respect, collaboration, and a supportive working environment within the school community.

The statistically significant p-value of less than .001 indicates that the observed relationship is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. Thus, the findings provide strong empirical evidence that transparency is closely associated with creating a healthy and positive school climate. This implies that school heads who consistently practice openness and accountability in managing school resources are more likely to foster stakeholder confidence, strengthen relationships among teachers, parents, and the community, and promote a culture of cooperation and shared responsibility. As transparency becomes embedded in school governance, stakeholders are encouraged to participate more actively in school programs, thereby enhancing organizational effectiveness and overall school performance.

The relationship between financial transparency and school climate was statistically significant and very strong, with Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient of $r_s = .840$ and $p < .001$. The coefficient represents a very large positive association, indicating that higher perceived levels of financial transparency were associated with more positive perceptions of school climate among the participating teachers. The descriptive statistics also showed that financial transparency ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.93$) and school climate ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.95$) were both rated Very High. Because the study used a descriptive-correlational design, this result should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence that transparency causes improvements in school climate. The finding suggests that teachers who reported higher levels of transparency also tended to report more positive perceptions of school climate.

The findings are consistent with the study of Aldridge and Fraser (2023), who reported that transparent and trustworthy leadership significantly contributes to a positive school climate by strengthening collaboration, mutual respect, and teacher commitment. Their review emphasized that leadership practices characterized by openness and fairness create supportive learning environments where teachers and stakeholders develop stronger trust and engagement. Likewise, the results support the findings of Hallinger and Kulophas (2020), who found that effective school leadership practices, particularly those emphasizing transparency, shared decision-making, and accountability, positively influence school climate by fostering organizational trust, teacher collaboration, and stakeholder participation. These studies affirm that transparent leadership is a fundamental factor in establishing positive school environments that support continuous school improvement and educational effecti

Relationship Between the Level of Accountability and the Level of School Climate

Table 6. Relationship Between the Level of Accountability and the Level of School Climate.

Variable	Test Statistics (r_s)	P-value	Decision for Ho	Interpretation
Accountability Vs School Climate	.874**	<0.001	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 6 presents the relationship between the level of accountability of school heads and the level of school climate. The analysis yielded a Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (r_s) of 0.874 with a p-value of $< .001$, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result indicates a statistically significant, very strong positive relationship between the accountability of school heads and the school climate.

The obtained correlation coefficient ($r_s = 0.874$) indicates that higher levels of accountability among school heads are associated with a more positive school climate. The strength and positive direction of the relationship suggest that as school heads become more accountable in managing school resources, complying with financial policies, maintaining accurate records, and fulfilling their responsibilities, the school climate likewise becomes more supportive, collaborative, and trusting. This finding emphasizes that accountability extends beyond compliance with financial regulations; it also strengthens organizational relationships by promoting integrity, fairness, and responsible leadership. When school heads consistently demonstrate accountability, teachers and other stakeholders are more likely to develop confidence in school leadership, resulting in stronger cooperation and a healthier organizational environment.

The p-value of $< .001$ confirms that the relationship is statistically significant, indicating that the association between accountability and school climate is highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. The findings imply that accountability is a critical factor in creating an organizational culture where trust, transparency, fairness, and stakeholder participation are encouraged. School heads who consistently practice accountability help establish an environment where teachers feel secure, respected, and motivated to contribute to the achievement of school goals. Such leadership also promotes effective resource management, responsible decision-making, and continuous school improvement.

These findings are consistent with the study of Garcer, et al. (2024), which found that strong accountability mechanisms, proper financial governance, and adherence to internal financial controls contribute significantly to effective school management and strengthen stakeholders' confidence in school leadership. Their study emphasized that accountable school leaders create environments characterized by integrity, ethical decision-making, and organizational effectiveness. Similarly, Aldridge and Fraser (2023) reported that leadership practices grounded in accountability, fairness, and ethical responsibility positively influence school climate by fostering trust, collaboration, teacher commitment, and positive interpersonal relationships within schools. These studies support the present findings that accountable leadership plays a vital role in cultivating a positive and productive school climate.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Financial transparency was perceived at a Very High level, with an overall mean of 4.33 (SD = 0.93). The results indicate that teachers generally perceived school heads as practicing open financial reporting, maintaining accessible records, communicating information about donations, and disclosing the use of financial resources.

Financial accountability was perceived at a Very High level, with an overall mean of 4.32 (SD = 0.96). Respondents generally perceived school heads as complying with financial policies, maintaining appropriate documentation, submitting financial reports, observing auditing requirements, and managing school resources responsibly.

School climate was perceived at a Very High level, with an overall mean of 4.29 (SD = 0.95). The results indicate generally positive perceptions of trust, fairness, respect, support, safety, collaboration, and confidence in school leadership.

Financial transparency had a statistically significant, very strong positive association with school climate ($r_s = .840$, $p < .001$). Thus, higher perceived levels of financial transparency were associated with more positive perceptions of school climate.

Financial accountability had a statistically significant, very strong positive association with school climate ($r_s = .874$, $p < .001$). Thus, higher perceived levels of financial accountability were associated with more positive perceptions of school climate. Although the relationships were very strong and statistically significant, the findings should be interpreted as associations rather than causal effects because the study employed a descriptive-correlational design. The results do not establish that financial transparency or accountability causes changes in school climate.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the study was conducted within a single Schools Division and involved 144 permanent teachers from Districts II-A and II-B. Consequently, the findings may not be directly generalizable to teachers and schools in other divisions, regions, or educational contexts.

Second, the study relied on teachers' perceptions of financial transparency, financial accountability, and school climate. Although the instrument demonstrated strong content validity and internal consistency, self-reported perceptions may be influenced by individual experiences, expectations, or social desirability.

Third, the study employed a cross-sectional descriptive-correlational design. The data were collected at one point in time; therefore, the findings establish statistical associations but cannot demonstrate temporal ordering or causal relationships among financial transparency, accountability, and school climate.

Finally, the study focused on quantitative associations and therefore did not capture in-depth explanations of why particular financial practices may be perceived positively or negatively by teachers. Factors such as school size, available resources, leadership experience, organizational culture, stakeholder participation, and contextual conditions were not examined as potential influences on the observed relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and limitations of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Broader sampling. Future researchers may include teachers from multiple Schools Divisions and regions to determine whether the observed relationships between financial transparency, accountability, and school climate remain consistent across different educational contexts.

Multiple stakeholder perspectives. Future studies may include school heads, teachers, parents, and other relevant stakeholders to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of financial transparency, accountability, and school climate.

Mixed-method approaches. Quantitative findings may be complemented by interviews, focus group discussions, or document analysis to explore how stakeholders experience financial reporting, participation, fairness, and accountability in actual school settings.

Longitudinal research. Future researchers may employ longitudinal designs to examine whether changes in financial transparency and accountability are accompanied by changes in perceptions of school climate over time. Such designs may provide stronger evidence regarding temporal relationships, although causal conclusions would still require appropriate experimental or quasi-experimental methods.

Additional explanatory variables. Future research may examine other organizational factors, such as leadership style, organizational trust, teacher engagement, communication quality, stakeholder participation, school resources, and perceived organizational support, which may help explain the relationships observed in the present study.



Further validation of the instrument. Future researchers may conduct confirmatory factor analysis or other appropriate psychometric procedures using larger and more diverse samples to further examine the factor structure and construct validity of the researcher-made instrument.

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