

Leadership Challenges during the Pandemic and Their Influence on School Heads' Performance

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Abstract: *The study concentrated on the performance of school leaders in the face of both internal and external obstacles, as well as the leadership challenges they encounter. This study found that the leadership problems faced by school heads had a substantial impact on their domain-based performance. The 52 secondary school principals employed permanently in the Schools Division of Bulacan were the subjects of the study, which employed a descriptive-correlational research design with a standard questionnaire and extensive documentary analysis. This approach supports the use of documentary data as a primary means of data collection. The outcome was processed using descriptive-correlational analysis using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) to ascertain the impact of the leadership problems faced by school heads on their domain-based performance. According to the report, the leadership is moderately challenging when it comes to both internal and external issues. Conclusive of the findings, the school heads' external and internal leadership challenges have no significant influence on their performances based on seven (7) Domains of the Philippine Professional Standard for School Heads. The null hypothesis should be accepted as a result of this. Lastly, it is recommended that school leaders' ongoing professional development program create workable add-ons to help them integrate successful practices into their daily administrative performance. They need to fully comprehend the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), particularly the various strands that describe the specific aspects of school leadership practices and disseminate the management implications derived from the study as valuable insights for school heads to carry out their obligations and responsibilities effectively and efficiently as school leaders.*

Keywords: Leadership challenges, Responsibilities, Obligation, Professional development, Internal and External Challenges

Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Introduction

This pandemic had brought a dilemma to educational institutions, especially when the government announced and ordered to stop the face-to-face classes for Academic Year 2020 - 2021 until the COVID-19 vaccine is available. People from all lifestyles were not spared from the pandemic's effect. Drastically, the education sector has frozen the system since the major stakeholders are children.

In response to this, the Department of Education (DepEd) released Department Order Nos. 007, 012, 013, and 014 series of 2020 instructing all basic education institutions to develop their Learning Continuity Plan (LCP). Strict health and safety protocols in the new normal education during the pandemic became the people's priority. In the schools, the school heads of the educational institutions carried out bigger challenges. Running an effective school in disruptive times requires more than routine problem solving or occasional firefighting (Harris et al., 2020).

In a global study of schools' response and planning in anticipation of the academic year 2020-2021, a significant majority or 60-90% of 330 respondents confirmed that the expected challenges are: ensuring continued academic learning, providing support for parents and students during remote

instruction, defining curricular priorities, and ensuring the well-being of teachers and students (Reimers et al., 2020).

As of October 2020, nearly 36 million people had been infected, with over one million dying. This resulted in nearly 325,000 infections and 6,000 deaths in the Philippines (Worldometer, 2020). As a result, more than a billion students worldwide have been impacted. According to UNESCO, in 2020, over 28 million Filipino students from all levels are among those who stayed at home and followed the Philippine government's quarantine measures. Based on a survey of over 1,800 leaders from 12 countries, more than 70% of principals believe that the well-being of their students is their primary responsibility.

Recently, the responsibilities of principals in schools have changed drastically as their roles and functions have become more complex and multifaceted (Mestry, 2017); (Stringer et al., 2016). In times of great change, complexity, and uncertainty, school leaders were challenged to adapt and navigate the tide of internal and external forces to create the best positive outcome for students and the school community (Drysdale et al., 2017).

Leadership is a key element in improving schools and performance (Adams et al., 2020). A substantial amount of research studies has confirmed the existence of a strong link between principals' leadership and students' learning (Harris et al., 2018); (Hallinger et al., 2018). On a similar note, there is a considerable amount of international evidence (Allen et al., 2015); (Harris et al., 2016) indicating that principal leadership has a direct effect on school performance and an indirect effect

on student performance. However, Stringer et al. (2016) stated that the roles of school principals had changed considerably in today's educational era. Therefore, this has caused significant expectations and demands on school principalship (Hult et al., 2016).

Adams et al. (2020) stated that school leaders do not emerge fully prepared and effective from training programs. Their development is a more involved and gradual process that begins with their education and continues through their first year as school leaders. According to Senol (2019), school principals' professional development should continue and be sustainable after they have been appointed to their schools. School principals must engage in a continuous learning cycle due to the numerous changes and demands that come with a school leader's job. Many researchers around the world have emphasized the importance of strengthening leadership capacity to plan for and meet the complex challenges posed within the workplace (Carter, 2018).

School principals play a vital role in education systems throughout the world. There is a considerable amount of international evidence (Adams et al., 2020); (Harris et al., 2016) indicating that principal leadership has a direct effect on school performance as well as an indirect effect on student performance. Many researchers agreed that leadership is a key element in improving schools' and students' performance (Adams et al., 2020). Similarly, according to (Bafadal et al., 2019), principals' leadership is a determining factor for school success.

In the past three decades, much has been written about how much principals can positively influence the school's educational outcomes. Although the extent and nature of this influence have been debated, overall, the literature clearly demonstrates the vital role and positive impact of principals on school improvement and effectiveness, particularly in terms of student outcomes; as a result, the demands of the position have become more complicated, multi-dimensional, and sometimes contradictory than ever before (Bafadal et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, numerous national and global frameworks, such as the K-12 Education Program, ASEAN Integration, Globalization, and the changing nature of 21st-century learners, demand a call for the NCBSH, or National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads, to be rethought (DO 24 s. 2020, p. 1, para. 3). Thus, In September 2020, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order no. 24 s. 2020 entitled "National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH)," with Office Performance Commitment and Review Forms (OPCRF), became the heart of the new performance assessment.

Today, the educational system is going under a major paradigm shift. Leadership practices have changed considerably irreversibly because of COVID19. Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, preparing for the new school year is even more challenging than usual. The new normal in education means additional administrative and operational burdens to teachers and school heads. In response to basic education challenges brought about by COVID 19, the

Department of Education issued DepEd Order no. 12, s. 2020, the Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for the School Year 2020-2021 in the light of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. The BE-LCP lays down the direction for basic education in the coming school year. Implementation specifics will be embodied in appropriate guidelines, rules, or directives and operationalized through programs, projects, and activities. It will take more than normal issue solving and occasional fine-tuning to run a successful school in these turbulent times. School leaders will instead need to participate in continuous crisis and change management, which will involve the cooperation and collaboration of all personnel.

Despite global attention on the education system, research on school leaders' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic is limited. This research aims to determine how the pandemic affected the performance of school leaders in the Division of Bulacan. By gaining a better understanding of the nature of these difficulties, the principals and schools can be assisted in reaching their goals.

In this undertaking, the concept of determining the perceived influence of leadership challenges faced by school principals during the pandemic on the school heads' performance will seek post-implementation measures to gauge its value and impact on school leadership and management. This research paper was anchored on the concept and recognition of a need to directly intervene in the provision of training for highly critical skills and to redirect the professional development programs to skills that are most needed by public high school principals so that the content of professional development program proposals can be tailored to their needs.

Review of Related Literature

This section summarizes relevant local and foreign literature and may help provide basis for the study. This may also strengthen the belief that the school heads are opted to face the challenges in whatever calamities occur.

School Heads' Responsibilities and Challenges

School heads determine the mission, vision, goals, and objectives of the school and create an environment within the school that is favorable to teaching and learning, according to Rule IV Section 6.2 of Republic Act 9155, or the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. School heads are in charge of implementing, monitoring, and assessing the school curriculum, as well as developing the school education program and school improvement plan. School leaders must also provide educational programs, projects, and services that give equal opportunities for all community members. In addition, school heads oversee and manage all of the school's people, physical, and financial assets. School leaders must also support and strengthen staff development, construct school and community networks, and encourage active engagement of teacher organizations, public school non-academic workers, and parent-teacher-community associations. School leaders must be fully prepared to carry out the responsibilities and accountability that have been placed on their shoulders.

The following are the internal challenges faced by the school heads, to wit: First; Lack of knowledge and skills in digital leadership (system). Bryson (2018) asserted that technology has always been a game-changer, but the speed and scale of the changes seem to be accelerating. As a result of significant changes in the workplace, social relationships, information, opinion sharing, financial systems, health care, security systems, global interconnection, and other factors, the function of school heads is being redefined. As stewards of schools, school heads play a critical role in creating an enabling and supportive environment for good teaching and learning. Through their quality leadership and management, the Department of Education (DepEd) can develop quality teachers and holistic learners who are steeped in values, equipped with 21st-century skills, and able to propel the country to development and progress as per DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017. Technology solutions are vital when it comes to distance learning. Many people believe that online platforms are the most advanced mode of learning because they can facilitate a wide range of interactive and remote activities, including the delivery of diverse content to a connected audience (DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020).

The DepEd Information and Communication Services (ICTS) summary reports stated that teachers must be trained to use technology for learning delivery. DepEd has already conducted two online training programs this year with the involvement of 17,000 participants each on the use of technology in teaching. These were expanded, but there were teachers with limited ICT knowledge and no internet access.

Second, school heads challenge in dealing with poorly performing staff (people). Teacher quality is vital in raising learner achievement, but teachers alone cannot bring about substantive changes without effective leadership. In 2018, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) stated that the quality of an education system is determined by the quality of its teachers; however, the quality of teachers cannot exceed the quality of the policies that shape their work environment in school and guide their selection, recruitment, and development. Teachers and school administrators were taught to implement a learning delivery system that adhered to the Department of Education's professional development framework and standards, as well as the transformation of the Philippine National Educators Academy (NEAP). They were introduced to learning delivery modalities that they can readily utilize depending on the community context and be provided with tools and mechanisms to inform their decision-making (DepEd Order No. 12, s. 2020). The third is Achieving Work-life Balance (self). In the face of national and international reforms such as the K-12 Basic Education Program and the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH) provided a framework for school leaders to pursue professional improvement (DepEd Order. no. 24, s. 2020). Balancing system imperatives with local demands is the fourth step (place). The development and validation work of the PPSSH, led by the Bureau of Human Resource and Organizational Development (BHRD) and the National

Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), in collaboration with the Philippine National Research Center for Teacher Quality (RCTQ), had ensured that this set of standards is aligned to K-12, internationally comparable, and responsive to the career aspirations of school heads.

On the other hand, the External Challenges include the following: Firstly, is the Legacy of the prior school principal. The Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, Republic Act (RA) 9155, offers the overarching foundation for principal empowerment by improving principal and leadership goals and local school-based management in the context of transparency and local accountability.

On the other hand, school leaders who focused on their work tended to succeed, while those who appeared to be inept were left behind. This led to comparisons between school principals, making it difficult for the incoming principal to equal, if not surpass, the legacy of the prior school principal. The second is Parents and political intervention. As stated in DepEd Order No. 54, s. According to the 2009 Revised Guidelines Governing Parents-Teachers Associations (PTA) at the School Level, every elementary and secondary school shall organize a Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) to provide a forum for the discussion of issues and their solutions related to the total school program, and to ensure the full cooperation of parents in the efficient implementation of such program. They had to provide methods to ensure good coordination with community members, a platform for discussing pertinent concerns, and aid and support to the school in order to promote their shared interests. The support of parents and the local government is critical to the success of a school.

School Heads Performance

Thanks to the release of two significant education regulations that set professional criteria for the country's school leaders, the roles of school heads and supervisors in improving teacher quality are now more clearly defined. The Department of Education issued DO 24 s.2020, or the National Adoption and Implementation Act of the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH), and DO 25, s. 2020, or the Philippine Supervisory Professional Standards National Adoption and Implementation (PPSS). This is consistent with DepEd's commitment to assist school leaders in fulfilling their responsibilities, including improving the quality of teachers and achievement of learners. Professional standards for principals have been developed, and the Result-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) and the Office

PPSSH is a public statement of professional accountability for school heads to reflect on and assess their practice as they aspire for and pursue professional development. This policy is in line with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, which were enacted by DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, the National Educators Academy of the Philippines was transformed in accordance with DO 011, s. I 2019, and the Philippine Professional Standards for Supervisors (PPSS). The PPSSH Framework (Figure 1) depicts the synergy between maximizing school effectiveness and ensuring people

effectiveness through a broad range of instructional and administrative practices stipulated in the PPSSH's five domains: (a) strategic leadership; (b) school operations and resources management; (c) focus on teaching and learning; (d) developing self and others; and (e) building connections. Domain 1: Strategic leadership emphasizes school leaders' responsibility for determining the school's direction, goals, and objectives, as well as ensuring that all stakeholders understand and accept them. This domain encapsulates the commitment of school leaders to a strategic course of action aligned with institutional goals in order to improve organizational performance (DO 24 s. 2020, p6). It is primarily concerned with strategic planning and policy implementation. Bryson (2018) explained that strategic planning is a way of knowledge intended to help leaders and managers discern what to do, how, and why to help leaders and managers successfully address major issues or challenges facing an organization not amenable to simple fixes. In 2021 Car et al. further asserted that school principals are generally in the dimensions of strategic leadership, transformational, managerial, and political applications. In terms of ethical applications, they always demonstrate strategic leadership characteristics. Similarly, Deusdedith (2018) concluded that school heads must formulate all possible means of ensuring school policies, aims, and values are implemented. These policies act as guiding tools for the good of such institutions as schools. He further said that several school heads perform their leadership duties; hence, many managerial challenges related to school planning, human relations, discipline, school supervision, and community relations experience ultimately affect school heads' performance.

Domain 2: Management of School Operations and Resources focuses on school administrators' responsibility in monitoring school systems and processes. This domain highlights the dedication of school leaders to enhancing organizational health by ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness in the performance of functions (DO 24 s. 2020, p9). Financial and staff management is the highlight of this domain.

Management is the arrangement of available human and material resources to achieve desired goals and objectives (Nwune et al., 2016). With the implementation of RA 9155, significant decision-making authority was transferred from state and district offices to individual schools. School heads as decision-makers have implemented their way of managing their schools based on their current situation. The varying degrees of how school heads decide on certain school matters led to different approaches and strategies in dealing with problems.

The principal is the chief administrator of a secondary school who is expected to effectively use various resources by adopting management principles and practices to realize school goals. If the education system must achieve its national policies and goals, the school managers must ensure optimum management of human, material, financial, and time resources (Victor, 2017). Likewise, Egwu (2016) opined that the principal is a leader who must plan, coordinate, and supervise the school's affairs to run smoothly.

Domain 3: Teaching and Learning focus on the work of school principals in promoting quality teaching and learning.

This domain emphasizes the commitment of school leaders to providing instructional leadership to improve teacher competence and learner outcomes (DO 24 s. 2020, p12).

Developing a teacher is the responsibility of principals as leaders of learning in schools. The key tasks of the principal, which are an integral part of his/her competence as the principal, are managerial leadership and instructional leadership. It is to know the whole process of learning, mentoring teachers, and engaging in learning activities at school (Thalib et al., 2016)

To ensure continuous improvement and best practices in their teaching, school-based administrators must work directly with teachers. "Direct involvement with teachers in the business of improving teaching and learning is required for student-centered leadership" (Robinson, 2011 p. 22). Moreover, Smith et al. (2016) stressed that principals could have great influence in leading instructional practices in their schools through teacher assessments, informal conversations, and guided learning opportunities.

Domain 4: Developing oneself and others acknowledges the role of school leaders in nurturing oneself and others. This domain focuses on the commitment of school leaders to ensuring people and team effectiveness (DO 24 s. 2020, p15).

Principals are in the best position to help teachers improve in areas of weakness and can accomplish this through observations and dialogue that show respect for teachers as professionals (Goddard et al., 2015 p 13). The ability of principals to provide timely, specific, and actionable feedback to teachers is critical to assisting teachers in growing as professionals. Effective principals provide teachers with descriptive, relevant, timely, and respectful professional feedback. The feedback has the right amount of information to move teacher learning forward by identifying the next steps in the learning journey (Lochmiller, 2016). Additionally, Ingersoll et al. (2018) emphasized that good principals foster the idea of working together as a valuable enterprise because they understand that this kind of collaborative learning community ultimately will build trust, collective responsibility, and a schoolwide focus on improved student learning. According to Vanblaere et al. (2016), as part of school principals' ongoing instructional leadership responsibilities, high-performing school principals are highly visible through contact and interaction with teachers, students, and parents, thus promoting a professional learning community.

Domain 5: Building connections emphasize the school leaders' ability to engage stakeholders in initiatives to improve school communities. This Domain reflects the school leaders' commitment to advocating that education is everyone's responsibility (DO 24 s. 2020, p18).

School-community partnerships have long been viewed as a promising way to help struggling students, families, and neighborhoods (Stefanski et al., 2016). School-community partnerships play an essential role in successful schools, often providing support and resources to meet staff, family, and student needs beyond what is typically available through school (Gross et al., 2015).

Furthermore, increasing family and community engagement in schools fosters relationships among educators, families, and community members. Family and community involvement is not a one-time event. It is a continuous process of meaningful interaction between schools and families that includes two-way communication and a purposeful focus on student learning (Gracia et al., 2016).

Review of Related Studies

This section presents a summary of relevant local and foreign studies that could help enlighten the background of the study.

School Heads and Their Challenges

Drysdale et al. (2017) had previously outlined that in times of great change, complexity, and uncertainty, school leaders are challenged to adapt and navigate their way through the tide of internal and external forces to create the best positive outcome for students and the school community.

The key challenges faced by school heads during the pandemic may be categorized into dealing with the system, dealing with people, dealing with the place, and dealing with self (Karakose et al., 2014). He found that the aspects of work considered most challenging were lack of knowledge and skills in digital literacy (system), dealing with poorly performing staff (people), achieving a work-life balance (self), and balancing system imperatives with local needs (place). According to Francisco et al. (2020), the pandemic forced organizations to make digitalization and digital transformation a rapid strategic focus. The rapid digitalization of their day-to-day assignments caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 was believed that a new normal leader is challenged to adjust towards becoming a digital leader.

A major challenge for post-secondary leaders is developing digitally literate faculty and staff who manage the constant rapid changes in technology designed to support both administration and teaching (Burnett, 2018). School leaders are to be instructional leaders within a digital environment, just as they are expected to do in the non-digital environment (Shepherd, 2019)

The role of digital learning collaboration in education is an evolution in which principal functions are interoperability, allowing individuals to construct digital learning tailored to specific objectives (Adam et al., 2017).

Similarly, Baporikar (2018) found that the rate of technological development, particularly in information and communications technologies (ICT), has increased in his research. Despite the emergence of multiple online universities, this transition gives new venues for improving teaching and learning. The interviews conducted by (Alhouthi et al., 2017) revealed that principals in Kuwait are not well-prepared for their positions due to the inadequacy (and absence) of formal preparation programs, relevant learning experiences, induction procedures, and continuing support.

School leaders are currently reliant on guidance concerning COVID-19 from various statutory agencies. Like

other employees in the education sector, they are required to deal with extra pressures such as staffing issues and increased workloads (Harris et al., 2020). They also had to take on other essential but time-consuming duties, such as assisting with contact tracing to curb and monitor the pandemic (McNeilly, 2020). Stone-Johnson et al. (2020) described principals as essential frontline workers as they are also dealing with societal issues, maintaining students' morale, and communicating with parents about, for example, the physical opening and closing of schools.

Jinot et al. (2020) pointed out that the most challenging tasks for novice school heads are dealing with low-performing teachers. Similarly, Khan et al. (2019) said that the job of the management authority is to ensure that the people in the workplace have the necessary skills, abilities, passion, and knowledge to work so that productivity and performance can be improved. Teachers and staff members may also be resistant to change, new routines, and culture because they are accustomed to their former preferences and habits (Spillane et al., 2015).

A major challenge for school leaders is developing digitally literate faculty and staff who manage the constant rapid changes in technology designed to support both administration and teaching (Northouse, 2016).

Very few school leaders have thorough training and support for their role, and even fewer have been given clear guidelines on their expectations through disaster response and recovery (Panunciar et al., 2020). According to the studies conducted by Beam et al. (2016), paperwork was the most agreed-upon category as participants spoke of documentation and reported writing as their greatest challenge. Furthermore, several mentioned that electronic reports, communication, and documentation had made their jobs even more stressful as information was required to be managed more quickly.

Beam et al. (2016) concluded that juggling family time, graduate studies, and a new administration post puts school leaders in a difficult scenario. They were at times unsure of where to begin or what they should concentrate on.

Sepuru et al. (2020) discovered that novice principals believe they are unprepared to lead and manage schools during their first years on the job. Similarly, Myende et al. (2018) also revealed that novice principals are also confronted with personal challenges such as lack of knowledge and skills. After completing their leadership preparatory programs, novice school leaders enter the transition period into the principalship. Thus, novice principals are tossed into the trenches unprepared, isolated, and left to survive on their own (Tahir et al., 2021). Faced with contradictory issues, novice principals described their initial experiences with mixed feelings.

Some described the challenges as intriguing and exciting (Bagi, 2015), while others described them as daunting (Edwards, 2016) and leading to self-doubt. Despite their lack of experience, novice principals were expected to be skilled in carrying out their duties from their first day as school principals, potentially leading to increased workloads and stress (Oplatka, 2017). New principals were asked to take on unprecedented challenges as leaders of K-12 public schools. Though they received preparatory training at institutes of higher education or

may have prior administrative experience, they often lacked the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to meet the demanding challenges created by their multifaceted leadership roles.

According to Bayar (2016), most novice principals were not happy and were very close to quitting their position. In the workplace, novice principals typically struggled with emotions of professional isolation and loneliness.

The findings of the study conducted by (Jinot et al., 2020) showed that novice heads suffered from professional isolation. They were overwhelmed with administrative management and their incapacity to manage learner discipline due to a lack of parental support in implementing the reform. They could not also support the implementation of digitalized education. Training and Development have direct associations with productivity, efficiency, accuracy, and personal development (Khan et al., 2019).

Most states and districts have centered professional development on teachers rather than principals over the years. However, research revealed that principals played a critical role in ensuring that all students met the national high achievement standards. When given the proper training and support, school leaders may be tremendous change agents (Rowland, 2017). Most school principals lacked access to professional development that reflected current school events (e.g., changing demographics, changing technology, shifting instructional approaches) and information that led to effective practices. At the local level, improving principal professional development necessitated a new style of thinking, prioritizing, and spending.

In his study, Bayer (2016) also mentioned that the former principal's leadership style was another problem for new school principals. Teachers and other school staff compared the new principal to the previous principal and objected to new policies and practices.

School leadership is challenging and demanding academic work that requires serious preparation. Quality school leadership is what every educational institution desire, particularly as it looks forward to leadership challenges. Leadership training should be provided to novice academic leaders to help them prepare for these challenges and gain confidence in taking on the new task. In response to this concern, many schools in various countries offer leadership training to aspiring academic leaders, but it is optional.

According to Parson et al. (2016), there is a need for specific preparation programs to suit the demands of future rural instructional leaders. The multifaceted job of a rural school leader is an important aspect to consider during preparation. On a similar note, Lingam et al. (2016), in his findings, pointed out that there was hardly any in-service education and training provided to the school leaders on instruction and assessment. Cruz-González et al. (2016) emphasized that successful school heads' leadership and management can be developed and expanded over time. Their ability to reflect on their actions, perceptions and the perceptions of others is necessary to complete the challenges of one's endeavor to be effective and efficient. Schools need to put the right person in the position and train the right person

on competencies that will enhance and sustain an environment of efficient and effective leadership and management.

When it comes to providing effective professional development for rural school leaders, Hildreth et al. (2018) claim that one size does not fit all. Understanding rural school leaders' professional development needs and preferred delivery methods is the first step in creating engaging, meaningful professional development for them.

In Thailand, Iskak et al. (2019) conducted a study that revealed that school administrators were inadequately trained for school leadership. This resulted in poor performance due to a lack of strategies in management and knowledge to govern an organization, which negatively affects education and national development in general.

The external challenges include the following: First is the Legacy of the prior school principal. Edwards (2016) identified dealing with a former principal's legacy as an important obstacle for novice principals while researching their challenges. This is especially true if the previous principle was successful in increasing the school's performance. This occurred because the school community had grown accustomed to and felt at ease with the former principal's leadership style and preferences.

Bayar (2016), in his study, mentioned that the previous principal's leadership style is another problem for new school principals. Teachers and other school personnel compared the incoming principal to the previous principal and were resistant to new policies and practices. The second is parents and political intervention. While the most common difficulties encountered by novice school leaders are a lack of skilled employees and insufficient resources, beginning school leaders endure a variety of problems, according to Myende et al. (2018), including negative parental feelings and political involvement. Beam et al. (2016) shared similar sentiments, citing the unplanned and unexpected nature of parent concerns and unfavorable remarks as a roadblock. They also faced administrative overwhelm and an inability to manage learner discipline due to a lack of parental support for the reform. Most of them find it difficult to support the implementation of distance education (Bozkurt et al., 2020).

The findings of Wiczorek et al. (2018) in their research revealed that the principals' positional stature and visibility in the rural community brought feelings of pressure to meet their community's expectations. They were expected to participate in all school and community events and shared how they strived to find professional balance and fit into the community culture.

School Heads Performance

When most people think of school performance, they think of educational accountability, which refers to the process of evaluating a school's performance against specified criteria. The academic accomplishment of pupils and how effectively the school adheres to Department of Education criteria based on its mission and vision are used to evaluate school performance (Babinue, 2017).

Generally, school performance is an overall and collective effort between teachers and principals. According to

Romeo Jr. et al. (2020), it encompasses the entire range of activities that characterize a successful school. This also includes highly motivated and dedicated teachers, learner satisfaction and involvement, parental involvement, a clean and orderly school environment, and strong principal leadership.

Annually, principals evaluate themselves using tools for leadership and core behavioral competencies. This is for their annual performance evaluation and management. During the performance-planning phase, district supervisors compiled the results of their assessments, which served as the foundation for determining the school leaders' professional development and searching for potential resource persons for training, particularly those who have demonstrated as role models. Simply put, leadership competency is one of the principal's major qualities to ensure school performance (Thapa, 2016).

Domain 1: Leading Strategically. High-performing schools were all led by principals who defined a distinct vision, mission, and goals based on personal values about student learning. The school's program aided students in their learning.

Similarly, principals who did not work from a position of clearly recognized personal convictions or vision for the school were characterized as not accomplishing to the degree that their socioeconomic status would indicate (Mombourquette, 2017).

According to Jaleha et al. (2018), effective strategic leadership is a critical component for the successful performance of any organization operating in the ever-changing and complex environment of the twenty-first century. Strategic leadership is required in the context of information uncertainty and resource scarcity to confront the reality of environmental turbulence and the ongoing need for appropriate organizational change to achieve performance goals.

Domain 2: Managing School Resources and Operations. In this time of uncertainty where everything must stop, the competencies of the school leaders in management need to be strengthened to ensure better school performance (Valenzuela et al., 2021). On a similar note, Nkwoh (2011) observed that school principals must possess a wide array of competencies to lead schools effectively towards the accomplishment of educational goals, which has led to changing expectations of what leaders need to know and must be able to do. Furthermore, Heller (2012) outlines the functions of school administrators as including management of instructional programs, staff personnel administration, students' personnel administration, finance, physical resource management, and community relationship management. Effective management of human, material, time, and financial resources is highly crucial for institutional sustainability and the development of school action plans.

Dabon (2021) concluded that one of the most important functions of school heads is their role as financial managers. As such, they generate and mobilize financial resources; prepare financial reports and submit and communicate the same to higher authorities and partners; accept donations, gifts, bequests, and grants in accordance with RA 9155 and accounts for school funds; and manage registration,

maintenance, and replacement of school assets and dispositions on non-reusable properties.

On the same note, Nweze (2019) revealed that school administrators deserved support from relevant authorities in managing the environmental changes. More funds are required for the effectiveness and cooperation of the community leaders if the school administrator must succeed.

The following competencies in managing school operations and resources, according to Valenzuela et al. (2021), have a significant impact on the school's quality and efficiency: record management, financial management, school facilities and equipment, staff management, disaster preparedness, mitigation and resiliency, and management of emerging opportunities.

Domain 3: Focusing on Teaching and Learning. The future leaders will have to shift away from merely teaching syllabus-oriented curriculum, focusing on student learning outcomes –yet not neglecting what is spelled out by the nation's philosophy. This also means that more importance must be given to learning –no longer for the teacher to cover the syllabus, but for the teacher to facilitate the students to discover for themselves what they need to learn and acquire what is outlined in the centrally designed curriculum, on top of what teachers' discussion in the classrooms (Ahmad et al., 2017).

Similarly, Tie (2011) discovered that, while school principals understood the importance of continual learning to prepare students to handle the challenges of rapid change, they were under a lot of pressure to guarantee that students fared well in the examination-based education system. The push to guarantee that schools followed the current education changes exacerbated the problem.

Domain 4: Developing Self and Others. Leaders seeking to support professional development in today's school settings face numerous challenges. These challenges necessitate educators who can engage in continuous and adaptable professional learning.

Findings in the study conducted by Ng et al. (2016) demonstrated that the newly appointed principals are expected to be equipped with the administrative skills of human resources management, such as empowering middle leaders and handling underperforming staff. They also stressed the critical need to provide opportunities for continual professional development to newly appointed principals so that they can deal with the impact of reforms and globalization on school development.

Teachers must change their knowledge and practice to stay up with the changing demands of teaching. By failing to provide teachers with broad access to good training and professional development, as well as learning communities where their professional judgment is recognized, we impair their efficacy, sense of purpose, and career advancement possibilities (Garcia et al., 2019).

Domain 5: Building Connections. Researchers have stressed the importance of family and community engagement in student performance since the publication of Equality of Educational Opportunity. A multi-faceted approach to community involvement requires including community

members in the design, implementation, and feedback of any program, service, or help provided (Jackson et al., 2018). Findings from the study of Moore-Vissing (2017) suggested that to facilitate school-community engagement, both the school district and community partners made philosophical changes and developed new structures, processes, and opportunities for engagement. Similarly, according to Francis et al. (2016), all educational stakeholders benefit when families and school staff have trusting partnerships as they work together to achieve mutual goals. Furthermore, Oakes et al. (2017) found out that school's partner with community agencies and local government to provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement.

According to the findings of Epstein et al. (2016), a policy on parental participation could be a useful first step. Other critical components for building a basic partnership program are principals' support for family and community engagement, as well as district officials' active facilitation of research-based structures and processes. One of the issues facing today's business and educational leaders is building an environment in their companies and schools that supports the New Realities of Learning. Globally, there is agreement that school-community partnerships are one of the mechanisms to address challenges that schools cannot address alone. However, according to the findings of the study, where school-community partnerships have been initiated, their functionality and continuity are not always easy to achieve, and research both locally and internationally has not adequately addressed this concern.

Theoretical Framework

Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory served as the foundation for this research. The situational leadership model emphasizes adaptability so that leaders can respond to the needs of their followers as well as the demands of the situation.

This theory is used in the context of this study to determine the impact on a school principal's performance of the challenges posed by the pandemic's unprecedented changes. According to Francisco et al. (2020), Situational leadership refers to a school administrator's ability to adapt to changing circumstances. According to situational leadership, no single leadership style is superior. Rather, it is determined by the type of leadership and strategies that are best suited to the task. According to this theory, the most effective leaders can adapt their style to the situation and consider cues such as the type of task, the nature of the group, and other factors that may contribute to the job being completed.

The onset of the COVID 19 Pandemic has placed all the school heads in instantaneous challenges that no one has expected. Utilizing the theory, the researcher had the privilege of determining how the school heads adapted to the situations, functioning effectively with their job responsibilities. Challenges are quite different from their responsibilities because their leadership experiences are leadership challenges that test the strength of their leadership. These challenges can

be tested if a significant influence exists on the part of the school heads and the school heads' performance based on PPSSH domains.

Conceptual Framework

The research paradigm that guides this study is depicted in the schematic model shown in Figure 1.

Independent Variables Dependent Variables

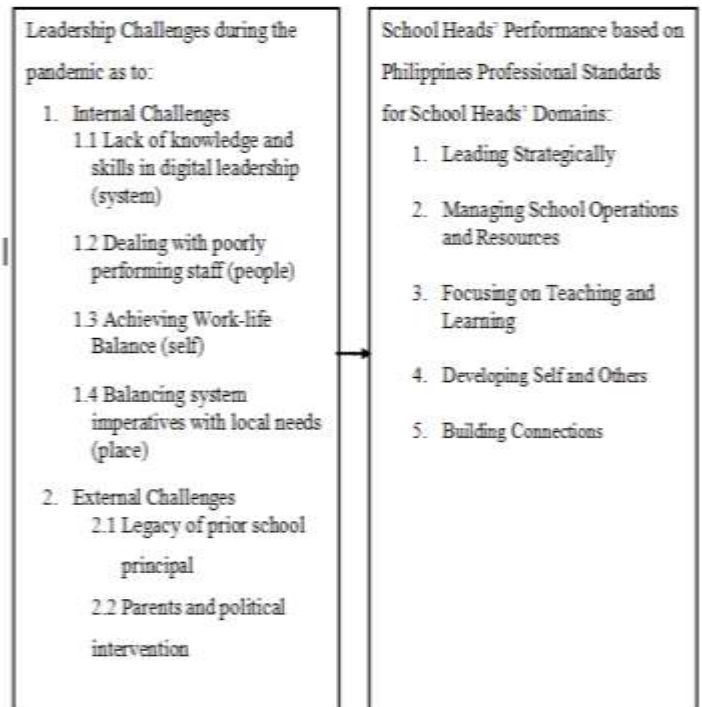


Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

As shown in the diagram, the Independent Variables of the study constitute the leadership challenges of the school heads during the pandemic. These include internal and external challenges. The internal challenges include the following lack of knowledge and skills in digital leadership (system), dealing with poorly performing staff (people), achieving work-life balance (self), and balancing system imperatives with local needs (place). The external challenges constitute the legacy of the prior school principal and parents and political intervention. The dependent variable describes the school performance indicators based on the Philippine Professional Standard for School Heads' Domains, which are as follows: leading strategically, managing school operation and resources, focusing on teaching and learning, developing self and others, and building connections. It outlines what school leaders are expected to understand, be capable of doing, and value as they advance in their careers. The one-headed arrow that connects the independent and dependent variables indicates the hypothesized relationship between them.

Statement of the Problem

The general problem of the study is: "How may the influence of leadership challenges during the pandemic on school heads' performance be analyzed?"

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How may the school head leadership during the pandemic be described in terms of:
 - 1.1 Internal Challenges
 - 1.1.1 Lack of knowledge and skills in digital leadership (system);
 - 1.1.2 Dealing with poorly performing staff (people);
 - 1.1.3 Achieving Work-life Balance (self); and
 - 1.1.4 Balancing system imperatives with local needs (place)
 - 1.2 External Challenges
 - 1.2.1 Legacy of prior school heads; and
 - 1.2.2 Parents and political interventions.
2. How may the school head's performance be described in terms of the following domains?
 - 2.1 Leading Strategically
 - 2.1.1 School Planning and Policy Implementation
 - 2.2 Managing School Operation and Resources
 - 2.2.1 Fiscal Management and Personnel Management
 - 2.3 Focusing on teaching and learning
 - 2.3.1 Teaching Standards and Pedagogies
 - 2.4 Developing Self and Others
 - 2.4.1 Professional Development of School Personnel
 - 2.5 Building Connections
 - 2.5.1 Management of School Organizations?
3. Do leadership challenges during a pandemic significantly influence school head performance?
4. What management implications may be derived from the result of the study?

Hypothesis

At a .05 level of significance, this hypothesis was tested:

The leadership challenges of school principals during the pandemic have no significant influence on school heads' performance based on PPSSH domains.

Significance of the Study

The researcher has determined the following groups of individuals to be the major beneficiaries of the present study:

Learners. The study would increase the learners' knowledge and competencies since they are one of the beneficiaries of school improvement based on the school operations from the school principals' training. This would ensure that learners develop holistically to their fullest potential and become globally competitive.

Teachers. The study will provide relevant suggestions for professional development programs for public high school teachers in the Division of Bulacan. They will be positively motivated and will be able to gain the confidence to overcome any obstacles they may encounter in the classroom. The study will also equip them with leadership strategies applicable in their future endeavors as leaders.

School principals. The results of this study will help them realize the responsibility not only to acquire technical knowledge and skills but also to help build a positive commitment to the thrust of the Department of Education. By clearly inculcating the significance of training and its long-term outcome, school principals can become more valuable agents of change as a product of the professional development programs. They will be more solicitous in improving the quality of their leadership, keeping in mind both the old problems and the new realities faced by the school leaders. It will also provide insights into the dynamics of school principals' professional development programs in a period of educational transformation and reform.

Parents. The findings will serve as a reality check on the academic development of their children. Parents will acquire information on the development of their children's academic status. The results of the training that the school principals would have will be solid evidence of the positive development of the students since they are the client of the educators.

Curriculum Planners. They will become aware of their special role in collaborating with the school officials in preparing school leaders for a successful career path and responsible educators; hence, they will be able to achieve the vision, mission, and objectives of the Department of Education. This will also mete out suggestions on redesigning the planning and implementing the training, particularly for professional development.

Future Researchers. This would provide them with data and other literature as references for their studies, thereby serving as a springboard for other researchers who want to further study in the area.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This research aimed to look into the challenges that secondary school principals faced during the pandemic. This confirmed the assumption that the challenges faced by school principals during the pandemic influence the school heads' performance.

The focus of this research was on the internal and external leadership problems faced by secondary school principals in the Schools Division of Bulacan. Thus, this is intended to determine the influence of these challenges on the performance of Ninety-Six (96) public secondary school heads in the Schools Division Bulacan. Regardless of positions or rank, all school heads with permanent appointments and positions are included in the study. The researcher selected the school heads because she herself is a school head in the Schools Division of Bulacan.

In addition, the study relied on the responses to the questionnaires that were filled out and answered by school heads. This exploration was limited by a short timeframe and a fixed budget.

Elementary school heads in both public and private schools nor retired school heads from the service were not included in the study.

Definition of Terms

The operational definitions of terms used in this study are provided below for clarity and understanding:

External Challenges. External leadership issues can arise from a number of sources, including coworkers, the company itself, economic and political events. As used in this study, this refers to challenges in the school context as well as challenges from stakeholders, such as personnel and staff relations, insufficient facilities and resources, negative parental attitudes, and interventions by local political leaders.

Internal Challenges. It underlines a person's true abilities or lack thereof. It emphasizes a person's limitations, strengths, and weaknesses. Internal problems can affect the leader on a personal level. This term refers to the personal obstacles that school principals face, such as a lack of knowledge and skills, work-life balance, and leadership training programs that are insufficient.

Leadership. The art of motivating a group of people to work toward a common goal. In dealing with a diverse group of people, it can be challenging to get everyone on the same wavelength to work together to create the best outcome for success.

Leadership Challenges. Leadership challenges are significant because they can lead to personal and professional development. When confronted with a difficulty, a person must look for solutions to overcome it in order to advance in their work or personal life. It refers to a worry that necessitates the use of expertise, strength, or a requirement to explain or justify difficulty in a task or undertaking that is exciting to the person doing it for the sake of this study. Instigation or antagonization can also be used to persuade someone to do something they would not otherwise do.

PPSSH. This stands for Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads. This word refers to a set of standards that explain what school administrators should know, be able to do, and value in order to improve teacher quality and learning outcomes, as used in this study.

School Head. A person who oversees a school. Schools, like other organizations, have objectives to achieve. The main objective of a school is to transmit knowledge, skills, and desired attitudes to students. Schools need proper leadership to accomplish the stated objective. In this study, a school head is the one who is responsible for motivating and ensuring other subordinates execute their roles well, especially the provision of quality education.

School Heads' Performance. It is a means of determining how well or poorly a school principal fulfills his or her responsibilities. At the end of a period, academic year, or instructional program, the school principal's performance is mostly reviewed using standardized evaluation instruments. It

refers to the output as a result of using the Office Performance Commitment and Review Process, to manage teachers, manage the instructional process, enforce school discipline, and perform various other related functions.

Chapter 2 METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter outlines the research design, respondents and study setting, instrumentation and validation, data collection procedure, and statistical data treatment.

Research Method and Design

To answer the research objectives, this quantitative study used a Descriptive-Correlational approach with regression analysis and documentary analysis for Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSSH). A descriptive correlational is a study in which the researcher is primarily interested in describing relationships among variables, seeking to establish a causal connection (Saunders et al., 2009).

This research followed a single research method, an online survey design; the analysis is based on primary data generated through a structured online questionnaire. This study only used an online structured questionnaire to gather data from the respondents. The respondents answered the questionnaire at their convenience. The respondents were given the opportunity to probative privacy, which is often an important factor in the respondent's decision to participate and/or provide accurate responses, especially to sensitive questions (Lavrakas, 2008).

Respondents and Setting of the Study

Ninety-six (96) secondary school principals from the Division of Bulacan participated in this study. Initially, the researcher identified the ninety-six (96) schools that were known to have a permanent secondary school principal. The involved school heads were individually contacted by phone to explain the purpose of the study. During the data collection process, however, only fifty-two (52) school principals returned their responses as well as the Office Performance Commitment Review Form (OPCRF) results. The situation was attributed to the pandemic, which prevented people from moving. The study included only 52 school principal respondents in total.

Table 1 *Respondents of the Study*

This table presents the total number of secondary school heads per EDDIS within the Division of Bulacan. In the third column, the number of school heads who answered the survey questionnaires was presented.

EDDIS	Total Number of School Heads	No. of School Heads Responses	Percentage
I	24	14	58.33%%
II	28	15	53.57%
III	30	16	53.33%
IV	14	7	50.00%
Total	96	52	54.16 %

Instrumentation and Validation

This study utilized an adopted set of standardized research instruments entitled: Survey on School Principals’ Leadership Challenges from Bagi’s (2015) dissertation study. The participants were requested to complete a survey with multiple-choice questions and tick the appropriate Likert scale in order to determine the challenges faced by the school principals.

Table 2

Likert Scale in Determining the School Heads’ Leadership Challenges

This table showcases the scale used to determine the school heads leadership challenges during the pandemic. The items were constructed to express higher ratings as Very Challenging, while the lowest ratings as Not Challenging.

Range/Scale	Adjectival Rating
4.500 – 5.000	Outstanding
3.500 – 4.499	Very Satisfactory
2.500 – 3.499	Satisfactory
1.500 – 2.499	Unsatisfactory
below 1.499	Poor

Range/Scale	Verbal Interpretation
1.00 – 1.79	Not Challenging
1.80 - 2.59	Slightly Challenging
2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Challenging
3.40 - 4.19	Challenging
4.20 – 5.00	Very Challenging

In addition, to determine the school heads’ performance based on PPSSH domains, the five-point Likert

scale was employed with the matching linguistic interpretation, namely:

Table 3

Likert Scale for School Head’s Performance-based on OPCRF

This rating scale is based on the Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 06, s. 2012, which sets the guidelines for the establishment and implementation of a Strategic Performance Management System in all government agencies. The items were designed so that higher scores were expressed as Outstanding and lower ratings were expressed as Poor.

Data Gathering Procedure

Upon approval of the proposed study, the researcher obtained an endorsement letter from the Dean of Meycauayan College Graduate Studies, which was submitted to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent of the Schools Division of Bulacan. Upon approval of the letter, the letter of request with the necessary attachment was forwarded to the selected schools’ principals to seek permission to administer questionnaires to the selected participants.

This study implemented online survey research using a Likert scale survey questionnaire. The school leaders were asked a series of 20 questions permitting data collection on school demographics and respondents’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on school leadership. An email invitation for online survey participation was sent to the public secondary school principals in the Schools Division of Bulacan.

Pseudonyms were employed in this study to protect the respondents’ identities. They were replaced with SP “A” to SP “V” (for secondary principals) (Christensen & Johnson, 2014). They were selected to obtain more insights, reflections, in-depth explanations, and suggestions regarding their experiences and challenges as school principals during the outbreak of COVID 19.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The descriptive-correlational analyses was used in the study to assess the relationship between the independent variable (leadership challenges during the pandemic) and the dependent variable (performance of school principals). Researchers can utilize multiple regression analysis to determine the strength of the link between the dependent variable and the predictor variable.

Mean computation was used to answer problem number one, determining the leadership challenges faced by secondary school principals during the pandemic. In contrast, document analysis was used to answer problem number two, describing the school heads’ performance based on PPSSH’s five (5) domains using the OPCRF 5-point Scale. Documentary Analysis entailed obtaining information by analyzing written records and documents to solve a problem. For problem number 3, descriptive-correlational analysis were employed to

determine if the school heads' leadership challenges during the pandemic significantly influenced school heads' performance.

In this undertaking, the researcher focused on the connections between school principals' challenges during the pandemic and their potential influence on school heads' performance. This shed light on the management implications that a need to craft a more refined professional development program model to help school leaders improve their performance may be considered.

Chapter 3
PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND
INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter discusses the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data.

The information is presented in the order and sequence of the problems stated in Chapter 1, to wit; 1) School head leadership challenges during the pandemic based on internal and external factors; 2) School heads' performance based on PPSSH Domains; 3.) Significant influence of leadership challenge on school head's performance, and 4.) Management implications derived from the result of the study.

School Heads' Leadership during the Pandemic based on Internal Challenges

Presented in Table 4.1 is the distribution of the computed mean of school heads' leadership during the pandemic based on internal challenges.

As shown in the tabular presentation of performance based on internal challenges, all eighteen indicators obtained an Overall Mean of 2.83, interpreted as Moderately Challenging. It is surprising to learn that the principals' performance on internal domains yielded that result. However, of the eighteen indications, number 13 was assessed as Challenging, working in a multifaceted role had the highest computed mean, which is one of the principal's most important performance indicator. This indicates the principals strive to perform multifaceted role despite the threat of the pandemic.

Table 4.1

School Heads' Leadership during the Pandemic based on Internal Challenges

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Dealing with the number of emails and general correspondence	2.63	Moderately Challenging
2. Helping the school to incorporate technology in teaching	3.48	Challenging
3. Helping staff to stay motivated	3.44	Challenging
4. Working through conflict or tensions	2.60	Moderately Challenging

5. Dealing with underperforming staff	3.33	Moderately Challenging
6. Developing a cohesive and effective senior leadership team	2.50	Slightly Challenging
7. Working through interpersonal conflict and tensions between staff members	2.44	Slightly Challenging
8. Managing Workloads	2.63	Moderately Challenging
9. Dealing with feelings of professional isolation and loneliness	2.63	Challenging
10. Dealing with interruptions during the day	2.52	Slightly Challenging
11. Finding enough quality time with your family	2.85	Moderately Challenging
12. Staying healthy through diet and exercise	2.25	Slightly Challenging
13. Working in a multifaceted role	3.52	Moderately Challenging
14. Responding to the number of people seeking some time with you	2.60	Moderately Challenging
15. Coping with stress	3.27	Moderately Challenging
16. Prioritizing your work	2.46	Slightly Challenging
17. Working through conflict or tensions between yourself and other staff members	2.37	Slightly Challenging
18. Completing administrative work	2.63	Moderately Challenging
Overall Mean	2.83	Moderately Challenging

On the other hand, the lowest computed mean was indicator number 12, staying healthy through diet and exercise, with 2.25, interpreted as Slightly Challenging.

It may be inferred that the school heads were able to cope with the internal challenges that they have experienced during the pandemic. It was surprising that the school heads were used to combat different challenges when most people worldwide were not ready to face the challenges. According to Aytac's (2020) research, the COVID-19 epidemic had an impact on education, just as it had on all other aspects of life in the world and in Turkey. The COVID-19 epidemic has had an impact on children's life, as well as on educational surroundings and teaching approaches. As a result of the closure of schools in Turkey, the educational process was disrupted, and children began learning at home. He emphasized that while the epidemic had disrupted children's usual school-based education, it did not mean that their learning-teaching process would be halted. They

labeled the situation as the "new normal" for the world; the COVID-19 epidemic has disrupted schooling and teaching processes, causing numerous issues. Despite the fact that the incident occurred in Turkey, it depicted the worst-case scenario that the schools had to deal with.

School Heads’ Leadership during the Pandemic based on External Challenges.

Table 4.2

School Heads’ Leadership during the Pandemic based on

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Establishing your leadership as principal	2.63	Moderately Challenging
2. Dealing with the influence of the legacy, practice, and style of the previous principal	2.90	Moderately Challenging
3. Improving student behavior	2.17	Slightly Challenging
4. Dealing with complaints of parents	2.67	Moderately Challenging
5. Maintaining the public reputation of the school	2.52	Moderately Challenging
6. Implementing new government initiatives	2.48	Slightly Challenging
7. Dealing with possible media and community negativity	2.58	Moderately Challenging
Average	2.56	Slightly Challenging

External Challenges

Shown in Table 4.2 is the distribution of the computed mean of school heads’ leadership during the pandemic based on external challenges.

The highest computed indicator was obtained by number 2. Dealing with the influence of the legacy, practice, and style of the previous principal with a mean of 2.90 was interpreted as Moderately Challenging. At the same time, the lowest computed Mean was obtained by indicator number 3, Improving student behavior, with 2.17 interpreted as Slightly Challenging. Generally, the overall mean was computed to 2.56, interpreted as Slightly Challenging. The same with the

internal domains, the result was surprising. It showed that despite the pandemic school principals find it external challenges to be slightly challenging. Practically, it may be because they are well-versed with the OPCRf indicators they are expected to perform in any circumstances.

In fact, Thapa (2016) confirmed that principals evaluate themselves using tools for leadership and core behavioral competencies. The tool is for their annual performance evaluation and management. During the performance-planning phase, district supervisors compile the results of their assessments, which serve as the foundation for determining the professional development of school principals and searching for potential resource persons for training, particularly those who have demonstrated as role models. Simply put, leadership competency is one of the principal’s major qualities to ensure school performance.

School Heads’ Performances based on Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads

The Philippine Professional Standards for School Head clearly articulate the professional practice expected of quality school leaders. The set of professional standard provides the language for high-impact leadership among school heads.

The distribution of mean computation for the school heads’ performance based on the Philippine Professional Standard for School Head measured using the Office Performance Commitment and Review Form is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

School Heads’ Performances based on Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads’ Office Performance Commitment and Rating Form (PPSSH-OPCRF)

Table 5 illustrates the five (5) indicators of the school heads’ performance during the pandemic based on external challenges

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
Domain 1: Leading Strategically		Outstanding
Domain 2: Managing School Operations and Resources	4.70	Outstanding
Domain 3: Focusing on Teaching and Learning	5.00	Outstanding
Domain 4: Developing Self and Others	4.99	Outstanding
Domain 5: Building Connections Plus Factors	4.99	Outstanding
	4.98	Outstanding
	4.90	Outstanding
Average	4.93	Outstanding

Domain 2 on Managing School Operations and Resources obtained the highest calculated mean of 5.00, which was considered Outstanding, while Domain 1 on Leading Strategically received the lowest computed mean of 4.70, which was also considered Outstanding, as indicated in the table. The Plus Factor, on the other hand, obtained a 4.90 computed mean, interpreted as Outstanding. In sum, all the five domains and the Plus Factor obtained a 4.93 computed mean, interpreted as Outstanding. It could be inferred that the Principals are committed to their performance despite the challenges they faced during the pandemic. Francisco et al. (2020) emphasized that school administrators in the Department of Education are truly selfless enough to perform outstandingly despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic (Francisco et al., 2020).

Significant Influence on Leadership Challenges of School Principals to School Heads’ Performance

Displayed in Table 6 is the statistical result on the significant influence on the leadership challenges in the Office Performance Commitment and Review.

Table 6

Descriptive Correlational Analysis

Table 6 summarizes the statistical result on the significant influence of the leadership challenges of school principals on school heads’ performance.

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		
B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.845	.073	66.832	.000
External	.020	.018	.158	1.113
Internal	.011	.023	.070	.496
R-squared = .028				
F-value = .693				
p-value = .505				
alpha = .05				

As presented in Table 6, correlation and regression analyses were run to examine the influence of school leadership challenges on the school heads’ performances. As reflected in the tabular presentation, the external challenges obtained a Beta Coefficient of .018, while the internal challenges obtained a Beta coefficient of .023. The school heads' challenges did not influence their performance based on PPSSH. Though there was a slight decrease from external to internal, no influence or correlation exists between the two sets of variables. There was a weak correlation or influence between the challenges and the school heads’ domain-based performance. The B coefficients present the amount of change to the school heads’ performance associated with a change in the unit of the variables under leadership challenges. The same conclusion implies that for every unit increase in the school leaders' challenges, the school leaders' performance decreases slightly.

In the presence of the other variable, p-values, on the other hand, tell us whether a variable has a statistically significant predictive capability (Nahm, 2017). All variables in

the school leaders' challenges have no statistically relevant predictive capacity on school leaders' domain-based performance, which is less than the predefined significance level of 0.05.

The result of the study would further imply that the school heads leadership challenges during the pandemic could have forced school heads to function at their best to cope with the new normal system of education. Moreover, in a period which is volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous that characterized the pandemic, school leaders' abilities in digital literacy and crisis management became critical requirements.

**Chapter 4
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

The facts, conclusions, and recommendations are summarized in this chapter.

Summary

The study dealt with the school heads’ leadership challenges based on external and internal and school heads’ performance based on the PPSSH domains. This study determined that heads leadership challenges faced by school heads during the pandemic have no significant influence on the school heads’ domains-based performances. The study included the fifty-two secondary school principals with a permanent appointment in the Schools Division of Bulacan. This study used a descriptive-correlational research approach, using a conventional questionnaire as the primary data-gathering tool and substantial documentary analysis to support that assertion. The null hypothesis was subjected to testing a 0.05 level of significance. The results were processed using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) through multiple regression analysis.

Findings

Based on the study, the following findings are presented:

1. The school heads’ leadership based on internal challenges was Moderately Challenging while Slightly Challenging based on external challenges.
2. The school heads’ performance attained an outstanding rate based on the five (5) domains of the Philippine Professional Standard for School Heads.
2. According to the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads, internal and external leadership challenges have no significant influence on school heads' domain-based performance (PPSSH).
3. Based on the result of the study, the following management implications are arrived at:
 - One of the vital roles of the school heads is the preparation of a Contingency Plan in times of any calamity or suspension of

classes. As instructional leaders, school heads must have realized that the online classes have caused too much stress to the parents and the students. At this point, school heads should have initiated the move to orient the parents and the learners on the adjustment of the learning modalities. The scenario is also a challenge that is needed to be addressed.

- The challenges experienced by school heads and other significant stakeholders during the pandemic are good sources of information for evaluation and documentation as the basis of future leadership decisions.

Conclusions

Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The school heads' exemplary leadership skills in managing the school, despite the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, unequivocally demonstrate their exceptional level of preparedness and proficiency in crisis management.
2. Despite the unprecedented and disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, an overwhelming majority of secondary school heads in the Division of Bulacan demonstrated exceptional resilience and outstanding performance, as evidenced by their consistent attainment of an Outstanding rating across all domains outlined in the PPSSH-OPCRF. Their unwavering determination to uphold and perpetuate their remarkable achievements in the OPCRf underscores their steadfast commitment to excellence in educational leadership, even amidst the most challenging circumstances.
3. The leadership challenges faced by school heads during the pandemic have no significant influence on their performances based on the domains, which led to the decision of accepting the null hypothesis.
4. From a management perspective, this implies that investing in the development and enhancement of crisis management skills among school leaders is crucial. Providing ongoing training, resources, and support to school heads can help them better prepare for and effectively respond to future crises or unexpected challenges. It also highlights the importance of fostering a culture of resilience, determination, and a commitment to excellence within the educational system.
5. Furthermore, recognizing and acknowledging the outstanding performance of school heads is essential. It can boost morale, motivation, and job

satisfaction among educational leaders, leading to increased productivity and continued dedication to achieving high standards of educational leadership.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in the light of the study's preceding findings and conclusions:

1. School heads may sustain their leadership skills, which are vital in coping with internal and external challenges. Hence, they may initiate developmental programs for aspiring school leaders in dealing with external and internal leadership issues and work-life balance strategies among their subordinates thru School Learning Action Cell.

Further, school heads may continuously adhere to the PPSSH, which articulates the school leadership qualities through well-defined domains that measure competent practice and effective leadership and management. The authentic outstanding rating as Means of Verification may likewise inspire other teachers to aspire for an Outstanding rating in their Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF).

2. Provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for school heads to enhance their crisis management skills. This can include workshops, seminars, webinars, and access to relevant resources and best practices.
3. Recognition and Incentives: Recognize and reward outstanding performance by school heads in crisis management. This can include public acknowledgments, awards, and incentives to motivate and encourage continuous excellence.
4. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of crisis management strategies and gather feedback from school heads, staff, students, and parents. This feedback can inform necessary adjustments and improvements to crisis management plans and processes.
5. Future researchers may conduct a relevant study, which may involve the challenges of Master Teachers and Head Teachers from both elementary and secondary schools in the aftermath of the COVID 19 Pandemic utilizing this study as a reference.

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