

## **DISPOSITIONAL, RELATIONAL AND CONTEXTUAL TRAITS OF PRINCIPALS AS PREDICTORS OF MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABILITY**

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### **Abstract**

The main objective of the study was to explore the dispositional, relational, and contextual traits that predict the principals' management sustainability. A total of 206 teacher respondents were involved in the study. The researcher made use of the descriptive-correlational method with questionnaire as the main instrument used for gathering data. Results showed that the teachers strongly agreed that their present principals demonstrate dispositional traits. The principals manifest the indicators along the following subscales of relational traits namely: communication; acceptance; sharing responsibility; respect; trust; and transparency as strongly agreed by the teachers. For the principals' contextual traits, the teachers strongly agreed that their present principals demonstrate the following subscales/indicators: working together with others; knowledge and experience; scope of leadership; political climate; and autonomous action. With regard to management sustainability, the teachers perceived that their principals demonstrate management sustainability on a very great extent. It was also found out that there is a significant relationship between the principals' dispositional, relational and contextual traits and management sustainability. Of the three traits, the principals' relational and contextual traits are predictors of management sustainability. This study recommends that the study be forwarded to the Department of Education-Office-Schools Division of Bulacan so that relevant and appropriate actions may be under taken to further improve principals' management sustainability.

**Keywords:** dispositional, relational and contextual traits; management sustainability

Management sustainability encompasses the concepts from sustainability and synthesizes them with the concepts of management. In schools, sustainability encompasses various aspects: instructional competence, school, home and community linkages and personal, social growth and personal characteristics. Sustainable management, therefore, may be applied to many things, as it can be applied as a literal and an abstract concept. Management sustainability includes the aspects of instruction such as diversity of learners, curriculum content and pedagogy, planning, assessing and reporting (Sergiovanni, 2012). With regard to school, home and community linkages, management sustainability encompasses learning environment and community linkages. In terms of personal, social growth and personal characteristics, management sustainability includes social regard for learning, personal, social growth and professional development.

Looking closely at how sustainability comes into the picture, the researcher used the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads Training and Development Needs Assessment (NCBSSH-TDNA). The competencies reflected in the NCBSSH –TDNA are based on the mandate for school heads indicated in the RA9155, otherwise known as Governance Act for Basic Education, its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR), and the National competency standards for school heads contained in DepEd Order No. 32 series of 2010, “The National Adoption and Implementation of the National Competency – Based Standards for School Heads. The DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2010 defines NCBSSH with a list of competency standards which can be used as bases of the school heads’ decision making, actions and performances of their functions. In addition to fundamental direction provided by the set standards, there are knowledge, skills, and values that are clarified through the indicators defined per strand on every domain. There are seven (7) domains which contain indicators that measure the management sustainability of school heads namely: School Leadership

includes developing and communicating Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives (VMGO), Data – based Strategic Planning, Problem – Solving, Building High Performance Teams, Coordinating with Others and Leading and Managing Change; Instructional Leadership involves Assessment for Learning, Developing Programs and/or Adapting Existing Programs, Implementing Programs for Instructional improvement and Instructional Supervision; Creating a Student Centered Learning Climate provides Setting high social and academic expectations, Creating school environments focused on the needs of the learner; HR Management and Professional Development includes Creating a Professional Learning Community, Recruitment and Hiring and Managing Performance of Teachers and Staff; Parent Involvement and Community Partnership includes Parental Involvement and External Community Partnership; School Management and Operations includes Managing School Operations, Fiscal Management and Use of Technology in the Management of Operations; and Personal and Professional Attributes and Interpersonal Effectiveness includes Professionalism, Communication, Interpersonal Sensitivity and Fairness, Honesty and Integrity.

However, in the discharge of their duties as school principals, their traits and responses to certain situations may be influenced by certain factors such as those depending on their dispositions, relationships with others and their actual contexts. Dispositional traits include perceptions and attitudes that form the basis of behaviors. On the other hand, relational traits are the means in which principals and teachers or parents and other stakeholders deal with each other (Sergiovanni, 2012). Contextual traits deal with teachers’ beliefs (Jamalzadeh and Shahsavari, 2015). They also refer to the character to exhibit certain kind of behavior. Moreover, context means certain situations or circumstances that help to explain the school principals’ management. It is therefore the main objective of the study to explore the dispositional, relational, and contextual traits that predict the principals’ management sustainability.

## The Problem

Specifically, the researcher aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How may the principals' dispositional traits be described in terms of:
  - 1.1 interaction with others;
  - 1.2 professional ethics and practices;
  - 1.3 effective communication;
  - 1.4 planning and teaching for pupil learning; and
  - 1.5 sensitivity to diversity and equity?
2. How may the principals' relational traits be described in terms of;
  - 2.1 trust;
  - 2.2 communication;
  - 2.3 transparency;
  - 2.4 sharing responsibility;
  - 2.5 respect; and
  - 2.6 acceptance?
3. How may the principals' contextual traits be represented by the following:
  - 3.1 scope of leadership;
  - 3.2 working together with others;
  - 3.3 political climate;
  - 3.4 knowledge and experience; and
  - 3.5 autonomous action?
4. How may the principals' management sustainability be described in terms of:
  - 4.1 School Leadership
  - 4.2 Instructional Leadership;
  - 4.3 Creating a Student-Centered Learning Climate;
  - 4.4 HR Management and Professional Development;
  - 4.5 Parent Involvement and Community Partnership;
  - 4.6 School Management and Operations; and
  - 4.7 Personal and Professional Attributes and Interpersonal Effectiveness?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the principals' management sustainability and their dispositional, relational and contextual traits?

## Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant relationship between the principals' dispositional, relational and contextual traits and their management sustainability.
2. The principals' dispositional, relational and contextual traits do not predict their management sustainability.

## Theoretical Framework and Model of the Study

The Management Sustainability Theory suggests that the more frequently and systematically that organizations transform resources into production and transform school weaknesses into strengths, the more likely it is that eventually the results of those actions will be more sustainable (Starik, 2013). It shows that principals should have the initiative to be strategic, move toward, including at the individual, organizational, and societal levels, to immerse themselves in the rationales for environmental and socio-economic sustainability and to identify how they can practice effective approaches as often and as widely as possible to make a significant positive sustainability impact.

The researcher believes that the dispositional traits such as interaction with others, professional ethics and practices, effective communication, planning and teaching for pupil learning and sensitivity to diversity and equity may predict sustainability. For relational traits, the following are included: trust, communication, transparency, sharing responsibility, respect and acceptance. For contextual traits, the following indicators are considered: scope of school leadership, working together with others, political climate, knowledge and experience and autonomous action. This study aims to determine which among the dispositional, relational, and contextual traits predict management sustainability.

Management Sustainability is synthesized along the following domains: School Leadership; Instructional Leadership; Creating a Student-Centered Learning Climate;

Human Resource Management and Professional Development; Parent Involvement and Community Partnership; School Management and Operations; and Personal and Professional Attributes and Interpersonal Effectiveness.



**Figure 1.** Model showing the dispositional, relational, contextual traits and management sustainability of principals

## Method

This research made use of the descriptive-correlation method. This descriptive method is appropriate because this study involved collection of data from the teachers and principals in order to test a hypothesis or to answer questions concerning the relationship between principals' dispositional, relational and contextual traits and their management sustainability. After considering the number of teachers, the researcher decided to include only those schools with the highest number of teachers within the Educational District III (EDDIS III). All in all, 425 teacher participants were registered.

A survey-questionnaire was used for data gathering. The researcher constructed benchmark statements for the subscales of dispositional traits namely interaction with others, professional ethics and practices, effective communication, planning and teaching for pupil learning; and sensitivity to diversity and equity. Indicators were also reflected along the following subscales of relational traits as follows: trust, communication, transparency, sharing responsibility, respect and acceptance. Lastly, benchmark statements were constructed along the subscales of contextual traits namely scope of leadership; working together with others; political climate; knowledge and experience and autonomous action.

The questionnaire was validated by principals from private and public schools to check the content of the questionnaire and at the same time to incorporate some suggestions pertaining to principals' dispositional, relational and contextual traits.

For management sustainability, the researcher used the National Competency – Based Standards for School Heads Training and Development Needs Assessment (NCBSSH-TDNA) of the Department of Education.

The four-point modified Likert scale was used to

analyze the teachers' responses. Mean and Standard Deviation were utilized to describe the dispositional, relational, and contextual traits as well as the management sustainability of the principals. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation was used to determine the relationship between the principals' dispositional, relational, and contextual traits and their management sustainability.

### Results, Findings and Discussions

**Table 1.** Principals' Dispositional Traits

Subscale	Mean	SD	Description
Interaction with others	3.64	.391	Strongly Agree
Professional ethics and practices	3.65	.424	Strongly Agree
Effective communication	3.62	.470	Strongly Agree
Planning and teaching for pupil learning	3.58	.443	Strongly Agree
Sensitivity to diversity and equity	3.58	.443	Strongly Agree
Dispositional Traits	3.61	.405	Strongly Agree

Table 1 shows the principals' dispositional traits with a mean of 3.61. The teachers strongly agreed that their present principals demonstrate dispositional traits along the following areas/subscales: professional ethics and practices; interaction with others; effective communication; planning and teaching for pupil learning; and sensitivity to diversity and equity. It was disclosed by Voseles and Moss (2012) that professional ethics and practices are often the most easily observed of the dispositional behaviors. Moreover, they mentioned that professional ethics and practices include acceptable dress and grooming, and timeliness, not only in arrival and departure, but also in the completion of tasks. In the same way, principals with positive professional dispositions tend to act in ways that elevate the profession of teaching in the eyes of others.

**Table 2.** Principals' Relational Traits

Subscale	Mean	SD	Description
Trust	3.57	.476	Strongly Agree
Communication	3.64	.427	Strongly Agree
Transparency	3.57	.543	Strongly Agree
Sharing responsibility	3.61	.442	Strongly Agree
Respect	3.60	.466	Strongly Agree
Acceptance	3.63	.462	Strongly Agree
Relational Traits	3.60	.427	Strongly Agree

As revealed by Table 2, the principals' relational traits had a mean of 3.60. It could be inferred that the teachers strongly agreed that their principals manifest the indicators along the following subscales of relational traits namely: communication; acceptance; sharing responsibility; respect; trust; and transparency. The subscale communication had the highest mean score of 3.64 and a standard deviation of .427. Whether they are trying to improve communication with their family members, pupils, teachers, co-workers, or even parents and other stake holders, they improve their communication skills that enable them to effectively connect with others, build trust and respect, and feel heard and understood (Lozano, Nummert & Ceulemans, 2016).

**Table 3.** Principals' Contextual Traits

Subscale	Mean	SD	Description
Scope of leadership	3.60	.477	Strongly Agree
Working together with others	3.64	.459	Strongly Agree
Political climate	3.58	.569	Strongly Agree
Knowledge and experience	3.62	.480	Strongly Agree
Autonomous action	3.56	.483	Strongly Agree
Contextual Traits	3.60	.440	Strongly Agree

Table 3 reflects the principals' contextual traits with a mean score of 3.60. Of all the subscales, working together with others received the highest mean score of 3.64 with a standard deviation of .459. It only shows that school teachers perceived their principals to be working well with others.

**Table 4.** Principals' Management Sustainability

Dimension	Mean	SD	Description
School leadership	3.56	.434	Very Great Extent
Instructional leadership	3.58	.462	Very Great Extent
Creating a student-centered learning climate	3.62	.433	Very Great Extent
HR management and professional development	3.58	.436	Very Great Extent
Parent involvement and community partnership	3.55	.480	Very Great Extent
School management operations	3.56	.467	Very Great Extent
Personal and professional attributes	3.60	.468	Very Great Extent
Management Sustainability	3.58	.423	Very Great Extent

Table 4 presents the principals' management sustainability. As perceived by the teachers, their principals demonstrated management sustainability (3.58) on a very great extent along the following dimensions namely: creating a student-centered climate; personal and professional attributes; instructional leadership; HR management and professional development; school leadership; school management operations; and parent involvement and community partnership.

**Table 5.** Significant Relationship Between Management Sustainability and the Principals' Dispositional, Relational and Contextual Traits.

Management Sustainability	R	Sig.
Dispositional Traits	.798	.000**
Relational Traits	.872	.000**
Contextual Traits	.873	.000**

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

Table 5 shows that the strength of relationship between management sustainability and dispositional traits is positively very high ( $r=.798$ ), and that the correlation is significant ( $p=.000$ ). In addition, the data reveals a very high positive relationship between management sustainability and contextual traits ( $r=.872$ ), and that this correlation is found to be significant ( $p=.000$ ). The table also indicates that the strength of association between management sustainability and contextual traits is positively very high ( $r=.873$ ), and that the correlation is significant ( $p=.000$ ). As supported by the study of Mutch in 2015 that in all areas of management, the three traits always go hand in hand for the principal to sustain his management. It is important that principals and teachers create an atmosphere for learning. An atmosphere of trust, shared vision and openness create positive school climate conditions. According to Sergiovanni (2012), most effective principals had a clear management sustainability when they contextually align resources and priorities with the vision, in achieving the goals embedded in the vision and thus, the management sustainability aspect is manifested.

**Table 6.** Regression Analysis Between Dispositional, Relational and Contextual Traits.

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig</i>
Dispositional Traits	.071	.798	.951	6.8	.343
Relational Traits	.385	.872	3.968	38.9	.000**
Contextual Traits	.445	.873	6.047	46.3	.000**

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

As revealed in Table 6, contextual traits and relational traits are found to significantly predict the management sustainability of principals ( $p=.000$ ). However, dispositional trait is found to be not a predictor of management sustainability ( $p=.343$ ). It means that the principals' dispositions do not predict their management sustainability. When they are faced with problems in school, there are some instances in which principals' moods and attitudes produced considerable inflexibility and failure to examine alternative courses of action (Leithwood & Steinbach, 2011). In the same way, they may not use their beliefs about people and things when they are to decide on certain issues. It means that they are independent enough and that they use dispositions based on logic.

Moreover, Table 6 reveals that both relational and contextual traits are said to be predictors of the principals' management sustainability. This only means that from problem solving to simple decision making, the principals are definite enough; they make decisions based on behavioral factors such as trust, communication, and transparency, sharing responsibility, respect and acceptance affecting the quality of their decisions. While the factors that contribute to school success are complex and multifaceted, one defining predictor of management sustainability is relational trait of the principals. If principals trust their teachers they work with, teachers can be open and honest in their thoughts and actions, and principals do not have to waste time and energy

watching their teachers (Mills & Ballantyne, 2010). In the same manner, contextual traits are said to be predictors of management sustainability. It only shows that principals base their decisions on the context where they are. They value the actual contexts in which they operate.

## Conclusions

In light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. As claimed by the teachers, they strongly agreed that their present principals demonstrate dispositional traits along the following areas/subscales: professional ethics and practices; interaction with others; effective communication; planning and teaching for pupil learning; and sensitivity to diversity and equity.
2. The principals manifest the indicators along the following subscales of relational traits namely: communication; acceptance; sharing responsibility; respect; trust; and transparency as strongly agreed by the teachers.
3. For the principals' contextual traits, the teachers strongly agreed that their present principals demonstrate the following subscales/indicators: working together with others; knowledge and experience; scope of leadership; political climate; and autonomous action.
4. With regard to management sustainability, the teachers perceived that their principals demonstrate management sustainability on a very great extent along the following dimensions: creating a student-centered climate; personal and professional attributes; instructional leadership; HR management and professional development; school leadership; school management operations; and parent involvement and community partnership.
5. There is a significant relationship between the principals' dispositional, relational and contextual traits and management sustainability. Moreover, the principals'

relational and contextual traits are predictors of management sustainability.

## Recommendations

Based on the results and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are hereby given:

1. The researcher recommends that the study be forwarded to the DepEd Office-Schools Division of Bulacan so that relevant and appropriate actions may be under taken to further improve principals' management sustainability by considering the following points:
  - 1.1. Principals must further involve parents and teachers in all the various activities of the school.
  - 1.2. Principals must be more responsible for making decisions that may impact the improvement of the school.
2. It is suggested that the principals be further made aware on the relationship of their dispositional, relational and contextual traits with management sustainability.

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