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Research Article

Ethical Leadership And Crisis Leadership Competence As Predictors Of Empowering Leadership Among Public School Leaders: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Study

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Abstract

Introduction: Empowering leadership gives teachers a voice in school decisions, yet Philippine school governance remains centralized. Limited research examines empowering leadership as an outcome of supervisory practices. No Region XI study has tested whether supervisors' ethical leadership and crisis leadership competence predict school leaders' empowering leadership.

Objective: This study assessed ethical leadership, crisis leadership competence, and empowering leadership, tested their predictive relationships, and explained quantitative findings through school leaders' perspectives.

Methods: An explanatory sequential mixed methods design involved 300 public school leaders from 11 Region XI divisions, selected through stratified random sampling. Respondents rated their supervisors' ethical leadership and crisis competence and their own empowering leadership using adapted five-point scales. Descriptive statistics and multiple regression were applied. Qualitative data comprised 10 interviews and one focus group discussion with seven participants. Thematic analysis and a joint display integrated findings. Ethical approval was secured.

Results: All constructs received very high ratings: ethical leadership ($M = 4.88$), crisis competence ($M = 4.85$), and empowering leadership ($M = 4.89$). Regression was significant ($F(2, 297) = 29.52$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .166$). Ethical leadership significantly predicted empowering leadership ($\beta = .370$, $p < .001$), whereas crisis competence did not ($\beta = .105$, $p = .054$). Participants emphasized integrity, transparency, calm crisis response, delegation, trust, and supervisory emulation.

Conclusions: Supervisors' ethical leadership is a stronger predictor of empowering leadership. Leadership development should integrate ethics-centered supervision, mentoring, and crisis preparedness.

Keywords: crisis leadership competence; empowering leadership; ethical leadership; explanatory sequential design; public school leaders; social learning theory

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1. Introduction

Empowering leadership shares power with followers. Leaders grant autonomy, assign responsibility, and open decisions to participation in order to raise motivation and performance (Knevelsrud et al., 2025; Setiawan et al., 2020). In schools, this practice lets staff make professional decisions, take initiative, and shape school development (Alif & Nastiti, 2022; Panga et al., 2025).

Many school systems still place most administrative and instructional decisions in the hands of the school head and leave teachers little room for autonomy (bin As-Siddiqi & El-Bukhary, 2025; Feiger, 2024). Such centralization limits teacher initiative, shared responsibility, and participation in governance (Leithwood, 2021).

The problem crosses borders. Leaders in the United States hesitate to delegate authority (Kim & Beehr, 2021). Leaders in China restrict empowerment when they keep tight control over decisions (Zhang & Wang, 2025), and conventional administrative models in Pakistan keep leadership in a few hands (Alam & Ashraf, 2025). In the Philippines, centralized procedures reduce teacher involvement in instructional and management decisions in Quezon City (David et al., 2019), and bureaucratic structures limit teacher autonomy in Cabuyao City (Mahinay & Gallardo, 2025).

School leadership in General Santos City remains administrator-oriented (Jumawan & Namocot, 2023). In Region XI, teachers in a rural Davao del Sur school described governance as centralized and compliance-oriented, employees in Davao Occidental reported concentrated decision authority , and teachers in Davao de Oro cited micromanagement and symbolic participation (Cabilla, 2025).

Two leadership practices offer a route toward wider empowerment. Ethical leadership stresses moral standards, fairness, trust, transparency, and accountability (Hoch et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2025). Ethical and empowering leadership differ in focus, yet both relate to positive employee outcomes (Limpo & Junaidi, 2022). Crisis leadership competence, the capacity to combine directive and delegative approaches when managing crises, treats empowerment as a core element alongside decisiveness, resilience, and open communication (Balasubramanian & Fernandes, 2022). Leaders with this competence delegate routine tasks while keeping overall direction (Marques et al., 2025), because delegation without guidance adds stress for employees during a crisis (Van Roekel et al., 2025).

1.1. Empowering Leadership

Empowering leadership consists of practices granting employees autonomy, shared influence, and involvement through the delegation of power and support for self-direction (Kim & Beehr, 2021; Wang et al., 2022). The style moves away from hierarchical control and positions teachers as participants rather than receivers of orders (Wen et al., 2023).

The mechanism works through psychological empowerment, the sense of competence, meaning, self-determination, and impact, which in turn raises motivation and performance (Kundu et al., 2019). The Empowering Leadership Questionnaire captures this behavior in five dimensions: leading by example, participative decision-making, coaching, informing, and showing concern (Arnold et al., 2000).

Evidence from schools shows wide variation. Empowering leadership of principals in Hong Kong secondary schools raised teacher performance through structural empowerment and team cohesion (Liang et al., 2026). High principal empowerment in Turkey increased teacher well-being and reduced workplace ostracism (Okçu et al., 2024), and strong empowering leadership in Chinese universities enhanced the adaptive performance of faculty (Xu & Zhang, 2022). Low empowering leadership in Pakistani higher education restricted autonomy and suppressed task performance (Ahmed et al., 2022), and centralized compliance routines in Thai primary schools limited daily power sharing (Boonyota et al., 2024).

Empowerment also carries risks. Delegation without clear structure creates role ambiguity (Dennerlein & Kirkman, 2022), empowering leadership lowers performance among subordinates lacking motivation (Xu & Zhang, 2022), and cultures valuing subordination discourage teachers from taking up leadership (Özdemir et al., 2023). Calibrated delegation matters as much as the amount of power shared.

1.2. Ethical Leadership and Empowering Leadership

Ethical leadership is normatively appropriate conduct shown through personal actions and relationships and promoted to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Banks et al., 2020). Langlois et al. (2014) describe three ethics in school leadership. The ethic of care centers on empathy and attention to the needs of others (Ballangrud & Aas, 2022; Osuntade, 2025). The ethic of critique asks leaders to question practices placing some members at a disadvantage (Hoare, 2025; Kaduma, 2024). The ethic of justice stresses fairness, equity, and consistent application of rules (Atasoy & Yalçın, 2023; Patel, 2025). Reported levels vary across settings. Teachers in Hafr Al Batin rated principals high on integrity (M = 4.10) (Aldawsari, 2020), and 541 teachers in Sakarya reported high perceptions of principal ethical behavior (İlğan & Ekiz, 2020). Head teachers in Multan showed moderate ethical behavior (M = 3.90, SD = 0.35) (Ali, 2021), while weak ethical leadership in a South African university coincided with staff disengagement (Bhana & Bayat, 2020).

Studies link the two constructs. Among 226 higher education faculty and staff, ethical and empowering leadership correlated at r = .87 to .90 (Da Silva Matos et al., 2026). Among 330 educators in Quezon, empowering mechanisms predicted ethical leadership behavior (adjusted R^2 = .513) (Callo & De Villa, 2022). Ethical leadership predicted the psychological empowerment of 265 university teachers in Punjab (Awan, 2023), and psychological empowerment moderated the effect of ethical leadership on innovative work behavior among 1,100 academic staff in China (Lin et al., 2023). Organizational constraints, culture, and job demands shape the strength of these links (Dennerlein & Kirkman, 2022; Suhadi et al., 2026).

1.3. Crisis Leadership Competence and Empowering Leadership

Crisis leadership competence in education refers to the capacity of school leaders to limit harm under acute ambiguity through adaptive sensemaking, compassionate communication, and collaborative decisions (Charteris et al., 2026; Mcleod & Dulsky, 2021). Crises demand quick decisions under incomplete information and emotional strain (Riggio & Newstead, 2023). Catubig (2023) measured three competencies among 130 Philippine school administrators and reported strong ratings in team leadership (M = 3.25), decisiveness and emotional effectiveness (M = 3.24), and situational awareness (M = 3.18). High crisis leadership among academic leaders in 41 Philippine higher education institutions improved organizational agility (Reyes & Prado, 2025), and the crisis leadership of principals in Vietnam predicted school resilience and teacher commitment (Kim et al., 2026). Elementary school heads in the Northern Philippines showed only moderate readiness, with gaps in crisis communication and mental health support (Domingo & Antonio, 2025).

Evidence also connects crisis competence with empowering practice. Distributed and participative leadership correlated with school crisis management capability in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia (r = .627, p < .01) (Alene, 2022). A systematic review of school leadership during and after COVID-19 found empowering practices effective only with structural support, clear communication, and distributed decisions (Gümüş et al., 2026). Under wartime conditions, strategic thinking affected principal management competencies only through resilience and culture (Pizhuk et al., 2026). The link between crisis competence and empowerment therefore holds under clear boundary conditions.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

Three theories guided the study (Figure 1). Empowerment Theory explains how individuals gain influence over decisions affecting their work. Leaders enable this process by creating conditions for autonomy, competence, and shared authority (Zimmerman, 2000). Social Learning Theory holds people acquire behavior by observing role models and the consequences of their actions (Bandura, 1977). School leaders who watch supervisors act with fairness, transparency, and care are expected to reproduce such conduct with their own teachers. Situational Leadership Theory proposes leaders adjust directive and supportive behavior to the readiness of followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Supervisors who read a crisis well know when to direct and when to delegate, and school leaders observe this balance.

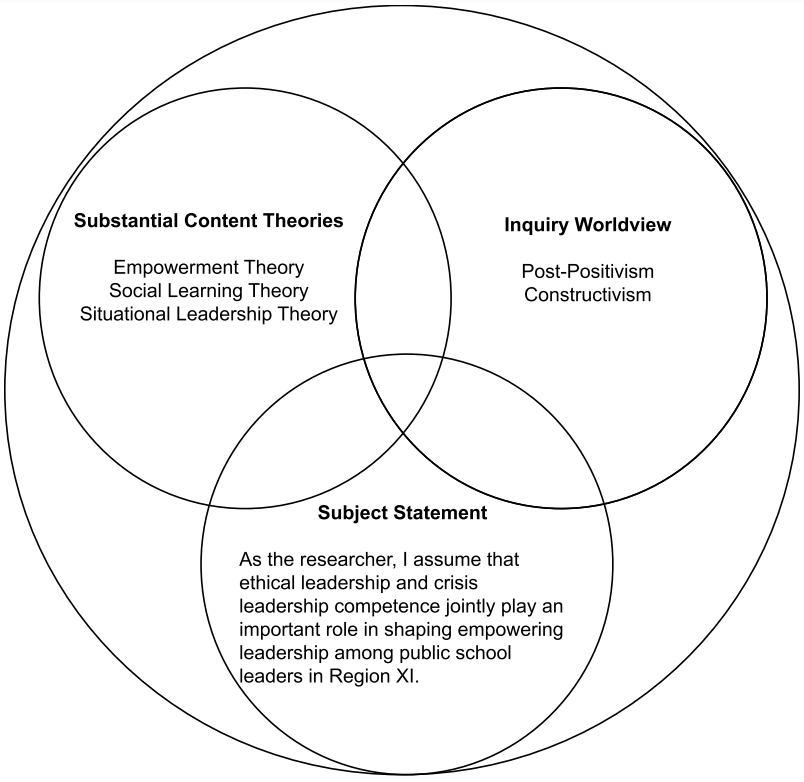


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of the study

1.5. Research Gap and Purpose

Research has mostly treated empowering leadership as a cause of organizational outcomes rather than as an outcome of other leadership practices (Mutonyi et al., 2020). Few studies examine ethical leadership and crisis leadership competence together as antecedents, and no study in Region XI has tested whether the practices of immediate supervisors predict the empowering leadership of the school leaders they supervise. Most leadership studies also rely on survey data alone and leave the meaning behind the numbers unexplored. This explanatory sequential mixed methods study addressed four research questions (RQs):

RQ1. What are the levels of ethical leadership, crisis leadership competence, and empowering leadership as perceived by public school leaders?

RQ2. Do ethical leadership and crisis leadership competence significantly predict empowering leadership?

RQ3. What are the standpoints of the participants on the salient points of the quantitative results?

RQ4. How do the qualitativRe findings explain the quantitative results?

For RQ2, the study tested the null hypothesis (H_0): ethical leadership and crisis leadership competence do not significantly predict the empowering leadership of public school leaders.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

The study followed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023; Toyon, 2021). A descriptive-correlational quantitative strand came first and carried the main emphasis. A qualitative strand followed to explain the salient quantitative results. Pragmatism framed the study. The survey strand took a post-positivist stance and treated leadership behaviors as measurable approximations of reality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maksimovic & Evtimov, 2023).

The interview strand took a constructivist stance and treated leadership as meaning built through interaction within the school community. The strands connected at two points. Quantitative results shaped the interview guide, and qualitative participants came from the survey sample. A joint display integrated both strands during interpretation (Fetters et al., 2013).

2.2. Respondents and Sampling Procedure

The study took place in Region XI (Davao Region), Mindanao, Philippines. The region has 11 Schools Division Offices (SDOs): Davao City, Davao del Norte, Davao del Sur, Davao Occidental, Davao de Oro, Davao Oriental, Digos City, Mati City, Panabo City, Island Garden City of Samal, and Tagum City. Its schools span urban, semi-urban, and rural settings.

2.2.1. Quantitative strand. The Policy, Planning and Research Division listed 2,688 school leaders in the region. The Raosoft calculator gave a minimum sample of 337. Following Comrey and Lee (2013), the study used 300 respondents. Stratified random sampling used the SDOs as strata: Davao City (72), Davao Oriental (53), Davao de Oro (42), Davao del Norte (32), Davao del Sur (29), Davao Occidental (24), Mati City (13), Island Garden City of Samal (10), Panabo City (9), Tagum City (9), and Digos City (7). Eligible respondents were principals, assistant principals, head teachers, and teachers-in-charge with at least three years as school leader and at least two years under their current immediate supervisor (a principal, public schools district supervisor, or district principal-in-charge). Leaders on leave, leaders who declined consent, and incomplete questionnaires were excluded.

2.2.2. Qualitative strand. Seventeen survey respondents took part in the qualitative strand: 10 in in-depth interviews (IDIs) and seven in one focus group discussion (FGD). The group comprised eight men and nine women aged 33 to 60 years, holding positions from Head Teacher III to Principal IV, with 3 to 21 years in their positions, from 10 coded SDOs (Appendix A). The dissertation reports stratified random selection of these participants.

2.3. Research Instruments

Three adapted questionnaires measured the variables on a five-point scale from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Experts in educational leadership and research methodology validated the items for clarity, relevance, and fit with the local setting.

2.3.1. Ethical leadership. Ten items adapted from the Ethical Leadership Questionnaire of Langlois et al. (2014) covered the ethic of care (3 items), ethic of critique (3 items), and ethic of justice (4 items). School leaders rated their immediate supervisors. The source study reported Cronbach's alpha above .85.

2.3.2. Crisis leadership competence. Ten items adapted from the Crisis Leadership Competencies Questionnaire of Catubig (2023) covered team leadership (3 items), situational awareness and integrative thinking (3 items), and decisiveness and emotional effectiveness (4 items). School leaders rated their immediate supervisors. The source study reported Cronbach's alpha above .85.

2.3.3. Empowering leadership. Fifteen items adapted from the Empowering Leadership Questionnaire of Arnold et al. (2000) covered leading by example, participative decision-making, coaching and development, informing and clarifying, and showing concern and support (3 items each). School leaders rated their own practice. The source study reported Cronbach's alpha above .70.

Mean scores were interpreted as very high (4.20–5.00), high (3.40–4.19), moderate (2.60–3.39), low (1.80–2.59), and very low (1.00–1.79).

The qualitative strand used a researcher-made interview guide validated by experts. After preliminary questions, the guide presented four salient quantitative results, one per part, with follow-up questions on agreement, lived experience, concrete examples, and explanatory conditions (Appendix B).

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

After ethics approval, the researcher secured endorsement and permission from the Department of Education (DepEd) Regional Office XI, the SDOs, and the heads of the identified schools. The researcher distributed printed questionnaires in person. Respondents signed informed consent forms before answering, and the researcher checked each returned questionnaire for completeness. The IDIs took place face to face, and the FGD ran on a secure online platform. Sessions were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. Responses in Cebuano and Filipino were rendered into English. Participants reviewed their transcripts and the interpretations through member checking.

Means and standard deviations answered RQ1. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis at $\alpha = .05$ answered RQ2 (Roustaei, 2024). Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis in six phases: familiarization, initial coding, theme search, theme review, theme definition, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A joint display set the quantitative and qualitative results side by side, and each pair was classified by its nature of integration (Fetters et al., 2013).

Trustworthiness followed Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility came from methodological triangulation and member checking. Transferability came from detailed descriptions of the setting, participants, and procedures. Dependability and confirmability came from an audit trail documenting data collection, analytic decisions, and methodological changes.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee (UIC-REC) reviewed and approved the protocol (Protocol Code GS-FB-04-26-0299) before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and participants were free to skip any question or withdraw at any time without penalty. Respondents were adult professionals. Because hierarchical ties within DepEd pose a risk of pressured participation, the study kept all responses anonymous and confidential. Codes replaced names, and only data needed for the study were collected, consistent with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Electronic files were encrypted and password-protected, printed materials were locked away, and all data will be retained for five years before secure disposal.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Levels of Ethical Leadership, Crisis Leadership Competence, and Empowering Leadership

Table 1 summarizes the levels of the three constructs. School leaders rated the ethical leadership of their immediate supervisors very high ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 0.23$). The ethic of care scored highest ($M = 4.93$), followed by the ethic of critique and the ethic of justice (both $M = 4.86$). At the item level, promoting respectful and trusting relationships among teachers scored highest ($M = 4.93$), and addressing instances of unfair treatment scored lowest ($M = 4.83$).

Table 1. Levels of ethical leadership, crisis leadership competence, and empowering leadership (N = 300)

Construct and Indicator	*M*	*SD*	Descriptive Rating
Ethical leadership of supervisors	*4.88*	*0.23*	*Very High*
Ethic of care	4.93	0.23	Very High
Ethic of critique	4.86	0.28	Very High
Ethic of justice	4.86	0.29	Very High
Crisis leadership competence of supervisors	*4.85*	*0.30*	*Very High*
Team leadership	4.87	0.32	Very High
Situational awareness and integrative thinking	4.83	0.33	Very High
Decisiveness and emotional effectiveness	4.85	0.33	Very High
Empowering leadership of school leaders (self-rated)	*4.89*	*0.21*	*Very High*
Leading by example	4.88	0.30	Very High
Participative decision-making	4.90	0.26	Very High
Coaching and development	4.90	0.27	Very High
Informing and clarifying	4.87	0.29	Very High
Showing concern and support	4.90	0.27	Very High

Note. 4.20–5.00 = Very High, 3.40–4.19 = High, 2.60–3.39 = Moderate, 1.80–2.59 = Low, 1.00–1.79 = Very Low.

Crisis leadership competence of supervisors was also very high (M = 4.85, SD = 0.30). Team leadership led (M = 4.87), followed by decisiveness and emotional effectiveness (M = 4.85) and situational awareness and integrative thinking (M = 4.83). Clearly delegating responsibilities during emergencies scored highest (M = 4.88), and adjusting plans to changing conditions scored lowest (M = 4.82). School leaders rated their own empowering leadership very high as well (M = 4.89, SD = 0.21). Participative decision-making, coaching and development, and showing concern and support each reached M = 4.90. Making time to listen to and address teacher concerns scored highest (M = 4.92). Explaining school goals and communicating how teacher roles contribute to school success scored lowest (both M = 4.86).

These levels match several earlier reports. Teachers in Hafr Al Batin and Sakarya rated principal ethical behavior high (Aldawsari, 2020; İlğan & Ekiz, 2020), and high crisis leadership appeared among Philippine academic leaders and Vietnamese principals (Kim et al., 2026; Reyes & Prado, 2025). Principals in Hong Kong and Turkey also showed strong empowering leadership (Liang et al., 2026; Okçu et al., 2024). Other settings show a different picture. Head teachers in Multan displayed moderate ethical behavior (Ali, 2021), elementary school heads in the Northern Philippines showed moderate crisis readiness (Domingo & Antonio, 2025), and leaders in Pakistani higher education institutions restricted employee autonomy (Ahmed et al., 2022). Care in school leadership also weakens under pressure in some settings (Steilen & Stone-Johnson, 2023).

The dimension-level results add detail. The top rating for the ethic of care fits accounts of school leaders who place teacher well-being, professional dignity, and emotional safety at the center of practice (Ballangrud & Aas, 2022). The ethic of critique ranked lower, consistent with reports of critique-oriented behavior depending on organizational structures and expectations (Richardson, 2024). Within crisis leadership competence, team leadership ranked first and situational awareness last. Delegating during emergencies was the top item, while adjusting plans to changing conditions was the lowest. Experienced Philippine school heads likewise excelled in relationship-building and coaching (Anteg & Salcedo, 2026), and collaborative crisis practices succeeded when backed by structure and clear communication (Gümüş et al., 2026). Among empowering dimensions, informing and clarifying ranked lowest. School leaders reported listening and participation more strongly than explaining goals and how teacher roles feed school success.

Two features of the data call for careful reading. First, every indicator mean fell between 4.83 and 4.93, and every standard deviation stayed below 0.34. Ratings clustered near the ceiling of the scale. Second, school leaders rated their own supervisors within a hierarchical system and rated their own empowering behavior. The figures therefore describe perceptions, and social desirability likely contributed to the ceiling pattern. Social Learning Theory offers one reading of the consistency across the two levels. Supervisors who model ethical and calm conduct set norms, and the school leaders who observe them report similar practices in their own schools (Bandura, 1977).

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and intercorrelations of the study variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*
1. Ethical leadership	4.88	0.23
2. Crisis leadership competence	4.85	0.30
3. Empowering leadership	4.89	0.21

3.2. Ethical Leadership and Crisis Leadership Competence as Predictors of Empowering Leadership

Table 3 presents the multiple regression results. The model was significant, $F(2, 297) = 29.52$, $p < .001$, $R = .407$, $R^2 = .166$, and H_0 was rejected. Together, the two predictors explained 16.6% of the variance in empowering leadership. Ethical leadership predicted empowering leadership after controlling for crisis leadership competence ($\beta = .370$, $t = 6.80$, $p < .001$).

A one-standard-deviation rise in perceived supervisor ethical leadership corresponded to a .370-standard-deviation rise in self-rated empowering leadership. Crisis leadership competence showed a positive coefficient without a significant unique contribution ($\beta = .105$, $t = 1.94$, $p = .054$).

Table 3. Multiple regression of empowering leadership on ethical leadership and crisis leadership competence

Predictor	β	*t*	*p*	Remarks
Constant		10.20	< .001	Significant
Ethical leadership	.370	6.80	< .001	Significant
Crisis leadership competence	.105	1.94	.054	Not Significant

Note. $R = .407$, $R^2 = .166$, $F(2, 297) = 29.52$, $p < .001$.

The ethical leadership result agrees with studies linking ethical and empowering leadership through single-predictor models (Callo & De Villa, 2022; Da Silva Matos et al., 2026) and through psychological empowerment (Awan, 2023). The present study adds a two-level view. Supervisor conduct, as perceived by school leaders, relates to the empowering practices those school leaders report in their own schools. Social Learning Theory explains this pattern. School leaders who observe care, critique, and justice in their supervisors adopt leading by example, participative decisions, coaching, clear communication, and concern for staff (Bandura, 1977).

The nonsignificant unique effect of crisis leadership competence points to shared variance. Once ethical leadership entered the model, the part of empowering leadership explained by crisis competence overlapped with the part explained by ethical conduct. Situational Leadership Theory offers a further reading (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Crisis competence comes to the fore during emergencies, whereas ethical conduct shapes daily supervisory exchanges. Empowering practices form mostly through these daily exchanges. Evidence elsewhere is mixed. Participative leadership tracked crisis management capability in Ethiopian schools (Alene, 2022), whereas empowering practices worked during COVID-19 only with structural support and clear communication (Gümüş et al., 2026). The model also left 83.4% of the variance unexplained. Job demands, resources, structural constraints, culture, and climate shape empowering leadership (Dennerlein & Kirkman, 2022), as do collaboration and reliance on colleague expertise (Mutonyi et al., 2020).

3.3. Standpoints of the Participants on the Salient Quantitative Results

Thematic analysis produced four essential themes, one per salient result (Table 4). Participants agreed with each result and explained the reasons behind it.

Table 4. Essential themes and typical reasons from the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion

Salient Result	Essential Theme	Typical Reasons
Ethical leadership (very high)	Confirmed very high level of ethical leadership	Integrity and honesty in leadership actions. Fairness and impartiality toward teachers, school heads, and stakeholders. Transparency in decisions, finances, and policies. Accountability in programs and school resources. Decisions grounded in DepEd policy, evidence, and the welfare of learners and personnel. Role modeling through ethical conduct, consultation, respect, and concern.
Crisis leadership competence (very high)	Confirmed very high level of crisis leadership competence	Calm and composure in emergencies. Timely, sound, and balanced decisions. Clear and prompt communication of instructions and advisories. Coordination with teachers, school heads, stakeholders, and external agencies. Reliance on experience, existing protocols, and disaster risk reduction frameworks. Priority on safety alongside continuity of learning.
Empowering leadership (very high)	Confirmed very high level of empowering leadership	Delegation based on teacher strengths and expertise. Involvement in planning, problem-solving, and decisions. Trust with reasonable autonomy and guidance. Coaching, technical assistance, resources, and professional development. Recognition of accomplishments and leadership potential. Opportunities to lead programs and own school activities.

Salient Result	Essential Theme	Typical Reasons
Joint influence of the two predictors (significant model)	Confirmed significance of the joint influence on empowering leadership	Trust, fairness, integrity, and psychological safety from ethical leadership. Confidence in the crisis competence of the supervisor. Modeling by ethical and crisis-competent supervisors. Willingness of personnel to accept delegated responsibility. Guidance, ethical treatment, technical support, and trust enabling initiative. A supportive environment created by both practices together.

Note. Typical reasons follow the Discussion chapter of the dissertation, where Table 4 was incomplete.

3.3.1. Ethical leadership. Participants traced the very high rating to visible daily conduct rather than stated values. IDI-07 explained, "the respondents consistently observe that the leaders are demonstrating qualities such as integrity, fairness, respect, accountability, and responsible decision-making." FGD-02 described a supervisor who stayed "fair, transparent, accountable, and consistent in making decisions" and who "considered the welfare of both learners [and] teachers." IDI-05 described transparency in the use of maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE):

> Transparency does not just end up to transparency boards, but you can also let your stakeholders see what you are doing in the school. (IDI-05)

These accounts mirror findings on fairness and role modeling among ethical school leaders in Malaysia (Mansor et al., 2021; Waheed et al., 2019) and on transparent resource use in Tanzanian public schools (Soka et al., 2025). Fair and consistent dealings build trust in leaders (Biniaminov & Moshel, 2025).

3.3.2. Crisis leadership competence. Participants pointed to calm, prompt action during real emergencies. IDI-07 recalled the response of a supervisor to a recent earthquake:

> Right after the earthquake, our supervisor gave an immediate order to inspect the entire school vicinity to find out the extent of the damage and to ensure the safety of the students. Right away, we submitted a report to the central office. (IDI-07, lightly edited English rendering)

FGD-02 described a supervisor who stayed "so calm" while "making timely decisions, communicating clear instructions, and prioritizing the safety and well-being of learners and school personnel during emergencies." IDI-06 noted the readiness of supervisors "in crisis situation[s] like calamity" (English rendering). FGD-04 attributed this competence to "long experience and all the situations [supervisors] are able to conquer," along with capacity building and training. K–12 leaders elsewhere earned trust through composure, clear instructions, and coordination with stakeholders (Longmuir, 2021; Williams & Liou, 2023). Philippine and Turkish school leaders drew on past disasters and established protocols when new emergencies struck (Culha et al., 2025; Equipado & Digo, 2026), and Philippine principals placed safety alongside learning continuity during the pandemic (Uy et al., 2023).

3.3.3. Empowering leadership. Participants credited their own empowering practice to training, experience, technical assistance, and graduate study. IDI-05 observed, "There has been no shortage of training, especially for school heads … those training activities enhanced our capacity to empower others" (English rendering). IDI-09 linked empowerment to the wisdom of age and experience and concluded, "the best thing to do is modeling" (English rendering). FGD-02 described the practice in concrete terms:

> You have to give them opportunity to lead or to take responsibility. You have to trust them to perform the task, provide the necessary support, and involve them in the decision-making, because that really increases their confidence and motivation to contribute to the school. (FGD-02)

Similar practices appear in Philippine school heads who delegate according to teacher ability (Cagatcagat & Pabiona, 2025), in principals who develop teachers through mentoring and recognition (Berhanu, 2025), and in distributed leadership giving teachers ownership of school processes (Galdames-Calderón, 2023). Recognition of teacher expertise also preceded teacher leadership across countries (Pineda-Báez et al., 2019).

3.3.4. Joint influence. Participants described the two supervisory practices as complementary. IDI-06 stated, "ethical leadership builds trust, crisis leadership builds confidence, and empowering leadership turns both into action" (English rendering). IDI-07 noted the supervisor "put so much trust on us as school leaders," and the trust prompted new programs. FGD-02 described learning by emulation:

> If these two are demonstrated by your immediate supervisor, that somehow can be emulated. Based on those experiences, gradually, I apply all those learnings in my school setting. (FGD-02)

Modeling did not always mean imitation. FGD-04 recalled a negative supervisory experience and explained, "that particular experience, the negative one, … challenged me to do better and to be not like that." Participants also named other influences on empowering leadership: leadership experience, school culture, work environment, personnel characteristics, resources, willingness to participate, teamwork, and the nature of delegated tasks. These accounts fit evidence on ethical leadership and psychological empowerment (Awan, 2023), on trust and fairness easing the acceptance of delegated work (Dwinanda et al., 2025), and on Spanish school leaders learning from the practices of supervisors during COVID-19 (Cruz-González et al., 2026). Participant references to guidance and support echo a caution in the literature: delegation without direction breeds ambiguity and stress (Dennerlein & Kirkman, 2022; Van Roekel et al., 2025). Empowerment Theory frames the joint account. Ethical leadership supplies trust and fairness, crisis competence supplies direction during disruption, and together these conditions let personnel take on leadership roles (Zimmerman, 2000).

3.4. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results

Table 5 presents the joint display. Connecting occurred through sampling, since all qualitative participants came from the survey sample (Fetters et al., 2013). For the three levels, qualitative accounts confirmed the quantitative ratings and supplied reasons and examples. For the regression result, participants confirmed the significant joint model. The interview guide presented the joint model only, and participants were not asked about the nonsignificant unique effect of crisis leadership competence. The qualitative accounts therefore explain how participants understand the two practices working together. They do not establish a separate effect of crisis competence. Participants also named influences outside the model, consistent with the 83.4% of unexplained variance.

Table 5. Joint display of quantitative and qualitative results

Research Area	Quantitative Result	Qualitative Result	Nature of Integration
Ethical leadership	Very high (M = 4.88, SD = 0.23)	Integrity, fairness, transparency, accountability, policy adherence, and concern for stakeholders	Connecting-confirmation
Crisis leadership competence	Very high (M = 4.85, SD = 0.30)	Calm and timely decisions, preparedness, clear communication, coordination, and priority on safety	Connecting-confirmation
Empowering leadership	Very high (M = 4.89, SD = 0.21)	Trust, delegation, shared decisions, autonomy, recognition, and opportunities to lead	Connecting-confirmation
Joint influence on empowering leadership	Significant model, $F(2, 297)$ = 29.52, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .166$. Ethical leadership $\beta = .370$, $p < .001$. Crisis leadership competence $\beta = .105$, $p = .054$.	Ethical leadership builds trust and crisis competence builds confidence, encouraging delegation and initiative. Other organizational and interpersonal factors also matter.	Connecting-confirmation of the joint model, with qualification for the nonsignificant unique effect of crisis leadership competence

3.5. Implications for Practice

Education offices and supervisors should treat ethical conduct as the core of supervision, since this practice showed the clearest link with the empowering behavior of school leaders. Supervisory feedback and mentoring should name fairness, transparency, and accountability as explicit expectations.

Crisis preparedness remains necessary for school safety and continuity, and the nonsignificant unique effect gives no reason to drop crisis training. Leadership development programs should combine ethical decision-making, crisis simulation, delegation, and coaching, followed by long-term mentoring for supervisors and school leaders.

4. Conclusion

Public school leaders in Region XI perceived the ethical leadership and crisis leadership competence of their immediate supervisors, and their own empowering leadership, as very high. Taken together, the two supervisory practices significantly predicted empowering leadership and explained 16.6% of its variance. Ethical leadership carried the unique contribution, while crisis leadership competence did not add a significant unique effect. Participants explained the results through integrity, transparency, calm crisis response, delegation, and trust, and described learning empowering practices by observing their supervisors. The integrated findings show empowering leadership among public school leaders as most closely associated with the ethical leadership of their immediate supervisors, with crisis leadership competence contributing as part of the joint model.

Four recommendations follow. First, DepEd Regional Office XI should establish an integrated program on ethical, crisis-ready, and empowering leadership anchored on the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads and for Supervisors (Department of Education, 2020a, 2020b), with indicators for monitoring practice. Second, SDOs should run scenario-based workshops, tabletop exercises, and after-action reviews consistent with the Comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in Basic Education Framework (Department of Education, 2015). Third, immediate supervisors should hold regular coaching conferences and post-crisis reviews modeling fair decisions, transparency, calm leadership, and responsible delegation. Fourth, school leaders should institutionalize participation, delegation plans, feedback, and recognition through school-based management structures (Department of Education, 2012). Future research should examine organizational culture, psychological safety, resources, and personnel readiness as further antecedents of empowering leadership.

5. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations bound the findings. The cross-sectional design supports prediction and association, not causation. Predictors and outcome came from the same respondents on one form at one time, which raises the risk of common method variance, and empowering leadership was self-rated. Ratings clustered near the scale ceiling, a pattern consistent with social desirability under hierarchical relationships, and restricted range weakens regression estimates. The instruments were shortened adaptations, and no factor analysis tested their structure in this sample. Several school leaders likely rated the same supervisor, so responses were not fully independent. The sample of 300 fell below the Raosoft minimum, and the study covered one region. In the qualitative strand, the interview guide asked participants whether they agreed with each result, which invites agreement, and one researcher conducted, transcribed, and translated the interviews. Future studies should collect teacher ratings of school leaders, use longitudinal and multilevel designs, test measurement models through confirmatory factor analysis, probe nonsignificant and unexpected results in interviews, and extend the work to other regions and school levels.

6. Supplementary Details

6.1. Supplementary Materials & Data availability statement:

The survey questionnaires and interview guide used in this study are included in the appendices of the manuscript. De-identified quantitative survey data may be obtained from the corresponding author, Aye Brant C. Bueno, upon reasonable request, subject to applicable ethical and data privacy requirements. Qualitative interview transcripts and audio recordings are not publicly available to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

6.2. Author Contributions:

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Aye Brant C. Bueno	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	
Nelca Stephany U. Amatong	✔	✔		✔						✔			✔	

6.3. Funding:
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6.4. Institutional Review Board Statement
The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the University of the Immaculate Conception and approved by the University of the Immaculate Conception Research Ethics Committee with Protocol number *GS-FB-04-26-029 dated May 8, 2026*.

6.5. Informed Consent Statement:
Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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6.7. Conflicts of Interest:
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

6.8. Disclosure Statement:
Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to improve the overall language, grammar, clarity, and readability of this journal article. The authors reviewed and approved all revisions and remain fully responsible for the article's content, analysis, and conclusions.

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Appendix A

Profile of the qualitative participants (n = 17)

Code	Sex	Age	SDO	Position	Years in Position
IDI-01	Male	55	SDO A	Principal IV	15
IDI-02	Female	59	SDO B	Head Teacher III	11
IDI-03	Male	36	SDO C	Head Teacher III	5
IDI-04	Female	33	SDO D	Head Teacher III	3
IDI-05	Male	46	SDO E	Principal II	21
IDI-06	Female	42	SDO F	Head Teacher III	4
IDI-07	Male	46	SDO G	Principal II	11
IDI-08	Female	46	SDO H	Principal I	18
IDI-09	Female	60	SDO I	Principal II	13
IDI-10	Female	43	SDO J	Principal II	10
FGD-01	Female	51	SDO G	Principal I	4
FGD-02	Male	35	SDO I	Principal II	4
FGD-03	Male	58	SDO E	Principal II	10
FGD-04	Male	39	SDO F	Principal II	9
FGD-05	Female	58	SDO A	Principal II	20
FGD-06	Male	44	SDO J	Head Teacher V	5
FGD-07	Female	33	SDO B	Principal I	3

Appendix B

Summary of the interview guide used in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussion

Preliminary questions: (1) age, Schools Division Office, current position, and years in school leadership, (2) meaning of ethical leadership in public schools, (3) description of crisis leadership competence based on crises experienced, and (4) the look of empowering leadership in daily work with teachers and staff.

Part A. Standpoint on the very high level of ethical leadership (M = 4.88, SD = 0.23).

Part B. Standpoint on the very high level of crisis leadership competence (M = 4.85, SD = 0.30).

Part C. Standpoint on the very high level of empowering leadership (M = 4.89, SD = 0.21).

Part D. Standpoint on the finding that ethical leadership and crisis leadership competence, taken together, significantly predict empowering leadership ($F(2, 297) = 29.52$, $p < .001$).

Follow-up questions for each part: Do you agree with this result? Why or why not? To what extent does this finding reflect your actual experience? What specific behaviors or practices demonstrate this? Can you describe a specific situation? What experiences, practices, or conditions explain the result? Part D added: Aside from ethical leadership and crisis leadership competence, what other factors influence empowering leadership?

Concluding question: Is there anything else from your experience you would like to add to help explain the Phase 1 results?