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Fostering Teacher Motivation and Retention: A Qualitative Study of Principals' Leadership Approaches in Selected Private Schools in Las Piñas City

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Abstract

Aim: Teacher motivation and retention are crucial to the stability and success of educational institutions, particularly in private school settings where high turnover can disrupt instructional continuity. This qualitative study explored how principals' leadership approaches influence teacher motivation and retention in selected private schools in Las Piñas City.

Methodology: Employing a phenomenological research design, the study utilized semi-structured interviews to capture the lived experiences of six private school principals and six teachers. Thematic analysis was conducted, with findings validated through teacher perspectives to enhance credibility and depth.

Results: The study found that principals who employed transformational, democratic, and servant leadership styles significantly enhanced teacher morale, professional engagement, and job satisfaction. Leadership behaviors such as open communication, individualized support, recognition, faith-driven guidance, and collaborative decision-making were central to fostering teacher commitment. Teachers were more likely to remain in schools where they felt valued, heard, and supported both professionally and emotionally. Nonetheless, challenges such as generational differences, limited resources, and social tensions emerged as barriers to sustaining a motivated teaching workforce.

Conclusion: The study concludes that effective, emotionally intelligent leadership is vital to promoting teacher motivation and retention in private school contexts. It recommends a strategic, inclusive leadership framework rooted in integrity, empowerment, and adaptability to address institutional challenges and nurture a resilient teaching force. These insights offer valuable guidance for educational leaders, human resource practitioners, and policymakers striving to enhance teacher retention and institutional stability.

Keywords: Teacher motivation, teacher retention, leadership approaches, transformational leadership, private schools, educational leadership

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are the backbone of any educational system, directly influencing student outcomes and overall school effectiveness. However, rising teacher attrition—particularly within private school contexts—threatens instructional continuity and institutional stability (Toropova et al., 2020). This growing concern is commonly attributed to systemic challenges such as low compensation, excessive workloads, and insufficient administrative support (Nguyen & Springer, 2021; Pangilinan, 2025).

In this complex environment, school leadership emerges as a pivotal force in enhancing teacher motivation and retention. Principals serve not only as instructional leaders but also as cultural architects who shape school climate, collegial relationships, and job satisfaction. Studies highlight that transformational and participative leadership styles cultivate teacher engagement and morale, whereas authoritarian or indifferent approaches lead to stress, burnout, and attrition (Smith & Taylor, 2020; Carvajal et al., 2023; Sanchez et al., 2024).

While global research has long explored the connection between leadership and teacher well-being, qualitative studies specific to private schools in the Philippines remain limited. Most existing investigations focus on public school systems and employ quantitative methods, thereby overlooking the nuanced leadership dynamics in private institutions,



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particularly in urban areas like Las Piñas City. These schools typically operate under varied governance models, which often lead to inconsistent leadership practices (Sideridis & Alghamdi, 2024; Sanchez et al., 2022).

Critical elements such as teacher autonomy, shared governance, and professional development opportunities significantly contribute to job satisfaction and long-term commitment (Ma & Marion, 2025). However, the absence of inclusive and emotionally intelligent leadership in many private schools weakens these factors, resulting in dissatisfaction and increased turnover (Scallan et al., 2023; Sanchez et al., 2024; Carvajal et al., 2024).

Addressing these contextual and systemic gaps, this study explores how leadership practices shape teacher motivation and retention in selected private schools in Las Piñas City. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, it offers context-specific insights and introduces the R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Strategic Leadership Framework—comprising Relational Trust, Emotional Support, Shared Decision-Making, Professional Growth, Equity and Fairness, Communication, and Tangible Support. This framework is grounded in authentic local experiences and leadership practices, aligning with earlier works that emphasize reflective and transformative leadership as key to sustainability in educational settings (Carvajal et al., 2024; Sanchez et al., 2024).

Ultimately, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on educational leadership by offering actionable, context-aware strategies aimed at improving teacher retention and promoting a more resilient and motivated teaching workforce in Philippine private education.

Statement of the Problem

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the influence of school principals' leadership approaches on teacher motivation and retention in selected private schools in Las Piñas City. Recognizing the pivotal role of leadership in shaping organizational culture and staff engagement, this research aimed to explore how varying leadership styles impacted the experiences and professional decisions of teachers.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What were the perceptions of school principals and teachers regarding the leadership approaches practiced within their institutions?
2. How did principals' leadership approaches influence teacher motivation, from the perspectives of both school leaders and teaching staff?
3. In what ways did school principals' leadership styles affect teacher retention within the academic institution, as perceived by both principals and teachers?
4. What strategic leadership framework was developed to enhance teacher motivation and retention, based on insights from school principals and teachers?

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Principal and Its Role

Sari et al. (2024) elaborated on the role of principals in supporting the professional development of their teaching staff. They stressed that principals needed to actively assist their teachers in improving their skills and abilities to remain effective in their roles.

Simon (2023) revealed that principals acknowledged their responsibility to serve as coaches and mentors for their teachers. By adopting this coaching role, principals demonstrated their commitment to improving the performance of their staff.

Principal Leadership Style

According to Aimang (2024), effective management by school principals encompasses several critical stages, including the meticulous planning of teacher performance development programs, formulating well-defined strategies, and aligning schedules with the school's academic calendar.

Culduz (2023) emphasized the importance of principals in fostering better learning outcomes. Their research focused on leadership in terms of providing instructional support, managing the organization, and cultivating a positive climate.

Factors Influencing Teachers' Motivation

Bukhari et al. (2021) found that intrinsic factors such as recognition, achievement, and professional growth significantly influenced teacher motivation. The study showed that teachers who perceived their work as meaningful and who received acknowledgment for their efforts were more likely to remain engaged and perform effectively.



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According to Washington (2021), intrinsic motivators had a stronger impact on private school teachers compared to extrinsic factors like salary, as these educators often prioritized personal fulfillment over financial gain.

Factors Influencing Teachers' Retention

The education sector continued to grapple with the ongoing issue of teacher turnover and attrition. A significant number of educators left the profession due to burnout, dissatisfaction, and unfavorable working conditions, which was a cause for concern (Betkowski, 2024).

Hadijah (2024) stated that leadership in educational settings was crucial in fostering teacher development, enhancing motivation, and ensuring job satisfaction. Leaders played a pivotal role in creating a positive environment, supporting professional growth, and inspiring collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement.

Theoretical Framework



Figure 1. Transformational Leadership Theory

This study was grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory, originally introduced by Burns (1978) and further elaborated by Bass (1985). The theory highlights leaders' capacity to inspire, motivate, and develop individuals toward collective objectives. In educational contexts, transformational leadership significantly shapes school culture, fosters teacher development, and improves staff retention. Bass & Riggio (2014/2022) identified four core components: *idealized influence*, *inspirational motivation*, *intellectual stimulation*, and *individualized consideration*. These components cultivate a supportive environment where educators feel valued, empowered, and committed. Riggio (2021) revisited and refined these constructs, emphasizing their relevance across varied organizational settings. Recent empirical research, such as Martinez and Reyes (2021), confirms that transformational leadership enhances teacher motivation by fostering a shared sense of purpose and belonging.

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of school principals and teachers regarding leadership approaches and their impact on motivation and retention. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow for rich, in-depth data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Population and Sampling

Participants were selected from private basic education institutions in Las Piñas City. Using purposive sampling, six principals with at least two years of leadership experience and six teachers who had worked under them for at least one academic year were chosen. Data saturation was reached after interviewing all twelve participants.

Instruments

Data were collected through in-depth and confirmatory interviews, guided by an aide-memoire. The instruments were validated by field experts to ensure clarity and alignment with the study's goals (Baligod & Carillo, 2023).



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Data Collection

Interviews were conducted on-site or virtually, depending on participant preference. All sessions were audio-recorded with consent and supported by notes and reflective field journals to provide additional context.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's method, which involved transcription, extraction of key statements, and identification of themes. Findings were verified through member checking and expert review.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the quality, credibility, and ethical integrity of the study, the researcher strictly followed established research protocols. Prior to data collection, formal approval was obtained from school authorities and participating individuals. Informed consent letters were distributed, allowing participants to voluntarily agree to take part in the study.

Upon receiving approval, interviews were scheduled with the selected participants. All interviews were digitally recorded with explicit permission, in compliance with the *Data Privacy Act of 2012*.

To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout transcription, analysis, and reporting. Participant identities and responses were known only to the researcher and were kept strictly confidential. All collected data were handled with care and securely discarded after their intended use in the study.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presented the findings of the study, organized into emergent themes that reflected both principal and teacher perceptions of leadership approaches and their impact on teacher motivation and retention. The thematic presentation followed the study's research objectives for clarity and alignment.

1. Perceptions of leadership styles from both principals and teachers Themes

Values-Based and Service-Oriented Leadership
Emotionally Grounded and Empathic Leadership
Participative and Collaborative Leadership

1.1 Values-Based and Service-Oriented Leadership

This theme highlighted how both principals and teachers viewed leadership as grounded in core values and service. Such an approach fostered a school environment built on trust, compassion, and mutual respect. The following are samples of transcription:

Principal Perspective:

Principal 1: "Leadership is service. Being a school head doesn't mean commanding—it means helping."

Principal 4: "Our leadership approach is anchored in Christian values and character development."

Principal 5: "I lead with a sense of purpose rooted in service and personal integrity."

Principal 2: "Integrity is number one. I lead by doing what's right even when no one is watching."

Principal 6: "We treat each other like family. We always put God at the center of our school."

Teachers Perspective

Teacher 1: "Our principal's values shape the way she leads. She treats us with fairness and respect."

Teacher 2: "You can feel her leadership comes from a deep moral compass—it's not just about policies."

Teacher 3: "He leads by example. I follow his lead because he walks his talk."

Teacher 4: "Her integrity inspires us to do better, not because we have to, but because we want to."

Teacher 5: "She cares about what's right, not just what's easy. That's why we trust her."

Values-based and service-oriented leadership established a strong foundation for ethical and inclusive school environments. By modeling integrity, compassion, and humility, school leaders set a tone that encouraged trust, collaboration, and mutual respect among staff. This leadership approach not only strengthened professional relationships but also nurtured a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Teachers were more likely to feel motivated, valued, and committed when they worked under leaders who prioritized service over authority and upheld



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core values in decision-making and daily interactions. Patel & Lee (2023) emphasized that such leadership enhanced overall school culture and teacher well-being. Martinez & Nguyen (2023) highlighted their role in promoting cohesion and long-term professional engagement.

1.2 Emotionally Grounded and Empathic Leadership

This theme captured how both principals and teachers valued leadership that was emotionally attuned and grounded in empathy. Such leadership went beyond tasks—it nurtured emotional well-being and fostered deeper connections within the school community. The following are samples of transcription:

Principals' Perspective

Principal 2: "My leadership is puso to puso—heart to heart. I care deeply about their well-being."

Principal 3: "Understanding their emotional and financial needs is part of my role as a leader."

Principal 6: "It's not just rules—it's relationships. I always check how they're really doing."

Principal 1: "I stay close to my team—listen to them, be with them, guide them emotionally."

Principal 5: "We talk about feelings and struggles. It's important they know they're not alone."

Teachers' Perspective

Teacher 1: "When I was going through a tough time, she was there—not just as a boss but as a person."

Teacher 3: "He knows how to sense when something's wrong and gives us space to breathe."

Teacher 2: "It's not just about deadlines. She genuinely cares if we're okay mentally and emotionally."

Teacher 5: "Our principal makes us feel heard, even when we're struggling."

Teacher 4: "The emotional support I get here keeps me going—even when the job gets heavy."

Leadership rooted in empathy created emotionally safe spaces where teachers felt heard, valued, and supported. When principals demonstrated emotional intelligence, genuine concern, and presence, it strengthened trust and built meaningful relationships. This approach promoted psychological safety, improved staff morale, and encouraged open communication within the school. Shepherd-Jones and Salisbury-Glennon (2018) emphasized that emotionally intelligent leadership boosted staff well-being and relational trust. Sari et al. (2024) further highlighted that empathy-driven leadership strengthened connection and enhanced overall teacher morale.

1.3 Participative and Collaborative Leadership

This theme reflected how leadership that valued collaboration and shared decision-making empowered teachers and strengthened school unity. Both principals and teachers emphasized the importance of inclusive and participative practices in fostering a productive work culture. The following are samples of transcription:

Principals' Perspective

Principal 3: "I make space for their ideas—we make decisions as a team."

Principal 1: "I empower them by involving them in planning and giving them voice in major choices."

Principal 5: "I always explain my decisions and ask for their input—it builds ownership."

Principal 2: "I consult them before big changes. It's not just my school—it's ours."

Principal 6: "We pray and reflect together. I believe leadership should be shared."

Teachers' Perspective

Teacher 3: "Our opinions matter. I feel like I'm part of something, not just following orders."

Teacher 1: "We collaborate. I've never felt left out of the process."

Teacher 4: "Even in small things, we're asked what we think. That means a lot."

Teacher 5: "It feels empowering to be asked, 'What do you think?'"

Teacher 2: "Leadership here means working together—it's not top-down."

A collaborative leadership style fostered mutual respect, accountability, and professional engagement. When teachers were included in decision-making, they experienced a greater sense of ownership and motivation. This approach not only improved team dynamics but also encouraged innovation and reduced workplace conflict. Sarwar et al. (2022) found that participative leadership increased motivation and strengthened team relationships. Cuduz (2023) supported this finding, noting that shared decision-making enhanced commitment and reduced resistance to change.



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2. Leadership Influence on Teacher Motivation

Themes

Growth-Oriented and Empowering Leadership
Emotional Encouragement and Psychological Support
Recognition and Appreciation

2.1 Growth-Oriented and Empowering Leadership

This theme explored how leadership that focused on professional growth and empowerment inspired teachers to reach their full potential. Both principals and teachers emphasized the impact of trust, encouragement, and developmental opportunities on teacher motivation. The following are samples of transcription:

Principals' Perspective

Principal 1: "I encourage them to continue studies and lead projects—they're capable of so much more."

Principal 2: "Empowerment starts when you believe in them first—then they start believing in themselves."

Principal 3: "I support their promotions and give space for them to lead small teams."

Principal 5: "Training is not an expense—it's an investment in our teachers' future."

Principal 6: "When they feel trusted, they take initiative. That's where real growth begins."

Teachers' Perspective

Teacher 1: "Dahil sa principal namin, nag-enroll ako sa master's. She believes in us."

Teacher 2: "Binigyan ako ng chance maging coordinator. Yun ang nag-boost ng confidence ko."

Teacher 3: "Pinayagan akong magturo ng bagong subject. It challenged and empowered me."

Teacher 4: "We're encouraged to present in seminars. Nakaka-inspire yung support."

Teacher 5: "The principal constantly pushes us to grow—not to pressure, but to believe we can."

Empowering leadership motivated teachers by providing them with trust, responsibility, and support to grow professionally. When principals believed in their staff's abilities and invested in their development, teachers became more confident, proactive, and committed to continuous improvement. UNESCO (2021) emphasized that leadership promoting professional growth increased teacher engagement and performance. Hardiyana (2024) further noted that empowerment through leadership built teacher confidence and supported long-term career development.

2.2 Emotional Encouragement and Psychological Support

This theme emphasized the critical role of emotionally supportive leadership in maintaining teacher well-being. Both principals and teachers highlighted the value of empathy, presence, and encouragement in navigating personal and professional challenges. The following were samples of the transcription:

Principals' Perspective

Principal 3: "They need to feel seen, heard, and valued—not just managed."

Principal 4: "Simple presence and kind words make them feel supported, especially during tough times."

Principal 1: "I check in with them not just about work, but how they're feeling."

Principal 2: "Hindi lang sila empleyado. They're people, and they deserve emotional care."

Principal 6: "I make sure no one suffers in silence. Emotional support is part of leadership."

Teachers' Perspective

Teacher 3: "Kahit may family issue ako, hindi ako pinabayaan ng school head namin."

Teacher 4: "Ang laki ng tulong ng leadership support lalo na sa mental health namin."

Teacher 5: "Minsan kahit hindi niya masolusyunan, the fact na she listens, ang laking bagay."

Teacher 2: "Yung pa-check in niya sa amin, kahit short lang, makes a big difference."

Teacher 6: "I felt emotionally burned out, but my principal helped me recover. She really cared."

When school leaders provided emotional encouragement and psychological support, it boosted teacher morale and helped reduce stress and burnout. Feeling emotionally supported created a positive environment where teachers were more resilient, motivated, and consistent in their performance. Washington (2021) highlighted that emotionally responsive leadership improved teacher well-being and job satisfaction..



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2.3 Recognition and Appreciation

This theme illustrated how simple acts of acknowledgment and appreciation from school leaders significantly impacted teacher motivation and morale. Both principals and teachers emphasized the value of being seen and celebrated. Sample transcriptions were as follows:

Principals' Perspective

Principal 5: "Acknowledge their efforts—small or big. They thrive when you appreciate them."

Principal 6: "We recognize their wins during meetings. Recognition is a powerful motivator."

Principal 1: "I write handwritten notes for teachers on their birthdays or achievements."

Principal 3: "Simple thank-you cards after a hard week can lift morale."

Principal 2: "Even just mentioning their names during assemblies brings smiles."

Teachers' Perspective

Teacher 5: "Yung 'thank you' niya after class observations, parang boost ng energy ko."

Teacher 6: "Na-recognize ako nung Teacher's Day. It made me feel proud and valued."

Teacher 1: "Pinost ang work ko sa faculty board. Small thing, pero I felt appreciated."

Teacher 3: "Pag sinasabi niya na 'good job,' nakakawala ng pagod."

Teacher 2: "Even a simple text saying 'thank you' after a long event is enough for me."

Recognition served as a strong driver of intrinsic motivation. When school leaders consistently acknowledged teachers' efforts and achievements, it fostered a sense of pride, belonging, and professional commitment. Even small gestures of appreciation led to greater engagement and sustained performance. Bukhari et al. (2021) highlighted that meaningful recognition enhanced teacher morale and was a cost-effective way to sustain motivation and productivity.

3. Leadership Impact on Teacher Retention

Themes

Strong School-Family Culture
Tangible Support and Flexibility
Shared Values and Vision

3.1 Strong School-Family Culture

This theme underscored how a family-like school culture fostered deep connections among staff, contributing to teacher retention. Both principals and teachers highlighted the importance of shared celebrations, emotional bonds, and a sense of belonging. Sample transcriptions were as follows:

Principals' Perspective

Principal 1: "We celebrate as a family here. From birthdays to milestones—everyone's included."

Principal 2: "When teachers feel like family, they stay—not for salary but for connection."

Principal 3: "We build bonds beyond work—we pray together, laugh together. That's what keeps people here."

Principal 4: "We treat each other like siblings. That closeness builds loyalty."

Principal 6: "The heart of retention is relationship. When they feel they belong, they stay."

Teachers' Perspective

Teacher 1: "Ayaw ko umalis kasi pamilya ko na ang mga tao dito."

Teacher 2: "Hindi lang staff relationship—totoong samahan kaya hindi mo iiwan."

Teacher 3: "Masaya sa school kasi parang pamilya kami. Yun yung nagpapastay saakin."

Teacher 4: "May bonding kahit di work-related. Nakaka-attach sa environment."

Teacher 5: "Yung principal namin parang nanay. Iba 'yung care dito."

A school culture rooted in strong interpersonal relationships and a sense of community played a crucial role in teacher retention. When educators felt emotionally safe, respected, and genuinely connected to their colleagues and leaders, their commitment to the school deepened. This sense of belonging fostered trust, emotional support, and shared identity, which reduced turnover and strengthened long-term engagement. Spaulding (2024) emphasized that schools promoting relational belonging and a supportive environment were more successful in keeping teachers motivated and committed.



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3.2 Tangible Support and Flexibility

This theme highlighted the importance of providing concrete support and flexibility to address teachers' real-life needs. Both principals and teachers emphasized that practical assistance and understanding of personal circumstances strengthened commitment to the school. Sample transcriptions were as follows:

Principals' Perspective

Principal 3: "We give financial aid and flexible schedules when needed. They know we care."

Principal 4: "We respond when they need help—emergency loans, wellness leaves, etc."

Principal 1: "Kapag may problema sila, I make room—emotionally and logistically."

Principal 2: "Pag may need sila sa pamilya, we adjust their time or load."

Principal 5: "Support is not just moral—it's material. We help them concretely."

Teachers' Perspective

Teacher 3: "Nabigyan kami ng housing aid... malaking bagay yun para sa amin."

Teacher 4: "Hindi ako umalis kasi naiintindihan nila 'yung sitwasyon ko at binigyan ako ng time off."

Teacher 1: "Nagka-emergency ako, pero sinuportahan pa rin ako ng school."

Teacher 2: "Flexible sila sa schedule kapag may family concerns. Hindi lahat ng school ganon."

Teacher 6: "Malaking bagay yung may school na naiintindihan ka at tumutulong talaga."

When school leaders provided tangible support, such as financial assistance, leave benefits, or schedule adjustments, they helped teachers manage personal and professional responsibilities more effectively. This kind of responsiveness not only eased burdens but also reinforced teachers' sense of being valued and understood, which contributed to long-term retention. Walton et al. (2023) confirmed that supportive and flexible school policies significantly reduced teacher attrition, particularly in private school settings.

3.3 Shared Values and Vision

This theme examined how alignment between a teacher's values and the school's mission promoted deeper loyalty and long-term commitment. Both principals and teachers emphasized that a shared vision gave their work meaning and purpose. Sample transcriptions were as follows:

Principals' Perspective

Principal 5: "We align their personal values with the school mission. That's where long-term commitment grows."

Principal 6: "When their purpose aligns with ours, retention becomes natural."

Principal 1: "Our teachers stay because they believe in what we believe."

Principal 3: "Purpose is a powerful magnet. If they feel it, they won't leave."

Principal 4: "It's not just rules—it's a mission. They commit to that mission."

Teachers' Perspective

Teacher 5: "Nandito ako kasi aligned ang vision ng school sa paniniwala ko bilang guro."

Teacher 6: "May saysay ang trabaho dito. Kaya ako nananatili."

Teacher 3: "The mission here aligns with my advocacy, so I feel fulfilled."

Teacher 1: "Nakikita ko yung values ng school sa daily work namin. Kaya worth staying."

Teacher 2: "Hindi lang trabaho, mission siya. At gusto ko yung mission na 'to."

Teachers were more likely to stay in schools where they felt their personal beliefs and professional goals aligned with the institution's mission. This sense of shared purpose strengthened their commitment, deepened their engagement, and built a strong sense of belonging and fulfillment in their roles. Gonzales et al. (2023) found that mission alignment increased teacher satisfaction and strengthened retention. Villanueva & Soriano (2025) further emphasized that ethical alignment between teacher and school fostered long-term professional commitment.



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4. Development of a motivation- and retention-centered leadership framework

Based on the comparative thematic findings and emerging gaps between strategic leadership intentions and teachers' lived experiences, the following strategic leadership framework was developed:

R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Strategic Leadership Framework: Enhancing Teacher Motivation and Retention Based on Principals' and Teachers' Perspectives

Rationale

Teacher retention started with leadership that was felt, not just declared. While principals and teachers agreed on the importance of relational and emotionally intelligent leadership, gaps emerged in fairness, daily support, and communication.

The **R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Strategic Leadership Framework** bridged this divide with seven actionable pillars: **Relational Trust, Emotional Support, Shared Decision-Making, Professional Growth, Equity and Fairness, Communication, and Tangible Support**. Grounded in research and practice, this framework turned leadership values into consistent action—building school cultures where teachers felt seen, supported, and inspired to stay.

Table 1

Implementation Matrix: R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Strategic Leadership Framework

Component	Strategy/Action	Responsible Person/Group	Timeline	Expected Outcome	Monitoring & Evaluation
R – Relational Trust	Conduct regular one-on-one check-ins and team-building activities	Principal, HR Officer	Quarterly	Improved teacher morale and trust	Feedback surveys, attendance logs
E – Emotional Support	Implement school-based wellness programs, counseling access, and peer support groups	Guidance Counselor, Admin Team	Bi-monthly	Teachers feel emotionally supported and valued	Wellness participation rates, qualitative feedback
S – Shared Decision-Making	Institutionalize teacher participation in policy, planning, and evaluation committees	Principal, Academic Council	Start of Academic Year	Enhanced sense of ownership and empowerment	Meeting minutes, teacher participation rates
P – Professional Growth	Create a structured professional development plan with mentoring and training opportunities	Training Coordinator, Principal	Ongoing (monthly sessions)	Improved teacher competence and motivation	PD attendance records, pre/post evaluations
E – Equity and Fairness	Audit workload distribution, ensure transparency in promotion and recognition systems	Admin and HR Committee	Every Semester	Increased teacher satisfaction and reduced perception of bias	Workload reports, teacher satisfaction surveys
C – Communication	Strengthen feedback loops via suggestion boxes, anonymous surveys, and open forums	School Communication Officer	Monthly	Clearer leadership-teacher communication and reduced misunderstandings	Survey results, issue-tracking logs
T – Tangible Support	Offer flexible scheduling, financial assistance (as	Principal, Finance Office	As needed, with a bi-	Teachers feel institutionally supported in	Budget reports,



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	feasible), and crisis support policies		annual review	personal and professional crises	emergency support logs
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Table 1 presented the Implementation Matrix for the R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Strategic Leadership Framework—a practical guide designed to help school leaders boost teacher motivation and retention, reflecting both principals’ and teachers’ views. It covered seven leadership pillars: Relational Trust, Emotional Support, Shared Decision-Making, Professional Growth, Equity and Fairness, Communication, and Tangible Support—each with actionable strategies, assigned roles, timelines, expected outcomes, and monitoring tools. Examples included team-building to build trust, wellness programs for emotional support, teacher involvement in decision-making, mentoring for growth, fair workload audits, open feedback channels, and flexible support measures. This matrix offered a structured, empathetic leadership model tailored to teachers’ real needs.

Conclusions

The study highlighted the vital role of emotionally intelligent and inclusive leadership in teacher retention, with trust, empathy, and open communication identified as key by both principals and teachers. While principals focused on strategic goals, teachers emphasized daily support and well-being, revealing a need for better alignment. Effective leadership combined vision with fairness, clarity, and emotional support. In private schools, authentic and consistent leadership boosted motivation and retention. Strategic frameworks like R.E.S.P.E.C.T. (Relational Trust, Emotional Support, Shared Decision-Making, Professional Growth, Equity and Fairness, Communication, and Tangible Support) helped connect leadership ideals with teachers’ real needs. Intentional, relational, and accountable leadership fostered a stable and empowered teaching workforce.

Recommendations

To enhance leadership and improve teacher motivation and retention, school leaders were encouraged to undergo training in emotional intelligence and relational leadership. Feedback systems, such as consultations and anonymous surveys, ensured alignment with teacher needs. Principals balanced vision with fairness by clearly communicating policies on delegation, workload, recognition, and professional development. Transparent practices fostered trust and job satisfaction. Private schools integrated moral values through empathy-based mentoring, crisis support, and shared leadership, which deepened teacher commitment. The R.E.S.P.E.C.T.(Relational Trust, Emotional Support, Shared Decision-Making, Professional Growth, Equity and Fairness, Communication, and Tangible Support) framework was institutionalized, with its principles embedded in leadership training, school planning, and evaluation processes, supported by ongoing monitoring and accountability to ensure sustained impact.

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