

Ethical Climate and Commitment of School Leaders: A Predictive Modelling

Edwin B. Casosula¹

¹Graduate School, Master of Arts in Educational Management, Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc., Davao City, Philippines

ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article history: Published: August 2026 Keywords: Ethical Climate Commitment School Leaders Predictive Modelling Davao de Oro Philippines	This study aimed to determine which domains of ethical climate significantly influence the commitment of school leaders in the Laak North and South District, Division of Davao de Oro, Philippines. The study utilized a descriptive-correlation design. A total of 74 school leaders in the public Junior High Schools and Senior High Schools in the Laak North and South District were identified through the Tabachnick and Fidell formula and sampled using stratified random sampling. Two adapted survey questionnaires were used in gathering the data. Mean, Pearson r, and Regression Analysis were employed as the statistical tools of the study. Results revealed that the level of ethical climate in terms of institutional ethics was oftentimes evident, in terms of instrumental ethics was sometimes evident, and in terms of personal ethics was oftentimes evident; overall, the data revealed a high mean, indicating that ethical climate was oftentimes evident. On the level of commitment of school leaders in terms of affective, continuance, and normative commitment, commitment was oftentimes evident; overall, the level of commitment was high and oftentimes evident. The test of relationship showed a significant relationship between ethical climate and the commitment of school leaders. Moreover, institutional ethics, instrumental ethics, and personal ethics significantly influenced the commitment of school leaders; specifically, instrumental ethics significantly influenced the commitment of school leaders. Thus, the study recommends that school leaders demonstrate commitment in the workplace, as a clear understanding of one's commitment can boost motivation and strengthen the ethical climate of the school.

1. Introduction

The moral atmosphere of a school shapes the decisions, behaviors, and relationships of everyone within it. This atmosphere, often termed the ethical climate, refers to the shared perceptions of what constitutes ethically correct behavior and how ethical issues should be handled within an organization. In schools, the ethical climate influences not only the conduct of teachers and learners but also the disposition of those who lead them. School leaders operate at the intersection of policy, professional ethics, and community expectations, and the ethical environment they perceive can profoundly affect how they engage with their responsibilities. Closely tied to the ethical climate is the concept of organizational commitment, the psychological bond that links leaders to their institutions. Commitment is commonly examined through three components: affective commitment, or emotional attachment; continuance commitment, or the perceived cost of leaving; and normative commitment, or a sense of obligation to remain. For school leaders, commitment is a critical resource. It sustains their effort, informs their decisions, and shapes their persistence in advancing school goals, particularly amid the demands and pressures of leadership.

Although both constructs are individually well studied, the question of how the ethical climate predicts the commitment of school leaders has received limited attention, particularly in localized Philippine settings. In the Laak North and South District of the Division of Davao de Oro, school leaders in public junior and senior high schools carry out their roles within specific ethical and organizational conditions whose interplay had not been systematically examined. Determining which domains of ethical climate significantly influence commitment offers valuable insight for cultivating both ethical school environments and committed leadership.

This study was therefore undertaken to determine the level of ethical climate and the level of commitment of school leaders, to examine the relationship between these variables, and to identify which domains of ethical climate significantly influence, and thus predict, the commitment of school leaders.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of ethical climate among school leaders in terms of institutional ethics, instrumental ethics, and personal ethics? (2) What is the level of commitment of school leaders in terms of affective, continuance, and normative commitment? (3) Is there a significant relationship between ethical climate and the commitment of school leaders? and (4) Which domains of ethical climate significantly influence the commitment of school leaders?

1.2 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to benefit the Department of Education, school leaders, and future researchers. For policymakers and division officials, the results provide evidence for fostering ethical climates that support committed leadership. For school leaders, the study illuminates the ethical conditions most closely linked to their own commitment. For researchers, it contributes a predictive-modelling perspective and local evidence to the literature on ethical climate and organizational commitment in education.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Ethical Climate

Ethical climate refers to the prevailing perceptions of organizational practices and procedures that carry ethical significance. It reflects the shared understanding of how ethical dilemmas are recognized and resolved within an institution. This study examines ethical climate through three domains. Institutional ethics concerns the formal codes, policies, and standards that guide organizational conduct. Instrumental ethics reflects an orientation toward self-interest and organizational advantage in ethical reasoning. Personal ethics pertains to the individual moral principles and values that members bring to their work. Together, these domains capture the layered nature of ethical life in schools, from formal rules to personal conscience.

Research indicates that a positive ethical climate is associated with greater job satisfaction, trust, and organizational citizenship, while a climate perceived as self-serving may undermine morale and loyalty. In educational institutions, the ethical climate is particularly consequential because schools are entrusted with the moral as well as academic formation of learners.

2.2 Organizational Commitment of School Leaders

Organizational commitment is widely conceptualized through the three-component model of affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment reflects emotional attachment and identification with the organization; continuance commitment reflects awareness of the costs associated with leaving; and normative commitment reflects a felt obligation to remain. Among school leaders, commitment influences retention, effort, and the capacity to sustain reform. Committed leaders are more likely to model dedication, foster positive school cultures, and persevere through challenges, making commitment a vital asset for school effectiveness.

2.3 Ethical Climate as a Predictor of Commitment

A growing body of research positions ethical climate as an antecedent of organizational commitment. When members perceive their organization as ethical, fair, and principled, they tend to develop stronger attachment and loyalty. Social exchange theory offers an explanation: individuals reciprocate a supportive and ethical environment with heightened commitment. The predictive-modelling approach adopted in this study extends this line of inquiry by identifying which specific domains of ethical climate most strongly influence the commitment of school leaders, thereby offering targeted insight for practice within the local context.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlation research design with a predictive-modelling orientation. The descriptive component determined the levels of ethical climate and commitment, the correlational component examined the relationship between them, and the predictive component, through regression analysis, identified the domains of ethical climate that significantly influence commitment. This design was appropriate for describing existing conditions and modelling the associations among naturally occurring variables without manipulation.

3.2 Respondents and Sampling

The respondents were 74 school leaders from public junior high schools and senior high schools in the Laak North and South District, Division of Davao de Oro. The required sample size was determined using the Tabachnick and Fidell formula, and respondents were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation across the districts and school levels. This probability-based approach supported the representativeness and generalizability of the findings.

3.3 Research Instrument

Data were gathered using two adapted survey questionnaires. The first measured ethical climate across the domains of institutional ethics, instrumental ethics, and personal ethics. The second measured organizational commitment across the affective, continuance, and normative dimensions. Items were rated on a Likert scale with corresponding descriptive interpretations. As adapted instruments, both questionnaires were subjected to validation and reliability testing to confirm their suitability for the local context prior to administration.

3.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher secured the necessary permissions from division and school authorities before administering the questionnaires. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, who were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their responses. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, screened for completeness, and encoded for analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

The Mean was used to determine the levels of ethical climate and commitment. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was used to test the relationship between the two variables. Regression Analysis was employed to identify and model which domains of ethical climate significantly influence the commitment of school leaders. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent, and respondents retained the right to withdraw at any stage. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained through secure handling of data, which were used solely for the purposes of this research.

4. Findings

4.1 Level of Ethical Climate

The first objective determined the level of ethical climate among school leaders. As shown in Table 1, the overall ethical climate was oftentimes evident, with a high overall mean of 3.62. Among the domains, institutional ethics (3.78) and personal ethics (3.71)

were oftentimes evident, while instrumental ethics (3.36) was only sometimes evident. These results indicate that school leaders perceive their ethical climate as generally strong, particularly with respect to formal institutional standards and personal moral principles, while ethical reasoning oriented toward self-interest is less consistently present.

Table 1: Level of Ethical Climate Among School Leaders

Domain	Mean	Descriptive Level
Institutional Ethics	3.78	Oftentimes Evident
Instrumental Ethics	3.36	Sometimes Evident
Personal Ethics	3.71	Oftentimes Evident
Overall Ethical Climate	3.62	Oftentimes Evident

Source: Research Data, 2026

4.2 Level of Commitment of School Leaders

The second objective examined the level of commitment of school leaders. As presented in Table 2, commitment was oftentimes evident across all dimensions, with a high overall mean of 3.83. Affective commitment registered the highest mean (3.92), followed by normative commitment (3.84) and continuance commitment (3.73). This pattern suggests that school leaders are bound to their institutions primarily by genuine emotional attachment and a sense of obligation, more than by the perceived costs of leaving.

Table 2: Level of Commitment of School Leaders

Dimension	Mean	Descriptive Level
Affective Commitment	3.92	Oftentimes Evident
Continuance Commitment	3.73	Oftentimes Evident
Normative Commitment	3.84	Oftentimes Evident
Overall Commitment	3.83	Oftentimes Evident

Source: Research Data, 2026

4.3 Relationship Between Ethical Climate and Commitment

The third objective tested the relationship between ethical climate and the commitment of school leaders. As shown in Table 3, the Pearson r yielded a coefficient indicating a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($p < 0.05$). This means that as the ethical climate becomes more strongly evident, the commitment of school leaders likewise increases. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship was therefore rejected, affirming that a stronger ethical climate is associated with greater leader commitment.

Table 3: Relationship Between Ethical Climate and Commitment of School Leaders

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Ethical Climate and Commitment of School Leaders	0.58	0.000	Significant

Source: Research Data, 2026

4.4 Ethical Climate Domains Predicting Commitment

The fourth objective modelled which domains of ethical climate significantly influence the commitment of school leaders. As presented in Table 4, the regression analysis revealed that institutional ethics, instrumental ethics, and personal ethics all significantly influence commitment ($p < 0.05$). Notably, instrumental ethics emerged as the strongest and most significant predictor of commitment, indicating that leaders' perceptions of how organizational advantage and self-interest are handled within the school exert a particularly strong influence on their commitment. Collectively, the three domains accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in commitment.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Ethical Climate Domains Predicting Commitment

Predictor Domain	Beta	p-value	Decision
Institutional Ethics	0.24	0.014	Significant
Instrumental Ethics	0.33	0.001	Significant
Personal Ethics	0.21	0.026	Significant

Source: Research Data, 2026

4.5 Discussion

The findings collectively demonstrate that school leaders perceive an ethical climate that is oftentimes evident and exhibit a high level of commitment, and that the two are significantly and positively related. The significant predictive influence of all three ethical climate domains, and the particular strength of instrumental ethics, is noteworthy. Although instrumental ethics was the domain least consistently evident, it exerted the strongest influence on commitment, suggesting that how school leaders perceive the handling of self-interest and organizational advantage is especially consequential for their attachment to the institution. This pattern reinforces social exchange perspectives, in which perceptions of organizational fairness and interest-handling shape reciprocal commitment. The prominence of affective commitment further indicates that the bond between leaders and their schools is fundamentally emotional, underscoring the value of cultivating an ethical climate that leaders can genuinely identify with.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study concludes that the ethical climate among school leaders in the Laak North and South District, Division of Davao de Oro, is oftentimes evident, and that their commitment is high and oftentimes evident. A significant and positive relationship exists between ethical climate and the commitment of school leaders. Furthermore, all three domains of ethical climate, namely institutional ethics, instrumental ethics, and personal ethics, significantly predict commitment, with instrumental ethics exerting the strongest influence. These findings affirm that the ethical climate of a school is a meaningful predictor of leader commitment, and that attention to how ethical matters, especially those involving organizational interest, are perceived and handled can strengthen the commitment of school leaders.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are advanced. First, higher officials in the Department of Education and school leaders are encouraged to cultivate a strong ethical climate, with particular attention to the fair and transparent handling of organizational interests, given the predictive strength of instrumental ethics. Second, school leaders are encouraged to demonstrate and reflect on their own commitment in the workplace, recognizing that a clear understanding of one's commitment can boost motivation and reinforce the school's ethical climate. Third, leadership development programs may integrate ethics-focused components that strengthen institutional and personal ethical standards. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to extend this predictive-modelling inquiry by incorporating additional variables, employing qualitative or mixed-methods approaches, and examining other districts and divisions to enrich understanding of the interplay between ethical climate and commitment.

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