

Fostering Ethical Leadership for Positive School Culture: Addressing Teacher Compliance Challenges in Public Schools in Siargao Division

May Sheila S. Agad

St. Paul University Surigao, Surigao City, Philippines

0009-0008-3592-7347

amayshiela@gmail.com

Abstract: *This desk study explores the influence of ethical leadership on fostering a positive school culture and addressing teacher compliance issues in public schools, particularly in the Division of Siargao. By reviewing existing literature and policy documents, the study examines how ethical leadership—characterized by integrity, fairness, and accountability—can shape teacher behavior and strengthen adherence to institutional rules. Findings from the review highlight that ethical leadership is essential in building trust, promoting professionalism, and improving school climate. The study emphasizes the importance of ethical governance and leadership development, while adhering to ethical standards in research.*

Keywords: Ethical Leadership, School Culture, Teacher Compliance, Public Schools, Policy Implementation

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Ethical leadership plays a fundamental role in shaping school culture, promoting accountability, and ensuring professional integrity among educators (Brown and Treviño, 2006). In public schools, teacher compliance with institutional policies is crucial for maintaining operational efficiency and fostering a positive learning environment. However, school leaders often face resistance when implementing policies, particularly in cases where teachers misinterpret rule enforcement as excessive control rather than necessary governance (Department of education, 2017). In many educational institutions, concerns have emerged regarding the misuse of leave credits and reluctance to fully adhere to school and DepEd policies. Such behaviors can disrupt school operations and strain professional relationships. Ethical leadership-rooted in fairness, integrity, and transparency-offers a promising approach to addressing these challenges. Research suggests that leaders who emphasize ethical-decision making, accountability, and inclusivity contribute to a more disciplined and cooperative school culture.

However, studies primarily focus on general general leadership styles rather than how ethical leadership specifically influences teacher compliance and institutional harmony.

This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring the role of ethical leadership in fostering a culture of compliance and accountability, particularly in public schools in Siargao Division facing resistance to policy implementation. Through an in-depth analysis, this research seeks to uncover strategies that allow school leaders to balance firm governance with positive professional engagement.

Statement of the Problem

School leaders in public education systems in the Division of Siargao face the challenge of ensuring teacher compliance with institutional policies and regulations. However, some educators struggle to align with these expectations, particularly regarding leave credit policies, adherence to school rules, and professional responsibilities. In certain cases,



resistance to policies is accompanied by perceptions that school administrators are overly strict, leading to tensions in the workplace.

The effectiveness of ethical leadership in addressing teacher compliance challenges remains an area that requires deeper exploration. While leadership research often focuses on general administrative strategies, there is limited empirical evidence on how ethical leadership specifically influences compliance, professional discipline, and school culture. Furthermore, striking a balance between enforcing policies and maintaining trust among educators presents a complex dilemma for school leaders.

To address this gap, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- How does ethical leadership influence teacher compliance with school and DepEd policies in public schools in the Division of Siargao?
- What leadership strategies have been effective in addressing teacher accountability challenges?
- How can an ethical leadership framework be developed to improve policy adherence in public education in Siargao Division?

Significance of the Study

This study holds value for multiple stakeholders:

School Leaders : Provides insights into leadership strategies that balance accountability with a positive work culture.

Teachers : Encourages reflection on professional responsibility and ethical workplace behavior

DepEd Policy Makers: Offers evidence-based recommendations for enhancing school governance and teacher compliance.

Future Researchers: Contributes to the growing body of knowledge on ethical leadership and public-school administration, offering a reference for further studies.

Scope and Limitations

This study examines the role of ethical leadership in fostering teacher compliance and a positive school culture within public schools in the Division of Siargao. It explores how school leaders navigate challenges related to policy enforcement, leave credit misuse, and resistance to institutional regulations, as well as how ethical leadership can promote accountability, collaboration, and professionalism among teachers.

The study focuses on the role of ethical leadership in fostering teacher compliance with school policies within the Division of Siargao. It employs a desk research approach, analyzing existing literature, policy documents, and case studies on ethical leadership in education. No primary data, such as interviews or surveys, will be collected. The study is limited by its reliance on secondary data, which may not fully capture localized or emerging issues in specific school settings. However, the findings will provide a broad framework applicable to public schools with similar challenges.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Ethical leadership is widely recognized as a crucial factor in fostering a positive school culture (Brown and Treviño, 2006). Leaders who model integrity, fairness, and accountability set the ethical tone for their institutions (Ehrich et al., 2015). However, while some studies emphasize the benefits of ethical leadership in creating trust and collaboration (Fullan, 2014), others caution that rigid enforcement of ethical standards may lead to resistance if not coupled with open communication (Yukl, 2012). This tension highlights the need for a balanced leadership approach that integrates ethical principles with teacher engagement.

Teacher compliance is essential for maintaining institutional order and achieving educational goals (Ingersoll, 2003). However, research suggests that compliance issues often arise from perceived authoritarianism or lack of participatory decision-making (Kurland et al., 2010). Bruns et al. (2011) found that absenteeism and misuse of leave credits are linked to poor policy communication rather than outright defiance. Conversely, Smith and Kovacs (2011) argue that some teachers use compliance as a tool for resistance, challenging leadership authority by blaming strict enforcement.



These contrasting views indicate that leadership style and school culture significantly influence teacher attitudes toward compliance.

Different leadership styles impact teacher compliance in varying ways. Transformational leadership has been shown to inspire intrinsic motivation, making teachers more willing to adhere to policies (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Spillane (2005) argues that distributed leadership, which involves shared decision-making, fosters a sense of ownership among teachers, leading to voluntary compliance. However, Kouzes and Posner (2017) note that even transformational leadership can fail if not supported by clear and consistent policy enforcement. Additionally, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) emphasize that ethical discussions in professional development settings can bridge the gap between leadership expectations and teacher perceptions.

Although various studies highlight the importance of ethical leadership in education, existing literature primarily focuses on leadership effectiveness rather than its direct role in addressing teacher resistance and compliance issues. Moreover, much of the research on teacher compliance examines structural factors rather than ethical considerations in leadership (Brown & Mitchell, 2010). This study aims to address this gap by critically exploring how ethical leadership can enhance policy adherence in public schools of Siargao, particularly in contexts where resistance and blame-shifting are prevalent.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a desk research approach through a narrative review method, synthesizing existing literature on ethical leadership, school culture, and teacher compliance. A narrative review is suitable for analyzing theoretical perspectives, identifying trends, and addressing gaps in the literature without requiring primary data collection. This qualitative approach, allows the comprehensive exploration of leadership challenges in fostering the positive school culture, providing insights that can inform policy and practice.

Sources of Data

The study relies on secondary sources from credible academic and institutional publications, including:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles on ethical leadership and teacher compliance
- Books and theoretical frameworks on leadership and organizational behavior
- Educational policy documents (DepEd regulations, school governance frameworks)

Selection criteria prioritize recent, relevant, and credible sources to ensure the study reflects contemporary perspectives and established theoretical foundations.

Data Collection and Analysis

As a desk research study, data is collected systematically using structured search and selection methods:

- Search Strategy: Databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Springer are utilized with search terms like *“ethical leadership in education,” “teacher compliance behavior,” and school culture and leadership.”*
- Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria: Priority is given to sources published within the last 10 years, with foundational studies included where necessary. Non-peer-reviewed materials or sources lacking relevance are excluded.
- Thematic Analysis: Extracted data is categorized based on recurring themes such as leadership ethics, teacher accountability, compliance challenges, and policy implications. This method ensures that the study synthesizes key insights rather than simply summarizing literature.

Ethical Considerations

Although this study does not involve human participants, ethical research principles are upheld by:

- Proper citation and attribution of all secondary sources
- Maintaining objectivity in literature analysis, avoiding selective bias



- Presenting balanced discussions, acknowledging diverse perspectives in ethical leadership research

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical role of ethical leadership in fostering a positive school culture and ensuring teacher compliance with institutional policies. The findings highlight that teacher resistance to compliance is influenced by various factors, including leadership perceptions, previous leadership practices, personal attitudes, and inconsistencies in policy enforcement across schools.

One key challenge is that some teachers misinterpret strict rule enforcement as authoritarian rather than ethical leadership, especially when past leaders were more lenient. Additionally, younger school heads often struggle to gain respect of older teachers, leading to misunderstanding and resistance. Furthermore, the lack of uniform policy enforcement among school leaders contributes to confusion, as teachers become accustomed to inconsistent expectations regarding attendance, punctuality, and professional responsibilities.

The study also emphasizes that the burden of enforcing policies should not rest solely on school heads. Division-level support is essential to ensure that compliance with DepEd policies is a system-wide expectation rather than a school-specific issue. By reinforcing ethical leadership principles, promoting shared accountability, and addressing systematic inconsistencies, schools can cultivate a professional culture rooted in fairness, responsibility, and mutual respect.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For School Heads

- Adopt Transformational and Ethical Leadership Approaches – Engage teachers in shared decision-making and clearly communicate the rationale behind school policies to reduce resistance.
- Strengthen Teacher Engagement – Conduct regular dialogues to foster mutual understanding and ensure that compliance is perceived as professional responsibility rather than imposed authority.
- Model Ethical Behavior – School leaders should set an example by strictly adhering to policies themselves, reinforcing their credibility in policy enforcement.
- Provide Capacity-Building Programs – Offer professional development sessions focused on ethics in education, teacher accountability, and leadership skills.

For Teachers

- Cultivate a Professional Mindset – Emphasize that compliance with school policies is part of professional responsibility rather than personal preference.
- Recognize the Role of Ethical Leadership – Understand that ethical leadership is meant to enhance school culture and student outcomes, not restrict teacher autonomy.
- Encourage Peer Accountability – Foster a culture where teachers support and remind each other about professional obligations, reducing dependence on school heads for policy enforcement.

For the Division of Siargao and DepEd Officials

- Standardize Policy Enforcement Across Schools – Ensure that uniform understanding and application of attendance and conduct policies to eliminate disparities in rule enforcement.
- Hold Both School Heads and Teachers Accountable – Implement regular monitoring and assessment mechanisms to check compliance at both leadership and teacher levels.
- Provide Division-Led Orientations and Training – Conduct mandatory teachers orientations on professional responsibilities and ethical conduct, reinforcing that policies are system-wide expectation.
- Establish a Support System for School Heads – Create mentoring programs for younger school leaders to help them navigate leadership challenges and gain teacher respect.



For Future Research

- Expand Empirical Data Collection – Future studies should gather quantitative and qualitative data from teachers and school leaders to measure the effectiveness of ethical leadership in fostering compliance.
- Examine Teacher Perceptions of Leadership Across Different School Divisions – Investigating leadership perceptions beyond Siargao could provide comparative insights into how ethical leadership affects compliance across varying school cultures.

Ethical leadership is not just about enforcing rules but about creating a professional and ethical school culture where teachers willingly uphold their responsibilities. By bridging gaps in policy enforcement, fostering shared accountability, and reinforcing ethical leadership practices, schools can create a more cohesive and disciplined educational environment that ultimately benefits both teachers and students.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude to all those who supported her throughout the completion of this study. Her sincere thanks go to her Ethics in Research Professor Dr. Rene Paquibut, whose guidance, encouragement, and expertise were invaluable in shaping the direction of this work. She also wishes to acknowledge the support of St. Paul University Surigao, for providing the academic environment and resources that made this study possible. Special thanks to the Division of Siargao, whose educational context inspired the focus of this research. Although this is a desk study, the challenges and realities faced by school leaders and teachers in the field greatly influenced my understanding of ethical leadership.

Finally, she is grateful to her family and friends for their unwavering support, and motivation throughout this journey. Above all, she thanks God for granting her the strength, wisdom, and perseverance to complete this research.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Bandura, A. (1977). Social learning theory. Prentice-Hall.
- [2]. Gumus, S., Bellibas, M. S., Esen, M., & Gumus, E. (2018). A systematic review of studies on leadership models in educational research from 1980 to 2014. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46 (1), 25-48.
- [3]. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143216659296>
- [4]. Ingersoll, R. M. (2003). Who controls teachers' work? Power and accountability in America's schools. Harvard University Press.
- [5]. Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J.A. (2016). Ethical Leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas (4th ed.). Routledge.

