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Educational Managers' Leadership Competence and its Implications to School Improvement Plan in Coastal and Non-Coastal Areas

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Abstract
Aim: This study assessed the leadership competence of educational managers and examine its relationship to the implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) in coastal and non-coastal elementary schools in Kalamansig Districts I and II, considering school profiles, leadership dimensions, and areas of SIP implementation.
Methodology: This study utilized descriptive and correlational research methods to assess the leadership competencies of educational managers and their influence on the development and implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Conducted in Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat, the study included all 21 public elementary schools in Districts I and II, involving 192 respondents (171 teachers and 21 school heads) through total enumeration sampling. Data were gathered during the third quarter of the 2024–2025 school year using a structured survey aligned with established leadership frameworks. Formal permissions were obtained prior to data collection, which was conducted in person by the researcher. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation, and range) were used to analyze school demographics and leadership competency levels. To determine differences in SIP implementation between coastal and non-coastal schools, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied due to the non-parametric nature of the data.
Results: The correlation coefficient of 0.61 indicates a strong positive relationship between educational managers' leadership competence and the effective implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIP). The statistical significance of this relationship is confirmed by a high t-value (10.36) and a p-value of 0.0000, demonstrating that the association is both robust and unlikely due to chance.
Conclusion: The study confirms a strong and significant relationship between educational managers' leadership competence and the effective implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIP).
Keywords: Educational managers, Leadership competencies, School Improvement Plan, Coastal, Non-coastal

INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership remains a vital force behind school effectiveness and continuous improvement, with school heads playing a pivotal role in fostering inclusive and high-performing learning environments. Core leadership competencies—such as strategic thinking, collaborative practice, performance management, and organizational development—are foundational to the successful implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIPs) (Leithwood & Sun, 2016). SIPs serve as structured frameworks that help schools respond systematically to academic and operational challenges, particularly in under-resourced or complex settings.

In Kalamansig District, which encompasses both coastal and non-coastal schools, the influence of leadership competence on SIP implementation is especially significant due to the unique and varied local contexts. Coastal schools tend to experience logistical and accessibility issues, resource constraints, and transportation challenges (Bortolotti, 2019; Sanchez, et al., 2022), while non-coastal schools may struggle with infrastructure limitations and weaker community involvement (Chavez & Diwa, 2021). These contextual differences demand that school leaders

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exhibit adaptability and localized decision-making, tailoring improvement strategies to specific environmental demands.

Moreover, key school profile elements such as enrollment size, faculty availability, and budget allocations further shape the capacity of school heads to effectively lead SIP initiatives (Harris, 2018). Research has consistently shown that leadership traits—particularly those related to vision-setting, strategic planning, and stakeholder collaboration—are directly linked to improved school outcomes (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2019). However, there is limited empirical work exploring how leadership competencies influence SIP effectiveness across geographically diverse settings. Drawing from the researcher's firsthand observations of performance disparities between coastal and non-coastal schools in Kalamansig, this study sought to examine how school leaders' competencies impact SIP implementation. Focusing on areas such as community engagement, fiscal management, and curriculum planning (Gurr, 2016; Harris, 2018), the findings aim to contribute to leadership development efforts and inform targeted interventions for more equitable and effective educational improvement.

Objectives

This study aimed to describe the relationship between educational leadership competencies and the implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIPs) in elementary schools within Kalamansig Districts I and II.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

1. What is the school profile in terms of:
   1.1. enrollment profile;
   1.2. faculty population; and
   1.3. budget allocation?
2. What is the extent of educational managers' leadership competencies among the school heads of elementary schools in Kalamansig District I and II in terms of:
   2.1. thinking strategically and creatively;
   2.2. building collaborative and inclusive working relationships;
   2.3. managing for performance and coaching for results; and
   2.4. creating and nurturing high-performing organizations?
3. To what extent of implementation of the SIP among elementary schools in Kalamansig District I and II in terms of:
   3.1. community involvement;
   3.2. fiscal management; and,
   3.3. curriculum development?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the educational managers' leadership competence and SIP among the elementary schools in Kalamansig in coastal and non-coastal areas?
5. Is there a significant difference in the extent of SIP implementation between the elementary schools in coastal and non-coastal areas of Kalamansig?

Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following null hypotheses, which were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between the educational managers' leadership competence and SIP among the elementary schools in Kalamansig coastal and non-coastal areas.
2. There is no significant difference in the extent of SIP implementation between the elementary schools in Kalamansig's coastal and non-coastal areas.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed both descriptive and correlational research methods to assess the leadership competencies of educational managers and to examine their influence on the development and effectiveness of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

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Population and Sampling

This study employed total enumeration sampling, including all 171 teachers and 21 school heads from the 21 public elementary schools from Kalamansig District I and II.

Instrument

A structured survey questionnaire was used to assess the leadership competencies of school managers. The instrument was based on the Civil Service Commission's (CSC) leadership competency framework, which outlines the core skills and behaviors expected of public sector leaders. This framework ensured the tool's validity, reliability, and relevance within the context of DepEd, and guided the evaluation of Teachers-in-Charge, Head Teachers, and Principals in Kalamansig Districts I and II.

Data Collection

The study was conducted in the third quarter of the 2024–2025 school year across elementary schools in Kalamansig Districts I and II. Formal approval was obtained from the Dean of the Graduate School of Sultan Kudarat State University – Access Campus. Permission to conduct the research was also secured from the Schools Division Superintendent and participating school principals. The researcher personally administered and immediately retrieved all survey questionnaires to ensure accurate and timely data collection.

Statistical Treatment

Descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation, and range) were used to analyze variables such as enrollment, faculty size, and budget allocation across coastal and non-coastal schools. These measures also assessed leadership competencies and the extent of School Improvement Plan (SIP) implementation. To compare SIP implementation between school types, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed. A p-value below .05 indicated a significant difference. This combination of statistical methods enabled a comprehensive analysis of SIP implementation across geographic contexts.

Ethical Considerations

This study ensures adherence to ethical standards in the following ways: The confidentiality and privacy of school head and teacher respondents were strictly maintained, with no personally identifiable information disclosed in any reports or publications. School profiles and other institutional data were also treated with strict confidentiality to prevent any unauthorized disclosure. Prior to data collection, formal permission were obtained from school heads, and the voluntary participation of all respondents were ensured through informed consent. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any time, and the assurance that their responses would be used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section provides the interpretation of the data collected and results are presented for the study regarding the school profile, educational managers' leadership competence and implementation of school improvement plan in coastal and non-coastal areas.

Profile of Public Elementary Schools

The profile of elementary schools in terms of three key indicators: enrolment, teacher population, and budget allocation.

Table 1. Profile of Public Elementary Schools in Kalamansig, Sultan Kudarat

Variables	School Types	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Enrolment	Coastal Schools	10	413	307	396	68	1,348
	Non-coastal Schools	11	113	107	61	11	220

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Faculty (Teacher) Population)	Coastal Schools	10	11	9	9	2	33
	Non-coastal Schools	11	5	6	1	3	7
Budget allocation	Coastal Schools	10	841,000.00	785,000.00	329,093.37	518,000.00	1,615,000.00
	Non-coastal Schools	11	571,090.91	557,000.00	44,468.99	524,000.00	654,000.00

Coastal schools in the study report significantly higher enrolment figures, with an average of 413 students and a maximum of 1,348, compared to non-coastal schools, which average only 113 students and peak at 220. This substantial difference suggests that coastal schools serve larger and more concentrated student populations, possibly due to better accessibility and broader catchment areas. These demographic variations point to the need for context-aware strategies in school planning and resourcing.

This enrolment disparity is directly linked to faculty size. Coastal schools employ an average of 11 teachers, with some having up to 33, while non-coastal schools average only five teachers, with a maximum of seven. Such a gap indicates potential strain on instructional quality and teacher workload in more populated schools. According to Janer and Deri (2020) and Muńoz and Sanchez (2023), student and teacher numbers are vital in determining resource allocation, making it critical to address these imbalances for effective teaching and learning.

Budget allocation further reflects these disparities. Coastal schools receive a higher average budget of ₱841,000 (reaching up to ₱1.6 million), while non-coastal schools receive significantly less, averaging ₱571,090.91. Although the Department of Education applies a per capita formula for allocating MOOE, Esguerra and Esguerra (2023) argue that this approach may not always reflect schools' actual needs, particularly in geographically diverse areas. Coastal schools may face additional operational costs due to logistical challenges that require more flexible funding approaches.

The high standard deviation in coastal school budgets (₱329,093.37) suggests inconsistencies in how funds are distributed, with some schools potentially underfunded despite large enrolments. Mahumot (2020) stresses that such irregularities in budget use and fiscal management can negatively affect school climate and teacher morale. Furthermore, Beronibla (2024) notes that schools with larger student populations face greater difficulties when their operational funds do not scale accordingly. These insights emphasize the need for equity-focused funding models that adapt to schools' unique demographic and geographic realities.

Educational Managers' Leadership Competence

Table 2. Summary of the Educational Managers' Leadership Competence

	Indicators	*Mean*	*SD*	*Verbal Description*
1.	Thinking Strategically and Creatively	4.37	0.41	Always Observed
2.	Building Collaborative and Inclusive Working Relationships	4.39	0.40	Always Observed
3.	Creating and Nurturing High-Performance Organizations	4.46	0.44	Always Observed
4.	Managing and Coaching for Results and Nurturing High-Performance Organizations	4.38	0.49	Always Observed
	Overall Mean	**4.40**	**0.38**	**Always Observed**

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Table 2 shows an overall mean score of 4.40, indicating strong leadership competence across key domains. The highest score (M = 4.46) reflects strength in creating high-performance organizations, while the lowest (M = 4.37) suggests room for improvement in strategic and creative thinking. Overall, educational managers demonstrate effective leadership, with an opportunity to enhance innovation for greater impact on school improvement.

Implementation of School Improvement Planning

Table 3. Summary on the Level of Implementation of School Improvement Planning

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Community Involvement	4.29	0.50	Outstanding
Fiscal Management	4.56	0.45	Outstanding
Curriculum Planning	4.39	0.49	Outstanding
Overall Mean	**4.41**		**Outstanding**

The overall implementation of school improvement planning is rated as outstanding (M = 4.41). Fiscal management received the highest rating (M = 4.56), reflecting efficient allocation of resources aligned with institutional priorities. This underscores the importance of financial stewardship in sustaining and improving educational services.

Curriculum development also received a high rating (M = 4.39), highlighting schools' commitment to responsive, inclusive, and localized instructional content (Harris, 2019). Community involvement, while still rated outstanding (M = 4.29), received the lowest score, suggesting room for deeper engagement. Expanding community participation can enhance school improvement and academic outcomes (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2019; Wang & Hallinger, 2020).

These findings affirm the success of current initiatives but emphasize the need for more robust community involvement to ensure lasting educational impact.

Table 4. Relationship Between Educational Managers' Leadership Competence and Implementation of School Improvement Planning

Indicators			r	tstat	p-val	Interpretation
Leadership Competence	vs	Implementation of School Improvement Planning	0.61	10.36	.0000	High Positive Correlation

Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The computed correlation coefficient of 0.61 indicates a strong positive relationship between educational managers' leadership competence and the effective implementation of School Improvement Planning (SIP). This suggests that improvements in leadership capability are associated with more effective execution of SIP initiatives. Competent school leaders are better positioned to guide strategic planning, coordinate improvement efforts, and drive successful implementation, reinforcing the critical influence of leadership on school performance.

This relationship is statistically robust, supported by a t-value of 10.36—well above the critical threshold—and a p-value of 0.0000, which confirms the significance of the correlation at the 0.05 level. These results demonstrate that the observed association is unlikely to be due to chance.

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Overall, the findings underscore the essential role of leadership competence in educational development. Strengthening leadership capacity among school administrators is vital to enhancing school planning, promoting collaboration, ensuring effective resource utilization, and achieving sustainable educational improvement. The data provide compelling evidence that leadership development is a key driver of successful and enduring school reform efforts.

Table 5. Difference Between the Implementation of School Improvement Planning of Coastal and Non-coastal Schools

SIP Implementation	School Types	N	Mean	SD	Mann-Whitney	p
Community Involvement	Coastal	122	4.35	0.46	3563	0.056
	Non-coastal	70	4.2	0.55		
Fiscal Management	Coastal	122	4.6	0.46	3498	0.034
	Non-coastal	70	4.49	0.41		
Curriculum Development	Coastal	122	4.41	0.50	3901	0.312
	Non-coastal	70	4.36	0.47		
Overall Mean	Coastal	122	4.45	0.38	3577	0.062
	Non-coastal	70	4.35	0.42		

The table presents School Improvement Planning (SIP) implementation results across coastal and non-coastal schools in three key areas: Community Involvement, Fiscal Management, and Curriculum Development. In the area of Community Involvement, coastal schools had a higher mean score (M = 4.35, SD = 0.46) compared to non-coastal schools (M = 4.20, SD = 0.55). However, the Mann-Whitney U test (U = 3563, p = 0.056) indicated no significant difference, suggesting comparable community engagement across both school types (Schildkamp et al., 2016).

Fiscal Management showed a significant difference, with coastal schools scoring higher (M = 4.60, SD = 0.46) than non-coastal schools (M = 4.49, SD = 0.41). The Mann-Whitney U test (U = 3498, p = 0.034) confirmed this difference, highlighting more effective financial management in coastal schools, which aligns with Yoon's (2016) findings on the role of financial oversight in school improvement.

In Curriculum Development, both school types performed similarly (coastal M = 4.41, SD = 0.50; non-coastal M = 4.36, SD = 0.47), with no significant difference (U = 3901, p = 0.312), indicating consistency across school settings (Mandinach & Gummer, 2016).

Overall, SIP implementation showed minimal variation (coastal M = 4.45, SD = 0.38; non-coastal M = 4.35, SD = 0.42), with a non-significant p-value of 0.062. These findings suggest that while coastal schools excel in fiscal management, both school types implement SIP with similar effectiveness. This supports the importance of leadership, policy alignment, and community involvement (Yoon, 2016; Schildkamp et al., 2016).

Conclusions

The study concludes that there are disparities between coastal and non-coastal schools in terms of enrollment, staffing, and funding. Coastal schools serve significantly larger student populations and have more teaching staff, but this scale also introduces challenges in maintaining instructional quality and managing workloads. Budget allocations are higher in coastal areas, though the variation in funding suggests inconsistencies that could hinder operational efficiency. These differences highlight the need for more context-sensitive policies that account for geographic and demographic factors in resource distribution.

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Educational managers were found to demonstrate strong leadership competence, particularly in creating high-performing organizations (M = 4.46), indicating their effectiveness in fostering collaborative and results-driven environments. While all leadership domains were rated positively, the slightly lower score in strategic and creative thinking (M = 4.37) points to an area for ongoing professional development. These competencies are essential for guiding schools through the effective implementation of improvement initiatives.

The overall implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIP) across both coastal and non-coastal schools was rated as outstanding, particularly in fiscal management (M = 4.56). Despite slight variations—such as stronger fiscal practices in coastal schools—the statistical analysis shows no significant differences in most SIP components. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.05$) between leadership competence and SIP effectiveness underscores the critical role of school leaders in driving success. Investing in leadership development and reinforcing equity in school support systems remain key strategies for sustained improvement.

Recommedations

Based on the results, findings, and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that educational leaders and policymakers take deliberate steps to address the geographic disparities between coastal and non-coastal schools. This includes adopting more flexible and responsive budget allocation models that consider local enrollment patterns, infrastructure needs, and logistical barriers unique to coastal areas. With coastal schools catering to significantly larger student populations, they require proportionally greater financial support and strategic teacher deployment. Ensuring equitable staffing levels in high-enrollment schools can ease instructional burdens and improve student learning. Additionally, building the capacity of school leaders through targeted training in data-driven decision-making will empower them to allocate resources more effectively and optimize both administrative and instructional functions.

Although educational managers exhibit generally strong leadership competence, the relatively lower scores in strategic and creative thinking point to the need for ongoing professional development. Programs that emphasize critical thinking, innovation, and adaptive leadership should be prioritized to prepare school leaders for navigating educational reforms and local challenges. These can take the form of continuous learning workshops, coaching or mentoring systems, and professional learning communities that encourage the sharing of best practices. Institutionalizing these leadership development initiatives will help sustain school improvement efforts, build resilience in leadership, and ensure that school heads are better prepared to drive meaningful change in dynamic environments.

Enhancing school-community collaboration is also a critical component of effective School Improvement Plan (SIP) implementation. Schools should strengthen partnerships with parents, local organizations, and other stakeholders to foster a shared responsibility for educational outcomes. Establishing regular and transparent communication mechanisms can deepen trust and engagement, aligning community resources with curricular and fiscal priorities. Finally, future research should investigate the long-term influence of leadership competence on student outcomes and school success, particularly across diverse and underserved school contexts. Such studies can provide deeper insights into the role of leadership in fostering equitable, inclusive, and sustainable educational development.

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