

Caring Leadership, Teacher Agency, and Organizational Commitment: A Convergent Mixed-Methods Analysis for the Schools Division of Quirino

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article history: Published: October 2026 Keywords: Organizational Commitment Caring Leadership Teacher Empowerment Teacher Agency Convergent Mixed Methods Quirino	The study examined how school leaders' caring practices and teachers' sense of professional empowerment related to organizational commitment, while using a convergent mixed-methods framework to interpret the apparent mechanisms. A quantitative analytic matrix comprised 264 teacher-level observations with 18 five-point items; an accompanying qualitative strand used a transparent thematic demonstration organized around 18 narrative profiles. Three six-item composite scales were summarized and entered into a heteroscedasticity-robust multiple regression, controlling for teaching experience and school level. Caring leadership ($B = 0.353$, 95% CI [0.247, 0.459]) and empowerment ($B = 0.305$, 95% CI [0.203, 0.407]) were positive coefficients for commitment; the regression R^2 was 0.332. The qualitative framework identified relational trust, consequential participation, professional discretion, and bounded workload as integration themes. A commitment strategy needed to combine interpersonal care with meaningful professional agency; neither supportive language nor delegation without resources would be sufficient by itself.

1. Introduction

Organizational commitment described the psychological connection that helped explain why employees identified with their organizations and intended to remain involved in institutional work. Meyer and Allen distinguished affective, continuance, and normative commitment, emphasizing that staying because one wanted to, needed to, or felt obligated to represented different psychological states. A school study therefore needed a clear definition rather than treating commitment as a synonym for job satisfaction or willingness to accept extra assignments.²

In schools, leadership affected how teachers experienced their professional role. The literature on successful school leadership connected leadership practice to conditions for teaching and learning rather than to formal authority alone. A caring leadership perspective emphasized attentive listening, respect, support during difficulty, fair treatment, and concern for teachers' professional and personal welfare. Care was understood as a practice that could be assessed through concrete interactions, not as a personality label applied to a school head.^{5,4}

Teacher empowerment contributed a distinct explanatory dimension. Spreitzer identified meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact as dimensions of psychological empowerment. These dimensions illuminated why teachers who were permitted to exercise judgment and influence school decisions could report a stronger connection to institutional purposes. Empowerment was not equivalent to merely adding leadership tasks; its central question was whether educators had meaningful discretion and influence.³

Social-exchange reasoning offered a bridge between caring leadership and commitment. Individuals who perceived that their organization valued their contributions and cared about their well-being could respond with stronger attachment. The underlying mechanism did not require unconditional loyalty. Teachers could appreciate a caring principal and still experience constraints in workload, professional autonomy, family responsibilities, or opportunities for advancement.⁴

The most closely related Philippine publication was the convergent study by Mariano and Solomon, which considered caring leadership, empowerment, and organizational commitment among public secondary teachers in Region XI. That work was important precedent, but the present article did not treat its findings or participants as interchangeable with Quirino. The proposed extension separated relational care from consequential teacher agency, included both elementary and secondary roles, controlled for selected work characteristics, and made quantitative–qualitative integration explicit through a joint display.^{1,8}

Contemporary international evidence also supported examining school leadership in the context of professional conditions. The OECD's TALIS 2024 synthesis associated teacher involvement, autonomy, and professional opportunities with important aspects of teachers' work experience. Such findings could inform an interpretation of the relationships but did not establish that the same magnitudes or mechanisms necessarily operated in Philippine school divisions.⁶

An exclusively quantitative correlation model would identify whether teachers who scored leadership or empowerment highly also scored commitment highly, but it would not reveal how educators interpreted care, why they regarded some involvement as authentic, or whether participation created unintended workload. A qualitative strand was therefore necessary to examine the meaning of the constructs and cases that contradicted the average pattern.

The study addressed five questions: (1) How were caring leadership, empowerment, and organizational commitment characterized? (2) How were these constructs related at the bivariate level? (3) Did care and empowerment retain independent associations with commitment after adjusting for years of service and school level? (4) What qualitative patterns could plausibly explain or challenge

the quantitative relationships? (5) What integrated school-leadership implications followed? The planned null hypothesis stated that the two focal regression coefficients equaled zero.

2. Methods

2.1 Design and integration logic

The study followed a convergent mixed-methods design. Quantitative ratings and narrative material were analyzed separately and interpreted together only after strand-specific results had been organized. This distinction mattered because the qualitative themes were not treated as explanations automatically proven by significant regression coefficients. Integration sought convergence, divergence, complementarity, and unresolved questions, with an explicit joint display linking the two kinds of evidence.⁸

The quantitative design was correlational and cross-sectional; it did not support causal claims. Teacher-level data represented the specified unit of analysis, and the relevant organizational context was the Schools Division of Quirino. The analytic matrix contained 264 teacher records, of which both elementary and secondary school classifications appeared. The qualitative strand contained 18 illustrative role-and-experience profiles designed to test the coherence of thematic interpretations.

2.2 Construct operationalization

Caring leadership was operationalized through six statements about respectful interaction, listening, support in professional difficulty, fairness, follow-through, and attention to reasonable workload. Teacher empowerment was operationalized through meaning, competence, instructional discretion, influence over school decisions, ability to initiate improvement, and access to resources. Organizational commitment was operationalized through institutional identification, intention to contribute, shared-purpose alignment, persistence, involvement, and a positive view of continued service.

Each scale score equaled the mean of six integer-coded responses from 1 to 5. The item set was developed for the analytical design rather than represented as a licensed reproduction of a copyrighted instrument. Consequently, similarity to well-established constructs did not justify calling the scale psychometrically validated. Content review, factor structure, criterion validity, and measurement invariance across school levels remained empirical prerequisites.

2.3 Regression and qualitative analysis

The analysis reported sample means, standard deviations, six-item Cronbach alpha, and Pearson correlations. The dependent variable in ordinary least squares regression was the six-item organizational commitment mean. Predictors were caring leadership, empowerment, years of service, and school level coded 1 for secondary and 0 for elementary. Heteroscedasticity-consistent HC3 standard errors were used, with 95% Wald confidence intervals. Reported p-values described the working matrix rather than population-level discoveries.

The thematic phase employed a reflexive thematic-analysis logic: familiarization with the constructed narrative profiles, coding of meaning units, examination of patterns, theme definition, and review against the study questions. The process did not use inter-rater agreement as a substitute for interpretive rigor. Instead, credibility in a future field application would require a clear analytic trail, reflexive notes, careful attention to contrasting experiences, and protection of teacher identity.⁹

Integration used a convergence coding table that placed statistical patterns alongside thematic propositions and classified their fit as support, qualification, or unanswered question. This method reduced the tendency to use invented quotations merely to decorate a regression result. No verbatim interview quotations were presented because no genuine recorded interviews informed the illustrative corpus.

3. Results

Table 1. Teacher-profile distribution in the working matrix

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary school	157	59.5%
Secondary school	107	40.5%
Years in service: 3–7	104	39.4%
Years in service: 12–18	134	50.8%
Years in service: 25	26	9.8%

The analytic matrix covered teachers across two basic-education levels and multiple career stages. The mixture allowed school level and years of service to be treated as covariates, reducing the likelihood that the observed two-predictor associations were merely descriptive reflections of those variables. It did not reproduce a division personnel roster or support claims about actual teacher composition.

A multi-stage empirical sampling process would be preferable to convenience selection. Teachers within the same school shared leadership environments and policy conditions, meaning that observations might be dependent. The present matrix did not identify actual schools and therefore could not estimate intraclass correlations or cluster-robust standard errors.

In interpreting the profile, years of service represented tenure rather than exact age. It should not be used as a proxy for age or rank without justification. Similarly, school level was a contextual classification, not an indicator of the quality of school leadership.

Table 2. Scale summary and internal consistency

Scale	Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach α
Caring leadership	6	3.64	0.63	0.797
Teacher empowerment	6	3.62	0.60	0.773
Organizational commitment	6	3.66	0.60	0.750

The three scale means occupied the favorable side of the response continuum, without reaching the top of the theoretical range. This was compatible with a setting in which teachers could recognize supportive leadership and professional meaning while still

encountering organizational challenges. The proximity of scale averages did not imply that care, empowerment, and commitment were identical constructs.

The reliability coefficients were computed from the item-level matrix. They reflected the extent to which responses within each six-item battery covaried and were not chosen to meet a threshold. Reliability was a necessary part of interpreting a scale but not sufficient to demonstrate discriminant validity: a high internal consistency estimate might also arise from repetitive items or common-response tendencies.

Interpretation of a mean on an agreement scale required caution. A mean difference of 0.10 was not inherently an educationally important effect, especially when compared across constructs containing different statement content. Decision makers should examine item distributions and practical consequences rather than assign categorical labels such as “excellent” based only on arbitrary cut points.

Table 3. Pearson correlations among the three study constructs

Pair	r	p-value
Caring leadership × Teacher empowerment	0.396	<.0001
Caring leadership × Organizational commitment	0.494	<.0001
Teacher empowerment × Organizational commitment	0.458	<.0001

Caring leadership and empowerment were positively associated, which was coherent with an organizational climate in which attentive school heads also created space for teacher voice. The correlation was not perfect: a teacher could receive personal support without gaining influence over instructional or organizational decisions. The two constructs therefore remained conceptually separable.

Both focal constructs were positively associated with organizational commitment in the bivariate analysis. This pattern was consistent with, but did not prove, social-exchange and psychological empowerment perspectives. Any direct causal pathway would require a temporal design, stronger control of confounding, and evidence that changes in leadership practice preceded changes in commitment. Pearson’s *r* described the direction and linear strength of association between two composite variables. The subsequent regression evaluated the separate coefficient for each construct when the other variables were held constant. Similar-looking correlations and regression coefficients were not interchangeable measures.

Table 4. HC3-robust OLS model predicting organizational commitment

Term	B	Robust SE	z (HC3)	p-value	95% CI
Intercept	1.183	0.224	5.28	<.0001	[0.744, 1.623]
Caring leadership	0.353	0.054	6.50	<.0001	[0.247, 0.459]
Teacher empowerment	0.305	0.052	5.85	<.0001	[0.203, 0.407]
Years of service	0.007	0.005	1.54	0.1234	[-0.002, 0.016]
Secondary (vs elementary)	0.015	0.064	0.23	0.8154	[-0.110, 0.140]

The multivariable model estimated a positive independent association of caring leadership with organizational commitment after controlling for empowerment, tenure, and school level. The coefficient described the expected difference in commitment-scale points associated with a one-unit difference in caring leadership on the bounded scale, holding the other regressors fixed. It was not a treatment effect.

Empowerment also retained a positive coefficient under mutual adjustment. The two associations were consequently not reducible to a single generic “good leadership” score within the matrix. This supported the analytical distinction between being cared for and having meaningful agency. The importance of that distinction would need to be tested through real teacher feedback and validated instruments.

The *R*² quantified the proportion of variance in composite commitment explained by the specified linear prediction equation within the working data. It should not be read as a percentage of commitment caused by leadership or empowerment. Residual variation could include resources, workload, school climate, salary context, peer relations, family considerations, and measurement error.

Table 5. Regression specification and diagnostic decisions

Issue	Applied decision	Interpretive consequence
Dependent variable	Mean of six commitment items	Bounded 1–5 composite; not a retention event
Primary predictors	Leadership and empowerment composites	Partially correlated and jointly entered
Covariates	Tenure in years; secondary-school indicator	Selected adjustments, not exhaustive controls
Uncertainty	HC3 heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors	Robust to certain variance misspecifications
Clustering	Not estimated because schools not identified	Real field study requires school-sensitive analysis
Causal identification	Cross-sectional associations only	No claims about interventions or causal mediation

The regression specification was deliberately limited. Introducing more covariates than the study questions required would complicate interpretation without guaranteeing better control of confounding. The selected school-level indicator and tenure term represented plausible professional background factors; neither replaced a direct measure of school resources or workload.

HC3 standard errors addressed one statistical concern but not all possible limitations. They did not correct clustering, sampling bias, common-method measurement, omitted variables, or nonlinear response relationships. A field replication should graph residuals, examine influential records, assess collinearity, and consider multilevel regression if school identifiers and adequate school counts were available. A bounded 1–5 scale placed practical limits on linear modeling. Predicted values outside the range, substantial skew, or ceiling effects would motivate sensitivity checks using robust rank or ordinal latent-variable approaches. The principal value of the present specification lay in its transparent relationship between constructs, records, calculations, and interpretations.

Table 6. Qualitative thematic framework

Theme	Main construct	Analytical pattern	Fit with quantitative strand
Respectful listening and trust	Care	Leadership presence made discussion of difficulty psychologically safer	Supports positive care coefficient
Decision voice with consequences	Empowerment	Teacher proposals mattered when decisions or resources changed	Supports positive empowerment coefficient
Autonomy without abandonment	Empowerment	Professional discretion required access to guidance and materials	Qualifies empowerment pathway
Excessive assignments as a boundary	Both	Delegated tasks without time or resources could diminish goodwill	Negative case/qualification
Organizational identity and shared purpose	Commitment	Commitment centered on pupils and school mission, not compliance alone	Extends outcome interpretation
Support during personal strain	Care	Responsive scheduling and respectful communication mattered	Mechanistic explanation

The qualitative themes offered mechanisms that a regression coefficient could not communicate. Respectful listening might make difficult professional conversations safer, while meaningful decision voice could make teachers feel that their judgment was trusted. A teacher's account of empowerment would therefore be stronger if it described a decision changed by teacher input than if it merely mentioned attending a committee meeting.

A deliberately retained contrasting pattern concerned "autonomy" that arrived as additional paperwork or uncompensated coordination duties. This distinction prevented empowerment from being equated with unlimited task delegation. A supportive principal might maintain open communication and still need to correct unrealistic workload expectations.

The themes also differentiated commitment to education from compliance with immediate administrative demands. Identification with the school's purposes could coexist with disagreement about a particular policy. In a real qualitative study, divergent cases would be important evidence for refining rather than merely confirming the quantitative model.

Table 7. Convergent mixed-methods joint display

Quantitative pattern	Statistical reading	Qualitative proposition	Integrated inference
Leadership → commitment	Positive adjusted coefficient	Listening, fairness, follow-through	Convergence with mechanism; not causal proof
Empowerment → commitment	Positive adjusted coefficient	Decisions, discretion, professional meaning	Convergence; meaningful agency emphasized
Leadership × empowerment	Positive construct correlation	Care enabled voice; voice required resources	Complementarity; interaction untested
Tenure/school level adjustments	Covariates included	Career stage changed expectations	Partial connection; further data required
Organizational commitment	Explained variance remained incomplete	Mission attachment coexisted with workload tension	Divergence and scope for expanded model

The joint display identified convergence when quantitative associations aligned with interpretable narratives of trust or professional agency. It also exposed qualifications: the same activity described as empowerment by an administrator could be experienced as unresourced delegation by a teacher. A joint display was therefore more useful than placing a few qualitative sentences after a quantitative table.

Integration sharpened the meaning of an actionable intervention. A professional-development workshop on empathy alone might not increase teacher agency, while creating committees alone might not increase trust. A credible intervention would specify concrete leader behaviors, decision rights, resource support, and a feedback loop through which teachers could see the consequences of participation. The convergent design did not imply that every statistic needed a corresponding theme or that conflicting evidence should be suppressed. Where one strand remained silent, the appropriate inference was a gap for future study. In a field replication, cases that opposed the dominant pattern would be actively sought and reported.

4. Discussion

4.1 Caring leadership as enacted practice

The study treated care as consistent, observable behavior rather than a general expression of goodwill. Listening, clear explanation, equitable treatment, practical support, and credible follow-through offered evidence that leadership valued teachers as professionals. This interpretation aligned with perceived organizational support, which linked perceptions of being valued and cared for to workplace attitudes.⁴

A school head's capacity to offer care was nevertheless constrained by policies, resources, workload, and the demands of instructional supervision. For that reason, leadership preparation should not frame care merely as emotional warmth. It should include allocation decisions, timely response to concerns, conflict-sensitive communication, and the ability to explain limits honestly.

4.2 Professional agency and commitment

Empowerment added conceptual content beyond being consulted. Teachers could feel highly competent but unable to exercise discretion, or could be invited into meetings without influencing decisions. The four dimensions described by Spreitzer provided a useful theoretical check: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact should not be collapsed into the frequency of delegated assignments.³

For a school improvement process, the relevant question was whether teachers could identify decisions in which their knowledge had changed an instructional plan, a resource choice, or a learner-support procedure. Documented feedback cycles could make agency visible. Conversely, nominal consultation without an explanation of decisions might generate dissatisfaction rather than commitment.

4.3 Affective attachment versus obligated participation

Meyer and Allen's framework cautioned against treating retention intent as a unitary expression of loyalty. A teacher could remain because of commitment to learners, because of limited alternatives, or because of a perceived duty. These motives implied different organizational experiences and policy responses.²

The working instrument focused on broadly positive institutional identification and contribution. It did not independently estimate the three components of the Meyer–Allen framework, so the paper did not claim a validated three-factor commitment structure. A future study could include appropriately licensed or validated instruments for affective, normative, and continuance components.

4.4 Avoiding an overly simple causal narrative

Positive regression coefficients did not establish the direction of influence. Committed teachers might evaluate their principals more positively, empowering environments might result from pre-existing collaborative norms, and an unmeasured factor might shape all three scales. The cross-sectional design could not resolve these alternatives.

One promising empirical extension would measure leadership behavior, teacher empowerment, and commitment at multiple points across a school year. Separating time points could address reverse causation imperfectly, while school-fixed effects or multilevel methods could clarify the role of school context. Intervention evaluation would require a more rigorous identification strategy.

4.5 Workload and the limits of distributed leadership

Shared leadership became counterproductive when participation amounted to additional administrative labor without corresponding authority, preparation time, or resources. The analytical contrast between meaningful involvement and burdensome delegation was therefore central to interpreting the qualitative strand.

The OECD's TALIS findings on teacher autonomy and well-being suggested that supportive professional environments must be evaluated alongside demands. Those international findings provided comparative context; they could not be used to infer specific prevalence or effect magnitudes within Quirino schools.⁶

4.6 Policy linkages in Philippine schools

School governance councils and the revised school-based-management framework offered institutional channels for teacher input, while the mental-health policy context underscored the importance of staff and learner well-being. The challenge was translating these frameworks into experiences of credible voice, professional support, and transparent decision-making.^{10,11,12}

In a Philippine public-school setting, policy compliance also needed to coexist with respect for teachers' instructional judgment. A responsible division-level initiative could identify decisions requiring standardized compliance and those genuinely open to school-based or teacher-level discretion. Clear boundaries would help avoid the false expectation that every consultation could change mandatory policy.

4.7 Contribution relative to earlier Philippine evidence

The 2024 Mariano and Solomon study established a direct Philippine antecedent for the three-construct relationship, using convergent methods in Region XI. The present framework contributed a different operational emphasis: separating relational care from consequential agency, including a basic-education-level covariate, and displaying points of fit and tension between quantitative and qualitative strands.¹

The present manuscript did not claim to replicate or contradict that published article empirically. It placed the earlier study in a transparent literature trajectory and identified a locally relevant field-validation agenda that could add independent evidence once actual Quirino teacher responses were available.

5. Conclusion

The integrated framework distinguished two conditions that could help explain teacher organizational commitment: being treated with care and being trusted to exercise meaningful professional judgment. The numerical illustration supported positive independent relationships with each construct, while the thematic framework clarified that care needed practical follow-through and empowerment needed authority and resources.

For school leaders, a practical improvement sequence involved respectful listening, transparent decisions, protected instructional discretion, participatory planning, appropriate resource allocation, and follow-up on teacher proposals. For researchers, the strongest contribution lay in specifying a transparent model and a joint-display strategy that a future empirical investigation could validate.

5.1 Competing interpretations and the design of a stronger follow-up study

The observed model relationships supported more than one plausible explanation. One interpretation was that caring practices helped create psychologically safe conditions for professional participation, which in turn reinforced institutional attachment. Another was that teachers already committed to their schools interpreted school-head behavior favorably and volunteered more readily for school decisions. A third explanation involved school climate as a common cause of all three variables. None of these accounts could be eliminated by a single cross-sectional regression.

Clarifying directionality would require better temporal separation. A prospective design could measure leadership practices early in the school year, changes in agency after structured decision-making opportunities, and subsequent commitment at specified intervals. Pre-registering primary outcomes, documenting teacher mobility, and retaining nonrespondent information where lawful would

make the estimates more interpretable. Repeated measurement would not automatically establish causality, but it could reduce ambiguity in the sequence of change.

A field replication should also test the construct structure. Caring leadership, empowerment, and commitment were related enough that item responses might share a general positive-evaluation factor. Factor analysis with an independent validation sample could examine whether the intended dimensions were distinguishable. Where teacher language or school-level terms varied, cognitive interviews could identify unfamiliar words and avoid treating misunderstanding as a low score.

School leadership was situated in a nested organizational environment. Teachers in the same institution could report similar experiences because they shared one school head, common schedules, and the same governance culture. Ignoring that dependence would risk underestimating uncertainty. If the field sample covered enough schools, investigators could use multilevel modeling or cluster-aware standard errors, report school-level variation, and avoid presenting the teacher count as the number of independent leadership settings.

The qualitative strand should not be recruited solely from teachers who had favorable survey scores. A purposive design could sample different combinations of leadership, agency, and commitment, including highly caring but low-agency contexts, high-agency but overburdened teachers, and negative cases with strong organizational attachment despite difficult leadership relationships. Such contrasts could reveal mechanisms hidden by averaged coefficients.

Professional risk required special attention. Teachers asked about their supervisors might reasonably fear that criticism would affect appointments, assignments, promotion, or collegial relationships. Interviews should therefore be organized independently of performance appraisal, participation should be clearly voluntary, and transcripts should remove school and personnel identifiers that were unnecessary for analysis. Data security and controlled reporting were integral to methodological quality.

Integrated interpretation could then proceed through a transparent decision record: which numerical association was observed, which narrative mechanisms aligned with it, what evidence contradicted it, and what alternative explanation remained. Integration should alter conclusions when warranted rather than automatically declare agreement between strands. For example, a quantitative benefit of agency could be qualified by interview accounts of excessive delegated work, leading to a sharper recommendation about providing decision authority with commensurate support.

School-level action would ideally be evaluated using both experience and process indicators. Teacher voice could be assessed through documented influence on decisions, while professional care could be observed in fair workload negotiation, effective follow-through, and respectful response to concerns. Organizational commitment could be tracked over time with construct-valid measures, without treating teacher retention or task compliance as interchangeable with meaningful attachment. A credible intervention would specify who changed which practice and why the expected mechanism should operate.

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