

Distributed Leadership Practices and their Relationship to Teachers' Professional Collaboration in Selected Senior High Schools in Zamboanga City

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Article History:

Date Received: August 5, 2026

Date Revised: August 14, 2026

Date Accepted: October 14, 2026

Date Published: October 18, 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.67903/ijroms0395>

Document ID: 2026IJROMS0395

Recommended Citation:

Paradji, N. A. (2026). Distributed Leadership Practices and their Relationship to Teachers' Professional Collaboration in Selected Senior High Schools in Zamboanga City. *International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(9), 493-505. <https://doi.org/10.67903/ijroms0395>

Abstract. Distributed leadership and teachers' professional collaboration are widely recognized as important aspects of school improvement and professional learning. However, context-specific evidence concerning the relationship between these variables among public senior high school teachers in Zamboanga City remains limited. This study aimed to determine the level of distributed leadership practices as perceived by teachers and examine the relationship between distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration in selected public senior high schools. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed, involving 200 teachers from Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial Stand Alone Senior High School, Baliwasan Stand Alone Senior High School, and Sinunuc National High School in Zamboanga City. Data were gathered using a validated researcher-made questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale. Distributed leadership practices were assessed in terms of shared decision-making, teacher involvement in leadership roles, leadership support, and collaborative school culture. Teachers' professional collaboration was examined through sharing of teaching strategies, peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and professional discussions. Mean scores were used to describe the levels of the study variables, while Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to examine their relationship. The findings revealed that distributed leadership practices received a very high overall mean of 4.27, while teachers' professional collaboration obtained a very high overall mean of 4.24. A strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship was found between distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that higher perceived levels of distributed leadership were associated with higher levels of professional collaboration among the participating teachers. The study provides context-specific evidence for understanding the relationship between leadership practices and teacher collaboration in public senior high schools. It highlights the relevance of shared decision-making, teacher participation, leadership support, and collaborative school culture in informing school leadership practices and future research on professional collaboration. equitable access to digital tools. It recommends the integration of continuous training for both teachers and students to bridge digital gaps and strengthen technology-based learning strategies. Future studies should explore longitudinal impacts of technological skills on academic performance across varied educational levels.

Keywords: Collaborative School Culture; Distributed Leadership; Professional Collaboration; Senior High Schools; Teacher Leadership

Introduction

Educational leadership plays an important role in shaping school practices, supporting teachers' professional growth, and creating environments conducive to teaching and learning. In contemporary educational settings, leadership is increasingly understood not only as the responsibility of school heads but also as a process involving teachers and other members of the school community. This perspective is reflected in distributed leadership, which emphasizes the sharing of leadership responsibilities and the interaction among school leaders, teachers, and the situations in which their work takes place (Spillane, 2006). Rather than concentrating decision-making authority in one individual, distributed leadership recognizes that

teachers can contribute to school improvement through their expertise, participation, and professional responsibilities.

Previous scholarship has highlighted different aspects of distributed leadership and its relevance to school development. Gronn (2002) conceptualized distributed leadership as a form of collective activity in which leadership functions emerge through the contributions and interactions of multiple individuals. Similarly, Spillane (2006) emphasized that leadership practice is shaped by the interactions among leaders, followers, and their working situations. These perspectives suggest that leadership in schools involves more than the formal authority of school administrators; it also includes the opportunities provided to teachers to participate in decisions, contribute ideas, and take responsibility for shared school goals. However, the presence of shared responsibilities alone does not establish whether teachers experience stronger professional collaboration. The relationship between leadership practices and actual collaborative activities therefore requires empirical examination.

Teachers' professional collaboration is another important dimension of school improvement. It involves teachers working together to exchange instructional knowledge, discuss professional concerns, plan lessons, and support one another's teaching practices. Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice Theory provides a useful perspective for understanding how professionals develop shared knowledge and learn through mutual engagement in common activities. In schools, professional collaboration can create opportunities for teachers to learn from colleagues and address instructional challenges collectively. Nevertheless, meaningful collaboration may depend partly on whether the school environment provides teachers with opportunities, support, and shared responsibility. Distributed leadership and professional collaboration are therefore conceptually related, although they represent distinct aspects of school practice: the former concerns how leadership is shared and enacted, while the latter concerns how teachers work and learn together professionally.

The relationship between these concepts is relevant to the Philippine basic education context, where school-based professional development and collaborative learning are promoted through initiatives such as the Learning Action Cell. The Department of Education's Order No. 35, series of 2016, identifies Learning Action Cells as a school-based continuing professional development strategy intended to improve teaching and learning. Such initiatives provide opportunities for teachers to discuss instructional concerns, share experiences, and develop their professional practices collectively. However, the existence of collaborative professional development activities does not, by itself, establish the extent to which teachers perceive leadership as distributed or whether these perceptions are associated with their broader professional collaboration. Examining these variables together can provide evidence that may inform school leadership and teacher development initiatives.

In this study, distributed leadership practices refer to the ways leadership responsibilities, participation, and support are shared within the school. They are examined through four dimensions: shared decision-making, teacher involvement in leadership roles, leadership support, and collaborative school culture. Shared decision-making concerns teachers' opportunities to contribute to school-related decisions. Teacher involvement in leadership roles refers to their participation in leadership responsibilities and school improvement activities. Leadership support concerns the guidance, encouragement, and assistance provided to teachers as they carry out professional responsibilities. Collaborative school culture refers to the extent to which the school environment encourages cooperation, shared responsibility, and the exchange of professional knowledge.

Teachers' professional collaboration refers to teachers' professional interactions and joint activities intended to support teaching practice and professional learning. In this study, it is examined through sharing of teaching strategies, peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and professional discussions. Sharing of teaching strategies involves exchanging instructional approaches and classroom experiences. Peer mentoring refers to professional guidance and support among colleagues. Joint lesson planning involves working together to prepare instructional activities and learning experiences. Professional discussions involve exchanging ideas about teaching, instructional challenges, and possible improvements to practice. These dimensions provide the basis for examining professional collaboration in relation to teachers' perceptions of distributed leadership practices.

Although distributed leadership and teacher collaboration have been discussed in educational leadership and professional learning literature, context-specific evidence concerning their relationship among public senior high school teachers in Zamboanga City remains limited in the present study's research context. Local evidence is important because leadership arrangements, opportunities for teacher participation, and collaborative practices may differ across schools. Understanding how teachers perceive these practices and whether the variables are significantly related can contribute to a more context-sensitive understanding of leadership and professional collaboration in Philippine public senior high schools.

Accordingly, this study aimed to determine the level of distributed leadership practices as perceived by teachers, assess the level of teachers' professional collaboration, and examine whether a significant relationship exists between these two variables in selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City. Specifically, the study considered distributed leadership in terms of shared decision-making, teacher involvement in leadership roles, leadership support, and collaborative school culture, and professional collaboration in terms of sharing of teaching strategies, peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and professional discussions. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study sought to establish the nature and strength of the relationship between the variables without assuming that one directly causes the other. The findings are intended to provide context-specific evidence that may inform school leadership practices, professional collaboration initiatives, and future research in public senior high school education.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the level of distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration and examine the relationship between these variables in selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of distributed leadership practices as perceived by teachers in terms of:
 - 1.1. shared decision-making;
 - 1.2. teacher involvement in leadership roles;
 - 1.3. leadership support; and
 - 1.4. collaborative school culture?
2. What is the level of teachers' professional collaboration in terms of:
 - 2.1. sharing of teaching strategies;
 - 2.2. peer mentoring;
 - 2.3. joint lesson planning; and
 - 2.4. professional discussions?
3. Is there a significant relationship between distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration among teachers in the selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focused on the relationship between distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration in selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City. It involved 200 senior high school teachers from Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial Stand Alone Senior High School, Baliwasan Stand Alone Senior High School, and Sinunuc National High School. Distributed leadership practices were examined in terms of shared decision-making, teacher involvement in leadership roles, leadership support, and collaborative school culture. Teachers' professional collaboration was assessed through sharing of teaching strategies, peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and professional discussions. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design and gathered data through a validated researcher-made questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. Its scope was limited to the participating teachers and the three selected schools. It examined the statistical relationship between the two variables and did not seek to establish a causal relationship. The findings should therefore be interpreted within the context of the participating schools and should not automatically be generalized to all public senior high schools in Zamboanga City or other locations.

Literature Review

Distributed Leadership in Educational Settings

Distributed leadership has gained considerable attention in educational leadership research because it views leadership as a practice shaped by the interactions of school leaders, teachers, and their working environment rather than as a responsibility exercised exclusively by the school head. Spillane (2006) explained that leadership practice emerges through the interaction of leaders, followers, and situations. From this perspective, teachers may contribute to school leadership by participating in decisions, assuming leadership responsibilities, supporting colleagues, and engaging in school improvement activities.

Gronn (2002) similarly emphasized the collective and collaborative dimensions of leadership. Both perspectives challenge the assumption that effective school leadership depends solely on the formal authority or individual capabilities of the principal. However, distributed leadership should not be interpreted simply as assigning additional duties to teachers. Meaningful distribution requires opportunities for participation, recognition of professional expertise, and coordination of responsibilities toward shared educational goals.

More recent scholarship has examined the development, application, and limitations of distributed leadership. Mifsud (2024), in a systematic review of research published between 2010 and 2022, examined the purposes, concepts, and approaches used in distributed leadership studies. The review demonstrates the continued relevance of the concept while highlighting the need for careful examination of how distributed leadership is conceptualized and investigated across educational settings. This suggests that the presence of distributed leadership structures should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of effective collaboration or improved school outcomes. Its practical significance must be examined in relation to specific organizational practices and professional experiences.

Hulsbos et al. (2025) further examined different manifestations of distributed leadership in schools and the conditions these practices require from school leaders. Their research emphasizes that distributed leadership does not follow a single organizational pattern. Rather, school leaders need to recognize the particular forms of leadership that emerge when teachers work together and provide appropriate support for these practices. This perspective reinforces the importance of examining how leadership is experienced in actual school settings instead of assuming that a formal leadership arrangement necessarily produces the same outcomes in every school.

Galdames-Calderón (2023) further discusses how school principals enact distributed leadership to support teachers' professional development and school improvement. This perspective highlights the importance of creating opportunities for teachers to participate in leadership and professional learning.

For the present study, distributed leadership is examined through shared decision-making, teacher involvement in leadership roles, leadership support, and collaborative school culture. These dimensions represent different but related ways teachers may experience leadership within their schools. Shared decision-making concerns participation in school decisions, while teacher involvement in leadership roles concerns opportunities to contribute to leadership and improvement activities. Leadership support concerns the guidance and assistance available to teachers, and collaborative school culture concerns the organizational environment in which cooperation and shared responsibility are encouraged.

Teachers' Professional Collaboration and Professional Learning

Teachers' professional collaboration refers to professional interactions through which teachers exchange knowledge, examine instructional practices, plan lessons, and support one another in addressing educational concerns. These activities provide opportunities for teachers to learn from their colleagues and reflect on their professional practices. Collaboration can take place through formal arrangements, such as scheduled professional learning sessions and team planning, or through informal exchanges involving instructional advice and shared problem-solving.

Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice Theory provides a useful perspective for understanding professional collaboration. The theory explains how learning and shared knowledge develop through participation in a community engaged in common practices. In a school context, teachers can develop professional knowledge by discussing instructional challenges, sharing experiences, and working together to improve teaching. Collaboration, therefore, involves more than the physical presence of teachers in meetings; it requires meaningful engagement in professional learning and shared activities.

De Jong, Meirink, and Admiraal (2022), in a systematic review of school-based collaboration in secondary education, examined factors that enable or hinder collaborative learning activities. Their review identified sharing, experimenting, and designing as important forms of collaborative activity and emphasized the importance of the processes through which teachers work and learn together. This suggests that providing opportunities for teachers to meet is not necessarily sufficient to produce meaningful collaboration. The quality of professional interaction and the organizational conditions surrounding it also matter.

De Jong et al. (2023) examined distributed leadership practices within and around collaborative teacher teams. Their study found that distributed leadership was associated with teachers experiencing fewer barriers to seeking advice and looking beyond the concerns of their individual classrooms. This finding is particularly relevant because it connects leadership practices with the professional interactions of teachers. Nevertheless, because the research focused on collaborative innovation-oriented teams in a different national context, its findings should not be assumed to apply identically to Philippine public senior high schools.

Additional evidence comes from Liu, Bellibaş, and Gümüş (2021), who examined instructional and distributed leadership in relation to teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction, including the roles of supportive school culture and teacher collaboration. Their research provides further grounds for considering teacher collaboration as an important process associated with school leadership and teacher outcomes. It also highlights the importance of considering the organizational environment in which collaboration occurs rather than treating teacher interaction as an isolated activity.

Professional learning communities provide another perspective on the relationship between leadership and teacher collaboration. Zheng, Jiang, and Liu (2023) investigated relationships among

distributed leadership, departmental teacher leadership, professional learning communities, and teacher self-efficacy among teachers in China. Their findings indicated that leadership at different levels was connected with professional learning communities and teacher development through complex relationships. The study emphasizes that leadership and collaboration may operate through both school-level arrangements and the work of teacher leaders within departments. However, its findings arise from a different educational and cultural context and therefore provide comparative evidence rather than a direct explanation of collaboration in Zamboanga City.

Stoll et al. (2006) explain that professional learning communities provide opportunities for teachers to learn collaboratively and improve their practice. Similarly, van Schaik et al. (2020) examine how different forms of school leadership can foster collaborative teacher learning.

Taken together, these studies suggest that professional collaboration depends on teachers' engagement in shared activities as well as the organizational conditions that enable such engagement. The present study examines professional collaboration through the sharing of teaching strategies, peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and professional discussions. These dimensions capture several forms of professional interaction that may be associated with teachers' experiences of distributed leadership.

Relationship between Distributed Leadership and Teachers' Professional Collaboration

Distributed leadership and teachers' professional collaboration are conceptually connected because both involve professional interaction, shared responsibility, and the exchange of expertise. When teachers are invited to contribute to decisions and participate in leadership activities, they may have more opportunities to communicate with colleagues, coordinate instructional work, and engage in professional discussions. Leadership support may also provide conditions that encourage teachers to seek assistance, exchange teaching strategies, and work jointly on instructional concerns.

The connection between the two concepts is supported by Spillane (2006) and Wenger (1998). Distributed Leadership Theory explains how leadership practice emerges through interactions among individuals and their situations, whereas Communities of Practice Theory explains how people learn and develop shared knowledge through participation in common professional activities. Considered together, these theories provide complementary perspectives: distributed leadership helps explain the organization of shared leadership practice, while Communities of Practice Theory helps explain the collaborative learning that may take place through professional participation.

Empirical research provides additional support for examining this relationship. De Jong et al. (2023) found associations between distributed leadership practices and teachers' willingness to seek advice and engage beyond their individual classrooms. Their findings suggest that the distribution of leadership practice may be relevant to how teachers interact professionally. Similarly, Liu et al. (2021) examined distributed leadership alongside teacher collaboration, supportive school culture, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction, demonstrating the relevance of collaboration when investigating relationships between leadership practices and teacher outcomes.

Lin (2022) directly examined the relationship between distributed leadership and teacher innovativeness, including the mediating roles of teacher autonomy and professional collaboration. Using data from the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey, the study analyzed responses from a large sample of teachers. Its focus on professional collaboration provides particularly relevant comparative evidence for investigating how distributed leadership relates to teachers' professional practices. However, the study's focus on teacher innovativeness and its use of a large international dataset differ from the specific variables and local school context examined in the present research.

Ma and Marion (2024) also investigated how leadership relates to teacher collaboration using evidence from teachers in United States schools. Their study contributes to the broader discussion of how leadership practices are connected with collaborative professional work. Together with de Jong et al. (2023) and Lin (2022), this research supports the importance of examining leadership and collaboration as related but distinct constructs.

Ninković and Knežević Florić (2024) found in their systematic review that teacher collaboration and professional learning are among the pathways through which school leadership relates to teaching practice. This supports examining distributed leadership and teachers' professional collaboration as related but distinct constructs.

Nevertheless, the concepts are not interchangeable. A school may distribute leadership responsibilities without necessarily establishing meaningful opportunities for teachers to share instructional knowledge or plan lessons collaboratively. Likewise, teachers may collaborate informally even when formal leadership responsibilities remain concentrated among a few school officials. These possibilities indicate that distributed leadership and professional collaboration should be examined as distinct variables rather than assuming that one necessarily produces the other.

The existing literature therefore provides a rationale for testing whether teachers' perceptions of distributed leadership practices are significantly associated with their professional collaboration. At the same time, findings from other countries and school systems cannot establish the strength or statistical significance of this relationship in every setting. Context-specific investigation is necessary to determine whether the relationship is also evident among teachers in selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City.

Distributed Leadership and Professional Collaboration in the Philippine Education Context

In the Philippines, school leadership and teacher professional development operate within the broader framework of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, or Republic Act No. 10533. The law established the K to 12 basic education program and provided the legislative framework for the enhanced basic education curriculum. Within this system, school leaders and teachers have responsibilities related to curriculum implementation, instructional improvement, and the continuing development of teaching practices.

A relevant policy for teacher collaboration is Department of Education Order No. 35, series of 2016, which identifies the Learning Action Cell as a school-based continuing professional development strategy for improving teaching and learning. The policy describes Learning Action Cells as professional learning communities intended to support teachers in improving their practices and learner achievement (Department of Education, 2016). Its emphasis on school-based professional learning provides an institutional context for activities such as professional discussions, sharing teaching strategies, and collaboratively examining instructional concerns.

The Learning Action Cell framework is relevant to the present study because it provides a formal opportunity for teachers to engage in professional learning with colleagues. However, the implementation of a collaborative professional development policy does not necessarily demonstrate that leadership responsibilities are shared consistently or that teachers participate equally in school-level decisions. Nor does the existence of scheduled professional learning activities establish the extent to which teachers collaborate beyond formal meetings. These distinctions reinforce the need to examine teachers' actual perceptions of distributed leadership and their reported professional collaboration.

International studies provide useful comparative perspectives, but their findings must be considered in relation to the Philippine context. For example, de Jong et al. (2023) examined collaborative teacher teams, while Zheng et al. (2023) investigated leadership and professional learning communities in Chinese schools. Both studies highlight the importance of examining leadership and teacher collaboration within particular organizational settings. Their findings offer useful concepts for the present study, but they do not establish how distributed leadership and professional collaboration are related in Zamboanga City.

Within public senior high schools, teachers may encounter different opportunities to participate in school decisions, assume leadership responsibilities, receive support, and engage in collaborative professional activities. Examining these experiences can provide evidence relevant to the implementation of school leadership and professional development initiatives. It can also help distinguish between the formal availability of collaborative structures and teachers' perceptions of the leadership practices and professional interactions taking place within their schools.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to determine the levels of distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration and examine the relationship between the two variables in selected senior high schools in Zamboanga City. The descriptive component was used to summarize teachers' assessments of distributed leadership practices and professional collaboration, while the correlational component was used to determine the strength and direction of the association between these variables. This design was appropriate because the study sought to describe existing practices and establish whether a statistically significant relationship existed between them without manipulating the variables. The design also corresponded to the research objectives, which focused on determining the levels of distributed leadership practices and professional collaboration and examining their relationship. Since the study was correlational, the findings were interpreted in terms of association rather than causation.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in three selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City, Philippines: Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial Stand Alone Senior High School, Baliwasan Stand Alone Senior High School, and Sinunuc National High School. These schools were selected as research locales for examining distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration within public senior high school settings. The

study focused on teachers' perceptions of shared decision-making, involvement in leadership roles, leadership support, and collaborative school culture. It also examined professional collaboration through the sharing of teaching strategies, peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and professional discussions. These areas provided the basis for describing the two principal variables and analyzing their relationship among teachers in the selected schools.

Research Participants

The participants consisted of 200 senior high school teachers from the three selected public schools in Zamboanga City. Eligibility was based on their teaching assignment at the senior high school level in one of the identified schools. The participants were appropriate for the study because their professional experiences provided the context for assessing school leadership practices and collaborative activities among teachers. Their responses served as the primary data for determining the perceived levels of distributed leadership practices and professional collaboration and examining the relationship between these variables.

Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-made survey questionnaire consisting of two main sections. The first section measured distributed leadership practices in terms of shared decision-making, teacher involvement in leadership roles, leadership support, and collaborative school culture. The second section measured teachers' professional collaboration in terms of sharing teaching strategies, peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and professional discussions. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert agreement scale. The numerical values and corresponding response categories were as follows: 5 – Strongly Agree, 4 – Agree, 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree, 2 – Disagree, and 1 – Strongly Disagree. The instrument was reviewed by the researcher's adviser, who served as its validator, before its use in the study. Pilot testing was also conducted before the main data-gathering activity. The questionnaire responses were subsequently organized and analyzed to address the research objectives. The weighted mean scores were interpreted using the following ranges: 4.21–5.00, Very High; 3.41–4.20, High; 2.61–3.40, Moderate; 1.81–2.60, Low; and 1.00–1.80, Very Low. These categories provided a consistent basis for describing the levels of distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the administration of the questionnaire, the researcher secured approval from the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct the study. The researcher then coordinated with the appropriate school officials in the three selected schools regarding the conduct of the survey. The purpose of the study and the nature of participation were explained to the prospective respondents, and written informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that they could decline participation without penalty. The researcher personally distributed and collected the questionnaires. Respondents were not asked to indicate their names on the questionnaires to help preserve anonymity. They were given the opportunity to complete the survey and provide responses without being required to disclose their identities. The completed questionnaires were retrieved by the researcher, checked for completeness, and organized for data processing. Responses were encoded for statistical analysis, and the collected information was handled confidentially and used for research purposes. These procedures were intended to protect respondents' privacy and support the responsible handling of the study data.

Results and Discussions

This section presents and discusses the findings on distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration in selected senior high schools in Zamboanga City. The results are organized according to the study variables and their relationship. The discussion interprets the statistical findings, relates them to relevant literature, and identifies implications for school leadership and teachers' professional practice.

Research Question 1: What is the level of distributed leadership practices as perceived by teachers in terms of; shared decision-making; teacher involvement in leadership roles; leadership support; and collaborative school culture?

Table 1. Overall Level of Distributed Leadership Practices

Variable	Mean Verbal Interpretation
Distributed leadership Practices	4.27 Very High

Table 1 shows that distributed leadership practices obtained an overall mean of 4.27, interpreted as *Very High*. This finding indicates that the participating teachers generally perceived distributed leadership practices positively in their respective school contexts. It suggests that leadership was perceived not only in terms of formal administrative authority but also in relation to teachers' participation, contributions, and professional interactions.

Spillane's (2006) Distributed Leadership Theory provides a useful explanation of this result. The theory views leadership as a practice that emerges through the interactions among leaders, followers, and their situations. From this perspective, leadership is not confined to the actions of a single school head but may involve the contributions of teachers and other members of the school community. The high mean in the present study is consistent with this understanding of leadership as a shared organizational practice.

The finding also relates to de Jong et al. (2023), who examined distributed leadership practices within and around teacher teams. Their study highlighted the importance of collaborative interactions and teachers' engagement beyond their individual classrooms. Similarly, Hulsbos et al. (2025) examined different manifestations of distributed leadership and emphasized that school leaders have an important role in supporting the conditions necessary for teacher collaboration. These studies provide relevant perspectives for understanding the present finding, although differences in research contexts and methods mean that the results should not be treated as directly equivalent.

The overall result has practical implications for school administration. School heads may promote distributed leadership by encouraging teachers to participate in appropriate decisions, contribute their expertise to school initiatives, assume leadership responsibilities, and engage in professional collaboration. However, the overall mean should be understood as a summary of the variable rather than proof that every dimension was equally strong.

The four dimensions considered in this study—shared decision-making, teacher involvement in leadership roles, leadership support, and collaborative school culture—represent complementary aspects of distributed leadership. Shared decision-making provides opportunities for teachers to contribute to school decisions; teacher involvement recognizes their professional expertise; leadership support helps create conditions for participation; and collaborative school culture encourages interaction and shared responsibility. Considered together, these dimensions provide a broader perspective on leadership as a collective practice in schools.

Shared decision-making is important because teachers possess classroom-based knowledge that can inform instructional planning and school improvement. Teacher involvement in leadership roles provides opportunities for professional expertise to contribute to activities beyond individual classroom responsibilities. Leadership support remains essential because distributing leadership does not remove the responsibilities of formal school leaders; rather, it requires them to facilitate participation and provide appropriate guidance. Meanwhile, a collaborative school culture can help sustain professional interactions and shared educational objectives.

These interpretations are consistent with the theoretical perspective of Spillane (2006) and the research of de Jong et al. (2023) and Hulsbos et al. (2025). Nevertheless, the overall mean of 4.27 does not establish the individual statistical level or relative ranking of these four dimensions. The defensible conclusion is that distributed leadership, considered as an overall variable, received a very high rating from the participating teachers.

Research Question 2: What is the level of teachers' professional collaboration in terms of; sharing of teaching strategies; peer mentoring; joint lesson planning; and professional discussions?

Table 2. Overall Level of Teachers' Professional Collaboration

Variable	Mean Verbal Interpretation
Teachers' Professional Collaboration	4.24 Very High

Table 2 shows that teachers' professional collaboration obtained an overall mean of 4.24, interpreted as *Very High*. This finding indicates that respondents generally perceived professional collaboration positively. It underscores the importance of teachers' professional interactions in school settings, where teaching responsibilities may involve the exchange of instructional ideas, coordination of activities, professional support, and collective reflection.

Professional collaboration provides opportunities for teachers to draw on one another's knowledge and experiences. Through professional interaction, teachers can exchange instructional strategies, discuss challenges, coordinate lesson preparation, and reflect on approaches to teaching. These activities may help teachers consider alternative perspectives and identify opportunities for improving their professional practice.

The result is conceptually consistent with de Jong et al. (2023), whose research highlighted the significance of teacher collaboration and professional interactions in distributed leadership contexts. Their study helps explain how collaborative work may extend beyond individual classrooms and involve teachers in broader professional activities. Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice Theory also offers a useful perspective: members of a professional community develop shared understandings through participation, interaction, and the exchange of experience.

The overall mean should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that every teacher engages in all forms of collaboration to the same extent. Nor does it establish that each dimension received an equally high rating. The dimensions of sharing teaching strategies, peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and professional discussions represent different but related forms of professional collaboration.

Sharing teaching strategies enables teachers to exchange instructional approaches and learn from colleagues' experiences. Peer mentoring provides opportunities for guidance, feedback, and professional support. Joint lesson planning allows teachers to coordinate learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessments. Professional discussions provide a setting for exchanging ideas, reflecting on classroom experiences, and addressing shared concerns.

These dimensions illustrate how professional collaboration can be expressed in daily school practice. They also demonstrate why collaboration should be understood as more than simply working in the same school or attending the same meetings. Meaningful collaboration involves professional interaction directed toward shared purposes and the improvement of teaching practice.

The findings of de Jong et al. (2023) are relevant because their research highlights advice-seeking and collaborative engagement among teachers. Wenger's (1998) theory further explains how professional participation can contribute to shared learning and the development of common understandings. These perspectives support the interpretation of collaboration as an important part of teachers' professional work.

For school administrators, the finding suggests the value of providing opportunities for purposeful professional exchanges. Appropriate time for joint planning, collegial discussions, peer support, and the sharing of instructional experiences may help sustain a collaborative environment. These are practical implications of the finding, rather than additional outcomes directly measured by the overall mean.

Overall, the mean of 4.24 indicates that teachers' professional collaboration was rated very high in the participating schools. This result provides an important basis for examining its relationship with distributed leadership practices.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration among teachers in the selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City?

Table 3. Relationship between Distributed Leadership Practices and Teachers' Professional Collaboration

Variable	Pearson's r	Significance	Interpretation
Distributed Leadership Practices and Teachers' Professional Collaboration	0.71	$p < .001$	Strong positive and statistically significant relationship

Table 3 presents the relationship between distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration. The Pearson correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.71$), with ($p < .001$), indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables. Because the reported significance level is below .05, the null hypothesis of no linear relationship between distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration is rejected, based on the reported analysis.

The positive correlation indicates that higher scores in distributed leadership practices tended to be associated with higher scores in teachers' professional collaboration. In practical terms, respondents who reported more favorable perceptions of distributed leadership also tended to report more favorable perceptions of professional collaboration. This finding is important because it suggests that the two aspects of school organization are related rather than operating entirely independently.

The result can be understood through Spillane's (2006) Distributed Leadership Theory. When leadership is viewed as an interaction among leaders, teachers, and their working conditions, professional collaboration provides one context in which shared leadership practices may occur. Teachers may contribute to school initiatives, exchange professional knowledge, and participate in collective activities through interactions with colleagues and formal school leaders.

The result also relates to de Jong et al. (2023), whose study examined distributed leadership practices within and around teacher teams. Their findings highlight the importance of collaborative interactions and teachers' engagement beyond their individual classrooms. Hulsbos et al. (2025) likewise emphasized that different forms of teacher collaboration require appropriate support from school leaders. These studies provide

useful comparisons because they examine the connection between leadership practices and the conditions supporting collaborative professional work.

Ma (2024) also investigated the relationship between leadership and teacher collaboration in United States schools. This research provides a relevant comparative perspective for the present study's focus on the association between leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration. Although the studies differ in setting and measurement, both address the broader question of how school leadership relates to teachers' collaborative work.

The strong positive relationship identified in the present study suggests that school leaders may need to consider leadership arrangements and opportunities for collaboration together when planning school improvement initiatives. Teachers' participation in decisions, involvement in leadership responsibilities, access to appropriate support, and opportunities for professional interaction may be considered complementary aspects of a supportive school environment.

Nevertheless, the result must be interpreted in accordance with the study's descriptive-correlational design. Pearson's correlation establishes the direction and strength of a linear association; it does not demonstrate that distributed leadership causes professional collaboration. Other organizational or professional factors may also be relevant, but their effects cannot be determined from the reported correlation alone.

Likewise, the overall correlation does not establish which specific dimension of distributed leadership has the strongest relationship with which dimension of professional collaboration. Such conclusions would require additional analyses using the corresponding dimension-level data. The present finding therefore supports the conclusion that the two overall variables are strongly and positively related, without attributing the relationship to any single dimension.

Synthesis and Implications of the Findings. The findings reveal three central results. First, distributed leadership practices obtained an overall mean of 4.27, interpreted as very high. Second, teachers' professional collaboration obtained an overall mean of 4.24, also interpreted as very high. Third, the Pearson correlation coefficient of ($r = 0.71$), with ($p < .001$), indicated a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

Taken together, the findings indicate that respondents generally perceived distributed leadership and professional collaboration positively and that higher scores in one variable tended to be associated with higher scores in the other. The results highlight the importance of examining leadership practices and teachers' professional interactions together when considering school organization and improvement.

The findings are consistent with Spillane's (2006) perspective that leadership is enacted through interactions among leaders, followers, and situations. They also correspond with research emphasizing collaborative interactions and the support needed for distributed leadership to operate in schools (de Jong et al., 2023; Hulsbos et al., 2025). Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice Theory further provides a basis for understanding how professional participation and the exchange of experience can support shared learning.

For school administrators, the results suggest the value of encouraging teacher participation, supporting appropriate leadership responsibilities, and providing opportunities for meaningful professional collaboration. These practices may help create conditions in which teachers can contribute their expertise and work toward shared educational goals. However, the correlational finding does not establish that any particular leadership practice will independently produce higher collaboration.

The study contributes evidence from selected senior high schools in Zamboanga City to the discussion of the relationship between distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration. Its findings provide a basis for school leaders and educators to reflect on the relationship between shared leadership and collaborative professional work. At the same time, the results should be interpreted within the study's scope, measures, and correlational design.

In conclusion, the study found very high overall ratings for distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration, together with a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables. These results support continued attention to leadership practices and collaborative opportunities as related aspects of school improvement.

Ethical Considerations

This study observed ethical standards in educational research to protect the rights, privacy, and welfare of the participating teachers. Permission to conduct the study in the selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City was obtained from the Department of Education through the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS), following a formal research request endorsed by the professor and the Dean of the Graduate School. Coordination with the concerned school authorities was undertaken in connection with the administration of the research questionnaire. Written informed consent was obtained from the

participating teachers before data collection. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents, and participation was voluntary. The respondents were not required to write their names on the questionnaires, thereby helping protect their identities. Confidentiality was maintained in handling and analyzing the responses, and the findings were reported in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individual participants. The information collected was used for the purposes of the study and handled responsibly in accordance with applicable data privacy principles under the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). The researcher endeavored to protect the collected information from unauthorized disclosure and to ensure that participation did not adversely affect the respondents' professional relationships or employment. Throughout the research process, fairness, objectivity, and academic integrity were observed, and the findings were reported honestly without fabrication or misrepresentation.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration were both perceived at a very high level in the selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City. Distributed leadership practices obtained an overall mean of 4.27, while teachers' professional collaboration obtained an overall mean of 4.24. Furthermore, the Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.001$). These results suggest that higher perceived levels of distributed leadership practices were associated with higher perceived levels of teachers' professional collaboration within the participating schools. However, the correlational design does not establish that distributed leadership directly causes greater collaboration. Theoretically, the findings are consistent with Spillane's Distributed Leadership Theory, which emphasizes that leadership practice is shaped through the interactions of school leaders, teachers, and their organizational context rather than being confined to a single formal leader. The significant relationship observed in this study supports the relevance of examining leadership as a shared practice in understanding teachers' collaborative work. The findings are also compatible with Wenger's Communities of Practice Theory, which highlights the importance of shared engagement, interaction, and collective learning in professional communities. Considered together, these perspectives help explain why distributed leadership practices and professional collaboration may be related in school settings. Nevertheless, the present findings establish an association between the overall variables and do not independently verify every theoretical mechanism or dimension. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of creating school environments in which teachers have meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions, contribute to leadership responsibilities, receive appropriate leadership support, and engage in a collaborative school culture. School heads and instructional leaders may use these findings to reflect on how leadership responsibilities are shared and how teachers are supported in exchanging teaching strategies, mentoring colleagues, planning lessons together, and engaging in professional discussions. These practices may provide opportunities for collective problem-solving, professional learning, and the development of more coherent teaching approaches. Such implications should be considered in light of the study's correlational design rather than interpreted as proof of direct causal effects. The study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence of a strong positive relationship between perceived distributed leadership practices and teachers' professional collaboration in selected public senior high schools in Zamboanga City. While previous scholarship has examined distributed leadership and collaborative professional practice, this study adds context-specific evidence from the participating schools and brings the two constructs together in a single correlational investigation. Its contribution lies not in establishing a new theory, but in extending the local evidence base that may inform school leadership reflection, professional development initiatives, and future educational research. The findings should be interpreted within the limits of the study, including its focus on selected public senior high schools, purposive sampling, and reliance on teacher-reported questionnaire responses. The results may not be generalized to all schools without further investigation. Future research may examine the individual dimensions of distributed leadership and professional collaboration using dimension-level statistical results, larger or more diverse school samples, and qualitative approaches that explore how teachers experience shared leadership and collaboration in their daily professional practice. Such work may clarify the conditions under which these practices are most strongly associated and further develop understanding of their relevance to school improvement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for school leaders, teachers, the Department of Education, and future researchers. For School Heads and School Leadership Teams. Given the very high perceived level of distributed leadership practices and their strong positive relationship with teachers' professional collaboration, school heads are encouraged to sustain and

institutionalize opportunities for meaningful teacher participation in school decision-making. Within existing DepEd policies and school governance arrangements, school leadership teams may strengthen mechanisms for consulting teachers, assigning appropriate leadership responsibilities, providing professional support, and promoting a collaborative school culture. These mechanisms may be incorporated into school improvement planning, instructional supervision, and regular school-based professional learning activities. For Teachers and Learning Action Cell (LAC) Coordinators. Teachers are encouraged to sustain professional collaboration through structured sharing of teaching strategies, peer mentoring, joint lesson planning, and professional discussions. LAC coordinators and department or subject-area leaders may organize regular, focused sessions in which teachers discuss instructional challenges, exchange classroom practices, review learning evidence, and develop shared teaching resources. These activities should be planned around identified professional learning needs and documented through appropriate school-based processes to support continuity and reflection. For School Administrators and the Department of Education. The findings may inform school-level implementation and monitoring of relevant DepEd policies, particularly DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016, which establishes the Learning Action Cell as a school-based continuing professional development strategy for improving teaching and learning. School heads and designated LAC coordinators may review existing LAC plans and implementation practices to determine whether they provide meaningful opportunities for teacher collaboration and shared professional learning. Rather than immediately proposing a revision of national policy, schools may use the findings to identify implementation strengths and areas for improvement within existing policy provisions. Any proposed policy adjustments should be supported by broader evidence and appropriate consultation. For Professional Development Planners. Professional development activities may be designed to complement the existing strengths indicated by the findings while responding to teachers' identified learning needs. School leaders may use teacher feedback, LAC discussions, and school-based professional development assessments to identify areas where additional support, mentoring, or collaborative planning would be beneficial. The results should serve as a basis for reflection and planning rather than as evidence that any particular leadership practice alone will cause improvements in collaboration. For Future Researchers. Future studies may extend this research by examining the individual dimensions of distributed leadership practices—shared decision-making, teacher involvement in leadership roles, leadership support, and collaborative school culture—and their relationships with the dimensions of teachers' professional collaboration. A larger, more diverse sample drawn from public senior high schools in different school divisions or regions may improve the breadth of evidence. Where a complete sampling frame is available, probability sampling, such as stratified random sampling by school, may be considered to improve representativeness. Researchers may also employ mixed-methods designs combining survey results with interviews, focus-group discussions, or document analysis to explore how teachers experience distributed leadership and collaboration in practice. Longitudinal research could examine whether changes in perceived leadership practices correspond with changes in professional collaboration over time. Future studies may also validate the research instrument with multiple experts, report appropriate reliability estimates for each scale or subscale, and examine relevant contextual factors, such as school leadership arrangements, school size, and opportunities for professional learning. These approaches would provide a more detailed understanding of the relationship and help clarify how it varies across different educational settings.

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