Classroom Leadership Techniques and Their Influence on Engagement of Multi-Grade Pupils

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Abstract
Aim: This study investigated classroom leadership techniques used by multigrade teachers and their influence on pupils' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in selected multigrade elementary schools in the Division of Eastern Samar.
Methodology: A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed. Multigrade teachers and their pupils were surveyed using an adapted questionnaire and an observation checklist (instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing; Cronbach's α > 0.70). Leadership was measured across five domains—Instructional; Organizational and Managerial; Motivational and Supportive; Participative and Adaptive; and Relational and Collaborative. Descriptive statistics (means) and Pearson product-moment correlation were used to analyze the data.
Results: Teachers reported consistently high use of leadership techniques across all domains, with Relational and Collaborative Leadership highest (M = 4.62) and Instructional Leadership lowest (M = 4.45). Pupils' engagement was high across emotional (M = 4.19), behavioral (M = 3.93), and cognitive (M = 3.91) dimensions. A strong, statistically significant positive correlation was found between overall classroom leadership techniques and pupil engagement (r = 0.816, p < .001).
Conclusion: Diverse and effective classroom leadership strategies—particularly relational and collaborative practices—are strongly associated with higher pupil engagement in multigrade classrooms. The study recommends targeted professional development, institutional support, and collaborative programs to strengthen instructional leadership and sustain learner engagement.
Keywords: multigrade teaching; classroom leadership; pupil engagement; collaborative learning; professional development

INTRODUCTION

Multigrade teaching is an instructional arrangement in which a single teacher simultaneously handles two or more grade levels within one classroom (Little, 2006). This approach is widely implemented globally, particularly in geographically isolated, low-enrollment, and rural communities where establishing mono-grade classes is not feasible. International research highlights that multigrade education remains a practical strategy for increasing school participation, addressing teacher shortages, and improving educational access in underserved areas (Fargas-Malet & Bagley, 2022; Kobayashi, 2022). Countries across Asia, Latin America, and Africa continue to adopt multigrade programs as part of broader efforts to ensure equity and inclusion in basic education.

In the Philippines, multigrade teaching is institutionalized through Department of Education (DepEd) policies such as DepEd Order No. 96, s. 1997, which outlines the organization and operational guidelines for multigrade classes. This policy aims to expand access to quality education in remote areas where learner populations cannot sustain mono-grade structures. Support for multigrade education was further strengthened through DepEd Order No. 81, s. 2009, which introduced capacity-building initiatives, special hardship allowances, and instructional resource packages for teachers assigned in challenging contexts. Multigrade schools face unique instructional and managerial demands due to learners' varied ages, developmental stages, and academic needs.

As a result, teachers must adopt innovative leadership strategies and flexible instructional practices to create positive learning environments conducive to high levels of engagement. Leadership practices such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, differentiated instruction, and structured classroom management have been shown to enhance

student motivation, participation, and achievement (Kaur, 2021; Kim & Kim, 2020). Ferlazzo's (2011) view that "engagement is…helping students find their spark and make their own fire" (p. 28) underscores the role of teachers as leaders who inspire autonomy, collaboration, and purposeful learning.

Despite increasing recognition of leadership's importance in learning environments, empirical studies examining how classroom leadership techniques influence student engagement in multigrade contexts—particularly at the elementary level—remain limited. Existing research tends to focus on multigrade instructional strategies, classroom management, or general challenges, but rarely explores the leadership–engagement relationship, especially in rural Philippine settings. Moreover, few studies investigate engagement in its multidimensional form: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. This study addresses these gaps by examining the relationship between classroom leadership techniques and pupil engagement in multigrade schools in the Division of Eastern Samar. By identifying which leadership practices most strongly influence engagement, the findings aim to support improved instructional decision-making, inform localized policy interventions, and contribute to the broader discourse on effective leadership in multigrade learning environments.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Global literature consistently affirms that multigrade education is a strategic response to educational challenges in sparsely populated and geographically isolated communities. Countries implement multigrade programs to promote equitable access, address teacher shortages, and maximize limited school resources (Fargas-Malet & Bagley, 2022; Kobayashi, 2022). Philippine studies support this perspective, emphasizing how multigrade instruction enhances learner participation, reduces dropout rates, and improves academic achievement in rural schools (Naparan & Alinsug, 2021; Saraspe & Abocejo, 2020).

The multigrade learning environment requires teachers to manage multiple grade levels, diverse learner needs, and varying developmental stages simultaneously. Effective multigrade instruction therefore, relies on differentiated teaching strategies, flexible grouping, and a well-organized classroom environment (Erden, 2020; Ruiz, 2020). The Learning Environment, Learning Process, and Learning Outcome (LEPO) framework has been widely used to guide instructional planning and assessment in multigrade settings (Msimanga, 2020).

Collaborative learning approaches—including peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and mixed-ability grouping—have been shown to strengthen student engagement, improve comprehension, and support social development (Kaur, 2021; Kim & Kim, 2020). Classroom management likewise plays a critical role: establishing clear expectations, consistent routines, and positive reinforcement strategies reduces disruptive behavior and promotes more meaningful engagement (Aquino & Rivera, 2021; Garcia & Dela Cruz, 2020). Strong teacher–student relationships further enhance classroom behavior, motivation, and active participation (Lanuza, 2022).

Leadership is increasingly recognized as a central factor influencing student engagement. Contemporary leadership literature conceptualizes leadership as a relational process that shapes classroom culture and affects students' motivation, expectations, and level of participation (Northouse, 2022). Studies show that transformational leadership, in particular, enhances student motivation, autonomy, and academic performance more effectively than transactional or laissez-faire leadership styles (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020; Murphy, 2020; Purwanto, 2022). Research also identifies student expectations as a mediating variable between teacher leadership and engagement (Ibrahim & El Zaatari, 2020). More recent findings further indicate that structured opportunities for student leadership can strengthen engagement and foster collaborative learning (Joshi et al., 2024).

Although existing literature establishes the importance of classroom management, instructional strategies, and teacher leadership in multigrade settings, several gaps remain. Few studies examine leadership techniques specifically within Philippine multigrade classrooms, despite the country's unique regional and contextual factors. Moreover, the relationship between classroom leadership and the three dimensions of engagement—behavioral, emotional, and cognitive—remains underexplored, particularly at the elementary level. Research is also limited in remote and rural divisions such as Eastern Samar, where multigrade teaching is widespread and where context-responsive leadership strategies are most urgently needed. To address these gaps, this study investigates how classroom leadership techniques influence multidimensional student engagement in rural Philippine multigrade schools.

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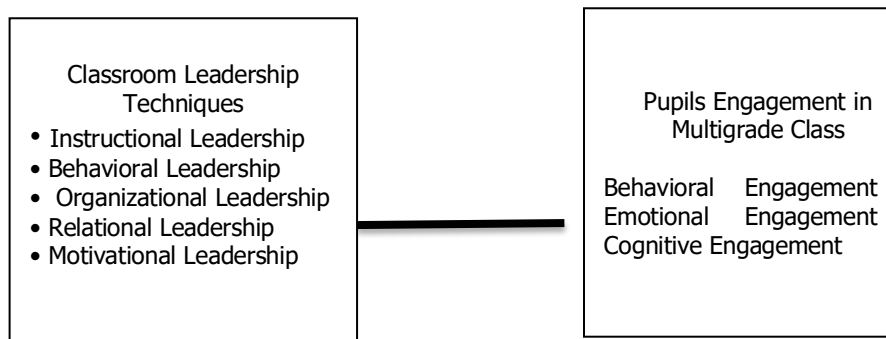with us!*

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three major theories that collectively explain teacher leadership, classroom interaction, and learner engagement in multigrade settings. First, Bandura's Social Learning Theory emphasizes that learning occurs through modeling, observation, and social interaction. In multigrade classrooms, pupils often acquire behaviors, routines, and task approaches by observing both the teacher and older peers, making the theory particularly relevant in understanding how leadership behaviors influence pupils' engagement and participation. Second, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the concept of scaffolding highlight the importance of guided interaction and peer support in the learning process. Because multigrade environments naturally facilitate peer tutoring and mixed-ability grouping, this theory provides a strong foundation for explaining how supportive leadership techniques strengthen learner engagement. Third, Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory posits that effective leaders adapt their leadership style based on learners' developmental readiness and competence. This aligns closely with multigrade teaching, where pupils differ widely in age, maturity, and academic ability, requiring teachers to adjust their leadership approaches to sustain meaningful engagement.

These theories collectively support the alignment of variables examined in the study. Classroom leadership techniques, the independent variable, are grounded in the principles of Situational Leadership and Social Learning, both of which emphasize adaptive behaviors and modeling. Student engagement, the dependent variable—which includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions—is explained through the interaction of Social Learning and Sociocultural theories that highlight observation, social interaction, and scaffolded support. Overall, the interplay between adaptive leadership and scaffolded learning environments provides a comprehensive theoretical explanation of how teacher leadership practices foster engaged and participatory multigrade classrooms.

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored on the premise that **Classroom Leadership Techniques** influence the **Student Engagement** of pupils in multigrade classes. The independent variable includes five domains of leadership—**Instructional, Behavioral, Organizational, Relational, and Motivational techniques**—which represent the teacher's strategies for managing and guiding multigrade learning environments. These techniques are hypothesized to positively affect the three dimensions of student engagement: **behavioral engagement** (participation and on-task behavior), **emotional engagement** (interest, motivation, sense of belonging), and **cognitive engagement** (effort in learning and use of strategies).

The framework illustrates how specific leadership practices contribute to higher levels of pupil engagement in multigrade settings.

Classroom Leadership Techniques
- Instructional Leadership
- Behavioral Leadership
- Organizational Leadership
- Relational Leadership
- Motivational Leadership

Pupils Engagement in Multigrade Class

Behavioral Engagement
Emotional Engagement
Cognitive Engagement

Statement of the Problem

Effective classroom leadership is essential in shaping learner behavior, sustaining engagement, and ensuring productive learning environments—an even more critical concern in multigrade settings where teachers simultaneously manage diverse grade levels, abilities, and learning needs. Although multigrade schools are widespread in geographically isolated and resource-limited Philippine communities, particularly in the Division of Eastern Samar, there remains limited empirical research on how teachers' leadership techniques influence pupils' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Existing studies focus primarily on instructional challenges or multigrade strategies, leaving a

gap in understanding the specific leadership practices that sustain learner engagement in these unique contexts. Addressing this gap is necessary to inform professional development, strengthen instructional leadership, and enhance educational outcomes in underserved multigrade classrooms. Thus, this study examines the classroom leadership techniques employed by multigrade teachers and investigates their influence on pupil engagement during the School Year 2024–2025.

Research Objectives

General Objective:
To investigate the influence of classroom leadership techniques on the engagement of multigrade pupils in the Division of Eastern Samar.

Specific Objectives:
1. To identify the classroom leadership techniques employed by multigrade teachers.
2. To determine the level of classroom engagement exhibited by multigrade pupils.
3. To examine the relationship between classroom leadership techniques and the level of engagement among multigrade pupils.
4. To formulate recommendations for enhancing classroom leadership practices and improving pupil engagement based on the study's findings.

Research Questions
1. What classroom leadership techniques are employed by multigrade teachers?
2. What is the level of classroom engagement exhibited by multigrade pupils?
3. Is there a significant relationship between classroom leadership techniques and the level of engagement among multigrade pupils?
4. What recommendations may be formulated to enhance classroom leadership and pupil engagement in multigrade settings?

Hypotheses
H_0: There is no significant relationship between classroom leadership techniques and the level of engagement among multigrade pupils.
H_a: There is a significant relationship between classroom leadership techniques and the level of engagement among multigrade pupils.

METHODS

Research Design
This study employed a **descriptive–correlational research design** to determine the relationship between classroom leadership techniques and pupil engagement in multigrade classrooms. A descriptive–correlational design is appropriate when the objective is to describe existing conditions and examine the statistical association between variables without manipulating them (Creswell, 2014).

The independent variable of the study was **Classroom Leadership Techniques** (CLT), while the dependent variable was **Pupil Engagement**, measured across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. This design was selected because it allows the researcher to quantify leadership practices, measure engagement levels, and determine their degree of association in authentic multigrade teaching environments.

Population and Sampling
The population of the study comprised all multigrade teachers in the selected districts of the Schools Division of Eastern Samar during School Year 2024–2025. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only teachers with actual multigrade teaching assignments were included in the sample.

The study involved 150 teachers and 50 observed multigrade classrooms. This sampling approach ensured that the data were obtained from educators with relevant and authentic multigrade teaching experiences, thereby enhancing the contextual validity and reliability of the study's findings.

Instrument

This study employed a modified research instrument composed of a structured survey questionnaire and an observation checklist to examine the classroom leadership techniques of multigrade teachers and their influence on pupil engagement in the School Division of Eastern Samar. The instrument was designed to collect quantitative data on classroom leadership practices and to assess the levels of pupil engagement within multigrade classrooms.

The survey questionnaire gathered self-reported information from teachers regarding their demographic and professional profiles, such as years of teaching experience and training in multigrade instruction. It also elicited data on the specific leadership techniques they employed and their perceptions of pupil engagement across behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions.

To ensure the instrument's validity and reliability, it was carefully adapted to fit the multigrade classroom context and subjected to expert validation. Educational experts reviewed the instrument to evaluate its clarity, comprehensiveness, and relevance to the study's objectives. A pilot test was subsequently conducted, and the data were analyzed using Cronbach's alpha to determine internal consistency. The resulting coefficient exceeded 0.70, indicating that the questionnaire was highly reliable and appropriate for use in the study.

Data Collection

To address the research objectives, data were collected using a modified survey questionnaire and an observation checklist adapted from a validated instrument to suit the multigrade classroom context. The study was conducted in selected multigrade elementary schools within the Division of Eastern Samar during the designated data-gathering period of the research.

Prior to data collection, permission was secured from the original author of the instrument, the Division Office of Eastern Samar, and the school heads of the participating schools. Data collection was carried out on scheduled dates coordinated with school administrators to ensure the smooth administration of the instruments.

The survey questionnaires were administered to multigrade teachers during school hours, while classroom observations were conducted in the teachers' actual classroom settings using the observation checklist. These observations focused on documenting classroom leadership practices and pupils' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement as they occurred during regular classroom instruction.

All collected data were systematically organized and analyzed to determine the relationship between teachers' classroom leadership strategies and pupils' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in multigrade classrooms.

Data Analysis

The researchers employed descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze and interpret the collected data. Frequencies, means, and percentages were computed to describe the respondents' demographic profiles and summarize their responses to the Likert-scale items. To determine the relationship between classroom leadership techniques and pupil engagement, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was applied. Furthermore, correlation analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which specific leadership strategies influenced different dimensions of pupil engagement.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, ethical considerations were carefully observed to ensure integrity and respect for intellectual property. The study utilized existing research instruments for data collection, with proper acknowledgment through accurate citation and referencing to avoid plagiarism. The researchers ensured that all borrowed data and concepts were used responsibly and within the bounds of academic honesty and fairness. Moreover, confidentiality and the original intent of the authors were respected, and every effort was made to provide objective and unbiased interpretations. Adherence to these ethical standards reflects the researchers' strong commitment to maintaining credibility, transparency, and scholarly integrity throughout the research process.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The findings of the study focus on the classroom leadership techniques employed by multigrade teachers and the level of classroom engagement demonstrated by multigrade pupils. The study also establishes a significant relationship between the teachers' leadership techniques and the pupils' level of engagement.

Classroom Leadership Techniques Employed by Multigrade Teachers

The findings (Table 2) indicate that multigrade teachers consistently demonstrate strong classroom leadership techniques across five major domains: Instructional Leadership, Organizational and Managerial Leadership,

Motivational and Supportive Leadership, Participative and Adaptive Leadership, and Relational and Collaborative Leadership. All indicators were rated as "Always," reflecting a high level of competency and commitment in managing diverse learning environments.

Among these domains, Relational and Collaborative Leadership emerged as the most prominently employed, with a mean score of 4.62. This suggests that multigrade teachers place strong emphasis on building positive relationships with pupils and fostering collaboration with parents, colleagues, and the broader community. Such efforts are especially effective in multigrade settings, where small class sizes and varied learner needs benefit from a supportive, trusting atmosphere that promotes emotional and behavioral engagement.

On the other hand, Instructional Leadership, while still highly rated (Mean = 4.45), was the least employed. This domain involves setting clear learning goals, differentiating instruction, and implementing appropriate assessment strategies. The slightly lower score may reflect the inherent challenges of addressing varied academic levels simultaneously, compounded by constraints such as limited planning time, curriculum misalignment, and inadequate instructional resources.

Instructional Leadership (Mean = 4.45). Multigrade teachers exhibit excellent instructional leadership by setting clear learning objectives, differentiating instruction, and responding to the varied academic needs of learners. These findings are supported by Little (2006), who emphasized the need for careful instructional planning in multigrade settings to accommodate simultaneous teaching of different grade levels. Similarly, the study of Mulryan-Kyne (2007) revealed that instructional clarity and adaptive teaching strategies are crucial for maintaining pupil engagement and academic performance in multigrade classrooms. Timely feedback and student assessment, as reported in this study, further align with Veenman's (1995) conclusion that effective feedback mechanisms are essential for addressing learning gaps in multigrade teaching.

Organizational and Managerial Leadership (Mean = 4.53). Multigrade teachers also excel in classroom management, establishing routines, and organizing instructional materials that foster independent learning. Effective organizational leadership in multigrade classrooms ensures a structured environment conducive to learning. This is particularly important when learners at different grade levels must work independently while the teacher attends to another group. The findings are also consistent with the work of Cornish (2010), who emphasized that classroom order, safety, and respect are foundational for successful multigrade teaching.

Motivational and Supportive Leadership (Mean = 4.61). The highest mean score in this domain indicates that multigrade teachers actively cultivate a motivational learning environment. By encouraging responsibility, using praise, and incorporating interactive strategies, they help learners stay engaged.These practices promote resilience, particularly in rural contexts where resources are often limited.

Participative and Adaptive Leadership (Mean = 4.49). Teachers' ability to adapt leadership styles and involve learners in classroom decision-making reflects a democratic and flexible approach.Furthermore, studies by Miller (2008) support the finding that reflective teaching practices and fair conflict resolution contribute to sustained learner engagement and classroom harmony.

Relational and Collaborative Leadership (Mean = 4.62). The ability of teachers to establish strong relationships with students and collaborate with parents reinforces the role of social-emotional intelligence in educational leadership. Research by UNESCO (2015) highlights that relational leadership in multigrade classrooms improves student behavior, attendance, and learning outcomes. Building trust and open communication, as demonstrated in this study, aligns with the findings of Saarivirta and Kumpulainen (2016), who underscored the importance of community engagement and teacher-student relationships in multigrade school success.

Hence, the results of this study are reinforced by a wide body of literature underscoring the importance of instructional flexibility, classroom management, student motivation, leadership adaptability, and strong relationships in multigrade teaching contexts. These competencies not only help multigrade teachers manage complex classroom environments but also enhance the quality of education delivered. Given their demonstrated capacity for high-level leadership, continued professional development, peer mentoring, and institutional support are recommended to sustain and further strengthen multigrade instruction.

Table 1. Classroom Leadership Techniques Employed by Multigrade Teachers

Instructional Leadership	Mean Score	Interpretation
1. I set clear learning objectives for all grade levels in my multigrade class.	4.44	Always
2. I plan and deliver lessons that cater to the diverse learning needs of pupils across grade levels.	4.53	Always
3. I use differentiated instructional strategies to address varying student abilities.	4.47	Always
4. I monitor and provide timely feedback on pupil performance across all grade levels.	4.34	Always
5. I communicate expectations and instructions clearly to pupils.	4.47	Always
Mean Score	**4.45**	**Always**
Organizational and Managerial Leadership		
6. I establish clear rules and routines that are consistently followed by all pupils.	4.59	Always
7. I organize learning materials and resources in a way that supports independent learning.	4.41	Always
8. I manage transitions between tasks and grade-level activities smoothly and efficiently.	4.47	Always
9. I maintain a classroom environment that promotes order, safety, and mutual respect.	4.66	Always
Mean Score	**4.53**	**Always**
Motivational and Supportive Leadership		
10. I encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.	4.62	Always
11. I regularly use praise and recognition to motivate pupils.	4.66	Always
12. I provide opportunities for peer teaching and collaborative learning.	4.62	Always

13. I integrate games and interactive activities to maintain pupil interest.	4.53	Always
Mean Score	**4.61**	**Always**
Participative and Adaptive Leadership		
14. I involve pupils in decision-making processes related to classroom activities.	4.34	Always
15. I handle conflicts between pupils in a fair and respectful manner.	4.66	Always
16. I adapt my leadership style depending on the situation or group dynamics.	4.5	Always
17. I reflect on my classroom practices and make improvements when needed.	4.47	Always
Mean Score	4.49	**Always**
Relational and Collaborative Leadership		
18. I foster open communication and actively listen to pupil concerns.	4.59	Always
19. I build strong relationships with pupils based on trust and respect.	4.69	Always
20. I collaborate with parents and guardians to support pupil learning.	4.59	Always
Mean Score	**4.62**	**Always**

Pupils' Classroom Engagement Level

Table 2 presents the pupils' level of engagement in the classroom. Notably, the items "Pupils appear happy and comfortable within the classroom environment" (Mean = 4.25), "Pupils demonstrate confidence when completing tasks" (Mean = 4.22), and "Pupils exhibit pride in their work and achievements" (Mean = 4.34) all received ratings indicating a high level of engagement. These results highlight that pupils are particularly engaged in activities that support their emotional engagement, suggesting that a positive and supportive classroom climate significantly contributes to their overall involvement in learning.

Table 2. Pupils' Classroom Engagement Level

Behavioral Engagement	Mean	Interpretation
1. Pupils attend class regularly and on time.	3.87	Engaged
2. Pupils actively participate in classroom activities and discussions.	4.18	Engaged

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3.	Pupils follow classroom rules and routines consistently.	3.81	Engaged
4.	Pupils complete assigned tasks and activities on time.	3.72	Engaged
5.	Pupils volunteer to answer or contribute during class sessions.	4.03	Engaged
6.	Pupils show effort in group activities and cooperate with classmates.	4.12	Engaged
7.	Pupils maintain focus and attention during class activities.	3.78	Engaged
	Mean Score	**3.93**	**Engaged**
	Emotional Engagement		
8.	Pupils show enthusiasm and interest in learning activities.	4.12	Engaged
9.	Pupils appear happy and comfortable within the classroom environment.	4.25	Highly Engaged
10.	Pupils express positive feelings about school and learning.	4.16	Engaged
11.	Pupils demonstrate confidence when completing tasks.	4.22	Highly Engaged
12.	Pupils exhibit pride in their work and achievements.	4.34	Highly Engaged
13.	Pupils show motivation even when faced with challenging activities.	4.09	Engaged
	Mean Score	**4.19**	**Engaged**
	Cognitive Engagement		
14.	Pupils ask questions that show curiosity and deeper thinking.	4.12	Engaged
15.	Pupils apply previous learning to new tasks or problems.	3.91	Engaged
16.	Pupils demonstrate persistence in completing difficult assignments.	3.91	Engaged
17.	Pupils reflect on their own learning progress.	3.84	Engaged

18. Pupils engage in critical thinking and problem-solving tasks.	3.81	Engaged
19. Pupils seek feedback and try to improve their performance.	3.97	Engaged
20. Pupils explore topics or ideas beyond the classroom content.	3.78	Engaged
Mean Score	**3.91**	**Engaged**

The results of the survey on pupil engagement are categorized into three domains: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Each domain shows generally positive levels of engagement, indicating that pupils are actively involved in their learning environment across different dimensions.

Behavioral Engagement. The overall mean for behavioral engagement is 3.93, which falls under the interpretation of "Engaged." This suggests that pupils exhibit consistent positive behaviors that support learning. The highest mean score within this category is observed in item 2, "Pupils actively participate in classroom activities and discussions" (M = 4.18), and item 6, "Pupils show effort in group activities and cooperate with classmates" (M = 4.12). These indicate that pupils are actively involved and collaborative during class.

Meanwhile, the lowest behavioral indicator is item 4, "Pupils complete assigned tasks and activities on time" (M = 3.72), though still within the "Engaged" range. This might reflect occasional delays or the need for further time management support. Overall, the consistent "Engaged" interpretation across all items implies a positive behavioral climate conducive to learning.

Emotional Engagement. Emotional engagement registered the highest overall mean among the three domains, at 4.19, with most items interpreted as "Engaged" and several as "Highly Engaged." Items 9 ("Pupils appear happy and comfortable within the classroom environment"), 11 ("Pupils demonstrate confidence when completing tasks"), and 12 ("Pupils exhibit pride in their work and achievements") received the highest mean ratings of 4.25, 4.22, and 4.34, respectively. These results suggest that pupils have a strong emotional connection with the learning environment, which fosters a positive attitude towards school and learning.

The lowest mean in this domain is item 13, "Pupils show motivation even when faced with challenging activities" (M = 4.09), which still falls under "Engaged." This suggests that while pupils remain generally motivated, additional support or encouragement may help sustain motivation when faced with more difficult tasks.

Cognitive Engagement. The cognitive engagement domain yielded a mean of 3.91, also interpreted as "Engaged." This reflects pupils' mental investment in learning tasks. The highest score in this domain is for item 14, "Pupils ask questions that show curiosity and deeper thinking" (M = 4.12), indicating a strong presence of inquiry-based learning behaviors.

However, item 20, "Pupils explore topics or ideas beyond the classroom content" (M = 3.78), received the lowest score in this domain, though still rated as "Engaged." This may imply that while pupils are cognitively engaged during structured lessons, there is room to encourage independent exploration and intellectual curiosity beyond classroom requirements.

Across all domains, the pupils demonstrated consistent engagement, with emotional engagement scoring slightly higher than behavioral and cognitive dimensions. This suggests that a supportive and emotionally nurturing classroom climate is in place, which positively influences both participation and intellectual effort. While all engagement areas are strong, encouraging more exploratory learning and improving time management may further enhance pupil engagement.

Correlation Between Classroom Leadership Techniques Employed by Multigrade Teachers and Pupils' Engagement Levels

Table 3 presents the results of the correlation analysis between the classroom leadership techniques employed by multigrade teachers and the engagement levels of their pupils.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

Variable 1	Variable 2	Correlation Coefficient	P-value	Interpretation
Classroom Leadership Techniques	Pupils Engagement	.816	.000	Significant

The correlational analysis reveals a strong positive relationship between **Classroom Leadership Techniques** and **Pupils' Engagement**, with a **correlation coefficient (r) of 0.816**. This value indicates a **very strong linear association** between the two variables, suggesting that as the effectiveness of classroom leadership techniques increases, pupils' engagement levels also tend to increase correspondingly. This is consistent with recent studies that emphasize the impact of teacher leadership on student engagement, particularly in diverse or multi-level classrooms (Razi & Afzal, 2022; Velasco & Gonzalez, 2023).

Furthermore, the **p-value of 0.000** is below the conventional threshold of 0.05, indicating that the result is **statistically significant**. This means that the observed correlation is not due to random chance and reflects a meaningful connection between the leadership strategies employed by multigrade teachers and the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement of their pupils.

In practical terms, this finding supports the idea that strong and consistent leadership—characterized by instructional, motivational, adaptive, and collaborative practices—plays a crucial role in fostering active and sustained pupil engagement in multigrade classroom settings.

Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, multigrade teachers in the Division of Eastern Samar exhibited consistently high levels of classroom leadership across the five measured domains, with relational and collaborative practices being most prominent (M = 4.62). Pupils demonstrated generally high engagement across emotional (M = 4.19), behavioral (M = 3.93), and cognitive (M = 3.91) dimensions. A strong and statistically significant positive correlation was observed between overall classroom leadership techniques and pupil engagement (r = 0.816, p < .001; $r^2 \approx 0.67$), suggesting that variations in teachers' leadership practices accounted for a substantial portion of the variance in pupil engagement. Given these results, adaptive, participative, and relational leadership practices appeared particularly influential in supporting pupil involvement and motivation in multigrade classrooms.

Recommendation

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **For Multigrade Teachers:** Teachers may further develop instructional leadership competencies—such as differentiated planning and formative assessment—to complement existing relational and motivational practices. Professional learning communities may be used to share practical strategies for simultaneous multi-level instruction.
2. **For School Administrators:** School leaders may allocate structured planning time and provide school-based mentoring to strengthen teachers' instructional leadership in multigrade settings. Administrative support may include access to targeted resources and peer-observation opportunities.
3. **For the Department of Education (DepEd):** DepEd Eastern Samar Division may consider designing in-service training modules focused on differentiated instruction and assessment for multigrade teachers, and may prioritize allocation of instructional materials to remote schools.
4. **For Future Researchers:** Future studies may use mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to explore causal pathways between leadership practices and engagement, and may examine contextual moderators (e.g., class size, socio-economic factors). Researchers may also triangulate teacher self-reports with independent classroom observations to reduce social desirability bias.

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