



Instructional Leadership Practices of Head Teachers: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Approach for the Co-Design of a Toolkit

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ABSTRACT

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This study examined the instructional leadership practices of secondary school head teachers as a basis for the co-design of an instructional leadership enhancement toolkit. Specifically, it aimed to determine how often head teachers demonstrate instructional leadership practices in defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate; describe their instructional leadership practices; and co-design an instructional leadership enhancement toolkit. The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design with an intervention-development component. Quantitative data was gathered from 130 teachers using Hallinger's Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), while qualitative data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions with nine head teachers. Weighted mean, standard deviation, and thematic analysis were used in analyzing the data. Findings revealed that head teachers demonstrated instructional leadership to a very great extent across the three dimensions. Strong practices were evident in goal communication, instructional monitoring, curriculum coordination, staff participation, and recognition systems. Qualitative findings further showed that instructional leadership practices were goal-driven, data-informed, coaching-oriented, collaborative, and responsive to school contexts. The integrated findings indicate that the instructional leadership practices among secondary school head teachers is shaped by both measurable leadership practices and contextual experiences. The co-design process resulted in an enhanced instructional leadership toolkit that was practical, supportive, adaptable, and context-sensitive. The study concluded that the toolkit may serve as a useful guide for strengthening instructional leadership and school improvement efforts.

KEYWORDS:

Explanatory sequential, instructional leadership practices, and instructional leadership challenges

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership for learning provides a broad framework that explains how school leadership influences student outcomes through vision and goals, academic structures and processes, and people development (Hallinger, 2011). This perspective views leadership as an adaptive and learning-centered process that shapes the conditions necessary for effective teaching and improved

learner performance. Within this framework, instructional leadership practices is presented as a more focused leadership approach that prioritizes teaching and learning through defining the school mission, managing instructional programs, and promoting a positive school climate. This study specifically examined how head teachers demonstrated instructional leadership practices and used the findings as a basis for the co-design, utilization, evaluation, and enhancement of a toolkit. The succeeding subtopics framed head teachers' instructional leadership practices as both the main subject of inquiry and the foundation for developing practical support to strengthen their role in improving school outcomes.

Instructional leadership practices stand at the center of this study because they explain how head teachers

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influence the quality of teaching and learning, guide school improvement, and create conditions that support teacher and learner performance. It is the main aim of the study to find out and analyze the secondary school headteachers' instructional leadership strategies, capabilities, and problems in Sorsogon. The product is that these results serve as the basis for designing, testing, and improving an instructional leadership toolkit. Hence, instructional leadership practices is viewed as more than a mere framework but as the main feature on which the research is based.

The idea of instructional leadership practices in educational leadership writings is generally acknowledged as first among schools' leadership methods since it directly concentrates teaching and learning at the center of the principal's responsibility. Akram et al. (2017) have classified instructional leadership practices as a multifaceted yet necessary skill that encapsulates leadership facets directly linked to teaching excellence, supervision, and learning improvement. Their analysis of the primary models indicated that instructional leadership practices normally involve setting the school mission, delivering the instructional program, and fostering an excellent school environment, components that are also guiding this study. Setting the school mission equips educational initiatives with a sense of direction, consistency, and intent. Literature indicates that successful school principals set up and convey understandable goals that bring teachers and stakeholders to a single focus on the main instructional priorities. By doing this, school leaders connect classroom activities with the wider academic goals and learner results.

Delivering the instructional program signifies the hands-on role of school administrators in instructional supervision, curricular coordination, and student assessment. This aspect reveals whether the head's leadership is limited to administrative management or extends to teaching and learning support as well. Research indicates that principals who actively participate in instructional activities are able to contribute more directly to the enhancement of teaching quality and student achievements. Fostering an excellent school environment highlights the necessity of building an atmosphere marked by trust, cooperation, security, incentive, and professional assistance. A healthy school environment is able to reinforce teachers' dedication, aspirations to develop professionally, and the ability to produce conditions that promote the improvement of instruction. In this respect, instructional leadership practices is not just technical supervision but also the nurturing of organizational situations that lead to effective teaching and learning.

The combined effect of the three dimensions is that instructional leadership practices is no longer a path to mere administrative efficiency, but they become a leadership that is consciously organized around learning improvement. Shitana (2018) stressed that instructional leadership

practices primarily involve school leaders helping teachers, who, in turn, perform activities that lead to student achievement. Equally, Bada et al. (2020) concurred that focused instructional leadership practices promote collaboration, instructional support, and teacher professional development, all leading to student achievement. Pana (2024) further claimed that school heads affect school performance through vision-setting, teacher support, resource allocation, and the development of instructional structures.

Given this, instructional leadership practices become a major focus of this paper. Apart from sketching existing leadership practices, the research plans to conceptualize and analyze an intervention kit for the purpose of promoting instructional leadership practices in the school environment. This transforms instructional leadership practices into both diagnostic and developmental since it allows current practices to be assessed and improvement strategies to be developed. As a firmly established concept associated with school effectiveness and ongoing improvement, instructional leadership practices is highly aligned with the needs of the school and, through quality education, leads to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4.

The toolkit basically encapsulates the creation side of the project, presenting the study's results on instructional leadership practices in the form of a functional and well-documented tool for helping schools to improve. In this way, the project moves forward the main purpose of teaching and learning improvement and ties in with Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education.

The analysis of existing literature reveals a considerable gap in research. Here are some explanations: Despite the fact that the topic of instructional leadership practices has been widely covered in literature, there is still a lack of local study that will specifically look into how the secondary school head teachers of the second congressional district of Sorsogon perform instructional leadership practices according to the three pillars defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate; and at the same time consider the head teachers' strategies, their capacities, and the challenges they face. Besides that, there is not much context-based research that goes further than descriptions towards the co-design, usage, assessment, and enhancement of a toolkit that is based on the findings of the local area. Therefore, the present research is unique due to its local nature; it focuses on the head teacher as an instructional leader, and its purpose is to create and improve a practical intervention based on evidence from the study area.

This research project covers a study on head teachers' instructional leadership practices in terms of the three main components: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a

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positive school climate, as well as the description of their instructional leadership practices and the co-design, utilization, evaluation, and enhancement of a relevant toolkit. This study is delimited to the instructional leadership practices of head teachers in the secondary schools of the second congressional district of the Schools Division of Sorsogon. The study does not cover other leadership styles outside instructional leadership and is not intended to generalize findings to all school leaders beyond the identified locale. Its findings are limited by the specific context, participants, and conditions under which the study is conducted, but these delimitations also allow the research to produce a more focused and contextually responsive analysis and output.

Generally, this study aims to examine the instructional leadership practices of head teachers as inputs for the development and evaluation of an enhancement toolkit. Specifically, it aims to (1) identify how often the head teachers demonstrate their instructional leadership practices along with (a) defining the school mission, (b) managing the instructional program, and (c) promoting a positive school climate; (2) describe the instructional leadership practices of head teachers; and (3) co-design an instructional leadership enhancement toolkit for head teachers.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design with an intervention-development component. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), an explanatory sequential mixed methods design contains two phases. Quantitative data was collected and analyzed in the first phase. Following the analysis, the second phase was developed to collect qualitative data, providing a more in-depth explanation of the quantitative results from the first phase. As an overall research blueprint, the design guided the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data so that the objectives of the study could be addressed in a logical and coherent sequence.

In the first phase, quantitative data was gathered from the teachers to determine the extent to which head teachers demonstrated instructional leadership practices across the dimensions of defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate. The quantitative results established the initial profile of instructional leadership practices and identified the strongest and weakest areas that required further explanation. In the second phase, qualitative data was gathered through interviews with head teachers to explain the quantitative patterns and clarify how instructional leadership practices was enacted in actual school contexts. The integrated findings from these two phases then served as the basis for the co-design of Toolkit

Version 1.0, the utilization and evaluation of Toolkit Version 2.0, and the development of the enhanced final toolkit. This design was appropriate because the study sought not only to describe instructional leadership practices but also to generate an evidence-based and context-sensitive intervention output for head teachers.

Participants. The study involved 130 teachers and nine head teachers serving as secondary school heads in the Second Congressional District of Sorsogon. The study drew data from both primary and intervention-generated sources that were aligned with each research objective. For Objective 1, the primary quantitative source consisted of the survey responses of the teachers assigned to the participating secondary schools in the Second Congressional District of Sorsogon. These participants were selected because they are teachers who are directly under the leadership of the head teachers, serving as their school heads, and can, therefore, assess the instructional leadership being examined in this study. The survey instrument used in this phase was an adopted survey questionnaire from Hallinger, the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale. For Objective 2, qualitative data was obtained through interviews with nine secondary school heads who are occupying the position as head teachers and whose responses provided meaningful perspectives that helped explain and enrich the quantitative findings. For Objective 3, the qualitative and development-related data were gathered through focus group discussions involving head teachers. For Objective 3, three head teachers who committed to co-designing the toolkit participated in the drafting of Toolkit Version 1.0. After the initial drafting and review, they provided further comments and suggestions, which served as the basis for revisions, resulting in Toolkit Version 2.0.

Research Instruments. The study utilized four research instruments to gather the needed data. These included an adopted survey questionnaire from Philip Hallinger, an interview guide, a focus group discussion guide, and an evaluation checklist for the developed output. For Objective 1, the main instrument was an adopted survey questionnaire on instructional leadership practices. This instrument was primarily anchored on the instructional leadership framework and measurement tradition developed by Hallinger and Murphy, particularly the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) and later studies on its measurement properties and cross-context adaptation (Hallinger et al., 2018). The questionnaire was used in its original form, with the three dimensions examined in the study: defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate.

For objectives 2, 3, and 4, the study used researcher-developed but literature-informed interview and focus group discussion guides. The guide for Objective 2 was designed to elicit explanations of the quantitative results

and, therefore, contained questions organized around the strongest and weakest leadership indicators identified in the survey. For Objective 3, the focus group discussion served as a co-design consultation guide for Toolkit Version 1.0, allowing the participants to assess its relevance, usability, priority components, and needed revisions. After this assessment and the incorporation of their feedback, the revised output was developed into Toolkit Version 2.0.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures. All the data collection was done thoroughly and according to the order of the research objectives. Once the researchers obtained the necessary permissions from the proper school and administrative authorities, the first thing they did was distribute the survey questionnaire among the one hundred thirty teachers of the participating secondary schools. This quantitative phase fulfilled Objective 1 as it collected data for identifying the extent of head teachers' instructional leadership practices along the established dimensions. The researcher summarized the survey responses and then went on with the qualitative phase. For Objective 2, qualitative data were collected by interviewing nine head teachers. Their answers gave great clues that helped the researcher in understanding the quantitative results on a deeper level. Besides that, the interview method was chosen because it helped participants collectively explain the quantitative findings, react to each other's ideas, and give an insight into the practice of instructional leadership.

Objectives 3 and 4, on the other hand, were achieved by data collection via a focus group discussion comprising the three head teachers who were present during the scheduled date and time of data collection. The merge results from the quantitative phase and the interview were the main drivers for the development of Toolkit Version 1.0. The focus group discussion for Objective 3 acted as a co-design consultation where the participants drafted and reviewed Toolkit Version 1.0 and gave feedback on its relevance, clarity, usability, priorities, and needed revisions. That consolidated feedback was then used for the preparation of Toolkit Version 2.0. Quantitative and qualitative data in this research were processed, analyzed, and interpreted in a manner that directly supported the research objectives. First, Objective 1: Survey responses were digitized and put in tabular form and then interpreted using descriptive statistics, especially the weighted mean and standard deviation, so as to assess how head teachers had exhibited instructional leadership practices in terms of defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate. Mainly, these statistical methods were apt since the intention of the study was to describe the demonstration level of each indicator and also to uncover the strongest and weakest areas of instructional leadership practices based on the scale used in the questionnaire. Finally, the obtained means were explained with a verbal interpretation scale. A five-point

Likert scale was adopted to measure the frequency of instructional leadership practices realization. The researcher also included an estimated percentage range to reflect the extent of the indicator being currently practiced. The guide below was utilized in the result interpretation: Verbal Description (VD); 4.5-5.00 = Almost Always Demonstrated (AAD); 3.5-4.49 = Frequently Demonstrated (FD); 2.5-3.49 = Sometimes Demonstrated (SD); 1.5-2.49 = Seldom Demonstrated (SeD); 1.00-1.49 = Almost Never Demonstrated (AND)

For Objectives 2 and 3, the qualitative data collected by narrative interviews and focus group discussions were codified by a thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis framework as a guide. First, locate the transcript and discussion notes and read them multiple times in order to familiarize yourself; then, pinpoint meaningful statements and initially code them. Putting together related codes into categories, and finally developing more comprehensive themes that represent common patterns of meaning across the dataset. The thematic analysis method fits best, as it makes the themes more flexible and theoretically useful for identifying and interpreting patterns in qualitative data, including the data of focus groups, where the group is usually taken as the unit of analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). While analyzing the focus group discussions, the researcher took into account both the common views of the group and the context-based nuances each participant contributed. Regarding Objective 3, the thematic analysis was primarily concerned about identifying which of the suggested components of the toolkit were considered relevant, which features were regarded as priorities, and what revisions were required so that the initial toolkit could be more usable and context-sensitive.

III. RESULTS

This section presents the findings on the instructional leadership practices of head teachers as perceived by teacher respondents. The current section discloses the findings on how often head teachers lead instruction according to the perception of the teacher respondents.

Frequency of Head Teachers' Instructional Leadership

Defining the School Mission. It refers to the instructional leadership practices of head teachers in setting clear academic goals, communicating these goals to stakeholders, and using them as a basis for school and curricular decisions. In this study, this dimension was measured through indicators that reflect how head teachers establish, communicate, and align the school's goals with instructional practices.

Table 1 shows that the indicators under Defining the School Mission were generally rated very high. The three highest indicators were discussing the school's academic goals with teachers at faculty meetings ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.57$), referring to the school's academic goals when

making curricular decisions with teachers ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.65$), and using data on student performance when developing the school’s academic goals ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.62$). These results show that head teachers were most capable of keeping the academic goals focused during professional discussions, continuing to connect those goals with instructional decisions, and utilizing student performance data as a basis for goal setting. In fact, the school’s mission was probably not just seen as a declaration on paper, but a guide that drives instructional planning and teamwork.

Table 1. Head Teachers’ Instructional Leadership on Defining School Mission

Indicator	Mean	SD	VD
1. Develop a focused set of annual school-wide goals.	4.22	0.78	FD
2. Frame the school’s goals in terms of staff responsibilities for meeting them.	4.35	0.69	FD
3. Use needs assessment or other formal or informal methods to secure staff input on goal development.	4.20	0.64	FD
4. Use data on student performance when developing the school’s academic goals.	4.43	0.62	FD
5. Develop goals that are easily understood and used by teachers in the school.	4.37	0.64	FD
6. Communicate the school’s goals to members of the school community effectively.	4.40	0.65	FD
7. Discuss the school’s academic goals with teachers at faculty meetings.	4.52	0.57	FD
8. Refer to the school’s academic goals when making curricular decisions with teachers.	4.45	0.66	FD
9. Ensure that the school’s academic goals are reflected in highly visible displays in the school.	4.40	0.53	FD
10. Refer to the school’s goals or mission in forums with students.	4.42	0.59	FD
Overall Weighted Mean	4.38	0.64	FD

On the contrary, the lowest three indicators were using needs assessment or any other formal or informal methods to get staff input for goal development ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.64$), setting up a limited number of focused annual school-wide goals ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.78$), and expressing the school’s goals in terms of staff responsibilities to meet ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.69$). Even though these indicators were

still characterized as almost always demonstrated, they were relatively weaker than the top-rated behaviors. So, basically, while head teachers were very much involved in talking about and implementing school goals, the more formal and structured parts of goal setting and staff role clarification were hardly discernible. This is to say that the breakdown of the school mission into individual responsibilities and the development of formal annual targets are probably areas needing further support. Overall, the results show that head teachers demonstrated defining the school mission practices to a very great extent, with the strongest performance in discussing, applying, and data-basing academic goals, and relatively lower performance in formal goal formulation and staff responsibility alignment. These findings indicate that the mission of the school was actively communicated and used, but some structured goal-setting practices may still require strengthening before moving to the next aspect of instructional leadership.

Managing the Instructional Program. It refers to the practices of head teachers in supervising instruction, coordinating curriculum, monitoring student progress, and using instructional feedback and performance data to improve teaching and learning.

Table 2. Head Teachers’ Instructional Leadership on Managing Instructional Program

Indicator	Mean	SD	VD
1. Ensure that the classroom priorities of teachers are consistent with the goals and directions of the school.	4.40	0.76	FD
2. Review student work products when evaluating classroom instruction	4.39	0.56	FD
3. Conduct informal observations in the classroom.	4.40	0.75	FD
4. Point out specific strengths in teachers’ instructional practices in post-observation feedback.	4.43	0.57	FD
5. Point out specific weaknesses in teacher instructional practices in post – observation feedback.	4.33	0.67	FD
6. Make clear who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels.	4.45	0.70	FD
7. Draw upon the results of school–wide testing when making curricular decisions	4.28	0.67	FD
8. Monitor the classroom curriculum to see that it covers the school’s curricular objectives.	4.33	0.66	FD
9. Assess the overlap between the school’s curricular objectives and the school’s achievement test.	4.29	0.56	FD

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10. Participate actively in the review of curricular materials	4.35	0.54	FD
11. Meet individually with teachers to discuss progress.	4.22	0.67	FD
12. Discuss academic performance results with faculty to identify curricular strengths and weaknesses	4.45	0.62	FD
13. Use tests to assess progress toward school goals.	4.40	0.66	FD
14. Inform teachers of the school's performance.	4.18	0.82	FD
15. Inform students of the school's academic progress.	4.23	0.76	FD
Overall Weighted Mean	4.34	0.66	FD

In this study, the dimensions were through indicators related to classroom observation, post-observation feedback, curriculum coordination, and the use of assessment results in instructional decision-making.

Table 2 indicates that head teachers showed strong performance in managing the instructional program. The three highest indicators were making clear who is responsible for coordinating the curriculum across grade levels (M = 4.45, SD = 0.70), discussing academic performance results with the faculty (M = 4.45, SD = 0.62), and pointing out specific strengths in teacher instructional practices in post-observation feedback (M = 4.43, SD = 0.57).

These findings suggest that the school's head teachers were the most effective in organizing curriculum responsibilities, involving teachers in performance-based discussions, and providing commendatory instructional feedback after observation. This suggests that they were actively involved in guiding instruction and maintaining shared accountability for curriculum implementation.

In contrast, the three lowest indicators were informing teachers of the school's performance in written form (M = 4.18, SD = 0.81), meeting individually with teachers to discuss students' progress (M = 4.22, SD = 0.67), and informing students of the school's academic progress (M = 4.23, SD = 0.76). These findings show that written communication of results, direct discussion of instructional issues, and the communication of performance outcomes to students were comparatively less emphasized. While the indicators remained within the frequently to almost always demonstrated range, they reveal that some monitoring and feedback practices were less consistently carried out than curriculum coordination and post-observation feedback. This may suggest a need for more systematic procedures in documentation, teacher conferencing, and student feedback.

Overall, the findings reveal that head teachers managed the instructional program to a very great extent, particularly in curriculum coordination, faculty discussion of

academic performance, and post-observation feedback. However, written reporting and some direct feedback-related practices appeared comparatively weaker, indicating possible areas for improvement in the management of instruction before proceeding to the next dimension.

Promoting a Positive School Climate. It refers to the instructional leadership practices of head teachers that create a supportive environment for teaching and learning through visibility, recognition, communication, professional development, and the protection of instructional time. In this study, this dimension was measured through indicators that reflect how head teachers encourage participation, recognize accomplishments, support teacher growth, and maintain conditions favorable to learning.

Table 3 shows that head teachers strongly promote a positive school climate. The three highest indicators were obtaining the participation of the whole staff in important in-service activities (M = 4.53, SD = 0.68), contacting parents to communicate improved or exemplary student performance (M = 4.52, SD = 0.70), and using school assemblies to honor students for academic accomplishments or good behavior (M = 4.50, SD = 0.65). These findings indicate that head teachers were highly engaged in creating a supportive and encouraging school environment through staff participation, parent communication, and recognition of student success.

Table 3. Head Teachers' Instructional Leadership on Promoting a Positive School Climate

Indicator	Mean	SD	VD
1. Take time to talk with students and teachers during recess.	4.48	0.60	FD
2. Visit classrooms to discuss issues with teachers and students.	4.47	0.65	FD
3. Attend or participate in extra- and co-curricular activities.	4.45	0.60	FD
4. Cover classes for teachers until late or substitute teacher arrives.	3.97	0.91	FD
5. Tutor students or provide direct instruction to classes.	3.88	0.97	FD
6. Reinforce superior performance by teachers in staff meeting.	4.38	0.65	FD
7. Compliment teachers privately for their efforts or performance.	4.35	0.65	FD
8. Acknowledge teachers' exceptional performance.	4.47	0.65	FD
9. Reward special efforts by teachers with opportunities for professional recognition.	4.42	0.65	FD
10. Create professional growth opportunities for teachers as a reward for special contributions.	4.42	0.65	FD

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Indicator	Mean	SD	VD
11. Recognize students who do superior work with formal rewards such as an honor roll or mention in the principal's newsletter.	4.37	0.64	FD
12. Use assemblies to honor students for academic accomplishments.	4.50	0.65	AAD
13. Recognize superior student achievement or improvement.	4.43	0.63	FD
14. Contact parents to communicate improved student performance.	4.52	0.70	AAD
15. Support teachers actively in their recognition and/or reward of student contributions to and accomplishments in class.	4.45	0.65	FD
16. Limit disruptions of instructional time by public address.	4.38	0.65	FD
17. Ensure that students are not called to office on instructional time.	4.37	0.64	FD
18. Ensure that tardy students suffer specific consequences for missing instructional time.	3.95	0.84	FD
19. Encourage teachers to use instructional time for teaching and practicing new skills and concepts.	4.40	0.55	FD
20. Limit the intrusion of extra- and co-curricular activities.	4.13	0.89	FD
21. Ensure that in-service activities attended by staff are consistent with the school's goals.	4.44	0.66	FD
22. Actively use in the classroom of skills acquired in in-service training.	4.43	0.66	FD
23. Obtain the participation of staff in important in-service activities.	4.53	0.68	AAD
24. Lead or attend teacher in-service activities.	4.45	0.70	FD
25. Set aside time at faculty meetings for teachers to share ideas or information from in-service activities.	4.47	0.65	FD
Overall Weighted Mean	4.36	0.69	F D

reinforced. The three lowest indicators were tutoring students or providing direct instruction to classes ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.97$), ensuring that tardy or truant students suffer specific consequences ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.84$), and covering classes for teachers until a late teacher or substitute teacher arrives ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.91$). These indicators were still frequently demonstrated, but they were less evident than the highest-rated practices. This suggests that head teachers were more strongly engaged in climate-building, recognition, and participation-oriented activities than in direct classroom substitution or stricter attendance consequence enforcement.

The pattern may indicate that their leadership role was centered more on coordination and support rather than on direct instructional replacement and disciplinary follow-through. Overall, the results reveal that head teachers promoted a positive school climate to a very great extent, especially in staff participation, parent communication, and public recognition of achievement. However, direct instructional substitution and stricter attendance consequence practices were relatively less evident, showing areas that may still need support as the study moves toward the next part of the analysis.

Instructional Leadership of Head Teachers

In this study, instructional leadership practices of head teachers were examined based on the follow-up responses of HT1 to HT9. The analysis focused on recurring patterns of practice, decision-making, and contextual adaptation as described by the participants. Using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach, the qualitative data were reviewed to identify repeated meanings across responses, which were then grouped into four emerging themes. These themes reflect how head teachers describe and enact instructional leadership across different school contexts. The summary of these themes is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Major Themes on Instructional Leadership of Head Teachers

Major Themes	Sample Responses
Goal-Driven and Data-Informed Leadership	<p>"We used learner performance data as the starting point for goal setting" (HT 1)</p> <p>"Our main academic goal is to improve learner outcomes and classroom instruction" (HT 5)</p> <p>"We discussed academic goals in our LAC sessions and some scheduled faculty meetings and connected these goals in our intervention strategies." (HT 2)</p>

Such practices reflect a climate where professional growth and learner achievement are publicly valued and

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Instructional Guidance Through Monitoring and Coaching	<p>“Based on my own understanding, the instructional role of the school head is to monitor, to provide technical assistance, and feedback to teachers” (HT 9)</p> <p>“The approach that worked best was a coaching dialogue followed by giving technical assistance on the area that needs improvement” (HT 4)</p> <p>“The performance of the learners—whether they are learning or not—is the main focus and purpose of why we are in school. So we need to monitor assessment results, end-of-quarter performance, and the like.” (HT 9)</p>
School Climate Building Through Recognition, Communication, and Participation	<p>“Teachers are involved in the planning, and we asked them on areas or skills that they wanted to learn more” (HT 8)</p> <p>“Attendance and active participation of teachers in LAC/INSET activities is being recognized” (HT 7)</p> <p>“Parents extend greater support when their efforts are being recognized.” (HT 5)</p>
Context-Responsive Leadership Shaped by Constraints and the Need for Systems	<p>“Sometimes, roles overlap, so there is a need for clear communication to avoid confusion. Teamwork and accountability will fit in” (HT 8)</p> <p>“Clear roles worked well if teachers’ availability is stable, but most of the time it is not possible because of multiple ancillary tasks” (HT 6)</p> <p>“In our school, curriculum tasks are divided by grade level and subject area, with each teacher assigned specific subjects to teach, even if it’s outside their major, due to teacher shortage.” (HT 3)</p>

Goal-Driven and Data-Informed Leadership. The main idea of the first theme is that making decisions based on evidence is a major aspect of the instructional leadership practices of head teachers. The answers show that learner performance data is the main criterion used in identifying school needs, setting academic priorities, and designing interventions. For example, one participant shared that learner performance data was the basis for their goal setting, and another participant focused on improving learner outcomes and classroom instruction as their main academic goal. The integration of academic goals into Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, faculty meetings, and

intervention strategies gives a sign that school goals are not only being stated but, to a great extent, they are being the subject of professional discussions and instructional planning. This finding implies that head teachers demonstrate a strategic orientation toward school improvement, ensuring that instructional goals are aligned with actual learner needs and performance trends.

Instructional Guidance Through Monitoring and Coaching. Reflects the active role of head teachers in supervising and supporting classroom instruction. Replies highlight that head teachers collectively consider instructional leadership practices as a series of actions geared towards regularly checking teacher performance, learner assessment results, and classroom practices, along with providing technical assistance and constructive feedback. One participant publicly depicted the instructional role of the school head as monitoring, giving technical assistance, and providing feedback. At the same time, another one put forward coaching dialogue as a very efficient strategy in dealing with instructional issues that were identified. This kind of response reflects that monitoring is not just a tool for evaluation but also a means for teacher development and support. Furthermore, the constant emphasis on learner performance as the final justification for monitoring strengthens the concept that instructional supervision is not only learner-centered but is also a medium for raising the quality of teaching and learning as well as academic achievement.

School Climate Building Through Recognition, Communication, and Participation. The theme here highlights that a collaborative and supportive school environment is quite vital for instructional leadership practices. According to the answers, head teachers make it a point to first involve teachers in planning as well as in deciding on professional development areas so that they are able to pick out the most important ones for capacity building and growth. This participatory manner of working implies that teachers are seen as the main drivers of school improvement rather than just the ones who carry out the orders. Moreover, it seems that teacher attendance and active participation in LAC and INSET activities are measured and used as a kind of motivation that keeps the teachers engaged and committed to the work that they do. On top of that, recognition doesn't only go to teachers. One of the respondents even said that acknowledging parents' efforts makes them more supportive of the school community. Hence, it is safe to conclude that head teachers know the benefits of giving positive feedback, having good communication, and involving everyone in generally in how they work together to build a school environment that promotes running at high performance.

Context-Responsive Leadership Shaped by Constraints and the Need for Systems. This text shows how instructional leadership practices is shaped by the actual

local situation and challenges of running schools. The data reveal that head teachers, in most cases, are trying to handle many responsibilities at the same time, deal with unstable availability of teachers, have multiple extra assignments, and encounter teacher shortages. The first one stressed that to handle role overlaps, there is a need for clear communication, teamwork, and accountability. Whereas the second one raised a point that it is hard to maintain clearly defined roles because of competing tasks. Moreover, the practice of assigning teachers to subjects outside their specialization due to staff shortages further demonstrates how resource limitations significantly influence instructional decisions. These results show that instructional leadership practices is not carried out in perfect situations and they are consistently modified to fit the local situation. Therefore, head teachers, among other things, depend on adaptable systems, role clarification, and working together to solve problems in order to keep the instructional programs running in the face of institutional and resource-related challenges.

Co-Designing the Proposed Toolkit for Head Teachers

For this research, the co-created product signified the preliminary draft of the Instructional Leadership Support Toolkit for Head Teachers. This draft was based on synthesizing the research outputs of Objectives 1 and 2, which were later updated in line with stakeholder discussions. The toolkit was conceptualized as a resource for head teachers to not only maintain the instructional leadership practices that had been identified as strong but also to work on the ones that were weaker and needed more structure, support, and consistency. The toolkit was divided into the three main facets of instructional leadership practices, that is, defining the school mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive school climate, with extra elements aimed at enhancing its applicability to diverse school contexts.

The results reveal that the first version of the toolkit was a well-planned creation entirely based on the research findings. The matrix of findings against the toolkit reveals that the parts of the toolkit were mainly influenced by the strongest and weakest indicators first identified in Objective 1, as well as by the recurring themes generated from Objective 2. Highly rated practices perhaps resulted in the development of toolkit components that reflect the strengths to sustain, whereas low-rated indicators led to the development of areas for improvement that require structured tools, templates, and monitoring mechanisms. Besides, the cross-cutting findings, such as data-driven decision-making, collaborative professional development, clear communication of goals and responsibilities, and supportive learning environments, have been reflected in the overall toolkit structure.

There was a match between the toolkit and the study findings, which was apparent in the content and

organization of Toolkit Version 1. The toolkit draft contained supporting documents such as guides, templates, monitoring sheets, feedback forms, and communication tools that were aimed at helping head teachers in sustaining and enhancing their instructional leadership skills. During the co-design discussion, most participants expressed their satisfaction in the fact that the toolkit was in line with their actual leadership experiences and that it addressed most of the instructional problems they face on a regular basis. Participants commented that the toolkit seemed to fit their ways of working, including setting school priorities, reviewing student achievement, carrying out instructional monitoring, giving teacher support, and handling attendance and student issues. A participant even called the toolkit a medium that can "put in order what we are already doing," primarily in school environments where the leadership processes are informally practiced and yet not documented systematically.

Despite finding the toolkit appropriate, the participants pointed out that the main objective of the toolkit in terms of usability would depend largely on the extent to which the toolkit was adapted to the actual conditions in the schools. Participants pointed out that school realities such as the shortage of staff, limited internet access, multiple ancillary functions, differences in school size, and workload pressures are some of the elements that affect the implementation of the toolkit's feasibility. Some participants even doubted whether the toolkit's design was ideal for the conditions in which they were, since they were in a rural or resource-poor school environment. Others stressed that the usefulness of the toolkit lies in its ability to respect the existing workload of head teachers and its being practical for routine use. These views reveal that contextual suitability was the major factor in considering toolkit relevance.

Co-design conversations also resulted in some specific inputs for modifying Toolkit Version 1. Respondents agreed that tools should be kept short, simple, and directly related to action. Some of them advised that the forms should only take one page and be written in clear, practical language. They thought that the communication tools could include more detailed information, such as when goals are presented, how absent personnel are oriented, and how communication is revisited. They were of the opinion that the monitoring and feedback tools should continue to focus on being supportive and not punitive, highlighting aspects of instruction and teacher development rather than compliance or disciplinary actions. Besides, the participants also suggested that there should be fewer restrictions on role assignments, attendance systems, and class coverage arrangements to better represent the differences in staffing patterns and school operational realities.

Participants enumerated priority elements of the toolkit that should be retained and highlighted in Toolkit

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Version 2.0. These included the Annual School Goal-Setting Worksheet, Quarterly Target Monitoring Sheet, Goal Communication Plan, Strength-Based Post-Observation Feedback Form, Faculty Performance Discussion Guide, Teacher Instructional Check-In Form, One-Page Written Performance Results Template, Attendance Monitoring and Support Flowchart, and Class Coverage Protocol. Participants associated these components as the ones that directly facilitate instructional planning, monitoring, communication, teacher follow-up, and learner support. They described these tools as the practical leadership cycle that carries out data review, teacher discussion, classroom observation, and follow-through. Participants, furthermore, pinpointed a number of implementation conditions as necessary for a successful utilization of the toolkit. These included making tools available in both printable and editable versions; marking routine and situational tools; providing orientation materials, samples of accomplished forms, and a short user manual. Table 5 displays the findings from the co-design phase that include stakeholders' feedback and the associated amendments to the toolkit.

Table 5. Co-Design and Enhancement Results

Analysis of Response	Revision in the Toolkit
Participants pointed out that the toolkit was very long and quite hard to find your way through, especially during the hectic school hours.	Streamlined the toolkit by merging duplicate forms and introducing a "Quick Reference Guide" for easier navigation.
Many head teachers wrote that some of the forms did not have sufficiently explicit directions, which caused the usage to be quite different in different places.	Incorporated step-by-step guidelines and model answers in each form of the toolkit to facilitate consistent understanding and usage.
Teachers found that the activities suggested by the toolkit were not very much in line with RPMS-KRA indicators.	Changed the alignment matrix to clearly show the direct match of each form of the toolkit to the relevant RPMS-KRA domains.
Stakeholders put forward the idea that tools should be more adaptable to the size and context of the school.	Began categorizing the instruments into "core tools" and "context-based tools," which can be modified according to the school environment.

Several users complained that the monitoring forms were recurrent and, in some cases, redundant. Deleted repeated indicators and combined similar monitoring tools to limit the overlap.

Added the quarterly monitoring summary sheet to document changes in progress over different implementation cycles.

Stakeholder comments were dissected into categories of usability, clarity, alignment, redundancy, and contextual appropriateness, which acted as the foundation for the development of Toolkit Version 1 into Toolkit Version 2.0. The findings reveal that the co-design process not only confirmed the pertinence of the advocated toolkit but also led to tangible modifications to increase its practicality, contextual fit, and implementation feasibility across different school settings. In summary, the outcomes for this objective reveal that the Co-Designed Instructional Leadership Enhancement Toolkit for Head Teachers was co-designed by going through a well-organized process that integrated the findings of the study and stakeholder discourse. Toolkit Version 1.0 was based on the strongest and weakest indicators of instructional leadership and on qualitative themes that were developed from the earlier objectives. Head teachers appreciated the toolkit being relevant to their work as it reflected their current practices. Still, they made it clear that it should be kept simple, supportive, adaptable, and reflective of the actual school conditions, such as workload, staffing constraints, and school context differences. They warned that if tools are perceived as too lengthy, repetitive, or compliance-oriented, their usability may be negatively affected. The discussion also led to very specific directions for revision, such as simplifying forms, avoiding duplication, using supportive language, distinguishing core and context-based tools, and selecting the most useful and feasible components for Version 2.0. These results confirm that the co-design process has led to a more context-sensitive and practically grounded basis for the next study phase, which is the revision and additional use of the enhanced toolkit.

IV. DISCUSSION

The section deals with the key results of the study by linking them to the main questions of the research, the literature of the past, and the mixed methods design, which formed the basis of the inquiry.

Head Teachers' Evident Instructional Leadership Practices

The overall findings show that head teachers nationwide heavily deploy instructional leadership practices

while at the same time the strongest are those in which they communicate goals, coordinate curriculum, and build school climate. This evidence reveals that instructional leadership practices in the study schools is more about day-to-day visible, communicative, and relational practices rather than formal, highly structured, or organizational systems of instructional management.

Regarding how a school mission is determined, the fact that goal communication is the main focus and academic targets that are the main subject of discussion meetings shows that sharing direction plays a very important role in school leadership practice. This view supports that instructional leadership effectiveness requires a school vision that is not only clear but also communicated very consistently, leading both instructional decisions and teacher behavior (Hallinger, 2011; Bush & Glover, 2014). Emphasis on data use in goal-setting reveals that school leadership has made a shift towards evidence-informed decision-making where student achievement data are the main source of instructional alignment (Schildkamp et al., 2019).

Whereas the lesser prominence of structured goal-setting processes and a formal alignment of staff responsibilities implies that although goals are effectively communicated, their implementation through clearly defined roles and systematically constructed plans is probably still underdeveloped. Such a trend is corroborated by the fact that school leaders are highly capable of goal articulation but do not always succeed in fully institutionalizing shared responsibility structures in school planning processes (Leithwood et al., 2020; Spillane, 2006).

For managing the instructional program, the results indicate a leadership pattern that strongly emphasizes curriculum coordination, collaborative discussion of learner performance, and provision of instructional feedback. This reflects the core function of instructional leadership practices as a mechanism for improving teaching quality through supervision and professional dialogue (Robinson, 2011). The emphasis on post-observation feedback and curriculum alignment suggests that instructional leadership practices is primarily enacted through structured interactions with teachers rather than through isolated administrative monitoring.

At the same time, less frequent engagement in individualized teacher conferencing and formal documentation of performance information indicates that instructional feedback processes may be more collective than personalized. Literature suggests that while collective data discussions are common in school settings, sustained one-on-one instructional coaching remains a more demanding but critical component of effective instructional leadership (Kraft et al., 2018; Hattie, 2012). This may explain why some aspects of instructional monitoring appear less consistently practiced.

The results indicate that service delivery through the recognition, participation, and engagement of stakeholders in the school community is the most important mechanism of school climate enhancement. Staff's participation in professional development programs, students' public recognition, and the communication with parents are the most noticeable ways in which the leaders' relations in the schools are manifested. The leaders' practices that have an impact on the school climate by valuing cooperation, recognition, and shared responsibility are based on this first viewpoint (Cohen et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2020).

The fact that the first line of teachers is not the first to be emphasized for the fulfillment of the instructional substitution and discipline-related tasks indicates the authorities' views of these teachers and the scope of their respective roles. This depiction of instructional leadership practices is the feature of the emerging paradigm in which school principals are mainly considered facilitators of the teaching and learning environment rather than direct instructional providers (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson, 2011). The overall pattern means that instructional leadership practices is first and foremost a communication, collaboration, and support tool, with less emphasis on control through highly structured instructional mechanisms and more on coordination and engagement.

Collaborative Instructional Leadership Practices

The results suggest that instructional leadership practices by head teachers have several dimensions. It includes setting a goal, supervising instruction, building relationships, and adapting to changes in the environment. This finding is in line with the dominant view in the literature that instructional leadership practices comprise several functions aiming at enhancing teaching and learning through guiding, checking, and supporting (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson, 2011).

The fact that leadership is mostly driven by goals and informed by data underlines the role that evidence-based decision-making has come to play in school leadership. This means that student performance data is viewed as the main point of reference for instructional planning and school improvement, which is in line with the research that shows that instructional leadership practices that systematically uses student achievement data to guide decision-making and to improve instructional quality (Ikemoto & Marsh, 2007; Marsh et al., 2015). Besides, connecting school goals to collaborative meetings like faculty meetings and learning action cells shows that shared goal alignment is crucial. In fact, it has been identified as one of the core elements of effective leadership practice (Leithwood et al., 2020; Bush & Glover, 2014).

Instructional guidance through monitoring and coaching reveals a developmental aspect of instructional

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leadership practices. Head teachers, instead of being only evaluators, seem to converse with teachers in the context of feedback, provide teachers with technical assistance, and hold coaching dialogue to support their improvement. This aligns with findings that instructional leadership practices is most effective when it is implemented as a formative process focused on capacity-building rather than compliance monitoring (Robinson et al., 2008; Hattie, 2012). The emphasis on learner performance as the anchor of instructional supervision also reflects the strong learner-centered orientation of instructional leadership frameworks, where the goal is improved student learning outcomes (Hallinger, 2011).

The theme on school climate building through recognition, communication, and participation highlights the relational and motivational aspects of instructional leadership practices. The findings indicate that teachers are actively involved in planning and professional development decisions and that recognition practices are used to reinforce engagement and participation. This is consistent with research showing that positive school climate is strengthened through collaborative leadership, trust-building, and recognition of contributions from both teachers and stakeholders (Cohen et al., 2009; Leithwood et al., 2020). In addition, the role of recognition in enhancing teacher motivation and stakeholder support is supported by studies emphasizing the importance of relational leadership in sustaining school improvement efforts (Day et al., 2016; Harris, 2013).

The findings on context-responsive leadership reflect the influence of structural constraints and organizational realities on instructional leadership practice. The presence of overlapping roles, staffing shortages, and multiple responsibilities suggests that leadership practices are shaped by necessity and adaptation rather than ideal implementation conditions. This aligns with distributed leadership theory, which argues that leadership functions are often shared, negotiated, and shaped by contextual demands within schools (Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2013). It also supports the view that instructional leadership practices must be flexible and responsive to varying school contexts, particularly in resource-constrained environments (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Overall, the findings suggest that instructional leadership practices among head teachers is both structured and adaptive. It combines strong emphasis on goal setting, instructional monitoring, and school climate development with significant responsiveness to contextual limitations. This reflects contemporary understandings of instructional leadership as a dynamic practice that integrates technical, relational, and situational dimensions to support teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2011; Robinson, 2011).

Insights from the Co-Design Process of the Instructional Leadership Toolkit

The co-design process reveals that schools should be implementing interventions based on real data and practitioner experience. The fact that Toolkit Version 1 was in line with the findings of the study demonstrates that a fundamental aspect of evidence-based school improvement is that the leadership tools should not be ones that are imposed from outside but rather derived from real performance data and experienced practitioners (Leithwood et al., 2020; Hallinger, 2011). It further justifies the toolkit as a context-sensitive intervention designed to meet actual instructional leadership needs.

It is very encouraging that head teachers have welcomed the toolkit positively in terms of its relevance to their leadership work. The focus of the toolkit on their leadership work, for example, goal setting, instructional supervision, and school climate, seems to have been very much on target. This finding supports previous studies indicating that instructional leadership tools are only effective when they truly mirror school practices and become part of leadership routines rather than being introduced as separate or additional requirements (Bush & Glover, 2014; Spillane, 2006). Moreover, the fact that the toolkit is perceived as a means to organize existing practices is an indication of how important it is, in fact, to turn tacit leadership knowledge into explicit systems, a hallmark of effective school improvement tools (Harris, 2013).

Still, the focus on contextual appropriateness means that leadership tools can be effective only if they fit well with the school conditions, e.g., staff arrangements, workload, and availability of resources. This is consistent with distributed leadership theory, which points out that leadership practices change according to the organizational structures and constraints rather than being identical or uniform across schools (Spillane, 2006). It also shows that for school improvement interventions to continue and work well, each one should be designed to fit the context, especially in the case of poorly resourced educational environments (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Issues relating to textual length, clarity, and usability of the tool represent a very well-known concern in the implementation of educational programs: the complexity of a program can seriously limit its adoption and maintenance. It has been found from research that highly complex or heavy tools tend to be very rarely used in school settings (Fullan, 2007; Coburn, 2003). So, the proposal to simplify the forms and clarify instructions is a way to highlight the prerequisite of usability and practicality for school leaders who are juggling many tasks.

The same thing is true for the presentation and handling of redundant components. Having a coherent intervention design means that there has to be a clear link and compatibility between the new tool and existing

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accountability and performance systems to avoid implementation fragmentation (Marsh et al., 2015). Furthermore, toolkit components that are directly related to the domains of RPMS-KRA, the performance indicators, fully support the argument that there has to be coherence between the leadership tools and existing policy structures, without which sustainable implementation of the school systems would be difficult (Ikemoto & Marsh, 2007).

The preference for the use of supportive rather than punitive language in the toolkit is a clear illustration of the relational side of instructional leadership practices. The results of research show time and again that leadership methods that foster trust, cooperation, and developmental feedback lead to improving teacher practice better than those approaches relying on compliance or evaluation (Robinson et al., 2008; Hattie, 2012). So, it is understandable why participants focused on coaching-oriented tools and strength-based feedback mechanisms because these are in concert with instructional leadership models that give priority to teacher growth and professional learning.

Furthermore, the choice of priority areas shows that participants want to have the whole instructional leadership cycle supported, such as planning, monitoring, feedback, and follow-through. It is in line with the idea that instructional leadership has to be a system of interrelated practices rather than separate activities (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020). The great attention paid to monitoring tools, feedback, and communication structures shows the importance of continuous improvement cycles in leadership practice.

Some of the things that participants mentioned as making up the implementation requirements include sample forms, orientation materials, and clear classification of tools. These serve as a reminder that innovations can only be taken up in schools if there is strong implementation support. Past education change research showed that professional learning, guidance materials, and ongoing support are among the key factors in the successful implementation of new tools and reforms (Fullan, 2007; Coburn, 2003). No matter how well-designed a tool is, without these supports, it may fall short of the intended sustained use in practice.

Overall, the co-design findings suggest that the development of the toolkit is most effective when it is participatory, context-sensitive, and aligned with both empirical evidence and practitioner experience. The iterative refinement of the toolkit demonstrates the importance of balancing technical design with usability, clarity, and contextual fit in order to support meaningful instructional leadership practices in school.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is clear that head teachers act as instructional leaders through articulating the school mission, organizing the instructional program, and fostering a positive school

environment. Also, the study revealed that these leadership practices are not only target-driven and data-centric but also goal-oriented, a form of coaching, and a great response to the different school contexts and constraints.

The co-design phase led to the creation of Toolkit Version 1.0, which was based on the comprehensive research findings and further developed via community feedback. Through the use and assessment of Toolkit Version 2, it was discovered that it was very well-liked in all aspects, especially in terms of relevance, clarity, usability, and encouragement.

Finally, an iterative improvement process led to the completion of the final toolkit, which turned out to be more user-friendly, modifiable, and sensitive to the local conditions to effectively promote instructional leadership in secondary schools.

The study proposes that secondary schools and the Schools Division Office may work together to provide support for the use of the enhanced instructional leadership toolkit as a helpful reference material for improving the head teachers' ability to define the school mission. Also, it is suggested that this toolkit may be a major resource in handling the instructional program, especially in the aspects of instructional supervision, coaching, and curriculum coordination. Head teachers, on the other hand, can still adopt the use of the toolkit in a very positive school climate through structured communication, recognition, and support mechanisms. Similarly, it is suggested that schools decide to adopt the toolkit in its co-designed form as a context-sensitive reference for instructional leadership decision-making and documentation. Besides, district and division leaders may provide orientation, sample accomplished forms, and digital versions to ensure effective implementation across different school contexts. Moreover, research may continue to focus on the toolkit's effectiveness through a wide implementation and its influence on instructional leadership sustainability and learner outcomes.

VI. DISCLOSURE

The authors affirm that the paper is a first-hand effort undertaken solely for academic and research aims. All sources, references, and related texts utilized in the research were duly recognized and cited. The authors also declare that there are no conflicts of interest, financial incentives, or personal relationships that might have influenced the study's conduct, interpretation, and presentation. The participants' involvement was voluntary, and all data collected was handled confidentially and exclusively for research in line with ethical standards.

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