

Decision Making in School Management: Stories of School Heads

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Abstract. This study explored the school head's accounts in decision-making. This included everyday experiences and the reasons for implementation. This shed some light on their decisions as this was an understudied phenomenon. The researcher narrowed down the highlights and lowlights of the existing issues in online learning, its effectiveness, and the school heads' coping practices on the challenges that come along the way, and I made use of phenomenology. The 10 participants of this study were from the Public Schools in Talomo District, Division of Davao City. I used a semi-structured online interview using the coding technique to analyze the data. The Study discovered that the participants make sound decisions, balancing competing demands and excessive administrative tasks and responsibilities. The coping mechanisms revealed were building relationships and communication and seeking support and collaboration. Some insights gained were collaboration and stakeholder engagement, and professional development and continuous learning, were essential. School heads recognize the significance of collaboration and stakeholder engagement in decision-making. Therefore, communicating effectively allows children to form strong bonds with teachers and peers, making them feel supported and confident. The findings underscore the importance of collaborative decision-making processes that involve multiple stakeholders. This has implications for school governance structures, emphasizing the need for inclusive decision-making practices that value the input of teachers, parents, students, and community members.

KEY WORDS

1. sound decision 2. school management 3. balance communication

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1. Introduction

The role of school heads in educational institutions is pivotal, extending far beyond administrative duties to encompass complex decision-making processes that shape the academic environment and student experiences. In this study, we delve into the narratives of school heads, exploring the multifaceted dimensions of decision-making within school management. Through qualitative inquiry, we aim to uncover school leaders' stories, challenges, and strategies as they navigate the dynamic landscape of educational leadership. By illuminating the lived experiences of these individuals, we seek to gain deeper insights into the intricate web of factors influencing decision-making processes in schools, shedding light on the nuances of leadership in educational settings. Globally, one significant issue school heads face in decision-

making is the equitable allocation of resources to meet diverse student needs. In many international contexts, schools grapple with limited budgets and competing demands for funding, leading to difficult decisions regarding staffing, infrastructure development, and educational programs (Brown, 2019). In addition to the challenge of resource allocation, another pressing issue for school heads is ensuring educational equity and inclusivity amidst diverse student populations. Schools worldwide are increasingly serving students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, linguistic communities, and learning abilities, amplifying the complexity of decision-making (Barton Coley, 2019). Addressing disparities in access to quality education, support services, and extracurricular opportunities requires strategic resource allocation and proactive policies to promote equity and social justice (Asio, 2020). Furthermore, the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, highlighting the urgent need for school leaders to prioritize equitable decision-making to support all students' academic and socio-emotional well-being (UNESCO, 2020). In Germany, school heads often encounter challenges in navigating the complexities of policy implementation within their institutions. Rapid policy changes, conflicting directives, and bureaucratic hurdles can hinder effective decision-making and create tensions between school autonomy and compliance with external mandates (Shaked Schechter, 2019). In addition to resource allocation challenges and ensuring educational equity, school heads often encounter difficulties in navigating the complexities of policy implementation within their institutions. Rapid policy changes, conflicting directives, and bureaucratic hurdles can hinder effective decision-making and create tensions between school autonomy and compliance with external mandates (Shaked Schechter, 2019). Moreover, the lack of clarity or consistency in policy guidelines may lead to confusion among staff

members and undermine the implementation of intended reforms (Ansara, 2019). Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on accountability measures and standardized assessments adds further pressure on school leaders to align policies with performance targets, often at the expense of holistic educational objectives (Bessell, 2019). Balancing the need for compliance with external regulations and fostering internal innovation and flexibility poses a significant challenge for school heads in effectively managing their institutions (Chadwick et al., 2020). In Malaysia, effective decision-making in school management necessitates meaningful engagement with various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and community members. However, school heads may need help to foster transparent communication channels and cultivate collaborative relationships, leading to dissonance, mistrust, and resistance to change (Clarke, F. Stevens, 2019). In effective decision-making in school management, meaningful engagement with various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and community members, is crucial. However, school heads often encounter challenges in fostering transparent communication channels and cultivating collaborative relationships with these stakeholders (Clarke, F. Wildy, M, 2024). This struggle can lead to dissonance, mistrust, and resistance to change within the school community. For instance, when stakeholders feel excluded from decision-making processes or perceive decisions as arbitrary, they may become less invested in supporting the school's initiatives and less motivated to contribute positively to its goals (Chance et al., 2019). Additionally, stakeholders' diverse interests and perspectives can sometimes conflict, further complicating the decision-making process and requiring skillful negotiation and consensus-building from school leaders (Celic et al., 2022). Therefore, addressing these challenges and fostering genuine stakeholder collaboration were essential

for effective school management and decision-making. In the Philippines, school heads need help with decision-making within school management. One prevalent issue is the inadequate allocation of resources, which hampers their ability to provide quality education. Limited budgets and increasing demands for infrastructure development, educational materials, and teacher training often force school administrators to make difficult choices regarding resource distribution (Department of Education, 2020). Additionally, the decentralization of education governance in the Philippines has led to disparities in resource allocation among schools, exacerbating inequalities in access to quality education (Peñaflor, 2019). Furthermore, bureaucratic red tape and administrative inefficiencies within the education system contribute to delays in decision-making processes, hindering school heads from promptly addressing emerging challenges and implementing necessary reforms (Casimiro, 2019). These issues underscore the need for comprehensive reforms to enhance school leaders' decision-making capacity and ensure equitable access to resources across educational institutions in the Philippines. In the Philippines, Morales (2019), Along with the obstacles and additional tasks and obligations given to school principals, the unfortunate truth is that school principals in the country face various challenges. Many of the jobs and responsibilities allocated to them need to be better prepared and trained for them. There needs to be more workshops or training. Provided training for South African school administrators to provide them with the skills they need to deal with significant principalship requirements (Cabato, 2019). The challenges school principals face in the Philippines and South Africa underscore the importance of providing adequate training and support for educational leaders. With proper preparation, principals may be able to fulfill their responsibilities effectively, leading to inefficiencies in decision-making processes and

potentially compromising the quality of education provided to students Corsaro (2020). In both contexts, the absence of workshops or training programs exacerbates the problem, leaving school leaders to navigate complex issues without the necessary guidance or skills, Donheku (2019). Moreover, school principals' roles extend beyond mere administrative tasks; they are expected to serve as instructional leaders, fostering a conducive learning environment and driving academic excellence. However, without adequate training, principals may find it challenging to implement instructional strategies, manage diverse student needs, and effectively address emerging issues in education Esteman (2020). To address these challenges, policymakers and education stakeholders must prioritize the professional development of school leaders. This entails designing and implementing comprehensive training programs that cover various aspects of school management, including financial management, human resource development, curriculum planning, and stakeholder engagement, Reyes (2020). Additionally, ongoing support and mentorship opportunities can help principals apply their newfound knowledge and skills in real-world scenarios, fostering continuous improvement and enhancing decision-making processes in school management, (Morales 2019). Ultimately, investing in the professional growth of school leaders is crucial for building strong and resilient educational systems that can adapt to evolving challenges and provide quality education for all students. By equipping principals with the tools and resources they need to succeed, policymakers can empower them to lead confidently and make informed decisions that positively impact student outcomes and contribute to the overall improvement of schools. Enon (2020), has noticed that some school administrators resign, some quit, and some retire early. Extended sick days result from stress and some people are even prosecuted for their work. When doing their tasks,

they act dishonestly and illegally. This is a signal. Thus, school principals must possess a particular set of abilities to satisfy the profession's expectations. Principalship. According to research, emotional intelligence has a favorable impact on a leader's performance as the essential component required for effective leadership (Velez, 2109). Additionally, intellect has been listed as one of the qualities that school administrators may find helpful. More successfully and efficiently carrying out their jobs (Reyes, 2020), Since I've been a teacher for the past five years in our District, I've noticed that some school administrators don't. When confronted with complex conditions, they can regulate their emotions. Thus, they end up acting rashly and taking illegal and unprofessional actions. Once, one of the school principals was seen responding emotionally and unable to control them due to a miscommunication he had with some of the group to regulate his emotions. SGB (School Governing Body) meeting. He interrupted the conference and pursued participants in the SGB from school since they could not agree on specific concerns. This indicated that he could not control his emotions, displaying a lack of emotional intelligence. I have also heard from other educators from neighboring schools that sometimes their school principals fail to control their emotions. Some educators from neighboring schools indicated that their principals talk harshly to them and learners. This was an indication of a lack of decision-making. This incident underscores the critical role of emotional intelligence in leadership, as leaders who cannot reg-

ulate their emotions may jeopardize the collaborative decision-making process and engender mistrust among stakeholders (Elo et al.,2022). In our district, the challenge of emotional regulation among school administrators poses significant implications for effective decision-making and professional conduct. Over the past five years, instances of administrators struggling to manage their emotions during challenging situations have been evident. Such lapses in emotional regulation can lead to impulsive and unprofessional behavior, as exemplified by a school principal who resorted to emotionally charged actions in response to a miscommunication during a School Governing Body (SGB) meeting, such as interrupting the conference and dismissing participants. Furthermore, the lack of emotional regulation among school principals affects their interactions with staff and their demeanor toward students. Reports from educators in neighboring schools corroborate instances where principals exhibit harsh and unkind behavior towards both teachers and learners. Such conduct undermines morale within the school community and reflects a need for more effective decision-making, as leaders who resort to authoritarian and punitive approaches may fail to foster a conducive learning environment conducive to collaboration and growth (Brackett et al., 2019). Thus, addressing the issue of emotional regulation among school administrators is essential for promoting professionalism, enhancing decision-making processes, and cultivating positive school climates conducive to academic excellence and holistic development.

1.1. Purpose of the Study—The purpose of this study was to understand the importance of school head decision-making in cultivating school growth. This discussion is a great part of their everyday activity and the basis for the effective implementation of their school policy. This would shed some light on their decisions as an understudied phenomenon.

1.2. Research Questions—This study sought to explore and discover the on-hand experiences of school heads regarding their handling and delivering school decision-making that may affect school operation and growth cultivation. This study would specifically be aimed to answer the following questions:

- (1) What are the experiences of School Heads in delivering their decision-making?
- (2) How do they cope with the challenges of their school decision-making?
- (3) What educational insights can be drawn from the experiences of the school heads?

1.3. Definition of Terms—Emotional Intelligence- the ability to identify, use, understand, and manage emotions healthily and effectively. This ability helps students empathize with others and themselves and deal with difficult situations without getting frazzled. Decision Making- the process of making choices by identifying a decision, gathering

information, and assessing alternative resolutions. A step-by-step decision-making process can help you make more deliberate decisions by organizing relevant information and defining alternatives. Leadership influences others' actions to achieve an organization's desirable ends. It was also defined as the ability of a leader to influence subordinates through social interaction.

1.4. Significant of the Study—This study was significant to principals. In it, principals were able to reveal their actual lived experiences in implementing educational policies in the school, especially in this new standard setting. They could also adopt the teachers' coping practices regarding their challenges. This study was equally significant to the school heads. It was a

good reference for them to examine the principals' challenges and how to address them. To the policymakers, for planning and drafting future training and seminars for teachers to properly address implementation gaps in utilizing the roles and responsibilities of principals in the teaching and learning process. Finally, to fellow researchers who wanted to conduct a similar or comparative study.

1.5. Theoretical Lens—This study is anchored on Decision theory or the theory of choice by Herbert A. Simon, it was a branch of applied probability theory and analytic philosophy concerned with the theory of making decisions based on assigning probabilities to various factors and assigning numerical consequences to the outcome. There are three branches of decision theory: Normative decision theory is concerned with the identification of optimal decisions, where optimality is often determined by considering an ideal decision-maker who is able to calculate with perfect accuracy and is, in some sense, fully rational. Prescriptive decision theory was concerned with describing observed behaviors through the use of conceptual models, under the assumption that those making the decisions are behaving under some consistent rules. Descriptive decision theory:

Analyzes how individuals actually make the decisions that they do. Decision theory was a broad field of management sciences and was an interdisciplinary topic studied by management scientists, medical researchers, mathematicians, data scientists, psychologists, biologists, social scientists, philosophers, and computer scientists. Empirical applications of this theory are usually done with the help of statistical and discrete mathematical approaches from computer science. Another theory that suits the study was first introduced by John Mayer and Peter Salovey in 1997. Afterward, another psychologist, Daniel Goleman (a renowned psychologist and science journalist), proposed his theory. His concept stemmed from his experience and research, which focused on behaviors, emotions, and the brain. He also published his book on emotional intelligence in 1995. The

book was titled “Emotional Intelligence – Why it could matter more than IQ,” allowing him to emerge as one of the New York Times best-selling authors based on the concept he developed. The idea of Emotional Intelligence was taken more seriously globally after the book was published, and different societies included it in their culture. The components of Emotional Intelligence formed by him were further elucidated by Kendra Cherry in a 2018 article titled “How Psychologists Evaluate Intelligence.” According to Cherry, the components listed below are essential for individuals to understand emotions. Self-Awareness- According to John Mayer, self-awareness was the ability of an individual to know the current mood and its reasons. It enables individuals to understand their strengths and weaknesses and process the effect of moods, emotions, and drives on other people. Self-awareness depends on the ability to identify and monitor one’s emotions and properly identify emotions in other people (Celtic, 2019). Clarky (2024) states that emotions constantly evolve and can be communicated both verbally and nonverbally. Without self-awareness, an individual cannot objectively assess emotional states because they need to know the reason for each emotional state. Individuals who have the attributes of self-awareness demonstrate self-confidence, mainly when they assess their performance with the opinions of their colleagues. Cooper (2021) underlines that motivation is not just a driving force, but an inner passion that fuels our outward activities. It’s about considering the long-term benefits of our actions, not just immediate gains. The stronger our motivation, the more we focus on our goals. Motivated individuals not only have a strong drive to achieve more, but they also display optimism, even in the face of unexpected challenges, inspiring others with their resilience and determination. Bessell (2019) states that empathy refers to the ability of individuals to respond to others based on their emotional makeup or reac-

tions. It involves the show of concern towards others when they have negative experiences. It requires sensing the feelings of others, allowing them to share how they feel and understand them based on their perspective. This component improves attributes such as cross-cultural sensitivity, talent building and retention, and to clients. Social Skills—An individual’s social skills determine the extent to which relationships and networks are built and maintained. They involve the ability of the individual to find common ground with other people under different circumstances and leverage their views about the world to build relationships. This component was essential in building teams and bringing about positive change in settings. It also fosters interactions among people with diverse backgrounds through enhanced communications, Chadwick (2019). Bernardo (2019) Self-regulation is the ability to control unexpected or disruptive emotions or impulses by maintaining a positive outlook even when situations do not go as planned. It helps prevent spontaneous judgment. It improves openness to change and adaptability among individuals. It also empowers individuals to develop good initiative, optimism, and integrity. Individuals who exhibit self-regulation do not react to setbacks, but they respond appropriately by managing their emotions. The experiences of Principals in the transition to the changing time way of teaching and learning, a qualitative inquiry that allows researchers and teachers as well as learners to provide the necessary skills, knowledge, and focus on engaging in meaningful inquiry about their professional practice would enhance this practice and effect positive changes concerning the educative goals of the learning community. There was a real concern, as could be viewed with the first circle, which interlinks to the second circle; however, the center of the two circles determines that there was a way of exploring the experiences of School Heads in trying times, a way of teaching and learning development

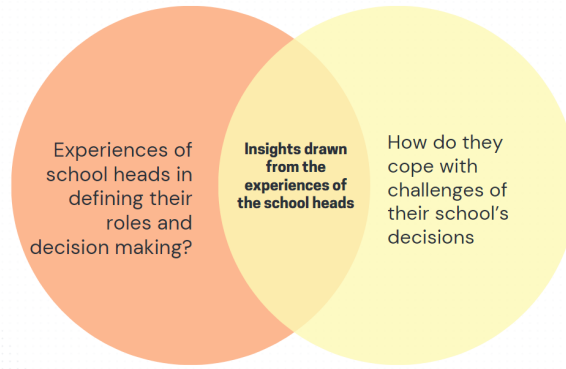


Fig. 1. conceptual framework of the study

that is very critical to school success. Figure 1 It shows three interconnected variables. presents the conceptual framework of the study.

2. Methodology

Presented in this chapter are the description of the research design, philosophical assumptions, research participants and sampling, ethical considerations, research instruments, data collection, and data analysis. The three most common qualitative methods were participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. Each method is particularly suited for obtaining a specific type of data. Participant observation was appropriate for collecting data on naturally occurring behaviors in their usual contexts. In-depth Interviews (IDI) were optimal for collecting data on individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when exploring sensitive topics. Focus groups effectively elicit data on a group's cultural norms and generate broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural groups or subgroups represented. Patton (2002) defined phenomenology as an inquiry that asks the question, "What was the structure and essence of the experience of his phenomenon for these people?" "The goal of this research worked well with this definition in trying to understand the challenges of the floating teachers. Giorgi (2007) cautioned researchers to be prepared for an investigation that was greater in both depth and breadth than the offered description implied. He suggested information be viewed as only the tip of the iceberg.

2.1. Philosophical Assumptions—The philosophical assumption framework was used to collect, analyze, and interpret data in a specific field of study. It establishes the background used to reach conclusions and decisions. Different types of philosophical assumptions were elaborated on. Good research begins with the selection of the topic, problem, or area of interest, as well as the paradigm. Good research-undertaking starts with the selection of the topic, problem, or area of interest, as well as the paradigm. Stanage (2007) traced the 'paradigm' back to its Greek (paradeigma) and Latin origins (paradigm) meaning pattern, model, or example. A paradigm was the patterning of the thinking of a person; it was a principal example among examples, an exemplar or model to follow according to which design actions were taken. Differently stated, a paradigm was an act of submitting to a view (Stanage 2007). This view was supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), who define a research paradigm as a "basic set of beliefs that guide action," dealing with first principles, 'ultimates,' or the researcher's

worldview or philosophy. In developing research methodologies there are three types of philosophical assumptions being used. Epistemological assumptions deal with subjective evidence that was collected from field studies. Axiological assumptions take into account the biases of the researcher and actively report them, it was used to establish whether the environment being studied was a product of the behavior that is encountered or if the behavior was a product of the environment (Pring, 2014). Ontological assumptions refer to the nature of the reality of the subject that was being researched. The latter assumption was best suited to my study as a qualitative researcher; I believe that these realities were perceived by different individuals and were heavily shaped by their experiences. Using phenomenology as a methodology, this proposed study focuses on the teachers' opinions, feelings, experiences, and inner thoughts concerning their knowledge, values, and skills acquired. It adopts a realistic ontology in which it follows the physical world where I, as the researcher, assumed the existence of a world of causes and effects. It was not the ontology of mechanical causes caught in the cause-effect relationships; rather, in this study, the researcher assumed that some realities exist in the world and may affect the way teachers proceed to the next level. Thus, the researcher that as qualitative researchers follow a realistic ontology, they view it as a casual reality. Ontology. This part of the research pertains to how the issue relates to the nature of reality. According to Creswell (2012), reality was subjective and multiple, as seen by participants in the study. The ontological issue addresses the nature of reality for the qualitative researcher. Reality is constructed by individuals involved in the research situation. Thus, multiple realists exist, such as the realities of the researcher, those of individuals being investigated, and those of the reader or audiences interpreting the study. In this study, the realities of implementing online

distance learning modality during the pandemic were elaborated since there were no face-to-face classes. In this study, I relied on the voices and interpretations of the participants through extensive quotes and themes that reflected their words and provided evidence of different perspectives. The answers of the participants to the study were coded and analyzed to build and construct the commonality and discreteness of responses. I made sure that the responses of the participants were carefully coded to ensure the reliability of the result. The researcher upheld the authenticity of the responses and precluded from making personal bias as the study progressed. Epistemology. This refers to the awareness of how knowledge claims are justified by staying as close to the participants as possible during the study in order to obtain firsthand information. Guba and Lincoln (1985), as cited by Creswell (2013), stated that on the epistemological assumption, the researcher attempted to lessen distance himself or herself from the participants. He suggests that being a researcher he or she collaborates, spends time in the field with participants, and becomes an "insider." Based on Davidson (2000) and Jones (2011). I would identify phenomenology with the use of thematic analysis as the best means for this type of study. In this regard, individual researchers "hold explicit belief". The purpose of this research was to gather essential details on the experiences of the learners during a pandemic. I assured them that I would establish a close interaction with the participants to gain direct information that would shed light on the knowledge behind the inquiry, particularly on the experiences of learners as they went through their teaching activities during the off-classroom classes. Axiology refers to the role of values in research. Creswell (2013) avers that the role of values in a study was significant. Axiology suggests that the researcher openly discusses values that shape the narrative and includes their own interpretation in conjunc-

tion with the interpretation of participants. I uphold the dignity and value of every detail of information obtained from the participants. The researcher understands the personal and value-laden nature of the information gathered from the study. Therefore, I preserve the merit of the participants' answers and carefully interpret them in light of the participants' personal interpretations. Rhetorics. This philosophical assumption stressed that the researcher might write in a literary, informal style using the personal voice, using qualitative terms, and limited definitions. In the context of the study, the researcher used the first person to explain the learners' experiences and coping mechanisms and thoroughly discussed their responses during the interview. As a researcher, I agree with the post-modernism philosophy of Afzal-os-

2.2. Qualitative Assumptions—The methodology was different from the method. The methodology was a creative and responsive approach to understanding questions and subject matter, while the method refers to the exact knowledge and procedure (Gerodias, 2013). In this study, the experiences and coping mechanisms of the school heads, specifically those learners from Talomo District, Davao City Division, were unleashed from their personal narratives. The researchers drove to know the deeper meaning of the predicaments of the school heads became the basis for doing qualitative research, a means which Kalof and Dietz (2008), as cited by Gerodias, (2013) considered helpful in looking for “meanings and motivations that underline cultural symbols, personal experiences, and phenomena”. By using phenomenology, this need was hoped to be addressed by bringing the stories of the floating teachers in a manner that, as David (2005) wrote, the themes, symbols, and meaning of the experiences would be presented. Phenomeno-

logical research was based on two premises. The first is that experience was a valid, rich, and rewarding source of knowledge. According to Becker (1992), as cited in Morrissey Higgs (2006), experience was a source of knowledge and shaped one's behavior. From the definition, human experience was viewed as a cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena and not as an unreliable source. The second premise of phenomenological research lies in the view that the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge, and that we can learn much about ourselves and reap key insights into the nature of an event by analyzing how it occurs in our daily lives (Morrissey Higgs, 2006). By using phenomenology, which is concerned with the “what” and the “how” (Moustakas, 1995), the researcher projected that the subjective experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the school heads were explored and insights drawn as the basis for possible future research and policy analysis concerning this research.

2.3. Design and Procedure—

This study used a qualitative research design employing a phenomenological approach. According to Hancock et al. (2009), qualitative research answers questions regarding society's problems. It raises the questions of why people behave as they do, what possible opinions and attitudes are formed in a certain situation, how people are affected by society in their ways of action, and how the practices and culture in society developed. Phenomenology, as a philosophy and a method of inquiry, was not limited to an approach to knowing; rather, it was an intellectual engagement in interpretations and meaning-making that was used to understand the lived world of human beings at a conscious level. The researcher can adopt interviews, observations, and discussions as data collection strategies within a phenomenological method of inquiry; therefore, phenomenology has both philosophical and methodological stances (Qutoshi, 2018). The Phenomenology was an approached to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach was to arrive at a description of the nature of the particular phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Typically, interviews were conducted with a group of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of an event, situation, or experience. The interview(s) attempts to answer two broad questions (Moustakas, 1994): What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced your experiences of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Other forms of data, such as documents, observations, and art, may also be used. The data was then read, reread, and culled for phrases and

themes that were then grouped to form clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2013). Through this process, the researcher may construct the universal meaning of the event, situation, or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon. Some sorts of philosophical assumptions were employed in the development of research methodology. Subjective evidence gathered from field investigations was the subject of epistemological assumptions that deal with subjective evidence. Subjective evidence collected from field studies has also been used to gain knowledge brought by the accessibility of the place. Axiological assumptions account for the researcher's biases and actively report them; they were used to determine whether the environment being investigated was a result of the behavior seen. Ontological assumptions refer to the nature of the reality of the subject that is being researched. The latter assumption was best suited to my study, for as a qualitative researcher, I believe that different individuals perceive these realities. I also believe that these realities are heavily shaped by their experiences. The phenomenological design interprets the experiences or facts, by listening to the experiences of the participants and providing the meaning of those experiences (Creswell, 2007). It describes the structures of experiences as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or Epistemology rhetoric assumption from other disciplines. The design examines the phenomena through the subjective eyes of the participants that describe the meaning of the experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007).

2.4. Research Participants—In the selection of the research participants, purposive sampling was applied. Purposive sampling was a sampling technique in which the researcher relied on his or her judgment when choosing mem-

bers of the population to participate in the study. It was a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when elements selected for the sample were chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they could obtain

a representative sample by using sound judgment, which would result in saving time and money (Black, 2010). In this study, suitable samples include school heads who were in the public either male or female teachers in Talomo District in the Division of Davao City. Ten informants were part of the in-depth interview. Moreover, to protect the identity of the participants, coding was used. IDI-FT1 to IDI-FT10 were used for the informants of the in-depth interview. In this study, I played various roles to attain the success of the study. First, asked for permission to conduct the study, which would start with the Schools Division Superintendent and then with the participants of my study. As

a researcher, if consented, I recorded the actual interview to achieve the needs in this type of research. The interview's goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of teachers in the new normal way of teaching and learning. The interview would also include how the Department of Education should improve its programs. After the needed data had been gathered, the researcher transcribed and analyzed everything. However, human instruments were more important to study in case the quality of this research has to deal with biases and assumptions regarding the persons involved in the research (Greenbank, 2003).

2.5. *Ethical Considerations*—Creswell (2007) emphasized that qualitative researchers face many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports. In this study, the researcher would deal with school heads in public schools. To ensure an authentic response from the participants, the researcher was responsible for exercising extra caution and maintaining the confidentiality of the study. The rights of the participants were extremely considered. Besides, they would not be forced to be part of the study when they would refuse. In protecting the identity of the participants, Glesne and Peshkins (1992) suggested that providing and assigning numbers or aliases could protect the anonymity of the participants. In this study, I used codes to protect the identity of the participants. Added to this, as the researcher, I explained the purpose and significance of the study. The participants were given the chance to question the researcher about the nature of the study. This certifies that the information was clear to the participants. Moreover, the data gathering and the participation of the participants were guided by the Informed Consent Form, which was signed by the chosen par-

ticipants. Lastly, the results and findings will be presented back to the participants for verification. The transcriptions of the recorded interview were kept private. Further, each participant was advised that they have the right to withdraw their information at any time up to the completion of the data collection process and that they could be requested and allowed to verify their transcript after the interview. This would provide the participants with the opportunity to amend or remove any information that they feel might identify them. The researcher reserves the right to use pseudonyms and change names and/or non-significant dates to protect the participant's identity in all subsequent data analysis and reporting. Qualification of the Researcher. The researcher would ensure that he or she possesses the needed qualifications to conduct the study. The researcher should complete the academic requirements and pass the comprehensive examination before thesis writing, which was the last requirement to obtain the master's degree. The researcher should also be qualified to conduct the study physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. In addition, the advisee-adviser tandem ensured that the study would reach its completion. Ade-

quacy of Facilities. The researcher would strive to complete the study successfully at the specified time and that he or she was equipped with the necessary resources. Likewise, the technical committee would help enhance the paper by giving the needed suggestions and recommendations. Also, the researcher would ensure that he or she has enough funds to continue and finish the research. Thus, this study was hoped to be completed in the target time. Community Involvement. The researcher showed respect for the local traditions, cultures, and views of the respondents in this study. Moreover, this study would not use deceit in any stage of its implementation, specifically, in the recruitment of the participants or methods of data collection.

2.6. Data Collection—The researcher secured a letter of permission to the participants. Upon approval, I used the forms of data collection as prescribed in the qualitative design. In the selection of the research participants, purposive sampling was applied. Purposive sampling was a sampling technique in which a researcher relied on his or her judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study. It was a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they could obtain a representative sample by using sound judgment, which would result in saving time and money (Black, 2010). In this study, suitable samples include all learners who were school heads School in Talomo District, Davao City Division. Ten informants were part of the virtual in-depth interview. Moreover, to protect the identity of the participants, coding was used. IDI-1 to IDI-10 were used for the informants of the in-depth interview. The researcher needs to understand the subjective interaction between the study participants. The researcher heavily relied on naturalistic methods interviewing and

Furthermore, the researcher would necessarily express great pleasure in the wholehearted participation of the interviewees in the conduct of the study. Plagiarism and Fabrication as the researcher. The researcher would respect other works by properly citing the author and rewriting what someone else has said his or her way. The researcher would also always use quotes to indicate that the text has been taken from another paper. Similarly, the researcher would ensure that honesty is present in working on the manuscript and that no intentional misrepresentation and making up of data and or results are included, or purposefully putting forward conclusions that are not accurate

audio recording, and the interpretive paradigm was used. Interpretive approaches rely heavily on naturalistic methods like interviewing, observation, and analysis of existing texts. These methods ensure an adequate dialog between the researchers and those with whom they interact to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality. Yin, as cited by Aquilam (2014), suggested numerous forms of data collection, including documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. To have legitimate and trustworthy data on teachers' experiences of the new normal way of teaching and learning, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview and focus group discussion. This interview aimed to gather information on the feelings and experiences of the former teachers of public schools. The participants have been encouraged to express their answers in their most comfortable manner. The interview with the participants has been transcribed word for word. Lastly, the researcher analyzed the data collected using discourse analysis and thematic analysis. Creswell (2007) suggested that succeeding in the conduct of the study, the data must be stored, so that they

could easily be found and protected from damage and loss. In this study, I used an Interview Guide Question Tool with sub-questions for the virtual in-depth interview and focus group discussion. The tool was used as my guide while interviewing the selected elementary learners who had been my participants in the recorded virtual in-depth interview and focus group dis-

2.7. Data Analysis—In analyzing the qualitative data, I used discourse analysis and thematic analysis. Discourse analysis focuses on the language use and patterning of the study's informants, as reflected in the detailed transcripts of recorded speech (Bueno, 2016). I transcribed and analyzed the recorded in-depth interview and focus group discussion. Part of the analysis was to determine the challenges, coping

2.8. Framework of Analysis—The analytical framework for this study was flexible enough to allow the researcher to either gather all of the data and then analyze it or evaluate it while it was being collected. The data collected was then sifted, charted, and categorized in line with key topics and themes during the analysis stage. This process involves familiarization, coding, developing a thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping, and interpretation (Ritchie Spencer, 1994). Familiarization was becoming familiar with the data through reading and re-reading interview transcripts. Familiarizing the whole interview with the audio recording and transcript and any contextual or reflective notes the researcher recorded was a vital stage in interpretation. It could also be helpful to re-listen to all or parts of the audio recording. The researcher becomes immersed in the data by listening to audiotapes, exploring the field, or reading transcripts. The researcher would become aware of critical ideas and recurring themes throughout the procedure and

discussion. This aimed to answer the research questions and collect additional inputs that could be used in my study. To address the validity issues of this design, specifically the method, I asked for help from the experts. The experts checked and validated my interview guide question tool. I followed the expert panels' suggestions for the sampling of my participants.

mechanisms, and leadership behavior of female school leaders. Thematic analysis was used of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It was a widely used method of analysis in qualitative research. In this study, I looked for patterns and themes that were being generated in the transcribed in-depth interview and focus group discussion.

would make a note of them. The researcher may be unable to review all of the material due to the enormous amount of data that might be collected in qualitative research. As a result, a portion of the data set would be utilized. Several elements of the data collection method would influence the selection. Coding was the process of summarizing and representing data in order to provide a systematic account of the recorded or observed phenomenon. After familiarization, the researcher carefully reads the transcript line by line, applying a paraphrase or label that is a 'code' that describes what they have interpreted in the passage as necessary. Coding aimed to classify all of the data to be compared systematically with other parts of the data set. Developing a thematic framework happens after coding a few transcripts. The researcher needs to compare the labels applied and select a set of codes to apply to all subsequent transcripts. Codes could be grouped into categories, which are then clearly defined. This forms a working analytical framework. Several iterations of the

analytical framework were likely required before no additional codes emerged. It was always worth having another code under each category to avoid ignoring data that does not fit; the analytical framework was never 'final' until the last transcript had been coded. Indexing involves identifying portions or sections of data that relate to a specific theme. This procedure is conducted using all textual data collected, such as transcripts of interviews. Ritchie and Spencer (1994) suggest using a numerical system to index references and annotating them in the margin beside the text for ease. Qualitative data analysis tools are ideal for this task. Charting involves summarizing the data by category from each transcript. Good charting requires an ability to strike a balance between reducing the data on the one hand and retaining the original meanings and 'feel' of the interviewees' words on the other. The chart should include references

to interesting or illustrative quotations. The final stage, mapping, and interpretation, includes an analysis of the important qualities depicted in the charts. This analysis should be able to provide a schematic diagram of the event/phenomenon, assisting the researcher in interpreting the data set. I must be cognizant of the objectives of qualitative analysis and define concepts, map the range and nature of phenomena, create typologies, find associations, provide explanations, and develop strategies (Ritchie Spencer, 1994). These concepts, technologies, and associations mirror the participant. Therefore, any strategies or recommendations the researcher offers reflect the participants' real views, beliefs, and values. Figure 2 shows the steps in the process of the study's analytical framework, which involves familiarization, coding, developing a thematic framework, indexing, charting, mapping, and interpretation.

2.9. *Trustworthiness of the Study*—The concepts of validity and reliability were relatively foreign to the field of qualitative research. Instead of focusing on reliability and validity, qualitative researchers substitute data trustworthiness. Trustworthiness consists of the following components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Harts, 2016). Credibility contributes to a belief in the trustworthiness of data by observing the attributes of prolonged engagement. To address the issue of credibility, interviewed as many research participants as possible or up to the point of saturation. Transferability was concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study could be applied to other situations. In positivist work, the concern often lies in demonstrating that the results of the work at hand can be applied to a wider population since the findings of a qualitative project were specific to a small number

of particular environments and individuals. It was impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions apply to other situations and populations. Therefore, to ensure transferability, I acknowledged that it was my responsibility as a researcher to ensure that sufficient contextual transformation about the fieldwork sites was provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer. Confirmability associate's objectivity in science with the use of instruments that are not dependent on human skill and perception. It was, however, difficult to ensure real objectivity since, as even tests and questionnaires were designed by humans, the intrusion of the researcher's biases is inevitable. Here, steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings were the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher.

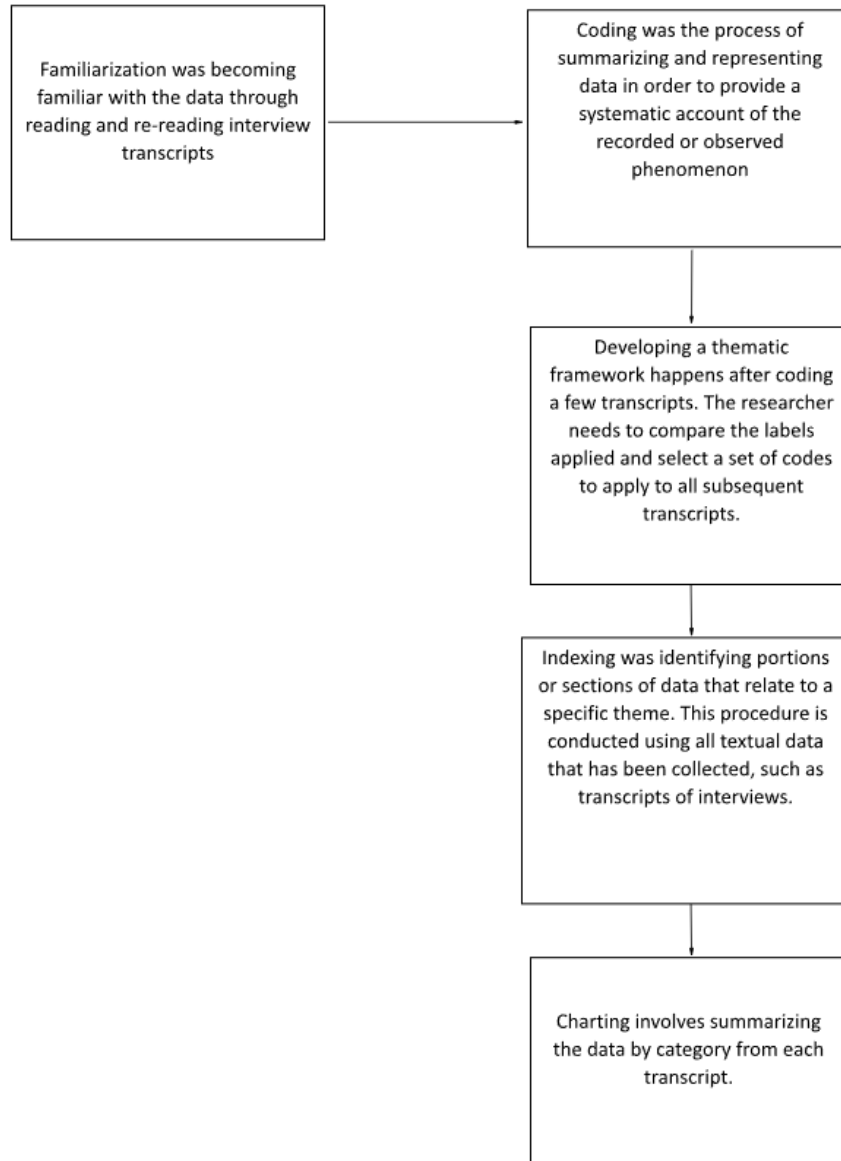


Fig. 2. Framework of the Study

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presented the results generated from analyzing the interview data. It presented themes that emerged from the analysis. Along with the themes were comprehensive discussions that answered the objectives of the study. Before I began my discussion, I established the symbols I used as I presented the quotations based on the responses of the study participants. Regarding the transcriptions of the conducted interviews, I used pseudonyms to refer to the participants of the research.

3.1. Experiences of School Heads in Defining Roles and Decision-Making—The study's first objective is to explore the school heads' experiences in their roles. The interviews conducted revealed several themes, including the school heads' experiences in defining their roles and making decisions.

3.1.1. Balancing Competing Demands—The first theme under the challenges of the school heads with their roles is balancing competing demands. School heads have to juggle various responsibilities, including overseeing curriculum implementation, managing staff, ensuring student welfare, handling administrative tasks, and engaging with parents and the community. Balancing these responsibilities and finding time for each can be a significant challenge. From the participants, the school leader must be accessible to address teachers' issues or grievances, promoting open communication and trust within the faculty. Similarly, when it comes to parent-related concerns, the school leader serves as a bridge between the school and the parents or guardians of students. They should be available to address parental inquiries, feedback, and suggestions regarding their children's education. Building strong relationships with parents fosters a sense of partnership and mutual respect, ultimately benefiting the school community. Additional inputs for our discussion came from the participants' narratives. Coming from the words of their principals and school heads, they have increasingly become critical actors in school systems. Their responsibilities have been extended, and they face growing complexity and demands of "effective school leadership." Not least, they have become more accountable for performance outcomes. This places principals in the crossfire of expectations in the form of external demands, for example, from government and school providers to improve school performance, and internal demands from teachers for good working conditions and appropriate support – a situation described in various ways in the research literature. Some school principals "seem to struggle with the tensions of managerial demands from the outside and their standards for acting as professional educational leaders". Likewise, the participant's response revealed that being the overall person in charge of all school operations as the school leader entails active involvement in various aspects of school management. This responsibility extends to addressing teacher, parent, and student-related concerns. By actively participating in these areas, the school leader can ensure that they comprehensively understand the dynamics within the school community. Regarding teacher-related concerns, the school leader is crucial in providing teachers with support, guidance, and mentorship. This may involve facilitating professional development opportunities, addressing instructional challenges, and fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. Finally, regarding student-related concerns, the school leader is pivotal in creating a safe, sup-

portive, and conducive learning environment. This involves implementing policies and practices that promote student well-being, academic success, and personal growth. The school leader should also proactively address any issues or challenges among students, such as disciplinary issues, bullying incidents, or academic struggles. However, Jarl, Fredriksson, and Persson (Citation 2012) claim that educational management in Sweden has been strengthened by state policies underpinned by New Public Management (NPM) and inspired by a managerial turn, leading to the institutional separation between teachers and school principals. Other researchers describe this shift as resulting from the promotion of a culture of managerialism (Codd Citation 2005; Green Citation 2011). Responsibility for evaluation was central to performance-based management, often expressed in Swedish official statements in discourses of school development and systematic quality work (Lundström Citation 2015). State documents define quality mainly as goal achievement and school development (NAE Citation, 2012). The Swedish Schools Inspectorate (SSI) claims deficiencies in most principals' systematic quality work signal a lack of pedagogical leadership. From the participants' sentiments, the principal's role covers many different areas including leadership, teacher evaluation, and student discipline. Being an effective principal is hard work and is also time-consuming. A good principal is balanced within all her roles and works hard to ensure she does what she feels is best for all constituents involved. Time is a major limiting factor for every principal. A principal must become efficient at practices such as prioritizing, scheduling, and organization. A school principal is a primary leader in a school building. A good leader always leads by example. A principal should be positive and enthusiastic, have his hand in the day-to-day activities of the school, and listen to what his constituents are saying. Effective leaders are available to

teachers, staff members, parents, students, and community members. He stays calm in difficult situations, thinks before acting, and puts the needs of the school before himself. An effective principal steps up to fill in holes as needed, even if it isn't a part of his daily routine. A large part of any school principal's job is handling student discipline. The first step to effective student discipline is ensuring that teachers know the expectations. Once they understand how the principal wants them to handle discipline issues, her job becomes easier. Discipline issues a principal deals with will mostly come from teacher referrals. There are times when this can take up most of the day. A good principal will listen to all sides of an issue without jumping to conclusions and collect as much evidence as she can. Her role in student discipline is similar to that of a judge and a jury. A principal decides whether the student is guilty of a disciplinary infraction and what penalty she should enforce. An effective principal always documents discipline issues, makes fair decisions, and informs parents when necessary. Most principals also are responsible for evaluating their teachers' performance following district and state guidelines. An effective school has effective teachers, and the teacher evaluation process is in place to ensure that the teachers are effective. Evaluations should be fair and well documented, pointing out strengths and weaknesses. A good principal should spend as much time in classrooms as possible. He should gather information every time he visits a classroom, even if it is just for a few minutes. Doing this allows the evaluator to have a larger collection of evidence of what actually goes on in a classroom than a principal who makes few visits. A good evaluator always lets his teachers know what his expectations are and then offers suggestions for improvement if they are not being met. Developing, implementing, and evaluating the programs within the school is another large part of the role of a principal. A principal should always be looking for ways to

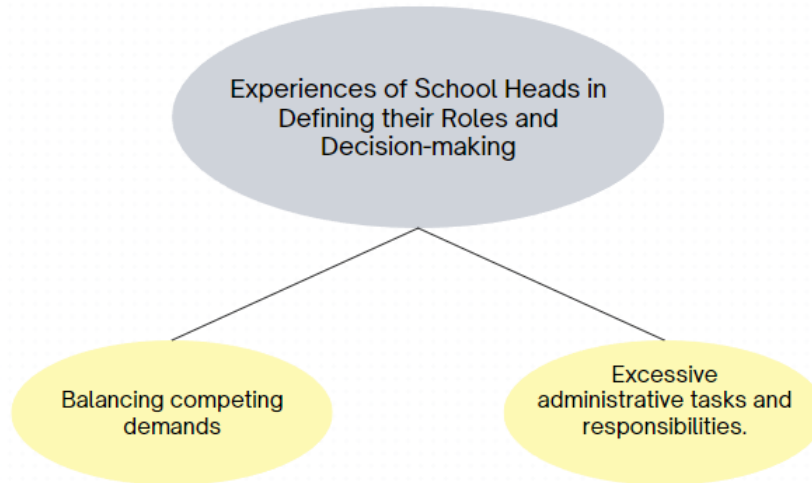


Fig. 3. Experiences of School Heads in Defining Their Roles and Decision-making

improve the student experience at school. Developing effective programs covering various areas is one way to ensure this. It is acceptable to look at other schools in the area and implement those programs within the principal’s school that have proved effective elsewhere. A principal should

3.1.2. *Excessive Administrative Tasks and Responsibilities*—School leaders often find themselves overwhelmed with administrative duties, such as paperwork, meetings, and compliance requirements, which can detract from their ability to focus on strategic decision-making. This administrative overload may lead to decision fatigue, where school heads feel mentally exhausted and struggle to make sound decisions, potentially resulting in suboptimal outcomes for the school. The insight here revolves around balancing the reactive nature of addressing urgent tasks with the proactive approach of addressing critical issues. School administrators often find themselves caught in a firefighting cycle, constantly dealing with pressing matters that demand immediate attention. This reactive mode of operation can prevent them from taking a step back to address underlying issues or implement long-term solutions. Furthermore, relying on an administra-

evaluate school programs every year and tweak them as necessary. If a reading program has become stale and students are not showing much growth, a principal should review the program and make changes as needed to improve it.

tive team to delegate tasks and share the workload is a common strategy for managing the overwhelming responsibilities of school leadership. However, the team’s capabilities are limited, and school heads may still find themselves stretched thin. Ultimately, the key to success lies in finding a delicate balance between addressing urgent tasks and proactively tackling important issues. School administrators must prioritize tasks effectively, delegate responsibilities wisely, and allocate time for strategic planning and long-term initiatives. By focusing on the needs of students and staff, administrators can create a supportive and thriving school environment while effectively managing the demands of their role. Figure 3 shows the experiences of school heads in defining their roles and decision-making and the emergence of the two themes: balancing competing demands and excessive administrative tasks and responsibilities.

3.2. *Coping Mechanism of School Heads to Address the Challenges with Their Roles and Decision-making*—Another study objective is to explore the different coping mechanisms that school heads employ to address the challenges faced by their roles and decision-making. From the interviews, the school heads shared that they employed coping mechanisms to build relationships and communication and to seek support and collaboration.

3.2.1. *Building relationships and communication*—One of the coping mechanisms that school heads may employ to address the challenges they face in their roles and decision-making is to build relationships and communication. School heads focus on building positive relationships with staff, students, parents, and the community. By fostering open and effective communication, they create an environment where concerns and challenges can be addressed collaboratively, and solutions can be developed together. Based on the participants, school heads can harness the valuable insights and support that parents offer by actively engaging parents in school activities, committees, and events. Here are some insights on this practice. Research consistently shows that when parents are involved in their child's education, students perform better academically, have improved behavior, and exhibit higher levels of motivation and self-esteem. As a school head, fostering parental involvement directly contributes to these positive student outcomes. Encouraging parental participation helps in creating a sense of community within the school. Parents who are actively involved feel more connected to the school and are more likely to support its initiatives and programs. This sense of community

can lead to a more positive school culture and a more supportive environment for students and staff. School heads can build trust with parents through transparency, approachability, and responsiveness, creating open lines of communication. This transparency helps address any concerns or issues that may arise promptly and effectively, thereby preventing potential misunderstandings or conflicts. Parents bring diverse skills, experiences, and resources that can be incredibly beneficial to the school. Whether volunteering, offering professional expertise, or providing additional resources, parental involvement can enhance the quality of education and the overall school experience. As a school head, prioritizing parental involvement is a strategic approach that benefits students, strengthens the school community, and enhances overall school effectiveness. Building trust through transparency and responsiveness ensures a collaborative and supportive environment where students can thrive. On the other hand, the participants thoroughly discussed some aspects that might be useful to develop a theme about coping with the challenges of the school heads in defining their roles and decision-making, and that gave me a clear picture or idea of a new theme which is the support and collaboration were revealed for the coping mechanism.

3.2.2. *Seeking Support and Collaboration*—Another coping mechanism that school heads may employ to cope with the challenges of their roles and decision-making is seeking support and collaboration. School heads often seek support from their colleagues, other school leaders, or professional networks. Collaborat-

ing with fellow administrators allows them to share experiences, exchange ideas, and seek guidance when facing challenges or making difficult decisions. The participants discussed that, As a school head, they extend my expertise beyond the confines of my institution by actively engaging in collaborative projects and

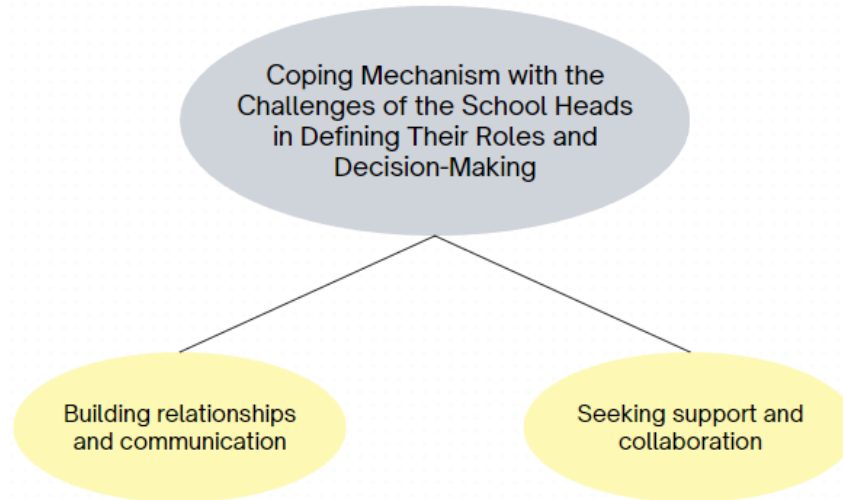


Fig. 4. Coping Mechanism with the Challenges of the School Heads in Defining their Roles and Decision- Making

partnerships with other schools. This approach broadens the scope of available resources and fosters a sense of community and shared purpose among educational leaders. By working together on joint initiatives, they can pool their resources, co-organize events, and implement collaborative strategies to enhance educational outcomes. These partnerships allow them to share best practices, innovate collectively, and effectively address common challenges. Such collaboration paves the way for a more interconnected and supportive educational environ-

ment, ultimately benefiting the schools and the broader educational community. Through these efforts, they can create a richer, more dynamic learning experience for their students while strengthening the professional bonds between educators and institutions. Figure 4 shows the coping mechanism with the challenges of the school heads in defining their roles and decision-making and the emergence of the two themes: building relationships and communication and seeking support and collaboration.

3.3. Educational Management Insights Drawn from the Findings of the Study—The study of the experiences of school heads in defining their roles and decision-making provides valuable educational insights. Some of these insights include: The experiences of school heads in defining their roles as decision-makers in school leadership make it essential

to be mindful of the potential impact of their decisions. This means being fully present and mindful when making decisions. Take the time to consider the different perspectives of the school community and weigh the potential consequences of your actions. The School heads and decision-making processes are critical in setting a clear school vision and direction.

3.3.1. Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement—School heads recognize the significance of collaboration and stakeholder engagement in decision-making. They involve teach-

ers, parents, students, and community members in the decision-making process to ensure diverse perspectives are considered and to build a sense of ownership and commitment to the decisions

made. Foster open dialogue by creating forums for discussion, inviting input, and actively listening to concerns. Establishing trust through transparency and demonstrating the positive impact of change over time helps bring even the most resistant stakeholders on board with the shared vision for educational improvement. Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement: I consider this an essential theme in defining their

roles as decision-makers in school leadership, making it essential to be mindful of the potential impact of their decisions. I find it essential because this was an essential experience or action by the school to function and make their decision appropriate to the needs of the learners and teachers. This insight emphasizes the importance of strong leadership and its impact on shaping the educational environment.

3.3.2. Professional Development and Continuous Learning is Essential—The study highlights the significance of ongoing professional development for school heads. It emphasizes the need for school heads to continuously learn, stay updated with educational research and best practices, and seek personal and professional growth opportunities. Professional development for principals must be ongoing, engaging them in continuous improvement and providing support such as continued coaching/mentoring to help them extend their focus beyond managerial competence toward instructional leadership. These educational insights, gleaned from the study of school heads' experiences in defining their roles and decision-making, contribute to our understanding of effective school leadership. They guide aspiring school leaders and inform professional development programs to enhance leadership practices in educational settings. One reason for poor school results has always been that principals are not appropriately skilled and trained in school management and leadership. As a result, some call for profes-

sional development of school principals. Today, school leadership improvement is the central area of concern for the priorities for school reform. The secondary school principals stated that a significant part of their training should provide knowledge and skills in leadership and in areas related to management, in the same way that civil servants are trained to enhance their management skills. School leaders described their training programs as primarily focused on content knowledge in a specific subject area and on teaching strategies and school discipline while generally neglecting curriculum planning, technology, classroom management and discipline, assessment techniques, research work, and communication skills, all of which are crucial for principals to function as effective school leaders (Nasreen A. and Odhiambo 2018). Figure 5 shows the Insights gained from the study of the school heads in defining their roles and decision-making and the emergence of the two themes: collaboration and stakeholder engagement and professional development and continuous learning were essential.

4. Implications and Future Directions

This chapter presents a brief overview of the study, followed by implications based on its findings. Future directions in the field of school culture are also discussed here.

4.1. Findings—The study's main objective is to explore the experiences of the school heads in defining their roles and decision-making.

Specifically, it sought to identify the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the school head in managing the school. In their

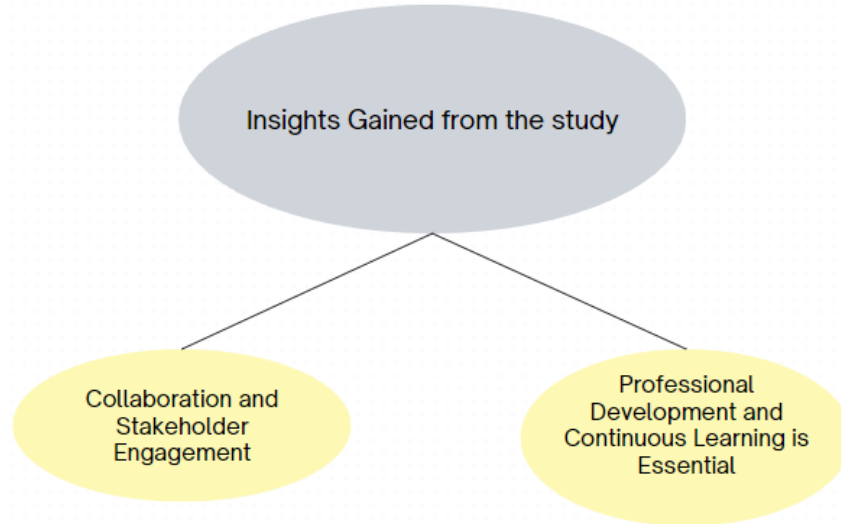


Fig. 5. Insights Gained from the Study

experiences, the school heads were constantly concerned with balancing the tasks at hand while building trust and relationships among stakeholders. Under their coping mechanism, the participants shared that they have been building relationships with open communication. School heads also seek support and collaboration from other school heads. This implies the need for professional development pro-

grams that focus on instructional leadership and developing interpersonal skills. Schools can provide resources and training to help school heads develop and strengthen their emotional intelligence, communication, and relationship-building abilities. Promotion of Reflective Practice: The experiences of school heads emphasize the importance of reflective practice in defining their roles and decision-making.

4.2. Implications—The results of my analysis revealed the following significant findings. The study of the experiences of school heads in defining their roles and decision-making carries several implications that could inform educational practice and policy. Some of these implications include: The experiences of school heads in defining their roles and decision-making and the emergence of the two themes: balancing competing demands and excessive administrative tasks and responsibilities. The balancing competing demands was somehow the School heads had to juggle various responsibilities, including overseeing curriculum implementation, managing staff, ensuring student welfare, handling administrative tasks, and engaging with parents and the community. Bal-

ancing these responsibilities and finding time for each can be a significant challenge while the Excessive Administrative Tasks and Responsibilities. School leaders often find themselves overwhelmed with administrative duties, such as paperwork, meetings, and compliance requirements, which can detract from their ability to focus on strategic decision-making. This administrative overload may lead to decision fatigue, where school heads feel mentally exhausted and struggle to make sound decisions, potentially resulting in suboptimal outcomes for the school. The coping mechanism with the challenges of the school heads in defining their roles and decision-making and the emergence of the two themes: building relationships and communication and seeking support and

collaboration. Building relationships and communication. One of the coping mechanisms that school heads may employ to address the challenges they face in their roles and decision-making is to build relationships and communication. School heads focus on building positive relationships with staff, students, parents, and the community. By fostering open and effective communication, they create an environment where concerns and challenges can be addressed collaboratively, and solutions can be developed together. While seeking support and collaboration is another coping mechanism that school heads may employ to cope with the challenges of their roles and decision-making is seeking support and collaboration. School heads often seek support from their colleagues, other school leaders, or professional networks. Collaborating with fellow administrators allows them to share experiences, exchange ideas, and seek guidance when facing challenges or making difficult decisions. The insights gained from the study of the school heads in defining their roles and decision-making and the emergence of the two themes, collaboration and stakeholder engagement, and professional development and continuous learning, were essential. Communication helps us develop and maintain relationships with those around us. Therefore, com-

municating effectively allows children to form strong bonds with teachers and peers, making them feel supported and confident and School heads recognize the significance of collaboration and stakeholder engagement in decision-making. They involve teachers, parents, students, and community members in the decision-making process to ensure diverse perspectives are considered and to build a sense of ownership and commitment to the decisions made. At the same time, for professional development, It emphasizes the need for school heads to continuously learn, stay updated with educational research and best practices, and seek personal and professional growth opportunities. Professional development for principals must be ongoing, engaging them in continuous improvement and providing support such as continued coaching/mentoring to help them extend their focus beyond managerial competence toward instructional leadership. The implications of studying school heads' experiences in defining their roles and decision-making can inform educational policies, leadership development programs, and school practices. They guide the creation of supportive environments that enable school heads to lead effectively, make informed decisions, and contribute to positive educational outcomes.

4.3. Future Directions—This study was significant to principals. In it, principals were able to reveal their actual lived experiences in implementing educational policies in the school, especially in this new standard setting. They could also adopt the teachers' coping practices regarding their challenges. This study was equally significant to the school heads. It was a good reference for them to examine the principals' challenges and how to address them. To the policymakers, for planning and drafting future training and seminars for teachers to properly address implementation gaps in utilizing

the roles and responsibilities of principals in the teaching and learning process. Finally, to fellow researchers who wanted to conduct a similar or comparative study.

The study of the experiences of school heads in defining their roles and decision-making is an evolving field with potential future directions. Some possible future directions for research in this area include: Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies that follow school heads over an extended period can provide deeper insights into how their roles and decision-making evolve. This can help iden-

tify patterns, trends, and changes in their experiences and understand the long-term impact of their decisions on school outcomes. Comparative Studies: Comparative studies across different educational contexts, such as different countries or school systems, can shed light on how cultural, social, and contextual factors influence the experiences of school heads in defining their roles and decision-making. Comparisons can provide valuable insights into the transferability of practices and strategies across different settings. Qualitative Research: Qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or case studies, can provide rich, detailed accounts of school heads' experiences in defining their roles and decision-making. This approach can more comprehensively capture the complexity, nuances, and contextual factors that influence their experiences. Intersectionality and Diversity: Future research may explore the experiences of school heads from diverse backgrounds, considering factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural perspectives. Examining how intersectionality and diversity influence their roles and decision-making can contribute to a more inclusive understanding of school leadership. Impact of External Factors: Research can investigate the influence of external factors, such as educational policies, funding mechanisms, accountability frameworks, and societal expectations, on school heads' experiences in defining their roles and making decisions. Understanding the impact of these external factors can help identify strategies to support school heads in navigating challenges and optimizing their decision-making processes. Professional Development and Support: Future research can focus on identifying effective professional development programs and support mechanisms for school heads. Investigating the types of training, mentoring, and coaching that are most beneficial in helping school heads develop the skills and competencies needed to define their roles and make effective decisions can inform the design and implementation of targeted professional development initiatives. Ethical Considerations: Exploring the ethical dimensions of decision-making for school heads is essential for future research. Investigating how school heads navigate ethical dilemmas and make morally sound decisions in complex educational contexts can provide valuable insights for ethical leadership development. By pursuing these future directions, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of the experiences of school heads in defining their roles and decision-making. This knowledge can inform policy development, leadership preparation programs, and supportive practices that enhance the effectiveness of school leadership and ultimately improve educational outcomes.

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