



# Visionary Leadership Strategies in Nurturing Teachers' Innovative Behavioral Competencies: The Mediating Role of Leader Supportiveness

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## Abstract

Innovative behavioral competencies are crucial in meeting the challenges of a dynamic workplace. This study aimed to explore the mediating role of leader supportiveness in the association between visionary leadership strategies and teachers' innovative behavioral competencies in the context of public elementary school. Using a descriptive research design, 145 teaching staff responded to a survey questionnaire which served as the primary instrument of the study. The relationship between the variables is tested using the Pearson Correlation while mediation analysis was conducted using Process Macro. The study revealed that visionary leadership strategies are significantly related to innovative behavioral competencies. Furthermore, it was found that leader supportiveness fully mediates the relationship between the school head's visionary leadership strategies and innovative behavioral competencies. With this, the researchers recommend exploring practices that foster leader supportiveness to ensure that visionary leadership strategies of the school heads translate to innovative behavioral competencies among the teachers.

## Keywords

Visionary leadership, Teachers' innovative behavioral competencies, Leader supportiveness

## INTRODUCTION

Providing quality instruction to learners remains to be the main goal of every academic institution, both private or public. Schools with their different units, the learners, teachers, school heads, and stakeholders each play a vital role in successfully achieving school outcomes. This study focuses on the visionary leadership role of the school heads, specifically the strategies that correlate with the innovative behavioral competencies of the teachers while exploring the mediating role of leader supportiveness.

The school heads are functional school administration figures. They supervise how the teacher facilitates the teaching-learning process, and how the interaction between instructors delivering lessons and students being taught translates into educational outcomes. The duties of the school head in a public school setting include those of an instructor, a manager, an administrator, a supervisor, a leader, an innovator, and a motivator (Rohmah, 2021). The leadership strategies of the school head play a significant impact on both the behavioral competencies of the teachers and other units of the school. Principal leadership refers to the effort of an individual who is entrusted as an organizational leader to influence its members, including teachers, staff/employees, students, and school committees, to achieve an educational goal. Therefore, school heads have an impact that is significant on the overall organizational success of the schools they are managing.

With the emerging school environment of the current educational landscape, the leadership role of school heads is changing from the traditional to a more relevant leadership that is applicable, especially in today's situation (Aliazas et al., 2023). Malik (2014) stated that effective transformation is a must in leadership or else even the best principals persist to be unproductive. One of the emerging leadership styles that a school head can adopt is visionary leadership.

Visionary leadership entails setting a clear vision for the school and crafting actionable actions to attain this vision. The visionary leader can determine the path to take, correctly decide at the appropriate moment, communicate decisions to his followers, and prepare and implement a change plan appropriate for the circumstances. Consequently, visions could be translated to outcomes when the role players of the school, the teachers, embrace change and developments offered by the fast-developing educational system. A visionary leader is expected to empower teachers to display innovative behaviors by exploring creative and pioneering approaches to the teaching and learning process along with their students.

Looking further at visionary leadership and how it correlates with innovative behavioral competencies of teachers, it was also important to look at the possible mechanism by which such a relationship exists, that is through leader support for innovation. Lin and Ling (2021) stated that leaders' supportiveness is described as practices of leaders that provide the highest assistance for their subordinates' work, incentives, and attention related to emotional aspects. Specifically, this study sought to explain the role of leader supportiveness on the assumed association between the leadership style and teacher's behavioral competencies. This research was deemed significant as it especially aims to contribute to establishing a setting where school leaders's practices translate to positive teacher behavior, which in turn will ultimately benefit the students.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used a quantitative, descriptive-correlational approach. According to Bloomfield and Fisher (2019), descriptive correlational research is mainly concerned with determining whether two or more variables are related without manipulating either of them. It entails gathering data that characterizes events, and then tabulating, organizing, depicting, and describing the data. The study utilized correlational design which aims to find out whether a significant relationship exists between school heads' visionary leadership strategies and teachers' innovative behavioral competencies. Further, it explored the mediating role of leader supportiveness in this assumed relationship as perceived by 145 public elementary school teachers in one school district at the Division of San Pablo City, identified through total enumeration.

To collect all of the data for this investigation, a survey questionnaire that was adopted and modified was employed and distributed via an online Google Form. There are four components to the research tool. Part I of the questionnaire covered the respondent's profile including the respondent's name (optional), school where they are currently affiliated, designation, years in service, and gender. This was followed by several parts that surveyed the perceptions of the respondents all of which were validated and tested for reliability. The second part was adapted from various studies which include a list of statements written in a descriptive manner that will be rated based on the respondent's perception of the visionary leadership in terms of strategies of their school head including designing strategy, establishing cooperation, and becoming a role model. This adapted instrument from Alansari had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70; the motivating inspiration part which was adapted from Nyamubi (2021) had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82; agents of change from Nurut and Aisyah (2016) had a Cronbach's alpha scale of 0.76; and lastly, empowerment from Özarallı (2015) had a coefficient of 0.95. There were 42 items in this section of the questionnaire, and each statement was given a 5-point Likert scale score that represented the respondents' degree of agreement. The third part of the questionnaire was also a list of statements written in a descriptive manner which are to be rated based on the respondent's perception of their innovative behavioral competencies. This part was also adapted from various studies such as resilience from Clarke and Nicholson (2010), idea generation from Chakravarthy (2003), and lastly, tolerance of ambiguity from McLain (1993) with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.80, 0.72, and 0.86, respectively. This part of the questionnaire had a total of 25 statements that were scored on a 5-point Likert scale which indicates the strength of the agreement of the respondents. The last part, Part IV of the questionnaire was adapted from Parson (2020) and Brands (2016), both with acceptable reliability coefficients of 0.93 and 0.95, respectively. It was a list of 15 statements written descriptively to capture the perception on leader supportiveness along the 5-point Likert scale.

**Table 1** Level of Internal Consistency of the Validated Research Instrument

Subscales	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal Consistency
<b>Visionary Leadership Strategies</b>			
Designing Strategy	5	0.904	Excellent
Motivating Inspiration	5	0.905	Excellent
Agents of Change	5	0.862	Good
Empowerment	10	0.923	Excellent
Establishing Cooperation	10	0.905	Excellent
Becoming a Role Model	7	0.957	Excellent
<b>Innovative Behavioral Competencies</b>			
Resilience	10	0.836	Good
Idea Generation	5	0.902	Excellent
Tolerance of Ambiguity	10	0.971	Excellent
Leader Supportiveness	15	0.966	Excellent

The instrument underwent an internal consistency test to assess the reliability of the data gathered during its pilot testing. The level of consistency of the validated research instrument was shown in Table 1 where all of the subscales were accepted. In terms of visionary leadership strategies, designing strategy and motivating inspiration had Cronbach's alpha

values of 0.904 and 0.905, respectively, both interpreted as excellent. The agents of change had a reliability coefficient of 0.862, interpreted as good while the dimensions of empowerment, establishing cooperation, and becoming a role model had Cronbach's alpha values of 0.923, 0.905, and 0.957, respectively, which are also interpreted as excellent. In terms of innovative behavioral competencies as to resilience, it yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.836, that is, good. On the other hand, the dimensions of idea generation and tolerance of ambiguity both have excellent reliability with Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.902 and 0.971, respectively. Lastly, the leader supportiveness survey had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.966 and was interpreted as excellent.

The data-gathering procedure includes steps such as conceptualization, implementation, data analysis, and ensuring ethical consideration. To guarantee that the researchers satisfy the prerequisites for the conduct of a study, they examined vast literature and sought consultations with experts in the field of educational management. Likewise, proper coordination with the authority through a letter of request to conduct the study was first secured. The instrument was validated by three master teachers, three school heads, and a district supervisor from a public elementary school district. After retrieving the validated instrument, suggestions and comments are considered. After editing, the instrument undergone pilot testing which was participated by teachers in the another districts in the same division to check for the reliability of the validated research instrument. From this, the crafting and finalization of the research instrument in online Google Form format was done and the survey was administered. It was ensured that the respondents are well-informed before agreeing to participate in the study. They gave consent to use the information they provided. The data was gathered, tabulated, and statistically analyzed. After obtaining the responses, the data were gathered, tabulated, and statistically analyzed.

Inferential statistics were used in this investigation. Inferential statistics enable the testing of hypotheses or the determination of whether the data may be extrapolated to a larger population. To ascertain the substantial link between teachers' creative behavioral abilities and visionary leadership techniques, inferential statistics like the Pearson Product Moment correlation (Pearson  $r$ ) are employed. To test whether leader supportiveness mediates the relationship between visionary leadership strategies and teachers' innovative behavioral competencies, mediation analysis facilitated by Processmacro was utilized.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 2** Correlation of Visionary Leadership Strategies and Innovative Behavioral Competencies

Visionary Leadership Strategies	Innovative Behavioral Competencies		
	Resilience	Idea Generation	Tolerance of Ambiguity
Designing Strategy	.358**	.358**	.317**
Motivating Inspiration	.486**	.381**	.329**
Agents of Change	.525**	.395**	.323**
Empowerment	.524**	.419**	.379**
Establishing Cooperation	.453**	.408**	.286**
Becoming a Role Model	.515**	.399**	.357**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 shows the correlation between visionary leadership strategies and innovative behavioral competencies. It can be gleaned that all variables under visionary leadership strategies such as designing strategy, motivating inspiration, agents of change, empowerment, establishing cooperation, and becoming a role model register significant relationships to innovative behavioral competencies in terms of resilience, idea generation, and tolerance of ambiguity. However, it is notable that among the dimensions under visionary leadership strategies; agents of change, empowerment and becoming a role model highly correlated with innovative behavioral competencies as to resiliency with  $r$ -values of 0.525, 0.524, and 0.515, respectively. On the other hand, establishing cooperation as a visionary leadership strategies dimension had a weak correlation with innovative behavioral competencies as to tolerance of ambiguity ( $r$ -value=0.286). This implies that school heads utilizing visionary leadership strategies tend to lead teachers with higher innovative behavioral competencies. This result may have been possible due to school heads designing strategy well in carrying out possible solutions and changes in the organization, providing motivation and inspiration among their teachers and other employees, portraying an image of "an agent of change" within the organization, empowering their subordinates through valuing and appreciating their ideas and plans, establishing cooperation both internally and externally with involvement of various stakeholders, and becoming a role model to everyone. With this, innovative behavioral competencies among the subordinates are being developed thereby leading the whole organization to achieve a common vision.

Agents of change are portrayed by the school heads through leading the organization in adapting to changes leading to innovation. They also empower their subordinates by giving them the freedom to work on tasks or problems that will potentially help them realize and develop their potential. The sense of trust that teachers felt in accomplishing these assigned responsibilities may give teachers the confidence to innovate solutions and introduce or embrace change in the organization. Finally, school leaders become role models by demonstrating excellence in carrying out their myriad duties that contribute to the accomplishment of the organization's objectives. As a result, educators develop greater resilience, displaying optimism in the face of adversity and adapting to potential adjustments for the school's benefit. Furthermore, establishing cooperation can be improved by the school heads by involving both internal and external

support and channeling resources out of these collaborations to achieve the goal effectively and efficiently. For instance, successful school activities and implementation of new programs are usually carried out in partnership with various stakeholders. This creates the idea of collaboration rather than isolation, which in turn leads to the improvement of tolerance of ambiguity among teachers. That is, building a belief that uncertain situations are not threats but opportunities for collaboration.

The findings of the study were also affirmed by Lee et al. (2013) who found a significant positive influence of visionary leadership of school leaders to the innovative behavior on the part of employees. Further, Anshar (2017) stated that visionary leadership in the workplace produces new plans and strategies that impact team members' creative behavior toward the accomplishment of common goals as well as the creation, reinforcement, and evolution of shared mental models and norms. Thus, encouraging the development and cultivation of innovative work behavior among team players.

**Table 3** Mediation of Leader supportiveness between Visionary Leadership Strategies and Innovative Behavioral Competencies Relationship

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval		t-statistics	Conclusion
				LB	UB		
Visionary Leadership → Leader supportiveness → Innovative behavior	.5370 (0.000)	.1560 (0.1264)	0.3809	.2043	.5552	4.2416	Full Mediation

Table 3 shows the mediating role of leader supportiveness between visionary leadership strategies and innovative behavioral competencies. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of the impact of school heads' visionary leadership strategies on teachers' innovative behavioral competencies with leader supportiveness as a mediator ( $b=0.3809$ ,  $t=4.2416$ ). Furthermore, the direct effect of school heads' visionary leadership strategies on teachers' innovative behavioral competencies in the absence of the leader's supportiveness as a mediator was not significant ( $b=0.1560$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). Hence, leader supportiveness fully mediated the relationship between visionary leadership strategies and innovative behavioral competencies.

School heads who use visionary leadership techniques inspire and motivate their team members to work together toward a similar objective, which improves the supportiveness of the leader. A leader may effectively impart a feeling of purpose and direction to their team by communicating a compelling and well-defined vision for the future. Team members may become more dependable and devoted as a result of feeling encouraged and in line with the leader's goals. Furthermore, visionary leaders foster a welcoming and inclusive work atmosphere by showing their team members empathy, understanding, and openness. Strong connections and a supportive culture may be established in the organization by visionary leaders through actively listening to their team, giving constructive criticism, and offering leadership support. On the other hand, to foster innovative behavioral competencies within a team or organization, supportive leadership is essential. Supportive leaders foster an atmosphere where workers are at ease taking chances, exchanging ideas, and trying out novel strategies. Team members are more inclined to act in ways that promote creativity when there is a climate of psychological safety. Supportive leaders enable their team members to think creatively, solve problems successfully, and work together on creative initiatives by giving them resources, feedback, encouragement, and acknowledgment. This raises motivation, engagement, and morale levels, which in turn leads to better levels of inventive performance inside the school community.

The result further shows that the school head's visionary leadership strategies translate to teachers' innovative behavioral competencies when mediated by leader supportiveness. It therefore implies that school head's use of visionary leadership strategies through designing strategy, motivating inspiration, becoming agents of change, empowerment, establishing cooperation, and becoming a role model could lead to the enhancement of their teachers' innovative behavioral competencies in different dimensions such as resilience, idea generation and tolerance of ambiguity. However, this could best happen when school heads provide support to teachers in various ways, tangible and intangible. Teachers must be provided with tools and resources that will facilitate their teaching. However, more than these, school leaders may prove to be supportive by providing feedback on teacher's job performance, setting clear expectations, encouraging two-way communication, developing an action plan, and providing professional development opportunities. Within the public school context, school heads demonstrate their support for teachers by actively listening to them and considering their ideas, recommendations, and comments in the planning and implementation of programs, projects and activities of the school, such as the crafting of the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Furthermore, by fostering a good and healthy atmosphere within the workplace, teachers might feel more at ease sharing their skill gaps with their school principal knowing that they will be supported by offering professional guidance and technical assistance. This allows teachers to open up about work-related issues without fear or reluctance thereby cultivating initiative and innovation in teacher decisions and actions. Similarly, Zhou et al. (2018) describe leader support as a leader's facilitation of self-management suggesting that a leader with a high level of visionary leadership fosters a supportive leader-follower perception, which fosters creative work practices among employees. Strongly perceived leader support is essential for fostering creativity in the workplace (Amabile & Pratt, 2016).

Therefore, teachers engage in creative endeavors when guided by a school vision and actions set by the visionary leader. However, ensuring the successful engagement of teachers in innovative behavior toward a task will entail the



leader's supportiveness. Organizational innovation stems from a vision that is achieved through leader support (Syrek et al., 2013); supportive leadership in turn leads to employee innovative work behavior.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it shows that visionary leadership strategies are significantly related to innovative behavioral competencies. It was revealed that dimensions of visionary leadership strategies such as designing strategy, motivating inspiration, agents of change, empowerment, establishing cooperation, and becoming a role model significantly relate to innovative behavioral competencies in terms of resilience, idea generation, and tolerance of ambiguity. In addition, leader supportiveness fully mediates the relationship between visionary leadership strategies and teachers' innovative behavioral competencies relationship. The researchers therefore recommend conducting regular training and seminars for all new school heads to provide them with salient information on emerging and relevant leadership strategies, such as visionary leadership strategy, and its wide application in the dynamic school setting. In addition, it may be recommended that a comprehensive professional development program be implemented to further support teacher innovative behavior. Likewise, visionary leadership and other relevant strategies may be considered as possible topics in future learning and development programs for school heads. Lastly, future researchers may be encouraged to perform further studies in a different context such as secondary school level exploring a greater number of respondents and utilizing research tools that will triangulate the results.

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## DECLARATION OF CONFLICT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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