



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Leadership in Action: Unveiling Positive Leadership Traits of Southern Thailand Public-School Administrators

Chawalit Kerdtip^{1*}, Sa-aree Sa-au²^{1,2} Faculty of Education, Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus), Pattani Province, Thailand

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: May 13, 2024	This study contributes to the literature by unveiling the components of positive leadership among school administrators in the three southern Thai border provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala. Through a comprehensive analysis involving 609 participants, including school directors, administrators, and teachers, this research identifies four key elements of positive leadership: relationship development with the environment, communicating with compassion, collaborative learning for change, and organizational strengths identification. Employing a 5-level Likert scale questionnaire with a reliability level of 0.96 and utilizing exploratory factor analysis (EFA), mean, and standard deviation (SD) methods, the study reveals the critical role of these components in fostering positive leadership. This research fills a significant literature gap by providing empirical evidence on the specific traits of positive leadership in educational settings. It underscores the need for curricula and activities designed to enhance these leadership skills, encouraging knowledge exchange and practical application among administrators.
Accepted: Aug 17, 2024	
Keywords	
Administrator leadership	
Conflict area	
Exploratory factor analysis	
School administrators	
Thailand	
*Corresponding Author: chawalit.k@psu.ac.th	

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental mechanism for enhancing the quality of a nation's citizens, which in turn accelerates national progress and competitiveness (Nitjarunkul, 2015; Van Le and Tran, 2024). In Thailand, education is highly prioritized as a cornerstone for national development (Thawesaengskulthai et al., 2024), aiming to cultivate citizens who are well-rounded in terms of knowledge, intellect, physical health, social skills, and moral and ethical values (Wei et al., 2024). School administrators are pivotal in this process, as their leadership directly influences the effectiveness of educational outcomes (Churngchow and Sinprajukpol, 2016; Culduz, 2024). Positive leadership, characterized by supportive actions, positive communication, and the promotion of virtuous behaviors, has been shown to enhance organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction and performance (Gordon, 2017).

Thailand's three southern border provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala face unique challenges due to ongoing unrest and violence, which have persisted since 2004. These conflicts, stemming from separatist struggles, organizational disputes, drug trafficking, and political disagreements, have resulted in a complex and unstable environment (Deep South Watch, 2021; Jitpiromsri, 2019), with more than 7,540 people killed and over 14,000 injured in violence in the region since 2004.

This instability affects the morale and motivation of educational personnel, leading to safety concerns and a reluctance among teachers to work in the region, thereby impacting educational development and student achievement (Jackson, 2013). Despite efforts to mitigate these issues, the region's Human Achievement Index (HAI) and Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) scores remain

among the lowest in the country (Narathiwat Provincial Education Office, 2023).

Given this context, there is a critical need to explore the potential of positive leadership among school administrators in these provinces to enhance the quality of education. Current research lacks a comprehensive analysis of how positive leadership can be effectively implemented in challenging environments such as conflict zones to improve educational outcomes (Hughes and Davidson, 2020; Warakulsalam and Chokprajakchat, 2022). This study aims to fill this gap by conducting an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the positive leadership traits of school administrators in the *Primary Educational Service Area Offices (PESAOs)* of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala. The findings will provide insights and guidelines for planning, improving, and enhancing the leadership capabilities of school administrators, ultimately contributing to the field of behavioral science by demonstrating how positive leadership can foster educational success in adverse conditions (Başaran and Kiral, 2020; Churngchow and Sinprajakpol, 2016; Phimkoh et al., 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive leadership definitions

Cameron (2022) defined positive leadership as promoting job advancement, good interpersonal relationships, virtuous behavior, positive emotions, and enthusiasm within the organization. It comprises four components: a positive atmosphere, positive relationships, positive communication, and positive meaning. Positive leadership is oriented toward sustainable development, particularly suitable for competitive educational environments. It enhances employee engagement, improves the quality of work life, and provides guidance and coaching, resulting in higher job performance.

Gordon (2017) described positive leadership as involving constructive actions and using positive energy to solve problems. Positive leaders see opportunities in every situation, emphasizing organizational progress, and fostering positive relationships within the team. Positive leadership combines leaders' characteristics and behaviors to create a stimulating and creative atmosphere, promoting positive actions and fostering understanding and cooperation between leaders and team members. This approach helps build a strong and successful organization.

Toler (2019) believed that positive energy is essential for organizational success, ensuring team members perform excellently. This involves creating an inspiring atmosphere, fostering commitment, and promoting positive thinking and behavior within the team. Positive leadership also includes responsibility for guidance and discipline at work, fostering enthusiasm, and encouraging cooperation. It emphasizes success and supports the development of team members' skills and potential, believing that positive thinking and actions lead to organizational success and advancement.

Gladis (2013) emphasized creating a health-enhancing and positive work environment. Leaders play a crucial role in setting the direction and creating a positive and healthy atmosphere within teams and organizations. Utilizing these characteristics can help organizations build a positive work culture and improve performance, leading to long-term success for both employees and the organization.

In summary, positive leadership refers to the characteristics and behaviors of leaders who create a positive and creative atmosphere, encourage internal motivation, discipline, and enthusiasm at work, and believe in success and potential opportunities.

Positive leaders support the development of team members' skills and potential, emphasizing the advancement of both individuals and the organization.

Positive leadership concepts

Historical context. Leadership studies have evolved over several decades (Asrar-ul-Haq and Anwar, 2018), beginning with trait theories, followed by behavioral theories, and later situational leadership

theories. By the mid-1970s, integrative paradigms combined these major theories to explain leaders' effective influence on followers. Key integrative leadership theories include charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, and strategic leadership. In the early 21st century, the rapidly changing environment, influenced by information technology, necessitated new and more tangible leadership models, highlighting the importance of positive leadership.

Positive leadership and positive psychology. Positive leadership, a branch of positive psychology, studies leadership styles, techniques, and behaviors categorized as positive deviance. This concept contrasts poor leadership behaviors with those at the far-right end of a bell curve, where positive leadership behaviors reside. Positive leadership aims to shift behaviors towards the far-right end of the curve, encompassing various theories under its condition, notably authentic leadership, ethical leadership, and servant leadership.

Authentic leadership. Developed between 2004 and 2008, authentic leadership emphasizes key attributes such as self-awareness, balanced information processing, relational transparency, and an internalized moral perspective (Al-Dhuwaih and Almohaisin, 2021). Authentic leaders build trust and respect among followers and foster collaborative relationships, creating ethical values within organizations. This is consistent with Başaran and Kiral (2020) who reported that teachers believe that school administrators' authentic leadership significantly predicts a teacher's perception of work engagement. Therefore, school administrators play a crucial role in establishing a positive atmosphere and reliable performance, promoting positive self-development and ethical cooperation.

Ethical leadership. Ethical leadership addresses duties and tasks beyond personal interests. It involves concern for followers' sense of justice, obligations, and motivation and embodies integrity, trustworthiness, and commitment to promises made to others (Sabir, 2021). Ethical leaders trust in people, care about their rights and potential, build community systems, and share leadership responsibilities.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership involves leaders who serve others before leading them, understanding their needs, motivating them, and helping followers develop their abilities (Gašková, 2020). Such leaders prioritize the needs and interests of others, foster emotional stability, and drive leadership by serving (Kumari et al., 2022). They strive to help followers grow, be healthy, intelligent, and self-governing.

Problem statement/research objectives

Traditional views of leadership often portray leaders as mere representatives of power (Ladkin and Probert, 2021). However, positive leadership emphasizes creating a beneficial atmosphere and fostering positive changes within organizations and society, particularly in educational settings.

This research aims to analyze the exploratory components of positive leadership among school administrators in the Primary Educational Service Area Offices (PESAOs) of Thailand's three southern border provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala (Warakulsalam and Chokprajakchat, 2022).

Research questions

RQ1. What are the key components of positive leadership exhibited by school administrators in the southern border provinces of Thailand?

RQ 2. How do these components influence the overall effectiveness of school administration?

RQ 3. What specific strategies can be implemented to enhance positive leadership skills among school administrators?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Population and sample

The population for this research consisted of school directors, administrators, and teachers from 868 schools under the *PESAOs* of the three southern border provinces. The sample size was determined using Sarstedt et al.'s (2021) variable-to-sample size ratio of 1:14.5. With 41 observable variables, the total sample size was 609 individuals, comprising 184 administrators/school directors and 425 teachers. Of the 840 questionnaires sent out, 609 were returned complete enough for analysis. To select the sample, the researcher used proportional stratified random sampling (Pimdee and Leekitchwatana, 2022), categorizing the strata by administrators and teachers in schools under the *PESAOs* of the three southern border provinces (Warakulsalam and Chokprajakchat, 2022).

Research instruments

The study utilized a questionnaire to assess the four main research components and their associated 42 variables. A 5-point Likert scale was used to assess each OTA user's opinions, which included '5' (4.51-5.00) indicating 'strongly agree', '4' (3.51-4.50) indicating 'agree', '3' (2.51-3.50) indicating 'no opinion', '2' (1.51-2.50) indicating 'disagree' and '1' (1.00-1.50) indicating 'strongly disagree'. Additionally, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire through a pilot test whose participants determined that the survey items were excellent yielding a value of 0.964. This study utilized statistical methods to analyze the dataset and reveal underlying patterns and structures.

One primary technique used was EFA, which enabled the researchers to identify latent factors or dimensions within the data without relying on pre-existing theories or hypotheses. EFA helps uncover the relationships between variables and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the dataset's structure. After identifying the factors, factor rotation using the Varimax method was performed. This rotation technique aims to simplify the interpretation of factor loadings by maximizing the variance of squared loadings, thereby making the results clearer and more interpretable.

The researcher then calculated the mean and standard deviation (SD) for each component extracted by factor analysis. These descriptive statistics provide insights into the central tendencies and variability of the data within each identified component. Overall, the combination of EFA, factor rotation, and descriptive statistics allowed for a thorough examination of the dataset, leading to a deeper understanding of the underlying structures and patterns present in the data.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using statistical software to compute various statistics. The process began with an analysis of the relationships between the positive leadership of school administrators in the *PESAOs* of the three southern border provinces. The suitability of the data for factor analysis was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO), measure of sampling adequacy (MSA), and Bartlett's test of sphericity, which tests the relationships between variables. Components were extracted to identify the number of components sufficient to explain the relationships between the observed variables using principal components analysis (PCA). Components with eigenvalues greater than one were selected. Factor rotation was performed using the Varimax method to identify the components of positive leadership and the components were named with meaningful labels corresponding to the component structure. The level of positive leadership was determined using the mean and standard deviation (SD) analysis.

RESULTS

Administrator demographic information

Table 1 shows that the majority of the public school staff surveyed served in *Pattani's PESAO 1* (31.4%). Also, 61.4% were associated with medium-sized schools. The primary role of the participants was teachers (69.8%), followed by administrators (25.6%).

Table 1. Participant characteristics (n=609)

Items	Participants	%
Primary Educational Service Area Office (<i>PESAO</i>)		
Pattani I	191	31.4
Pattani II	37	6.1
Pattani III	31	5.1
Yala I	104	17.1
Yala II	70	11.5
Yala III	18	3.0
Narathiwat I	111	18.2
Narathiwat II	19	3.1
Narathiwat III	28	4.6
School size		
Large	42	6.9
Medium	374	61.4
Small	193	31.7
Positions		
School Directors	156	25.6
School Deputy Directors	28	4.6
Teachers	425	69.8

Correlation coefficient analysis

The analysis began with an examination of the correlation coefficients between variables and two statistical tests: the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity. These tests assess the appropriateness of the variables for factor analysis. Table 2 shows a KMO value of 0.970, indicating a high level of adequacy since it exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.50. Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded significant results ($p < 0.05$), indicating sufficient correlations among variables for factor analysis.

The researchers then analyzed the number of components, eigenvalues, and the percentage of variance explained by each component. Eigenvalues represent the amount of variance explained by each component, with values greater than 1 indicating the component's significance. The percentage of variance and cumulative variance indicate how much of the total variance in the data each

component explains and the cumulative effect of all components, respectively. The analysis revealed a high KMO value and significant Bartlett's test, confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The eigenvalues and variance explained by each component will be detailed in the subsequent sections.

Table 2. Suitability test results of correlation matrix

Observed Variables	KMO		Bartlett's test of sphericity	
	Appropriate value	Analysis value	Appropriate value	Analysis value
41 variables	more than .50	9.70	$p < .05$.000

Principal component analysis (PCA)

Table 3 presents the results of the PCA. The analysis reveals four components with eigenvalues greater than 1, indicating their significance in explaining the observed variables. The first component, named *relationship development with the environment*, explains 59.45% of the total variance. The subsequent components explain decreasing proportions of the variance. As we examine the components, there is a gradual increase in cumulative variance, suggesting that collectively, they account for a significant portion of the data's variance.

These findings indicate that the variables are well-suited for factor analysis. The high KMO value and significant Bartlett's test suggest that the model is appropriate overall. The eigenvalues and percentage of variance provide insights into each component's contribution to the data structure. Specifically, considering eigenvalues greater than 1, we identify four such components. Together, these components explain a cumulative variance of 68.134 % of the total variance.

Table 3. Results of principal component analysis (PCA)

Components	Eigenvalues	Percentage of Variability	Percentage of Cumulative Variance
1 - Relationship development with the environment	24.968	59.447	59.447
2 - Communicating with Compassion	1.422	3.387	62.833
3 - Collaborative learning for change	1.154	2.747	65.581
4 - Organizational strengths identification	1.072	2.553	68.134

The results in Table 4 highlight the significance of the five components in explaining the observed variables, with *relationship development with the environment* (Component 1) being the most dominant. This component alone accounts for over half of the total variance, emphasizing its critical role. The remaining components, while individually less influential, collectively explain over 68% of the variance.

This study aimed to identify specific components of positive leadership among school administrators in public schools within the three southern border provinces. Factor rotation using the Varimax method clarified the relationships between variables within each component. The researchers considered factor loadings significant at 0.50 or higher, ensuring each component included at least three variables.

The analysis revealed that *relationship development with the environment* is the most significant component for administrators, promoting physical, mental, and emotional health. This involves understanding others' feelings, showing empathy, providing freedom, empowering decision-making, offering encouragement, balancing work-life well-being, valuing diversity, and assigning tasks based on individual abilities.

Preliminary tests confirmed the suitability of the variables for factor analysis, with a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.955 and significant Bartlett's test results ($p < 0.05$), ensuring the model's robustness. The PCA showed that *relationship development with the environment* had the highest eigenvalue, explaining 59.447% of the total variance, with the cumulative variance for all components exceeding 68 %.

Table 4. Components of positive leadership and component weighting.

Item No.	Component 1: Relationship development with the environment (n=12)	Element weight
21	Create an environment that supports physical, mental, and emotional health.	.703
20	Happiness and overall health are related to the workplace environment.	.674
30	Members' needs can be adjusted to fit the surrounding environment.	.654
29	Show empathy towards team members.	.636
28	Encourage team members to see relationships within their context.	.561
35	Prioritize the needs of others first.	.560
27	Foster a sense of shared ownership in team decision-making.	.559
31	Build mutual trust to create a pleasant working atmosphere.	.545
19	Emphasize work-life balance for well-being.	.534
25	Value and take care of the surroundings to coexist harmoniously.	.519
10	Promote a positive environment in conversations.	.512
33	Assign tasks according to each person's abilities and strengths.	.503
The eigenvalue is equal to 24.968		
Item No.	Component 2: Communicating with Compassion (n=11)	Element weight
7	Show respect and trust in team collaboration.	.707
17	Be honest, straightforward, and transparent.	.651
16	Be sincere, determined, and uphold ethical standards.	.649
14	Treat each other honestly to build team confidence.	.628
11	Treat team members with kindness and value everyone's opinions.	.625
9	Be open to listening to others' opinions.	.623
13	Be open-minded, show sincerity to everyone, and set an example for team members.	.611
8	Promote attentive listening and be a good listener.	.591

6	Communicate, openly, and transparently.	.567
15	Set guidelines for exemplary behavior that the organization should follow.	.559
18	Embrace all changes.	.518
The eigenvalue is equal to 1.422		
Item No.	Component 3 - Collaborative learning for change (n=9)	Element weight
40	Develop the team's skills to promote career growth.	.750
39	Emphasize the importance of learning for self-improvement.	.694
34	Learn together attentively for collective transformation.	.646
38	Promote learning by assigning tasks according to each team member's strengths and expertise.	.644
41	Encourage the team to seek opportunities for learning and developing new skills.	.627
36	Create a shared vision and plan through collaborative learning.	.618
42	Focus on personal growth within the career path.	.582
37	Employ management techniques and inspire the team.	.553
26	Foster a culture of appreciation by recognizing and celebrating every team's success.	.541
The eigenvalue is equal to 1.154		
Item No.	Component 4 - Organizational strengths identification (n=9)	Element weight
1	Encourage team members to develop problem-solving skills by fostering a culture of goodwill.	.741
3	Develop strategies and attract talented personnel for the organization's success.	.653
4	Inspire the team to ignite innovative thinking.	.619
12	Seek out new approaches that can strengthen the organization.	.561
5	Focus on finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems.	.556
33	Assign tasks according to each person's abilities and strengths.	.533
2	Motivate and inspire the team with a positive attitude.	.526
10	Foster a positive environment in conversations.	.519
24	Offer creative ways to overcome challenges.	.517
The eigenvalue is equal to 1.072		

DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the relationships between school administrator leadership factors and teacher performance effectiveness in three southern border province Thai PESAOs, the results can be discussed based on objectives and hypotheses as follows:

The analysis of the exploratory components determined that there are four primary components including *Component 1: relationship development with the environment*, *Component 2: communicating*

with compassion, Component 3 - collaborative learning for change, and Component 4 - organizational strengths identification. This aligns with Cameron's (2022) concept that positive leadership supports outcomes such as career advancement, good interpersonal relationships, positive behavior, positive emotions, and enthusiasm within the organization. Positive leadership consists of four aspects: positive climate, positive relationships, positive communication, and positive meaning. This type of leadership focuses on sustainable development and is suitable for the competitive educational environment. Administrators prioritize continuous learning and development for staff, promoting systematic analytical thinking and teamwork, leading to knowledge sharing and experience exchange. Additionally, school administrators emphasize developing communication, problem-solving, and flexible leadership skills to foster a trustworthy and responsible atmosphere, crucial for creating a creative and adaptable work culture. Administrators also highlight the importance of continuous learning environments, supporting staff training and development to enhance knowledge and problem-solving abilities in challenging situations, thereby promoting effective and sustainable team development.

Component 1: Relationship development with the environment

This component focused on creating an environment that supports physical, mental, and emotional health, recognizing the link between happiness and overall health. Understanding the feelings, perspectives, and needs of team members, showing empathy, prioritizing others' needs, empowering decision-making, encouraging, supporting, and strengthening the team, emphasizing work-life balance, valuing diversity, and fostering positive communication are key aspects. Tasks should be assigned based on individual abilities and strengths. This aligns with Gordon's (2017) insights into positive leadership, which highlights relationship building as a core characteristic. Positive leaders prioritize creating strong relationships based on trust, respect, and effective communication. Wijaya et al., (2022) also emphasized that positive relationships within an organization foster a sense of community, trust, and mutual respect among team members.

The first component emphasizes the significant role of primary school principals in promoting both physical and intangible environments within the school. The focus is on the well-being of teachers, students, and all stakeholders, consistent with research linking happiness to a positive working environment (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). Positive leadership goes beyond comfort, aiming to create a supportive and thriving environment for all.

In addition, positive leaders must understand the importance of integrating areas that need to be tailored to individual needs, aligning with the concept of 'Universal Design for Learning,' which emphasizes creating flexible learning environments that support diverse learners (Hollingshead, 2018). By considering personal needs and preferences, school principals should cultivate values and a sense of ownership both within the school and between the school and the community. However, as Phimkoh et al. (2015) have pointed out, most Thai schools under the supervision of local government organizations (LGOs) face several problems, with the critical one being the lack of creative leadership of school administrators.

Moreover, positive leaders actively demonstrate empathy toward team members' challenges. Research indicates that empathy fosters trust and collaboration within teams, leading to improved overall well-being (Decety and Cowell, 2014). Positive leaders also encourage team members to view their relationships not just within the school walls but within the broader community context. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of various environments influencing personal development (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994). Promoting awareness of these interconnected relationships fosters a sense of purpose and social responsibility within the school community.

Component 2: Communicating with compassion (CWC)

The second factor, CWC, emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships within the school community through clear, honest, and empathetic communication. This aligns with research highlighting the critical role of trust in enhancing team member security and overall team effectiveness (Northouse, 2016). Positive leaders understand that honesty and integrity are fundamental components of trust, avoiding gossip and acting ethically in all interactions (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Positive leaders also communicate with compassion, treating team members with respect and valuing their opinions. This includes actively listening to concerns and ideas, promoting open discussions, and welcoming diverse perspectives. Research suggests that attentive listening fosters a sense of belonging and psychological safety within teams, leading to increased creativity and innovation (Edmondson, 2019). Additionally, positive leaders show empathy by genuinely caring about the well-being and challenges of team members, promoting a sense of connection and strengthening relationships within the school community.

Component 3 - Collaborative learning for change (CLFC)

Collaborative Learning for Change is a powerful concept in positive leadership, emphasizing the promotion of a collaborative work environment where both leaders and team members continuously develop their skills. This fosters a culture of growth, empowers individuals, and ultimately leads to more successful and adaptable teams (Youssef and Luthans, 2012). This concept aligns with numerous studies that report that learning and growth encourage a culture of continuous learning, personal development, and support for team members in skill development and career advancement (Cameron, 2022; Ladd, 2010; Pimdee et al., 2023). Additionally, Peterson (2020) noted that continuous learning in positive leadership promotes a growth mindset, prioritizing ongoing learning and development for both leaders and their teams.

Several key aspects of *CLFC* are important. First, leaders should focus on developing team members' skills by providing opportunities for learning and growth. This may involve mentorship programs, specific skills training, or task assignments that expand team members' capabilities (Sukkamart et al, 2023). Leaders should also promote a growth mindset within the team, emphasizing that mistakes are opportunities for learning, not failures. Leaders who model continuous learning by openly discussing their challenges and growth can inspire their teams to adopt similar behaviors (Binheem et al., 2021). Focusing on *CLFC* not only benefits each team member's career but also enhances the overall efficiency and adaptability of the team. In today's rapidly changing world, continuous growth is a key component of positive leadership in schools.

Component 4 - Organizational strengths identification (OSI)

Organizational strengths identification (OSI) emphasizes the role of positive leadership in enhancing team members' capabilities through effective problem-solving skills and fostering a culture of positive attitudes. Empowerment in this context involves providing employees with the tools, confidence, and independence needed to proactively tackle challenges. According to Spreitzer and Porath (2012), organizations that promote a positive culture and empower their employees see increased engagement and productivity. A positive outlook not only enhances problem-solving abilities but also promotes innovation and resilience, which are essential for navigating the complexities of modern educational environments (Cameron and Winn, 2011). Positive leaders inspire their teams with unwavering optimism, focusing on solutions rather than dwelling on problems (Ladd, 2010).

Developing strategies to attract skilled and talented individuals is another crucial aspect of recruitment. The success of any organization, especially in the competitive field of education in

Thailand, depends on its ability to attract and retain top talent. Effective strategies include offering professional development opportunities, creating a supportive work environment, and providing competitive compensation packages. As highlighted by Barber and Mourshed (2007), the quality of educational institutions largely depends on the quality of their teachers. By focusing on strategic recruitment and retention, schools can ensure they have the best educators motivated to contribute to the organization's success (McPartland, 2011).

Inspiring the team to foster creativity and seek new approaches to strengthen the organization is also vital. Inspirational leadership can drive significant innovation and improvement. Leaders who inspire their teams communicate a compelling vision that aligns and motivates efforts toward shared goals. This approach not only sparks creativity but also promotes a culture of continuous improvement and excellence. According to Amabile and Kramer (2011), leaders who inspire their teams can significantly enhance organizational creativity and performance. By continuously seeking innovative solutions, schools can create unique strengths that differentiate them from competitors, leading to sustained success and growth (Fullan, 2011).

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study sheds light on the various dynamics of management in public schools within the three southern border provinces, which are striving for excellence. Effective leadership is crucial for influencing and motivating teachers to dedicate their knowledge and skills toward achieving the school's goals. One leadership style that can enhance teachers' performance is positive leadership. Positive leaders demonstrate behavior that guides subordinates in all situations using positive influence to create intrinsic motivation for work. This leadership style encourages a desire to perform tasks without external rewards.

Positive leadership involves setting clear goals and creating an environment that fosters health and positivity within the organization. By utilizing these characteristics, organizations can cultivate a positive work culture and improve performance, leading to long-term success for both individuals and the organization.

Limitations

While the recommendations provided offer valuable insights for enhancing the management of public schools in the three southern border provinces, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations of this study. Firstly, the recommendations may not fully address the diverse challenges faced by public schools in different contexts or regions. Economic and social changes, cultural norms, and educational policies may require tailored management approaches. Moreover, the recommendations are based on the current understanding of effective management practices in schools. However, the dynamic nature of the education sector and evolving trends in educational management may necessitate ongoing adjustments and refinements of these recommendations over time.

Additionally, this study primarily focuses on the perspectives of school administrators within the PESAOs of the three southern border provinces. Although efforts were made to include diverse viewpoints, the findings may not comprehensively capture all stakeholders' perspectives involved in school management. Lastly, the recommendations for future research outlined in this study are not exhaustive and may overlook emerging issues or new approaches in managing public schools in special regions. Researchers are encouraged to explore additional avenues for investigation to enhance our understanding of effective management practices in education. Despite these limitations, it is hoped that the recommendations and suggestions provided will serve as a starting point for further discussion and research aimed at improving public school management and enhancing educational outcomes for students in Thailand and beyond.

Future Research Recommendations

Future research should focus on the integrity, honesty, and transparency of school administrators. The study's findings indicate that these qualities have a stronger positive correlation with other factors in the school management context. Research should also explore the work experience of teachers. The results showed that teachers' work experience has a higher positive correlation with the positive leadership of school administrators compared to other aspects.

Recommendations for Enhancing School Management

Facilitating positive relationships

School administrators in the PESAOs of the three southern border provinces should foster positive workplace relationships by facilitating collaborative work. This can be achieved through the organization of Professional Learning Community (PLC) activities, providing opportunities for teachers to work together, share knowledge, and engage in continuous professional development (Wetchan et al., 2023). Administrators should schedule PLC activities within the school timetable, integrating them into teachers' daily routines. Additionally, administrators can provide resources and support for PLCs, including access to professional development materials, research-based strategies, and external experts. Establishing norms and procedures for PLC meetings can ensure their effectiveness and alignment with school goals.

Promoting distributed leadership

Administrators should promote positive workplace relationships by sharing leadership responsibilities among stakeholders, including department heads, teachers, and other staff. This approach encourages distributed leadership, enabling collaborative work and decision-making, thus fostering a cooperative culture. Administrators should identify and leverage each individual's strengths to enhance department heads' capabilities by offering leadership opportunities in professional development and mentoring. Implementing collaborative decision-making processes that involve input from teachers, staff, and other stakeholders is essential for school projects, policies, and practices. Promoting a culture of trust and transparency through open communication can further support this effort, encouraging diverse perspectives in key school decisions.

Professional growth coaching

Administrators should provide coaching and mentoring opportunities for professional growth by pairing less experienced or interested teachers with experienced mentors. These mentors can offer guidance, support, and continuous feedback based on best practices and teaching expertise. Additionally, administrators should organize training for mentors to develop their coaching and mentoring skills and gather valuable feedback and strategies for supporting teacher growth. Regular meetings between mentors and mentees should be facilitated to plan collaborative work, reflect, set goals, and engage in continuous professional development. These strategies can enhance positive relationships and collaboration in primary schools, ultimately improving teachers' experiences and students' academic achievements.

DECLARATIONS

Authors' individual contribution. Conceptualization — C.K and S.S.; Methodology — C.K and S.S.; Software — C.K and S.S; Validation — C.K and S.S; Formal Analysis — C.K and S.S; Investigation — C.K and S.S; Resources — C.K and S.S; Data Curation — C.K; Writing — Original Draft — C.K and S.S; Writing — Review & Editing — C.K and S.S; Visualization — C.K.; Supervision — C.K and S.S; Project Administration — C.K and S.S; Funding acquisition— C.K and S.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Ethics statement. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and

approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Prince of Songkla University, Pattani campus (REC Number psu.pn.2-028/66) for studies involving humans. A signed informed consent form for each of the study's pilot-survey group and the main study's respondents was also obtained. At every step, the anonymity of the participants was considered and ensured, with all interviewees informed that no information concerning their private information would be used.

Acknowledgements. The authors wish to thank Ajarn Charlie for his English language editing and final proofing. They would also like to thank the Sustainable Development Education in Multicultural Society Research Center at the Prince of Songkla University for its financial support.

Declaration of conflicting interests. The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

REFERENCES

- Acton R and P Glasgow, 2015. Teacher wellbeing in neoliberal contexts: A review of the literature. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(8): 99-114. DOI: 10.14221/ajte.2015v40n8.6
- Al-Dhuwaihi A and H Almohaisin, 2021. Degree of practicing authentic leadership among public school leaders from the teachers' viewpoint. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*, 16(3): 1175-1193. DOI: 10.18844/cjes.v16i3.5838
- Amabile T and S Kramer, 2011. *The progress principle: Using small wins to ignite joy, engagement, and creativity at work*. Harvard Business Press. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mr2zhjn6> (accessed 19 August 2024).
- Asrar-ul-Haq M and S Anwar, 2018. The many faces of leadership: Proposing research agenda through a review of literature. *Future Business Journal*, 4(2): 179-188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fbj.2018.06.002>
- Barber M and M Mourshed, 2007. How the world's best-performing systems come out on top. McKinsey & Company. Available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12365/17300> (accessed 19 August 2024).
- Başaran R and E Kiral, 2020. The relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*, 7(2): 351-365. DOI: 10.33200/ijcer.767560
- Binheem A, P Pimdee and S Petsangsri, 2021. Thai Student Teacher Learning Innovation: A Second-Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis. *TEM Journal*, 10(4): DOI: 10.18421/TEM104-48
- Bronfenbrenner U and SJ Ceci, 1994. Nature-nuture reconceptualized in developmental perspective: A bioecological model. *Psychological Review*, 101(4): 568. DOI: 10.1037/0033-295X.101.4.568
- Cameron KS and B Winn, 2011. Virtuousness in organizations. In: Spreitzer GM and KS Cameron (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*. Routledge, New York, pp.133-153. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199734610.013.0018
- Cameron KS, 2022. Responsible leadership as virtuous leadership. In: *Responsible Leadership*. 2nd edition. Routledge, London. DOI: 10.4324/b22741
- Churngchow C and W Sinprajukpol, 2016. Factors affecting the scholastic achievement of Prince of Songkla University students from private schools with Islam instruction in the three southern border provinces. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, 37(1): 59-65. DOI: 10.1016/j.kjss.2016.01.001
- Culdaz M, 2024. The impact of educational leadership in improving the learning experience. In: *Promoting Crisis Management and Creative Problem-Solving Skills in Educational Leadership*. IGI Global, pp. 168-189. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-8332-9.ch008
- Decety J and JM Cowell, 2014. Friends or foes: Is empathy necessary for moral behavior? *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 9(5): 525-537. DOI: [10.1177/1745691614545130](https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614545130)

- Deep South Watch, 2021. Deep South Watch Database: Summary of incidents in Southern Thailand, January 2021. Available at: <https://deepsouthwatch.org/en/node/11973> (accessed 19 August 2024).
- Edmondson A, 2019. The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in workplaces for learning, innovation, and growth. Third edition. John Wiley & Sons.
- Fullan M, 2011. Change leader: Learning to do what matters most. John Wiley & Sons.
- Gašková J, 2020. Servant leadership and its relation to work performance. *Central European Business Review*, 9(3): 24-37. <https://tinyurl.com/3cbv9ukn>
- Gladis S, 2013. Positive leadership: The game changer at work. Steve Gladis Leadership Partners.
- Gordon J, 2017. The power of positive leadership: How and why positive leaders transform teams and organizations and change the world. John Wiley & Sons Publishers.
- Hollingshead A, 2018. Designing engaging online environments: Universal design for learning principles. In: *Cultivating diverse online classrooms through effective instructional design*. IGI Global, pp. 280-298. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-3120-3.ch014
- Hughes TR and FD Davidson, 2020. Leading through conflict with credibility. In: *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.786>
- Jackson J, 2013. Teachers Targeted in Thai Conflict. Aljazeera, 3 February. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yc7p3ur2> (accessed 19 August 2024).
- Jitpiromsri S, 2019. The Deep South of Thailand: 15 years in fields of open conflict, violence and peace narratives. *Asian International Studies Review*, 20(1): 79–108. DOI: 10.16934/isr.20.1.201906.79.
- Kumari K, J Abbas, J Hwang, and LI Cioca, 2022. Does servant leadership promote emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behavior among employees? A structural analysis. *Sustainability*, 14(9): 5231. DOI: 10.3390/su14095231
- Ladd K, 2010. The power of a positive woman. Howard Books Publishers.
- Ladkin D and J Probert, 2021. From sovereign to subject: Applying Foucault's conceptualization of power to leading and studying power within leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(4): 101310. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2019.101310
- McPartland JM, 2011. Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago. DOI: 10.1177/0094306110391764b
- Narathiwat Provincial Education Office, 2023. Five-year government operational plan (2023-2027). Narathiwat: Narathiwat Provincial Education Office.
- Nitjarunkul K, 2015. The study of concepts understanding and using competence of teachers in educational innovation and technology for teaching management at schools of the unrest areas of three southern border provinces of Thailand. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 174: 2473–2480. DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.919.
- Northouse PG, 2016. Leadership: Theory and practice. Seventh edition. Sage Publications.
- Peterson C, 2020. Lead to Leadership: The Essence of Positive Leadership. Independently published.
- Phimkoh P, K Tesaputa and KO Somprach, 2015. Program development for enhancing creative leadership among school administrators in local government organizations of Thailand. *The Journal of Behavioral Science*, 10(2): 79-94. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/4dc6fsnc> (accessed 19 August 2024).
- Pimdee P and P Leekitchwatana, 2022. Appropriate Internet Use Behavior (AIUB) of Thai Preservice Teachers: A Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM) Analysis. *International Journal of Instruction*, 15(1): 489-508. DOI: 10.29333/iji.2022.15128a
- Pimdee P, A Ridhikerd, S Moto, S Siripongdee and S Bengthong, 2023. How social media and peer learning influence student-teacher self-directed learning in an online world under the 'New Normal'. *Heliyon*, 9(3): E13769. DOI: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e13769

- Sabir S, 2021. A study on Ethical leadership perceptions and its impact on teachers commitment in Pakistan. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 9(1): 28-53. DOI: 10.17583/ijelm.2020.4525
- Sarstedt M, CM Ringle, JF Hair, 2021. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. In: Homburg C, M Klarmann and A Vomberg (Eds.), *Handbook of Market Research*. Cham: Springer. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-57413-4_15
- Spreitzer G and C Porath, 2012. Creating sustainable performance. *Harvard Business Review*, 90(1): 92-99. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/2fjrdzjb> (accessed 19 August 2024).
- Sukkamart A, P Pimdee, P Leekitchwatana, W Kongpiboon and T Kantathanawat, 2023. Predicting student-teacher self-directed learning using intrinsic and extrinsic factors: a Theory of Planned Behavior adoption. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14: 1211594. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1211594
- Thawesaengskulthai N, A Chatmarathong and J Koiwanit, 2024. Impact and policy supporting Thailand innovation-driven enterprise: orchestrating university innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem with public and private stakeholders. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 13(1): 16. DOI:10.1186/s13731-024-00371-x
- Toler S, 2019. *The lasting impact of positive leadership*. Harvest House Publisher.
- Tschannen-Moran M, 2014. *Trust matters: Leadership for successful schools*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Van Le D and TQ Tran, 2024. Economic growth and quality of education: Evidence from the national high school exam in Vietnam. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 104: 102947. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102947
- Warakulsalam N and S Chokprajakchat, 2022. Policy and project in reducing unrest situation in the southern border provinces of Thailand. *International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences*, 17(2): 75-90. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3fe3ncfk> (accessed 19 August 2024).
- Wei Y, N Mhunpiew and V Boonpram, 2024. A model to foster global citizenship characteristics of students in private international universities in Thailand. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, 45(1): 21-30. DOI: 10.34044/j.kjss.2024.45.1.03
- Wetchan T, N Chairueang and C Ekpetch, 2023. The development of a supervision model for educational institution quality development using professional learning community networks (PLCNs) in Thailand. *Journal of Higher Education Theory & Practice*, 23(8): DOI: 10.33423/jhetp.v23i8.6065
- Wijaya MH, A Khoir and AW Zaini, 2022. Fostering Public Trust: The Transformative Leadership of School Principals. *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 1(1): 51-62. DOI: 10.33650/ijess.v1i1.3475
- Youssef CM and F Luthans, 2012. Positive global leadership. *Journal of World Business*, 47(4): 539-547. DOI: 10.1016/j.jwb.2012.01.007