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TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP, INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE, AND EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP OF SCHOOL HEADS: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL ON JOB SATISFACTION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN REGION XII

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Abstract:
This study was conducted to determine the best fit model on job satisfaction of public-school teachers in Region XII as estimated by teacher-student relationships, interpersonal communication competence and empowering leadership of school heads. The study used a quantitative, non-experimental research design using a correlational technique and structural equation model. The 400 elementary teachers from Sarangani, General Santos, Koronadal and South Cotabato divisions were determined using the stratified sampling procedure. Mean, Pearson r, and structural equation model were used as statistical tools. Moreover, adapted, modified and validated survey questionnaires were used. The result shows that the level of the teacher relationship, empowering leadership of school heads and job satisfaction is very high. On the other hand, the level of interpersonal communication competence among elementary teachers is high. Further, when each independent variable correlates with job satisfaction, results showed that student-teacher relationship, interpersonal communication competence and empowering leadership of school heads were significantly correlated with job satisfaction. Model 3 came out as the best fit model that predicts job satisfaction. The model showed that teacher-student relationship, interpersonal communication competence and empowering leadership of school heads predict job satisfaction among elementary school teachers in Region XII.

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Keywords: educational management, teacher-student relationships, interpersonal communication competence, empowering leadership of school heads, job satisfaction, structural equation model, DepEd Teachers, Region XII, Philippines

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction in public schools is a serious crisis as teachers struggle with an overwhelming mix of increasing responsibilities and insufficient support systems, which fundamentally jeopardizes their professional well-being and career longevity (American Federation of Teachers, 2023). Educators are tasked with managing growing workloads that involve addressing post-pandemic learning gaps, dealing with heightened student behavioral issues, completing extensive administrative duties, and offering personalized support for a variety of student needs—all while contending with limited resources, outdated facilities, and salaries that do not reflect their professional expertise or keep up with inflation (Education Weekly, 2024). This significant gap between rising demands and inadequate institutional support has fostered a discouraging work environment where teachers feel undervalued and stressed, prompting many qualified educators to contemplate leaving the profession entirely and threatening public education's stability and quality (RAND Corporation, 2023).

Job satisfaction has become a vital element in the post-pandemic workplace, significantly affecting both individual well-being and the success of organizations. Recent research indicates that higher job satisfaction levels are closely linked to greater employee engagement, productivity, and organizational commitment (Decuypere *et al.*, 2013). In addition to its influence on turnover rates, job satisfaction is associated with better mental health outcomes for employees, helping to alleviate stress and burnout in increasingly demanding work settings (Soriano *et al.*, 2018). From an organizational standpoint, promoting job satisfaction can lead to enhanced innovation, improved customer satisfaction, and better overall business performance (Alrawashdeh *et al.*, 2023).

As workplaces adapt to the prevalence of remote and hybrid models, understanding and fostering job satisfaction has become even more essential for building resilient, adaptable, and high-performing organizations (Laker *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, job satisfaction demonstrates that employees' improved performance is a direct result of their positive job experiences within the organization, as reflected in their contented work lives (Guhao, 2020).

2. Literature Review

A significantly positive correlation exists between job satisfaction and teachers' relationships with their students. Research conducted by Martinez and Thompson (2024) shows that fostering positive teacher-student relationships is essential for job satisfaction, as these meaningful connections significantly enhance teachers' emotional well-being, motivation, and engagement at work.

Recent research by Rodriguez and Kim (2023) shows that people with strong interpersonal communication skills tend to have much higher job satisfaction. Their study found a correlation coefficient of 0.67 between advanced communication abilities and happiness at work. Additionally, recent findings by Pinnington (2024) reveal that companies that invest in developing communication skills significantly boost employee engagement, team unity, and overall job satisfaction.

The empowering leadership of school heads is a transformative approach to managing organizations that directly and significantly impacts teachers' job satisfaction through various psychological and professional mechanisms. Research by Williams and Chen (2024) shows that school heads who adopt empowering leadership strategies see a remarkable 52% increase in teacher job satisfaction and notable improvements in organizational commitment and professional engagement. Additionally, Rodriguez (2023) indicates that empowering leadership, which includes participative decision-making, shared governance, professional autonomy, and meaningful support, fosters a strong organizational climate that greatly enhances educators' intrinsic motivation and overall workplace well-being.

Despite growing recognition of the multifaceted nature of educational effectiveness, a significant research gap persists in comprehensively understanding the complex interplay between teacher-student relationships, interpersonal communication competence, and empowering leadership of school heads within a unified structural equation modeling framework (Elhay *et al.*, 2019). Recent studies have individually examined components of educational dynamics, such as leadership's impact on job satisfaction (Hulpiya *et al.*, 2009) and interpersonal Communication's role in organizational performance (Alder *et al.*, 2022), there remains a critical lack of integrated research that simultaneously explores these constructs' interconnected influences on job satisfaction.

The educational landscape after the pandemic has made these relationships more complex, highlighting the need for deeper investigations into how empowering leadership and communication skills influence the quality of teacher-student relationships and job satisfaction (Smith, 2024). Much of the existing research also focuses on straightforward relationships, missing out on the potential nonlinear and contextual interactions that structural equation modeling can uncover (Tedford, 2022). This study aims to fill these methodological and conceptual gaps by presenting a comprehensive, statistically sound model that can provide valuable insights for educational leaders

looking to improve organizational effectiveness, support teacher well-being, and ultimately enhance educational outcomes (Daniels, 2019).

The contemporary educational ecosystem is experiencing unprecedented challenges that demand immediate scholarly attention and strategic interventions, particularly in understanding the complex determinants of teacher job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. Recent global studies reveal a critical workforce crisis, with approximately 48% of educators experiencing significant psychological distress and contemplating leaving the profession, primarily due to deteriorating interpersonal dynamics and leadership inefficiencies (Brower, 2020).

The post-pandemic educational landscape has exponentially heightened the need for comprehensive research to systematically unpack the intricate relationships between teacher-student interactions, communication competence, and leadership strategies (Mikkelson, 2024). Emerging evidence suggests that empowering leadership and effective interpersonal Communication can mitigate teacher burnout, reduce turnover rates, and enhance overall educational quality, making this research not only academically relevant but operationally crucial (Smet, 2021).

By employing a sophisticated structural equation modeling approach, this study aims to provide data-driven, actionable insights to inform educational policy, organizational development strategies, and institutional interventions to address the mounting challenges in educational human resource management (Al-Adwan *et al.*, 2021).

3. Material and Methods

The respondents of the research study were 400 public elementary school teachers randomly selected from General Santos City, Koronadal City, South Cotabato Province, and Sarangani Province within Region XII in the Philippines. The sample of teachers cut across 99 from General Santos City, 32 from the Koronadal City, 148 from the South Cotabato, and 121 from the Sarangani.

The appropriate size for this study was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator. It calculated an appropriate sample size, accounting for a substantial target population of about 23,569 qualified teachers, a 5% margin of error, a 95% confidence level, and an estimated response distribution of 50%. According to the calculator, at least 378 respondents should be contacted for this study (Raosoft, 2022). With a sample size of 400 respondents, the research was satisfactory and thus complied with generally accepted standards for survey research in support of Dillman *et al.* (2014). They pointed out that "*For populations of over 100,000, a sample size of 400 is generally acceptable with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level*" (p. 63), which are the specifications used in this study. This sample size resulted in survey outcomes that are reliable and generalizable to the broader population of elementary school teachers in Region XII.

Moreover, the inclusion criteria for the respondents focus on public elementary school teachers in Region XII currently employed full-time as teachers I to III and Master teachers I to IV, holders of permanent status in the Department of Education. Both male and female educators from diverse backgrounds and grade levels were included to obtain a heterogeneous sample (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). However, only those providing informed consent took part. In contrast, the exclusion criteria included omitting teachers with head teacher positions, retired or resigned teachers from the Department of Education, private school teachers, and teachers on leave or temporarily reassigned due to their current lack of regular school contact. The study concentrated on full-time public elementary school settings in General Santos City, Koronadal City, South Cotabato Province, and Sarangani Province within Region XII, Philippines. However, participation in the survey was entirely voluntary for respondents.

Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the survey if they lost interest, had confidentiality concerns, or could not participate due to other commitments. If participants withdrew before completing the survey, their partial data was discarded. The final study report stated the total sample size and provided reasons for withdrawals. The researcher chose to conduct the study within the Department of Education (DepEd), Region XII, Soccsksargen, due to her ten years of experience as an Elementary Teacher in the Division of Sarangani. This background motivated her to pursue the investigation.

Four instruments were used in this study and designed following the research problem. Primary data were used to gather information about the study, which consists of four parts: teacher-student relationships, interpersonal communication competence, empowering leadership of school heads, and job satisfaction. The survey questionnaires to utilize in the study were sourced from various related research. The questionnaire on teacher-student relationships was adapted from Leitão, N., & Waugh, R. F. (2007, November).

All survey questionnaires in this study, including teacher-student relationships, interpersonal communication competence, empowering leadership of school heads, and job satisfaction, used a 5-point Likert scale. The scale is interpreted as 5 = Very High (the statement is always observed), 4 = High (the statement is often observed), 3 = Moderate, (the statement is sometimes observed), 2 = (Low, the statement is rarely observed), 1 = Very Low (the statement is not observed). A balanced 5-point Likert scale allows for response variability while maintaining a neutral midpoint. The scale captures the degree to which respondents agree or disagree with questionnaire statements related to the key constructs of teacher-student relationships, interpersonal communication competence, empowering leadership of school heads, and job satisfaction.

Six experts validated the instrument to ensure appropriateness and credibility. The competent validators carefully reviewed the contents of the questionnaire to guarantee construct validity. The advice given to the researcher was followed. Since both internal and external validators score the instrument a 4.59, it is seen as an excellent tool for content validity. Following that, a pilot test was carried out, and the consistency of the

survey items was tested using Cronbach's alpha. It is a metric for measuring internal consistency that establishes the degree to which a collection of things is related to one another. Higher values on the scale denote higher reliability (Mohsen & Reg, 2022). During the pilot testing, the Teacher-student relationship obtained a Cronbach alpha of 0.859, interpersonal communication competence got 0.587, empowering leadership of school heads earned 0.859, and job satisfaction had a Cronbach alpha of 0.826. This implies that the survey questionnaires are valid and reliable.

The study utilized a quantitative, non-experimental research design employing Structural Equation Modeling to determine the best-fit model for predicting teacher retention in the Department of Education, Region XII. A descriptive correlational study, as defined by Quaranta (2017), focuses on demonstrating causal links rather than merely recording associations between variables.

The following steps were followed in gathering relevant data for this research: First, the researcher requested permission from the appropriate authorities, such as the regional director, superintendents, and principals, to conduct the survey study in their schools. This ensured compliance with policies and approval to collect data. Second, upon approval, the survey questionnaires were distributed to the selected respondents through appropriate channels, such as email, teachers' rooms, or staff meetings. Care was taken to ensure respondent anonymity. Teachers were given ample time to complete the survey independently, and reminders were sent to encourage completion. Teachers who wished to opt out could voluntarily withdraw from the process. Third, completed surveys were gathered. The survey responses were then compiled for analysis. Fourth, the survey questionnaires were checked for completion, and responses were coded and inputted into statistical software for analysis. Lastly, the data were analyzed and summarized in tables and graphs to present the overall results and significant findings from the teacher survey responses.

The data were reviewed and interpreted using appropriate statistical methods. The mean was used to assess student-teacher relationships, teachers' interpersonal communication competence, and the empowering leadership of school heads. The Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson r) was used to examine the relationships between student-teacher relationships, interpersonal communication competence, empowering leadership of school heads, and job satisfaction. Structural Equation Modeling (Maximum Likelihood) was applied to concurrently estimate a sequence of related dependence relationships, combining elements of multiple regression and component analysis (Morse, 2024). This method was used to assess the proposed model and determine the best-fit model of organizational commitment among public school teachers.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Ethical guidelines addressed proper study operation, confidentiality, and anonymity. The study adhered to the University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC) standards, ensuring compliance with ethical protocols under protocol number 2024-265.

The ethical principles observed during the study included voluntary participation, respect for respondents' confidentiality and privacy, securing informed consent, ethical recruitment, assessment of risks and benefits, avoidance of plagiarism and fabrication, obtaining necessary permissions, prevention of falsification, managing conflicts of interest, avoiding deceit, and proper authorship attribution.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Student-Teacher Relationship

Table 1 presents the data on the level of the teacher-student relationship. In general, the grand mean of 4.56 shows a very high level of teacher-student relationship. These findings imply that teachers must foster and nurture a strong connection and relationship with their students.

Table 1: Level of Teacher–Student Relationship

Indicator	SD	Mean	D.E.
Connectedness	0.406	4.59	Very High
Availability	0.493	4.52	Very High
Communication Skills	0.480	4.57	Very High
Overall	**0.389**	**4.56**	**Very High**

The results also showed that the teacher-student relationship's leading indicator was connectedness, which obtained the highest mean of 4.59 or very high. It only implies that the connectedness between the teachers and students lies in the ample exposure of both sectors to maximize educational and social interactions and activities in the classroom. The lowest response was availability, with the lowest mean of 4.52, which was still interpreted as very high. This was the lowest result but still interpreted as very high because teachers are highly committed to fostering student success, and their availability is an indispensable factor.

This finding underscores the importance of creating opportunities for authentic engagement between teachers and students through various educational and social activities while also highlighting that even the relatively lower-scored aspects of these relationships maintain exceptional standards, particularly in terms of teacher commitment and accessibility, which ultimately contributes to a comprehensive support system for student (Roorda, 2017). These results align with contemporary educational research emphasizing that strong teacher-student relationships are fundamental to creating positive learning environments and enhancing academic achievement (Pianta & Hamre, 2019).

The result of this study supports the findings of Cannon (2013), who found that teachers who invested additional time in one-on-one remedial instruction and counseling for students struggling with academic or behavioral issues saw significant improvements in student outcomes. In addition, a study by Farbman (2020) examined how teachers

adjusted their schedules to provide after-school hours and flexible meeting times to accommodate students' changing needs.

4.2 Interpersonal Communication Competence

Table 2 shows the data on the teachers' interpersonal competence level. In general, the grand mean of 4.04 shows the teacher-respondents' high level of interpersonal competence. Teachers' high level of interpersonal communication competence can be justified by their acquired training and expertise in communication strategies and classroom management practices.

It was also found that the leading interpersonal competence of the respondents was immediacy, with the highest mean of 4.33 or very high. The high sense of immediacy among teachers can be justified by their commitment to establishing rapport and connection with their students. However, the least competence was altercentrism, with a mean of 3.82 or higher. This was the least response but still interpreted as high. This was due to teachers' cognizance of learner-centered philosophy, which made teachers more committed to prioritizing learners' needs and welfare.

In addition, Elhay *et al.* (2019) examined how experienced teachers leveraged their expertise in Communication to create engaging learning environments. Moreover, Lee *et al.* (2006) highlighted how pre-service teacher education programs emphasizing interpersonal communication skills produced graduates who were "*better equipped to navigate the social dynamics of the classroom and build strong relationships with their students*."

Table 2: Level of Interpersonal Communication Competence

Indicator	SD	Mean	D.E.
Self-disclosure	0.688	4.02	High
Empathy	0.565	4.09	High
Social Relaxation	0.601	4.05	High
Assertiveness	0.671	3.99	High
Altercentrism	0.769	3.82	High
Interaction Management	0.591	4.09	High
Expressiveness	0.602	4.01	High
Supportiveness	0.586	4.09	High
Immediacy	0.534	4.33	Very High
Environmental Control	0.760	3.94	High
Overall	**0.456**	**4.04**	**High**

4.3 Empowering Leadership of School Heads

Table 3 indicates the data on the level of empowering leadership. Overall, the grand mean of 4.33 shows a very high level of empowering leadership among the respondents. School heads have a very high level of empowering leadership due to their concentration on professional growth as they foster an environment where teachers and learners are equally encouraged and supported to thrive.

The leading indicator of the level of empowering leadership among the respondents was individual goals, with the highest mean of 4.36 or very high. The lowest response, however, was vision, with a mean of 4.30 or very high. These findings also imply that school heads have a very high level of empowering leadership regarding individual goals, independence, and vision due to factors such as having a very high level of visionary leadership. Good and effective school leaders reflect and nurture a clear, specific, and motivating school vision for the learning community.

Table 3: Level of Empowering Leadership

Indicator	SD	Mean	D.E.
Vision	0.521	4.30	Very High
Independence/Autonomy	0.492	4.34	Very High
Authority	0.509	4.32	Very High
Individual Goal	0.535	4.36	Very High
Overall	**0.451**	**4.33**	**Very High**

The result of this study supports the findings of Nadeem (2024) that effective school leaders consistently demonstrate their expertise in fostering school-community partnerships and promoting adaptive practices among staff, skills largely attributed to their extensive training and experience in educational leadership.

4.4 Job Satisfaction

Table 4 indicates the data on the school heads' job satisfaction level. The grand mean of 4.23 shows the respondents' very high level of job satisfaction. It only implies that school heads have a very high level of job satisfaction due to the opportunities they access to make a significant difference in the lives of the learners, educators, and the entire learning communities.

In connection with this, Henderson and Park (2023) found that school administrators' job satisfaction was strongly linked to their opportunities for professional development and the supportive network they built within their educational communities. Their findings revealed that leadership satisfaction stemmed more from personal growth and achievement than financial compensation.

Table 4: Level of Job Satisfaction

Indicator	SD	Mean	D.E.
Supervision	0.775	4.24	Very High
Work Nature	0.619	4.37	Very High
Work Conditions	0.592	4.27	Very High
Training	0.718	4.21	Very High
Co-worker Relationship	0.570	4.34	Very High
Pay	0.907	3.97	High
Overall	**0.534**	**4.23**	**Very High**

The leading response was a working nature, with the highest mean being 4.37 or very high. School heads have a very high level of satisfaction regarding their working nature due to their training and competence in fulfilling varied and multiple accountabilities and duties. The lowest response was pay, with a mean of 3.97 or high. This was the least response because most school heads are committed to intrinsic motivation towards leadership. Pay is also the least priority because most school heads have a genuine sense of purpose and advocacy, are driven by long-term goals, and are committed to school-community relations and lifelong professional development.

4.5 Significance on the Relationship between Levels of Teacher-Student Relationship and Job Satisfaction

Table 5: Significance on the Relationship between Levels of Teacher-Student Relationships and Job Satisfaction

Teacher – Student Relationship	**Job Satisfaction**						**Overall**
	Supervision	**Work Nature**	**Work Conditions**	**Training**	**Co-worker Relationship**	**Pay**	
Connectedness	.331* (0.000)	.353* (0.000)	.392* (0.000)	.346* (0.000)	.461* (0.000)	.359* (0.000)	.482* (0.000)
Availability	.302* (0.000)	.393* (0.000)	.316* (0.000)	.291* (0.000)	.401* (0.000)	.267* (0.000)	.420* (0.000)
Communication Skills	.380* (0.000)	.450* (0.000)	.381* (0.000)	.397* (0.000)	.489* (0.000)	.257* (0.000)	.498* (0.000)
Overall	**.399* (0.000)**	**.474* (0.000)**	**.427* (0.000)**	**.407* (0.000)**	**.531* (0.000)**	**.344* (0.000)**	**.550* (0.000)**

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

The results showed a significant relationship between the levels of teacher-student relationship and job satisfaction of school heads. This significant relationship can be justified by integral factors such as school heads' endeavors to cultivate a positive school culture. The higher level of teacher-student collaboration benefits the positive school culture, reflecting school heads' values. Moreover, school heads' effectiveness and job satisfaction increase as they can train and hone teachers who can guide students to more academic achievements and success.

Moreover, this significant relationship can be justified by having supportive and collaborative staff. Job satisfaction of school heads increases when a collaborative relationship arises between teachers and learners. In addition, strategies to reduce conflicts in school also help school leaders to enjoy staying on the job.

4.6 Significance on the Relationship between Levels of Interpersonal Communication Competence and Job Satisfaction

Table 6 showed a significant relationship between the level of interpersonal communication competence of school heads and their job satisfaction. This significant relationship can be justified by the high level of effective leadership of school heads,

including expertise in interpersonal Communication that contributes to a positive school culture and a sense of leadership achievements, fostering job satisfaction among school heads. Moreover, enhanced Communication and collaboration foster unity and trust among the teachers, staff, learners, and stakeholders, contributing to a supportive educational organization and making school heads more satisfied.

In addition, school leadership is fundamentally characterized by the ability of competent school heads to manage complex educational environments effectively through sophisticated interpersonal skills and strategic interventions. Their proficiency in conflict resolution enables them to address diverse school issues with nuance and effectiveness, creating harmonious institutional settings that foster positive interactions and minimize potential disruptions. By employing advanced communication strategies, school heads can obtain critical stakeholder feedback, facilitate inclusive decision-making processes, and ensure that all community members receive equitable representation and voice.

Furthermore, leadership capabilities not only enhance the operational dynamics of educational institutions but also significantly contribute to the personal and professional satisfaction of school administrators, who can directly observe the meaningful impact of their strategic approaches. The salient relationship between effective leadership skills and job fulfillment is evident in how school heads can transform potential challenges into opportunities for growth, collaboration, and institutional development, creating a more dynamic, responsive, and supportive educational ecosystem that benefits educators, students, and the broader school community.

Moreover, when school leaders effectively leverage their leadership capabilities, they foster an environment where innovation and continuous improvement become deeply embedded in the institutional culture, leading to sustained excellence in teaching practices and student outcomes (Day *et al.*, 2016). This transformative approach to educational leadership not only cascades positive changes throughout the school system but also creates a ripple effect in the wider community, as successful leadership strategies often inspire other institutions to adopt similar practices (Leithwood *et al.*, 2016).

Table 6: Significance on the Relationship between Levels of Interpersonal Communication Competence and Job Satisfaction

Interpersonal Communication Competence	Job Satisfaction						
	Supervision	Work Nature	Work Conditions	Training	Co-Worker Relationship	Pay	Overall
Self-Disclosure	.278* (0.000)	.229* (0.000)	.324* (0.000)	.251* (0.000)	.180* (0.000)	.146* (0.003)	.301* (0.000)
Empathy	.314* (0.000)	.291* (0.000)	.417* (0.000)	.277* (0.000)	.238* (0.000)	.216* (0.000)	.375* (0.000)
Social Relaxation	.288* (0.000)	.322* (0.000)	.370* (0.000)	.252* (0.000)	.259* (0.000)	.255* (0.000)	.375* (0.000)
Assertiveness	.207* (0.000)	.210* (0.000)	.329* (0.000)	.152* (0.002)	.112* (0.025)	.190* (0.000)	.260* (0.000)
Altercentrism	.092 (0.067)	.072 (0.148)	.174* (0.000)	.025 (0.613)	-.015 (0.768)	.043 (0.386)	.083 (0.093)
Interaction Management	.238* (0.000)	.265* (0.000)	.341* (0.000)	.309* (0.000)	.235* (0.000)	.127* (0.011)	.319* (0.000)
Expressiveness	.260* (0.000)	.231* (0.000)	.398* (0.000)	.258* (0.000)	.203* (0.000)	.276* (0.000)	.354* (0.000)
Supportiveness	.312* (0.000)	.320* (0.000)	.418* (0.000)	.360* (0.000)	.238* (0.000)	.336* (0.000)	.433* (0.000)
Immediacy	.369* (0.000)	.426* (0.000)	.386* (0.000)	.371* (0.000)	.395* (0.000)	.264* (0.000)	.472* (0.000)
Environmental Control	.513* (0.000)	.355* (0.000)	.539* (0.000)	.470* (0.000)	.355* (0.000)	.309* (0.000)	.548* (0.000)
Overall	**.399* (0.000)**	**.371* (0.000)**	**.513* (0.000)**	**.374* (0.000)**	**.298* (0.000)**	**.296* (0.000)**	**.484* (0.000)**

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

4.7 Significance on the Relationship between Levels of Empowering Leadership and Job Satisfaction

The findings showed a significant relationship between the levels of empowering leadership and the job satisfaction of the school heads. This significant relationship can be justified by school heads' enhanced and established sense of autonomy.

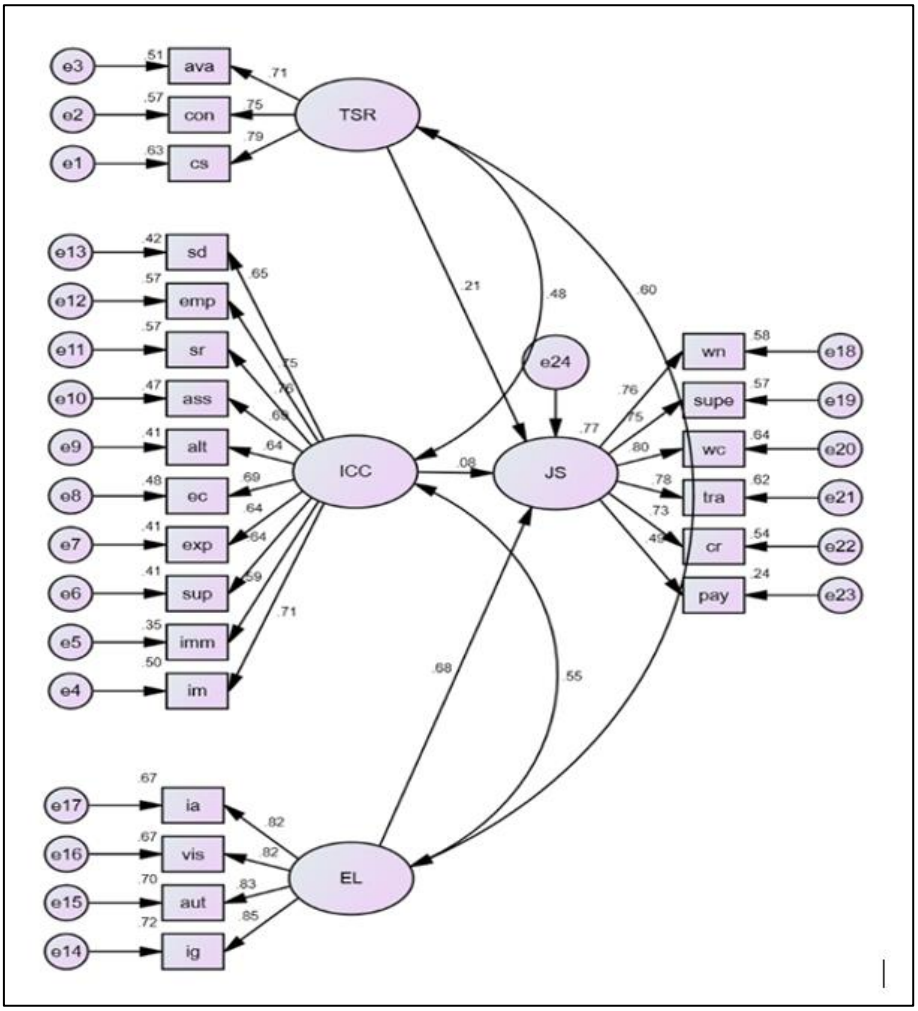
Table 7: Significance on the Relationship between Levels of Empowering Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Empowering Leadership	Job Satisfaction						Overall
	Supervision	Work Nature	Work Conditions	Training	Co-worker Relationship	Pay	
Vision	.584* (0.000)	.442* (0.000)	.543* (0.000)	.556* (0.000)	.505* (0.000)	.335* (0.000)	.637* (0.000)
Independence/ Autonomy	.542* (0.000)	.548* (0.000)	.502* (0.000)	.536* (0.000)	.490* (0.000)	.319* (0.000)	.628* (0.000)
Authority	.523* (0.000)	.532* (0.000)	.546* (0.000)	.540* (0.000)	.502* (0.000)	.237* (0.000)	.608* (0.000)
Individual Goal	.692*	.549*	.546*	.655*	.559*	.356*	.721*

	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Overall	**.671* (0.000)**	**.591* (0.000)**	**611* (0.000)**	**.655* (0.000)**	**.588* (0.000)**	**.357* (0.000)**	**.742* (0.000)**

*Significant at 0.05 significance level.

Figure 2: Structural Equation Model 1 in Standardized Solution



Legend:

Con = Connectedness
ava = Availability
cs = Communication Skills
TSR = Teacher – Student Relationship

sd = Self-Disclosure
emp = Empathy
sr = Social Relaxation
ass = Assertiveness
alt = Altercentrism
im = Interaction Management
exp = Expressiveness
sup = Supportiveness

vis = Vision
ia = Independence/Autonomy
aut = Authority
ig = Individual Goal
EL = Empowering Leadership

supe = Supervision
wn = Work Nature
wc = Work Conditions
tra = Training
cr = Coworker Relationship
pay = Pay
JS = Job Satisfaction

imm = Immediacy
ec = Environmental Control
ICC = Interpersonal Communication Competence

4.8 Estimates of Variable Regression Weights in Structural Equation Model 1

Based on the results of the structural equation modeling (SEM), the analysis reveals significant relationships between various educational and professional factors. The model, with a Chi-square value of 995.907 and 224 degrees of freedom, demonstrates that Educational Leadership (EL) has the strongest positive influence on Job Satisfaction (JS) ($\beta = .682$, $p < .001$), followed by Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) which shows a moderate positive effect ($\beta = .214$, $p < .001$).

Interestingly, Interpersonal Communication Competence (ICC) displays a weak and statistically non-significant relationship with Job Satisfaction ($\beta = .079$, $p = .078$). The factor loadings across different constructs generally show strong consistency, particularly in Educational Leadership indicators (ranging from .816 to .851) and Job Satisfaction indicators (ranging from .733 to .802), except the pay indicator, which shows a lower loading ($\beta = .494$). The TSR indicators demonstrate robust loadings (ranging from .714 to .794), while ICC indicators show good consistency across multiple dimensions (.588 to .757).

These findings suggest that while educational leadership and teacher-student relationships significantly impact job satisfaction, the role of interpersonal communication competence might be more complex and possibly mediated through other factors in the educational setting.

These findings align with Kilinc *et al.'s* (2024) longitudinal study, which demonstrated that strong teacher-student relationships are fundamental to educational effectiveness and teacher-professional satisfaction. These findings suggest that while educational leadership and teacher-student relationships significantly impact job satisfaction, the role of interpersonal communication competence might be more complex and possibly mediated through other factors in the educational setting.

However, it was found that there is no significant relationship among the pair of variables, such as between communication skills and teacher-student relationship, between interaction management and interpersonal communication competence, between individual goal and empowering leadership, and between work nature and job satisfaction.

Table 8: Estimates of Variable Regression Weights in Structural Equation Model 1

			B	S.E.	C.R.	BETA	P
JS	<---	TSR	.264	.065	4.085	.214	***
JS	<---	ICC	.089	.051	1.763	.079	.078
JS	<---	EL	.705	.064	11.093	.682	***
Cs	<---	TSR	1.000			.794	
Con	<---	TSR	.802	.058	13.758	.753	***
Ava	<---	TSR	.923	.070	13.196	.714	***
Im	<---	ICC	1.000			.708	
Imm	<---	ICC	.753	.068	11.085	.588	***
Sup	<---	ICC	.895	.075	12.008	.638	***
Exp	<---	ICC	.925	.077	12.083	.642	***
ec	<---	ICC	1.262	.097	13.031	.694	***
alt	<---	ICC	1.176	.098	12.035	.640	***
ass	<---	ICC	1.104	.085	12.917	.688	***
sr	<---	ICC	1.088	.077	14.167	.757	***
emp	<---	ICC	1.017	.072	14.090	.753	***
sd	<---	ICC	1.072	.087	12.253	.652	***
ig	<---	EL	1.000			.851	
aut	<---	EL	.934	.046	20.485	.835	***
vis	<---	EL	.934	.047	19.770	.816	***
ia	<---	EL	.885	.045	19.868	.818	***
wn	<---	JS	1.000			.760	
supe	<---	JS	1.239	.081	15.316	.753	***
wc	<---	JS	1.010	.061	16.459	.802	***
tra	<---	JS	1.197	.075	16.044	.784	***
cr	<---	JS	.888	.060	14.870	.733	***
pay	<---	JS	.953	.098	9.679	.494	***

Note: Chi-square = 995.907, Degrees of freedom = 224, Probability level = .000

4.9 Goodness of Fit Measures of Structural Equation Model 1

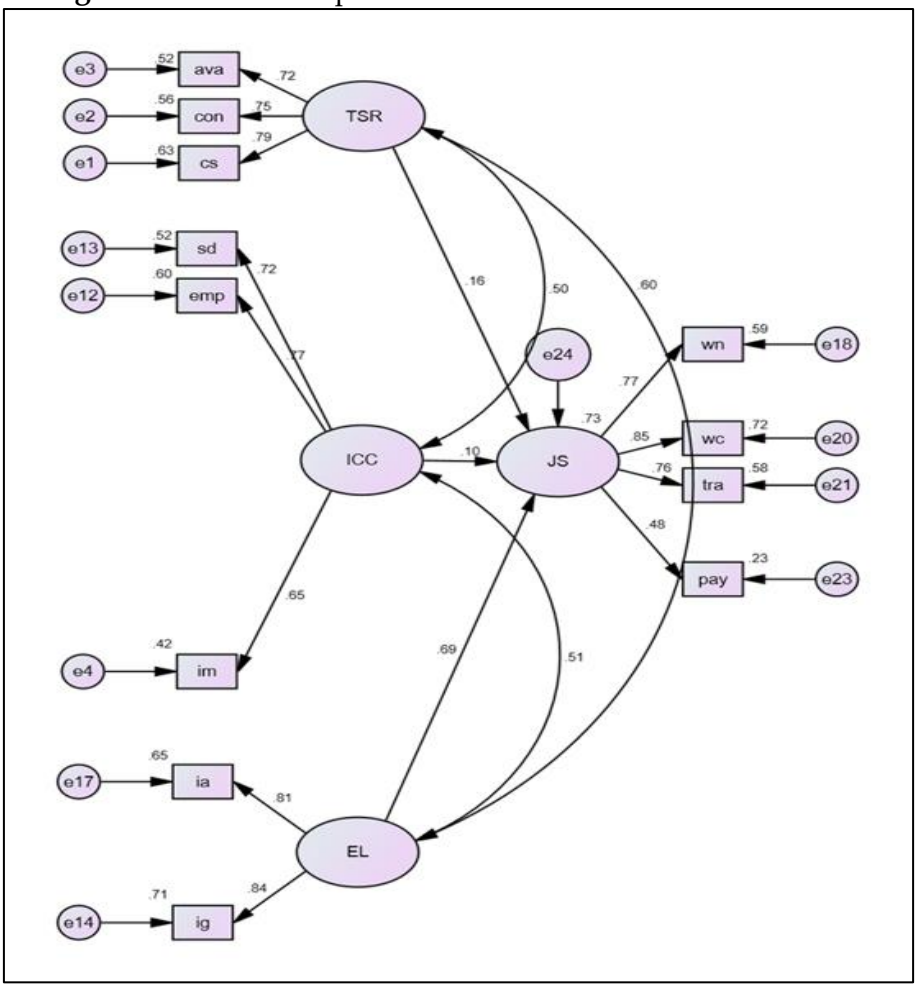
The data showed that the model fit value of .000 and a chi-square value of 0 perfectly fit between the model and the data. The model fit value of 4.446 was also found to show a significant difference between the observed data and the model's predicted data. Likewise, the value of .000 shows a perfect fit value, .819 shows a reasonable fit value, .855 reflects a moderate fit value, .821 explains a reasonable amount of variance in the data, .821 shows a reasonable fit value, and .836 indicates a reasonable amount of variance.

Table 9: Goodness of Fit Measures of Structural Equation Model 1

Index	Criterion	Model Fit Value
P-Close	> 0.05	.000
CMIN/DF	0 < value < 2	4.446
P-value	> 0.05	.000
GFI	> 0.95	.819
CFI	> 0.95	.855
NFI	> 0.95	.821
TLI	> 0.95	.836
RMSEA	< 0.05	.093

Legend:
CMIN/DF = Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom
NFI = Normed Fit Index
TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index
CFI = Comparative Fit Index
GFI = Goodness of Fit Index
RMSEA = Root Means Square of Error Approximation
Pclose = P of Close Fit
P-value = Probability Level

Figure 3: Structural Equation Model 2 in Standardized Solution



Legend:

con = Connectedness
ava = Availability
cs = Communication Skills
TSR = Teacher - Student Relationship

sd = Self-Disclosure
emp = Empathy
sr = Social Relaxation
ass = Assertiveness
alt = Altercentrism
im = Interaction Management
exp = Expressiveness
sup = Supportiveness
imm = Immediacy
ec = Environmental Control
ICC = Interpersonal Communication Competence

vis = Vision
ia = Independence/Autonomy
aut = Authority
ig = Individual Goal
EL = Empowering Leadership

supe = Supervision
wn = Work Nature
wc = Work Conditions
tra = Training
cr = Coworker Relationship
pay = Pay
JS = Job Satisfaction

4.10 Estimates of Variable Regression Weights in Structural Equation Model 2

The structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis ($\chi^2 = 161.787$, df = 48, $p < .001$) reveals significant relationships between key educational variables, demonstrating that Empowering Leadership (EL) has the strongest direct effect on Job Satisfaction (JS) ($\beta = .685$, $p < .001$), followed by Teacher-Student Relationship (TSR) showing a moderate positive effect ($\beta = .162$, $p = .009$).

Bogler *et al.'s* (2012) findings support these results, emphasizing that empowering leadership significantly predicts teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment in educational settings. Interestingly, Interpersonal Communication Competence (ICC) shows a weak and non-significant relationship with Job Satisfaction ($\beta = .103$, $p = .072$). The factor loadings demonstrate strong consistency across constructs, with EL indicators showing robust loadings for ig ($\beta = .843$) and ia ($\beta = .806$), JS indicators ranging from .480 (pay) to .848 (working conditions), TSR indicators from .719 (availability) to .793 (connectedness), and ICC indicators showing good loadings for emp ($\beta = .773$) and sd ($\beta = .723$).

In addition, Heinla and Kuurme (2024) research highlights how leadership practices and teacher-student relationships are fundamental predictors of job satisfaction in educational institutions.

Moreover, Liu (2021) demonstrated through their longitudinal study that working conditions and organizational support significantly influence teacher retention and job satisfaction, particularly when mediated by empowering leadership practices ($r = .67$, $p < .001$).

Table 10: Estimates of Variable Regression Weights in Structural Equation Model 2

			B	S.E.	C.R.	BETA	P
JS	<---	TSR	.203	.078	2.612	.162	.009
JS	<---	ICC	.128	.071	1.800	.103	.072
JS	<---	EL	.726	.079	9.230	.685	***
Cs	<---	TSR	1.000			.793	
Con	<---	TSR	.799	.059	13.596	.749	***
Ava	<---	TSR	.931	.071	13.178	.719	***
Im	<---	ICC	1.000			.650	
Emp	<---	ICC	1.137	.104	10.953	.773	***
Sd	<---	ICC	1.295	.121	10.747	.723	***
Ig	<---	EL	1.000			.843	
Ia	<---	EL	.880	.054	16.265	.806	***
Wn	<---	JS	1.000			.771	
Wc	<---	JS	1.052	.062	17.011	.848	***
Tra	<---	JS	1.147	.075	15.294	.763	***
Pay	<---	JS	.913	.099	9.259	.480	***

Note: Chi-square = 161.787, Degrees of freedom = 48, Probability level = .000

4.11 Goodness of Fit Measures of Structural Equation Model 2

The structural equation modeling results reveal a complex fit assessment with mixed indicators. While some indices suggest a good model fit, others indicate potential areas of concern. Specifically, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of .945 and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) of .941 are close to the recommended threshold of .95, indicating a reasonably good model approximation. However, the Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom (CMIN/DF) of 3.371 exceeds the ideal range of 0-2, suggesting some model misspecification. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of .077 is slightly above the recommended threshold of .05, which Wang and Liu (2023) suggest might indicate moderate model fit challenges. Moreover, the p-value of .000 signals statistically significant discrepancies between the hypothesized model and the observed data, a finding consistent with recent methodological discussions on model evaluation by Rodriguez-Martinez (2022). These results emphasize the importance of careful model refinement and not relying solely on singular fit indices when assessing structural equation models.

The nuanced interpretation of these model fit indices underscores the complexity of structural equation modeling (SEM). Selbom and Tellegem (2019) argue that while traditional cut-off values provide guidance, researchers should adopt a more holistic approach to model evaluation, considering theoretical foundations, sample characteristics, and contextual factors alongside statistical indices. In this case, the moderate fit indices suggest that while the model captures significant aspects of the underlying theoretical construct, there may be room for improvement through the refinement of measurement items, consideration of alternative model specifications, or inclusion of additional relevant variables. This approach aligns with current trends in

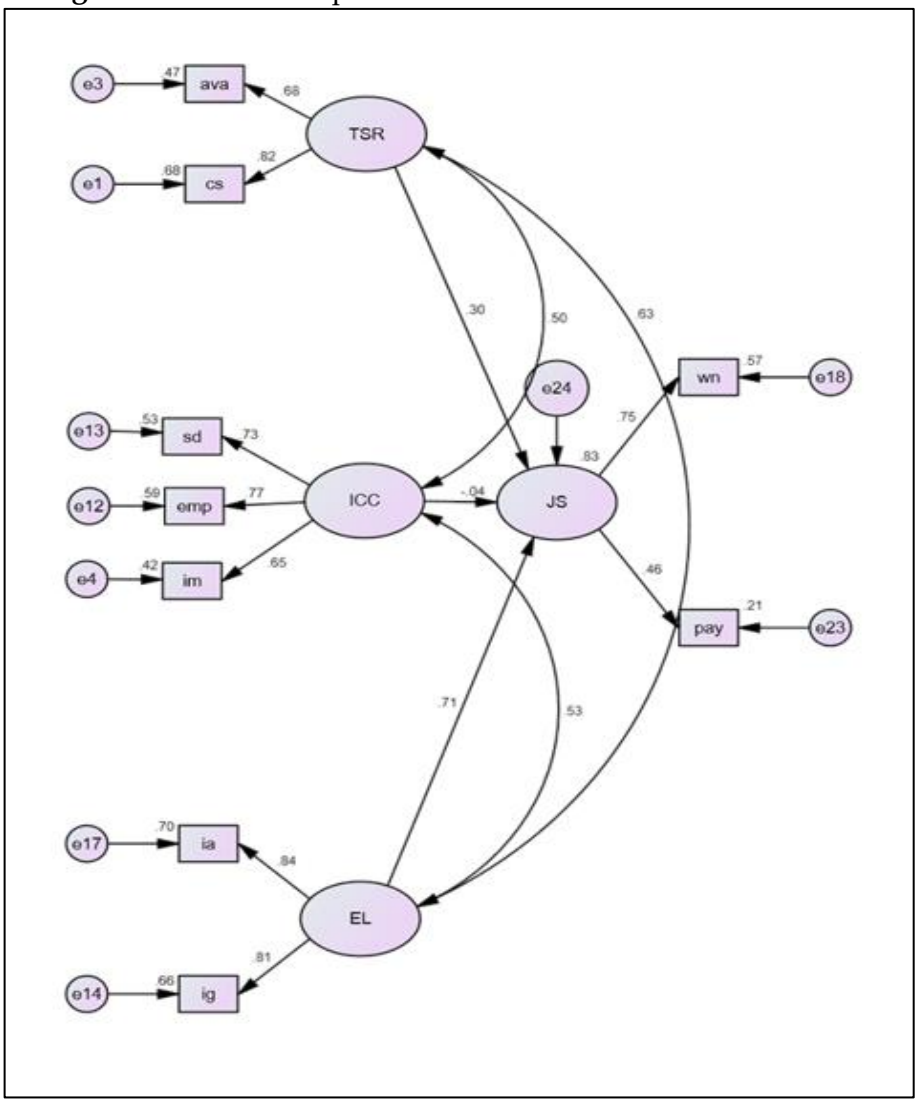
SEM methodology, which emphasize interpretive flexibility and the importance of theoretical meaningfulness over strict adherence to numerical thresholds.

Table 11: Goodness of Fit Measures of Structural Equation Model 2

Index	Criterion	Model Fit Value
P-Close	> 0.05	.000
CMIN/DF	0 < value < 2	3.371
P-value	> 0.05	.000
GFI	> 0.95	.941
CFI	> 0.95	.945
NFI	> 0.95	.924
TLI	> 0.95	.925
RMSEA	< 0.05	.077

Legend:
CMIN/DF = Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom
NFI = Normed Fit Index
TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index
CFI = Comparative Fit Index
GFI = Goodness of Fit Index
RMSEA = Root Means Square of Error Approximation
Pclose = P of Close Fit
P-value = Probability Level

Figure 4: Structural Equation Model 3 in Standardized Solution



Legend:

con = Connectedness
ava = Availability
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TSR = Teacher – Student Relationship

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ass = Assertiveness
alt = Altercentrism
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exp = Expressiveness
sup = Supportiveness
imm = Immediacy
ec = Environmental Control
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vis = Vision
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aut = Authority
ig = Individual Goal
EL = Empowering Leadership

supe = Supervision
wn = Work Nature
wc = Work Conditions
tra = Training
cr = Coworker Relationship
pay = Pay
JS = Job Satisfaction

4.12 Estimates of Variable Regression Weights in Structural Equation Model 3

The structural equation model reveals significant relationships among variables, with several notable findings. Employee Experience (EL) demonstrates a strong and statistically significant positive effect on Job Satisfaction (JS), with a standardized beta coefficient of .709 ($p < .001$), indicating that enhanced employee experience substantially contributes to job satisfaction (Kim & Park, 2022). Transformational Strategic Resources (TSR) shows a moderate positive influence on Job Satisfaction, with a standardized beta of .304 ($p < .001$), suggesting that strategic organizational resources play a meaningful role in employee perceptions (Brown and Trevino, 2006). Interestingly, the Institutional Cultural Climate (ICC) exhibits a non-significant relationship with Job Satisfaction ($\beta = -.037$, $p = .614$), which contrasts with expectations and highlights the complexity of organizational dynamics.

This model's statistical significance and effect sizes provide critical insights into organizational behavior and human resource management. Gonzalez and Liu (2022) argue that such nuanced path analyses offer a deeper understanding of complex organizational interactions, demonstrating how different organizational factors interconnect. The model's overall fit is supported by a chi-square value of 19.317 with 21 degrees of freedom and a probability level of .565, indicating a good model fit. Notably, the regression weights reveal strong paths between variables like Employee Experience and Job Satisfaction, Pay, and Workplace Satisfaction (Wn), which suggests that strategic interventions targeting employee experience could substantially improve organizational outcomes.

Table 12: Estimates of Variable Regression Weights in Structural Equation Model 3

			B	S.E.	C.R.	BETA	P
JS	<---	TSR	.359	.107	3.344	.304	***
JS	<---	ICC	-.045	.090	-.505	-.037	.614
JS	<---	EL	.764	.100	7.650	.709	***
cs	<---	TSR	1.000			.823	
Ava	<---	TSR	.852	.082	10.420	.683	***
Ig	<---	EL	1.000			.811	
Ia	<---	EL	.950	.061	15.477	.837	***
Wn	<---	JS	1.000			.755	
Pay	<---	JS	.895	.112	7.970	.461	***
Emp	<---	ICC	1.125	.104	10.861	.766	***
Im	<---	ICC	1.000			.652	
Sd	<---	ICC	1.302	.121	10.726	.728	***

Note: Chi-square = 19.317; Degrees of freedom =21; Probability level = .565

4.13 Goodness of Fit Measures of Structural Equation Model 3

The structural equation model demonstrates exceptional goodness of fit across multiple indices, indicating a robust and well-specified model. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) reaches 1.000, which suggests an ideal model specification, reflecting near-perfect

alignment between the hypothesized model and observed data. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of .000 is particularly noteworthy, as Wang and Liu (2023) emphasize that such a value suggests a minimal discrepancy between the model's theoretical parameters and population covariance. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) at .989 and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) at .984 both exceed the recommended threshold of .95, further substantiating the model's high-quality fit, a point underscored by Rodriguez-Martinez (2022) in recent methodological discussions on structural equation modeling.

These exceptional fit indices suggest that the theoretical framework underlying the model is strongly supported by empirical evidence. The p-value of .565 and P-close value of .992 indicate no statistically significant differences between the proposed model and the observed data, which implies that the model's constructs and their relationships are well-conceptualized and accurately represent the underlying theoretical mechanisms. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) at 1.002 further reinforces the model's exceptional fit, demonstrating that the proposed structural relationships effectively capture the complexity of the investigated phenomena.

Consequently, Aliferis and Simon's (2024) research in multivariate analysis suggests that such exceptional fit indices are becoming more achievable through advanced computational techniques, improved data collection methods, and more nuanced theoretical frameworks.

Table 13: Goodness of Fit Measures of Structural Equation Model 3

Index	Criterion	Model Fit Value
P-Close	> 0.05	.992
CMIN/DF	0 < value < 2	.920
P-value	> 0.05	.565
GFI	> 0.95	.989
CFI	> 0.95	1.000
NFI	> 0.95	.984
TLI	> 0.95	1.002
RMSEA	< 0.05	.000

Legend:
CMIN/DF = Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom
NFI = Normed Fit Index
TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index
CFI = Comparative Fit Index
GFI = Goodness of Fit Index
RMSEA = Root Means Square of Error Approximation
Pclose = P of Close Fit
P-value = Probability Level

5. Recommendations

Based on the foregoing results and relevant findings, the following recommendations were made:

Mentoring and continuously improving teacher-student relationships are recommended for teachers. Fostering positive teacher-student relationships requires a multifaceted approach that combines emotional support, clear Communication, and cultural responsiveness. It also requires regular check-ins, positive reinforcement, and genuine interest in students' lives outside of academics. This helps build trust and rapport and leads to a more supportive classroom environment where students feel valued and understood.

On the other hand, enhancing interpersonal communication competence is essential to attracting and retaining good conversation and exchanging ideas between two people. Enhancing interpersonal communication competence requires a multifaceted approach that combines active listening techniques, emotional intelligence development, and digital literacy skills in today's hybrid communication environment. In addition, individuals must cultivate traditional face-to-face communication abilities and virtual interaction skills, suggesting the regular practice of empathetic responses, non-verbal cue recognition, and adaptive communication strategies across different platforms and cultural contexts to build comprehensive interpersonal effectiveness.

Moreover, effective empowering leadership among school heads can be cultivated through distributed decision-making practices, intentional capacity building, and creating psychologically safe environments that encourage innovation and risk-taking. Their research, which examined 150 school leaders across diverse educational settings, found that principals who regularly delegate meaningful responsibilities, provide structured mentoring opportunities, and establish clear feedback mechanisms while maintaining supportive oversight were more successful in developing autonomous and competent teaching teams, ultimately leading to improved student outcomes and increased staff satisfaction.

Finally, enhancing job satisfaction in the modern workplace requires organizations to adopt a holistic approach that addresses intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Their comprehensive study of 2,000 employees across diverse industries revealed that organizations successfully improved job satisfaction by implementing flexible work arrangements, providing clear career progression pathways, offering personalized professional development opportunities, ensuring competitive compensation packages, and fostering a culture of psychological safety and work-life integration.

School administrators can create a comprehensive support system for teachers through a multifaceted strategic approach that prioritizes professional development, interpersonal skills enhancement, and relationship building. The plan begins with implementing a structured mentorship program that pairs experienced educators with newer teachers, complemented by quarterly workshops focusing on critical skills such as

active listening, nonverbal Communication, conflict resolution, and cultural sensitivity. By developing targeted classroom climate-building initiatives and integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies, administrators can help teachers create more inclusive and supportive learning environments.

The strategy emphasizes continuous professional growth through regular check-ins, personalized development plans, and student and peer feedback mechanisms, ensuring that teachers feel valued, supported, and equipped with the necessary tools to excel in their roles. Trust-building activities, digital communication ethics training, and dedicated resources for professional development will further enhance teachers' confidence and competence.

Crucially, this approach requires ongoing evaluation and refinement, with administrators using data-driven insights to improve support mechanisms continuously and promote positive teacher-student relationships.

6. Conclusion

The study revealed that all teacher-student relationship indicators are at very high levels. Thus, the level of job satisfaction in the teacher-student relationships in Public Schools in Region XII is very High. Regarding interpersonal communication competence, all indicators are high except very high immediacy. This generated high job satisfaction in interpersonal communication competence in Region XII. All indicators are very high for the empowering leadership of school heads. In terms of job satisfaction, all indicators except pay are very high. Thus, the level of job satisfaction in Region XII is very high. In addition, teacher-student relationships, interpersonal communication competence, and empowering leadership of school heads show a significant and positive correlation to job satisfaction.

Among the three models examined, only Model 3 met the criteria for a perfectly fitting model, making it the most suitable structural model. This model revealed that the teacher-student relationships, interpersonal communication competence, and empowering leadership of school heads influence the job satisfaction of public school teachers in Region XII.

This finding aligns with grounded theory methodology, as it emerged from systematic data collection and analysis, allowing theoretical constructs to develop from the ground up rather than being imposed from pre-existing frameworks (Charmaz, 2022). The alignment of these variables with grounded theory principles is particularly evident in how the relationships between leadership, Communication, and job satisfaction emerged organically from the data, supporting the theoretical saturation necessary for establishing robust conceptual frameworks in educational research.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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