

The Mediating Effect of Authentic Leadership of School Heads on the Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Decision Styles Among Public School Teachers

Edilberto P. Pantaleon

Graduate School, Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges, General Santos City, Philippines
edilbertopantaleon001@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the mediating effect of authentic leadership of school heads on the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision styles among public school teachers in Alabel 3 District, Sarangani Division. A quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive-correlational design was used with 150 public school teachers selected through stratified random sampling with proportional allocation. Data were gathered using adapted and modified questionnaires on emotional intelligence, decision styles, and authentic leadership, and were analyzed using mean, Pearson product-moment correlation, and path analysis. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated a very high level of emotional intelligence ($M = 4.30$), a very high level of decision styles ($M = 4.34$), and perceived a very high level of authentic leadership among school heads ($M = 4.43$). Significant

relationships were found between emotional intelligence and decision styles ($r = .605, p < .001$), emotional intelligence and authentic leadership ($r = .484, p < .001$), and authentic leadership and decision styles ($r = .332, p < .001$). Path analysis further showed that emotional intelligence significantly predicted authentic leadership ($\beta = .484, p < .001$) and authentic leadership significantly predicted decision styles ($\beta = .427, p < .001$), while the direct effect of emotional intelligence on decision styles became non-significant ($\beta = -.031, p = .706$). The results indicate full mediation, suggesting that authentic leadership is a key mechanism through which emotional intelligence supports teachers' decision-making styles. The study recommends strengthening emotional intelligence development and authentic leadership practices in public schools to enhance professional judgment, workplace relationships, and organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: *authentic leadership, decision styles, educational management, emotional intelligence, mediation, public school teachers*

INTRODUCTION

Decision-making is one of the most important professional functions performed by teachers and school leaders. In educational institutions, decisions influence classroom management, instructional delivery, workplace relationships, and organizational effectiveness. However, decision-making may be affected by personal bias, stress, limited information, and emotional pressures. These concerns make emotional intelligence a relevant professional competency for teachers because it supports self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, adaptability, and sound judgment.

Emotional intelligence enables teachers to understand their own emotions and the emotions of others, respond appropriately to stressful situations, and maintain positive professional relationships. Teachers who demonstrate emotional intelligence are more capable of handling classroom challenges, collaborating with colleagues, and making balanced decisions. In school contexts where teachers face complex instructional and

organizational demands, emotional intelligence may influence whether teachers use rational, intuitive, or balanced decision styles.

Authentic leadership is also important in educational management because school heads shape the climate in which teachers make decisions. Authentic leaders demonstrate self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and an internalized moral perspective. When school heads practice authentic leadership, teachers may feel supported, trusted, and empowered to make professional decisions. Thus, authentic leadership may serve as an important organizational mechanism connecting teachers' emotional intelligence with their decision-making styles.

This study examined the mediating effect of authentic leadership of school heads on the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision styles among public school teachers in Alabel 3 District, Sarangani Division. Specifically, it assessed teachers' emotional intelligence in terms of intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, adaptability, stress management, and general mood; described decision styles in terms of rational and intuitive approaches; measured authentic leadership of school heads; tested relationships among the variables; and determined whether authentic leadership mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision styles.

Literature Review

Emotional Intelligence and Teacher Decision-Making

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and use emotions effectively in personal and professional situations. In teaching, emotional intelligence supports classroom management, communication, stress regulation, empathy, and professional judgment. Teachers with strong emotional intelligence are more capable of recognizing their own emotional states, understanding students' needs, and responding appropriately to workplace challenges.

The study conceptualized emotional intelligence using five dimensions: intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, adaptability, stress management, and general mood. Intrapersonal intelligence emphasizes self-awareness and emotional self-management; interpersonal intelligence involves empathy and relationship-building; adaptability involves flexibility and problem-solving; stress management involves emotional control under pressure; and general mood reflects optimism and positive disposition. These dimensions are relevant to the teaching profession because teachers frequently make decisions in emotionally demanding contexts.

Decision styles refer to the approaches individuals use when selecting actions or solutions. Rational decision style involves systematic analysis, information gathering, and objective evaluation of alternatives. Intuitive decision style involves immediate judgment based on experience, feelings, and situational awareness. In school settings, both styles may be necessary because teachers often need to balance evidence-based reasoning with fast professional responses to classroom events.

Authentic Leadership as a Mediating Mechanism

Authentic leadership is a leadership approach grounded in self-awareness, moral integrity, balanced processing, and transparent relationships. School heads who demonstrate authentic leadership build trust and encourage teachers to participate in professional decision-making. This leadership style is significant in schools because it strengthens organizational support, ethical conduct, and positive workplace relationships.

The mediating role of authentic leadership is theoretically supported by emotional intelligence theory, authentic leadership theory, social cognitive theory, and decision-making theory. Emotional intelligence may influence how teachers perceive and respond to leadership practices, while authentic leadership may shape how teachers apply emotional competencies in decision-making. In this way, authentic leadership becomes the pathway through which emotional intelligence can be translated into more effective professional decision styles.

Previous research cited in the thesis suggests that emotional intelligence is related to decision styles, emotional intelligence is related to authentic leadership, and authentic leadership is related to decision styles. The

present study extends these relationships by testing a mediation model in the context of public school teachers in Alabel 3 District, Sarangani Division.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component assessed the levels of emotional intelligence, decision styles, and authentic leadership, while the correlational component examined the relationships among the variables. Path analysis was used to test the mediating effect of authentic leadership on the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision styles.

Research Locale and Respondents

The study was conducted among public school teachers in Alabel 3 District, Municipality of Alabel, Sarangani Province. The respondents were 150 public school teachers selected through stratified random sampling with proportional allocation. The study focused on teachers with relevant teaching experience and exposure to their respective school heads, allowing them to assess emotional intelligence, decision styles, and perceived authentic leadership in the school context.

Research Instrument

Three adopted and modified questionnaires were used. The first measured emotional intelligence based on the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory, covering intrapersonal intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, adaptability, stress management, and general mood. The second measured decision styles based on rational and intuitive decision-making. The third measured authentic leadership based on self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. The instruments were validated by experts and were subjected to internal consistency reliability testing.

Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

Permission to conduct the study was secured from appropriate institutional and Department of Education authorities. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the option to withdraw without penalty. Completed questionnaires were gathered, checked, encoded, and analyzed. The study followed the Cluster Ethics Research Committee protocol of Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges, and individual responses were treated confidentially and reported in aggregate form.

Data Analysis

Mean was used to describe the levels of emotional intelligence, decision styles, and authentic leadership. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships among emotional intelligence, decision styles, and authentic leadership. Path analysis was used to determine whether authentic leadership mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision styles. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Levels of Emotional Intelligence, Decision Styles, and Authentic Leadership

The results showed that teachers had a very high overall level of emotional intelligence ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.418$). Adaptability obtained the highest mean ($M = 4.56$), followed by interpersonal intelligence ($M = 4.41$) and intrapersonal intelligence ($M = 4.33$). Stress management ($M = 4.15$) and general mood ($M = 4.07$) were interpreted as high. These findings indicate that teachers generally demonstrated strong emotional awareness, adaptability, positive interpersonal behaviors, and emotional regulation in their professional work.

Table 1. *Level of Emotional Intelligence of Teachers*

Indicator	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Intrapersonal intelligence	0.429	4.33	Very High
Interpersonal intelligence	0.411	4.41	Very High
Adaptability	0.403	4.56	Very High
Stress management	0.451	4.15	High
General mood	0.437	4.07	High
Overall	0.418	4.30	Very High

Teachers also demonstrated a very high overall level of decision styles ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.44$). Rational decision style obtained a very high mean of 4.53, while intuitive decision style obtained a high mean of 4.15. This implies that teachers strongly rely on rational analysis in making professional decisions, while also using intuition and experience when situations require immediate judgment.

Table 2. *Level of Decision Styles of Teachers*

Indicator	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Rational	0.44	4.53	Very High
Intuitive	0.40	4.15	High
Overall	0.44	4.34	Very High

The level of authentic leadership of school heads was also very high. The item-level results indicated that teachers perceived their school heads as demonstrating core values, balanced processing, transparency, and self-awareness. The overall pattern suggests that school heads were perceived as leaders who act ethically, consider others' opinions, and promote trust in the school environment.

Table 3. *Selected Indicators of Authentic Leadership of School Heads*

Selected authentic leadership item	SD	Mean	Descriptive Level
Actions reflect core values	0.35	4.27	Very High
Seeks others' opinions before making up own mind	0.64	4.63	Very High
Openly shares feelings with others	0.41	4.04	High
Can list three greatest strengths	0.62	4.66	Very High
Does not allow group pressure to control decisions	0.33	4.73	Very High
Overall interpretation	-	Very High	Strong perceived authentic leadership

Relationships Among Emotional Intelligence, Decision Styles, and Authentic Leadership

Pearson correlation analysis showed that emotional intelligence was significantly related to decision styles. The overall correlation between emotional intelligence and decision styles was $r = .605$, $p < .001$, interpreted as a significant positive relationship. This means that teachers with higher emotional intelligence tended to demonstrate stronger rational and intuitive decision-making styles.

Table 4. *Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Decision Styles*

Emotional intelligence indicator	Rational	Intuitive	Overall decision styles
Intrapersonal intelligence	.352* (.000)	.387* (.000)	.587* (.000)
Interpersonal intelligence	.336* (.000)	.540* (.000)	.692* (.000)
Adaptability	.213* (.000)	.350* (.000)	.488* (.000)
Stress management	.263* (.000)	.352* (.000)	.592* (.000)
General mood	.180 (.178)	.283* (.021)	.315* (.000)
Overall	.318* (.000)	.410* (.000)	.605* (.000)

The analysis also revealed that emotional intelligence was significantly related to authentic leadership. The overall correlation was $r = .484, p < .001$. Among the indicators, adaptability showed the strongest relationship with authentic leadership ($r = .468, p < .001$), followed by intrapersonal intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. These results suggest that emotionally intelligent teachers are more likely to perceive and respond positively to authentic leadership practices in their schools.

Table 5. *Correlation Between Emotional Intelligence and Authentic Leadership*

Emotional intelligence indicator	Authentic leadership overall
Intrapersonal intelligence	.418* (.000)
Interpersonal intelligence	.414* (.000)
Adaptability	.468* (.000)
Stress management	.394* (.000)
General mood	.355* (.000)
Overall	.484* (.000)

Authentic leadership was significantly related to overall decision styles ($r = .332, p < .001$) and rational decision style ($r = .266, p = .003$), while its relationship with intuitive decision style was not significant ($r = .158, p = .232$). This indicates that authentic leadership is more strongly associated with systematic, rational decision-making than with purely intuitive decision-making.

Table 6. *Correlation Between Authentic Leadership and Decision Styles*

Authentic leadership	Rational	Intuitive	Overall decision styles
Overall	.266* (.003)	.158 (.232)	.332* (.000)

Mediating Effect of Authentic Leadership

Path analysis showed that emotional intelligence significantly predicted authentic leadership (standardized beta = .484, $p < .001$). Authentic leadership also significantly predicted decision styles (standardized beta = .427, $p < .001$). However, the direct path from emotional intelligence to decision styles became non-significant when authentic leadership was included in the model (standardized beta = -.031, $p = .706$). These results indicate full mediation.

Table 7. *Mediating Effect: Path Analysis (Full Mediation)*

Path	Unstandardized	Standardized	SE	C.R.	p-value
EI -> AL	.379	.484	.040	9.214	< .001
AL -> DS	.420	.427	.037	8.637	< .001
EI -> DS	-.031	-.031	.051	-.500	.706

The mediation result means that emotional intelligence did not directly influence decision styles after authentic leadership was considered. Instead, emotional intelligence influenced decision styles through authentic leadership. This finding highlights the importance of leadership context in translating emotional competence into professional decision-making behavior. In practical terms, teachers' emotional intelligence may be strengthened into better decision styles when school heads demonstrate authentic leadership through transparency, ethical conduct, balanced processing, and relational trust.

Proposed Leadership and Decision-Making Enhancement Plan

Based on the findings, a leadership and decision-making enhancement plan is proposed to strengthen authentic leadership and emotional intelligence as foundations for effective teacher decision-making.

Table 8. *Proposed Leadership and Decision-Making Enhancement Plan*

Focus area	Basis from findings	Recommended activities	Expected output
Emotional intelligence development	Teachers showed very high EI, but stress management and general mood were lower than other dimensions.	Conduct workshops on self-awareness, stress regulation, empathy, and emotional resilience.	Teachers sustain stronger emotional regulation and workplace well-being.
Authentic leadership	Authentic leadership fully mediated EI and decision styles.	Train school heads on transparency, balanced processing, ethical decision-making, and relational trust.	School heads strengthen supportive and ethical leadership practices.
Rational decision-making	Rational decision style obtained a very high mean and was significantly related to authentic leadership.	Use data-based decision-making sessions, case analysis, and collaborative problem-solving.	Teachers make more systematic and evidence-based decisions.
Collaborative school climate	Authentic leadership was related to overall decision styles.	Institutionalize teacher consultation, feedback systems, and participatory planning.	Teachers experience stronger participation and professional confidence.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that public school teachers in Alabel 3 District demonstrated very high levels of emotional intelligence and decision styles, while school heads were perceived to demonstrate very high authentic leadership. Teachers were emotionally aware, adaptable, and capable of maintaining positive interpersonal behavior. They also used rational decision-making strongly while applying intuitive judgment when needed.

The study further concludes that significant positive relationships exist among emotional intelligence, decision styles, and authentic leadership. Emotional intelligence was significantly related to decision styles and authentic leadership, while authentic leadership was significantly related to decision styles. These findings confirm the relevance of emotional competence and leadership climate in teachers' professional decision-making.

Most importantly, authentic leadership fully mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and decision styles. This means that authentic leadership serves as a key pathway through which emotional intelligence supports teachers' decision-making styles. Teachers' emotional competencies become more influential when school heads create transparent, ethical, supportive, and participatory school environments.

Recommendation

School heads should strengthen authentic leadership practices by promoting transparency, balanced decision-making, ethical behavior, and open communication. Leadership development programs may focus on relational transparency, moral decision-making, and participatory school management to help teachers make more confident and balanced professional decisions.

Schools and district offices should provide professional development programs on emotional intelligence for teachers, especially on stress management, emotional regulation, adaptability, and positive workplace relationships. These programs may help teachers sustain emotional well-being and improve decision-making under challenging school conditions.

Teachers should be encouraged to apply both rational and reflective decision-making strategies in classroom and organizational situations. Professional learning communities may be used as venues for case analysis, peer mentoring, and collaborative problem-solving. Future researchers may replicate the study in other districts, use mixed-method designs, and examine additional mediating or moderating variables such as organizational climate, teacher resilience, and school culture.

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