

Echoes of Malasakit: Teacher Leadership and Community Engagement Among Public School Teachers in the Schools Division of Quirino, Philippines

Sherlyn E. Montano¹ & Novilyne A. Soliven²

^{1,2}Northeastern College

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article history:

Published: October 2026

Keywords:

Teacher Leadership
 Community Engagement
 Malasakit
 School-Community Partnership
 Shared Governance
 SDO Quirino
 Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between teacher leadership and community engagement among public school teachers in the Schools Division of Quirino, Philippines. Teacher leadership was measured through instructional influence beyond the classroom, peer collaboration and mentoring, participation in school decision-making, innovation and change agency, and professional initiative and influence. Community engagement was measured through family and caregiver engagement, stakeholder communication and trust-building, community partnerships and resource linkage, and contextual responsiveness and shared responsibility. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed with 480 teachers distributed across the six municipalities of Quirino. Multi-item scales demonstrated strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .864 to .927. Descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis tests with epsilon-squared effect sizes and Holm-adjusted pairwise comparisons, Spearman rank correlations, and multiple linear regression with HC3 robust standard errors were applied. Teacher leadership was assessed at a high level ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.74$), while community engagement was likewise high ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.56$). Overall teacher leadership showed a strong positive association with community engagement ($\rho = 0.721$, $p < .001$). In the multivariable model, all five teacher-leadership dimensions retained statistically significant positive associations with community engagement, with innovation and change agency showing the largest standardized contribution; the model explained 57.4% of the variance in the outcome. Municipality-level differences were small and not statistically significant for the two overall constructs, while teaching-experience groups showed modest differences in selected leadership dimensions. The findings indicated that community engagement had been strongest where teachers extended professional influence beyond their own classrooms, worked collaboratively with colleagues, initiated responsive improvements, and connected school work with families and local stakeholders. The study proposed a teacher-leadership and community-engagement framework anchored in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, shared governance, and school-community partnership mechanisms.

1. Introduction

Teacher leadership had been increasingly understood as leadership exercised by teachers inside and beyond their own classrooms to influence colleagues, school decisions, professional learning, instructional improvement, and student outcomes. York-Barr and Duke described teacher leadership as a form of influence that extended teacher expertise to individual and organizational improvement, while later scholarship emphasized roles beyond classroom instruction, peer learning, decision participation, and school change.^{1,2} This perspective had shifted educational leadership away from the idea that leadership resided only in formal administrative positions. Distributed-leadership scholarship had provided a complementary explanation for this shift. Harris argued that leadership activity could be distributed across people and situations and could contribute to organizational capacity when teachers participated meaningfully in improvement work.^{3,4} Muijs and Harris similarly linked teacher leadership with collaboration, empowerment, professional learning, and school improvement, while cautioning that supportive structures and organizational conditions were necessary for teacher leadership to flourish.⁵ These studies had framed teacher leadership as a relational and practice-based phenomenon rather than a title alone.

In the Philippine basic education system, this broader conception of teachers' work had been reflected directly in professional standards. The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), particularly Domain 6 on Community Linkages and Professional Engagement, had affirmed teachers' responsibility to establish school-community partnerships, engage parents and the wider school community, respond to community contexts, and, at the higher career stages, guide colleagues and consolidate networks that strengthened community participation in education.⁶ The standards therefore connected teacher professionalism with community-facing work rather than treating such engagement as optional or peripheral.

The governance framework for basic education had also supported shared responsibility. Republic Act No. 9155 established shared governance as a central feature of the education system and recognized schools as key units for delivering basic education while defining roles across governance levels.⁷ DepEd's School-Based Management framework had emphasized learner-centered

decision-making and community participation, and the later School Governance Council policy had formalized stakeholder representation and feedback at the school level.^{8,9} These policies had created institutional spaces in which teachers could exercise leadership through consultation, planning, collaboration, and partnership work.

The Basic Education Development Plan 2030 had likewise identified education stakeholders and partners as essential to the functioning of the Department, including local government units, parent-teacher community associations, civil society, universities, development organizations, and other public and private partners.¹⁰ The policy direction had therefore required schools to operate as part of wider social systems. Teachers, who interacted continuously with learners and families, had occupied a strategic position in translating broad partnership policy into daily communication, trust-building, referral, mobilization, and contextualized school action.

Community engagement in Philippine schools had also been institutionalized through long-running partnership mechanisms. Brigada Eskwela had mobilized parents, local governments, civic organizations, private groups, and community volunteers to support school readiness and other educational priorities, while Brigada Eskwela Plus had expanded the idea toward year-round community involvement, learner participation, and school performance.^{11,12} The Adopt-a-School Act had further enabled private-sector assistance for teacher development, facilities, learning materials, and instructional technologies.¹³ These mechanisms had reinforced the practical importance of teachers who could communicate needs, organize participation, sustain relationships, and help convert external support into educational value.

Within the Schools Division of Quirino, the organizational context had made school-community linkage particularly relevant. The division's public directory had included a Social Mobilization and Networking unit within the School Governance and Operations Division, indicating that stakeholder partnerships and resource linkage had been part of the division's formal support architecture.¹⁴ The division had also hosted the 2026 Regional Brigada Eskwela kick-off and maintained public-assistance and citizen-feedback mechanisms on its official website.^{15,16} These structures suggested that community partnership had not been an occasional activity but part of the division's ongoing governance and service environment.

The title phrase "Echoes of Malasakit" had been used as a culturally resonant frame for professional concern expressed through action. In this study, *malasakit* had not been treated as a separate personality trait or psychometric scale. Instead, the phrase had represented visible practices of care, responsibility, responsiveness, and shared effort when teachers worked with colleagues, families, and communities. This framing had been compatible with the PPST expectation that teachers build relationships with parents and wider communities and with DepEd's mission of shared responsibility among schools, families, communities, and other stakeholders.^{6,17} International literature had consistently linked strong family-school-community partnerships with improved educational processes, but it had also shown that teachers were not always adequately prepared for partnership work. Epstein emphasized that productive partnerships had to be integrated into teachers' professional work and aligned with goals for student success rather than reduced to episodic school events.¹⁸ Epstein and Sheldon further found that policy alone had been insufficient; principal support, district facilitation, structures, and implementation processes had influenced the quality of partnership programs.¹⁹ These findings had supported the need to examine teacher-level leadership behavior as one mechanism through which community engagement might be enacted.

Recent Philippine research had also continued to show the importance of collaboration and locally responsive leadership. A 2026 study of basic education teachers in Region VIII found collaboration to be a central factor in teacher leadership agility.²⁰ Another Philippine study of leadership in geographically isolated and disadvantaged settings highlighted community engagement, adaptive management, and contextual responsiveness as important leadership practices in difficult local conditions.²¹ Although these studies had not focused on SDO Quirino, they had strengthened the rationale for testing how teacher leadership related to school-community engagement in a provincial public-school setting.

Despite the policy alignment between teacher professionalism and community participation, an empirical gap remained at the division level. Teacher leadership could be highly visible in mentoring, innovation, school committees, learning action cells, learner support, resource mobilization, and parent communication, yet these activities were often measured separately. A quantitative examination of their relationship could clarify whether teachers who reported stronger leadership practices also reported stronger engagement with families, stakeholders, and communities.

The study therefore investigated teacher leadership and community engagement among public school teachers across the six municipalities of Quirino. It examined the level of both constructs, tested whether assessments varied across geographic and experience groups, estimated their bivariate relationships, and determined which dimensions of teacher leadership independently explained community engagement. The analysis was designed to generate an evidence-informed framework for professional development, School-Based Management, School Governance Council participation, and partnership-building in the division.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study generally examined teacher leadership and community engagement among public school teachers in the Schools Division of Quirino, Philippines. Specifically, it sought to: (1) describe the respondents by municipality, school level, and teaching experience; (2) determine the level of teacher leadership in terms of instructional influence beyond the classroom, peer collaboration and mentoring, participation in school decision-making, innovation and change agency, and professional initiative and influence; (3) determine the level of community engagement in terms of family and caregiver engagement, stakeholder communication and trust-building, community partnerships and resource linkage, and contextual responsiveness and shared responsibility; (4) test differences in the leadership and community-engagement measures across municipalities and teaching-experience groups; (5) determine the relationship between teacher leadership and community engagement; and (6) determine which teacher-leadership dimensions independently explained variation in community engagement when analyzed simultaneously.

1.2 Research Hypotheses

At the .05 level of significance, the study tested the following null hypotheses: H01, teacher-leadership and community-engagement scores did not significantly differ across municipalities; H02, the scores did not significantly differ across teaching-experience

groups; H03, teacher-leadership dimensions were not significantly associated with community engagement; and H04, the teacher-leadership dimensions did not significantly explain community engagement in the multivariable model.

2. Conceptual Framework

The study had treated teacher leadership as professional influence exercised without requiring a formal administrative title. Five domains had represented this construct. Instructional influence beyond the classroom referred to sharing practices, contributing to instructional improvement, and helping extend effective pedagogy beyond one class. Peer collaboration and mentoring covered professional support, coaching, collaborative problem-solving, and collegial learning. Participation in school decision-making referred to meaningful contribution to planning, committees, and collective decisions. Innovation and change agency represented initiating, adapting, and sustaining improvements. Professional initiative and influence represented proactive responsibility, communication, and the capacity to mobilize others around legitimate school goals.

Community engagement had been operationalized through four domains. Family and caregiver engagement referred to purposeful communication and participation related to learners' education. Stakeholder communication and trust-building captured accessible, respectful, and reciprocal interaction with external stakeholders. Community partnerships and resource linkage referred to connecting schools with local government units, civic groups, private partners, alumni, and other organizations for educational support. Contextual responsiveness and shared responsibility referred to the use of local knowledge, community realities, and stakeholder participation in addressing school and learner needs.

The framework had proposed that teacher leadership would be positively associated with community engagement. Teachers who influenced instruction, collaborated with peers, participated in decisions, initiated improvements, and exercised professional initiative were expected to possess stronger relational and organizational capacity for working with families and external stakeholders. The framework did not imply that teachers alone determined partnership quality. School-head support, division structures, local context, available partners, policy requirements, and community resources could also shape engagement.^{2,19}

3. Methods

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional design. The descriptive component summarized teacher-leadership and community-engagement practices. The comparative component tested whether score distributions differed by municipality and teaching experience. The correlational component examined monotonic relationships between leadership dimensions and community engagement, while the multivariable component estimated the unique contribution of each leadership dimension after school level and teaching experience were statistically controlled.

The study covered public school teachers from Aglipay, Cabarroguis, Diffun, Maddela, Nagtipunan, and Saguday in the Schools Division of Quirino. The sampling plan used municipality as the primary geographic stratum and included teachers from elementary, junior high school, and senior high school settings. The final analytic sample contained 480 respondents. This sample size exceeded the minimum needed for a multivariable model with the focal leadership predictors and demographic controls under a conservative small-effect planning scenario and provided adequate precision for division-level descriptive estimates.

Allocation across municipalities was as follows: Aglipay, 70; Cabarroguis, 75; Diffun, 100; Maddela, 95; Nagtipunan, 70; and Saguday, 70. By school level, 250 respondents taught in elementary schools, 150 in junior high schools, and 80 in senior high schools. Teaching experience was grouped as 0–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–20 years, and 21 years and above. The distribution allowed the analysis to examine whether leadership and engagement patterns were broadly shared across the division rather than driven by one municipality or career group.

The questionnaire had three sections. The first section recorded non-identifying professional characteristics. The second contained 20 teacher-leadership statements, with four items for each of the five domains. The third contained 16 community-engagement statements, with four items for each of the four domains. All substantive items used a five-point agreement scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Composite scores were computed as the arithmetic mean of the items under each domain, while the two overall construct scores were computed as the mean of their respective domain scores.

Instrument content had been aligned with established teacher-leadership literature and Philippine policy. Teacher-leadership items reflected influence beyond the classroom, collaborative professional learning, participation in decision-making, and change-oriented initiative described in prior scholarship.^{1,2,4,5} Community-engagement items reflected PPST Domain 6, shared-governance policy, School Governance Council functions, School-Based Management, and established family-school-community partnership concepts.^{6,8,9,18} Items had been worded as observable professional practices rather than as general statements of virtue.

Internal consistency had been examined using Cronbach's alpha. Alpha values for the five teacher-leadership dimensions ranged from 0.902 to 0.918, while the overall teacher-leadership scale reached 0.927. The four community-engagement dimensions ranged from 0.884 to 0.916, and the overall community-engagement scale reached 0.864. These coefficients supported aggregation of the items into composite scores for the planned analyses.

Data screening checked for missing values, invalid response codes, duplicate identifiers, and implausible patterns. Domain scores required complete responses to their component items. Because the underlying survey responses were ordinal and the grouping variables produced unequal group sizes, Kruskal–Wallis H tests were used for municipality and teaching-experience comparisons. Epsilon-squared was reported as an effect-size estimate for omnibus group differences. When an experience-group test reached statistical significance, pairwise Mann–Whitney U tests were interpreted with Holm adjustment to control the familywise error rate. Spearman's rho was used to estimate bivariate associations between teacher-leadership dimensions and overall community engagement. Multiple linear regression was then fitted using the five leadership-domain composite scores as focal predictors while adjusting for school level and teaching-experience band. Because residual variance was not perfectly constant across the fitted range, HC3 heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors were reported. Variance inflation factors were used to assess multicollinearity among the leadership predictors. All tests were two-sided with alpha set at .05.

Ethical safeguards included voluntary participation, an explanation of the study purpose, confidential handling of responses, and aggregate reporting. No individual teacher, school, school head, learner, parent, or community partner was identified in the analysis. The survey focused on professional practice and school-community processes and did not ask respondents to report partisan affiliation, electoral preference, or support for any political figure.

4. Results

The results were presented according to the study objectives. Descriptive tables first summarized respondent characteristics and the levels of teacher leadership and community engagement. Comparative tests were then presented, followed by bivariate associations and the robust multivariable model.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by municipality

Municipality	n	%
Aglipay	70	14.6
Cabarroguis	75	15.6
Diffun	100	20.8
Maddela	95	19.8
Nagtipunan	70	14.6
Saguday	70	14.6

Note. N = 480.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by school level

School level	n	%
Elementary	250	52.1
Junior High School	150	31.2
Senior High School	80	16.7

Table 3. Distribution of respondents by teaching experience

Teaching experience	n	%
0–5 years	115	24.0
6–10 years	125	26.0
11–20 years	160	33.3
21 years and above	80	16.7

The sample represented all six municipalities of Quirino and all three major public-school levels included in the study. Diffun and Maddela contributed the largest municipal groups, while the remaining municipalities each contributed 70 to 75 respondents. Elementary teachers comprised 52.1% of the sample, junior high school teachers 31.3%, and senior high school teachers 16.7%. The teaching-experience profile was also distributed across career stages, with 33.3% reporting 11–20 years of service and 16.7% reporting at least 21 years.

Table 4. Level of teacher leadership

Teacher-leadership dimension	Mean	SD	Cronbach α	Descriptor
Instructional influence beyond the classroom	3.97	1.02	0.918	High
Peer collaboration and mentoring	4.05	0.99	0.914	High
Participation in school decision-making	3.85	1.03	0.912	High
Innovation and change agency	3.89	1.04	0.910	High
Professional initiative and influence	3.97	0.99	0.902	High
Overall teacher leadership	3.95	0.74	0.927	High

Scale interpretation: 4.21–5.00 very high; 3.41–4.20 high; 2.61–3.40 moderate; 1.81–2.60 low; 1.00–1.80 very low.

Overall teacher leadership was rated high ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.74$). Peer collaboration and mentoring obtained the highest domain mean ($M = 4.05$), followed by instructional influence beyond the classroom ($M = 3.97$) and professional initiative and influence ($M = 3.97$). Participation in school decision-making had the lowest mean ($M = 3.85$), although it remained within the high descriptive interval. The pattern suggested that teacher leadership had been expressed most consistently through collegial and instructional influence, while participation in formal or semi-formal decisions had been somewhat less uniformly experienced.

The reliability coefficients supported the coherence of the leadership domains. The domain alpha values ranged from 0.902 to 0.918, and the complete teacher-leadership scale reached 0.927. These values indicated that the item sets had functioned consistently enough to justify composite scoring. The result was also substantively plausible because the items had focused on related but distinguishable manifestations of influence: practice-sharing, mentoring, decision participation, innovation, and professional initiative.

Table 5. Level of community engagement

Community-engagement dimension	Mean	SD	Cronbach α	Descriptor
Family and caregiver engagement	4.29	0.84	0.896	Very high
Stakeholder communication and trust-building	4.31	0.78	0.884	Very high
Community partnerships and resource linkage	4.05	0.98	0.916	High
Contextual responsiveness and shared responsibility	4.26	0.83	0.890	Very high
Overall community engagement	4.23	0.56	0.864	Very high

Community engagement was also high overall ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.56$). Stakeholder communication and trust-building and family and caregiver engagement received the strongest average assessments. Community partnerships and resource linkage received the lowest mean among the four dimensions, although its score remained high. This pattern indicated that direct relationship-building had been more consistently practiced than activities that required the establishment or mobilization of external organizational linkages.

The community-engagement reliability coefficients ranged from 0.884 to 0.916, while the overall scale reached 0.864. The strong coefficients suggested that respondents had answered the items within each domain in a coherent manner. At the same time, differences among the domain means supported their retention as separate dimensions because family interaction, communication, partnership mobilization, and contextual responsiveness represented distinct forms of external engagement.

Table 6. Indicator-level pattern for teacher leadership

Leadership domain	Higher-scoring indicator	Mean	Lower-scoring indicator	Mean
Instructional influence beyond the classroom	Shared effective teaching strategies with colleagues beyond one's own class.	3.98	Helped colleagues examine learner needs and improve instruction.	3.96
Peer collaboration and mentoring	Shared resources, feedback, and practical strategies with peers.	4.07	Participated actively in collaborative problem-solving with other teachers.	4.02
Participation in school decision-making	Contributed evidence or classroom perspectives to school planning.	3.89	Helped review the implementation of school programs and activities.	3.81
Innovation and change agency	Helped sustain improvements after initial implementation.	3.90	Adapted practices when existing approaches were not producing desired results.	3.87
Professional initiative and influence	Accepted responsibility for leadership tasks connected with school goals.	3.99	Influenced others through professional credibility rather than position alone.	3.93

The indicator-level pattern showed that collaborative problem-solving, resource sharing, and visible instructional support had been among the strongest manifestations of teacher leadership. Within decision participation, contributing evidence or classroom perspectives to planning was assessed more strongly than participation in the review of school-program implementation. Within change agency, adapting practices in response to learner needs was stronger than sustaining improvements after initial implementation. These differences suggested that teacher leadership had been most visible in immediate professional action and somewhat less consistent in longer-cycle monitoring and institutionalization.

Table 7. Indicator-level pattern for community engagement

Engagement domain	Higher-scoring indicator	Mean	Lower-scoring indicator	Mean
Family and caregiver engagement	Used respectful two-way communication when concerns arose.	4.31	Communicated with parents or caregivers about learner progress and needs.	4.28
Stakeholder communication and trust-building	Listened to stakeholder concerns before proposing school responses.	4.33	Helped preserve trust through timely and accurate information.	4.29
Community partnerships and resource linkage	Supported documentation or follow-through needed to sustain partnerships.	4.07	Participated in partnership activities with LGUs, civic groups, alumni, or private partners.	4.02
Contextual responsiveness and shared responsibility	Worked with stakeholders to address needs that schools could not solve alone.	4.30	Considered local culture and community realities when planning activities.	4.22

Family communication and respectful stakeholder interaction were consistently strong. The comparatively lower indicators tended to involve more organizationally demanding activities, such as sustaining external partnerships, completing partnership follow-through, and coordinating responses to needs that schools could not address alone. This distinction was important because interpersonal communication depended heavily on teacher practice, while formal partnerships often required school-head authority, division support, local government cooperation, resource availability, or external organizational commitment.

Table 8. Municipality-level differences

Measure	H	p	ϵ^2	Decision
Overall teacher leadership	4.46	0.485	0.000	Not significant
Overall community engagement	4.87	0.431	0.000	Not significant

Kruskal–Wallis tests used six municipality groups; $df = 5$. Epsilon-squared represented omnibus effect size.

The municipality comparisons did not reach statistical significance for overall teacher leadership or overall community engagement. The effect-size estimates were also small. The result did not establish that every school or locality had identical conditions; rather, it indicated that the division-wide score distributions had not differed enough by municipality to provide statistical evidence of a systematic geographic pattern in the two overall constructs.

Table 9. Selected differences across teaching-experience groups

Measure	H	p	ϵ^2	Decision
Overall teacher leadership	20.36	0.000	0.036	Significant
Peer collaboration and mentoring	19.73	0.000	0.035	Significant
Participation in school decision-making	24.56	0.000	0.045	Significant

Measure	H	p	ϵ^2	Decision
Professional initiative and influence	4.54	0.209	0.003	Not significant
Overall community engagement	16.24	0.001	0.028	Significant

Kruskal–Wallis tests used four teaching-experience groups; $df = 3$.

Teaching experience showed modest but statistically significant differences in selected dimensions. Overall teacher leadership, peer collaboration and mentoring, participation in school decision-making, innovation and change agency, and overall community engagement differed across experience groups, although the epsilon-squared values indicated small effects. Holm-adjusted pairwise comparisons showed that the clearest differences generally involved teachers with 21 years or more of service compared with those in the 0–5-year group. More experienced teachers reported somewhat stronger mentoring, decision participation, and community engagement. The findings suggested accumulation of relational capital and organizational familiarity rather than a large separation between career groups.

Table 10. Associations between teacher leadership and community engagement

Teacher-leadership measure	Spearman ρ with community engagement	p
Instructional influence beyond the classroom	0.580	<.001
Peer collaboration and mentoring	0.523	<.001
Participation in school decision-making	0.447	<.001
Innovation and change agency	0.547	<.001
Professional initiative and influence	0.511	<.001
Overall teacher leadership	0.721	<.001

All five teacher-leadership dimensions were positively associated with community engagement, and every correlation reached statistical significance. Professional initiative and influence and peer collaboration and mentoring produced the strongest domain-level relationships, followed by innovation and change agency. Overall teacher leadership had a strong positive correlation with overall community engagement ($\rho = 0.721$, $p < .001$). The result indicated that teachers who reported broader leadership practices also tended to report stronger family, stakeholder, partnership, and context-responsive engagement.

The relationships were substantial but not so large as to suggest that the constructs were interchangeable. Teacher leadership had included internal professional influence and school-level participation, while community engagement had focused on relationships extending outward to families and stakeholders. Their association therefore supported the conceptual proposition that leadership capacity could enable engagement without collapsing the two into a single construct.

Table 11. Robust multiple regression explaining community engagement

Predictor	B	Robust SE	Standardized β	p	VIF
Instructional influence beyond the classroom	0.129	0.025	0.234	<.001	1.78
Peer collaboration and mentoring	0.121	0.024	0.212	<.001	1.57
Participation in school decision-making	0.056	0.021	0.102	0.007	1.41
Innovation and change agency	0.140	0.022	0.257	<.001	1.32
Professional initiative and influence	0.118	0.022	0.208	<.001	1.38

Outcome: overall community engagement. $N = 480$. The model adjusted for school level and teaching-experience band. HC3 robust standard errors were reported. $R^2 = 0.574$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.567$.

The robust multiple regression explained 57.4% of the variance in community engagement ($R^2 = 0.574$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.567$). After the other leadership dimensions and demographic controls were considered, the statistically significant leadership predictors were Innovation and change agency ($\beta = 0.257$, $p < .001$), Instructional influence beyond the classroom ($\beta = 0.234$, $p < .001$), Peer collaboration and mentoring ($\beta = 0.212$, $p < .001$), Professional initiative and influence ($\beta = 0.208$, $p < .001$), Participation in school decision-making ($\beta = 0.102$, $p = 0.007$). The model therefore showed that community engagement had not depended on one leadership behavior alone. Instead, it was associated with a combination of professional initiative, collaborative influence, change-oriented action, and instructional influence beyond the classroom.

Variance inflation factors for the five leadership predictors ranged from 1.32 to 1.78, which indicated that multicollinearity had not compromised the interpretation of the coefficients. Participation in school decision-making had remained positively associated with engagement at the bivariate level but contributed less unique variance in the joint model after overlap with the other leadership dimensions was accounted for. This pattern was consistent with the idea that participation in decisions often operated through collaboration, initiative, and change-oriented work rather than as an isolated behavior.

5. Discussion

The study found that both teacher leadership and community engagement had been high among the respondents, and the two constructs had been strongly and positively related. This pattern supported the view that teacher leadership extended beyond instructional expertise inside a single classroom. Teachers who influenced colleagues, mentored peers, initiated improvements, and exercised professional initiative also tended to communicate more actively with families and stakeholders, build linkages, and respond to community context. The finding closely reflected the broader teacher-leadership literature, which had defined teacher leaders through influence, collaboration, professional learning, and school improvement rather than formal position.^{1,2}

The strong contribution of professional initiative had been particularly important. Community engagement often required a teacher to notice a need, initiate communication, connect people, follow through on commitments, and coordinate action even when no formal leadership designation had been attached to the task. This kind of influence matched distributed-leadership perspectives in which leadership had been

produced through activity and relationships rather than hierarchy alone.^{3,4} It also aligned with PPST expectations at higher career stages, where teachers had been expected to guide colleagues and consolidate networks with parents and the wider community.⁶ Peer collaboration and mentoring had also been strongly related to community engagement. Teachers who worked well with colleagues appeared better positioned to coordinate external engagement because many community-facing activities required internal alignment first. Parent communication, School Governance Council work, Brigada Eskwela activities, learner referral, community projects, and stakeholder mobilization often required several teachers or offices to present consistent information and divide responsibilities. Collaboration inside the school could therefore operate as an enabling condition for partnership outside the school.

This interpretation was consistent with recent Philippine evidence showing collaboration to be important in teacher leadership agility.²⁰ It was also consistent with Epstein and Sheldon's observation that partnership policy required supportive implementation structures rather than policy statements alone.¹⁹ Even a motivated teacher could face difficulty sustaining community engagement if responsibilities were unclear, schedules were fragmented, records were not shared, or partnership activities depended on a single individual rather than a team.

Innovation and change agency had retained an independent positive relationship with community engagement. This result suggested that community-facing work had been strengthened when teachers were willing to adapt and improve established practice. A locally responsive school could not rely exclusively on fixed routines because family circumstances, transportation, learner participation, disaster risks, livelihood patterns, language, cultural practices, and local resource availability could differ across communities. Leadership in this setting required disciplined adaptation rather than change for its own sake.

The PPST had provided a direct policy basis for this interpretation. Domain 6 had expected teachers to establish learning environments responsive to community contexts and to engage parents and the wider school community in the educative process.⁶ At the Highly Proficient and Distinguished stages, the standards had moved beyond personal compliance toward guiding colleagues and leading networks. The study's results therefore suggested that community engagement could be treated as a legitimate arena of teacher leadership development rather than as an extracurricular expectation.

Instructional influence beyond the classroom had also contributed unique explanatory value. The result suggested that community engagement had been stronger when teachers understood school-community work as connected to teaching and learning rather than as separate social activity. Epstein had similarly argued that family and community partnerships became educationally meaningful when they were linked to student goals and integrated into teachers' professional work.¹⁸ A partnership became stronger when teachers could explain why an activity mattered for attendance, literacy, learning support, health, safety, career development, or another identifiable learner outcome.

Participation in school decision-making had been high but had contributed less unique variance in the multivariable equation. This did not make decision participation unimportant. Shared governance under RA 9155 and the School Governance Council framework had explicitly valued stakeholder participation and school-level decision processes.^{7,9} The statistical pattern instead suggested that the effect of decision participation had overlapped with other forms of leadership. A teacher who participated meaningfully in planning was often also collaborating, initiating, communicating, or helping implement change.

The small municipality-level differences were noteworthy. SDO Quirino included municipalities with different geographic, institutional, and community conditions, yet the overall leadership and engagement scores had not shown a statistically significant municipality pattern. This result suggested that the underlying professional expectations had been broadly shared across the division. However, it should not be interpreted to mean that school-specific access, remoteness, partner availability, connectivity, or community resources had been equal. Division monitoring would still benefit from school-level and context-specific evidence.

The teaching-experience differences had been modest but informative. More experienced teachers reported somewhat stronger mentoring, decision participation, and community engagement. These practices likely accumulated through familiarity with school routines, community relationships, and professional networks. The implication was not that newer teachers should simply wait for experience. Structured mentoring, guided participation in School Governance Councils, partnership orientation, and supervised community-engagement roles could accelerate the development of these competencies.

The organizational context of SDO Quirino provided practical structures through which such development could occur. The division's School Governance and Operations Division included Social Mobilization and Networking functions, while its public-facing systems had included assistance and feedback mechanisms.^{14,16} These structures could support teachers by providing clear partnership protocols, stakeholder directories, templates, documentation standards, and technical assistance. Teacher leadership would likely be more sustainable when division and school systems reduced ambiguity about who coordinated which community-facing functions.

Brigada Eskwela had provided one visible venue for community participation, but the findings supported a broader conception of engagement. DepEd had historically positioned Brigada Eskwela and Brigada Eskwela Plus as mechanisms for volunteerism, year-round community involvement, learner participation, and school improvement.^{11,12} Teacher leadership could extend the same partnership orientation throughout the school year through learner-support conferences, reading initiatives, health and safety activities, local resource mapping, contextualized learning, career guidance, disaster preparedness, and other school priorities.

The Adopt-a-School framework had also illustrated why teacher leaders needed both relational and procedural competence. External support could involve training, facilities, learning resources, or technology, but effective partnership required needs identification, communication, documentation, alignment with school plans, and sustained follow-through.¹³ Teachers could contribute valuable knowledge about learner and classroom needs, while school heads and authorized offices retained the governance and accountability responsibilities attached to formal agreements and resources.

The study's "malasakit" framing had therefore been most useful when translated into disciplined professional action. Concern without coordination could remain symbolic; participation without clear educational purpose could become ceremonial; and resource mobilization without accountability could create risk. By contrast, teacher leadership grounded in evidence, communication,

collaboration, professional ethics, and shared responsibility could convert concern into a reliable school-community process. This interpretation preserved the cultural resonance of malasakit while keeping the research constructs measurable and professionally bounded. The findings also had implications for professional development. Leadership development for teachers should not focus only on formal promotion pathways or administrative preparation. Training could include facilitation, peer coaching, stakeholder communication, conflict-sensitive dialogue, partnership mapping, project planning, documentation, monitoring, and the use of community data. Such competencies would support both teacher leadership and PPST Domain 6 practice. They would also help schools distribute partnership work across capable teams rather than concentrating it in one coordinator.

Finally, the results reinforced shared governance as a practice rather than a structure alone. School Governance Councils, School-Based Management, learning action cells, committees, and partnership programs created opportunities for participation, but teacher leadership determined whether those opportunities generated professional influence and coordinated action. The quality of engagement therefore depended on both institutional design and the everyday capacity of teachers to work across classroom, school, family, and community boundaries.

6. Proposed Teacher Leadership–Community Engagement Framework

The first component should have been professional influence for learning. Teachers could be supported to share evidence-based practices, facilitate peer learning, and connect instructional concerns with school-wide priorities. Community engagement would then begin from learner needs rather than from generic event participation.

The second component should have been collaborative leadership. Schools could use mentoring pairs, grade-level or department teams, learning action cells, and cross-functional working groups to distribute community-facing responsibilities. Collaboration protocols could clarify who communicated with families, who coordinated with partners, who documented commitments, and who monitored follow-through.

The third component should have been contextual partnership mapping. Each school could maintain an updated map of stakeholders and resources, including parent groups, barangay and municipal offices, health and social-service providers, alumni, civic organizations, cultural groups, local businesses, and other legitimate partners. The map should have been linked to school priorities and learner needs rather than maintained as a static directory.

The fourth component should have been shared-governance participation. Teachers could be progressively exposed to planning, School Governance Council processes, program review, and stakeholder consultation. Newer teachers could participate first through guided roles, while more experienced teachers could mentor colleagues in evidence use, consultation, and implementation monitoring.

The fifth component should have been feedback and accountability. Partnership activities could include simple indicators covering participation, timeliness, resources generated or mobilized, learner reach, unresolved issues, and stakeholder feedback. Documentation should have been proportionate to the activity but sufficient to support transparency, continuity, and institutional memory.

The sixth component should have been capability development tied to the PPST. School and division professional-development plans could explicitly connect leadership and community-engagement competencies with PPST career-stage expectations. This alignment would make community partnership part of professional growth rather than an additional task detached from recognized teacher standards.

7. Conclusion

The study concluded that teacher leadership and community engagement had been closely connected among public school teachers in the Schools Division of Quirino. Teachers who reported stronger professional initiative, collaboration and mentoring, change-oriented practice, and instructional influence beyond the classroom also reported stronger engagement with families and community stakeholders. The relationship was strong at the overall-construct level and remained meaningful when leadership dimensions were considered simultaneously.

The results positioned community engagement as an important expression of teacher leadership rather than as a peripheral school activity. The PPST, shared-governance policies, School Governance Councils, School-Based Management, Brigada Eskwela, and partnership mechanisms had already established a policy environment in which teachers could exercise leadership across school-community boundaries. The empirical pattern indicated that this leadership was strongest when professional influence was collaborative, purposeful, context-responsive, and connected with learner needs.

“Echoes of Malasakit” therefore captured a practical proposition: professional concern gained educational value when it was translated into coordinated leadership and sustained community engagement. For SDO Quirino, the most useful direction was not to add isolated outreach activities, but to strengthen the teacher capabilities and organizational systems that allowed families, schools, and communities to share responsibility for learner development.

8. Recommendations

SDO Quirino should integrate teacher leadership and community-engagement competencies into division and school professional-development plans, particularly through PPST Domain 6 and related leadership indicators. Training should include stakeholder communication, facilitation, mentoring, partnership mapping, project planning, documentation, monitoring, and conflict-sensitive coordination.

School heads should create structured opportunities for teachers at different career stages to participate in shared governance, school improvement, School Governance Councils, learning 1 rather than carrying partnership responsibilities alone.

The Social Mobilization and Networking function and other relevant SDO units should provide schools with standardized but flexible tools such as stakeholder maps, partnership checklists, communication templates, simple monitoring dashboards, and feedback forms. These tools should reduce ambiguity while allowing schools to adapt engagement strategies to local context.

Schools should link community activities to specific learner and school outcomes. Partnership plans should identify the educational problem being addressed, the expected contribution of each stakeholder, the teacher or team responsible for coordination, the evidence of completion, and the mechanism for reviewing results. This approach would help move community engagement from event-based participation toward sustained educational partnership.

Future research should use authenticated teacher and stakeholder data, include school-level organizational variables, and apply multilevel or longitudinal models where feasible. Parent, learner, school-head, local-government, and community-partner perspectives should also be included so that teacher-reported engagement can be compared with external experience and documented partnership outcomes.

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