

Exploring School Leaders' Turnover Intention: An Inquiry into the Influence of Servant Leadership

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2026.1307000234>

Received: 23 July 2026; Accepted: 28 July 2026; Published: 08 August 2026

ABSTRACT

This study employed qualitative research, specifically utilizing a phenomenological design. It explored the lived experiences of school leaders regarding their turnover intentions in leadership. The study also aimed to uncover how school leaders navigate challenges and how servant leadership sustains them. The participants included four school principals and four master teachers from the Division of Davao del Sur. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who met the inclusion criteria for the in-depth interviews (IDI), conducted both face-to-face and through online platforms. Thematic analysis was applied to extract essential themes from the participants' responses. The results revealed that school leaders experienced overwhelming workloads, administrative burdens, systemic and structural challenges, and resource shortages, factors contributing to their turnover intentions. Despite these challenges, school leaders managed to shape their intention to stay through collaboration and community engagement, balancing professional demands with personal well-being, and upholding leadership values. They described their servant leadership experience in terms of identity and purpose, prioritizing service before self, and highlighting their leadership's impact on teachers, students, and the community.

Keywords: servant leadership, turnover intention, school leaders

INTRODUCTION

Turnover intention, a critical concern in organizational studies, represents an employee's conscious and deliberate willingness to leave their current employment (Park & Min, 2020). Such intentions have been referred to as one's willingness to resign from the organization and seek out other alternative sources of employment (Rumpoko et al., 2022). Research globally has shown the teacher's intention to turn over as a prevalent and chronic challenge and it has remained a continuous problem up to this point in time (Kamau et al., 2020). Further, Teacher turnover is a global issue, affecting both developed and developing countries (UNESCO, 2024).

Further, in the United States, 84 percent of teachers from the public schools and 82 percent of teachers from the private schools in 2020–21 were planning to leave but decided to stay on as teachers at the same school in 2021–22 (Stayers et al., 2024). In the latest data, US educator turnover intentions are reported to be increasing, contributing to more than 1 million teachers leaving for different jobs (Thomas & Hammond, 2017). Likewise, in Japan, Nagasaki, 30.7 percent of private teachers had stated they were not interested in staying in their current positions in the next few years (Tayama et al., 2019), and in China, teachers' turnover intention in private schools increased to 41 percent (Yang et al., 2021). In fact, in China, with 10.57 million full-time teachers, Chinese ESL teachers have a high level of turnover intention that have a detrimental effect on students' learning. (Li et al., 2021).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education acknowledged the growing concern over teacher retention during the pandemic. Briones (2020) emphasized that the mental and emotional toll on educators could lead to a significant drop in workforce stability. A study by Montano and Acebes (2020) revealed that Filipino teachers experienced high levels of anxiety and stress, which are known precursors to turnover intention. The findings

showed that 40.7% of respondents experienced moderate to severe stress, while 53.1% reported moderate to severe depression conditions that may influence decisions to leave the profession.

Locally, in the study by Saramosing et al. (2025), highlights a growing concern in the Philippines, particularly in Region X (Northern Mindanao), where teacher turnover intention is rising due to insufficient administrative support and poor integration of educational technology. Teachers in public schools reported feeling undervalued, unsupported, and overwhelmed by the demands of digital learning environments, especially in under-resourced areas.

Existing research on teacher turnover intention often examines broader national contexts or specific school districts, such as those in the US or China (Yang et al., 2021). However, this study will investigate turnover intentions in the Philippines. It will solely explore School leaders' Turnover Intention, as an inquiry to the influence of Servant Leadership. Moreover, most studies being read utilized quantitative, descriptive-correlational, and some employed qualitative research design (UNESCO, 2024). Compared to the current study, it will use pure qualitative research, particularly as exploration. Also, less has been done among public school leaders. Therefore, the present study will solely explore the turnover intention of school leaders' teachers as an inquiry into the influence by servant leadership in Davao Del Sur, Philippines.

The findings of this research hold significant social value, offering the school teachers, school heads, school administrators, and division administrators and Department of Education vital foundation to implement responsive and sustainable measures addressing the pressing issue of school leaders turnover. This study not only informs institutional policy but also inspires a wave of future research in a critically underexplored domain. Ultimately, it paves the way for the development of targeted programs that promote school leaders retention, professional fulfillment, and educational stability benefiting not just educators, but the broader learning communities they serve.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore and understand the turnover intention of school leaders through the lens of servant leadership. Specifically, it seeks to examine how servant leadership principles—such as empathy, stewardship, empowerment, and community-building—can influence school leaders' job satisfaction, resilience, and commitment to their roles. By investigating the relationship between servant leadership practices and turnover intention, the study aims to identify whether adopting servant-oriented strategies can reduce burnout, strengthen organizational loyalty, and enhance leadership stability in schools.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is anchored on the Expanded-Multidimensional Turnover Intention Model (EMTIM) developed by Obinna Osita Ike et al. (2023), which provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors that influence an individual's intention to leave an organization. The model builds upon Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1991), which posits that behavioral intentions such as the intention to stay or resign are shaped by one's attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. However, Ike and colleagues expanded this theory by incorporating additional organizational and psychological dimensions, offering a more holistic view of turnover intentions. The Expanded-Multidimensional Turnover Intention Model EMTIM considers six key components: attitudinal factors, normative factors, control factors, and three forms of organizational commitment affective, continuance, and normative. These dimensions collectively capture both the individual and contextual influences that shape an employee's decision-making process regarding job retention or departure. In the context of this study, the Expanded-Multidimensional Turnover Intention Model EMTIM serves as a guiding framework to examine how teachers', school heads' or school leaders' perceptions, attitudes, and organizational experiences contribute to their turnover intentions. By adopting this model, the research aims to provide educators and policymakers with a more elaborate and multidimensional understanding of turnover behavior within the educational setting. Turnover intention is influenced by multiple factors, not just job dissatisfaction. The Expanded-Multidimensional Turnover Intention Model (EMTIM) explains how personal motivation, workplace environment, and social expectations together affect a teacher's/ school heads and school leaders' decision to stay in or leave an educational institution.

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative method, particularly phenomenological design. Qualitative studies delved into the motivations, opinions, and reasons behind a particular condition. In addition, Creswell (2014) presented that the research procedure involves new questions and methods, data collection that frequently takes place in the participant's environment, data analysis that builds inductively from specifics to broad ideas, and a method for exploring and understanding the significance of individuals or groups to attribute to a social or human issue and deduce the significance of the data from the findings. The structure and conclusion of my written report will be adjusted based on the context of the school and the school heads. Participants in this kind of research encourage an approach to research the value of an inductive method and an emphasis on personal significance, as well as the necessity of illustrating the complexity of a situation. Moreover, phenomenological design is a method of investigation that is philosophical and psychological underpinnings, in which the researcher shares the actual sensations of the subjects they are researching regarding a phenomenon as they are described by the participants (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenology, according to Qutshi (2018) is both a philosophy and a method of inquiry. As an intellectual activity including interpretations and meaning formation that is employed to aid in the comprehension of human life in the cognitive level. Phenomenological techniques are effective in surfacing profound difficulties as well as making their voices heard (Lester, 1999).

Research Site and Participants

The participants of this research were 8 school leaders from the elementary and secondary level within the Division of Davao del Sur. Also, I verified the status of these 2 males and 6 female school leaders, who were officially school leaders in the school year 2025- 2026. These participants were chosen using purposive sampling guided by the requirements as stated in the purpose of the study. In purposive sampling, there was a set of criteria for choosing the participants of the study. Hence, the following elements were considered: the location or type of school, and their ability to provide informed consent. Further, participants were first identified by their openness and willingness to the in-person interview. As posited by Patton (2002), this is a technique widely used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for the most effectively used of limited resources. Furthermore, this involved identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The sources of data in this research included the participants' responses in Individual interview, using the validated interview guide with the probing questions. It also involved having field notes in the duration of the study. The Interview will be done through face-to-face modality in their respective agreed choice of place and time. These types of interview is the most appropriate in getting the lived experiences from research participants for this allowed freedom to express their thoughts about the questions being asked or situations given. These provided an appropriate avenue for research participants to speak out and articulate what they have share. Lastly, these methods enabled us to establish a certain level of openness and trust by which observance of privacy or confidentiality of responses from the participants, were emphasized and upheld.

Data Analysis

A qualitative research data analysis necessitates good data arrangement of the information that will be obtained using the Braun and Clarke model (2006). The first issue is that the material must be accurately written in every detail. It is also a good idea to double-check the transcript with the captured video or audio. Second, during the coding process, each piece of data will be given equal attention. Third, the coding procedure will be completed properly, comprehensively, and without bias. Fourth, significant concepts is arranged in a logical and ordered manner. Fifth, themes will be compared and cross-reference with one another as well as with the original data. Sixth, themes is examined by making logical, consistent, and unique. Seventh and most crucially, the data is examined, interpreted, and appropriately credited. Eighth, the original data and the analysis must be identical. The ninth need is that the analysis provided a well-structured narrative. Tenth, there must be a fairness of analytic narration and illustrative citations. Eleventh, the analysis is given enough time to complete and is not hurried. Themes analysis methodologies and procedures is discussed in the twelfth. Thirteenth, the technique given, and the analysis must both be consistent. The fourteenth point is the terminology and concepts utilized in line with the study's epistemological character. Finally, I will consider an active participant in the research. These 15 points are necessary in the data analysis. The goal of the study is to maintain honesty with the participants and to be

aware of prejudices. This section does require some interpretation and inference in order to choose what to choose and how to convey and organize it, but its primary function is to describe rather than to explain (Qutoshi, 2018).

Trustworthiness

The degree of confidence in the data, interpretation, and methods employed to assure the quality of a study is referred to as the study's trustworthiness or rigor (Pilot & Beck, 2014). The primary justification for trustworthiness in qualitative research is to ensure that the conclusions are factual and deserve of its confidence and adoption. Credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability are all components of trustworthiness.

Ethical Considerations

This section is cited as one of my most crucial components. I followed the proper protocol and the confidentiality of the participants will be secured to ensure confidentiality.

Social value is the anticipated advantage that can be used to account for human research and consists of both societal and immediate benefits for the research subjects. The result of this study will help school administrators understand better the situation and disposition of the school leaders. They can deal appropriately the different challenges brought by the school leaders. It helps them in formulating a value laden program to strengthen the attitude and behavior of the school leaders and the school community members. The teachers' knowledge of the result of this study will make them understand and acknowledge the different source of strength and weaknesses of the school leaders. It makes them to accompany their school leaders with openness and care knowing that they have different challenges in life. The community which is the training ground can benefit from this study by supporting the school leaders program and activities and to participate in different community event and activities.

Informed Consent. To make sure that I informed the participants about the topic specifically on turnover intention and servant leadership, including the questions focusing on their lived experiences regarding their turnover intention in their leadership. I informed the participants that the conversation was recorded, including the taking notes of their responses. The participants are assured that everything taken during the interview remained confidential and solely be used for the purpose of this research only. I also made clear to them that they had the right to withdraw during the interview if they find the questions uncomfortable and inconvenient.

Privacy and Confidentiality of the Information. Issues concerning information confidentiality and privacy had been handled properly. I faithfully followed the Republic Act No. 10173, also referred to as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012,". Participants' personal information must only be obtained for legitimate and rational purposes. As a result, the obtained data will be save and retained in safe storage disks, and it used for the stated purpose specified by the data owner. The participants' anonymity was scrupulously maintained.

Transparency. The protocol and the process of this study will be transparently discussed with them. The moment the findings will be validated and approved, this will be shared to all who desired to know and use them. The only thing that I cannot share are the data of individual participants. I had to keep them to protect them individually. For transparency, the results must be shared with the participants and school community.

Qualification of the Researcher. I considered myself a qualified researcher because I have scientific competence, social awareness, cultural sensitivity, intellectual humility, vigilance, and safety preparedness. I chose to conduct this kind of research because the topic on servant leadership is close to my heart I spent my early age in the church, given the opportunity to be molded toward self-knowledge and altruism, I knew and experienced how valuable self- concept in facing life challenges. My goal was to gather enough data how the school leaders' participants face the desire to leave and yet stayed up to now and know how servant leadership play a role in their decision making.

RESULT

This chapter outlines the outcomes of the investigation. It provides a comprehensive account of experiences derived from the interview questions that guided the study. The findings are organized into themes and central concepts, presented in alignment with the research questions. Moreover, the data presentation is reinforced by transcripts gathered from the in-depth interviews through face to face and online flat form. In this section, the data are described, examined, and interpreted.

Profile of Participants

The respondents in this study consisted of four school principals and four master teachers from public schools within the Division of Davao del Sur. They had been serving in their respective roles for a period ranging from two to eight years. The participating schools included Padada National High School, Pedro A. Arches National High School, Kanapolo Elementary School, Balogonon Elementary School, and Tinongtongan Elementary School. Five participants engaged in the in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face, while three joined through online platforms. The group was composed of two males and six females, aged between 35 and 55 years old, all of whom willingly accepted the invitation to take part in this research.

Table 1 Profile of Participants

No.	Code	Sex	Age	Position	Year in Service	Study Group
1	IDI01	Male	45	Principal-2	6	IDI
2	IDI02	Female	44	Principal -3	4	IDI
3	IDI03	Female	49	MasterTeacher	3	IDI
4	IDI04	Male	54	Principal – 4	8	IDI
5	IDI05	Female	55	MasterTeacher	3	IDI
6	IDI06	Female	31	MasterTeacher	2	IDI
7	IDI07	Female	31	MasterTeacher	2	IDI
8	IDI08	Female	41	Principal – 2	3	IDI

What are the lived experiences of school leaders regarding, Their turnover intentions in their leadership roles?

Shown in Table 2 are the essential themes and core ideas extracted from the IDI on the lived experiences of school leaders regarding, their turnover intention as they fulfill their leadership role in the school entrusted to them. The themes are discussed in the preceding pages.

Table 2 What are the lived experiences of school leaders regarding, Their turnover intentions in their leadership roles?

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Struggled under workload and administrative tasks	Being dominated by excessive compliance requirements, reports, and paperwork. Experiencing constant policy changes from higher authorities adding pressure.

	Struggling with administrative tasks outweighing instructional priorities, reducing focus on teaching and learning.
Faced systemic and structural challenges	Working under rigid, top-down directives from the Department of Education. Enduring within policies prioritizing compliance over contextual realities of schools. Suffering from delayed responses, lack of recognition, and minimal guidance from higher authorities fostering frustration. Facing limited career growth opportunities, especially for younger educators, contributing to attrition.
Experienced resource shortages	Struggling with insufficient human resources, including teachers, staff, and learners. Coping with inadequate physical facilities such as school buildings and infrastructure. Enduring scarcity of resources, hindering meaningful educational impact.

Struggled under workload and administrative tasks The first theme that emerges as school leaders share their lived experiences regarding turnover intentions while exercising their leadership roles. They are Being dominated by excessive compliance requirements, reports, and paperwork. Experiencing constant policy changes from higher authorities adding pressure. Struggling with administrative tasks outweighing instructional priorities, reducing focus on teaching and learning.

I consider leaving during times of extreme workload and pressure. I felt physically and emotionally drain. Leadership felt overwhelming. (IDI 3)

As a school principal in the DepEd system the biggest challenges fueling thoughts of leaving stem from overwhelming administrative burdens and resource shortages that hinder true educational impact. (IDI2)

Faced systemic and structural challenges The second theme that emerges concerns how school leaders are affected by the demands of the system and structures imposed on them by the division office, which often lead them to contemplate leaving their leadership roles Working under rigid, top-down directives from the Department of Education. School leaders: Enduring within policies prioritizing compliance over contextual realities of schools, suffering from delayed responses, lack of recognition, and minimal guidance from higher authorities fostering frustration and facing limited career growth opportunities, especially for younger educators, contributing to attrition.

The challenges that contribute most to thoughts of leaving a leadership role usually revolve around the rigid and top-down nature of the system. This combination of heavy workload, limited autonomy, and feeling undervalued creates stress and frustration, which can make my role feel overwhelming and lead to thoughts of stepping down. (IDI6)

I can no longer understand the way of DepEd. It is full of tasks, and there are really a lot of paper works. (IDI7)

Lack of Career Growth and Development Opportunities for my Teachers, especially younger generations feel stagnant and leave if they do not see a clear path for advancement or skill development. (IDI4)

Experienced resource shortages The, third theme school leaders shared their experienced that make them think leaving their role was that the high demands of the system but with a very limited resource as they say they were: Struggling with insufficient human resources, including teachers, staff, and learners, coping with inadequate physical facilities such as school buildings and infrastructure also Enduring scarcity of resources, hindering meaningful educational impact

Lack of human resources such as, teachers, learners and other personnel in the school.
Lacking of Physical facilities that include buildings inside the school premises. (IDI3)

The challenge arises when strict reporting and administrative demands leave little time to support teachers or students. At times, I must balance doing what I feel is best for my school with meeting system requirements, which can create a conflict between my ideals and the practical demands of the role. (IDI6)

How do school leaders navigate the challenges and conditions that shape their intentions to stay or leave their positions?

Shown in Table 3 are the essential themes and core ideas extracted from the IDI on how school leaders navigate the challenges and condition that influence their intention to leave or stay in the leadership role the school entrusted to them. The themes are discussed in the preceding pages.

Table 3 How do school leaders navigate the challenges and conditions that shape their intentions to stay or leave their positions?

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Fostering collaboration and promoting community involvement	Benefiting from supportive teachers, collaborative culture, and engaged stakeholders easing leadership burdens. Receiving resources and encouragement through parent-teacher associations and local government support. Strengthening commitment and reducing isolation through shared responsibility and teamwork. Depending on support from colleagues, staff, and superiors influencing the intention to stay or leave.
Balancing Professional Demands with Personal Well-being	Creating intentional boundaries (e.g., no-work zones, family time). Practicing reflection, exercising, praying, and applying stress management strategies. Delegating tasks, empowering staff, and protecting personal health. Maintaining resilience by relying on supportive networks and disciplined time management. Balancing professional demands with personal well-being by setting boundaries and managing time intentionally.
Upholding values while practicing leadership principles	Highlighting fairness, integrity, collaboration, and continuous improvement. Centering student success and teacher development as primary goals.

	Dedicating efforts to staff growth through mentoring and professional development. Exercising fairness, integrity, and fostering growth for both teachers and students.
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Fostering collaboration and promoting community involvement. This theme emerged when participants reflected on how they navigate the challenges and conditions that influence their decision to remain in or leave leadership roles. Many emphasized benefiting from supportive teachers, a collaborative culture, and engaged stakeholders that ease leadership burdens. They described receiving resources and encouragement through parent-teacher associations and local government support, strengthening commitment and reducing isolation through shared responsibility and teamwork, and depending on support from colleagues, staff, and superiors—factors that decisively influence their intention to stay or leave.

Supportive teachers, collaborative culture, and engaged stakeholders make it easier to continue in my role. When staff members share responsibility, communicate openly, and demonstrate commitment to learner success, leadership feels purposeful and manageable. Clear guidance and responsive support from the Department of Education also strengthen confidence in decision-making. (IDI1)

When teachers collaborate, share ideas, and respect leadership, heads feel less isolated and more effective. Active parent-teacher associations and local government support provide resources and encouragement. access to training aligned with leadership standards. Seeing learners succeed academically and socially reinforces the sense of purpose. (IDI8)

Balancing Professional Demands with Personal Well-being. The participants recognized the importance of balancing professional responsibilities with personal well-being. They intentionally set boundaries, such as designating no-work zones and prioritizing family time, to protect their health. Reflection, prayer, exercise, and stress management practices became vital strategies for sustaining resilience. Delegating tasks not only empowered staff but also reduced personal strain, reinforcing a culture of shared responsibility. Supportive networks provided encouragement, while disciplined time management ensured productivity without sacrificing rest. This balance highlighted that effective leadership requires intentional self-care, enabling leaders to remain committed, energized, and capable of guiding others toward collective success.

I rely on prayer and reflection. I seek guidance from trusted colleagues. I refocus on my purpose. (IDI2)

Personal well-being during challenging times requires intentional, proactive strategies to prevent burnout and maintain resilience. Effective approaches include establishing strict boundaries, prioritizing self-care, and leveraging support systems. (IDI4)

Balancing professional demands with personal well-being requires intentional boundaries and disciplined time management. I prioritize urgent and high-impact tasks while delegating responsibilities that can empower my team. when possible, helps protect time for family and rest. I practice reflection and stress-management strategies such as exercise, prayer, or quiet planning to regain focus. (IDI1)

Upholding values while practicing leadership principles. Participants emphasized that their personal values serve as guiding principles in navigating leadership challenges. Fairness and integrity shaped their decision-making, ensuring trust and transparency within the school community. Collaboration fostered unity, while continuous improvement encouraged innovation and growth. By prioritizing student success and teacher development, they aligned their goals with the broader mission of education. Their dedication to mentoring and professional development highlighted a commitment to empowering staff, cultivating resilience, and sustaining meaningful progress in leadership.

Professional development: Opportunities form training, mentoring, and leadership growth help school leaders feel valued and capable of meeting challenges (IDI8)

I believe in collaboration, fairness, and continuous improvement, principles that guide my decisions as a leader (IDI 1)

My personal values and professional goals focus on fairness, integrity, and helping both teachers and students grow. These guide me to make decisions that prioritize learning and staff development. (IDI6)

What insights and meanings do school heads derive from their experiences of servant leadership in relation to their decisions about remaining in their roles?

Shown in Table 4 are the essential themes and core ideas extracted from the IDI on how servant leadership influence in their decision to remain in their leadership role.. The themes are discussed in the preceding pages

Table 4 What insights and meanings do school heads derive from their experiences of servant leadership in relation to their decisions about remaining in their roles?

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Define and strengthen the identity and purpose of school leaders	Viewing leadership as serving, not commanding. Shaping identity into mentoring, supporting, and guiding. Building trust, respect, and collaboration in school culture. Finding strength and resilience through serving by fostering service, empathy, and empowerment through servant leadership.
Put servant Leadership into action	Leading with the intention of serving others before self-interest. Actively listening, understanding needs, and empowering teachers, staff, and learners. Being guided by fairness, empathy, humility, and integrity. Focusing on others' needs and treating leadership as a calling.
Promote initiatives that benefit teachers, students, and the community.	Empowering teachers through mentoring and professional growth. Supporting students' holistic development and confidence. Building trust and collaboration with the community. Extending service beyond the school into families and society.

Define and strengthen the identity and purpose of school leaders As school leaders carry out their responsibilities amid both challenges and triumphs, they discover a higher purpose in their role. They view leadership as serving rather than commanding, shaping their identity into that of a mentor, supporter, and guide. By building trust, respect, and collaboration within the school culture, they find strength and resilience through service. Servant leadership fosters empathy and empowerment, enabling leaders to embrace service as their source of emotional strength and resilience. In this journey, service itself becomes the foundation that empowers them to lead with humility, compassion, and integrity.

Leaders see their role not just as administrative but as a calling to serve students, teachers, and the community. The sense of mission often outweighs frustrations and encourages them to stay. Servant leadership emphasizes enabling teachers and staff to thrive. Serving others provides emotional strength; challenges feel less like personal burdens and more like shared responsibilities. (IDI8)

Servant leadership shapes my identity as a school head by guiding me to lead with empathy, integrity, and a focus on others' growth. It reminds me that my role is not just about managing tasks, but about supporting teachers, mentoring staff, and creating a positive learning environment for students. This approach has strengthened my sense of responsibility, patience, and collaboration, making me a leader who values service, trust, and the well-being of the entire school community. (IDI1)

Put servant Leadership into action School leaders recognized the importance the value of altruism as seen in the following core ideas: First, leading with the intention of serving others before self-interest. Second, actively listening, understanding needs, and empowering teachers, staff, and learners. Third, being guided by fairness, empathy, humility, and integrity. Lastly, focusing on others' needs and treating leadership as a calling.

Servant leadership means prioritizing the needs of teachers and students, empowering others, and leading with empathy, humility, and integrity (IDI5)

Servant leadership shapes the identity of a school head by shifting the from authoritative management to a service-oriented, people-first approach. As a school head, this model transforms the identity into that of a mentor, a supporter of teacher well-being, and a curator of a supportive school climate. (IDI4)

Promote initiatives that benefit teachers, students, and the community. In their journey, school leaders find fulfillment in empowering teachers through mentoring and professional growth, supporting students in their holistic development and confidence, building trust and collaboration with the community, and extending service beyond the school into families and society. Through these commitments, leadership becomes not only a professional responsibility but also a meaningful calling that fosters lasting impact within and beyond the school environment.

Serving teachers, students, and the community carries a deeper meaning that goes beyond administrative duty—it becomes a source of identity, purpose, and legacy for a school head. Leadership is not about authority but about fulfilling a mission to uplift others. Service becomes a ripple effect, extending beyond the school into families and communities. (IDI8)

Serving others gives my work purpose. Knowing that my leadership contributes to students' futures and community development makes the challenges worthwhile. Serving the community means building trust, promoting collaboration, and ensuring that the school contributes positively to the lives of families and society. (IDI5)

DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected, school leaders faced the reality of their experiences: as they carried out their duties and responsibilities, there were times when they considered stepping away from their leadership roles not because of an inability to fulfill their tasks toward teachers and students, but due to the overwhelming workload and administrative burden. Excessive compliance requirements, reports, and paperwork consumed much of their time, often overshadowing instructional priorities. The study of Pinheiro et al. (2025) confirms this, stating that compliance demands dominate the time of school leaders, leaving little room for instructional leadership. Constant policy changes imposed by higher authorities further intensify the pressure, limiting their capacity to focus on teaching and learning. Administrative tasks consume most of their time, resulting in reduced opportunities for classroom engagement. Similarly, the *Frontiers in Education* journal (2025) argues that frequent policy shifts exacerbate these pressures, restricting administrators' ability to prioritize instruction. Alcober (2025), writing in the *Daily Tribune*, reported findings from DepEd's Technical Working Group showing that teachers and school heads spend disproportionate hours on non-teaching tasks, with administrative demands outweighing classroom priorities.

In addition, systemic policies and administrative structures contribute significantly to frustration and attrition among school leaders and teachers. Gueriba and Morales (2025), writing in the *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, emphasize that rigid, top-down directives from the Department of Education often prioritize compliance over the contextual realities of schools, thereby limiting leaders' autonomy and

effectiveness. This finding supports the results of my study, which similarly concluded that rigid directives restrict autonomy. Likewise, Ortiz Jr. et al. (2025), in the *Pedagogy Review*, highlight that delayed responses, minimal guidance, and lack of recognition from higher authorities foster dissatisfaction and weaken instructional leadership. These observations affirm my participants' claims that such practices generate frustration among school leaders. Furthermore, participants in my study noted that limited career growth opportunities, especially for younger educators, contribute to attrition. Dela Peña (2025) substantiates this by demonstrating that restricted career advancement, particularly for younger educators in geographically isolated schools, exacerbates attrition trends.

Furthermore, school leaders expressed that another factor influencing their turnover intentions is the shortage of resources, such as insufficient human resources (teachers, staff, and learners) and inadequate physical facilities, including school buildings and infrastructure. Resource scarcity hinders the ability to create meaningful educational impact. Similar findings were reported in the studies of J. Ondong (2024) and Karakose et al. (2024), which stated that principals and teachers often manage limited resources, with shortages in human capital and inadequate facilities serving as barriers to achieving meaningful educational outcomes. Insufficient staffing, poor infrastructure, and resource scarcity emerge as recurring challenges that undermine sustainable school improvement.

Collaboration and community engagement, balancing professional demands with personal well-being, and values and leadership principles are essential themes that emerge as school leaders navigate the challenges and conditions that influence their decision to remain in their positions. A culture of collaboration and supportive teachers helps ease leadership burdens. Findings from the *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management* (2025) confirm this, noting that supportive teachers and collaborative cultures reduce isolation, strengthen leaders' commitment, and ease administrative responsibilities through shared responsibility. Parent-teacher associations and local government support also provide resources and encouragement. Similar sentiments are found in the study of Mendoza and Cruz (2024), *Stakeholder Engagement and School Governance: The Role of Parent-Teacher Associations and Local Government Units*, which highlights how PTA and LGU support reinforce school governance and alleviate administrative challenges. Likewise, Coşkun et al. (2025), in their study *Support Systems and Turnover Intentions Among School Leaders*, found that support from colleagues, staff, and superiors plays a decisive role in leaders' intentions to stay or leave. Collegial support mitigates burnout and strengthens retention. These findings support the results of my study, which claim that shared responsibility and teamwork reduce isolation and reinforce leaders' commitment: "Support from colleagues, staff, and superiors plays a decisive role in their intention to stay or leave

Recent studies emphasize that balancing professional demands with personal well-being requires intentional boundaries and disciplined time management. Aware of the demands of their leadership roles, school leaders learn to set boundaries such as establishing no-work zones and prioritizing family time. They also dedicate time for reflection, exercise, prayer, and stress management strategies. These practices echo the findings of Barniso and Odenaria (2025), published in the *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, which reported that school leaders sustain well-being by creating no-work zones, prioritizing family time, and engaging in reflection, prayer, and stress management. Delegating tasks to empower staff and protect personal health further supports this approach, as affirmed by Gatela (2024), who identified exercise, mindfulness, and task delegation as effective strategies that both empower staff and safeguard leaders' health. In addition, school leaders maintain resilience through supportive networks and disciplined time management. This is consistent with the findings of Galorio and Bauyot (2024) in the *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, which demonstrated that resilience is strengthened through supportive networks, teamwork, and structured time management.

As school leaders choose to continue their leadership roles despite the challenges and conditions before them, their values and leadership principles are demonstrated through a strong emphasis on fairness, integrity, collaboration, and continuous improvement. They prioritize student success and teacher development as central goals, showing dedication to staff growth through mentoring and professional development. The studies of several authors foreshadow the results of my research. Pinheiro et al. (2025), in *Frontiers in Education*, emphasize that collaborative and regenerative leadership practices foster adaptability and long-term school

success, highlighting the importance of fairness and collective responsibility. Lorejo (2024), writing in the *Philippine Journal of Educational Leadership and Accountability*, underscores accountability and trust, ensuring that student success remains a central priority. Meanwhile, Laguitao (2024), in the *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISSE)*, presents ethical and strategic leadership models that prioritize mentoring and professional development, thereby advancing both teacher growth and student achievement.

Recent scholarship highlights servant leadership as a model that redefines school leadership as a mission of service rather than authority. The results of the inquiry conducted reveal three themes, the first being the identity and purpose of school leaders. Leadership is viewed as a mission of service, not authority, shaping leaders' identities into those of mentors, supporters, and guides. The *Frontiers in Education* journal argues that servant leadership transforms the identity of school heads into mentors, supporters, and guides, thereby fostering trust, respect, and a collaborative school culture. Pinheiro et al. (2025) affirm this by emphasizing that servant leadership builds trust, respect, and collaboration, while service itself becomes a source of emotional strength and resilience. Servant leadership shapes my identity as a school leader by fostering a mindset of service, empathy, and empowerment. In a similar way, Lorejo (2024), writing in the *Philippine Journal of Educational Leadership and Accountability*, emphasizes that integrity and service are central to effective leadership, with empathy and fairness strengthening accountability and supporting teacher development.

Second, servant leadership has increasingly been recognized in educational research as a model that prioritizes service before self-interest, positioning leadership as a calling rather than a pursuit of authority. Participants in my study also viewed servant leadership in this way, stating that leading with the intention of serving others before self-interest involves actively listening, understanding needs, and empowering teachers, staff, and learners. Guided by fairness, empathy, humility, and integrity, servant leadership means serving before leading and focusing on the needs of others, with leadership understood as a calling. These results resonate with the findings of Laguitao (2024), who, in the *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISSE)*, presents ethical leadership models that prioritize mentoring and professional development, thereby advancing both teacher growth and student success. Collectively, these studies affirm that servant leadership—anchored in service, empathy, and empowerment—builds trust, resilience, and collaborative cultures, shaping the identity of school leaders as mentors and guides dedicated to meeting the needs of others.

Finally, the data show that participants recognized servant leadership as empowering teachers through mentoring and professional growth. Mori (2024) demonstrates that empowering teachers through mentoring is not merely about skill-building; it creates ripple effects that support students and build collaborative trust within the school community. Servant leadership also supports students' holistic development and confidence while fostering trust and collaboration with the community. Lorejo (2024) affirms that servant leadership, anchored in service, empathy, and empowerment, builds trust, resilience, and collaboration, shaping school leaders as mentors and guides committed to fostering both educational and societal development. In addition, service extends beyond the school into families and society. Similarly, Laguitao (2024), writing in the *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISSE)*, presents ethical leadership models that extend service beyond the school into families and society, demonstrating how mentoring and professional development contribute to long-term societal growth.

Implementation for Educational Leadership Practice

The findings of the study can be highly beneficial to school administrators, policymakers, curriculum developers, teacher training programs, and school leaders. They provide a comprehensive understanding of how school leaders respond to the demands placed on them by administrators, as well as the challenges and conditions they face in working with students, teachers, parents, local government officials, and in addressing the shortage of human and physical resources

Despite challenges such as heavy workloads, systemic constraints, and limited resources, the findings of this study highlight strategies that can strengthen educational leadership. The Department of Education can design realistic solutions by simplifying reporting systems and reducing redundant compliance requirements to ease

administrative burdens. Digital tools and distributed leadership models can help leaders focus on instructional priorities. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into strengthening educational practice and leadership. Effective practice requires a balance of collaboration, personal well-being, and principled leadership. School administrators should make sure that during lack session this topic be given time and importance in order to create supportive environments that empower teachers, promote student success, and engage families and communities.

Collaboration fosters trust, reduces isolation, and sustains leaders' commitment to their roles. Embedding shared responsibility and resilience through intentional boundaries enables leaders to navigate systemic challenges while maintaining integrity and service. Mentoring and continuous professional development should be institutionalized to enhance teacher growth and student achievement. Finally, reframing leadership as service rather than authority ensures that values of fairness, collaboration, and continuous improvement remain central. These implications highlight the need for systemic reforms and community partnerships that sustain resilience, foster collaboration, and advance long-term educational excellence.

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