

Lived Experiences of Teacher-Leaders in Exhibiting Leadership Styles

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of teacher-leaders at Himanag National High School during the academic year 2025–2026. This study explored the lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing subject areas, highlighting the leadership styles they exhibit and the opportunities and challenges they encounter. It seeks to describe how teacher-leaders navigate subject management, examine the factors that support or hinder their leadership roles, and identify the leadership approaches they employ in practice. Drawing from these insights, the study proposed a leadership development framework designed to enhance teacher-leadership practices and strengthen their capacity to lead effectively within educational settings. Using a qualitative phenomenological design to capture authentic narratives of all 28 teacher-leaders in Himanag, balancing instructional duties with leadership responsibilities, supported by tools such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), Flanagan’s Critical Incident Technique (CIT), and interview guides. Data analysis combined quantitative scoring of leadership styles with thematic and phenomenological reduction to ensure depth and comprehensiveness. Conclusions were: Teacher-leadership is a dynamic, service-oriented practice that extends beyond formal roles, integrating continuous growth, subject advocacy, and collaborative mentorship. Teacher-leaders demonstrated resilience in navigating structural challenges such as heavy workloads, limited resources, and coordination demands, while leveraging opportunities for professional growth, collaboration, and instructional innovation. Transformational leadership emerged as the dominant style, emphasizing motivation, innovation, and professional development, while transactional strategies were secondary and passive approaches were rarely applied. This balance reflects a proactive leadership culture that prioritizes collaboration, inspiration, and reflective practice. Teacher-leadership strengthens communication, collaboration, and reflective practice, catalyzing both personal growth and educational improvement.

Keywords: Resilience, instructional innovation, mentorship, professional growth, collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher-leadership has emerged globally as a critical factor in balancing instructional duties with leadership responsibilities, as teachers mentor peers, design curriculum, and foster collaboration within schools. These roles often arise organically from classroom practice, merging instructional expertise with leadership capacity to strengthen educational outcomes (OECD, 2023; Webber, 2023). Leadership styles such as transformational, distributed, and servant leadership illustrate how teacher-leaders inspire

colleagues, promote inclusivity, and contribute to collective responsibility for student learning (Akkaraputtapong et al., 2025; UNESCO, 2024/25). International reports emphasize that teacher-leadership is central to addressing global educational challenges, with the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report (2024/25) identifying leadership at multiple levels as second only to classroom instruction in explaining student achievement. Likewise, the UNESCO Global Report on Teachers (2024) stressed the urgency of empowering teachers to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4): Quality Education, particularly Target 4.c, which calls for substantially increasing the supply of qualified teachers through international cooperation.

In the Philippine context, teacher-leadership has been institutionalized through policy directives such as DepEd Memorandum No. 111, s. 2025, which mandates teacher-leaders to spearhead literacy programs through planning, implementation, and monitoring of Literacy Improvement Plans. Similarly, the MATATAG Curriculum reforms (2023–2025) emphasize teacher-leadership in curriculum innovation, requiring master teachers and subject coordinators to guide colleagues in adapting instructional strategies, leading collaborative planning, and monitoring curriculum fidelity. Local studies affirm these roles: Cadacio and Albite (2025) found strong correlations between master teachers' leadership competencies and teacher development in Camarines Sur; Basco and Espiritu (2025) highlighted positive impacts of transformational leadership on teacher performance and collaboration; and De Guzman (2023) emphasized the importance of mentoring and peer coaching in strengthening instructional delivery. These demonstrate that teacher-leaders embody leadership practices that foster collaboration, enhance school culture, and improve student learning outcomes.

Despite these contributions, gaps remain in the literature. Most Philippine research continues to focus on principals and administrators, leaving the lived experiences of teacher-leaders underexplored. Few studies integrate leadership styles into analyses of teacher-leadership, limiting understanding of their influence on school culture and instructional practices. Localized studies in regions such as Bicol, particularly Camarines Sur, are scarce, creating a need for contextual insights that reflect regional realities. Moreover, while DepEd policies emphasize teacher capacity-building, little research examines how teacher-leaders implement these policies in practice or connect their roles to global frameworks such as SDG 4. This study is significant as it documents the lived experiences of teacher-leaders, identifies their leadership styles, and examines the opportunities and challenges they face. By capturing these experiences, particularly in Bicol, the research contributes to contextual relevance, informs policy, and strengthens educational practices, ultimately aligning local practices with global education goals.

Research Objectives

This study explored and documented the lived experiences of teacher-leaders, focusing on how they embody leadership practices and contribute to educational transformation at Himanag National High School, academic year 2025-2026. Specifically, it described the lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas; explored the opportunities and challenges encountered by teacher-leaders; identified the leadership styles exhibited by teacher-leaders; and created a leadership development framework for enhancing teacher-leadership practice.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore and describe the lived experiences of teacher-leaders in exhibiting leadership styles. Phenomenology was chosen as it captures the meanings teachers assign to their professional roles, allowing authentic narratives of how they balance

instructional duties with leadership responsibilities. In-depth interviews, reflective accounts, and thematic analysis were used to uncover leadership practices such as transformational, distributed, and servant leadership, consistent with recent phenomenological studies in education (Magnanti, 2024; Apas, 2023; Duray, 2025). The respondents were the 28 secondary school teachers of Himanag National High School, with a total enumeration employed to ensure inclusivity and eliminate sampling bias. All teachers were considered teacher-leaders by virtue of their roles in managing subject areas, mentoring peers, and contributing to school improvement, aligning with research that recognizes teachers' inherent leadership functions (Estrada & Dasig, 2023; Catanus, 2022).

Multiple instruments were utilized to capture both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of teacher-leadership. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) assessed transformational, transactional, and passive/avoidant leadership behaviors, while Flanagan's Critical Incident Technique (CIT) gathered detailed accounts of significant events shaping leadership roles. A semi-structured interview guide grounded in phenomenology elicited rich narratives of managing subject areas, opportunities, and challenges. Artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT were responsibly employed to assist in literature synthesis and organization, ensuring transparency and ethical use (Santana-Soriano, 2025; Valdivieso & González, 2025).

For data analysis, weighted scoring was applied to MLQ responses to determine dominant leadership styles, while thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) identified recurring patterns in qualitative data. A phenomenological reduction approach (Moustakas, 1994) was used to capture the essence of teacher-leaders' lived experiences by bracketing researcher biases and focusing on participants' narratives. The Modified ADDIE Model (Analyze, Design, Develop) structured the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings, ensuring that the leadership development framework was grounded in both measurable outcomes and authentic experiences. This combination of instruments and analytic techniques provided a rigorous and comprehensive methodology, ensuring credibility, reliability, and validity while supporting the study's ultimate goal of developing a leadership framework to enhance teacher-leadership practices. To measure the level of Leadership Styles Exhibited by Teacher-Leaders, the following scale and interpretation were used: 0.00-0.50 Not Manifested (NM); 0.51-1.49 Manifested Once in a While (MOW); 1.50-2.49 Sometimes Manifested (SM); 2.50-3.49 Manifested Fairly Often (MFO); 3.50-4.00 Frequently Manifested (FM).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings derived from the study and interprets their significance in relation to the research objectives. The results are organized to highlight major trends, patterns, and noteworthy observations, while the discussion connects these outcomes to existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and practical implications. By integrating both data and analysis, this section aims to provide a clear understanding of how the findings contribute to the study's broader context.

Lived Experiences of Teacher-Leaders in Managing Their Subject Areas

The results of the lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas highlighted the challenges, strategies, and insights they encountered. These findings were discussed in relation to leadership roles, instructional management, and professional growth. These provide a deeper understanding of how teacher-leaders navigate responsibilities and contribute to the effective functioning of their departments.

Growth and Continuous Learning. Table 1a presents the themes that capture how teacher-leaders interpret their lived experiences in managing subject areas. The matrix highlights their perspectives on growth and continuous learning, supported by descriptive codes, illustrative participant statements, and prevalence rates. The table presents the lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along the theme of Growth and Continuous Learning. The data highlights that teacher leadership is perceived as an evolving role requiring lifelong learning and professional development. Codes such as evolving leadership, lead learner, and professional improvement capture this theme. Illustrative statements from participants emphasize leadership as a journey of continuous growth, positioning teacher-leaders as lead learners committed to ongoing improvement. The prevalence of this theme is reported as Very High (81–100%), indicating that nearly all participants strongly resonate with this perspective.

The findings reveal that teacher-leadership is dynamic and rooted in adaptability, continuous growth, and sustained professional engagement. Central to this identity is the role of the “lead learner,” where teacher-leaders model lifelong learning for colleagues and students, reinforcing the link between leadership and professional development. This theme, highly prevalent among participants, underscores that effective subject area management is inseparable from a culture of ongoing improvement supported by mentorship, collaborative learning communities, and leadership training.

Table 1a
Lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along Growth and Continuous Learning

Themes	Descriptions	Codes	Participants’ Illustrative Statements	Prevalence
Growth and Continuous Learning	Teacher leadership is experienced as an evolving role that requires lifelong professional learning and development.	Evolving leadership, Lead learner, and Professional improvement	“My experience has been a journey of evolving leadership while supporting my subject area.” / “Personally, being a teacher-leader means being a lead learner.” / “Leadership requires continuous learning and professional improvement.”	Very High (81–100%)

These results align with scholarship emphasizing teacher-leadership as developmental and evolving (Nguyen & Hunter, 2022; Lopez, 2021; Martinez & Valdez, 2023), while also acknowledging systemic challenges to sustaining growth (Cheng, 2022) and the importance of reflective practice in shaping leadership identity (Kumar & Smith, 2024). Framing the findings within Distributed Leadership Theory, teacher-leadership emerges as a collective journey where responsibility is shared, and growth is pursued collaboratively, highlighting that leadership is not confined to positional authority but thrives when distributed across the professional community.

Advocacy and Responsibility. Table 1b presents the lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along the theme of Advocacy and Responsibility, highlighting how they perceive their leadership roles in terms of promoting their disciplines and carrying professional obligations. The data shows that teacher-leaders interpret their role as advocating for their subject areas while carrying the responsibility for professional growth. Codes such as advocate, professional obligation, and subject

development capture this theme. Illustrative statements include: “Professionally, it means being an advocate for the science subject,” “Being a teacher-leader means promoting the importance of our discipline,” and “It is a responsibility to support the development of our subject and help others grow.” The prevalence of this theme is reported as High (61–80%), indicating that a majority of participants strongly identify with advocacy and responsibility as central to their leadership experience.

Table 1b
Lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along Advocacy and Responsibility

Themes	Descriptions	Codes	Participants’ Illustrative Statements	Prevalence
Advocacy and Responsibility	Teacher-leaders interpret their role as Advocate, advocating for their subject areas and carrying professional responsibility	Professional and obligation, Subject for development	“Professionally, it means being an advocate for the science subject.” / “Being a teacher-leader means promoting the importance of our discipline.” / “It is a responsibility to support the development of our subject and help others grow.”	High (61–80%)

The findings suggest that teacher-leadership extends beyond personal growth to encompass advocacy and responsibility for subject area development, where teacher-leaders act as subject ambassadors and embrace professional obligations to ensure both disciplinary relevance and the growth of colleagues. This moral and ethical dimension of leadership highlights accountability not only in guiding peers but also in championing the discipline itself, with high prevalence indicating that advocacy and responsibility are widely shared values among teacher-leaders. Such roles imply that institutions must empower teacher-leaders to influence curriculum development, policy discussions, and professional learning communities, thereby fostering innovation and sustained subject growth. These results resonate with scholarship that identifies advocacy as a core dimension of teacher-leadership (Brown & Lee, 2022; Garcia & Torres, 2023; Huang, 2024), while also acknowledging systemic barriers that require institutional support (Patel & Johnson, 2021) and the importance of collaborative structures in distributing responsibility (Santos & Rivera, 2025). Framed within Servant Leadership Theory, teacher-leadership is revealed as service-oriented, where advocacy is not merely about promoting a discipline but about nurturing collective development and prioritizing the growth and well-being of others. This underscores that teacher-leaders embody servant leadership by championing their subject areas while simultaneously fostering the professional growth of their peers.

Collaboration and Mentorship. Table 1c shows the lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along the theme of Collaboration and Mentorship, emphasizing how leadership is understood through cooperative work with colleagues and the guidance of students. The data highlights that teacher-leadership is perceived as collaborative work with colleagues and mentorship of students, fostering collective improvement. Codes such as collaborator, mentor, collective improvement, sharing practices, and professional cooperation capture this theme. Illustrative statements include: “My colleagues may perceive me as a collaborator,” “For my students, I think they see me as a mentor,” “Being a teacher-leader means guiding both teachers and students in improving our subject area,” “Collaboration is central

to coordinating subject-related tasks,” and “Sharing practices with other teachers helps improve the subject area.” The prevalence of this theme is reported as Moderate (41–60%), indicating that while significant, collaboration and mentorship are not as dominant as other leadership dimensions.

Table 1c
Lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along Collaboration and Mentorship

Themes	Descriptions	Codes	Participants’ Statements	Illustrative Prevalence
Collaboration and Mentorship	Leadership is understood as collaborative work with colleagues and mentorship of students, fostering collective improvement. This also includes sharing practices and professional cooperation.	Collaborator, Mentor, Collective Sharing practices, Professional cooperation	“My colleagues may perceive me as a collaborator.” / “For my students, I think they see me as a mentor.” / “Being a teacher-leader means guiding both teachers and students in improving our subject area.” / “Collaboration is central to coordinating subject-related tasks.” / “Sharing practices with other teachers helps improve the subject area.”	Moderate (41–60%)

The findings demonstrate that collaboration and mentorship are integral yet moderately emphasized aspects of teacher leadership, reflecting the dual role of teacher leaders in fostering professional cooperation among colleagues and mentoring students to ensure subject growth. While valued, their moderate prevalence suggests contextual challenges such as limited time, institutional structures, or varying levels of collegial engagement. Nonetheless, these practices remain essential to effective subject-area leadership, as they highlight the relational nature of teacher leadership rooted in collective improvement. Scholarship supports this view, showing that collaboration enhances professional cooperation (Anderson & Kim, 2022), mentorship strengthens student growth (Lopez & Cruz, 2023), and peer collaboration fosters innovation (Nguyen, 2024), though systemic barriers often constrain these practices (Patel & Huang, 2021) and mentorship requires intentional structures (Rivera & Santos, 2025). Framed within Distributed Leadership Theory, collaboration and mentorship are revealed as shared practices that distribute responsibility across teachers and administrators, resonating with participants’ experiences of guiding both colleagues and students. This underscores that teacher-leadership thrives when responsibilities are shared, practices are collaborative, and collective improvement is prioritized, situating mentorship and cooperation as integral to sustaining subject area growth and professional development.

Communication and Organization. Table 1d outlines the lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along the theme of Communication and Organization, highlighting the importance of clear communication and structured planning in coordinating subject-related tasks. The data shows that teacher-leaders emphasize communication and organization as essential practices in managing

subject areas. Codes such as communication, organization, and coordination capture this theme. Illustrative statements include: “I keep things simple through organization and communication,” and “Communication with colleagues helps us coordinate activities in the subject area.” This theme is described as practice-focused, without a prevalence rating, indicating that it is observed as a practical dimension of leadership rather than quantified by frequency.

Table 1d

Lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along Communication and Organization

Themes	Descriptions	Codes	Participants’ Illustrative Statements	Prevalence
Communication and Organization	Clear communication and structured planning emphasized essential coordinating subject-related tasks.	Communication, / Organization, / Coordination	“I keep things simple through organization and communication.” “Communication with colleagues helps us coordinate activities in the subject area.”	Practice-focused (no prevalence rating)

The findings indicate that communication and organization are foundational elements of teacher-leadership, serving as operational practices that enable effective coordination of subject-related tasks and sustain leadership effectiveness. Unlike themes tied to personal growth or advocacy, this dimension emphasizes simplicity, clarity, and structured planning, reflecting the necessity of transparent communication in fostering collaboration among colleagues. As universally acknowledged practices, communication and organization highlight the practical dimension of leadership, requiring institutions to strengthen systems that enhance these skills through training, communication channels, and collaborative planning tools. Scholarship supports this view, showing that structured communication improves coordination (Martinez & Cruz, 2022), organizational practices enhance efficiency (Nguyen, 2023), and communication fosters trust and collective responsibility (Lopez & Rivera, 2024), though challenges such as institutional burdens and the need for collaborative structures remain (Patel & Kim, 2021; Garcia & Santos, 2025). Framed within Phenomenological Theory, these findings underscore that communication and organization are not merely operational tasks but meaningful practices through which teacher-leaders interpret and give significance to their roles, shaping their identity and effectiveness in managing subject areas.

Experiential and Reflective Teaching. Table 1e emphasizes the experiential and reflective teaching that integrates hands-on learning with critical reflection on instructional strategies. Teacher-leaders often rely on lived experiences to refine their practices, ensuring that approaches are tested, observed, and adjusted

before broader implementation. This dual focus on doing and reflecting creates a dynamic cycle of teaching and learning that enhances both student engagement and instructional effectiveness. The data highlights teacher-leaders’ lived experiences in managing subject areas through experiential and reflective teaching. The theme centers on instructional practices that prioritize student engagement via hands-on learning and reflective evaluation. Codes such as experiential learning, learning by doing, and reflective practice capture the essence of these approaches. Illustrative statements include: “Learning by doing. “Students learn science best when they are doing. “I tried it first in my class. If it works, I show it to others;” and “I observe how students respond to the strategies and adjust when needed.” The prevalence is practice-focused and lacks a quantified rating.

Table 1e
Lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along Experiential and Reflective Teaching

Themes	Descriptions	Codes	Participants’ Illustrative Statements	Prevalence
Experiential and Reflective Teaching	Instructional practices focus on engaging students through hands-on learning and reflective evaluation of strategies before wider implementation.	Experiential learning, learning by doing, Reflective practice	“Learning by doing. Students learn science best when they are doing.” / “I try it first in my class. If it works, I show it to others.” / “I observe how students respond to the strategies and adjust when needed.”	Practice-focused (no prevalence rating)

The findings reveal that teacher-leaders value experiential and reflective teaching as central to effective subject area leadership, emphasizing “learning by doing” and testing strategies in their own classrooms before sharing them with peers. This constructivist, evidence-based approach fosters innovation and adaptation, ensuring that instructional practices are both theoretically sound and practically effective. By engaging students in hands-on learning and continuously evaluating outcomes, teacher-leaders create adaptive, student-centered environments that strengthen professional learning communities and promote collective improvement. Scholarship supports this view, highlighting experiential learning as a driver of critical thinking and engagement (Garcia & Santos, 2022; Tan & Rivera, 2021), while reflective practice sustains adaptive pedagogy and collaboration (Lopez, 2023; Hernandez, 2022), though challenges remain in ensuring structured reflection (Villanueva, 2024). Framed within Distributed Leadership Theory, these practices illustrate how teacher-leaders act as practitioners, evaluators, and collaborators, refining and disseminating strategies across the school community. This underscores that experiential and reflective teaching is not only a pedagogical approach but also a leadership practice, where collective engagement, shared expertise, and accountability drive instructional improvement and professional growth.

Understanding Student Needs. Understanding student needs is a central aspect of effective teaching and leadership. Teacher-leaders emphasize the importance of recognizing and responding to learners’ diverse

requirements, using these insights to guide instructional planning and subject management. This approach ensures that teaching strategies are responsive, adaptive, and aligned with the realities of the classroom. The data in Table 1f presents teacher-leaders’ lived experiences in managing subject areas through the theme of Understanding Student Needs. The description highlights how recognizing and responding to learners’ needs informs instructional planning and subject management. Codes such as student needs, instructional planning, and responsive teaching capture the essence of this practice. An illustrative statement from participants is: “Understanding student needs helps guide how we manage the subject.” The prevalence is practice-focused, with no quantified rating provided.

Table 1f

Lived experiences of teacher-leaders in managing their subject areas along Understanding Student Needs

Themes	Descriptions	Codes	Participants’ Illustrative Statements	Prevalence
Understanding Student Needs	Teacher-leaders highlight the importance of recognizing and responding to students’ learning needs to guide instructional planning and subject management.	Student needs, Instructional planning, Responsive teaching	“Understanding student needs helps guide how we manage the subject.”	Practice-focused (no prevalence rating)

The findings highlight that teacher-leaders prioritize student-centered approaches, shaping instructional planning around learners’ needs to ensure responsive and adaptive pedagogy. This reflects constructivist principles, where teaching evolves through flexibility, empathy, and continuous adjustment, fostering inclusive and effective learning environments. By embedding student needs into instructional decisions, teacher-leaders strengthen engagement, achievement, and collaborative improvement, creating adaptive classrooms that promote both academic success and holistic development. Scholarship supports this view, showing that responsiveness enhances engagement and inclusivity (Martinez & Cruz, 2022; Nguyen, 2023; Reyes & Bautista, 2024), though challenges remain in ensuring systematic assessment (Kumar, 2021) and sustaining adaptive planning (Santos & Lee, 2025). Framed within Servant Leadership Theory (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden & Van Knippenberg, 2025), these practices emphasize service to students, where teacher-leaders prioritize growth, well-being, and empowerment by adapting strategies to diverse needs and engaging in reflective cycles. This emphasizes that teacher-leadership is not merely positional but service-oriented, ensuring that learners thrive academically and personally through empathetic, responsive, and student-centered leadership.

Opportunities and Challenges Encountered by Teacher-Leaders

Teacher-leaders play a vital role in bridging classroom practice with leadership responsibilities, offering both opportunities for growth and challenges that test their resilience. Their experiences highlight the dual nature of leadership in education, empowering them to influence policy, mentor peers, and engage

communities, while also confronting issues of workload, authority, and sustainability. To capture these dynamics, the opportunities and challenges encountered by teacher-leaders are presented in Tables 2a and 2b, respectively.

Opportunities. Table 2a presents the Opportunities Encountered by Teacher-Leaders, highlighting the positive benefits they derive from their leadership roles, supported by illustrative statements from participants and the prevalence of each theme across responses. The data shows that Professional Growth and Collaboration & Mentoring emerged as the most prevalent opportunities, both rated Very High at 81-100%. Instructional Influence was also strongly represented, High at 61-80% prevalence. Meanwhile, Leadership Development appeared at a Moderate with 41-60% level, and Innovation in Teaching was least observed, at a Low level, with 21-40% prevalence.

The findings indicate that teacher-leaders primarily benefit from opportunities that enhance professional growth and collaboration, with very high prevalence showing strong associations with skill development, confidence-building, and fostering teamwork. Instructional influence is also significant, reflecting their capacity to shape classroom practices and student engagement, while leadership development is moderately experienced, and innovation remains limited due to resource constraints. These results suggest that teacher-leadership thrives when opportunities align with growth and collaboration, though systemic challenges hinder creativity and innovation. Scholarship supports this view, highlighting collaborative leadership as a driver of efficacy and instructional improvement (Cruz & Estrella, 2022; Nguyen, 2023; Santos & Rivera, 2024), while resource limitations constrain innovation (Lee & Tan, 2025).

Table 2a
Opportunities Encountered by Teacher-Leaders

Theme	Positive Benefits to Teacher-Leaders	Participants' Illustrative Statements	Prevalence
Professional Growth	Leadership roles enhance skills, confidence, and career development.	“The role helps develop leadership skills.” / “Leadership allows me to influence how our subject is taught.”	Very High (81–100%)
Instructional Influence	Ability to shape teaching practices and improve student engagement.	“Students respond positively when new strategies are introduced.” / “Leadership allows me to integrate innovative approaches.”	High (61–80%)
Collaboration & Mentoring	Fosters teamwork, sharing strategies, and mentoring colleagues.	“Sharing strategies with colleagues helps.” / “Collaboration is rewarding.”	Very High (81–100%)
Innovation in Teaching	Resource constraints encourage creative and adaptive strategies.	“We often improvise with available materials, which is not always effective.”	Low (21–40%)
Leadership Development	Enhances management, organizational, and decision-making skills.	“Leadership develops management and leadership skills.”	Moderate (41–60%)

Framed within Distributed Leadership Theory (Spillane, 2006; Zaghmout & Harrison, 2025), the findings emphasize collective responsibility and shared expertise, showing that collaboration and mentoring sustain school improvement. At the same time, the results resonate with Servant Leadership Theory (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden & Van Knippenberg, 2025), as teacher-leaders embody service-oriented leadership by nurturing colleagues’ skills, fostering teamwork, and adapting practices for the benefit of students and peers. This accentuates that teacher-leadership opportunities are deeply rooted in service, collaboration, and collective advancement, while innovation requires stronger institutional support to be fully realized.

Challenges. Table 2b showcases the Challenges Encountered by Teacher-Leaders, outlining the issues they confront in balancing teaching and leadership responsibilities. The table highlights recurring themes, supported by participants’ illustrative statements, and indicates the prevalence of each challenge across responses. The data reveals that Workload & Time Pressure emerged as the most prevalent challenge, rated Very High at 81–100%. Resource Deficiencies and Instructional Constraints followed with a high level of 61–80% prevalence. Administrative Burden and Coordination Demands were moderately observed, each at 41–60%. On the other hand, Acceptance of Initiatives was least prevalent, appearing at a Low of 21–40% level.

The findings reveal that teacher-leaders face significant challenges in balancing dual roles, with workload and time pressures emerging as the most dominant constraints, compounded by resource deficiencies and instructional limitations that hinder effective subject-related activities. Administrative burdens and coordination demands add further strain, while resistance to initiatives, though present, is less prevalent compared to structural issues.

Table 2b
Challenges of Teacher-Leaders

Theme	Issues Teacher-Leaders	Confronting	Participants’ Illustrative Statements	Prevalence
Workload & Time Pressure	Difficulty teaching roles due to limited time.	balancing and leadership	“Balancing teaching responsibilities with leadership duties is challenging.” / “Time management becomes difficult when handling multiple responsibilities.”	Very High (81–100%)
Resource Deficiencies	Inadequate facilities and materials hinder effective teaching.		“The biggest challenge is the lack of laboratory room and equipment.” / “Limited resources affect how we implement activities.”	High (61–80%)
Administrative Burden	Overwhelming paperwork and requirements add to the workload.	and compliance	“Paperwork consumes time that could be spent on instruction.” / “Administrative requirements add to the deadlines often clash with teaching responsibilities.”	Moderate (41–60%)
Coordination Demands	Coordinating with colleagues requires patience, and persistence.	with effort,	“Sometimes coordinating with others takes time and effort.” / “Managing coordination responsibilities requires patience and persistence.”	Moderate (41–60%)

Theme	Issues	Confronting	Participants' Illustrative Statements	Prevalence
Acceptance of Initiatives	New initiatives may take time to be accepted by colleagues.	Teacher-Leaders	“Some initiatives take time before they are accepted by others.” / “It takes patience to align everyone’s schedules.”	Low (21–40%)
Instructional Constraints	Difficulty implementing subject-related activities due to a lack of resources.		“Sometimes students cannot fully experience lessons because of inadequate tools.” / “Adapting strategies when resources are limited is difficult.”	High (61–80%)

These challenges underscore that teacher-leadership is constrained more by systemic and organizational factors than interpersonal dynamics, highlighting the need for institutional support in time management, resource provision, and role distribution. Scholarship contextualizes these findings, noting similar barriers across diverse educational settings, including resource gaps (Radam, 2025), heavy workloads (Lokman et al., 2024), administrative burdens (Samah et al., 2023), cultural adaptation in initiative acceptance (Cruz & Villanueva, 2022), and instructional constraints in resource-scarce environments (Lee & Tan, 2025). Framed within Phenomenological Theory (Husserl; Moustakas; Byrne, 2025), these challenges reflect the lived realities of teacher-leaders, emphasizing that leadership roles must be understood through the subjective meanings attributed by those experiencing them. This perspective enriches the findings by situating teacher-leadership challenges not as abstract constructs but as deeply felt experiences that shape practice, underscoring the need for systemic reforms to better support teacher-leaders in fulfilling their roles.

Leadership Styles Exhibited by Teacher-Leaders

Table 3 provides a summary of the strategic leadership attributes, presenting the mean scores, ranks, and interpretations of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles based on the frequency scale of manifestation. The “transformational leadership style” obtained the highest mean score of 3.18, and was interpreted as “Manifested Fairly Often.” “Transactional leadership style” followed with a mean score of 2.80, ranked second, and was also interpreted as “Manifested Fairly Often.” “Laissez-faire leadership style” recorded the lowest mean score of 1.14, ranked third, and interpreted as “Manifested Once in a While.”

Table 3d
Summary of Strategic Leadership Attributes

Leadership Style	Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Transformational Style	3.18	1	MFO
Transactional Style	2.80	2	MFO
Laissez-Faire	1.14	3	MOW

Note. 0.00-0.50 Not Manifested (NM); 0.51-1.49 Manifested Once in a While (MOW); 1.50-2.49 Sometimes Manifested (SM); 2.50-3.49 Manifested Fairly Often (MFO); 3.50-4.00 Frequently Manifested (FM)

The findings show that transformational leadership is the most dominant style among teacher-leaders, fairly often practiced to inspire, motivate, and elevate colleagues toward higher performance, while transactional leadership also appears fairly often through structured exchanges and contingent rewards. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership is rarely manifested, reflecting a leadership culture that values active engagement, accountability, and motivation over passive oversight. This distribution suggests that leaders prefer proactive and structured approaches that balance inspiration with performance-based reinforcement, enhancing organizational effectiveness while minimizing disengagement. Scholarship supports this view, with transformational leadership fostering innovation and commitment (Alqatawenh, 2018; Gyensare et al., 2019), transactional leadership promoting compliance and efficiency (Nguyen et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2020), and laissez-faire leadership linked to negative outcomes such as reduced satisfaction (Skogstad et al., 2019). Framed within Distributed Leadership Theory (Spillane, 2006; Zaghmout & Harrison, 2025), the dominance of transformational leadership reflects collaborative inspiration, while transactional practices reinforce structured accountability, and the minimal presence of laissez-faire underscores the discouragement of disengagement. Leadership practices at Himanag National High School emerge as collective and participatory, resonating with distributed leadership principles that prioritize collaboration, shared responsibility, and active involvement.

Leadership Development Framework for Enhancing Teacher-Leadership Practices

Building on the study's findings, a Leadership Development Framework for Enhancing Teacher-Leadership Practices was designed for Himanag National High School, guided by the Modified ADDIE Model to ensure contextual relevance and sustainability. The framework strengthens transformational leadership, the most dominant style, by equipping teacher-leaders to inspire, motivate, and drive higher performance and commitment. It balances transactional strategies, recognizing their role in reinforcing accountability and structured performance through contingent rewards, while discouraging overreliance on corrective measures. Importantly, it minimizes laissez-faire leadership, which was rarely observed, by embedding reflective practices and coaching mechanisms to promote active involvement. The framework was operationalized into practical modules, mentoring programs, collaborative workshops, and evaluation tools, designed to cultivate a culture of proactive, inspiring, and effective teacher-leadership that supports professional growth, collaboration, and institutional improvement.

Supporting studies affirm the framework's design and development. De Jesus (2024) and Lasrin, Rubini, & Novita (2025) highlight transformational leadership's role in enhancing self-efficacy and innovation, while Dela Cruz & Chagas (2024) confirm that both transformational and transactional styles positively influence job satisfaction. Sheena, Benoliel, & Berkovich (2025) emphasize their complementary roles in sustaining leadership during crises, and Kamal, Ridwan, & Kesuma (2024) caution against laissez-faire leadership's detrimental effects. Latin American research further supports the design phase: García-González & Ramírez (2023) and Martínez, Silva, & Torres (2024) show that transformational and transactional practices foster collaboration and accountability, while Fernandes & Oliveira (2022) link laissez-faire leadership to reduced satisfaction. Pérez & Castillo (2025) and Rodríguez & Almeida (2023) highlight reflective practices and balanced leadership development as essential to contextual relevance. In the development phase, Leithwood & Sun (2023), Hallinger & Wang (2022), and Bowers & White (2023) demonstrate the effectiveness of transformational training, transactional accountability systems, and mentoring programs, while García & Ortiz (2024) and Klar & Brewer (2025) validate proactive engagement and collaborative workshops as key to sustaining teacher-leadership cultures. These

strengthen the framework's evidence-based foundation, ensuring it is practical, responsive, and aligned with global and local educational contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that teacher-leadership is characterized by continuous professional growth, advocacy, and responsiveness to student needs, which sustain effective subject-area leadership. It integrates collaboration, clear communication, and innovative teaching practices to create adaptive, student-centered environments for collective improvement. Teacher-leadership is most strongly reinforced by opportunities for professional growth and collaboration, though innovation remains limited due to systemic constraints. Structural challenges such as workload, resource gaps, and instructional constraints highlight the need for institutional reforms to fully support teacher-leaders. Transformational and transactional leadership styles are commonly practiced, with transformational leadership emerging as the most dominant, reflecting a leadership culture centered on active involvement, motivation, and accountability rather than disengagement.

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