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**SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN THE NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT TEST (NAT) IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN REGION V: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY**

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### ABSTRACT

School leaders are at the forefront of instructional decision-making, data interpretation, and implementation. They are entrusted with examining evaluation findings to identify patterns, weaknesses, and areas in need of development. This study assessed the correlation between leadership practices and students' performance in National Achievement Test (NAT) in the public secondary schools in Region V (Bicol Region). The research adopted a descriptive-correlational research design. A survey questionnaire was used to collect data from secondary school heads in all six provinces of Region V. Statistical tools such as weighted means and Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient were used to evaluate and establish the levels of leadership practices, challenges encountered and correlation between leadership practices and NAT results. Findings revealed that school heads in Region V consistently practice transformational, democratic, and administrative leadership, while instructional and strategic leadership were less emphasized. Results also showed that most public secondary schools in Region V generally performed well in the NAT, with notable variations across provinces. However, The correlation between school leadership practices and NAT performance is weak and statistically insignificant, suggesting that leadership alone does not

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strongly determine test outcomes. The study further identified key challenges faced by school heads, including limited parental and community involvement, inadequate learning and teaching resources, and learners' readiness and motivation. Based on these findings, a development plan was proposed, focusing on strengthening instructional and the challenges encountered by the school heads. The implementation of the proposed development plan is expected to enhance leadership effectiveness, improve instructional quality, and support better student learning outcomes across public secondary schools in Region V.

**Keywords:** *Leadership Practices; National Achievement Test; Challenges; Region V; Professional Development Plan*



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## INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4's global agenda intertwines governance, assessment, and leadership to deliver inclusive, high-quality education by 2030. Following UNESCO's Agenda 2030, Ghamrawi (2023) identifies instructional, distributed leadership, School Autonomy, and leader evaluation as core drivers for translating several SDG 4 goals into practice at institutional level. SDG 4 (Quality Education) is the most central to school leadership. This goal aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) is also closely linked to school leadership. School leaders are responsible for implementing inclusive policies that address learning gaps, providing support systems for diverse learners, and ensuring equitable access to resources. SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) underscores the need for accountable, inclusive, and effective institutions. The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework that reinforces the strategic, instructional, and transformational roles of school leaders. Through effective leadership practices, schools become key institutions in advancing sustainable development at the local and national levels.

School leaders are at the forefront of instructional decision-making, data interpretation, and implementation. Principals are entrusted with examining evaluation findings to identify patterns, weaknesses, and areas in need of development. School heads use assessment results to inform the planning and execution of capacity-building initiatives for teacher development. They ensure that teachers are prepared to address learners' requirements, as determined by assessments such as the Phil-IRI or NCAE, through Learning

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Action Cell (LAC) meetings, in-service training, or coaching programs. School heads also spearhead efforts to establish data-driven cultures in schools, motivating teachers to use data to tailor instruction and participate in formative assessment.

Many countries participate in international large-scale assessments alongside their national evaluations to benchmark student performance against global standards. Among these is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which evaluates the reading, mathematics, and science proficiency of 15-year-old students. Another is the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), which measures literacy, numeracy, and global citizenship among fifth-grade students in Southeast Asian nations. Participation in these assessments provides valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of education systems, helping to inform policy decisions, guide investments, and support efforts to improve educational quality and competitiveness on an international scale (UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020).

The Department of Education (DepEd) supervises and regulates Basic Education in the Philippines. This agency works with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in a triangular approach. The DepEd is mandated to formulate, implement, and coordinate all the policies, plans, programs, and projects in formal and nonformal basic education. It manages all public schools and regulates the private schools through the leadership of the department secretary at the national level.

Republic Act No. 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, emphasizes the integral function of assessments in improving teaching strategies, student

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learning, and school performance. It mandates the use of assessment results to drive evidence-based improvements within the education system. The Department of Education (DepEd) conducts a number of national tests to gauge the overall quality of the system, curriculum efficacy, and student achievement at different basic education levels. These tests are essential tools for shaping educational policy and classroom practice, as they can be used for diagnostic, formative, summative, and even career-guiding purposes.

As part of the legal and policy foundation for this study, two key issues underscore the importance of assessments and school leadership in improving learner outcomes. DepEd Order No. 55, s. 2016, also known as the Policy Guidelines on the National Assessment of Student Learning for the K to 12 Basic Education Program, provides a structured framework for conducting national assessments such as the National Achievement Test (NAT), Basic Education Exit Assessment (BEEA), and Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA). This order highlights the role of assessments as critical instruments for identifying learning gaps, informing instruction, and serving as tools for measuring academic achievement and evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and school leadership.

The National Achievement Test (NAT), one of the most well-known tests, assesses students' knowledge and proficiency in fundamental subjects like English, Math, Science, Filipino, and Araling Panlipunan. The NAT is a diagnostic tool used to assess how well students have learned the abilities included in the basic education curriculum. It is given to students in Grades 6 and 10. To increase teaching effectiveness and student performance, the findings

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alert educators and School Administrators to particular learning gaps that need to be filled (DepEd, 2016).

Despite the structured assessment system and leadership mandates, persistent issues undermine the effectiveness of school leadership in improving student performance (Verdugo et al., 2024). Not only do school heads, principals, and other educational leaders facilitate these tests, but they also play a crucial role in implementing assessment protocols, which, in turn, drive data use, instructional improvement, and accountability based on assessment outcomes. They are responsible for ensuring that standardized tests are administered faithfully, securely, and in accordance with DepEd regulations.

This study assessed the correlation between school leadership and student performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT). This study provided an overview of the varied leadership practices of school heads in public secondary schools across provincial divisions in Region V, which are crucial to improving students' achievement. With current trends pushing for stronger accountability, teacher quality, and instructional effectiveness, findings from this research can guide school leaders in enhancing leadership practices that directly influence assessment outcomes.

## Objectives of the Study

This study assessed the correlation between school leadership practices and performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT) of selected public secondary schools Region V as input for a development plan. Specifically, this study aimed to:

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1. Determine the extent of school leadership practices in selected public secondary schools in Region V along;
  - 1.1 Instructional
  - 1.2 Transformational
  - 1.3 Administrative
  - 1.4 Democratic and
  - 1.5 Strategic
2. Analyze the performance of Grade 10 students in the National Achievement Test (NAT).
3. Determine the significant relationship between the school leadership practices and student performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT).
4. Identify challenges encountered by the school heads in the leadership practices in improving student performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT).
5. Proposed a development plan to improve student academic performance.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Data-Informed Leadership Theory, Goal-Orientation Theory, and Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Data-Informed Leadership Theory (Mandinach & Gummer, 2006) emphasizes the strategic use of data, combined with professional judgment, to guide instructional improvements and enhance student performance.

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Goal-Orientation Theory (Dweck, 1986; Ames, 1992; Elliot & McGregor, 2001) explains how students' motivation—whether mastery- or performance-oriented—is influenced by the school environment, which is shaped by leadership practices. Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom et al., 1956; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) provides a framework for promoting higher-order thinking skills, highlighting the role of instructional leadership in improving teaching quality and academic outcomes.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive–correlational research design was employed, integrating quantitative survey data and documentary analysis. The quantitative component utilized a structured questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale to determine the extent of school leadership practices and challenges encountered by school heads across five dimensions: instructional, transformational, administrative, democratic, and strategic leadership. The qualitative component involved documentary analysis of National Achievement Test (NAT) results to assess student performance trends. The design enabled the study to describe leadership practices and examine their relationship with academic outcomes.

### Population, Sampling, and Sample Size

The population comprised school heads from public secondary schools in Region V. Using Slovin's formula with a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, a sample size of  $n = 497$  was derived from a total population of  $N = 671$ . A stratified random sampling technique was applied to ensure proportional representation across six provincial divisions.

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The distribution included respondents from Divisions A (77), B (59), C (152), D (34), E (102), and F (73), all of whom were school heads managing schools offering Grades 7 to 10.

### Sources of Data

Primary data were collected through a researcher-made survey questionnaire assessing leadership practices and challenges. Secondary data included official records of Grade 10 National Achievement Test (NAT) results from the Department of Education, as well as relevant national policies and related literature on educational leadership and student performance.

### Research Instrumentation

The main instrument was a validated researcher-made questionnaire based on the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads. It consisted of two parts: (1) leadership practices across five dimensions, and (2) challenges encountered in applying these leadership practices. A 4-point Likert scale was used (1 = Not Practiced/Not Challenging to 4 = Always Practiced/Highly Challenging). The instrument underwent validation by Public District Supervisors and Master Teachers to ensure face, content, and construct validity. Revisions were incorporated based on expert feedback prior to administration.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The study commenced with securing approvals from the Regional, Division, and school authorities. Upon approval, the researcher distributed survey instruments through Google Forms to the selected respondents. Orientation and instructions were provided to ensure accurate responses. Simultaneously, official NAT data were requested from appropriate offices.

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Data collection was closely monitored, and all responses were consolidated, organized, and prepared for analysis.

### **Statistical Techniques and Qualitative Analysis**

Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and weighted means, were used to summarize leadership practices, challenges, and respondent distribution. The weighted mean determined the extent of leadership practices based on the 4-point scale. Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) was utilized to examine the relationship between leadership practices and student performance in NAT, using ranked gains in scores rather than raw differences. A significance level of  $\alpha = 0.05$  was applied. Documentary analysis of NAT results was conducted to identify performance trends and support the quantitative findings, ensuring triangulation of results.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The following discussion aims to clarify the meaning of the observed results, highlight any unexpected outcomes, and explore their significance.

### **Extent of Leadership Practices of School Heads in Public Secondary Schools in Region V**

School heads are expected to demonstrate a wide range of leadership practices that respond to the evolving demands of the educational system. This includes curriculum implementation, teacher supervision, resource management, and stakeholder management. This study assessed the extent to which these practices are manifested along five leadership

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dimensions namely: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, administrative leadership, democratic leadership, and strategic leadership.

Table 1 presents the extent of instructional leadership practices of school heads in Region V, revealing an overall average weighted mean of 2.99, which falls within the “Practiced” category. Provincial Division D recorded the highest mean of 3.03 while Division A had the lowest mean of 2.72. This indicates that school heads are implementing instructional strategies and supporting teachers’ professional growth, although there is still room to enhance the effectiveness and consistency of these practices across the region.

Table 1. Extent of School Leadership Practices of School Heads in Public Secondary Schools in Region V

Region V	Instructional Leadership	Transformational Leadership	Administrative Leadership	Democratic Leadership	Strategic Leadership	$\bar{wx}$	Rank
A	2.72	3.20	3.22	3.22	3.17	3.11	6
B	3.00	3.31	3.20	3.24	3.15	3.18	3
C	3.01	3.30	3.20	3.23	3.19	3.19	2
D	3.03	3.28	3.18	3.16	3.14	3.17	4
E	3.01	3.24	3.26	3.40	3.20	3.22	1
F	2.99	3.22	3.29	3.13	3.14	3.16	5
Average	2.99	3.27	3.22	3.20	3.16	3.17	

**Legend:** 3.25 – 4.00 – Always Practiced (AP), 2.50 – 3.24- Practiced (P), 1.75 – 2.49 – Less Practiced (LP), 1.0 – 1.74 – Not Practiced (NP)

With multiple provinces showing consistently high weighted averages, transformational leadership is the top overall school leadership practice. This suggests that school heads successfully encourage, inspire, and support teachers' professional development. While school heads do well in other areas, classroom monitoring, feedback, and data-driven instructional assistance still need to be strengthened to improve teaching and learning results.

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This is demonstrated by the fact that instructional leadership is the lowest overall practice in the region.

According to the research on this subject, school administrators in Region V's public secondary schools have a great deal of success inspiring their faculty and staff. The sampled public secondary schools in Region V have also consistently implemented the Democratic and administrative leadership dimensions, showing that teachers are involved in various processes within their local administrations and that school heads exhibit a strong sense of administrative leadership in adhering to policies in the governance of their respective institutions. This suggests that the local administrations of the public secondary schools in Region V place little emphasis on the aspects of instructional leadership.

The results indicate that while school heads in Region V exhibit transformational, democratic, and administrative leadership qualities, there is a gap in their instructional leadership qualities that needs to be addressed in order to provide direct support and leadership to teaching and learning in the region. In order to create a better fit between leadership qualities, school heads' professional development interventions must concentrate on both their instructional and strategic leadership traits. To raise the standard of education in the area, this can aid in the formation of a better fit between leadership attributes.

The summary of school leadership practices across Region V shows that Provincial Division E consistently ranks highest in Instructional, Democratic, and Strategic Leadership, reflecting strong vision-setting, participatory governance, and adaptive strategic planning, while Transformational Leadership is strongest in Provincial Divisions B and C and

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Administrative Leadership in Division F. These results are consistent with Koh and colleagues in 2023, who emphasized that clear vision, effective goal setting, curriculum planning aligned with learners' needs, stakeholder engagement, and continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential to promoting collaboration, sustaining a positive school climate, and improving student outcomes. Sanchez and Watson in 2021 highlighted that effective leadership enhances student attitudes toward learning and academic achievement when performance management systems, including strategic planning and teacher evaluation, are in place. Dabesa and Cheramlak in 2021 further stressed that efficient resource management, policy implementation, and participatory leadership are crucial to achieving educational goals and sustaining school improvement.

Instructional Leadership demonstrates that school heads generally provide guidance, classroom monitoring, and professional support. Using a data-informed goal orientation, leaders analyze student performance data to identify learning gaps, set measurable objectives, and adjust teaching strategies. This practice aligns with Bloom's Taxonomy, particularly the application, analysis, and evaluation levels, ensuring that instructional decisions are evidence-based and targeted toward improved learning outcomes. Despite this, instructional leadership remains the lowest-rated dimension, highlighting the need for stronger classroom supervision and feedback mechanisms.

Democratic Leadership averages across the region, reflecting participatory and inclusive practices. Applying data-informed decision-making, school heads incorporate feedback from teachers and other stakeholders to refine instructional goals, reflecting Bloom's

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analyzing and evaluating levels. Some divisions, however, could further enhance participatory governance and collaborative problem-solving.

Provincial Division E, D, and F leaders use a data-informed approach to set priorities, establish SMART objectives, and monitor progress against school improvement plans. When combined with Bloom’s higher-order thinking levels, these practices help align instructional programs with learner outcomes and institutional goals. Nonetheless, stronger focus on evidence-based adjustments and continuous monitoring could further improve strategic outcomes.

Provincial Division E ranks highest in instructional, democratic, and strategic leadership, reflecting effective vision-setting, participatory governance, and adaptive planning. Divisions B and C perform well in instructional leadership practices guided by data-informed goal orientation and Bloom’s framework, while Division F demonstrates strong administrative management. These results underscore the importance of using data to inform leadership decisions, set achievable goals, and monitor performance systematically.

**Performance of the Public Secondary Schools in Region V on the National Achievement Test (NAT).** Table 2 presents the performance of public secondary schools in Region V on the National Achievement Test (NAT) for School Year 2022–2023. Across the region, a total of 497 schools participated in the examination. Based on the data from the Department of Education Central Office for SY 2022–2023, Provincial Division C achieved the highest number of students scoring in the top NAT bracket (111.13 and above), with 59 schools, indicating strong academic performance and effective instructional leadership within

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the division. Following Division C, Division E and Division F also demonstrated commendable results, with 39 and 36 schools, respectively, achieving the top bracket. Division D had the lowest number of top scorers at 21 schools, highlighting potential areas for instructional improvement.

In the second-highest NAT performance bracket (106.82–111.12), Division C again led with 20 schools, while Division D had the fewest at 4 schools. This trend underscores Division C's consistent academic strength across top-performing categories, whereas Division D shows challenges in supporting students to reach higher achievement levels.

For the mid-level performance brackets (102.51–106.81 and 98.20–102.50), Division A and Division C had relatively higher student counts, with 14 and 21 schools in 102.51–106.81 and 6 and 21 schools in 98.20–102.50, respectively. In contrast, Division D remained at the lower end with only 3 schools in 102.51–106.81 and 3 in 98.20–102.50, indicating weaker performance in the mid-range.

In the lower performance ranges (93.89–98.19 down to 76.64 and below), Division A and Division C continued to have notable numbers, though some lower brackets had very few schools, reflecting generally better outcomes. Division D consistently had the lowest counts across these ranges, including no schools in 89.58–93.88, 85.27–89.57, and 80.96–85.26 brackets, demonstrating persistent performance gaps.

Provincial Division C emerged as the highest-performing division in Region V based on NAT scores, showing strong instructional outcomes across most performance levels. Division D consistently had the lowest performance across multiple brackets, signaling the need for

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targeted interventions to enhance teaching quality, learner support, and overall student achievement.

Moreover, the NAT results are cumulative in nature, reflecting instructional practices, academic interventions, and leadership decisions implemented over a period of time. If the present school heads were not yet assigned during the preparation phase, implementation of review programs, or actual administration of the examination, their leadership practices could not have substantially influenced the recorded performance. This situation weakens the direct linkage between current leadership behaviors and NAT outcomes.

*Table 2. Performance of the Public Secondary Schools in Region V on the National Achievement Test (NAT)*

NAT Performance	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
111.13 and above	18	22	59	21	39	36	195
106.82-111.12	5	7	20	4	10	7	53
102.51-106.81	14	8	11	3	8	8	52
98.20-102.50	6	7	21	3	10	6	53
93.89-98.19	19	5	11	3	8	5	51
89.58-93.88	8	5	15	0	8	6	42
85.27-89.57	3	4	7	0	11	4	29
80.96-85.26	4	0	5	0	3	0	12
76.65-80.95	0	1	2	0	2	1	6
76.64 and below	0	0	1	0	3	0	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>497</b>

Source: Department of Education Central Office (NAT, SY 2022-2023, JHS, Region V)

These findings indicate the presence of achievement gaps among students despite the region's high-performance levels. They also show the need for effective school leadership, particularly instructional leadership, to ensure consistent performance across schools. They

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also indicate the need for effective instructional leadership to improve the performance of low-performing schools. Effective implementation of the effective transformational leadership will ensure more equitable performance levels in the region.

The strong academic outcomes which are concurring in the results of the study by Hanushek (2020) Papageorgiou & Callaghan (2020). However, these provinces also have schools in lower performance brackets, revealing disparities within the same province (Eke & Okonkwo, 2023). These findings suggest that high academic achievement is linked to effective school leadership. Transformational leadership, which has been shown to motivate teachers, foster professional growth, and improve school climate (Reyes, 2022), plays a crucial role in driving student performance. To reduce disparities, school heads should strengthen instructional and strategic leadership by improving classroom supervision, providing feedback, and using data-driven approaches to support learning. Aligning strong transformational leadership with these practices can promote more consistent and equitable academic outcomes across Region V.

These results suggest that while some divisions excel academically, others struggle to reach top performance levels. Data-informed goal-oriented leadership could address these disparities by analyzing student performance trends, setting targeted interventions, and applying Bloom’s higher-order thinking to improve instructional strategies and student outcomes.

### **Correlation Between School Leadership Practices and Performance of Public Secondary Schools in Region V on the National Achievement Test (NAT). Table 3**

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presents the correlation between school heads' leadership practices and students' performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT). In this study, the relationship between school heads' leadership practices and students' performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT) was analyzed using the Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's rho).

*Table 3. Correlation Between School Heads' Leadership Practices and Students Performance in National Achievement Test (NAT)*

Variables	Computed rho	Computed t-value	Tabulated t-value at 1% level	Decision
Instructional Leadership Practices and Students Performance in National Achievement Test (NAT)	.18	.52	1.96	H <sub>0</sub> = accepted
Transformational Leadership Practices and Students Performance in National Achievement Test (NAT)	.03	.08	1.96	H <sub>0</sub> = accepted
Administrative Leadership Practices and Students Performance in National Achievement Test (NAT)	.18	.52	1.96	H <sub>0</sub> = accepted
Democratic Leadership Practices and Students Performance in National Achievement Test (NAT)	.21	.60	1.96	H <sub>0</sub> = accepted
Strategic Leadership Practices and Students Performance in National Achievement Test (NAT)	.06	.17	1.96	H <sub>0</sub> = accepted

Based on the data presented in Table 3, the results consistently show that all five dimensions of school heads' leadership practices—instructional, transformational, administrative, democratic, and strategic—have weak positive correlations with students' performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT).  
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performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT). The correlation coefficients range from 0.03 to 0.21, indicating very low relationships. Among these, democratic leadership ( $\rho = 0.21$ ) has the highest correlation, while transformational leadership ( $\rho = 0.03$ ) has the lowest.

However, despite these positive correlations, all computed t-values (0.08 to 0.60) are significantly lower than the tabulated value of 1.96 at the 1% level of significance. This leads to the acceptance of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) across all leadership dimensions, confirming that there is no statistically significant relationship between school heads' leadership practices and students' NAT performance.

Based on the data presented in Table 3, the results consistently show that all five dimensions of school heads' leadership practices—instructional, transformational, administrative, democratic, and strategic—have weak positive correlations with students' performance in the National Achievement Test (NAT). The correlation coefficients range from 0.03 to 0.21, indicating very low relationships. Among these, democratic leadership ( $\rho = 0.21$ ) has the highest correlation, while transformational leadership ( $\rho = 0.03$ ) has the lowest.

These findings suggest that while leadership practices may contribute to the overall functioning and climate of the school, they do not directly or significantly influence students' academic performance in standardized assessments like the NAT. The weak correlations imply that improvements in leadership alone are unlikely to produce substantial gains in student achievement outcomes. The lack of significant relationship may be attributed to several external and contextual factors. These include teacher competence, instructional quality, availability of learning resources, student socioeconomic status, and school infrastructure,

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which may exert a stronger influence on student performance than leadership practices.

Additionally, the frequent reassignment or transfer of school heads may limit their ability to implement sustained leadership strategies, thereby reducing their measurable impact on NAT results. The results highlight that effective leadership must be complemented by strong instructional practices, targeted academic interventions, and supportive learning environments to significantly improve student performance.

The weak correlation between school heads' leadership practices and students' NAT performance suggests that leadership alone is insufficient to ensure high student achievement on standardized tests. Although transformational, democratic, and administrative leadership practices play a crucial role in motivating teachers, fostering collaboration, and maintaining effective school operations, they do not necessarily translate into higher academic outcomes. This underscores the importance of complementing leadership practices with professional development programs that enhance instructional and strategic leadership skills, as well as targeted interventions aimed at improving teaching quality, classroom practices, and learning resources. Policies that balance leadership responsibilities with direct instructional support are essential to create an environment where leadership efforts can meaningfully contribute to student performance.

Another reason for the lack of a significant correlation between leadership practices and National Achievement Test (NAT) performance is the frequent transfers off school leaders to other schools either during or immediately after the period when the NAT is conducted. As a result, these leaders may not have had sufficient time to implement their leadership

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strategies, influence teaching practices, or foster instructional improvements that could impact student learning outcomes. The NAT scores reflected in the data may largely capture the outcomes of prior leadership, instructional approaches, and teacher practices rather than the influence of the current respondents. Other contextual factors may dilute the direct impact of leadership on student performance. These include variations in teacher competence, student socioeconomic backgrounds, availability of learning resources, and school infrastructure. In schools where these factors vary significantly, leadership alone may not be a strong determinant of NAT outcomes.

Reyes (2022) similarly note that while transformational leadership enhances collaboration and professional growth, other contextual factors significantly influence academic outcomes. Eke & Okonkwo (2023) highlight that classroom environment, teacher-student relationships, and learning resources are critical determinants of student achievement, aligning with the minimal correlation observed in this study.

The weak correlations indicate that leadership effectiveness must be complemented by instructional quality, teacher competence, learning resources, and student support systems. Frequent reassignment of school heads may also limit the impact of strategic initiatives on NAT performance. Data-informed goal orientation can help school leaders mitigate these limitations by continuously analyzing performance data, monitoring interventions, and applying Bloom's levels of thinking to ensure that instructional decisions and strategic actions are tailored to actual learning needs.

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## **Challenges Encountered by the School Heads in the Practices of Leadership**

**Dimensions.** School heads are tasked with implementing instructional, transformational, administrative, democratic, and strategic leadership practices. In line with this, it is inevitable that they encounter challenges that hinder the effective execution of these roles.

Table 4.7 provides a consolidated overview of the challenges faced by school heads across all Public Secondary Schools in Region V along different leadership dimensions. The table indicates that parental and community involvement received the highest rating with a weighted mean of 3.34, signifying strong agreement among respondents on its importance, followed closely by the availability of learning and teaching resources at 3.33 and access to targeted professional development at 3.11. On the other hand, the lowest-rated challenge was accurate and complete student performance data, with a weighted mean of 1.98, reflecting disagreement and highlighting a critical gap in data management. Other moderate challenges include ample time for instructional supervision at 2.89, adequate teacher capacity in NAT-focused strategies at 2.94, learners' readiness and motivation at 3.19, and teacher absenteeism or turnover at 2.64. The overall average of 2.97 indicates that school heads generally agree that these challenges affect their leadership responsibilities, suggesting that while support systems like community involvement and resources are acknowledged, issues related to data accuracy, teacher availability, and instructional supervision remain areas needing urgent attention.

The findings suggest that school heads in Region V consider parental and community involvement, the availability of learning and teaching resources, and learners' readiness and

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motivation as the most significant challenges in implementing effective school leadership. This implies that to improve overall school performance, strategies should focus on strengthening partnerships with parents and the community, ensuring adequate and accessible instructional materials, and implementing programs that enhance student engagement and preparedness.

*Table 4.7. Challenges Encountered by the School Heads in Public Secondary Schools in Region V along the Different Leadership Practices*

Indicators	Region V Provincial Divisions						$\bar{wx}$	AI	Rank
	A	B	C	D	E	F			
Ample time for instructional supervision	3.28	2.69	3.20	2.65	2.77	2.72	2.89	A	8
Adequate teacher capacity in NAT-focused strategies	3.14	2.89	3.09	2.86	2.96	2.72	2.94	A	7
Availability of learning and teaching resources	3.25	3.35	3.38	3.36	3.51	3.12	3.33	SA	2
Learners' readiness and motivation	3.19	3.16	3.12	3.14	3.45	3.06	3.19	A	3
Active participation among teachers in implementing academic reforms	3.20	3.23	3.14	3.13	3.47	2.93	3.18	A	4
Accurate and complete student performance data	3.07	1.42	3.05	1.50	1.45	1.39	1.98	D	10
Parental and community involvement	3.30	3.38	3.23	3.36	3.67	3.12	3.34	SA	1
Teacher absenteeism or turnover	3.24	2.27	3.39	2.28	2.35	2.33	2.64	A	9
Bureaucratic delays and limitations	3.09	3.08	3.09	3.06	3.20	2.85	3.06	A	6

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Access to targeted professional development	3.26	3.08	3.22	3.06	3.24	2.82	3.11	A	5
Average	3.20	2.86	3.19	2.84	3.01	2.71	2.97	A	

**Legend:** 3.25 – 4.00 – Always Practiced (AP), 2.50 – 3.24- Practiced (P), 1.75 – 2.49 – Less Practiced (LP) 1.0 – 1.74 – Not Practiced (NP)

The fact that accurate and complete student performance data is perceived as the least challenging area indicates that while data collection and reporting systems may be functional, they alone are insufficient to drive improvements without addressing the more pressing challenges of resources, motivation, and stakeholder involvement. Therefore, educational stakeholders, including school administrators and local government units, should prioritize interventions that foster active parental engagement, enhance teaching and learning materials, and support initiatives that increase learner readiness to create a more conducive environment for student achievement.

These findings are in line with a study done by Caballero and Bantulo (2023), which emphasized that effective school management has a positive correspondence to teacher motivation and school results. Perez (2022) also focused on how school performance can be improved through resource allocation and a collaborative Provincial Division Culture by Provincial Division Administrators/principal leaders. Masudi et al. (2023) also stressed that effective leadership in various school settings can significantly enhance student results through resource allocation and active stakeholder engagement.

Across all divisions, school leadership challenges reflect the need for motivation, informed decision-making, and structured instructional planning. By integrating Goal

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Orientation Theory, Data-Informed Decision Theory, and Bloom's Taxonomy, school heads can strategically manage their schools. Goal Orientation Theory motivates staff and aligns efforts toward achievement objectives. Data-Informed Decision Theory enables evidence-based interventions and efficient resource allocation. Bloom's Taxonomy supports systematic instructional design and the promotion of higher-order thinking among learners. This theoretical alignment highlights that effective school leadership depends on setting clear goals, leveraging data to inform practices, and designing instruction to meet learners' developmental needs, ultimately enhancing school performance and student outcomes.

**Proposed Development Plan.** The proposed development plan aims to address common challenges faced by school heads in Region V, particularly in community engagement, resource management, and student motivation. Led by the Public District Supervisor (PDS), the plan is systematic, collaborative, and ongoing, equipping administrators with the skills and support networks necessary to address these priority areas. Its design integrates Goal Orientation Theory, Data-Informed Decision Theory, and Bloom's Taxonomy to guide practical strategies, evidence-based decision-making, and instructional leadership for improved student outcomes.

The plan focuses on three key areas. First, enhancing community-school partnerships through structured parental involvement, stakeholder forums, and collaborative planning encourages shared accountability for student success. Mentoring sessions from high-performing schools can model effective practices. Second, strengthening resource management involves capacity-building in strategic planning, finance mobilization, and

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optimization of materials and partnerships. Training on project proposals and collaboration with local stakeholders ensures efficient and equitable resource allocation. Third, improving instructional leadership and student motivation emphasizes learner support, academic intervention, and data-driven decision-making. District Learning Action Cell (LAC) workshops and coaching sessions support school heads in fostering student engagement, motivation, and readiness.

Key features of the plan include a needs-based, context-driven approach, collaborative learning through seminars, coaching, and peer mentorship, and sustainability through continuous monitoring, evaluation, and reflective feedback. Leadership initiatives are aligned with district priorities, ensuring measurable gains in stakeholder engagement, resource utilization, instructional supervision, and learner support. By fostering professional networks, shared accountability, and ongoing skill development, the plan positions the PDS as a coach, mentor, and strategic partner in enhancing school leadership.

The development plan is structured around six interconnected components: needs assessment and planning, capacity-building and professional development, implementation and technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation, collaboration and peer support networks, and sustainability and institutionalization. Each component contributes to strengthening school heads' competencies and ensuring long-term improvements in instructional quality, administrative efficiency, and student learning outcomes. Through this integrated and theory-driven approach, the plan aims to create responsive, accountable, and high-performing schools across the district.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the data gathered, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. School heads in Region V consistently practice transformational, democratic, and administrative leadership, with transformational leadership being the most exercised. Instructional and strategic leadership were less emphasized, indicating the need for improvement in classroom monitoring, instructional support, and long-term planning.

2. Public secondary schools in Provincial Divisions C, E, and A show relatively strong academic performance, though not all schools in these divisions reach top performance levels. Provinces such as B and D show lower overall performance.

3. The correlation between school leadership practices and NAT performance is weak and statistically insignificant, suggesting that leadership alone does not strongly determine test outcomes.

4. The greatest challenges for school heads are parental and community involvement, availability of teaching resources, and student readiness and motivation. The least challenging areas are student data accuracy, teacher absenteeism, and instructional supervision. Provincial Division E faces the highest overall challenges, while Division F has the lowest.

5. A development plan is needed for school heads, focusing on instructional and strategic leadership. Existing strengths in transformational, democratic, and administrative leadership can support improvements in classroom practices, resource management, long-term planning, and evidence-based decision-making, which may enhance NAT performance.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. It is recommended that school heads continue with the development and enhancement of transformational, democratic, and administrative leadership qualities and that greater consideration should probably be given to instructional and strategic types of school leadership.

2. This study recommends improving the low-performing schools with polarized NAT performance results. This includes the sharing of best practices among high- and low-performing schools, the conduct of remedial assistance for the students, and improving the resources of the teachers. Likewise, focus is necessary for the provinces with fewer numbers of high-performing schools to have equilateral learning opportunities for the people of Region V.

3. It is suggested to improve the low-performing schools in NAT. This includes the sharing of best practices among high- and low-performing schools, the conduct of remedial assistance for the students, and improving the resources of the teachers. Likewise, focus is necessary for the provinces with fewer numbers of high-performing schools to have equilateral learning opportunities for the people of Region V.

4. Involvement on the part of parents and the communities they come from can be addressed in a better manner through school heads who can facilitate this with the challenges they face. Coordination with barangay and municipal governments can further institutionalize stakeholder engagement initiatives.

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5. The development plan proposed be carried out and tailored to address particular leadership shortcomings. It is recommended that attention be paid, through training programs, to enhancing instruction and strategic leadership skills. Emphasis should be given to instructional supervision, strategic planning, transformational leadership, democratic practices, and administrative management.



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