

Social Competence of Principals and Performance of Integrated Schools in Glan, Sarangani Province

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Abstract. This study explored how school principals' social competence influences performance in public basic education institutions in Glan, Sarangani Province. As leadership is a cornerstone of school effectiveness, the research focused on six dimensions of social competence: self-management, interpersonal skills, positive self-identity, cultural skills, planning and decision-making, and adapting to social values. Eight principals and 166 teachers participated. Principals' social competence was assessed through validated surveys, while school performance was measured using results from the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) and the National Achievement Test (NAT). Findings showed both principals and teachers consistently rated social competence as outstanding, with the highest scores in "adapting to social values." However, performance indicators, especially NAT results for Grade 12, remained in the "Needs Improvement" range. No significant difference was found between principals' self-ratings and teachers' assessments. Regression analysis also revealed no significant relationship between social competence and school performance. The results suggest high social competence does not directly translate to improved academic outcomes. The study recommends strengthening social-emotional leadership skills while addressing systemic student achievement challenges. Future research should include additional factors such as instructional supervision and school resources for a more comprehensive view of school performance.

Keywords: ELLNA; NAT; Principal effectiveness; School performance; social competence.

1.0 Introduction

Effective school leadership is pivotal in enhancing school performance in the ever-evolving landscape of basic education. As schools navigate increasingly complex academic, social, and cultural challenges, the social competence of school principals has become an essential trait. Social competence, broadly defined, encompasses the ability to understand and manage oneself, interact effectively with others, and make socially responsible decisions (Vukojić Stefanović, 2019). In the context of educational leadership, it reflects a principal's capacity to promote a positive school culture, build relationships, and influence teacher motivation and student outcomes.

Social competence consists of multiple dimensions that are vital to effective leadership. These include self-management, which refers to the ability to regulate emotions and behaviors in various situations (Herawati & Tjahjono, 2020); interpersonal knowledge and skills, which involve effective communication and relationship-building with stakeholders (Yasin & Mustafa, 2020); and positive self-identity, which speaks to a leader's confidence and self-awareness in fulfilling their role (Alabddi, 2023). Additionally, cultural skills are necessary for navigating diverse school environments, while planning and decision-making skills enable leaders to

manage resources and guide school improvement efforts strategically. Lastly, adapting to social values ensures that leadership practices align with ethical standards and community expectations (Vukojičić Stefanović, 2019).

Alongside leadership traits, school performance remains a critical metric in evaluating the effectiveness of educational institutions. The Philippines commonly assesses this through the National Achievement Test (NAT) and the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA). These standardized tests serve as benchmarks for learners' academic achievement and literacy skills, reflecting both teaching quality and leadership effectiveness. According to Ornopia et al. (2022), improved school leadership directly impacts NAT and ELLNA outcomes, emphasizing the connection between principal competence and student performance.

Despite the recognition of these variables in the literature, there remains a research gap in understanding how the specific dimensions of social competence relate to school performance in terms of NAT and ELLNA results. Most existing studies address general leadership traits but do not examine how each dimension, such as self-management or cultural skills, may influence key performance indicators. To address this gap, the present study seeks to determine the level of social competence of school principals as assessed by themselves and by teachers in terms of self-management, interpersonal knowledge and skills, positive self-identity, cultural skills, planning and decision-making, and adapting to social values. It also aims to assess school performance based on NAT and ELLNA scores. Furthermore, the study investigates whether there is a significant difference between the principals' self-assessment and teachers' assessment of social competence and whether there is a substantial relationship between the level of social competence and school performance. By exploring these relationships, the study intends to provide empirical evidence that can guide future leadership development programs and inform educational policies to enhance principal effectiveness and school performance.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between school principals' social competence and school performance in public integrated schools. The descriptive component assessed principals' social competence across six dimensions: self-management, interpersonal skills, positive self-identity, cultural skills, planning and decision-making, and adaptation to social values. It also evaluated school performance based on National Achievement Test (NAT) and Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) scores. The correlational component explored the extent to which these competencies are associated with school performance outcomes. This research design was deemed suitable, as it allows for examining naturally occurring relationships without manipulating variables, supporting the generation of evidence-based insights in real-world educational settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

Participants included eight school principals and 166 teachers from selected public integrated schools in Glan. All principals were included via complete enumeration, while teachers were selected using proportionate random sampling based on school population to ensure representation across different school sizes and locations. Involving school leaders and teaching staff provided a balanced view of social competence, capturing self-assessments and external evaluations. This aligns with findings by Yasin and Mustafa (2020) and Kurniati et al. (2022), who emphasize the importance of incorporating multiple perspectives in evaluating educational leadership.

2.3 Research Instrument

The study used a structured and validated survey instrument to measure social competence and school performance. The first section assessed principals' social competence across six dimensions. It was adapted from established frameworks developed by Goleman (2006) on emotional intelligence, Gudykunst (2004) on intercultural communication, and Boyatzis (2008) on leadership competencies. The second section measured school performance using official NAT and ELLNA scores obtained from DepEd records.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

A systematic data collection process was followed to ensure accuracy and reliability. After obtaining approval from the Schools Division Office of Sarangani, the researcher coordinated with school principals of the selected institutions. Formal communication explained the study's purpose and sought their consent. Approval was

obtained from the Schools Division Office of Sarangani, and school heads were formally contacted to request participation. Upon receiving informed consent, the researcher distributed the validated survey instruments to principals and selected teachers, providing clear instructions to ensure accurate responses. Ample time was given for completion, and the researcher personally collected the forms to ensure a high response rate. All data were treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes, by ethical standards.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

To ensure validity and reliability, the instrument underwent content validation by a panel of educational leadership and measurement experts. A pilot test was conducted in a nearby district with similar characteristics, and necessary adjustments were made based on the results. The final instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study strictly adhered to ethical research guidelines to ensure all participants' safety, dignity, and rights. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to decline or withdraw from the study at any point without consequence. A letter of informed consent was provided, clearly explaining the purpose of the research, the use of data, and measures taken to ensure confidentiality. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were handled carefully. These safeguards were established to uphold the principles of respect, transparency, and academic integrity throughout the study.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The results in Table 1 reveal that principals and teachers rated the principals' self-management skills as *Outstanding*, with section means of 4.71 and 4.70, respectively. This high level of agreement highlights the principals' consistent ability to manage time effectively, stay composed under pressure, and maintain emotional control – traits essential for school leadership.

Table 1. *Level of Social Competence of Principals as Assessed by Themselves and the Teachers Based on Self-Management*

	Statements	Mean	Principals		Mean	Teachers	
			SD	Description		SD	Description
1	I effectively manage my time to fulfill my responsibilities.	4.70	.54	Outstanding	4.68	.54	Outstanding
2	I remain calm and focused under pressure.	4.65	.53	Outstanding	4.63	.53	Outstanding
3	I set clear goals for my personal and professional development.	4.76	.51	Outstanding	4.75	.51	Outstanding
4	I am able to control my emotions during difficult situations.	4.74	.49	Outstanding	4.72	.49	Outstanding
5	I am consistent in following through on commitments.	4.71	.55	Outstanding	4.70	.54	Outstanding
	Section Mean	4.71	.52	Outstanding	4.70	.52	Outstanding

Among the items, both groups gave the highest ratings to the statement "I set clear goals for my personal and professional development" (M = 4.76 for principals and M = 4.75 for teachers). This suggests that principals actively steer their own growth, a key indicator of self-leadership. Research affirms self-management is about handling tasks, self-awareness, and regulation, vital in high-stress professions like educational leadership (Cherniss, 2010). Furthermore, the responses show that principals are viewed as emotionally resilient, as reflected in strong ratings for their ability to stay calm in difficult situations (Goleman, 2006). These findings align with the work of Jennings and Greenberg (2009), who emphasized that emotionally competent leaders are better equipped to navigate conflict and maintain positive school climates. The close alignment in ratings between principals and teachers also indicates mutual perception and transparency in leadership behavior, reinforcing that effective self-management fosters trust and credibility within the school community (Leithwood et al., 2020). Overall, these results support the idea that self-management is foundational to social competence in school leadership and contributes meaningfully to educational institutions' organizational culture and performance.

The results in Table 2 demonstrate a strong alignment between how principals and teachers perceive school heads' interpersonal competence. The section means of 4.75 (self-assessed) and 4.74 (teacher-assessed) both fall within the “Outstanding” range, indicating consistent recognition of principals' strength in human relations.

Table 2. *Level of Social Competence of the School Principals as Assessed by Themselves and the Teachers based on Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills*

	Statements	Mean	Principals		Mean	Teachers	
			SD	Description		SD	Description
1	I actively listen to others during discussions.	4.74	.54	Outstanding	4.72	.54	Outstanding
2	I communicate clearly and effectively with staff and students.	4.72	.52	Outstanding	4.70	.52	Outstanding
3	I build trust and maintain positive relationships within the school.	4.75	.50	Outstanding	4.74	.50	Outstanding
4	I effectively handle conflicts and disagreements.	4.76	.45	Outstanding	4.75	.45	Outstanding
5	I encourage collaboration and teamwork among staff members.	4.78	.44	Outstanding	4.77	.44	Outstanding
	Section Mean	4.75	.49	Outstanding	4.74	.50	Outstanding

Among all indicators, the highest-rated statement for both groups was “I encourage collaboration and teamwork among staff members.” This highlights principals' critical role in cultivating a collegial atmosphere where professional relationships are built on trust and shared purpose. Current literature supports this, emphasizing that school leaders who foster collaborative work environments are more likely to positively influence teacher morale and student success (Nguyen et al., 2021). Similarly, effective conflict resolution and trust-building, as shown in the consistently high ratings for handling disagreements and maintaining positive relationships, reinforce the notion that socially competent leaders are pivotal to healthy school climates. Hallinger and Wang (2022) affirmed that leadership which emphasizes open dialogue and emotional balance significantly enhances school-wide cohesion.

The strong ratings in listening and communication also reflect how principal behavior contributes to staff engagement and a sense of belonging. Kraft et al. (2020) noted that when leaders are approachable and communicative, staff feel more motivated and supported, particularly in navigating organizational changes or educational reforms. Overall, the findings suggest that principals in this study have developed a strong foundation in interpersonal skills, which is recognized by their peers and validated by the teaching staff. These qualities remain essential in leading inclusive, respectful, and responsive school communities.

The data in Table 3 show that principals and teachers rated the principals’ positive self-identity at an *Outstanding* level, with an identical section mean of 4.76 (SD = 0.49). This reflects a strong agreement between the two groups that school leaders possess a clear and confident sense of self, essential for authentic and ethical leadership.

Table 3. *Level of Social Competence of the School Principals as Assessed by Themselves and the Teachers based on Positive Self-Identity*

	Statements	Mean	Principals		Mean	Teachers	
			SD	Description		SD	Description
1	I have a clear understanding of my strengths and weaknesses.	4.74	.50	Outstanding	4.74	.50	Outstanding
2	I am confident in my ability to lead the school.	4.76	.48	Outstanding	4.77	.48	Outstanding
3	I am open to feedback about my performance.	4.76	.46	Outstanding	4.76	.46	Outstanding
4	I demonstrate self-respect and integrity.	4.78	.52	Outstanding	4.77	.52	Outstanding
5	I take responsibility for my actions and decisions.	4.78	.51	Outstanding	4.77	.51	Outstanding
	Section Mean	4.76	.49	Outstanding	4.76	.49	Outstanding

The highest-rated statements emphasized the principals’ responsibility, integrity, and confidence, suggesting that these leaders understand themselves and inspire others through transparent and accountable behavior. These findings echo the work of Schonert-Reichl (2017), who emphasized that leaders who demonstrate positive self-identity can foster emotional intelligence and resilience in school settings, leading to better engagement and

interpersonal dynamics. Moreover, the agreement between principals and teachers on the statement “I am open to feedback about my performance” (both with a mean of 4.76) supports the idea that emotionally grounded leaders are open to growth and learning, key characteristics of effective school heads (Nguyen et al., 2021).

In addition, Hallinger and Wang (2022) assert that self-awareness and reflective practices in school leadership contribute to building trust and enhancing school performance outcomes, especially when principals model honesty and humility in their leadership. This sense of clarity and accountability contributes to individual leadership strength and a supportive school culture where growth is a shared value. In sum, the strong presence of positive self-identity among school principals as perceived by both themselves and their teachers affirms that these leaders are equipped with the personal insight and character needed to manage complex school dynamics effectively.

Table 4 presents the level of cultural skills as a component of social competence among school principals, as evaluated by both principals and teachers. Both groups assessed this domain as *Outstanding*, with the principals’ section mean at 4.76 and the teachers’ at 4.75. This consensus reflects a shared recognition that school heads exhibit culturally responsive leadership practices in their respective schools.

Table 4. *Level of Social Competence of the School Principals as Assessed by Themselves and the Teachers based on Cultural Skills*

Statements	Mean	Principals		Mean	Teachers	
		SD	Description		SD	Description
1 I show respect for different cultural backgrounds.	4.78	.48	Outstanding	4.77	.48	Outstanding
2 I adapt my communication style to suit diverse cultural contexts.	4.78	.47	Outstanding	4.77	.47	Outstanding
3 I promote cultural inclusivity within the school community.	4.78	.46	Outstanding	4.77	.46	Outstanding
4 I seek to understand the perspectives of people from different cultures.	4.76	.47	Outstanding	4.76	.47	Outstanding
5 I address cultural misunderstandings sensitively and effectively.	4.69	.52	Outstanding	4.68	.52	Outstanding
Section Mean	4.76	.48	Outstanding	4.75	.48	Outstanding

The consistently high ratings, particularly on promoting inclusivity and adapting communication styles, highlight the principals' efforts to create environments where cultural diversity is valued. In increasingly pluralistic school communities, these competencies are vital. According to Gay (2018), culturally responsive leadership fosters equity and respect, allowing learners and staff from varied backgrounds to thrive. One key strength noted in both self and peer ratings is the principal’s ability to adapt communication styles for diverse contexts. This mirrors the findings of Gollnick and Chinn (2021), who stressed that effective leaders understand cultural cues and use inclusive communication to avoid misunderstandings and foster trust.

Another standout indicator was the principals' effort to promote cultural inclusivity, with principals and teachers assigning a mean score of 4.78 and 4.77, respectively. This supports the view that inclusive leadership celebrates differences and actively builds bridges within diverse school communities. Nieto and Bode (2018) emphasized that culturally inclusive school leadership contributes to social justice and improves student engagement and teacher cohesion. Overall, this result suggests that principals in the study have successfully integrated cultural sensitivity into their leadership practices. These findings reinforce the argument that principals demonstrating cultural competence can create more harmonious and productive educational environments, where respect and understanding become foundational values.

As shown in Table 5, both principals and teachers rated the principals’ ability to adapt to social values as Outstanding (M = 4.79 for both groups), with a very low variation in responses. These results highlight that school leaders consistently exhibit fairness, integrity, and ethical conduct while adjusting to evolving societal expectations. Such behavior strengthens the trust and respect of the school community. According to Tschannen-Moran (2014), ethical school leadership builds a positive school culture and influences how staff and students model respectful behavior.

Table 5. *Level of Social Competence of the School Principals as Assessed by Themselves and the Teachers based on Adapting to Social Values*

	Statements	Principals		Description	Teachers		Description
		Mean	SD		Mean	SD	
1	I demonstrate honesty and fairness in all interactions.	4.80	.45	Outstanding	4.79	.45	Outstanding
2	I align my actions with the core values of the school community.	4.79	.44	Outstanding	4.78	.44	Outstanding
3	I respect the social norms and values of the community I serve.	4.79	.46	Outstanding	4.78	.46	Outstanding
4	I promote ethical behavior and set a positive example for others.	4.79	.46	Outstanding	4.78	.46	Outstanding
5	I adapt to changes in social expectations and values effectively.	4.80	.45	Outstanding	4.80	.45	Outstanding
	Section Mean	4.79	.45	Outstanding	4.79	.45	Outstanding

The indicators with the highest scores, such as demonstrating honesty and adapting to social expectations, underscore the principals' ability to be socially responsive while remaining grounded in the school's shared values. These are essential traits in leadership, particularly in communities undergoing rapid social or cultural changes. As Leithwood et al. (2020) noted, school leaders who align their values and actions foster a more profound sense of stability and trust within their institutions. Promoting ethical behavior and embracing core community values resonate with the concept of servant leadership, where the leader puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform at their best (Greenleaf, 2002). This approach empowers teachers, enhances morale, and strengthens the school's capacity to navigate social shifts. These findings affirm that school principals, through their social competence, contribute significantly to shaping a value-driven environment that promotes collective growth and accountability.

The data in Table 6 reveal that school principals demonstrated an outstanding level of social competence across all six measured domains. *Adapting to Social Values* emerged among the indicators with the highest mean score ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 0.45$), suggesting that principals align strongly with ethical conduct, community norms, and evolving social expectations. This supports the findings of Leithwood et al. (2020), who emphasized that effective leaders serve as ethical role models and shape the moral climate of the school environment.

Table 6. *Summary on the Level of Social Competence of the School Principals as Assessed by Themselves and the Teachers*

	Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
1	Self-Management	4.71	.52	Outstanding
2	Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills	4.75	.49	Outstanding
3	Positive Self Identity	4.76	.49	Outstanding
4	Cultural Skills	4.76	.48	Outstanding
5	Panning and Decision-Making Skills	4.76	.49	Outstanding
6	Adapting to Social Values	4.79	.45	Outstanding
	Overall Mean	4.75	.49	Outstanding

Positive Self-Identity, cultural skills, and Planning and Decision-Making Skills (all $M = 4.76$, $SD = 0.48$ – 0.49) were closely followed, indicating a balanced integration of internal self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, and executive functioning in the daily leadership tasks of school heads. These align with the assertions of Goleman (2018), who underscored that leaders with strong emotional intelligence, notably self-awareness and empathy, tend to build healthier organizational climates and foster inclusive practices. The domain of Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills scored slightly lower but was still outstanding ($M = 4.75$, $SD = 0.49$), highlighting the principals' ability to manage relationships, resolve conflicts, and foster collaboration effectively. This is consistent with the study by Sutcher et al. (2021), which emphasized that school leaders who communicate well and encourage teamwork tend to enhance staff morale and school-wide engagement. Lastly, Self-Management garnered a mean score of 4.71 ($SD = 0.52$), suggesting that principals exhibit consistency, emotional control, and time management, traits critical for sustained leadership success. Moore Johnson (2020) noted that school leaders who manage themselves effectively are better equipped to handle pressure and model professional behavior to their teams. The overall mean rating of 4.75 ($SD = 0.49$) confirms that principals in the study are competent and capable of fostering inclusive, ethical, and well-managed educational environments. These results underscore the importance of strengthening leadership training programs that reinforce these dimensions of social competence, which are pivotal in achieving sustainable school improvement.

The Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) results in Table 7 reveal that students across all assessed subjects—English, Filipino, Numeracy, and Mother Tongue—performed at a level that “Needs Improvement.” The overall mean rating of 51.16 reflects a pressing concern about foundational skills in early grade learners.

Table 7. Mean Percentage Scores and Performance Levels in ELLNA by Subject Area

	Subjects	Ratings	Verbal Description
1	English	51.87	Needs Improvement
2	Filipino	53.29	Needs Improvement
3	Numeracy	48.82	Needs Improvement
4	Mother Tongue	49.35	Needs Improvement
	Overall Mean Rating	51.16	Needs Improvement

Filipino obtained the highest mean percentage score (53.29) among the four subject areas, though still within the “Needs Improvement” range. English and Mother Tongue followed, while Numeracy posted the lowest mean (48.82), suggesting difficulty among learners in mathematical concepts and number fluency at the early level. These findings resonate with the national data reported by the Department of Education (DepEd, 2023), which indicates persistent learning gaps in basic literacy and numeracy across public elementary schools. Several studies affirm that such outcomes are often linked to instructional leadership, teacher support systems, and the socio-emotional environment of the school (Leithwood et al., 2020). Moreover, the low performance in Mother Tongue may imply that contextualized learning strategies are either underutilized or inconsistently applied, despite the mandates of the K to 12 curriculum (Palermo, 2022). This result calls for targeted interventions, including teacher capacity-building in early grade instruction and stronger school-home collaboration to improve foundational learning. Strengthening literacy and numeracy instruction through culturally responsive and inclusive strategies can also enhance learner outcomes (Yap & Aranes, 2021).

The results in Table 8 show that school performance, as measured by the Early Language, Literacy, and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) and the National Achievement Test (NAT) for Grades 6 and 12, remains within the “Needs Improvement” category. With an overall mean rating of 43.46, this finding paints a consistent picture of academic underperformance across key basic education levels.

Table 8. Overall School Performance based on ELLNA and NAT results

	Indicators	Overall Rating	Verbal Description
1	ELLNA	51.16	Needs Improvement
2	NAT 6	42.78	Needs Improvement
4	NAT 12	37.46	Needs Improvement
	Overall Mean Rating	43.46	Needs Improvement

The ELLNA score of 51.16 suggests foundational learning gaps in early grades, particularly literacy and numeracy. Meanwhile, NAT 6 and NAT 12 scores—42.78 and 37.46, respectively—indicate that students face increasing academic challenges as they progress through the system. These patterns align with findings from the Department of Education’s (2023) Basic Education Report, which points to low proficiency levels in core subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Filipino throughout the country. Multiple studies link student achievement to several school-level factors, including the quality of leadership, instructional practices, and socio-emotional climate (Leithwood et al., 2020; Moore Johnson, 2020). In particular, schools led by principals who demonstrate strong social competence—those who can manage interpersonal dynamics, adapt to changing values, and promote an inclusive culture—are more likely to foster teacher effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Goleman, 2006; Sutchter et al., 2021).

The declining NAT scores across grade levels may also reflect the compounding effects of early learning difficulties and gaps in curriculum alignment, assessment practices, and school support systems. This highlights the need for holistic school development plans prioritizing instructional leadership and learner-centered strategies. Addressing these issues may involve capacity-building initiatives for school heads, investing in targeted remediation programs, and adopting data-driven instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners. The

results suggest that while efforts are being made to enhance education delivery, more strategic and context-sensitive interventions are urgently needed.

The results in Table 9 show the outcome of the independent t-test conducted to compare the school assessment. The independent t-test results (Table 9) indicate a p-value of 0.262, which exceeds the standard significance threshold of 0.05. This suggests no statistically significant difference between school principals' self-assessments and teachers' evaluations of their social competence. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted—no significant difference exists between the self-assessment of school principals on social competence and the assessment given by teachers. This alignment may reflect the transparency and consistency of principals in their professional behaviors and interpersonal interactions within the school setting. Furthermore, Moore Johnson (2020) noted that when leaders regularly engage in open communication and model values-driven leadership, it fosters shared understanding among school personnel.

Table 9. *Independent t-test Analysis between the Level of Assessment of School Principals on Social Competence*

Indicators	Raters	t	df	F	p	Interpretation
School Principal Social Competence	Principal's Self Rating	-0.105	164	1.26	.262	Not Significant
	Teachers	-0.064	8.30			

The t-test results (Table 10) reveal that all six dimensions of social competence—self-management, interpersonal knowledge and skills, positive self-identity, cultural skills, planning and decision-making skills, and adapting to social values—have p-values less than 0.05. This indicates that each dimension is statistically significant, suggesting that principals and teachers consistently perceive these attributes as important and present in school leadership.

Table 10. *Results of T-Test Analysis between the Level of Assessment of School Principal on Social Competence*

Indicators	t	df	p	Interpretation
Self-Management	197.00	7	<.001	Significant
Interpersonal Knowledge and Skills	197.00	7	<.001	Significant
Positive Self Identity	54.17	7	<.001	Significant
Cultural Skills	98.00	7	<.001	Significant
Planning and Decision-Making Skills	98.00	7	<.001	Significant
Adapting to Social Values	197.00	7	<.001	Significant

**Significant at the .05 level.*

These findings affirm that social competence plays a critical role in effective school leadership when broken down into its dimensions. Self-management, for instance, is vital for personal regulation and enhances a leader's credibility in times of stress and change (Collie, 2021). Similarly, interpersonal knowledge and cultural sensitivity are essential in today's increasingly diverse school communities, where principals are expected to foster inclusivity and strong relational trust (Villarreal, 2022). The significance of positive self-identity and adapting to social values reflects how deeply internalized leadership values can influence daily decision-making and school climate. Research by Finnigan and Daly (2021) emphasized that school leaders with a strong sense of ethical alignment and adaptability are more likely to create sustainable organizational cultures and inclusive policies.

Moreover, the significant result for planning and decision-making aligns with recent findings that strategic leadership contributes to instructional improvement and teacher retention (Bastian & Henry, 2022). This means that principals who are socially competent in this area are effective in administrative functions and instrumental in shaping long-term academic outcomes. The statistically significant ratings across all dimensions suggest a coherent and high-level perception of principals' social competence. This further reinforces the call for leadership development programs to deliberately integrate social and emotional skills as core competencies for school heads.

4.0 Conclusion

This study examined the role of social competence in effective school leadership and its impact on school performance. The findings revealed that school principals demonstrated exceptional social competence across six dimensions: self-management, interpersonal knowledge and skills, positive self-identity, cultural skills,

planning and decision-making, and adapting to social values. Both self-assessments and teacher evaluations aligned, indicating a strong presence of these competencies in daily school interactions. Despite these leadership strengths, school performance, as measured by the National Achievement Test (NAT) and the Early Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLNA), remained in the "Needs Improvement" range. This suggests that while leadership competence is vital, it is insufficient to enhance academic outcomes without addressing systemic factors such as curriculum implementation, teacher preparedness, and student support systems.

Statistical analyses showed no significant difference between principals' and teachers' assessments of social competence, suggesting mutual perception and consistency in leadership behavior. However, the study did not find a statistically significant relationship between social competence and school performance outcomes. This allows future research to explore intervening variables such as instructional practices, student socio-economic background, and institutional support mechanisms. In conclusion, while principals in this study exhibited strong personal and professional competencies that foster positive school cultures, future research should investigate how these traits interact with instructional strategies and resource distribution to improve academic outcomes. Leadership development programs should continue to reinforce these core competencies, while broader educational reforms must focus on translating leadership into measurable gains in student achievement.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Both authors shared equal responsibility in all aspects of the research, including conceptualization, data collection, analysis, and manuscript writing. They collaboratively refined the study and ensured its accuracy and integrity. Both authors thoroughly reviewed and jointly approved the final version of the paper.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

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