



21st Century Leadership Competence and Performance of Deans in Business Program: A Basis for Capacity Development

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Abstract

This study assessed the 21st-century leadership competence and performance of deans in business programs to inform a capacity development program, using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. Conducted at selected private higher education institutions in the Caraga Region, the study involved 7 deans and 40 program heads/faculty members, for a total of 47 respondents, selected through total population enumeration and purposive sampling. Data were gathered through a researcher-developed survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide anchored in the Four-Frame Leadership Theory of Bolman and Deal, and analyzed using frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation, Kruskal–Wallis H Test, Spearman’s rho, regression analysis, and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that deans demonstrated high competence in 21st-century leadership, particularly in faculty development (M = 4.55) and quality assurance and compliance (M = 4.53), followed by stakeholder engagement (M = 4.42), digital leadership (M = 4.41), and fiscal/resource management (M = 4.37), all interpreted as competent to highly competent. In terms of performance, deans were rated outstanding in curriculum and program management (M = 4.60), student-centered and outcomes-based learning (M = 4.53), and academic leadership (M = 4.51). In contrast, research productivity and community engagement were rated very good, resulting in an overall performance mean of 4.49. A significant relationship existed between leadership competence and dean performance ($p = 0.000$), indicating that higher leadership competence was associated with better performance outcomes. Regression analysis further revealed that the model explained 91.4% of the variance in dean performance ($R^2 = 91.4\%$), with political competence ($p = 0.000$) and human resource competence ($p = 0.005$) emerging as significant positive predictors. Facilitating factors included administrative support, institutional collaboration, and professional experience, whereas workload demands, compliance pressures, and limited resources hindered performance. Based on the findings, a capacity development program was proposed to strengthen leadership competencies and improve dean performance in business programs.

Keywords: 21st-Century Leadership Competence, Dean Performance, Business Programs, Higher Education Institutions, Four-Frame Leadership Theory, Capacity Development Program, Mixed-Methods Research

Introduction

The role of academic deans has changed dramatically in the 21st century, as higher education institutions respond to technological advances, policy reforms, quality-assurance pressures, and heightened expectations for accountability and innovation. In today's world, deans are not just administrators but strategic leaders, instructional supervisors, change agents, and managers of institutional performance (Flores, 2024). This enhanced role requires skills in digital transformation, financial management, research governance, stakeholder engagement, and organizational strategy.

The mandates of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) further strengthen these expanding functions. Deans are responsible for ensuring curriculum alignment, compliance with accreditation standards, faculty qualification standards, research productivity, and institutional reporting under policies such as CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 46, s. 2012 on quality assurance and typology-based governance, discipline-specific CMOs for Business programs. Such mandates increase the administrative and managerial role of academic leadership.

Deans are central to implementing national reforms that affect higher education in the Philippines (Aldaba et al., 2024). Academic leaders are under increased pressure due to reforms such as the K to 12 transition, strict accreditation standards, digital learning, industry-aligned curricula, and research productivity. Hence, deans are required to juggle academic planning, faculty supervision, fiscal management, performance appraisal, and engagement with external stakeholders, while attempting to foster innovation, often amid limited institutional support and bureaucratic hurdles (Lintag et al., 2025).

These challenges are evident in Butuan City and the Caraga Region, where HEIs are seeking to improve the quality and competitiveness of their programs. Deans operate in various institutional settings with varying degrees of infrastructure preparedness, financial capacity, and organizational maturity (Quimba et al., 2024). This further intensifies leadership demands regarding accreditation, industry partnerships, research productivity, and digital transformation.

Preliminary observations and interviews with local deans suggest recurring challenges, including heavy administrative workloads, difficulty balancing academic and managerial functions, pressure to conform to CHED and accreditation standards, and challenges in developing faculty research productivity. Deans are also expected to lead digital and pedagogical innovations with little formal preparation or institutional backing (Ramiso, 2025). The conditions often lead to role ambiguity and work strain, pointing to the increasing complexity of academic leadership.

Although there was growing research on academic leadership in Philippine higher education, most of the literature was fragmented and descriptive. Current research has tended to analyze deans' leadership competencies in isolation or rely on qualitative narratives, and has not incorporated the multidimensional roles of deans across administrative, instructional, and research functions. Empirical evidence on the relationship between leadership competence and institutional performance indicators, such as accreditation results, faculty ratios, and enrollment growth, remained sparse.

These limitations indicate gaps in the literature regarding methods and context. Most studies used single-method approaches and rarely integrated quantitative and qualitative perspectives to gain a holistic understanding of academic leadership. Moreover, there are few studies on the regional higher education institutions in Butuan City and the Caraga Region, as their institutional conditions differ from those of metropolitan universities. The existence of these gaps made it imperative to conduct a context-sensitive mixed-methods investigation of leadership competence and performance of deans in Business programs.

The literature on academic leadership has been growing in volume, but a substantial methodological and integrative gap remains evident. Previous studies have often adopted a single-method approach and analyzed leadership competencies in isolation, leading to a fragmented view of the deanship. There was a lack

of comprehensive mixed-method studies that captured the multidimensionality of leadership competence, including structural, human resource, political, and symbolic dimensions, and their direct link to performance outcomes. This constraint made it difficult to grasp how leadership competence translated into fully measurable institutional performance. Therefore, this study addressed this gap by using a mixed-methods approach to investigate the joint association between leadership competence and performance of business program deans.

With the growing complexity of higher education governance, it was necessary to examine the influence of leadership competence on deans' performance. The study sought to clarify how leadership competence translated into institutional performance in Business programs by analyzing the structural, human, political, and symbolic dimensions of leadership. The outcomes ultimately contributed to improvements in leadership development and institutional support systems in regional higher education settings.

This study was aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), underscoring the importance of ensuring inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education. This study helped improve educational leadership and institutional effectiveness in higher education by examining 21st-century leadership competence and performance among deans of business programs. The quality of education was characterized by effective academic leadership, which was crucial in enhancing curriculum delivery, faculty development, research productivity, and student-centered learning. The study also supported Sustainable Development Goals 8, 9, and 17 by promoting industry partnerships, innovation in educational leadership, and collaborative engagement among stakeholders. The objective of the study was to enhance leadership practices that foster sustainable educational and socioeconomic development by developing a capacity-building program.

Related Studies

Contemporary research notes that the role of academic deans has shifted from traditional academic stewardship to complex leadership encompassing strategic management, quality assurance, external engagement, and resource mobilization (Seale, 2021). Deans have become mediators between faculty and institutional management, interpreters of policy for operational practice, and leaders of the charge on curricular reform and digital transformation. This is part of a broader shift in the governance of institutions of higher education that are increasingly working in competitive, performance- and accountability-driven contexts.

Leadership frameworks highlight the need for today's academic leaders to possess hybrid competencies, including instructional leadership, strategic thinking, stakeholder engagement, and budgetary stewardship (Ruben et al., 2023). However, many deans enter leadership through faculty promotion rather than traditional management preparation, resulting in a gap between role expectations and leadership readiness. Thus, it is recommended that higher education institutions implement leadership development and mentorship programs, as well as succession planning techniques, to enhance their administrative capabilities.

The outward-facing aspect of contemporary deanship has been noted in various studies. Academic leaders nowadays are tasked with building industry collaborations, securing funding, tapping into alum networks, and spearheading community-based activities to help sustain the school (Beatson et al., 2021; Pohlmann et al., 2025). These duties broaden the dean's profile beyond academic oversight and necessitate entrepreneurial talents to align institutional programming to the needs of the economy and society.

Research also suggests the growing role of digital leadership in academic administration. The proliferation of online learning platforms, data-driven decision making, and technology-enhanced pedagogy means deans will be expected to spearhead digital transformation programs at their institutions

(Subrahmanyam, 2025). Research indicates that deans actively supporting faculty technology adoption and digital pedagogy result in greater classroom innovation and increase the institution's responsiveness to technological change.

The roles of academic deans have increased with the growing importance of responsibility and regulatory compliance. Quality assurance systems, certification requirements, and national performance criteria have increased reporting and administrative responsibilities (Nadeem, 2023; Gallos & Bolman, 2021). While procedures like these are supposed to promote institutional standards, they also consume considerable time from deans on compliance-related tasks, sometimes limiting opportunities for intellectual leadership and faculty mentoring.

Role ambiguity and conflict in the deanship are often mentioned in the literature. The deanship is a hybrid job that blends academic identity with managerial obligations, so that many deans are torn between academic leadership and administrative responsibilities (see Madufo, 2025; Mgaiwa, 2023). Such tensions may affect job satisfaction, decision-making effectiveness, and leaders' performance. Scholars advise clearer role definitions, improved delegation procedures, and more administrative support systems.

Also, the research highlights the importance of deans in fostering academic culture and faculty participation. Supportive leadership approaches and recognition systems by effective deans can improve research output, teaching quality, and institutional morale (Fleming, 2025). Greater teacher dedication and superior student results have been connected with collaborative, inclusive, and professional development-oriented leadership practices.

Another emerging research topic concerns the managerial responsibilities of deans, particularly in finance and resource management. Fiscal stewardship, budgeting control, and strategic resource allocation have emerged as critical leadership duties; numerous academic leaders acknowledge insufficient formal training in financial management (Kulkarni et al., 2024; Louis et al., 2024). Academics advise embedding financial management training in leadership development courses and improving interaction between deans and institutional finance offices.

Research on dean preparation indicates that the leadership capabilities required for the position are seldom present in the standard academic career trajectories. Historically, deans have been selected for their academic achievement or seniority rather than for their leadership qualities (Wilhelm, 2024). To fill this vacuum, academics propose establishing structured leadership pipelines through administrative fellowships, rotational leadership posts, and professional coaching for aspiring academic leaders.

More recent empirical research evaluates the effect of leadership abilities on institutional outcomes. Studies on Asian higher education have shown that strategic planning skills, digital literacy, and transformational leadership techniques have a favorable effect on institutional performance outcomes such as program development and faculty involvement (Marichu & Paglinawan, 2024; Sulasula, 2023). These findings further emphasize the value of professional networks and collaborative leadership practices, especially at institutions outside major urban areas.

Research on workload and organizational pressures has also demonstrated that academic deans are under tremendous pressure. Studies have identified heavy administrative demands, role ambiguity, and substantial compliance obligations as contributing to stress, burnout, and poor job satisfaction (Mallorca et al., 2024; Sarabipour et al., 2023). These issues have prompted proposals for institutional reforms to define leadership responsibilities and reassign mundane administrative tasks.

Further global assessments demonstrate that the organizational governance of higher education institutions increasingly follows managerial and entrepreneurial organizational models. Hence, deans are expected to manage finance, institutional reporting, collaborations, and strategic initiatives without compromising academic integrity (Anderson, 2021; Sayang, 2024). These extended managerial tasks indicate the growing hybrid nature of academic leadership.

In the Philippine context, the significance of academic deans' functions and duties is largely shaped by regulatory mechanisms established by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Program leadership, certification of faculty, curricular supervision, and quality assurance are explicitly defined in the CHED Memorandum Orders (CHED CMO No. 7, s. 2022). Earlier, CMOs governing professional programs also determined appointment requirements and administrative functions, representing an advanced formalization of academic leadership roles in Philippine higher education.

Regional literature further indicates increased demand for institutions of higher education in areas such as Butuan City and the Caraga Region to strengthen research productivity, community engagement, and workforce development programs (Matildo, 2022). These regional development targets place additional leadership obligations on deans to align college-level planning with broader socio-economic objectives while working within institutional resource limitations.

In the context of Philippine higher education, empirical evidence suggests that leadership qualities, including vision-setting, people management, and academic quality assurance, are positively correlated with institutional performance (LaRiviere, 2024). Research also underscores the importance of digital leadership, in which deans who champion technology integration can dramatically affect faculty adoption of digital teaching practices (Tulo & Lee, 2022). Competency-based leadership structures also underscore the need for technical, managerial, and relational abilities for academic governance and institutional development (Ruben et al., 2023; van Lill & Hoole, 2024).

The regional literature in the Caraga Region emphasizes the importance of collaborative academic leadership in enhancing the quality of higher education. According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Council of Deans and regional capacity-building workshops are seen as ways to enhance program quality and institutions' accreditation readiness (Baylan, 2023; CHED Caraga, 2021; Prado, 2025). The initiatives enable institutions to pool resources and share best practices and professional experience, thereby positioning deans as agents of institutional reform and partners in regional development objectives.

There are several studies on competency frameworks for academic deans in the Philippine context. Early competency models have identified three basic dimensions of leadership competence: technical, personal, and management, which are extensively employed in performance appraisal and leadership development (Mohan, 2024). The results demonstrate a good degree of correspondence between stakeholders' expectations and deans' self-assessments, although improvements are still needed in managerial competencies. These frameworks facilitate the adoption of competency-based professional development and frequent evaluations to ensure that leadership competencies align with evolving institutional demands.

Studies on the digital leadership of Philippine deans have shown that leadership commitment is important in facilitating the incorporation of technology in higher education institutions. Research suggests that when deans advocate for digital initiatives, faculty are more likely to adopt online pedagogies and digital assessment techniques (Zhang et al., 2025; Madufo et al., 2024). However, the overall impact of these programs is often constrained by policy gaps, uneven infrastructure, and inadequate training. This underscores the need for integrated investments in leadership development, institutional policies, and technological resources to achieve digital transformation.

Empirical studies on business deans in the Caraga Region identify numerous fundamental leadership abilities, namely visioning, people management, and quality assurance (Forman, 2022; Ponce & Escuadra, 2024). Respondents often demonstrate strong competencies in academic leadership and faculty supervision, but weaker skills in entrepreneurial and fundraising activities. Some of these gaps may be explained by limited collaboration among local industries and budget constraints, underscoring the need for dedicated capacity-building programs to improve resource mobilization and external engagement.

Relational leadership has also been acknowledged as an important component in sustaining program quality. Grounded theory research on deans managing Centers of Excellence (COEs) found that cooperation,

networking, and faculty capacity building were critical methods for sustaining high-quality academic programs (Capulso et al., 2024; Quintero, 2024). These studies suggest that the formation of partnerships, the mobilization of social capital, and the encouragement of collaborative decision-making across institutions are crucial for effective academic leadership.

A further commonly mentioned worry in the literature is competency in financial management. Studies on the financial readiness of deans show that many academic administrators lack formal training in fiscal policy and financial management, which can hinder their ability to plan resource allocation and create sustainable budgets (Ramos & Lumapenet, 2023). The research suggests that deans who work more closely with institutional finance offices achieve better resource allocation outcomes. Scholars have suggested including fiscal management courses in leadership development programs.

Other research highlights the importance of leadership preparation and succession planning. The current literature on aspirant deans in regional institutions points to persistent skill deficits in fundraising, financial management, and establishing external partnerships (Annet, 2025; Fabrao & Pacadaljen, 2024). Structured mentorship, leadership fellowships, and administrative training programs have been demonstrated to increase managerial preparation among prospective academic leaders.

Further research on career routes indicates that excellent deans frequently gain leadership experience through stepwise administrative positions such as program coordinator or department chair (Velez, 2025). Structured career paths and leadership rotations are beneficial in developing administrators who are more responsive to management responsibilities. The results underscore the need for comprehensive succession planning in higher education institutions.

Research on dean leadership also shows its impact on institutional performance and faculty involvement. Studies have shown that the better the deans lead, the better their accreditation outcomes, graduate employment rates, and program sustainability (Balaoro, 2023; Pineda, 2023). In addition, leadership behaviors that encourage recognition, research support, and inclusive academic cultures enhance faculty morale and research productivity (Postrado & Matildo, 2022).

Entrepreneurial leadership is widely acknowledged as an important element of modern deanship. Research on partnerships with industry and alumni networks suggests that deans who proactively develop external relationships might create extra revenue streams, internships, and collaborative research opportunities (Elsisura et al., 2020; Briones, 2024). Long-term relationship management with alumni and industry partners is highly beneficial for sustaining institutional development projects.

Quality assurance and accreditation processes further underscore the centrality of academic deans to institutional governance. Research shows that dean-led training, curriculum review, and faculty mentoring have considerable positive impacts on the accreditation preparation and program quality of regional schools (Santelices & De La Cruz, 2023). Therefore, the active participation of deans in quality assurance systems remains a key strategy for institutional reform.

Recent research also examines the role deans play in community participation and regional development. Studies indicate that deans who emphasize building links with local communities and industries enhance chances for experiential learning and strengthen institutional relevance for regional stakeholders (Sulasula, 2024). These efforts help build the workforce, fuel local innovation, and make graduates more employable.

Finally, studies of organizational issues point to the substantial administrative burdens carried by academic deans. Studies show that delegating to associate deans and administrative personnel alleviates leadership burden and allows deans to focus on strategic activities (Peñas, 2025). Support for leadership development, fiscal management, digital capacity, and quality assurance are also identified as priority topics for enhancing academic leadership in the local needs assessments of the Caraga Region (Roque & Ulanday-Lozano, 2024).

The literature reviewed and empirical investigations together suggest that the role of the academic dean is becoming more complex. While research to date has provided essential insights into leadership abilities, managerial problems, and institutional contexts, considerable gaps remain in our understanding of how these characteristics interact across regional settings. The gaps highlight the need for localized, multi-method studies on the competencies, difficulties, and performance outcomes of deans in business school programs in Butuan City and the Caraga Region.

Reviewed studies and literature indicate that academic leadership in higher education has become a complex function requiring competencies in strategic management, digital leadership, quality assurance, and stakeholder engagement. Though previous research has highlighted the importance of these qualities, it has largely been limited to descriptive analyses and unidimensional measures of leadership. Moreover, there is a paucity of integrative studies on the effect of leadership competency on performance outcomes in a given environment, notably in the regional higher education institutions. These gaps indicate the necessity for a holistic mixed-methods study that reflects the multifaceted nature of leadership and its direct link to performance. Therefore, this study was performed to address these constraints and to provide a more holistic view of academic leadership in business programs.

Theoretical / Conceptual Framework

The study is based on the Four-Frame Leadership Theory of Bolman and Deal (1991; 2017), which views leadership in four ways: Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic. The idea suggests that successful leaders flexibly use these frames to meet complicated organizational objectives. Deans in higher education institutions, especially business schools, are expected to manage regulatory compliance, digital transformation, faculty development, and institutional accountability. Thus, the model provides a broad view of studying the impact of leadership ability on performance outcomes. The paper also locates leadership within the regulatory environment of the Philippines, specifically the Manual of Regulations for Private Higher Education (MORPHE) under CHED Memorandum Order No. 40, s—2008, which addresses institutional governance, faculty standards, and quality assurance in private higher education institutions.

The Structural Frame stresses the importance of organizational architecture, policies, accountability systems, and explicit role definitions. This frame is vital in Business programs since deans must be aware of CHED regulatory issuances, such as CMO No. 46, s. 2012 on outcomes-based quality assurance and CMO No. 07, p. 2022 on institutional governance; discipline-specific CMOs and MORPHE regulations. These policies determine faculty qualifications, academic workload, and quality assurance criteria. In this study, the Structural Frame explores how deans operationalize regulatory compliance, manage resources, and sustain program effectiveness in enhanced accountability regimes.

The Human Resource Frame emphasizes people-centered leadership, faculty empowerment, and organizational well-being. MORPHE is also committed to this view through measures such as faculty qualification upgrades, professional development, and requirements for academic promotion. Deans have to ensure that faculty training needs are met, research capabilities are developed, workloads are balanced, and regulatory obligations are complied with. In this context, leadership competency involves mentoring, evaluating performance, and creating supportive academic settings that improve the quality of education and research productivity.

The Political Frame is about negotiation, coalition-building, and strategic resource mobilization amid competing interests and scarce resources. To comply with CHED rules and MORPHE, investments in faculty development, research, accreditation, and infrastructure are often required. This means that deans have to negotiate with institutional leaders, get resources, and develop connections with industry and community groups. Political leadership ability allows deans to develop stakeholder consensus and maintain the program's

competitiveness in resource-constrained higher education environments.

The Symbolic Frame is about vision setting, institutional identity, and cultural leadership. Compliance with MORPHE and quality assurance procedures increases institutional legitimacy and public trust. Deans, as symbolic leaders, communicate strategic aims, create a research culture, and develop the brand identity of Business programs. Innovating recognition processes and public representation, they transform regulatory compliance into a collective vision of academic excellence and relevance.

Bolman and Deal's thesis further emphasizes that leadership effectiveness arises from integrating four frames rather than relying on a single perspective. MORPHE sets structural standards. However, leadership is also about human development, political negotiation, and the formation of symbolic meaning. Leadership focused only on structural conformity might result in institutional problems such as administrative burden or faculty motivation deficits. This study, therefore, explores the effect of integrated leadership abilities on deans' performance in academic leadership, curriculum management, research productivity, and community engagement. Thus, the Four-Frame model is the conceptual framework for analyzing findings and for constructing a capacity-building program for deans.

The conceptual structure of the study is presented in Figure 1. It explains the relationships among independent, moderating, and dependent variables that would lead to the suggested capacity-building program. The framework is grounded in the Four-Frame Leadership Theory. Leadership competence is conceived in terms of Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic aspects. These competencies reflect the leadership needs of deans of Business programs operating within the regulatory context of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the MORPHE rules.

In the Structural Frame, leadership competency includes digital leadership, fiscal management, and quality assurance compliance. These duties are stipulated in CHED mandates such as CMO No. 46, s. CMO No. 07, p. 2012 and 2022, as well as for the qualification of faculty, academic ranks, and reporting by institutions. Thus, structural leadership competency indicates the dean's ability to connect program operations with regulatory standards and maintain accreditation readiness.

The Human Resource Frame considers faculty development and stakeholder involvement. This dimension is reinforced by MORPHE policies requiring faculty to update their qualifications and pursue professional growth. As they conform to CHED criteria, deans need to implement mentoring programs, manage workloads, improve research capacity, and support faculty well-being. Within this frame, effective leadership enhances the quality of education and research output.

The Political Frame stresses the dean's adeptness at navigating institutional politics, securing resources, and cultivating strategic alliances. Research, faculty scholarships, and infrastructure are usually associated with financial costs to meet CHED standards. Deans therefore work with governing boards, industry partners, and community stakeholders to maintain institutional competitiveness and expand programs.

The Symbolic Frame examines vision-setting, institutional branding, and leadership in innovation. Meeting MORPHE standards promotes institutional credibility, and deans reinforce program identity through strategic direction, recognition practices, and innovative initiatives. Symbolic leadership is necessary for building institutional reputation and stakeholder trust.

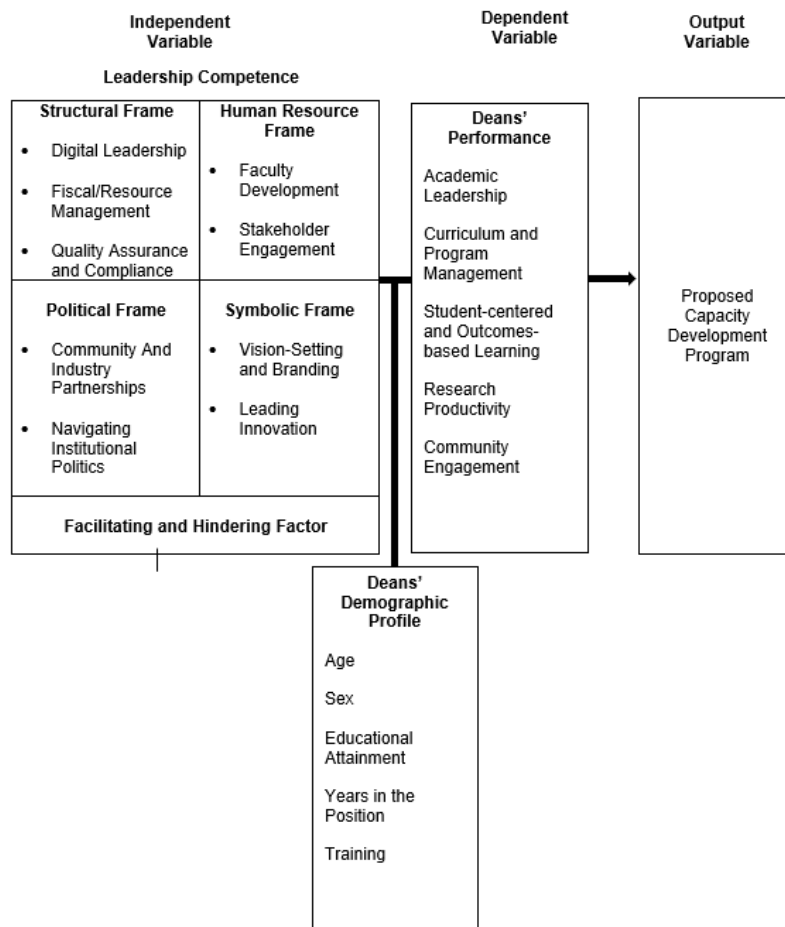
The framework's moderating variables are the demographic profile of the deans, i.e., age, gender, education, years in post, income level, and relevant training. These variables affect the translation of leadership qualities into performance outcomes. For example, higher education may be helpful for regulatory compliance, and longer tenure may enhance political clout within institutions.

The dependent variable is the performance of deans in the Business programs as measured by academic leadership, curriculum and program management, implementation of student-centered learning, research productivity, and community engagement. These indicators are consistent with CHED performance expectations and institutional mandates. Thus, Dean's performance is a function of the interaction of

leadership competence and contextual factors.

Finally, the framework's output is the suggested capacity-building program for deans. This program integrates findings from the leadership frames, demographic factors, and performance outcomes to develop a structured intervention model. The program intends to develop integrative leadership competence, enhance regulatory compliance, support faculty development, improve political negotiation capacity, and foster symbolic leadership. The program is grounded in Bolman and Deal's Four-Frame Leadership Theory and addresses the complex leadership demands of 21st-century deanship in Business programs.

Figure 1. Figure 1. Schematic Diagram Showing the Flow of the Study



Objectives of the Study

This study sought to assess the following objectives: (1) determine the demographic profile of deans in business programs in terms of age, educational attainment, and years in the position; (2) determine the extent of the 21st-century leadership competence of deans in terms of the Structural Frame, particularly digital leadership, fiscal/resource management, and quality assurance and compliance; the Human Resource Frame, including faculty development and stakeholder engagement; the Political Frame, specifically community and

industry partnership and navigating institutional politics; and the Symbolic Frame, particularly vision-setting and branding and leading innovation; (3) determine whether there is a significant difference in the extent of 21st-century leadership competence of deans across demographic profiles; (4) determine the level of deans' performance as rated by respondents and participants in terms of academic leadership, curriculum and program management, student-centered and outcomes-based learning, research productivity, and community engagement; (5) determine whether there is a significant difference in deans' performance levels across demographic profiles; (6) determine whether there is a significant relationship between the extent of 21st-century leadership competence and the level of deans' performance; (7) identify which dimensions of 21st-century leadership competence significantly predict the performance of deans in business programs; (8) describe the facilitating and hindering factors affecting the performance of deans in business programs; and (9) propose a capacity development program based on the findings of the study.

Methodology

The study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches, to assess the 21st-century leadership competence and performance of deans in business programs as a basis for a capacity development program. The quantitative phase employed a descriptive-correlational and predictive research design to assess the demographic profile of the respondents, determine the extent of leadership competence and level of dean performance, examine significant differences across profiles, identify relationships between leadership competence and performance, and determine predictors of dean performance. The qualitative phase followed the quantitative results through semi-structured interviews to explore and explain the facilitating and hindering factors affecting dean performance. The study was conducted in selected private higher education institutions in the Caraga Region, specifically in Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, and Butuan City. The respondents consisted of seven (7) deans and forty (40) program heads/faculty members, totaling fifty-two (52) participants, selected through total population enumeration for deans and purposive sampling for faculty members and program heads with at least a master's degree and relevant institutional experience. Data collection was conducted using a researcher-made survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide anchored on the Four-Frame Leadership Theory of Bolman and Deal and aligned with CHED and MORPHE policies. The survey questionnaire consisted of items assessing leadership competence across the Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic Frames, as well as dean performance in academic leadership, curriculum and program management, student-centered and outcomes-based learning, research productivity, and community engagement. The instruments underwent expert validation and pilot testing using the test-retest method, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90, indicating high reliability. Data analysis included frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation, Kruskal-Wallis H Test, Spearman's rho, regression analysis, and thematic analysis to determine the respondents' profile, extent of leadership competence, level of dean performance, significant differences and relationships, predictors of performance, and facilitating and hindering factors affecting dean performance.

Results and Discussion

Problem 1. What is the dean’s demographic profile in terms of age, sex, educational attainment, years in the position, and number of trainings per year?

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

| | | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Age Range | Below 30 | 26 | 50.0 |
| | 31-40 | 12 | 23.1 |
| | 41-50 | 9 | 17.3 |
| | 51 and above | 5 | 9.6 |
| | Total | 52 | 100.0 |
| Sex | Male | 28 | 53.8 |
| | Female | 24 | 46.2 |
| | Total | 52 | 100.0 |
| Educational Attainment | Bachelor’s Degree | 12 | 23.1 |
| | Master’s Degree | 30 | 57.7 |
| | Doctoral Degree | 10 | 19.2 |
| | Total | 52 | 100.0 |
| Years in the Position | 1-3 years | 18 | 34.6 |
| | 4-6 years | 16 | 30.8 |
| | 7-10 years | 9 | 17.3 |
| | More than 10 years | 9 | 17.3 |
| | Total | 52 | 100.0 |
| Number of Trainings per Year | 0-2 | 5 | 9.6 |
| | 3-5 | 20 | 38.5 |
| | 6-8 | 8 | 15.4 |
| | 9-11 | 6 | 11.5 |
| | 12 or more | 13 | 25.0 |
| | Total | 52 | 100.0 |

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents. In terms of age, the majority of respondents were 30 years old or younger (50.0%), while those 51 years old or older comprised the smallest group (9.6%), indicating that the respondents were generally younger professionals who may be more adaptable to modern academic practices and institutional innovations. In terms of sex, male respondents comprised 53.8%, slightly higher than female respondents at 46.2%, suggesting an almost balanced representation of both sexes and providing a more comprehensive perspective in the study. As to educational attainment, the majority of respondents held a master’s degree (57.7%), while only 19.2% had doctoral degrees, indicating that most respondents possessed graduate-level qualifications necessary for academic and professional responsibilities in higher education institutions. Regarding years in the position, most respondents had served for 1-3 years (34.6%), while those with 7-10 years and more than 10 years each accounted for 17.3% of respondents, suggesting that the respondents were generally early- to mid-tenured professionals who may still be adjusting

to leadership roles and institutional responsibilities. Finally, in terms of training attended per year, the largest proportion of respondents attended 3–5 training sessions (38.5%), while only 9.6% attended 0–2 training sessions, implying active engagement in professional development and a positive orientation toward continuous learning to improve competencies and job performance.

Problem 2. What is the extent of the 21st-century leadership competence of the deans, along with Structural Frame (digital leadership, fiscal/resource management, and quality assurance and compliance), Human Resource Frame (faculty development, and stakeholders’ engagement), Political Frame (community and industry partnership, and navigating institutional policies), and Symbolic Frame (vision-setting and branding, and leading innovation)?

Table 2. Extent of the 21st Century Leadership Competence of Deans

| Competence | Overall Mean | Std Dev | VD | VI |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|------------------|
| Structural Frame | 4.44 | 0.81 | Agree | Competent |
| 1. digital leadership | 4.41 | 0.786 | Agree | Competent |
| 2. fiscal/resource management | 4.37 | 0.885 | Agree | Competent |
| 3. quality assurance and compliance | 4.53 | 0.750 | Strongly Agree | Highly Competent |
| Human Resource Frame | 4.49 | 0.794 | Agree | Competent |
| 1. Faculty development | 4.55 | 0.747 | Strongly Agree | Highly Competent |
| 2. stakeholders’ engagement | 4.42 | 0.841 | Agree | Competent |
| Political Frame | 4.51 | 0.755 | Strongly Agree | Highly Competent |
| 1. community and industry partnership | 4.43 | 0.843 | Agree | Competent |
| 2. Navigating institutional policies | 4.58 | 0.666 | Strongly Agree | Highly Competent |
| Symbolic Frame | 4.43 | 0.786 | Agree | Competent |
| 1. vision-setting and branding, | 4.47 | 0.806 | Agree | Competent |
| 2. leading innovation | 4.38 | 0.765 | Agree | Competent |
| Grand Mean | 4.46 | 0.785 | Agree | Competent |

Legend: 1.00-1.50 (Not Competent); 1.51-2.50 (Slightly Competent); 2.51-3.50 (Moderately Competent); 3.51-4.50 (Competent); 4.51-5.00 (Highly Competent); VD (Verbal Description); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

The extent of deans’ leadership competence in the 21st century, according to the four leadership frames, is presented in Table 16. The results show that the mean (4.51) for the Political Frame is the highest, indicating Highly Competent. This has been contributed by the indicator “navigating institutional policies”, which has the highest mean (4.58). This suggests that deans are quite skilled at navigating institutional dynamics, negotiating conflicts, and managing relationships in complex organizational settings. This may be explained by the demands of higher education governance, in which leaders are regularly required to negotiate, coordinate, and bring together diverse stakeholder interests. Ruben et al. (2023) support this finding, noting that effective academic leaders possess strong political and relational competencies that enable them to navigate institutional structures and maintain organizational effectiveness.

The lowest mean, on the other hand, is under the Structural Frame for the indicator “fiscal/resource management,” with a score of 4.37, interpreted as Competent. Although this is a relatively low figure, it is still in a high range. This shows that deans may have difficulties in some areas of financial and resource management, such as budgeting, allocation limits, or technical financial processes. This is perhaps because most academic leaders are trained as academics rather than administrators, and they have little formal

education in financial management. This observation is consistent with the findings of Kulkarni et al. (2024), who found that academic leaders possess sufficient competence in resource management, but that gaps exist in advanced financial management skills requiring continuous professional development.

The grand mean of 4.46 (Competent) indicates that deans are generally perceived to have a high level of 21st-century leadership competence across all dimensions. This indicates that they can fulfill their leadership roles well in structural, human-resource, political, and symbolic terms. However, not all sites are competent at the top level, all the time. Such a general pattern supports the framework of Bolman and Deal (2017), which holds that effective leadership requires integrating multiple frames and that imbalances across these dimensions may affect overall leadership effectiveness. Overall, the findings indicate that deans are effective leaders. However, additional development in some areas, particularly in structural and resource functions, could lead to more balanced high-level leadership performance across all frames.

Problem 3. Is there a significant difference in the extent of 21st-century leadership competence across profiles?

Table 3. Result of the Test of the Significant Difference of the Leadership Competence Across Profiles Using Kruskal-Wallis

| Profile | H | P Value | Result | Decision |
|---------------------------------|------|---------|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. Age | 6.51 | 0.089 | Not significant | Accept Ho |
| 2. Sex | 0.03 | 0.869 | Not significant | Accept Ho |
| 3. Educational attainment | 3.69 | 0.158 | Not significant | Accept Ho |
| 4. Years in the position | 5.88 | 0.117 | Not significant | Accept Ho |
| 5. Number of trainings per year | 3.31 | 0.507 | Not significant | Accept Ho |

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to assess whether leadership competence differed significantly across selected profile variables. The results of this test are presented in Table 17. The results of the study revealed that the p-values for age (0.089), sex (0.869), educational attainment (0.158), years in the position (0.117), and number of trainings per year (0.507) are all higher than the 0.05 level of significance. This means there are no statistically significant differences in leadership competence when these profile variables are used to group respondents. This results in the acceptance of the null hypothesis, indicating that the level of leadership competency among deans does not differ significantly across their demographic and professional characteristics.

This means that there is no relationship between leadership competence and age, sex, level of education, period of appointment, or frequency of training. It could be tied to other variables such as the institutional context, the type of leadership experience, or the support systems within the organization. This finding was also supported by Ruben et al. (2023), who argued that leadership competence is more affected by organizational dynamics, leadership practices, and contextual demands than by demographic characteristics in higher education.

Problem 4. What is the level of deans’ performance, as rated by respondents and participants, in terms of academic leadership, curriculum and program management, student-centered and outcomes-based learning, research productivity, and community engagement?

Table 4. The Level of Performance of Deans

| Indicators | Overall Mean | Std Dev | VD | VI |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1. Academic leadership | 4.51 | 0.727 | Strongly Agree | Outstanding |
| 2. Curriculum and program management | 4.60 | 0.713 | Strongly Agree | Outstanding |
| 3. Student-centered and outcomes-based learning | 4.53 | 0.763 | Strongly Agree | Outstanding |
| 4. Research productivity | 4.36 | 0.908 | Agree | Very Good |
| 5. Community engagement | 4.44 | 0.800 | Agree | Very Good |
| Grand Mean | 4.49 | 0.782 | Agree | Very Good |

Legend: 1.00-1.50 (Poor); 1.51-2.50 (Fair); 2.51-3.50 (Good); 3.51-4.50 (Very Good); 4.51-5.00 (Outstanding); VD (Verbal Description); VI (Verbal Interpretation)

Table 4 shows the performance of deans in the main functional areas. Based on the results, the area of curriculum and program management has the highest mean of 4.60, rated Outstanding. This is an attestation to the efficiency of deans in designing programs of study in accordance with standards and in consideration of the needs of the institution and society. This strong performance may be due to the important role of curriculum management across several dimensions, including accreditation, quality assurance, and the institution's competitiveness. This is consistent with the findings of Santelices and De La Cruz (2023), who found that strong curriculum oversight and alignment with standards significantly improve program quality and institutional credibility.

The median for research productivity was 4.36. This is not too bad, but it is the lowest. This relatively low value, however, may suggest that research-related functions are not prioritized or supported to the same degree as other areas. However, this level of performance remains satisfactory. This may be due to various reasons, such as insufficient funding, heavy teaching and administrative loads, or insufficient incentives for research. This finding is consistent with the findings of Postrado and Matildo (2023), which indicate that research productivity in higher education institutions is usually determined by institutional support, leadership encouragement, and the availability of resources.

The grand mean score of 4.49, interpreted as Very Good, indicates that deans have a high level of performance across all domains for the entire organization. This indicates that they are generally successful in carrying out their roles in academic leadership, program management, teaching and learning support, research, and community engagement. However, they do not necessarily excel in all of these domains. As Ruben et al. (2023) point out, effective academic leadership is performance across many domains, and strengths in these areas are contingent on institutional priorities and contextual considerations. This general trend is consistent with the findings of Ruben et al. (2023), who identified this need.

Overall, the results suggest that the deans are doing their jobs quite well, but that further improvements in research productivity would lead to uniformly excellent performance.

Problem 5. Is there a significant difference in deans' performance levels across profiles?

Table 5. Result of the Test of Significant Difference on Performance Across Profiles Using Kruskal-Wallis

| Profile | H | P Value | Result | Decision |
|---------------------------------|------|---------|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. Age | 8.61 | 0.035 | Significant | Reject Ho |
| 2. Sex | 0.04 | 0.847 | Not significant | Accept Ho |
| 3. Educational attainment | 6.11 | 0.047 | Significant | Reject Ho |
| 4. Years in the position | 6.69 | 0.082 | Not significant | Accept Ho |
| 5. Number of trainings per year | 4.57 | 0.334 | Not significant | Accept Ho |

Table 5 presents the results of a significant difference test on the level of performance of deans across profile variables using the Kruskal–Wallis test. The results show that the calculated p-values for age (0.035) and educational attainment (0.047) are below the 0.05 significance level, indicating statistically significant performance differences when grouped by these variables. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected for these profiles. This means that the performance of deans varies by age and level of education, suggesting that experience, maturity, or higher academic qualifications may affect their effectiveness in performing their duties. The p-values for sex (0.847), years in the position (0.082), and number of trainings per year (0.334) are greater than 0.05, indicating no significant differences across these variables and acceptance of the null hypothesis. This implies that these factors do not have significant effects on deans’ performance. That performance might be more closely related to aspects of personal and professional growth than to tenure, gender, or frequency of training alone. This result was confirmed by LaRiviere (2024), who emphasized that variations in leadership effectiveness are often influenced by factors such as education and professional experience rather than demographic characteristics.

Problem 6. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of 21st-century leadership competence and the level of deans’ performance?

Table 6. Result of the Test of the Significant Relationship Between Independent and Dependent Variables Using the Spearman-rho

| Independent | Dependent | r | P Value |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------|---------|
| Leadership Competence | Performance | 0.926 | 0.000 |

Decision: Rejected Ho. Remarks: Significant

The results of Spearman's rho, used to assess the significance of the relationship between leadership competence and performance, are shown in Table 25. The results show that the calculated p-value is 0.000, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected as there is a statistically significant relationship between leadership competence and performance. The results of the study show that deans' leadership competency has a significant impact on, and is a significant predictor of, deans' performance. This implies that deans are good at various leadership dimensions that lead to better performance. This may be because mediators such as the institutional context, resources, or organizational support systems are involved. This is consistent with Maduforo et al. (2024), who postulate that leadership competence may not be directly transferable to performance outcomes alone. This is because organizational factors and contextual conditions significantly affect leadership effectiveness in institutions of higher education.

Problem 7. Which of the 21st-century leadership competencies predicts the dean's performance?

Table 7. Result of the Regression Analysis

| Predictor | Coef | SE Coef | T | P |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| Constant | 0.0874 | 0.2069 | 0.42 | 0.675 |
| Structural Competence | -0.3121 | 0.1148 | -2.72 | 0.009 |
| Human Resource Competence | 0.4526 | 0.1525 | 2.97 | 0.005 |
| Political Competence | 0.6104 | 0.1189 | 5.13 | 0.000 |
| Symbolic Competence | 0.2277 | 0.1498 | 1.52 | 0.135 |

The regression equation is

$$\text{Performance} = 0.087 - 0.312 \text{ Struc} + 0.453 \text{ Human} + 0.610 \text{ Political} + 0.228 \text{ Symbolic}$$

S = 0.1913 R-Sq = 91.4% R-Sq(adj) = 90.7%

Analysis of Variance

| Source | DF | SS | MS | F | P |
|----------------|----|---------|--------|--------|-------|
| Regression | 4 | 18.3872 | 4.5968 | 125.59 | 0.000 |
| Residual Error | 47 | 1.7203 | 0.0366 | | |
| Total | 51 | 20.1076 | | | |

Table 7 presents the results of the regression analysis relating to the impact of the various dimensions of leadership competence on deans’ performance. The results show that the model as a whole is statistically significant. The p-value from the analysis of variance is 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. Taken together, the independent variables are significant predictors of deans’ performance.

Moreover, the model accounts for a very high percentage of variance in performance, with an R-squared value of 91.4 percent, indicating that the four leadership competencies account for the vast majority of variation in performance outcomes. Individual predictors show that political competence (p=0.000) and human resource competence (p=0.005) are significant positive predictors of performance. At the same time, structural competence (p = 0.009) is significant but negative, indicating an inverse relationship. However, symbolic competence (p = .135) was not a significant predictor of performance in this model.

The results show that the capacity to manage people and institutional politics is more important for performance improvement than the symbolic leadership factors. Ruben et al. (2023) support this, finding that relational and political skills, particularly stakeholder management, collaboration, and navigating the organization, have a significant impact on leadership effectiveness in higher education, as they influence institutional performance outcomes.

Problem 8. What are the facilitating and hindering factors in the dean's performance?

Table 8. Emerging Themes on the Facilitating Factors

| Theme | Codes | Participant Responses |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Supportive Institutional Environment | Supportive institutional culture; Alignment with standards; Decentralized decision-making; Openness to innovation; Leadership autonomy | P1: “There is a supportive academic environment and clear alignment with CHED standards, which allows me to apply flexible teaching strategies and improve the curriculum continuously.” P2: “The institution enables me to demonstrate leadership when there is trust from top management, decentralization of decision-making, and encouragement to introduce new ideas.” P7: “What really helps is that our school is open to new ideas and not too rigid, which allows me to introduce improvements in teaching and partnerships.” |
| Strong Administrative Support | Responsive administration; Efficient coordination; Leadership mentoring; Stakeholder collaboration; Institutional support | P1: “The administration is approachable and responsive, especially in approvals, scheduling, and policy implementation, which improves efficiency in decision-making.” P4: “We receive strong support from top management, including financial assistance, mentoring, and partnerships with stakeholders |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | such as government agencies.” |
| Availability of Resources and Systems | Functional learning systems; Available digital tools; Adequate instructional materials; Established monitoring systems; Faculty collaboration | <p>P5: “Administrative support provides leadership trainings, budget allocation, and opportunities to attend conferences that enhance leadership performance.”</p> <p>P1: “The college provides basic instructional materials, LMS access, and digital communication tools that help in managing classes and monitoring student performance.”</p> <p>P2: “Systems such as performance monitoring tools, LMS, and research support services assist me in fulfilling managerial and academic responsibilities.”</p> |
| Leadership Competencies and Skills | Effective communication; Leadership adaptability; Problem-solving ability; Strong interpersonal relations; Transformational leadership | <p>P6: “We use LMS for exams, grading, and lesson preparation, which supports our instructional and administrative tasks.”</p> <p>P1: “Communication skills, adaptability, problem-solving, and teamwork help me handle leadership responsibilities effectively.”</p> <p>P2: “Resilience, sound judgment, conflict management, and innovation enable me to motivate faculty and achieve common goals.”</p> |
| Professional Experience and Development | Continuous leadership training; Curriculum development engagement; Accreditation experience; Ongoing professional learning; Leadership exposure | <p>P5: “Transformational and service leadership help me support faculty, resolve conflicts, and improve instructional delivery.”</p> <p>P1: “Handling program evaluation, curriculum revision, and student concerns strengthened my leadership and organizational skills.”</p> <p>P4: “Leadership trainings, strategic planning activities, and stakeholder engagement have improved my effectiveness as a leader.”</p> <p>P7: “My experience with accreditation and continuous training helped me become more organized, detail-oriented, and responsive to institutional needs.”</p> |

Table 8 presents several emerging themes among the enabling factors affecting academic leaders’ demonstration of 21st-century leadership competencies. This table presents the conditions and experiences necessary for leaders to successfully perform their functions in managing business programs.

Within the context of the enabling institutional environment, the positive and enabling organizational climate is the key determinant of leadership effectiveness. Participants discussed the importance of trust from senior management, openness to innovation, and alignment with institutional and regulatory standards in enabling the development of autonomy and improvements. When educational institutions develop a flexible and supportive environment for their leaders, those leaders are more likely to make decisions and implement changes that improve academic programs. This was also supported by Subrahmanyam (2025), who found that academic leaders operating in a supportive institutional environment are more successful at implementing initiatives related to digital transformation and innovation.

Strong administrative support underscores the need for responsive leadership and organizational support to enable effective performance. Participants were informed that the plan is executed with timely approvals, clear coordination, mentoring, and stakeholder partnerships, and is subsequently used to achieve the goals. This support reduces operational workload and allows leaders to focus more time on academic and strategic responsibilities, thereby increasing their overall effectiveness. This agrees with the findings of

Fleming (2025), who observed that strong administrative and organizational support improves leadership effectiveness by enabling academic leaders to concentrate on strategic and instructional responsibilities.

One example of the importance of institutional provisions in supporting leadership functions is the availability of resources and systems. Access to learning management systems, digital tools, instructional materials, and monitoring systems enables leaders to manage academic and administrative responsibilities effectively. These resources are key to today’s educational leadership, as they promote better communication, streamline processes, and enable decisions based on accurate information. This is in line with the findings of Louis et al. (2024), who have shown that leadership effectiveness, decision-making processes, and overall organizational performance improve with the availability of institutional resources and systems. This result confirms that of that study.

The emphasis on leadership competencies and skills highlights the importance of personal characteristics in effective leadership. The participants indicated that the most important features for performing a variety of tasks were communication, flexibility, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills. These competencies demonstrate that leadership success depends not only on the institution but also on the individual's skills. These skills empower leaders to face challenges, motivate faculty and students, and establish a productive workplace. The results of this study are consistent with Ruben et al. (2023), who identified communication, adaptability, and interpersonal skills as leadership competencies pivotal to effective academic leadership and institutional success.

Professional experience and development: Learn and gain experience in leadership roles to improve leadership performance. Their involvement in trainings, curriculum development, accreditation processes, and other institutional activities has made them more organized, strategic, and responsive. This allows us to build leaders who are better able to adapt and respond to the evolving needs of the educational system. This is also supported by the findings of Wilhelm (2024), who found that continuous professional development and leadership experience are significant factors in the effectiveness and adaptability of academic leaders.

Table 9. Emerging Themes on the Hindering Factors

| Theme | Codes | Participant Responses |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Workload and Role Conflict | Excessive workload; Role conflict; Time constraints; Task overload | P1: “One major challenge is balancing teaching load and administrative responsibilities, which creates stress and affects efficiency.” P3: “Balancing multiple responsibilities makes it difficult to focus on leadership tasks.” P7: “Handling faculty expectations, student concerns, and administrative work all at once creates pressure.” |
| Resistance to Change | Resistance to innovation; Low technology adoption; Traditional mindset; Change reluctance | P1: “There is resistance among faculty, especially in adapting new teaching methods and technologies.” P5: “Some faculty members find it difficult to accept and adapt to technology, which slows down implementation.” P7: “Some faculty are used to traditional methods, so they do not easily adapt to new systems or approaches.” |
| Institutional Constraints | Limited budget; Delayed approvals; Unclear policies; Bureaucratic processes | P2: “Institutional limitations include delayed approvals, unclear policies, and overlapping responsibilities that affect implementation.” P6: “Decisions must go through higher administration, which delays action and limits autonomy.” |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Resource Limitations | Insufficient funding; Limited facilities; Inadequate workforce; Lack of training opportunities | <p>P5: "Limited budget restricts the implementation of important activities, especially faculty development programs."</p> <p>P1: "Limited facilities, lack of advanced technology, and insufficient training opportunities affect the quality of instruction."</p> <p>P2: "Insufficient funding and manpower reduce the capacity to introduce innovations."</p> |
| External Demands and Compliance | Heavy regulatory demands; Accreditation pressure; Documentation burden; External compliance constraints | <p>P4: "There is a lack of expert faculty and limited resources to support program expansion."</p> <p>P1: "Compliance with CHED and other regulatory bodies requires extensive documentation, which reduces time for instruction."</p> <p>P6: "We must strictly adhere to CHED requirements, which can be demanding and time-consuming."</p> |
| Implementation Challenges | Goal misalignment; Resistance to reforms; System inefficiencies; Difficult transitions | <p>P7: "Accreditation and regulatory requirements require significant documentation and adjustments."</p> <p>P2: "Resistance from faculty during curriculum revision made implementation difficult."</p> <p>P5: "Misalignment between my goals and institutional leadership creates challenges in implementation."</p> <p>P7: "During the shift to online learning, lack of readiness and connectivity issues made implementation difficult at first."</p> |

Table 9. Emerging themes for academic leaders to exemplify 21st-century leadership competencies. The table below outlines some of the challenges and barriers that leaders encounter in performing their duties in managing business programs.

Role conflict and workload affect the effectiveness of leadership. Sounds like the scope of responsibility would be a big factor. Participants reported spending less time on leadership responsibilities and felt pressure to balance administrative and teaching responsibilities. Conflicting demands and overlapping responsibilities create stress and low productivity. This means that workload management is still one of the major barriers to effective leadership. This finding supports the findings of Mallorca et al. (2024), who found that the heavy workloads, role conflicts, and administrative demands of academic leaders create stress and compromise their leadership effectiveness.

2. Resistance to change. Innovation is difficult because the faculty resists change. Participants identified traditional mentalities and a lack of adaptation to technology as hindering the application of modern teaching methods and systems. The opposition impedes institutional reforms and the full implementation of 21st-century leadership strategies. This is in agreement with the findings of Maduforo et al. (2024), who found that faculty resistance to change and a lack of technological adaptability are barriers to the successful adoption of innovation in higher education institutions.

Institutional constraints are operational constraints on leadership actions imposed by organizational constraints. Tight budgets, lengthy approval processes, unclear policies, and bureaucratic procedures make it difficult for participants to implement programs and initiatives. These deficiencies limit decision-making freedom and can delay plan execution, undermining the overall effectiveness of leadership. This is in line with

the findings of Ramos and Lumapenet (2023), who revealed that institutional constraints such as tight budgets, bureaucratic processes, and unclear policies hinder academic leadership.

The non-availability of institutional support (money, facilities, staff, training opportunities) as a resource constraint hampers the leadership performance. "Limited resources constrain opportunities for faculty development, innovation, and quality instruction," they warned. So, a lack of resources is a major hindrance to achieving organizational goals. Louis et al. (2024) found that a lack of funding, facilities, and training opportunities negatively affected institutional outcomes and leadership performance.

There is so much pressure on leaders to be compliant and to meet expectations. The participants said the time spent on accreditation paperwork and government regulations was a drain on time that could have been spent improving instruction and increasing student engagement. External variables complicate program management and increase the workload. This is consistent with Nadeem (2023), who observed that higher compliance and regulatory demands negatively affect academic leaders' instructional and strategic roles.

Leadership is even less effective because it is hard to create change. Participants discussed issues such as conflicting objectives, resistance to reforms, systemic inefficiencies, and transition challenges (e.g., the transition to online learning). These challenges result in failed initiatives and the need for better planning and support systems. In line with the findings of Sarabipour et al. (2023), implementation problems, including system inefficiency and resistance to reforms, are among the primary barriers to effective leadership and organizational change.

Problem 9. Based on the results of the study, what capacity development program may be proposed?

Enhancing 21st-Century Leadership Competence of Deans in Business Programs: An Integrative Capacity Development Program

Rationale

The study discovered that deans scored high in leadership competence across the four dimensions: Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic Competence, with mean scores ranging from 4.37 to 4.58. The study also found that the deans were rated high in the key areas of academic leadership, curriculum management, research productivity, and community engagement. Competencies in institutional politics ($M = 4.58$), faculty development ($M = 4.55$), and quality assurance and compliance ($M = 4.53$) were strong indicators of leadership effectiveness. However, areas such as digital leadership ($M = 4.41$), stakeholder engagement ($M = 4.42$), and community and industry partnerships ($M = 4.43$) were rated only as competent, indicating the need for further improvement. The results indicate that deans possess strong foundational leadership competencies, but targeted interventions are needed to develop competencies that support innovation, collaboration, and digital transformation in higher education.

Moreover, the qualitative results identified facilitating and hindering factors affecting leadership performance. Supportive institutional environments, administrative support, and resource availability contributed to leadership effectiveness. Workload and role conflict, resistance to change, institutional constraints, resource limitations, and compliance demands challenged optimal performance. These findings underscore the significance of a structured and responsive capacity development program that not only enhances leadership competencies but also tackles organizational and systemic barriers. Thus, the proposed program seeks to maintain high-performing leadership while strengthening areas for development, thereby preparing deans to meet the changing demands of 21st-century higher education.

Proposed Capacity Development Program Matrix

| Specific Variables | Focus Area | Proposed Activities | Objectives | Persons Involved | Time frame | Expected Outcomes |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Structural Competence | | | | | | |
| Digital Leadership | Enhancement of digital management and technology integration skills among deans | Conduct seminars and workshops on digital leadership, AI utilization, data-driven decision-making, and educational technologies. | To strengthen the digital leadership competencies of deans in managing academic programs and institutional operations | Deans, IT Personnel, External ICT Experts, Academic Heads | 1st Quarter | Improved utilization of digital tools, enhanced decision-making, and efficient academic management |
| Fiscal/Resource Management | Need for effective budgeting, resource allocation, and financial planning | Training workshops on fiscal management, budget preparation, procurement policies, and resource optimization | To improve financial management and efficient utilization of institutional resources | Deans, Finance Officers, Budget Officers, School Administrators | 2nd Quarter | Enhanced budgeting skills, transparent financial management, and optimized resource allocation |
| Quality Assurance and Compliance | Strengthening compliance with accreditation and quality assurance standards | Capability training on quality assurance systems, accreditation processes, and policy compliance | To enhance the dean's competence in maintaining academic quality and institutional compliance | Deans, QA Officers, Accrediting Agencies, Program Chairs | 2nd Quarter | Increased compliance with QA standards and improved institutional accreditation performance |
| Human Resource Competence | | | | | | |
| Faculty Development | Need for continuous professional growth and mentoring of faculty members | Faculty coaching and mentoring programs, leadership training, and instructional enhancement workshops | To improve the dean's ability to support faculty growth and professional development | Deans, Faculty Members, HR Personnel, External Trainers | Whole Academic Year | Strengthened faculty competencies, improved teaching performance, and higher faculty engagement |
| Stakeholder Engagement | Strengthening collaboration and communication with stakeholders | Stakeholder partnership forums, communication skills training, and collaborative planning workshops | To enhance relationship-building and stakeholder participation in institutional programs | Deans, Faculty, Parents, Alumni, Industry Partners, Community Leaders | 3rd Quarter | Improved stakeholder collaboration, stronger partnerships, and increased institutional support |

| Political Competence | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Community and Industry Partnerships | Need to establish sustainable linkages and external collaborations | Partnership-building activities, MOA development workshops, and industry immersion programs | To strengthen the deans' competencies in developing community and industry linkages | Deans, Industry Partners, LGUs, Community Organizations | Whole Academic Year | Increased partnerships, expanded community involvement, and strengthened industry collaboration. |
| Navigating Institutional Politics | Enhancement of conflict management, negotiation, and decision-making skills | Leadership forums, conflict resolution training, and strategic governance workshops | To improve deans' political competence in handling institutional challenges and organizational dynamics | Deans, School Executives, HR Officers, Leadership Experts | 4th Quarter | Improved conflict management, stronger leadership influence, and effective institutional governance |

Conclusions

Based on the findings given, the following are drawn:

1. Academic leadership in higher education requires a combination of strategic, managerial, interpersonal, and innovative competencies to address the increasing complexity of institutional governance effectively. This suggests that deans must continuously adapt to evolving educational demands to sustain institutional effectiveness and academic quality.
2. The integration of Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic leadership dimensions strengthens the capacity of deans to manage institutional responsibilities effectively. A balanced leadership approach enables deans to respond to academic, organizational, and stakeholder-related challenges in higher education.
3. Leadership effectiveness is influenced by individual and professional characteristics, emphasizing the importance of continuous academic preparation, leadership exposure, and professional training. This implies that sustained professional development contributes to stronger leadership readiness and adaptability.
4. Effective dean performance contributes significantly to institutional development by strengthening academic leadership, curriculum implementation, research productivity, and community engagement. This highlights the critical role of deans in sustaining institutional growth and educational excellence.
5. Leadership competence serves as a foundational element of institutional performance, indicating that stronger leadership capabilities contribute to better academic and organizational outcomes. Institutions, therefore, benefit when academic leaders are equipped with relevant competencies and support systems.
6. Higher education institutions must invest in leadership development mechanisms to ensure that deans remain responsive, adaptive, and capable of addressing emerging challenges. Continuous leadership enhancement is necessary to sustain competitiveness and institutional relevance.

7. Institutional effectiveness is strengthened when academic leaders are provided with supportive environments, collaborative systems, and adequate resources. Such conditions enable deans to perform their roles more effectively and implement institutional goals successfully.
8. Organizational challenges such as workload pressures, limited resources, and resistance to change may constrain leadership effectiveness when left unaddressed. This underscores the need for institutional interventions that minimize barriers and improve leadership efficiency.
9. A structured capacity development program is essential in strengthening leadership competence and improving dean performance in higher education institutions. Such intervention provides a sustainable mechanism to address competency gaps and prepare academic leaders for future educational demands.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

Commission on Higher Education (CHED). They may improve policy frameworks and leadership standards to promote competency-based development and increase the effectiveness of academic leadership in higher education institutions.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). They can develop structured leadership development programs to improve leadership competence, sustain high-performance outcomes, and strengthen institutional support mechanisms.

Academic Deans. They can further develop their competencies in digital leadership, stakeholder engagement, and resource management to enhance their effectiveness in handling academic and administrative functions.

Faculty & Staff. They may participate more actively in professional development and collaboration to capitalize on the improved leadership support and improved instructional and research practices.

Graduate Students and Emerging Academic Leaders. They can participate in academic preparation and leadership development to gain competencies needed for effective leadership roles in higher education.

Industry & Community Partners. They could improve collaboration and partnership initiatives to support academic programs and contribute to institutional development and relevance.

Future Researchers. Further studies on leadership competence and performance can be conducted to add to the empirical evidence base and investigate other variables that affect leadership effectiveness.

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