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The Influence of Distributed Leadership on Teacher Commitment: The Mediating Role of School Climate

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Abstract:

Teacher commitment serves as a foundation for educational quality, reflecting teachers' dedication, sense of responsibility, and willingness to contribute to school goals. This study examined the influence of distributed leadership on teacher commitment, with school climate as a mediating variable, among public secondary school teachers in the Division of Cagayan de Oro City. Guided by Spillane's Distributed Leadership Theory (2006), Social Exchange Theory, and Organizational Climate Theory, a quantitative research design with mediation analysis was employed. A total of 116 teachers were selected through stratified random sampling, and data were gathered using validated instruments and analyzed through non-parametric tests, regression, and mediation analysis. Results revealed that teachers exhibited a very high level of commitment across all dimensions and perceived high levels of distributed leadership and positive school climate. No significant differences in teacher commitment were found when grouped by position, educational attainment, or tenure. Regression and mediation analyses showed that distributed leadership significantly influenced both school climate and teacher commitment, with school climate fully mediating their relationship. Qualitative data on teachers' lived experiences revealed themes of supportive and empowering leadership, participative and collaborative leadership, transformational and ethical leadership, and a positive school climate, highlighting how the school head's leadership influenced their commitment. These findings indicated that fostering distributed leadership enhances teacher commitment through a positive and collaborative school climate. A Distributed Leadership–School Climate–Teacher Commitment Enhancement Training (DLSC-ET) was developed to strengthen shared governance and sustain teacher engagement.

Keywords: **shared leadership, organizational climate, teacher motivation, mediation, educational management.**

Introduction

Teacher commitment is critical to education quality, influencing student learning, school performance, and teacher retention. It reflects teachers' emotional attachment and dedication to their role, shaped by factors such as leadership and school climate. Distributed leadership, a collaborative leadership model, positively impacts teacher commitment by fostering shared responsibility and trust, yet its effectiveness depends on clear coordination and a supportive school climate. School climate encompasses interpersonal relationships, institutional culture, and support systems that mediate leadership influence on teacher commitment. Theoretical frameworks grounding this study include Distributed Leadership theory, Organizational Climate theory, and Social Exchange theory, which collectively explain how leadership practices and school environment shape teacher motivation and engagement.

Goals and Objectives

This study aims to investigate how distributed leadership impacts teacher commitment in public secondary schools, with school climate as a mediating factor. It also examines how teachers' demographic factors (teaching position, highest educational attainment, and years of service) influence this relationship. The research addresses gaps in understanding distributed leadership's role in teacher commitment within the Philippine education context.

II. Methods/Design

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative research design with mediation analysis to examine associations among distributed leadership, school climate, and teacher commitment. This design allowed for objective measurement using standardized instruments and statistical tests without manipulating environmental conditions, thereby preserving naturalistic settings. Mediation analysis was utilized to test if school climate mediates the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher commitment, providing insights into the underlying causal mechanisms in a non-experimental context. An embedded qualitative component with an open-ended survey item enriched the data by capturing teachers' lived experiences.

Respondents of the Study

The sample consisted of 116 public secondary school teachers from six large schools, representing various teaching ranks from Teacher I to Teacher III.

Materials

Data were collected via a modified survey comprising:

- Demographic questionnaire (teaching position, educational attainment, years in school)
- Teacher Commitment Scale (21-item Likert scale covering five subdomains)
- Distributed Leadership Scale (10-item Likert scale measuring five leadership dimensions)
- Secondary School Climate Assessment Instrument-General (36-item Likert scale assessing six school climate domains)
- An open-ended item for qualitative insights

Validity of Instrument

Content validity was assured through expert review by specialists in educational management and psychometrics. Pilot testing (n=30) confirmed the instrument's reliability with an overall Cronbach's alpha of 0.969, indicating excellent internal consistency.

Data Gathering Procedure

Approval was secured from academic and school authorities. The researcher coordinated with school principals to administer the questionnaire during convenient times, with confidentiality and voluntary participation assured. The researcher supervised data collection to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Data Analysis Procedure

Non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal-Wallis H) were used for demographic comparisons due to non-normal data distribution. Multiple linear regression analyzed direct effects among variables. Bootstrapping procedures tested mediation effects of school climate in the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher commitment. Qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed for thematic insights.

III. Results

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the 116 teacher respondents reveals a predominance of entry-level positions, basic educational qualifications, and relatively short to moderate tenure in their current schools.

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents

Profiles	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Teaching Position	Teacher 1	78	67%
	Teacher II	9	9%
	Teacher III	29	29%
	Total	116	100%
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's degree	87	75%
	Master's degree	29	25%
	Total	116	100%
Number of Years in the Current School	1-10 years	87	75%
	11-20 years	23	20%
	21 years and above	6	5%
	Total	116	100%

Most respondents (67%) hold Teacher I positions, indicating early-career educators focused on classroom duties rather than leadership roles. Three-fourths possess only bachelor's degrees, meeting minimum DepEd standards, while 25% have pursued master's degrees for professional advancement. Tenure shows 75% with 1-10 years in their current school, suggesting mobility, with a smaller experienced core providing stability.

This profile aligns with typical Philippine public secondary school demographics, where entry-level teachers dominate and tenure reflects transfer practices.

PROBLEM 2: How do respondents perceive the distributed leadership in their school in terms of:

2.1 Shared responsibility

2.2 Collaborative decision-making

2.3 Interdependence and trust

2.4 Leadership Opportunities, and

2.5 Open communication?

Teachers perceived distributed leadership practices in their schools as Very Strong overall (M = 3.42, SD = 0.63), with all dimensions rated similarly high.

Summary Result of Distributed Leadership

No.	Dimensions	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1	Shared responsibility	3.55	0.53	Very Strong
2	Collaborative decision-making	3.44	0.61	Very Strong
3	Interdependence and trust	3.42	0.67	Very Strong
4	Leadership Opportunities, and	3.38	0.67	Very Strong
5	Open communication	3.31	0.68	Very Strong
	Overall	**3.42**	**0.632**	**Very Strong**

Note: : 3.25 – 4.00 Very Strong; 2.50 – 3.24 Strong; 1.75 – 2.49 Weak; 1.00 – 1.74. Very Weak

PROBLEM 3: How do teachers perceive their school climate in terms of:

3.1 Physical Appearance
3.2 Faculty Relations
3.3 Student Interactions
3.4 Learning, Instruction, and Assessment
3.5 Attitude and Culture, and
3.6 Community Relations?

Teachers perceive the overall school climate in their public secondary schools as Very Positive, with an overall mean of 3.49 and standard deviation of 0.59, indicating a highly favorable environment supporting collaboration, inclusivity, and community engagement.

Summary Result of School Climate

No	Dimensions	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1	Physical Appearance	3.24	0.73	Positive
2	Faculty Relations	3.49	0.57	Very Positive
3	Student Interactions	3.42	0.63	Very Positive
4	Learning, Instruction, and Assessment	3.72	0.49	Very Positive
5	Attitude and Culture	3.54	0.55	Very Positive
6	Community Relations	3.52	0.57	Very Positive
	OVERALL	**3.49**	**0.59**	**Very Positive**

Note: 3.25 – 4.00 Very Positive; 2.50 – 3.24 Positive; 1.75 – 2.49 Negative; 1.00 – 1.74 Very Negative

Learning, Instruction, and Assessment received the highest rating, indicating that teachers find teaching practices, student engagement, and assessment practices highly effective and growth-oriented. Attitude and Culture, Community Relations, and Faculty Relations followed closely, reflecting strong professionalism, respect, and partnerships within and outside the school.

Physical Appearance, rated as Positive (just below Very Positive), suggests infrastructural or maintenance challenges typical of public schools, which slightly lower perceptions of the physical environment. This highlights the impact of school facilities on teacher morale and overall climate but does not detract from the otherwise strong positive perceptions.

These dimensions align with established school climate frameworks that emphasize the importance of relational, instructional, cultural, and environmental factors in shaping a positive educational atmosphere.

Problem 4: How do respondents assess their commitment to the following?

4.1 Learner
4.2 Society
4.3 Attaining Excellence
4.4 Profession, and
4.5 Basic Values?

Teachers assessed their overall commitment as Very High (M = 3.69, SD = 0.64), demonstrating strong dedication across all dimensions reflecting their professional values and ethical responsibilities.

Summary Result of Teacher Commitment

No	Dimensions	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1	Commitment to Learner	3.71	0.51	Very High
2	Commitment to Society	3.69	0.52	Very High
3	Commitment to Professionalism	3.72	0.47	Very High
4	Commitment to Excellence	3.62	0.54	Very High
5	Commitment to Basic Values	3.62	0.55	Very High
	OVERALL	**3.69**	**0.64**	**Very High**

Note: 3.25 – 4.00 Very High; 2.50 – 3.24 High; 1.75 – 2.49 Low; 1.00 – 1.74 Very Low

Commitment to Profession and Learner received the highest ratings, indicating deep motivation for professional integrity and student holistic development. Commitment to Society followed closely, showing awareness of education's role in community transformation. Excellence and Basic Values, while slightly lower, remained Very High, reflecting continuous improvement efforts and adherence to ethical standards.

These multidimensional commitment levels align with established frameworks measuring teacher dedication to students, profession, society, excellence, and values, which predict enhanced performance and student outcomes.

PROBLEM 5: Is there a significant difference in the teacher commitment when the respondents are grouped based on their profile?

No significant differences exist in teacher commitment levels across demographic groups, indicating uniformly high dedication regardless of position, educational attainment, or tenure.

Test of Difference in the Teachers' Commitment when Grouped Based on Profile

Profile	Category	Mean Rank	Test Statistic	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Teacher Position	Teacher I	59.00	$z = -0.41$	0.61	Do not Reject Ho1	Not Significant
	Teacher II–III	57.47				
Highest Educational Attainment	Completed bachelor's degree	56.32	$z = -1.41$	0.159	Do not Reject Ho1	Not Significant
	Completed master's/doctorate degree	65.05				
Years in their Current School	1–10 years	57.83	$\chi^2 = 1.08$	0.583	Do not Reject Ho1	Not Significant
	11–20 years	60.89				
	21 years and above	59.08				

Teacher I (n=78) and Teacher II-III (n=38) showed comparable commitment (both Median=4.00). Bachelor's degree holders (n=87) and Master's holders (n=29) exhibited similar high levels (Median=4.00). Tenure groups also displayed consistent commitment, with 11-20 years slightly higher but insignificant (Medians: 3.76-3.86).

These non-parametric test results ($p>0.05$ across all comparisons) suggest intrinsic motivation and collaborative school culture sustain commitment uniformly in Philippine public secondary schools.

PROBLEM 6: Does distributed leadership significantly influence teacher commitment?

Distributed leadership significantly influences teacher commitment ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 4.60$, $p < .001$), explaining 18% of variance ($R^2 = 0.18$, $F = 25.03$, $p < .001$). Shared responsibility and open communication emerged as key predictors.

Model 1 Test on the Significant Influence of Distributed Leadership on Teacher Commitment

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standardized Coefficients (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Constant	2.42	—	8.92	< .001	------	Significant
Distributed Leadership	0.20	0.42	4.6	< .001	Reject Ho_2	Significant

Model Summary:

R^2 = 0.18 , Adjusted R^2 = 0.14, *F value* = 25.03 , *p value* = < .001, *Interpretation* = Significant

Model 2 Test on the Significant Influence of Dimensions of Distributed Leadership on Teacher Commitment

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p	Interpretation
Constant	2.42	0.27	—	8.92	< .001	Significant
Shared Responsibility	0.20	0.10	0.24	1.98	0.05	Significant
Collaborative Decision-Making	-0.03	0.12	-0.04	-0.23	0.816	Not Significant
Interdependence and Trust	0.16	0.12	0.22	1.32	0.189	Not Significant
Leadership Opportunities	0.03	0.09	0.05	0.32	0.75	Not Significant
Open Communication	0.004	0.27	0.24	8.92	< .001	Significant

Model Summary:

R^2 = 0.18 , *Adjusted* R^2 = 0.14, *F value* = 4.86 , *p value* = < .001, *Interpretation* = Significant

The regression equation is TC = 2.42 + 0.20(SR) + 0.004(OC) + ε. Shared responsibility increases commitment by 0.20 units per unit increase, while open communication adds 0.004 units. These findings confirm distributed leadership's positive direct effect on commitment, consistent with research showing moderate correlations (r ≈ 0.4) between shared leadership practices and teacher dedication.

PROBLEM 7: Does distributed leadership significantly influence school climate?

Distributed leadership significantly influences school climate (β = 0.72, t = 11.39, p < .001), explaining 52% of variance (R^2 = 0.52, F = 129.7, p < .001). Leadership opportunities and open communication were key predictors.

Model 1 Test on the Significant Influence of Distributed Leadership on School Climate

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p	Decision	Interpretation
Constant	1.21	0.18	—	6.72	< .001	----	Significant
Distributed Leadership (Overall)	0.57	0.05	0.72	11.39	< .001	Reject Ho3	Significant

Model Summary:

R^2 = 0.52 , Adjusted R^2 = 0.51, *F value* = 129.7 , *p value* = < .001, *Interpretation* = Significant

Model 2: Test on the Significant Influence of Dimensions of Distributed Leadership on School Climate

Predictor Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p	Interpretation
Constant	1.68	0.19	—	8.64	< .001	Significant
Shared Responsibility	0.03	0.07	0.04	0.46	0.65	Not Significant
Collaborative Decision-Making	0.11	0.09	0.16	1.28	0.2	Not Significant
Interdependence and Trust	0.07	0.08	0.11	0.82	0.41	Not Significant

Leadership Opportunities	0.17	0.07	0.27	2.51	0.01	Significant
Open Communication	0.16	0.06	0.26	2.49	0.01	Significant

Model Summary:

$R^2 = 0.72$, *Adjusted* $R^2 = 0.50$, *F value* = 23.81 , *p value* = < .001, *Interpretation* = Significant

The regression equation is SC = 1.68 + 0.17(LO) + 0.16(OC) + ε. Leadership opportunities increase climate by 0.17 units per unit increase, while open communication adds 0.16 units. These results confirm distributed leadership's strong effect on climate, particularly through empowerment and communication, consistent with research showing strong correlations ($r \approx 0.7$) between shared leadership and positive school environments.

PROBLEM 8: Does school climate significantly influence teacher commitment?

School climate significantly influences teacher commitment, explaining 49% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.49$, $F = 123.21$, $p < .001$). The regression model shows a strong positive effect of school climate on teacher commitment.

Model 1 Test on the Significant Influence of School Climate on Teacher Commitment

Predictor Variable	**B**	**SE B**	**β**	**t**	**p**	**Decision**	**Interpretation**
Constant	0.62	0.19	—	3.26	0.001	----	Significant
School Climate (Overall)	0.68	0.06	0.7	11.1	< .001	Reject Ho4	Significant

Model Summary:

$R^2 = 0.49$, *Adjusted* $R^2 = 0.49$, *F value* = 123.21 , *p value* = < .001, *Interpretation* = Significant

Model 2 Test on the Significant Influence of Dimensions of School Climate on Teacher Commitment

Predictor Variable	**B**	**SE B**	**β**	**t**	**p**	**Interpretation**
Constant	0.85	0.28	—	3.01	0.003	Significant
Physical Appearance	-0.03	0.06	-0.04	-0.43	0.668	Not Significant
Teacher Relations	0.13	0.09	0.16	1.53	0.128	Not Significant
Student Interactions	-0.13	0.08	-0.16	-1.55	0.124	Not Significant
Learning, Instruction, and Assessment	0.59	0.1	0.56	5.95	< .001	Significant
Attitude and Culture	0.18	0.1	0.2	1.8	0.075	Not Significant
Community Relations	0.02	0.09	0.03	0.25	0.8	Not Significant

Model Summary:

R = .70 R^2 = .50 Adjusted R^2 = .47 *F value = 18.95* p = < .001 *Interpretation* = Significant

Among dimensions, only Learning, Instruction, and Assessment significantly predicts teacher commitment, emphasizing the importance of effective instructional practices and professional collaboration. Other dimensions, though not statistically significant, contribute contextually as reflected in qualitative responses about supportive climate reducing stress and aiding student management. This evidence underscores fostering a learning-centered, collaborative school climate as critical for promoting strong teacher commitment.

PROBLEM 9: Does school climate significantly mediate the influence of distributed leadership on teacher commitment?

School climate fully mediates the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher commitment. The indirect effect is significant (Estimate = 0.07, z = 4.69, p < .001), while the direct effect becomes non-significant (Estimate = 0.07, z = -0.16, p =

.873) when controlling for school climate.

Test on the Mediating Effect of School Climate in the Influence of Distributed Leadership on Teacher Commitment

Effect	Estimate	z-value	p	Decision	Interpretation
Indirect Effect (a × b)	0.07	4.69	< .001	Reject H_{05}	Significant
Total Effect (c + a ^{x} b)	0.09	-0.16	.873	-------	Not Significant
DL → TC direct (c)	0.07	4.60	< .001	-------	Significant
DL → SC (a)	0.05	10.91	< .001	-------	Significant
SC → TC (b)	0.12	5.22	< .001	-------	Significant

All paths are significant: distributed leadership positively affects school climate (a path), which in turn enhances teacher commitment (b path). The non-significant direct path confirms full mediation, distributed leadership influences commitment entirely through improved school climate.

This aligns with mediation research showing school climate as a key mechanism translating shared leadership into teacher dedication via supportive environments.

PROBLEM 10: What are the teacher's lived experiences on the influence of distributed leadership on teacher commitment as mediated by the school climate?

Qualitative analysis revealed rich, personal insights emphasizing the pivotal role of distributed leadership practices in nurturing teacher commitment through a positive school climate. Themes included leadership support, transformational and ethical leadership, teacher wellness, motivation, inclusion, trust, and shared governance. Teachers highlighted responsiveness, fairness, empathy, collaborative decision-making, mentoring, and clear communication as central to feeling motivated and committed. Positive experiences fostered a sense of belonging, professional growth, and emotional support, aligning closely with a supportive and inclusive school climate that empowers and values teachers.

However, some reported negative experiences of authoritarian and toxic leadership marked by emotional instability and lack of inclusivity, which damaged morale and increased stress.

Overall, the dominant theme was that distributed leadership strongly shapes teacher commitment by building a positive, trustful, and participatory school climate. These findings resonate with existing research indicating that shared leadership and inclusive practices cultivate teacher engagement and professional dedication, while toxic leadership undermines these outcomes.

This qualitative evidence complements the quantitative findings, illustrating that leadership style and school climate profoundly influence teacher motivation and loyalty through lived, everyday school experiences.

PROBLEM 11: What plan can be proposed to enhance the relationship between distributed leadership and school climate, and boost teacher commitment?

The LEAD-CARE Framework addresses gaps in distributed leadership implementation, inconsistent shared practices, authoritarian behaviors, limited recognition, and workload stress, enhancing the leadership-climate-commitment relationship through targeted training.

Program Overview

Aspect	Details
Title	Leadership Enhancement and Development for a Collaborative, Adaptive, Responsive, and Empowering School Climate (LEAD-CARE)
Duration	July 8-10, 2026 (3 days, 8 hours each)
Target	School principals, assistant principals, head teachers, and secondary teachers in Cagayan de Oro Division
Budget	₱40,000 (speakers ₱20,000; venue ₱8,000; meals ₱10,000; materials ₱2,000) for 150 participants

Aspect	Details
Rationale	Distributed leadership's effect on commitment weakens without positive climate; framework builds supportive environments via SBM/LAC alignment .

Daily Objectives and Activities

Day	Objectives	Key Content	Activities	Expected Outputs
1: Awareness	Understand distributed leadership and climate role	Principles, dimensions, gaps	Lectures, SWOT analysis, sharing	SWOT documents, gap awareness
2: Leadership Practices	Apply shared strategies	Decision-making, mentoring, trust-building	Role-playing, simulations, action planning	Role maps, skill practice, draft plans
3: Climate & Commitment	Develop action plans	Assessment tools, SBM/LAC integration	Diagnostics, workshops, presentations	Climate reports, aligned action plans

This structured intervention promotes collaborative leadership and climate improvement, mirroring successful distributed leadership implementations that enhance autonomy, trust, and outcomes through training and shared governance. Implementation fosters sustained teacher commitment via empowered, supportive school environments.

IV Discussions

Teachers in Cagayan de Oro's public secondary schools primarily hold entry-level Teacher I positions (67%), bachelor's degrees (75%), and 1-10 years tenure (75%), representing a developing workforce with institutional stability from experienced minorities. Distributed leadership perceptions were Very Strong overall (M=3.42), strongest in shared responsibility (M=3.55), while school climate rated Very Positive (M=3.49), led by learning/instruction (M=3.72). Teacher commitment remained Very High across dimensions (M=3.69), unaffected by demographics ($p>0.05$).

Distributed leadership significantly predicted commitment ($\beta=0.42$, $R^2=0.18$) through shared responsibility and open communication, and school climate ($\beta=0.72$, $R^2=0.52$) via leadership opportunities and communication. School climate strongly influenced commitment ($\beta=0.70$, $R^2=0.49$), primarily through instructional practices. School climate fully mediated this path (indirect effect $p<.001$; direct effect non-significant post-mediation), confirming leadership effects channel through supportive environments.

Qualitative themes reinforced this: supportive, inclusive leadership fostered belonging and motivation via positive climate, while toxic practices increased stress. The LEAD-CARE framework addresses gaps like inconsistent sharing and workload via targeted training aligned with DepEd SBM/LAC.

V. Conclusion

Distributed leadership significantly influences teacher commitment entirely through school climate mediation, as school heads' shared responsibility, opportunities, and open communication cultivate supportive environments enhancing professional dedication.

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