

State of Balance: Lived Experiences of School Heads on School Mental Health Management

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8100179>

Received: 18 October 2024; Accepted: 29 October 2024; Published: 13 November 2024

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study design was to explore the experiences of school heads in selected public schools in Davao City on mental health management. A total of five school heads were identified through purposive sampling. The study utilized a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. Thematic content analysis is used as a data analysis tool. Results revealed that the practices of school heads on total quality management implementation in their respective schools were: managing resources, collaborative decision-making, and curriculum and learning. Moreover, results revealed the study on school heads' experiences with mental health management in selected public schools in Davao City revealed two key elements: fostering a supportive environment and implementing mental health initiatives. School heads coped through effective management strategies and recognition of staff and student needs. Insights highlight the importance of continuous mental health programs, alongside monitoring and evaluation, to sustain and enhance mental health efforts in schools. Recommendations emphasize using these approaches to strengthen mental health management in public schools, contributing to the well-being of the school community.

Keywords: Mental health management, phenomenological study, school heads, teachers and experiences

INTRODUCTION

The mental health of educators is an essential element within the intricate ecosystem of education, which has a direct impact on the overall condition of a school. As individuals who are frequently compared to the commanders of the educational vessel, school administrators have a significant impact on the mental well-being of their faculty and staff. The influence of school heads on the psychological welfare of teachers is extensive and of the utmost significance. In addition to advocating for supportive policies, fostering a supportive work environment, exercising effective leadership, managing workloads, acknowledging contributions, and promoting professional development are all ways in which school administrators can substantially enhance the mental well-being and overall job contentment of educators. An educational institution that promotes a sense of worth and assistance among its faculty not only guarantees favorable conditions for their personal development but also cultivates a constructive atmosphere for student learning.

The daily affairs of schools and communities are contingent upon their school heads. A successful school leader may foster a supportive school culture that promotes positive teacher and student motivation and academic performance (Dicke et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2019; Riley et al., 2021; Walsh & Dotter, 2018). By offering support, guidance, direction, and vision, school leaders can also affect the mental health experiences of teachers. There is an increasing body of research suggesting that the teaching profession is a stressful job. It is even believed to be extremely stressful for a variety of reasons, some of which include the neoliberal

philosophy of economic competition, responsibility, and equality (Carnoy, 1995), in addition to additional expectations that have developed over the course of the past few years (Oplatka, 2017).

In the Philippines, mental health issues have been on the rise among educators in the country, including school heads, for decades, even though the pandemic has exacerbated and intensified stress. Educators in Sorsogon City continue to encounter challenges in adapting to the new norm due to inadequate preparation for the modifications in instructional methods. In addition to facing challenges in maintaining and sustaining school operations, administrators are devoting their efforts to matters related to the pandemic. To carry out their responsibilities efficiently, school heads must ensure that they have sound mental health and the capacity to cope with the tension that accompanies their roles as school leaders and managers (Estinor & Digo, 2021).

Lived Experiences of School Heads

An increasing body of evidence suggests that teaching is an inherently demanding profession (Jepson & Forrest, 2017). Anxiety is a detrimental occurrence that arises in situations with protracted, unmanageable pressure such as in the teaching field. Work performance may be negatively impacted by stress-related health issues (Bellingrath et al., 2019). It causes emotional exhaustion, which damages efficacy and productivity (Niessen, Mader & Jimmieson, 2017), in addition to the caliber of instruction (Cherniss, 2020). Additionally, it increases job turnover (Jackson, Swab & Schuler, 2021), premature exhaustion (Jepson & Forrest, 2017), and decreases job satisfaction and occupational commitment. Stress may result in decreased staff retention and absenteeism, which will incur additional costs for the school in the form of replacement staff compensation. Furthermore, the overall welfare of both individuals and the organization is adversely affected by stress (O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2021). Thus, teacher mental health may have an impact on student outcomes.

On the other hand, well-being is the integration of optimal physical and mental performance. Positive emotions, life satisfaction, and comparatively elevated levels of contentment are all linked to it (Huppert, 2019). In the context of school, well-being is defined as the result of a process of developing a set of abilities to identify and regulate one's emotions, establish and attain constructive objectives, value the viewpoints of others, foster and maintain positive relationships, exercise responsible judgment, and manage interpersonal challenges in a constructive manner (Barry, Clarke, & Dowling, 2017). The provision of support for teachers' well-being by school heads is a critical factor in facilitating their productive involvement in the classroom, boosting their self-assurance and dedication (Anari, 2021), and aiding them in managing stress. According to Durlak, Weisberg, Dymnici, and Schellinger (2018), improved well-being also improves job satisfaction, productivity, and academic success. It increases financial savings, mitigates stress-related illness-induced absenteeism, and enhances the profession's public perception. Additionally, it facilitates the recruitment of personnel and enhances staff retention (Jepson & Forrest, 2017).

In addition to managing their own emotions and those of their staff, school heads are expected to foster constructive interpersonal connections. Additionally, it is anticipated that they will cultivate an awareness and understanding of the emotional components associated with school administration (Fullan, 2018). An aspect of fostering positive emotions involves engaging in emotional expression. Heads of schools who exhibit a greater degree of emotional expression are perceived as more charismatic, more likely to foster a positive emotional environment, and more attuned to the feelings of others (Oplatka, 2021; Riggio, 2017). Individuals who have a greater capacity to comprehend emotions are more content, socially active, and productive. Happier individuals have greater social connections. Individuals engage in the exchange of emotional support, which has been linked to comparatively elevated levels of psychological well-being (Huppert, 2019). Emotional regulation is positively impacted by the emotional milieu at school, which includes the use of emotional vocabulary (Berkovich & Eyal, 2016; Clark, Hype-Hailey & Kellinher, 2017). Positive emotions are commonly elicited in followers (Bass & Avolio, 2017), and they positively influences individuals' interpretations and initiations of social interaction and perceptions of social behavior. People experiencing positive emotions, according to Forgas (2021), have a more favorable opinion of themselves and others, and are more lenient, confident, optimistic, and benevolent in interpersonal situations. Positive emotions can

also inspire individuals to prioritize the welfare of the pupils in the school over their objectives (Begleym & Stefkovich, 2017).

Positive Working Environment

The learning outcomes of students are significantly influenced by the working environment in which teachers operate. A conducive learning environment can be achieved by eliminating any issues that may arise during class (Haley, 2018). (Charner-Laird et al. 2017) Teachers in schools with positive working environments report high levels of satisfaction and low intentions to abandon the profession, regardless of the socioeconomic backgrounds of the instructors or the demographics of the students. The organizational dimensions of schools have been the subject of a growing amount of research (Connolly et al. 2018). Despite the increasing recognition of the critical nature of working environments, researchers have only recently begun to comprehend how various workplace factors influence teachers' self-efficacy, satisfaction with their role and assignment, and willingness to remain in their school and profession, as well as their ability to teach effectively (Reaves & Allen, 2018).

Teachers work in a school, just as they would in any other organization; therefore, the overall structure of these specific environments may influence their perspectives. Although certain elements of the work environment are essential, their effects on health will vary by their level of intensity (Warr, 2017). (1) opportunity for control; (2) opportunity for skill application; (3) externally generated objectives; (4) variety; (5) environmental clarity; (6) financial accessibility; (7) physical security; (8) interpersonal interaction opportunities; and (9) a prestigious social standing. While all of them are essential for psychological well-being when used in moderation, certain factors, such as burden, are considered detrimental when utilized at extremely high levels. Despite their considerable influence, affluence and social standing are among the many additional factors that are improbable to negatively affect health. Teachers' self-efficacy is influenced by various factors, including the learning environment, mastery experiences, and collective efficacy (Wilson et al., 2020). Conversely, perceived organizational support has the potential to enhance the self-esteem of educators through the reduction of occupational stress (Masoom, 2021).

Developing Work Satisfaction

Work satisfaction is a positive mental state that is positively correlated with instructors' evaluations of the workplace's capacity to assist students in achieving success and the contentment instructors derive from the academic achievements of their pupils, according to research. It also encompasses a fundamental affective element of "happiness" and satisfaction that arises from an inherent commitment to the profession of education. It is crucial to bear in mind that the terms 'happiness' and 'satisfaction' do not possess identical connotations across all cultures and languages (Diener et al., 2019; Veenhoven, 2017). Moreover, according to Shulman (2018), assistance, the significance of the objectives, the foundation, and the interaction are all interrelated actions that are essential for effective teaching. Gaining insights into the relationship between teachers and students regarding the influence of teacher attributes or personality traits on effective teaching can be facilitated through their interactions. Effective teachers are surrounded by human qualities including comprehension, self-assurance, regard for others, empathy, fair play, appreciation, adaptability, objectivity, interest, friendliness, maturity, credibility, trustworthiness, humor, and the ability to engage, according to Beishuzen, Hof, Putten, Bouwmeester, and Asscher (2017) and Chickering & Gamson (2017). It is critical due to the close relationship between effective teaching and this ability to influence students (Walsh & Maffei, 2015).

Thus, the direct correlation between working-life satisfaction and teachers' self-efficacy is not an unexpected finding. Our research suggests that educators who possess self-efficacy may encounter reduced levels of tension, depression, emotional exhaustion, and overall burnout. Instead, people may "experience higher levels of personal accomplishment, commitment, and work satisfaction" (Zee & Koomen, 2016) and "have more confidence in mastering difficult tasks." The conceptual framework of subjective wellbeing, which emphasizes

the significance of psychological functioning in explaining human flourishing, has recently incorporated the eudaimonic features of wellbeing (Diener et al., 2017; Huppert & So, 2020; OECD, 2019).

Teachers must build and sustain productive working relationships with their coworkers and managers to offer social support and facilitate administrative involvement. Each of these aspects of the teaching profession has the potential to induce tension, which can have several detrimental effects on an educator's capacity to carry out their work, as well as on their own well-being and mental health. In addition, the most prevalent occupational stressors include inadequate administrative support, insufficient peer assistance, role conflict, ambiguity in roles, and anticipated emotional investment in one's work (Kyriacou, 2018). Personality attributes, gender, age, experience, and classroom type are among the variables that can exacerbate or mitigate the negative effects of occupational stressors. Additionally, the workplace environment and particular educators may be associated with these factors (Kyriacou, 2018).

Teachers who worked in schools with collegial connections, resilient principal leadership, and a positive school culture reported greater levels of job satisfaction and academic advancement, according to Johnston et al. (2012). The school can be expected to be a secure and well-organized environment for instruction and learning, but without the participation of the teachers, it will be governed by regulations rather than standards (Johnston et al., 2012). To develop, implement, and advance a positive school culture, the principal works with teachers. When their principal and colleagues are on their side, a teacher is more likely to remain in the classroom (Brown, et al., 2018). According to Brown et al. (2018), some schools are probably better at attracting and retaining talented instructors than others. An Aspiring teacher who are dedicated to becoming an effective educator, especially if they are personally motivated to assist underrepresented, low-income children, will likely prefer to work with others who share their goals and aspirations (Sun, 2018). A school with a robust professional culture will retain that instructor (Sun et al., 2017).

Students would benefit from attending a school that is renowned for attracting and retaining teachers who share their perspectives (Lee & Louis, 2019). Teachers who frequently collaborate and exchange knowledge enjoy a healthful work environment. Since elementary school teachers can raise student test scores by working with more proficient colleagues, collegial relationships can be advantageous to them (Jackson & Elias, 2017). Collegial exchanges that are constructive are likely to promote student learning. As a consequence, schools with robust work cultures appear to foster a more cooperative environment between teachers and students. The level of trust and respect among teachers, their comfort level when discussing challenges, and their commitment to supporting students' learning are determinants of this (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015)

Promote Social Relation

It may be challenging for individuals with mental illnesses to maintain close friendships and regularly engage in social activities (Linz & Sturm, 2013). An association has been established between loneliness and a range of mental disorders, including depression and psychosis when both are present (Cernovsky, 2017). Loneliness is characterized by feelings of isolation and is strongly associated with psychological disorders, according to Shevlin et al. (2014). Furthermore, research has established a correlation between loneliness and suicidal ideation, emphasizing the critical nature of initiatives aimed at mitigating the detrimental health effects associated with loneliness (Stickley & Koyanagi, 2016).

Social relations are defined in a variety of ways. Generally, it is described as a process involving actions that satisfy specific human needs, such as the desire for self-worth, the need to adhere to a group, and the need to achieve. It also functions as a symbol that underscores the overarching objective of completely gratifying fundamental human needs. Conversely, it is characterized as a compilation of fixed relative readiness characteristics that distinguish an individual from another in the context of social interaction; it merely exposes the unconscious mental processes that lie concealed behind vocal expressions, body language, and signs of emotion. On the contrary, social relations between individuals and their social environment exhibit variability contingent upon the circumstances; while certain individuals react favorably through cooperation and adaptability, others react unfavorably. Conflicts between competitors are an instance of a negative form. For

organizations and individuals to maintain positive relationships, interaction with others is essential. Careful consideration must be given to the relationship between the social contexts of encounters and their respective social systems if social relations are to be productive and fruitful. This is for social systems to effectively influence identity formation and behavior modification within the context of constructive and targeted social engagement (Freihat & Kitishat, 2015).

Additionally, teacher-parent relations have an impact on students' learning and well-being, and many teachers try to involve parents in classroom or school administration activities. Parent-teacher involvement initiatives contribute to the improvement of teacher-student relationships and engage parents in educational interventions that yield significantly greater success rates compared to those that fail to do so.

Theoretical Lens

The Human Relations Theory is the theoretical foundation of this study. According to Onday (2016), Elton Mayo et al. (1888–1949) established the Human Relations Theory. According to the claim, knowing people and their requirements is crucial for developing organizational commitment and good productivity. Human relations theory holds that managers can better integrate staff into the company by getting them involved. Both managers and employees may accomplish their objectives, increasing their commitment and satisfaction. The idea holds that there are certain needs that employees look to their bosses to satisfy.

The study is also anchored on the Three Component Model of Commitment by Meyer and Allen (1991). According to the three-component approach, the interaction between an employee's levels of affective, normative, and continuation commitment determines their commitment profile. They distinguish between affective commitment, which is based on one's values, normative commitment, which is based on duty, and continuation commitment, which is based on the analysis of the costs and benefits. According to Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993), these elements are differentiable and related to variables as antecedents and consequents. Organizational researchers have shown a great deal of interest in the three-component model, which has been put to the test in several empirical contexts (Bentein et al. 2005; Lok, Westwood, and Crawford 2005; Snape and Redman 2003). According to the model, loyalty to an organization is a psychological state with three separate elements that influence how employees feel about the company they work for.

The last theory is Becker's Side-Bet Theory (1960). This theory suggests that organizational commitment is a structural phenomenon that develops over time as a result of repeated individual organizational transactions and variations inside bets. According to the theory put forth by Becker in 1960, "commitments come into being when a person, by making a side bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity". Making side bets has the effect of raising the cost of abandoning a course of action. Staying with the business is the course of action in the situation of organizational commitment.

Research Questions:

This study addressed the following research questions:

- To explore the experiences of school heads in selected public schools in Davao City on mental health management.
- To determine the coping strategies of the school heads based on their experience in mental health management in selected public schools in Davao City.
- To gain insight into experiences encountered by school heads regarding mental health management.

METHOD

In the current study, the researcher utilized a phenomenological study research design. It provided detailed insights into specific situations, allowing researchers to explore complexities and nuances in depth. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study uncovered the challenges, successes, and

implications within the specific context of the topic. The phenomenological study provided rich, contextualized data to inform future decisions and initiatives in education.

The sample participants were selected explicitly to encompass instances in which the phenomena under study were likely to be found. This approach to sample design was consistent with the strategy of homogeneous sampling, in which the desired outcome was the description of some particular subgroup in depth (Patton, 2020). In this study, a sample pool of five (6) school heads was drawn from the discipline. The sample was composed of experienced school heads in their fields, with the average number of years of administrative experience being five (5) years.

Data were collected from the five (6) school participants over a period of 3 months using a pre-tested interview protocol focusing on specific total quality management practices. Each question was mapped to one or more of the main research questions. After the interviews were conducted with the participants, the results were transcribed and analyzed.

The main approach to data analysis involved a detailed analysis of the interview transcripts. As the first step in this sequential process, notes from each interview made both during the interview and immediately after it, were reviewed; highlights or new concepts were identified. Next, the transcript from each interview was reviewed and coded. As the process continued, each new interview was compared to the previous ones for confirming or disconfirming evidence; earlier interviews were reanalyzed in light of new concepts identified in later interviews. Because the phenomenological study design encouraged the researcher to analyze the data from earlier interviews before scheduling and conducting the later ones, the analytic process itself influenced the emphasis placed on certain questions during the latter part of the process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presented the results and discussions of the data based on the research questions of the study. It included the school head's experiences in selected public schools in Davao City on mental health management, then, the coping strategies of the school heads based on their experience in mental health management, and to determine the educational management insights of the school heads that can be drawn from the findings of the study.

Experiences of School Heads in Selected Public Schools in Davao City on Mental Health Management

Figure 1 shows the experiences of school heads in selected public schools in Davao City on mental health management. The results revealed three (2) indicators of the experiences of school heads on mental health management. It was found that the common experiences of school heads from selected public schools were: (1) Supportive Environment, and (2) Mental Health Initiatives.

The first theme found in the experiences of school heads in selected public schools on mental health management was a supportive environment. School heads often found themselves in creating a healthy, stigma-free work environment by encouraging open communication and offering access to mental health resources. The participants stressed the need to model good habits and self-care techniques while fostering a culture that values teachers' mental health. It was also stated that open communication among teachers is an effective approach for establishing harmony and boosting mental wellness. Participants stated that

“Model healthy behaviors and self-care practices and encourage teachers to prioritize their mental well-being.” (P1)

“My key responsibilities include fostering a stigma-free culture, providing access to mental health resources.” (P2)

“As a school head, I make sure to give and set a harmonious environment towards my teachers by providing open communication between them.” (P5)

“Foster a positive and supportive work culture that reduces stigma around mental health.” (P1)

“Communication is one of the best strategies that can manage the mental health of teachers.” (P5)

“By communicating to other teachers, it will serve as simple gestures but very powerful, so open communication is the key.” (P5)

In conclusion, fostering a stigma-free work environment through open communication and access to mental health resources is crucial. Modeling healthy behaviors and prioritizing teachers' well-being helps create a supportive culture, promoting harmony and mental health among staff, which benefits the entire school community.

Creating a supportive work environment is essential for developing a mentally healthy workplace for teachers, and this can be accomplished through a range of vital tactics. Open communication channels allow for open discussions, while regular team-building activities and wellness initiatives promote camaraderie and well-being. Furthermore, allowing teachers to provide feedback on their concerns and suggestions ensures that their voices are heard, resulting in a more inclusive and supportive workplace (Agyapong et al., 2022). Establishing a supportive work environment is critical not just for individual well-being, but also for improving the whole educational environment, resulting in higher teacher satisfaction and effectiveness.

Support from colleagues is essential for fostering a sense of belonging, because educators, like kids, benefit from developing meaningful relationships with one another. Teachers must build constructive relationships with their students and trustworthy people to develop a collaborative environment. Education leaders can create a more supportive atmosphere by creating structures, norms, and systems that promote a safe and conducive work environment. These initiatives can promote growth and well-being in the educational community by addressing the root causes of mental stress in teachers. Prioritizing relationship-building among educators can greatly boost teacher morale and collaboration, resulting in a more resilient and vibrant school environment.

According to a study, when teachers are given more support and autonomy from school administrators, their mental health and dedication to their work improve. Having colleagues to turn to for help also benefits teachers' mental health. All school personnel should be trained on how to seek accessible mental health services. Furthermore, schools should offer peer-support programs to teach employees "how to be an ally or 'askable' adult for their colleague to get the support they need" (Superville & Will, 2022). Promoting a culture of support and autonomy helps to improve teachers' mental health and professional dedication, which are critical for creating a positive educational environment.

Furthermore, creating institutional frameworks for peer assistance among the institution's educator community can be quite beneficial. For example, schools can develop peer mentorship programs in which experienced instructors assist and support fresher colleagues (Agarwal, 2023). This emphasizes the necessity of developing established support structures that allow experienced educators to mentor their peers, improving professional growth and increasing community ties within the school.

The second theme found in the experiences of school heads in selected public schools on mental health management was mental health initiatives. School heads play a vital role in supporting teachers' well-being by implementing regular check-ins, counseling programs, and workshops focused on stress management and work-life balance. School heads foster a supportive environment through team-building activities and peer support groups, while also encouraging mindfulness practices during staff meetings. Furthermore, by recognizing and appreciating teachers' accomplishments through quarterly awards, school leaders enhance confidence and motivation, creating a culture of gratitude that promotes both personal and professional growth among educators. Whereas, the participants have shared that:

"I've implemented regular check-ins, established a counseling program, and organized workshops on stress management and work-life balance." (P2)

"I see to it that Team Building is included in the SIP and AIP for teachers to develop the supportive environment." (P3)

"I've introduced peer support groups and encouraged mindfulness practices during staff meetings." (P2)

"Recognition and Appreciation quarterly awarding for the accomplishments they have done." (P3)

"Recognition and Appreciation helps to boost the confidence and ability of the teachers." (P4)

School heads enhance teachers' well-being through several key initiatives. Regular check-ins, counseling programs, and workshops on stress management and work-life balance offer vital support. Team-building activities integrated into the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) foster collaboration, while peer support groups and mindfulness practices promote emotional resilience. Quarterly recognition and appreciation awards boost teachers' confidence and reinforce their abilities, cultivating a motivating and supportive culture.

Providing access to counseling and mental health services is critical for helping educators, and collaborating with professional therapy platforms can provide them with expert advice and practical stress-management techniques. Furthermore, providing frequent mental health workshops and training can assist teachers in identifying and addressing symptoms of burnout, anxiety, and depression. Regular check-ins with faculty reinforce the message that their mental health is a top priority, making them feel supported and aware of available mental health resources (Agyapong et al., 2022).

Educational institutions must ensure that teachers have easy access to competent counseling services. For example, they can work with local mental health organizations to provide on-site counseling services or establish a confidential helpline where teachers can seek advice on dealing with mental health issues. Furthermore, organizing frequent mental health workshops and training sessions can provide teachers with the tools and knowledge they require to properly manage their well-being (Agarwal, 2023).

Implementing school-based initiatives to support teachers' and staff's mental health can improve the school atmosphere while also promoting student mental health and success. Mindfulness can benefit both students and teachers. Teachers learn how to manage the responsibilities of teaching while reducing the physical and mental effects of stress. Mindfulness programs for teachers and staff are often group-based and can be included in various professional development plans. These programs teach teachers how to notice and comprehend their own emotions and tendencies. They then utilize mindfulness, meditation, yoga, and breathing exercises to manage their emotions (NCCDPH, 2023).

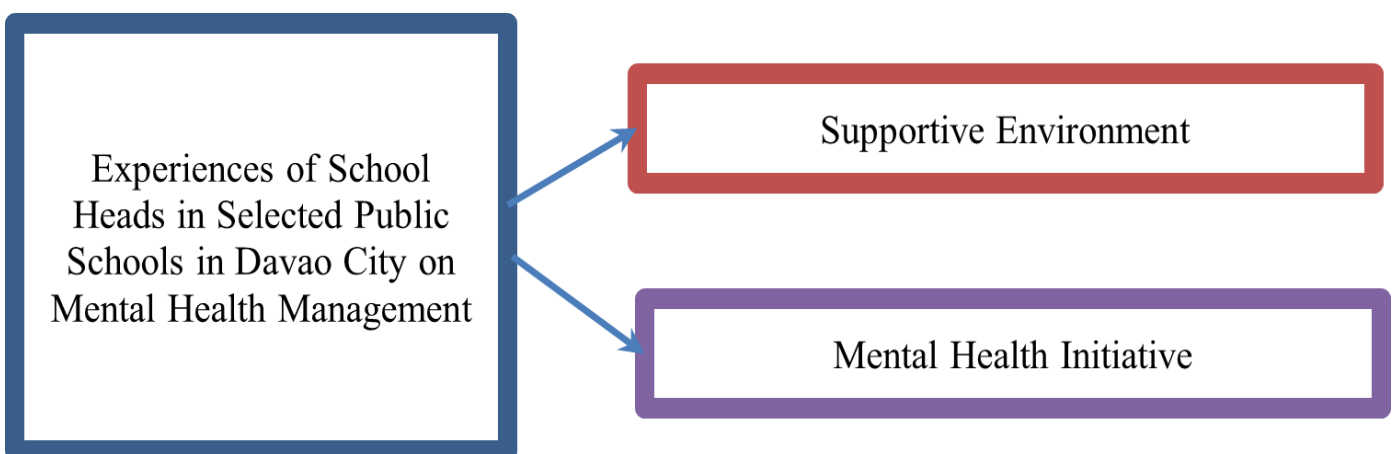


Figure 1. Experiences of School Heads in Selected Public Schools in Davao City on Mental Health Management

Coping Strategies of the School Heads based on their Experience in Mental Health Management in selected public schools in Davao City.

Figure 2 displays the coping strategies of the school heads based on their experience in mental health management in selected public schools in Davao City. The results revealed three (2) indicators of the coping strategies of the school heads based on their experiences in mental health management. It was found that the common ways for school heads to cope based on their experiences were achieved by: (1) management strategies, and (2) recognition.

On the first theme, it was revealed that the coping strategies used by the school heads based on their experience in mental health management were management strategies. The critical role that effective management strategies play in the mental health management practices employed by school heads. By drawing on their experiences, these leaders have demonstrated a proactive approach to addressing mental health challenges within their institutions. This focus on management strategies not only reflects an understanding of the complexities involved in mental health management but also highlights the necessity for structured and strategic responses to ensure the well-being of both staff and students.

"Proper scheduling. Know the holidays and plan." (P1)

"I manage these challenges through continuous education, creative resource allocation, and developing clear, fair policies that support both teachers and school operations." (P2)

"I invited a resource speaker to talk in one of the LAC sessions on how to manage people needing behavioral understanding so that her/his colleagues can adjust to the behavior the teacher is showing." (P3)

"To balance fairness, I promote respect, transparency, and consistent support to the teachers." (P4)

"Proper planning and getting the consensus or most needed break that my teacher needs." (P5)

In conclusion, the insights gathered from school heads regarding their management strategies in mental health management highlight the importance of structured approaches to fostering a supportive educational environment. As indicated in the related literature, effective planning and resource allocation are critical in helping teachers manage their multifaceted responsibilities while reducing stress and preventing burnout. The school heads' emphasis on proper scheduling, continuous education, and the promotion of respect and transparency aligns with the recommendations from UNICEF (2021) and Chang (2009) on the necessity of creating a supportive culture through strong relationships and open communication.

By implementing these strategies, school leaders not only address immediate mental health challenges but also contribute to building a resilient teaching workforce. As emphasized by the literature, recognizing and celebrating teachers' efforts further strengthens community ties and enhances overall school morale. The experiences shared by the school heads reflect a profound understanding that sustainable mental health management relies on collaborative efforts, where both teachers and school leaders actively participate in creating an empathetic and resourceful educational atmosphere. This collective commitment ultimately benefits students, educators, and the broader school community, illustrating the profound impact of effective management strategies in shaping a positive educational experience.

On the second theme, it was found that another way to cope according to school heads based on their experience in mental health management was mainly focused on the recognition gained. The focus on recognition as a coping mechanism in mental health management among school heads reflects a transformative leadership approach that prioritizes resilience and growth. By emphasizing the benefits of their efforts, these leaders foster an optimistic environment that enhances their well-being and cultivates positivity within their schools. This perspective not only inspires educators and staff but also encourages students to recognize and celebrate their successes. Ultimately, by prioritizing positive outcomes, school heads demonstrate that mental

health management is about harnessing growth potential, contributing to a supportive and thriving educational community.

"Yes, I've observed improved teacher retention, increased job satisfaction, and a more positive school climate overall." (P2)

"Yes, there's a big improvement in teachers' performance." (P3)

"It helps teachers feel valued and respected." (P4)

"Yes, it boosts their morale as individuals and makes them feel valued." (P5)

Respecting and recognizing educators can have a substantial impact on schools, resulting in a more engaged teaching profession and better student results. Teachers are more likely to stay in the field, providing their unique knowledge and insight to support schools and new teacher training programs, if they feel trusted, empowered, and recognized for their work. Despite their vital function, educators are frequently underappreciated and underpaid when compared to other professions that demand comparable degrees of postsecondary education. Stakeholders may help create a brighter future for everyone by pushing for respectful and equitable working circumstances, treating teachers with love and respect, and recognizing their contributions to society (Montalvo, 2024).

A true appreciation for teachers and other critical school-based jobs can be exhibited by creating a healthy school culture, improving working conditions, and providing more possibilities for personal and professional development. According to research, perceived school culture has a substantial impact on teachers' attitudes toward their professions, with pleasant environments resulting in higher levels of engagement and dedication while minimizing burnout. Furthermore, allowing teachers to participate in school decision-making processes has been associated with higher job satisfaction and retention. Prioritizing these characteristics can help schools create a more supportive and successful educational environment (Dimmett, 2023).

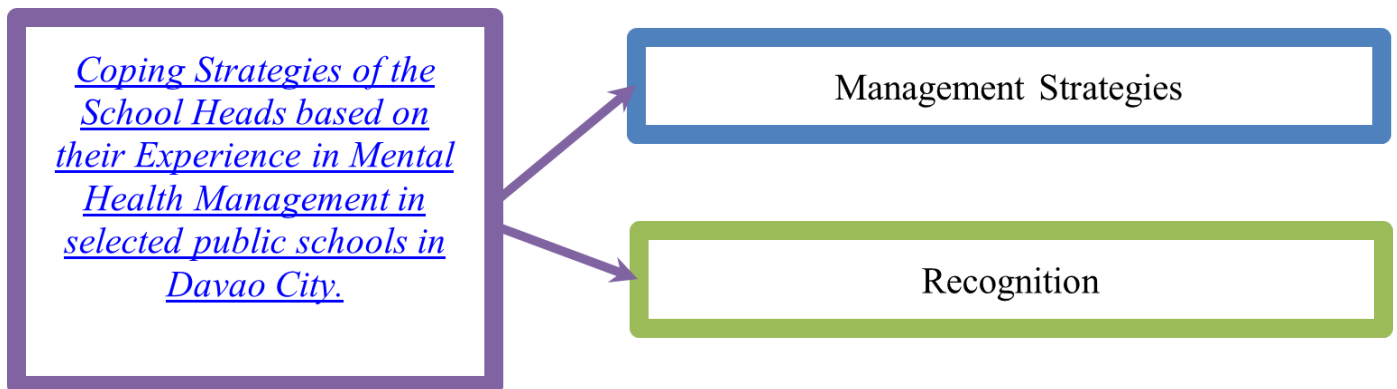


Figure 2. Coping Strategies of the School Heads based on their Experience in Mental Health Management in selected public schools in Davao City.

Educational Management Insights of the School Heads can be drawn from the Findings of the Study in Selected Public Schools in Davao City.

Figure 3 displays the educational management insights of the school heads that can be drawn from the findings of the study in selected public schools in Davao City. The results have revealed two (2) indicators of the educational management insights. It was found that the common insights shared by the participants based on their experiences were: (1) Mental health initiatives, and (2) monitoring and evaluation practices.

The first theme of the educational management insights of the school heads was mental health initiatives. The school heads emphasized the importance of mental health initiatives in supporting teacher well-being,

highlighting various programs designed to foster a balanced and healthy work environment. Key initiatives include promoting work-life balance by encouraging teachers to take personal time for family and relaxation after demanding workloads. Flexible work arrangements and peer mentoring systems are also seen as beneficial in maintaining teacher morale and well-being.

"Work-life balance initiative: Allow teachers to take leave for a vacation with family and bonding/recharging moments after a heavy work." (P1)

"Our most beneficial programs include flexible work arrangements and a peer mentoring system." (P2)

"Physical and mental well-being programs like conducting Zumba once a week and Team Building once a quarter help create an environment where personal connections between and among teachers are developed." (P3)

"Physical Activity, Recollection, and Team Building help in managing teachers' stress as they are out of their comfort zone." (P4)

"Teacher mentorship and leadership programs and proper orientation." (P5)

Mental health and well-being activities for teachers should be ongoing and inclusive. Including self-care activities such as physical movement, socializing, and setting limits at work can support teachers in improving and maintaining their wellness. These activities should be combined with knowledge of and access to institutional support networks, such as employee assistance programs (EAPs). Supportive and trusting workplace cultures will also improve the mental health and well-being of teachers and other school staff. School administrators can provide resources and articles, set up peer mentoring, and foster professional ties among employees (White, 2022).

Schools should prioritize mental health awareness by offering resources and training to help teachers identify indicators of distress in themselves and their colleagues. Offering confidential counseling services is also necessary since it gives a secure space for educators to discuss their mental health issues. Encouraging a healthy work-life balance by setting realistic task goals and giving chances for professional development and self-care is critical for overall well-being. Furthermore, creating peer support networks allows teachers to connect with colleagues who are facing similar issues, allowing them to share coping skills and develop a feeling of community (Healey, 2023).

Furthermore, providing mental health training and related personal and professional development opportunities is critical for educators. Experts advocate training a group of willing employees to serve as mental health ambassadors, raising awareness, and linking colleagues to resources; administrators should also participate in this training. Additionally, providing self-care activities such as yoga or meditation workshops helps foster bonding among educators while also helping them feel peaceful and grounded. Setting up support groups, supervised by qualified mental health specialists, helps teachers to connect and share their experiences in a safe environment, allowing them to exhale and feel understood. Furthermore, ensuring access to mental health resources, such as support for mental health days, is critical for creating a healthy work environment (White, 2022).

On the second theme, it was found that the educational management insights of the school heads were monitoring and evaluation practices. The monitoring and evaluation practices of the school heads reflect a diverse range of approaches, with some schools relying on informal observations and others implementing more structured methods. While a lack of formal monitoring systems was noted in several cases, there were instances where anonymous surveys, feedback sessions, and performance tracking were used to assess the effectiveness of mental health initiatives. The reliance on informal monitoring, such as behavioral observations and subjective indicators of success, suggests that many schools may benefit from developing more formalized

and documented evaluation processes. This would not only enhance the accountability and effectiveness of mental health programs but also provide clearer insights into areas for improvement.

"No formal monitoring and evaluation. Observation lang without written documents." (P1)

"We use anonymous surveys, regular feedback sessions, and track metrics like absenteeism and performance to monitor and evaluate our mental health initiatives." (P2)

"Through monitoring of behavior. Master Teachers assigned to a certain grade level teacher must be informed of the teacher's problem and recording for any untoward observation affecting work-related incidents." (P3)

"No monitoring, but observation of development, and if the program succeeds, one indicator is that the teachers' output is well delivered and the school does not encounter a lot of problems." (P4)

"There is no formal monitoring." (P5)

While each teacher has unique stress and burnout thresholds, school managers can assess their teachers' overall wellness and mental health using a variety of effective ways. One option is to use surveys, such as the Teacher Subjective Well-Being Questionnaire, a scale that assesses teachers' job-related well-being. Individual feedback can also be acquired through one-on-one sessions that foster open communication, allowing administrators to ask specific questions and address concerns directly. Focus groups can also be created, bringing together a small group of teachers for a question-and-answer session to identify the most important concerns in teacher wellbeing. By actively engaging educators through these strategies, school administrators can have a deeper understanding of their teachers' well-being and begin generating answers to their issues (Chakravarty, 2024).

Moreover, ongoing data collection and monitoring are critical to the success of school mental health policies. Districts can begin developing a mental health plan by collecting data to identify needs, such as mental health outcomes, and information from existing or new surveys of teachers, students, and families. This data-gathering process continues as districts evaluate the impact of mental health initiatives using survey data on mental health indicators, school climate, and workforce indicators such as absenteeism. This holistic approach fosters continual improvement and successful program evaluation, ensuring that mental health efforts match the requirements of the school community (Hanover Research, 2022).

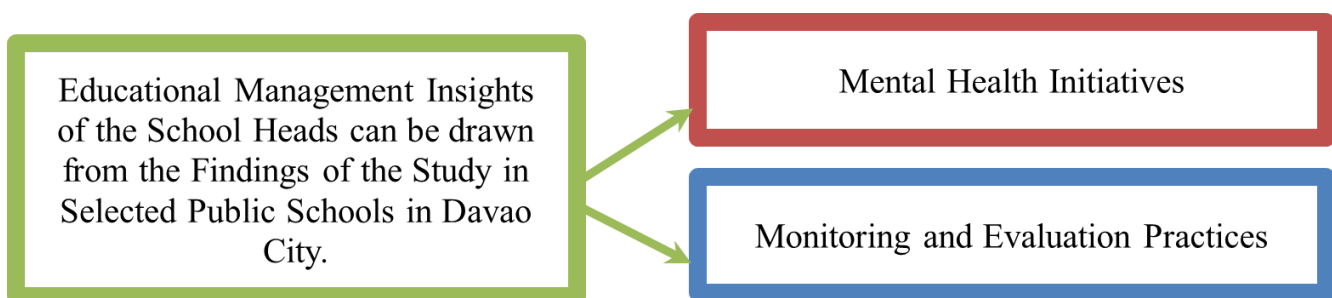


Figure 3. Educational Management Insights of the School Heads can be drawn from the Findings of the Study in Selected Public Schools in Davao City.

CONCLUSION

On the experiences of school heads in selected public schools in Davao City on mental health management. The results revealed three (2) indicators which were: (1) a Supportive Environment, and (2) Mental Health Initiatives. Further, the coping strategies of the school heads based on their experience in mental health management in selected public schools in Davao City. The results revealed three (2) indicators which were achieved by: (1) management strategies, and (2) recognition. Lastly, the educational management insights of the school heads were: (1) Mental health initiatives, and (2) monitoring and evaluation practices.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the present study's findings, the subsequent recommendations were made: Based on the experiences of school heads in selected public schools in Davao City regarding mental health management, the findings highlight two key areas: the creation of a supportive environment and the implementation of mental health initiatives. These elements play a critical role in fostering a positive school atmosphere conducive to mental well-being. Furthermore, the school heads employed coping strategies through effective management practices and recognition of both staff and student needs. Lastly, the insights gathered from these leaders underscore the importance of continuous mental health initiatives coupled with regular monitoring and evaluation practices to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of mental health programs within schools. These approaches provide a comprehensive framework that can guide public schools in strengthening their mental health management systems, ultimately contributing to the overall well-being of school communities.

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