

Organizational Culture and School Leadership: From the Narratives of the School Heads

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Abstract: This research aimed to explore the lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and personal insights of school heads in supervising, organizing, and leading the schools in the Department of Education Montevista District, Davao de Oro. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with seven informants. Findings revealed a wide range of positive experiences, including building strong partnerships with stakeholders, fostering community and teacher collaboration, promoting teamwork, and implementing programs successfully. School heads also highlighted the importance of transparency, mentoring, shared leadership, and learner-centered practices as essential to effective school management. Despite these successes, the study uncovered numerous challenges. These included student behavioral issues, teacher attitudes, resource limitations, administrative workload, lack of parental involvement, communication problems, crisis management, and the struggle to balance multiple responsibilities. Such issues tested the leaders' decision-making capacity and sometimes led to misalignment in outcomes, adversely affecting the school community. In response, school heads developed various coping strategies. These included empowering teachers, practicing patience and acceptance, focusing on goals, establishing strong communication, and drawing strength from personal purpose and optimism. They emphasized staying positive, being transparent, and building a strong school culture rooted in collaboration and mutual respect. The school heads' insights reflected deep commitment and growth. They recognized the need for continuous improvement, innovation, integrity, and fairness. They valued the importance of being present, inspiring others, and maintaining a passion for education. Their leadership was shaped by experience, driven by a desire to improve student performance and create competitive schools. Ultimately, they believed that with collaboration, positivity, and a clear vision, everything will fall into place.

Keywords: Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, Experiences, Leadership, Narrative, Organizational Culture, Philippines.

1. Introduction

School principals in the present time must deal with a myriad of critical tasks in guiding, directing, and managing schools, particularly with shifting education policies and increased demands for accountability. One is the heavy administrative burden that takes away from their prime function of instructional leadership. This usually leaves them with less time for guiding teachers, rolling out curriculum innovation, and interacting with stakeholders. Additionally, restricted decision

making autonomy, combined with the demands of satisfying performance indicators, generates stress and inhibits them from effective leadership. In [1] assertion, principals often face difficulties in making managerial responsibilities and leadership coincide because of systemic limitations and inadequate support systems.

In Turkey, [2] stated that while carrying out these numerous administrative responsibilities that are crucial to the operation of schools and education systems, they frequently confront many challenges and difficulties. As a result, school leaders faced significant challenges, including insufficient funds and budgets, a shortage of school staff, insufficient or unwilling teachers, an abundance of responsibilities with limited authority, school building maintenance, and dealing with excessive and rapidly changing legislation. Other severe concerns and challenges included a lack of inspector expertise and a refusal to consider new ideas, principal assignments that were not merit-based, limited communication and collaboration among teachers, and pressures from superiors or unions.

In the Philippines, school leaders have several recurring issues in effectively overseeing, organizing, and directing their schools, particularly in establishing alignment across all school entities, including teachers, non-teaching professionals, students, parents, and community stakeholders. Likewise, In the Davao Region, school principals confront numerous challenges in supervising, organizing, and leading schools, particularly while preparing for and implementing school Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs) in distant locations. These problems demand students and teachers to be adaptable, inventive, and resourceful. According to [3], school administrators face challenges such as low-quality materials, insufficient training and orientations, restricted learning resources, and excessive workload. These issues make it more difficult for school principals to manage school activities, guide their staff, and get support from stakeholders.

Locally, in Montevista District, public secondary school heads experiences struggle in managing and supervising schools' community behavioral culture. For them, the problem comes from personal and family problems, financial issues, disobedience, dishonesty relevant to duties, superiority, authoritarian behaviors towards co-workers, factions due to hearsay, gossip, work ethics, and moral values in place.

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Furthermore, conflicts among teachers due to individual differences, failure of teachers to submit reports, conflict of priorities, absenteeism, and tendencies of teachers to dwell in their comfort zones were evident as major concerns among school head teachers. Moreover, these issues made them bothered as it shows the potential impact of the school performance and the learners' achievements.

While some studies have looked at the connection between school leadership and organizational culture, there is very little research in the Philippines that explores the personal experiences and views of school leaders. Most past studies used mainly numbers and data, which do not fully show how school leaders understand and influence their school's culture. Like, [4] found that creative leadership helps improve principals' performance through the school culture, but their study did not explore the leaders' personal stories. Likewise, [5] looked at programs designed to improve how schools are managed in Mandaluyong City, but they did not study how school leaders deal with and understand their school culture. Thus, this study aims to fill that gap by learning from the stories of school heads to better understand how they see and use organizational culture in their leadership.

A. Purpose of the Study

The main thrust of this phenomenological research study was to explore the lived experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and personal insights of participants as they managed issues in supervising, organizing, and leading their schools, with a focus on how they understood and practiced organizational culture. By listening to their voices, the study examined how leadership styles, values, and actions shaped school culture, especially in the face of difficulties. It also explored how school heads encouraged teamwork and led through shared norms and expectations. The results aimed to furnish helpful insights into school leaders, stakeholders, and policymakers by identifying effective leadership approaches that improve school culture. Ultimately, the study aimed to support the development of schools that are more united, collaborative, and responsive to the needs of both teachers and students.

2. Review of Related Literature

A. Experience in Supervising, Organizing, and Leading a School

Accordingly, school leaders are likely to have numerous positive moments while running their schools, which significantly impact overall school cultures and student success. Transformational leadership, by motivating and inspiring staff towards a common vision, has been a prominent contributor to positive moments. A systematic review conducted by [6] revealed that transformational leadership positively affects school staff by promoting organizational cohesiveness, interdependence, and collective efficacy, which leads to increased school productivity. Similarly, the study by [7] emphasized that transformational leaders foster a positive school culture by building trust, collaboration, and shared accountability among staff. Such leadership practices not only increase teacher motivation and job satisfaction but also result

in an effective and inspiring learning environment for students.

Likewise, Philippine school principals have also demonstrated adaptive leadership traits, especially in times of adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic. [8] observed that principals became empathic and compassionate in their practice, not only prioritizing the health and well-being of 5 students and teachers but also ensuring the continuity of learning. This shift towards empathic leadership is aligned with [9] findings, with emotional intelligence as one of the most important elements of school leadership. Through transparent communication and involving teachers in decision-making, principals were able to build trust and resilience within their school communities, fostering a more peaceful and compassionate learning environment.

Empowering principal leadership behaviors also have a crucial role to play in enhancing teacher well-being and reducing organizational feelings of exclusion. Empowering leadership behaviors were seen to have a positive impact on teachers' feelings of inclusion and support and, therefore, their overall workplace well-being based on research conducted by [10] in Türkiye. Empowering leadership behaviors instigate teachers to take ownership and become more committed to professional work and, therefore, a sense of ownership and commitment towards school goals. Such positive experiences not only benefit the teachers but also lead to a brighter and more productive learning environment for the students.

Furthermore, proactive school principal involvement in teacher professional development has also been linked to improved teaching practices and student performance. [11] conducted a study that demonstrated how highly involved principals who also organize professional development events create a culture of continuous learning and enhancement. By engaging teachers in professional development opportunities and recognizing their activities, school heads can enhance teacher quality and job satisfaction, leading to better student learning outcomes. These positive outcomes underscore the importance of school leadership in shaping the 6 quality and efficacy of education in their schools.

In summary, effective school leadership is critical to developing a constructive school culture and improving teacher and student performance. Transformational leaders motivate and bring together staff in a collaborative work environment, building trust and motivating staff to enable school productivity and develop an inspiring learning environment. In the context of the Philippines, principals have likewise demonstrated adaptive and empathic leadership, particularly amid difficulties such as the COVID-19 pandemic, where emotional intelligence and open communication facilitated building trust and resilience. Empowering leadership also enhances teacher well-being by facilitating inclusion and ownership, which enhances commitment to school purpose. Additionally, principals who engage actively in teacher professional development build a culture of ongoing development, enhancing teaching quality and student performance. Overall, these leadership styles emphasize how school administrators directly impact the success and welfare of their school communities.

B. Challenges in Supervising, Organizing, and Leading a School

A study of [12] mentioned that the school principals nowadays are not just challenged by the programs, projects, and demands of DepEd but also, they are challenged with the best strategies on how to encourage the teachers to have the passion and dedication towards teaching. There are principals also who have difficulty in dealing with the attitude and behavior of teachers who usually decline the tasks assigned to them. In addition, [13] investigated on challenges to educational administration and management in primary schools in Malawi. The findings indicated that there was insufficient funding which led to lack of sufficient resources in the schools, lack of cooperation between school management and communities surrounding the schools, headteachers themselves were not exemplary in their administrative work, miss management of funds, lack of training for head teachers prior to their appointment and lack of in-service training for teachers in general.

Moreover, [14] noted that public school managers in the Philippines must manage academic, administrative, and fiscal responsibilities and therefore cannot focus much on instructional leadership. Along the same line, [15] opined that there is a gap in performance management in rural areas since most school leaders lack adequate access to instructional leadership training. According to [16], supervision requires constant, contextual engagement with teachers, which is problematic given that school administrators are overwhelmed with compliance-driven tasks.

These issues in supervision are aggravated by a shortage of resources. Most Philippine public schools, as reported by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2019), do not have sufficient supplies such as teaching aids, instructional materials, and ICT equipment, which hinders the support which can be provided by school administrators. Inadequate school budgets, particularly in far-flung barangays, also curtail teacher development programs and school improvement plans, as reported by [17]. In the same manner, ambiguous rules and delays in the release of funds create difficulties in implementing DepEd programs for most school heads.

The role of supervision is further disrupted by interpersonal and cultural concerns within schools. Communication and trust are necessary in supervision, but school administrators often encounter resistance from teachers, especially unmotivated and resistant ones. [18] highlighted the conflict brought about by different teaching philosophies and generational differences, which makes it difficult for school administrators to impose one uniform school culture. Supervision is seen by some teachers as being punitive, and thus cooperation is low, based on the study of [19] in the Davao Region. In addition, it is difficult to do effective supervision in developing countries such as the Philippines continuously since school heads are tasked as counselors, budget officers, and human resource managers besides being leaders.

To wrap up, instructional supervision in the Philippines suffers due to the overlapping and complicated responsibility of school administrators, who double as academic, administrative,

and fiscal affairs, rendering little time for intensive leadership. These are compounded by the lack of resources, including teaching materials and ICT facilities, and financing, particularly in rural and far-flung communities. Adding to the problem are bureaucratic delays and ambiguous policies that hamper the implementation of needed educational programs. In addition, interpersonal relationships and cultural differences at schools such as distrust, generation gap, and opposition to change add further obstacles to good supervision. Overall, the complex demands on school leaders in the Philippines seriously limit their capacity to offer stable, meaningful instructional leadership.

C. Coping Mechanism in Supervising, Organizing, and Leading a school

School principals bear a critical responsibility in navigating and reorienting poor organizational cultures in schools. When faced with poisonous work cultures where there is poor communication, mistrust, or opposition to change, school principals tend to utilize adaptive approaches like transformational leadership, shared decision-making, and open communication. [20] noted that transformational leaders are successful in the process of rebuilding school culture by building trust, inspiring shared vision, and encouraging teacher commitment. Likewise, [21] contend that effective school leaders focus on relational trust and emotional intelligence to transform staff mindsets, which is vital for cultural change. These leader behaviors transform entrenched negativity into a better work environment.

Managing negative culture also involves the ability to reframe values and reshape organizational narratives. Principals typically start with recognizing the underlying causes of dysfunction (e.g., poor morale, role ambiguity, or lack of appreciation) and then implementing targeted interventions. [22] highlights that school leaders must "change the culture by changing the conversation," i.e., redefine norms and expectations through collaboration. [23] also emphasize the importance of "sustainable leadership," where principals have long-term strategies that tackle cultural resistance while supporting staff well-being and motivation. Such measures prove that it is not quick solutions but continuous, genuine engagement that is involved in managing school culture.

One of the most practical initiatives employed by school heads is developing leadership capacity among the staff. Enabling the teacher as co-leader fosters a culture of collective responsibility, which can effectively resist adverse environments. Distributed leadership fosters cultural transformation by driving autonomy and initiative among the teaching staff to lead to enhanced job satisfaction and performance, as suggested by [24]. Similarly, [25] established that staff participation in curriculum and policy matters by the principal results in reduced negative attitudes and staff cohesion. By promoting participation, school leaders minimize hierarchical stress and foster togetherness.

Resilience and reflection are equally important coping mechanisms employed by school leaders. Most effective principals depend on personal and professional development

habits to keep them stable in difficult moments. Reflective practice helps school heads evaluate their leadership style and the impact it has on school culture so that timely adjustments can be made, as argued by [26]. Meanwhile, emotional and strategic resilience have been highlighted by [27] as the key to school leaders coping with hostile or demotivating environments. Inner resources, in combination with practical action, assist school heads in negotiating cultural adversity and facilitating institutional renewal.

Fundamentally, school principals are crucial in reshaping negative or poisonous school cultures through adaptive leadership practices like transformational and distributed leadership. I believe that establishing trust, shared vision, and involving teachers are crucial to altering staff perceptions and enhancing the working environment. Successful leaders also resolve entrenched cultural problems by redefining norms and maintaining long-term initiatives that focus on the welfare and motivation of staff. Empowering teachers to act as co-leaders facilitates a collective sense of responsibility, easing hierarchical tensions and encouraging collaboration. Further, resilience and reflective practices by principals are essential in handling challenges and constantly adapting their leadership to aid effective cultural change.

D. Insights in Supervising, Organizing, and Leading a School

[28] concluded that the heart of successful leadership practice includes personal skills (advancement of self-awareness, critical and complex management of stress and well-being and conflict resolution); interpersonal skills (building relationships through constructive communication, gaining authority and strength, promoting productivity, and resolving and reclosing tensions); and group skills (inspiring and empowering others, building successful performance, and leading progressive adjustment). [29] posits that higher-level teachers represent higher educational success in creating a healthy learning atmosphere, resolving individual differences, transmitting learning priorities, and determining learning outcomes.

More so, school heads accumulate valuable insights through their leadership experiences that shape their professional growth and decision-making abilities. One major insight gained is the importance of adaptive leadership and the ability to respond flexibly to changing school environments and challenges. According to [30], adaptive leadership involves mobilizing people to tackle tough problems while maintaining organizational stability. Compounding this, [31] put the forefront that strong principals build adaptive capacities via experience-based learning, which allows them to work through tricky dynamics and introduce innovation into schools.

Another essential discovery centers on the place of emotional intelligence and relational competence in leadership. School administrators indicate that skillfully managing relationships with students, teachers, parents, and neighborhood stakeholders is key to successful leadership. [32] contend that emotional intelligence plays a major role in leadership success through enhancing empathy, communication, and conflict handling. In a similar vein, [33] discovered that veteran school

administrators increasingly acknowledge the significance of relational trust and emotional labor as essential to creating a positive climate for schools and for maintaining organizational transformation.

School leaders also learn about the value of collaborative and shared leadership. [34] research demonstrated that school leaders who adopt distributed leadership empower teachers and generate shared responsibility for school improvement. Not only does this develop capacity but also increases morale and ownership among teachers. Similarly, [35] claimed that effective leaders realize leadership is not a solitary position but a shared process demanding others' development and inclusive decision-making.

Lastly, most school principals look back at the wisdom of learning continuously and professional perseverance. They confirm that leadership is a process of continuous improvement, often characterized by challenges that push them to their limits. [36] emphasize that reflective practice allows school leaders to reflect on their practice and change strategy. Further, [37] highlighted the contribution of resilience in supporting leaders to endure motivation, recover from failures, and have a vision for long-term school achievement.

Overall, school principals derive valuable learnings from their leadership experiences that help in their professional development and decision-making. One of the major understandings is the necessity for adaptive leadership to be responsive and adaptable to shifting school contexts without compromising stability. Emotional maturity and excellent relationship skills also prove to be essential in handling multiple stakeholders and maintaining a healthy school climate. In addition, adopting collaborative and distributed leadership contributes to developing shared accountability and strengthening teachers, enhancing morale and school reform initiatives. Finally, constant learning, reflection, and resilience are essential for principals to overcome obstacles and maintain long-term success.

3. Theoretical Lens

This research was anchored on Edgar Schein's Organizational Culture Theory, which states that organizational culture is a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group in coping with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. The assumptions are conveyed to new members as the right way to perceive, think, and feel about those problems. Leaders, as per [38], play a major role in defining and sustaining this culture. They achieve this by establishing direction, exemplifying behavior, and reinforcing norms that are derived from the fundamental values of the organization. Within the context of schools, the behavior and choices of school heads become pivotal in defining how teachers, staff, and students understand and live out the school's mission, values, and practices.

The applicability of Schein's theory to this study lies in its emphasis on the leadership role in the formation of organizational culture. As schools exist within larger systems, it is sometimes the head of the school who explicitly creates and maintains the school's internal culture. School heads in most

Philippine schools, particularly in various or disadvantaged environments, have challenges that challenge them to respond resourcefully while maintaining fundamental values. This research used the personal accounts of school heads to investigate how they perceived their impact on culture, how they managed challenges, and how they matched their style of leadership to the needs of their school communities. Schein's theory served to give a perspective to examine how these personal accounts have the larger cultural dynamics of school leadership reflected within them.

From this perspective, the research examined the dynamics between school leadership and organizational culture as uncovered in school heads lived experiences. Leadership was not seen in a vacuum but as inextricably linked with what it means for the school's common values, beliefs, and customs. School heads shaped culture through decision-making, communication, solving problems, and their manner of inspiring staff and students. Consequently, the school's current culture impacted on the behavior of its leaders and the effectiveness of leadership. Following Schein's theory, the study demonstrated how organizational culture and school leadership were reinforcing each other, developing through routine practices, and influenced by individual agency as well as shared experiences in the school community.



Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of the organizational culture and school leadership

Figure 1 depicted the diagram which schematically presented the conceptual framework of the study by depicting the dynamic interplay between the central theme of the study and the salient themes developed from school heads lived experiences. At the center of the diagram is the focal phenomenon under investigation Organizational Culture and School Leadership which is the point of departure of the qualitative study. Surrounding this core are four interconnected aspects: Experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and Insights. These aspects were marked as vital dimensions that capture how school heads see, shape, and manage

organizational culture through their leadership actions.

4. Research Questions

The main concept of this study was to unveil and document the different experience, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights encountered by school heads in Montevista District, Montevista, Davao de Oro Division. Each of these was subdivided into more specific questions to guide the data collection process and analysis. Therefore, important questions that were tackled included the following:

1. What are the experiences encountered by the participants in supervising, organizing, and leading a school?
2. What are the challenges encountered by participants in supervising, organizing, and leading a school?
3. How do the participants cope with the challenges in the organizational culture of schools?
4. What insights did the of the participants gain from their experience as leaders of schools?

5. Research Methods

The present study used a qualitative research design specifically phenomenological approach, in investigating and determining the lived experiences of school heads regarding organizational culture and school leadership. Qualitative research, as defined by [39], is a methodology for investigating and comprehending meaning that people bring to a social or human issue. It entails questions and processes arising from emerging issues, data usually gathered in the setting of the participant, and interpretation of the meaning of the data by the researcher. This design is suitable for obtaining rich narratives, enabling researchers to explore how school heads understand, interpret, and react to the intricacies of school leadership in the organizational culture of their schools.

Moreover, the research adopted a phenomenological approach, which is concerned with capturing the shared meaning for several people of their experiences of living with a concept or phenomenon [40]. The aim of phenomenology was to reduce individual experience of a phenomenon into a description of the universal essence. This method was highly applicable for this research since it aimed to capture the shared but distinct experiences of school leaders in dealing with leadership issues and cultural dynamics within their institutions. By prioritizing the participants' standpoint, the design enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth knowledge regarding how organizational culture is interpreted and constructed through school leadership, especially within the environment of the Montevista District.

The study was conducted in Montevista District, Davao de Oro. Specifically, the respondents' schools were Alimadmad Integrated School, Camansi National High School, Canidkid Integrated School, Mayaon National High School, Montevista National High School, Montevista Stand Alone Senior High School, and San Vicente Integrated School. The study's respondents included the seven public secondary and integrated junior high schools and the teachers at these schools in the

district of Montevista, Division of Davao de Oro, during School Year 2024–2025. Montevista was a landlocked municipality in the coastal province of Davao de Oro.

The participants of this qualitative research were the seven school heads in the Division of Davao de Oro, specifically from the Municipality of Montevista. A semi-structured individual interview was conducted to generate diverse views and perceptions and to address the need for triangulation of sources. In addition, the participants were selected and chosen through a non-probability type of sampling, specifically purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involved the careful selection of participants to elucidate a particular theme, idea, or phenomenon.

Furthermore, the participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (a) appointed as the school head in a particular school, (b) had rendered 3 to 7 years in service as the school head in the particular school, (c) male and female, (d) supervised more than 10 teachers, and (e) were willing to share their unforgettable experiences in organizing and leading the school. Conversely, the exclusion criteria involved school heads who had less than three years or more than seven years of service, those who supervised fewer than 10 teachers, and those who were not willing or unable to participate openly in the interviews. Additionally, temporary or acting school heads were excluded to maintain consistency in leadership experience among the participants.

6. Results and Discussion

A. Experiences of the School Heads in Supervising, Organizing, and Leading a School

The main concept of this study was to unveil and document the different experience, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights encountered by school heads in Montevista District, Montevista, Davao de Oro Division. The responses generated four essential themes: *build strong partnerships with stakeholders, Promoting Teamwork and Collaborations, Gaining School Community's Trust and Respect, and Building Trust and Confidence.*

Build Strong Partnerships with Stakeholders:

This theme constitutes how building strong partnerships with stakeholders is key to creating a supportive and effective learning environment. When school heads actively work to build strong partnerships with stakeholders, it can lead to significant benefits for the students, the school, and the wider community.

Informant 1 shared how building strong partnerships with stakeholders was one of the positive experiences encountered in supervising the school. She pointed out;

“The positive experiences are, before, in organizing the school, since I was teacher in charge for 2 years when I came here. The positive experience that I observed is that the school is built on strong partnerships with parents, local leaders and other stakeholders. Second is that there is empowerment of teachers, especially in providing and allowing the teachers to attend seminars and training courses and in providing support

to the teachers”

Promoting Teamwork and Collaborations:

Promoting teamwork and collaboration is a crucial aspect of how school heads organize schools effectively. Their experiences in fostering this can be quite insightful. The relevance of promoting teamwork and cooperation was highlighted, the Informant reiterated the importance of promoting a strong partnership between schools and the community, as well as successfully leading meetings, workshops and team-building sessions. Accordingly;

“Aside from that is promoting teamwork and collaborations between schools and community. Successfully leading meetings, workshops, and team-building sessions.”

Gaining School Community's Trust and Respect:

Gaining the school community's trust and respect is a cornerstone of a school head's successful leadership, especially where community ties can be strong. The experiences of school heads in achieving this often involve a combination of actions and personal qualities.

Informant 1 specified that one of the most observable positive experiences of the school in leading the school is gaining the trust and respect of the school community. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of promoting professional development by advising teachers, encouraging continuous learning and conducting effective LAC sessions or inset insights drawn from his own leadership experiences.

“In leading the school, one of the most observable experiences is gaining the trust and respect of the school community. Another thing, fostering professional growth such as Mentoring teachers, encouraging continuous learning, and conducting effective LAC sessions or INSET This is just based on my experience.”

Building Trust and Confidence:

Treating everyone equitably and applying rules consistently builds a sense of security and trust. School heads might find that fairness, even in difficult situations, earns respect and confidence over time. Informant 2 repeated that their experiences showed them to be risk-takers and that teamwork and cooperation foster trust, confidence, and better decision-making in school planning and execution. She further emphasized that;

“It influenced me because I learned from my experiences. It built my attitude to become a risk taker like teamwork or collaboration can really build trust and confidence especially if we have projects, it will be easier to attend to. It strengthens decision-making especially in planning and implementing plans, programs and activities.”

This also fits Informant 3's remark that having teachers who are cooperative, sure, and trusting helps the school head make better choices for the advantage of the institution. He asserted that;

“It can influence you because you will appreciate it especially if teachers have trust and confidence. They are not hard-headed. As a school head, it really helps me if they make

necessary decisions for the good of the school.”

Informant 4 also shared his point of view by stating that a leader's strength is reflected on the school and that trust, openness, respect, and cooperation are essential in creating a vibrant school community. He specified that;

“If the leader is weak, the subordinates are weak. Because the image of a leader reflects the kind of teachers or students in that school. The school is built on trust, transparency, and respect and promotes collaboration towards teachers and staff.”

B. Challenges of the School Heads in Supervising, Organizing, and Leading a School

This section presents the results of the 2nd major research question ‘What are the challenges encountered by school heads in supervising, organizing, and leading a school? The response generated four essential themes namely: *Varied Issues and Concerns on Behavior and Discipline, Problem with Resources, Behavioral and Poor Communication, and Teachers’ and Students’ Attitude.*

Issues and Concerns on Behavior and Discipline:

School heads often encounter a wide range of behavioral issues, from minor classroom disruptions to more serious incidents like bullying, defiance, and even issues involving the wider community impacting student behavior. Informant 1 declared that among the common problems faced in the school are hearsays being exaggerated, lack of computer skills, student misconduct issues, and insufficient teacher motivation influencing classroom teaching. She further expressed that;

“The issues that I encountered are more on hearsays. Sometimes even trivial issues are made big about hearsays. Also, there are others that are not equipped in terms of technology. Students’ behavior and discipline issues. Moreover, teachers’ motivation, especially about work, there are times when there are a lot of delays and in terms of classroom lecture, there are others who are not doing their classes.”

Dealing with varied issues and concerns related to behavior and discipline is indeed a significant aspect of a school head's role, and it can present numerous experiences and challenges in supervising the school. Informant 2 verbalized that some educators oppose new ideas and developments, hence it becomes difficult to carry out school reform projects and handling student behavior presents a significant obstacle. To her;

“One of those is the teachers that are not fond of innovation, do not like changes, which is the reason why it is hard to implement plans for school improvement. Also, the behavior of children because it really gives me a hard time in managing. Even from that, I already have a hard time.”

Along with student problems like jumping fences and moral conduct among teachers and students, Informant 6 also expressed worries on teacher behavioral issues including tardiness and absenteeism.

“Issues on some behavioral problems of the teachers. Sometimes issues on not going to class on time, will give grades

but does not go to class. Students who jump off the fence. Issues on the morality of the teachers. Morality between students.”

Problem with Resources:

School heads often encounter insufficient funding from the government, coupled with rising operational costs, often leaves school heads struggling to afford necessary educational tools, infrastructure maintenance, and even basic supplies. Informant 3 openly revealed that problems always surface, particularly with new tasks, stressing the importance of knowing the individuals and environment prior to enacting any plans. He also indicated the insufficiency of physical materials, including chairs and facilities, because of a poor MOOE allowance, which they often borrow when needed. Specifically;

“There are a lot, especially those who are new. So, you really need to observe your new assignment, for the people since you cannot implement it if you are not knowledgeable about it. You should know their styles, you can suggest. And we are also lacking in terms of physical resources like chairs and other facilities since we have limited budget from the MOOE. We just borrowed it since it is insufficient.”

This was confirmed by Informant 4, who expressed that it is difficult to head the school, particularly when there are insufficient chairs, tables, and learning materials. He further indicated that;

“Handling and leading the school is not easy. Especially when the school is having shortages in chairs, tables, resources, and instructional materials, it will really affect the classroom organization and the learning of the students.”

Behavioral and Poor Communication:

Behavioral and communication issues among students (disruptive talking, defiance, aggression) create a stressful environment, disrupt teaching, and negatively affect the learning of all students. This increased stress and lost instructional time can directly impact the school head's ability to achieve academic goals.

Informant 1 stressed that challenges were in coping with teachers' varied attitudes and behaviors, as well as some poor communication among staff, although these problems were still manageable. To her;

“Challenges include first the teacher’s since we do not have the same attitude since we cannot please everyone especially in the behavioral aspects of teachers because teachers are unique. Sometimes the existence of poor communication among school staff because sometimes we cannot avoid issues but still, I was able to manage it.”

Discipline and Behavioral Problems among Teachers and Students:

Discipline and behavioral problems are significant factors that school heads often must navigate while leading a school. How a school head approaches these challenges can greatly impact the school climate, student well-being, and overall effectiveness.

Informant 1 indicated that the biggest problems are related to learners' behavioral problems and communication breakdowns

among teachers, whereas there were no significant issues in the community. She further expressed that;

“First, learners, because of their discipline and behavioral problems. Also, for me, it is behavioral issues or discipline problems among learners. For teachers, there are problems with poor communication, especially if there are issues. And in the community since I do not have problems that I encountered in the community”

Informant 6 corroborated this perspective by asserting that difficulties involve students' behavioral problems and truancy, teachers' personal financial difficulties and poor collaboration, and the community's poor participation and effort in supporting school programs.

“Learners, crimes and absences. It is hard if it involves behavioral problems. For the teachers there are financial problems and a lack of teamwork to do their duties. When the teachers suffer from it, their work will also suffer. Then behavioral problems of the teachers. In the community, there is a lack of participation and support to school projects and programs.”

This statement was also supported by Informant 7, who mentioned that learners' disciplinary problems are problematic, most teachers are usually late for class, and others in the community do not entirely back school projects, perhaps because they are busy. According to her;

“For the learners, their issues with regards to behavior in school. It is very troublesome. For the teachers, sometimes, they are very tardy in going to class. There are a lot of teachers that are late in going to school. In the school community, those that do not really support especially in school projects and events may be because they are busy”

C. Coping Mechanisms of The School Heads in the Organizational Culture of Schools

This section presents the results on the viewpoints of the research participants of the community relations functions or responsibilities of school principals or heads. This was the gist of the 3rd major research question, how do school head cope with the challenges in the organizational culture of schools? *Establish Partnership and Good Communication, Empower Teachers, Study the Culture, and Stay Focus on Work and Goals* were the essential themes generated.

Establish Partnership and Good Communication:

A school head who actively establishes partnerships often needs strong communication skills to nurture and maintain those relationships. Similarly, good communication is essential for building trust and encouraging stakeholders to partner with the school. Informant 2 described how she established partnership and the importance of good communication to cope with challenges with negative organizational culture;

“Find a partner and have good communication. You should be open and you need to be friendly. I explained to them my duties and responsibilities to support their children.”

Partnerships foster a sense of shared ownership in the students' education and the school's success. This can lead to greater engagement and commitment from all parties involved.

This was contended by informant 3 when he shared that there should be an open relationship or communication between teachers and school head;

“Through open relationship or communication between the teachers and school head. There should be collaboration and transparency during the meeting, especially financially. For budgeting, they should be the ones who will do it so that they will know where this is going.”

Informant 4 added how vital sharing the challenges to your colleagues is;

“Okay, so, before the traditional way of a leader, you work on your own. If there is a challenge, you need to share that with colleagues, you do not have to keep it to yourself. Openness, sharing of ideas and accept criticisms. In crafting plans and programs, include the community stakeholders. You should be transparent. There also must be a support system to achieve our goals in school.”

Informant 5 also expressed how good communication and connection is one of her coping mechanisms;

“What are my coping mechanisms, I think, one is good communication, and you have to connect with them. You need to listen to them to know their gusto, concerns, and suggestions.”

On the other hand, informant 6 mentioned how he consistently creates a good environment in order to build self-esteem and confidence;

“Silence. Most of the time, coping mechanisms build self-esteem and confidence. You need to have this consistently in creating a good environment. You must be transparent in everything you do.”

Informant 7 also shared how prayer and a good support system helps in coping;

“Of course, prayer and find a good support system. There should be good communication and their relationship.”

Empower Teachers:

Empowerment encourages teachers to take on leadership roles within the school, whether it is leading a committee, mentoring colleagues, or spearheading a new initiative. This distributes leadership and builds capacity within the school. Informant 1 stated her experience of empowering teachers in order to communicate, collaborate and inquire;

“First, I empower the teachers to communicate, collaborate and inquire. Next is to reflect on one way to innovate to help the children and parents. So, one of my ways is through open communication or being transparent to the teachers, learners, and the community. Other than that, is to build strong and consistent relationships among them. And through a successful system in implementing the programs.”

Study the Culture:

Dealing with a negative culture within a school can be a significant challenge, but also an opportunity for transformative leadership. Informant 3 verbalized how he learned about the culture first to establish trust and respect towards everyone;

“To deal with the negative, first is you must study what their culture is. You should have enough patience in all aspects. You

should establish trust and respect towards all. As leaders, we should be a model to all. The most difficult thing is that if teachers will not obey them, for them to obey you, you should listen to them. You should be careful with all your actions. If the culture is supportive, you should also be supportive of their needs.”

Stay Focus on Work and Goals:

The ability of a school head to stay focused on work and goals while navigating the existing organizational culture – which might sometimes present challenges – is crucial for driving positive change and ensuring the school's success.

Informant 1 proclaimed and shared her means of focusing on finding solutions to the problems managing effectively despite the organizational culture;

“You have to manage. Of course, there is time management since the way you manage your is not easy since, as I said earlier, they have different behaviors and for me, I want them to follow my goals like the VMG and follow what is legal for the job and is not unlawful. Despite the challengers, I remained effective in my role as school leader like you are grounded in my purpose, focus in giving solutions to my problems, and making them resilient to problems that they encounter.”

D. Insights of the School Heads Gained from their Experience as Leaders of Schools

The results in this section were from the responses to the specific research questions used to gather data for the 4th major research question, what insights do the school heads gain on their experience as leaders of schools? The study generated seven essential themes Namely: *Promote Innovation and Excellence, Be Transparent, Always Establish Collaboration, Leaders should be Inspiring and Guiding, Learn from Experience, Be Fair to Everyone, and Listen to Teachers.*

Promote Innovation and Excellence:

The school head can model innovative practices and strive for excellence in their own work, inspiring others through their actions. Informant 1 relayed how she felt that innovation and excellence is vital in order to have changes needed in school;

“Of course, we must continue and then we must promote innovation and excellence in education. We should stick in the vision, mission and goals and core values of DepEd. We should obey lawful ways. We should be transparent. And what I can share as advice to my fellow school heads is that we should not lose hope. We should build a good relationship with teachers and students, especially our stakeholders. We should also model good attitudes. We should shoulder everything, there should be collaboration because change starts in a strong leader.”

Be Transparent:

The key is often to be transparent in a way that is also mindful of the existing organizational culture. Sometimes, this means choosing the right time and the right way to share information. It is not about being completely unfiltered all the time, but about consistently acting with honesty and openness. This can be

drawn based on what Informant 4 reiterated how monetary matter destroys people's trust which is why it is essential to be transparent all the time;

“Mostly, not only in Montevista but in other municipalities, the first thing that can disrupt is monetary matters. If you are not transparent, their minds will be dirty. They will lose their trust in you. You cannot expect full support from your colleagues.”

Always Establish Collaboration:

“Establishing collaboration among school heads while navigating a potentially unsupportive or hindering organizational culture requires strategic and persistent effort, especially within the context of the educational landscape.”

Informant 5 expressed how a school leader cannot function all alone and the need for collaboration.

“You do not have to do all the things alone. You need them to do it with you.”

Leaders should be Inspiring and Guiding:

A school leader who can inspire and guide school heads to manage effectively despite the existing organizational culture is truly valuable. Informant 3 noted his insight into the essence of a school leader who continues to guide and inspire everyone for the good of the school;

“A leader should continue to guide and inspire everyone. We should have goals and purpose to continue despite the hardships. And another thing, we should continue to help each other because it is difficult to lead them all the time, we should also include everyone for the good of the school.”

Learn from Experience:

A school head's ability to learn from experience and manage effectively despite the existing organizational culture, especially where cultural nuances can significantly impact school dynamics is a powerful aspect of leadership. Informant 5 voiced out the many things she learned from her experiences, cultures, and personalities that molded her to become a passionate and purposeful leader;

“I have learned many things. What I am today is because of the different experiences, cultures, and personalities. That perhaps molded me into what I am now. A passionate and purposeful leader.”

Be Fair to Everyone:

A school head who strives to be fair to everyone while managing effectively, even amidst cultural nuances, demonstrates strong ethical leadership and a commitment to equitable practices. Informant 1 exclaimed how to be fair and avoid supporting and helping just one side;

“You should not only support one aspect, but you should also support everything. Then, you need help. You should be fair. There should be open communication. You should appreciate their efforts in school and listen to their concerns.”

Listen to Teachers:

When school heads actively listen to teachers, it makes

teachers feel valued, respected and heard. This can significantly boost morale, especially in a challenging organizational culture where they might feel less empowered. Informant 3 noted the pertinence of giving attention, supporting, and listening to the teachers;

“That is, it, you should love and listen to your teacher and give them attention. You should support, respect, and help them. For the changes in the school, you should start with a good attitude as a school head.”

This is supported by the statement of Informant 7 when she said how important it is to listen to your subordinates and help each other:

“You should listen to your subordinates and help each other.”

7. Conclusions

This study clearly highlighted the varied experiences of school heads in Montevista District as they handled the challenges of supervising, organizing, and leading their schools. The results showed that effective school leadership relies on engaging stakeholders, building mutual trust, and fostering collective commitment. Building partnerships with parents, local officials, and community members is crucial for creating a shared vision for school improvement. This supports the findings of [41], who pointed out how important stakeholder collaboration is for enhancing student outcomes and ensuring school success. Similarly, [24] noted that successful school heads build strong external partnerships to support ongoing school transformation.

Promoting teamwork and cooperation was recognized as a key part of effective school management. School heads acknowledged that involving teachers and stakeholders boosts morale and accountability. This aligns with findings from [42], which showed that shared leadership encourages responsibility and professional growth. Likewise, [43] argued that leaders promoting collaboration enhance school capacity and boost staff commitment to common goals.

School heads faced challenges like student discipline, behavioral issues, resource shortages, and communication breakdowns. These significant obstacles were managed through flexibility and determination. This mirrors observations by [44], who found that school leaders in developing areas often deal with insufficient resources and systemic constraints. In addition, [45] emphasized that strong leadership is vital when facing complex school-level challenges that affect academic and organizational effectiveness.

To tackle these challenges, school heads used strategies focused on communication, empowerment, and understanding their context. They stressed the importance of understanding school culture before making changes. According to [46], effective school leaders adjust their methods based on context, using trust and communication as tools for change. Similarly, [31] highlighted how important adaptive leadership is in dealing with diverse teacher attitudes, organizational resistance, and social-cultural dynamics in schools.

The experiences of school heads also provided valuable insights about leadership. Many emphasized the need for

transparency, innovation, and ethical practices. Informants pointed out that openness, collaboration, and empowering teachers are crucial for building trust and achieving excellence. This supports the work of [32], who said that emotionally intelligent leadership fosters empathy, motivation, and relationship-building. In line with this, [47] concluded that values-driven leadership is essential for promoting sustainable change in schools, especially in high-need communities.

In conclusion, the realities of school heads in Montevista District show that effective leadership is not just about administration but is also deeply relational and transformational. By building trust, encouraging collaboration, and staying committed to educational goals despite difficulties, school leaders became agents of positive change. These findings reinforce the work of [48], who emphasized that effective leadership arises from moral purpose and strategic action. Furthermore, [49] noted that in uncertain times, school leaders who exhibit resilience, empathy, and vision are best equipped to lead schools toward excellence.

Given the findings of this study, future research could look into developing structured leadership training programs designed for the challenges faced by school heads in rural and under-resourced districts like Montevista. These programs may focus on improving skills in stakeholder engagement, leadership flexibility, and teamwork in decision-making. Additionally, researchers can conduct long-term studies to track the lasting effects of trust-building, teacher empowerment, and community partnerships on school performance and student outcomes. Comparing research with other districts or regions could also reveal leadership models that work best in different social and cultural settings. Moreover, using digital tools and leadership technologies to tackle communication and resource management issues offers a promising area for exploration. These future efforts can build on the current findings to support policies and leadership development strategies that respond to the changing needs of 21st-century education.

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