

# **Stressors and Coping Mechanism of Private School Principals in San Jose City Nueva Ecija, Philippines**

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## **ABSTRACT**

School principals can experience emotional stress in many ways. As the Management Information System Officer who shares an office with the principal, the researcher observed how stressful it can be. As the leader of the school, he/she may suffer stress from the problems with the teachers and staff, in the improvement of the physical well-being of the school, submission of necessary school forms, and how he/she can abide the orders from the owners of the school and the Department of Education. This led to the researcher's desire to conduct this study. Coping was necessary for school principals to continue with their everyday operations, and they carried the responsibility of making the school run smoothly with their leadership and guidance. This study was conducted from March to April 2023, focusing on principals in 12 private schools in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines. This study employed the qualitative type of research, particularly the phenomenological approach of the Private School Principals in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines; there are ten females and two males; 10 are married, and two are single, 4 of them have a Master's Degree, 8 of them have Bachelor's Degree and their age ranged from 21-60 years old. The everyday stressors and problems associated with the administrative responsibilities of private school principals who were participants in this study were budgeting and decision-making in terms of administrative responsibilities, communication in terms of interpersonal relationships, and technology in terms of instructional supervision. Also, this study aimed to suggest a coping mechanism program to help principals cope with stress. The researcher also recommended the Mindfulness-Based

Stress Reduction (MBSR) program.

**Keywords:** Budgeting, Communication, Coping Mechanisms, Decision making, Mindful-Based Stress Reduction, Planning, Principals, Self-Care, Stressors, Technology.

## INTRODUCTION

In charge of a school's academic, administrative, and social components, school principals are essential in determining the direction of education. However, they are frequently subjected to a wide range of stressors due to the demanding nature of their employment. Fostering a healthy learning environment requires an understanding of the pressures faced by school principals and the identification of practical coping techniques. This essay examines the value of studying the stressors faced by school principals, highlighting significant stressors and coping strategies by reviewing the body of existing research. To be successful, today's school principals must not only manage a complex human organization in the rapidly changing dynamics of schools and society, but they must also be influential leaders in a wide range of areas, with an increasing emphasis on student achievement. Each school requires an administrator to manage and supervise teachers, provide quality education, and carry out educational programs, initiatives, and services. As mentioned earlier, the administrator is liable and responsible for overseeing the school's operations.

As to what the researcher has observed, controlling student behavior, hiring teachers and staff, fostering individualized learning, boosting instructional efficacy, student retention, parent support, and other challenges confront school principals. Let the advances in expectations by the education system and the parent community, combined with rapid advances in technology and society itself, have increased the demands of the role without necessarily alleviating any of the daily stresses that the head faces be an addition. Nowadays, as the position of school principals has become more complex and multifaceted, the implications of their role in their well-being are sometimes overlooked. As an administrative assistant/Management Information Technology Officer and being with the principal in her office, the researcher has observed that school leaders must deal with various issues in their personal and professional lives. The researcher also observed that the principal was stressed by the daily difficulties due to their high level of responsibility. A school principal should have

techniques to manage stress to comply with their working requirements. All these reasons led to the researcher's curiosity and made her pursue this research.

Any change that creates physical, emotional, or psychological distress is called stress. Not all sorts of stress, however, are damaging. People are subjected to several kinds of stress. Eustress is enjoyable, exciting stress that energizes you (commonly called "stress"). This is the most common sort of stress we face in our daily lives. Acute tension is just temporary. Acute stress occurs every day, resulting in a generally chaotic life. Chronic stress is defined as stress that appears to be unending and unavoidable, such as the stress of a terrible marriage or a very demanding profession (this form of stress can lead to burnout) (U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2020).

Worry, fear, anger, and grief are normal, healthy emotions until they impede your ability to perform what you want or need to do. Stress is a typical reaction to life's challenges. It is difficult for a school principal to deal with challenges and stress. Worry, fear, rage, sadness, and other emotions are natural reactions. All of them are a part of life.

Work-related stress is a growing concern worldwide, affecting employees' health and well-being and organizational productivity. Work-related stress occurs when various sorts and combinations of work demands surpass a person's capacity and competence to cope. A variety of factors can induce work-related stress. For example, if their employment obligations are more significant than they can comfortably manage, they may feel under pressure. Work-related stress factors include conflict with coworkers or superiors, continual change, and job security.

School principals might suffer emotional stress in a variety of ways. As the principal, they may be stressed by problems with instructors and staff, the school's physical well-being improvement, the submission of relevant school paperwork, and how they can abide by directions from the school's owners and the Department of Education. Coping is necessary for school principals to continue with their daily operations at the school, and they bear the burden of ensuring that the school runs smoothly through their leadership and direction. The researcher chose this study to learn about and comprehend the lived experiences of school principals, including their problems and anxieties and how they cope with the stress they face.

Studying the pressures and coping strategies school principals face is essential to improving educational leadership and, by extension, the education system. The body of current research elucidates a range of stresses and coping strategies, providing a foundation for future

investigation. In order to create a sustainable and supportive climate for school administrators, educators, legislators, and stakeholders must first have a better understanding of these difficulties. This will ultimately benefit the entire educational community (Johnson et al., 2022). We can change educational leadership as we begin this research journey, providing a strong and prosperous basis for coming generations.

## **METHODS AND PROCEDURE**

The researcher developed an interview guide questionnaire addressing the study's objectives. The critical issue of this research was, "What stressors do private school principals face, and what are their coping mechanisms?"

The first part of the instrument elicited the participants' background information, including their sex, civil status, and highest educational attainment.

The second part dealt with the common problems and stressors school principals encounter regarding administrative responsibilities, interpersonal relationships, and instructional supervision, and the strategies or ways to cope with stressors in their work as school principals.

The interview aimed to know how they handle stress-related situations in school and how these affect their physical and mental health. Lastly, this study wanted to know the strategies to cope with stressors as a School Principal.

The researcher upheld the confidentiality of the data and the researcher's integrity by adhering to professional ethics.

This study used purposive sampling, where the researcher selected participants who were principals of private schools in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. This method allows researchers to focus on cases expected to provide valuable insights or represent essential aspects of the population.

Participants engaged in honest discussion. Given the nature of qualitative research, all participants allocated pseudonyms to preserve and maintain privacy and confidentiality. The participants come from private schools in the Division of San Jose City, Nueva Ecija: A.) Bettbien Montessori (Ramar Campus), B.) Bettbien High School, C.) Core Gateway College Inc., D.) Gracious Shepherd Christian Academy. E.) Home Academy, F.) Lighthouse Christian Academy, G.) Mount Carmel Montessori Center, H.) San Jose Christian Colleges, I.) School of Sacred Heart San Jose City, J.) St. John's Academy, K.) St. Joseph School, L.) United Methodist Church Learning Center.

Collected data was transformed into a written format, subjected to content analysis to examine the standard codes, and then categorized. Then there was reliability analysis, coding, establishing themes, and categorizing. Categories and themes were later found based on the principles and their similar characteristics. Finally, the codes that emerged, selected types, and articles were interpreted along with the quotations from the transcripts. Once the results were ready, these were sent back to the participants and discussed orally.

The study shared with the participants the results of how to improve the capabilities and skills to manage their school effectively and to avoid stressors in their workplace, how to motivate their coordinates to become more productive, how to strive for the betterment of their management, interpersonal and decision-making skills, how to balance work-life situation and be role models to teachers, students, and parents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Participants' Background Information

Table 1 shows ten female and two male participants in the study. Most are married, and a Master's degree is their highest educational attainment.

**Table 1. Participant's Background Information**

PARTICIPANTS	SEX	CIVIL STATUS	HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
1	Female	Married	Bachelor's Degree
2	Female	Married	Master's Degree
3	Female	Married	Master's Degree
4	Female	Married	Bachelor's Degree
5	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree
6	Female	Married	Bachelor's Degree
7	Male	Married	Bachelor's Degree
8	Female	Married	Bachelor's Degree
9	Female	Single	Bachelor's Degree
10	Female	Married	Bachelor's Degree
11	Male	Married	Master's Degree
12	Female	Married	Master's Degree

## **Common Problems and Stressors Encountered as a School Principal**

The common problems and stressors identified by the participants were administrative responsibility, interpersonal relationships, and instructional supervision.

### **Administrative Responsibilities**

The themes identified under the administrative responsibilities were budgeting and decision-making.

#### **Budgeting**

The data collected were analyzed to determine the problems of school administrators with budgeting. Budgeting is a fundamental financial management strategy that aids in allocating and monitoring income and expenses for individuals and companies. While budgeting has many advantages, it may also be stressful for many people.

Participant 1 stated, "Problems in high maintenance and operations cost, making strategic decisions, surviving competition in the long run. Unang-una pag malaki ang school na hina-handle mo mas malaki ang needs mo when it comes to maintenance lalong-lalo na sa school facilities, maraming facilities na every year inaayos at lalong pinagaganda example niyan ang mga learning facilities like computers, at ang mga laboratories na kailangang mapaganda at makasunod din sa pagbabago ng panahon at technologies." (The more significant the school, the bigger the budget you need; when it comes to maintenance, especially the school facilities, some facilities have changed yearly. The school needs to follow the changing in technology)

Participant 2 also said, "Time Management - Minsan mahirap talaga ito lalo na kung sabay-sabay ang dumarating na trabaho nag-ko-cause din talaga ng stress pag sabay-sabay ang work at isasabay pa ang pag-handle ng employees' problem. And of course, as an admin in a school, I also have the responsibility to make a good and right decision for the improvement of the school and also for my subordinate." (Sometimes it can be particularly challenging, especially if the work comes at the same time.)

Participant 5 answered, "Isa sa mga problema tliga ay budgeting, bakit? Especially pag mayroon kang bigger project pero limited yung resources mo, hindi naman porke isa kang admin dahil

maganda yung project ippush mona or gagawin mona agad diba? Icoconsider mo parin young kayang i-allot noong school para sa project mo kasi kahit gaano kaganda yoong project mo kung kulang naman sa budget ang school anong gagawin mo?" (One of the problems is budgeting, especially if you have proposed a bigger project but have limited resources, being an admin doesn't mean you have to go through your proposed project even its splendid, you must consider the allotted budget provided by the school for a certain project, even though you have an excellent project if the budget is not good enough, what will you do?)

Participant 7 responded with "Preparing lalo na sa start ng school year bilang principal I need to make decisions para magplano minsan nakaka stress yun lalo pag mag isa kang nagpa-plan as an school administrator. In terms naman sa budgeting isa ito sa kailangang planuhin mo bilang isang school admin paano ba magkakabudget ang school? So dapat magkaroon ng maraming students para magkaroon ng budget although hindi naman pera pera ang labanan pero hindi tatakbo ang school pag walang budget lalo sa private schools, organizing and storing information in proper digital forms." (Starting the school year, I need to make the first decision to make a plan for the school as a school administrator. In terms of budgeting one needs to plan a school admin how to budget the school? So there should be a lot of students to have the budget although not money the fight but the school does not run the budget especially private schools, organizing and storing information in proper digital forms.)

A related answer from Participant 8 was "Budgeting, Greeting visitors at reception, and dealing with queries on the phone." Another response about budgeting was from Participant 9, who stated, "Let us face it, a private school needs profit to be working. Yun ang unang concern." (Let us face it: a private school needs profit to be working. That is the primary concern.)

Participant 10 answered, "As Principal, ang buhay kasi ng private school ay clients. Kailangan pakisamahan natin sila ng maganda para tuloy ang business na school. May mga clients in the form of students may budget and may school to run the business." (The life of a private school depends on its clients. We need to have a good relationship so that the business will be running. There are clients in the form of students, meaning, if there is a budget, the school will still be in business.)

Participant 11 answered, "I encounter problems in terms of high cost in maintenance and operations."

Lastly, Participant 12 stated, "one of the problems sometimes

mahirap mag-budget and mag-desisyon for allocating the school budget lalo na pag nagkakaroon ng biglaang problema sa facilities ng school nakakapag bigay ng stress yun lalo na kapag kulang ang budget pero kailangan mong ayusin yung facilities dahil kailangan ng mga students. (One of the problems sometimes are difficult to allocate a certain budget and decision making for school, especially when there are sudden problems that occur with the school facilities, it gives as a lot of stress especially you have to fix it as soon as possible because the students' needs it)

Owens and Steinhoff (2017) carried out one pertinent study that addresses the budgeting issue school administrators face. The researchers analyzed the difficulties and budgeting procedures faced by American school administrators. They looked at the variables that affected principals' budgeting choices and noted the significant challenges to budget management.

From the participants' answers, when trying to manage their limited financial resources wisely, school administrators face a fundamental challenge: budgeting. Therefore, the complexity and problems surrounding budgeting at educational institutions have been the subject of several studies, and this problem is well-documented in academic research.

According to Owens and Steinhoff (2017), budgeting for schools is tricky for administrators due to a lack of funding, rising demand for educational programs, and the need to balance competing goals. To manage school budgets efficiently, they emphasized the significance of strategic decision-making, collaboration with stakeholders, and the responsibility of school leadership.

## **Decision Making**

In line with the problems that school principals encounter, another theme that emerged in the interviews was decision-making.

Participant 1 answered, "When it comes to strategic decisions naman, every year mayroon kaming planning team para sa planning of school curriculum including our school calendar we need to plan with an optimistic strategy para sa future ng aming mga students at eskwelahan." (When it comes to strategic decisions, every year, we have a planning team to prepare an optimistic strategy for our students and school, including the planning of the school curriculum, including the school calendar)

Participant 2 states, "And of course, as an admin in a school, I also have the responsibility to make a good and right decision for the

improvement of the school and my subordinate.”

Participant 3 answered, “As an administrator, Kailangan is making your decisions strategically in terms of decision making.” (As an administrator, you have to think strategically in terms of decision making)

Participant 4 stated, "Being an admin, one of the problems I encountered is a lack of communication between advisers and me. Regarding advisers, forget to update attendance records or student status without letting the registrar know. Moreover, one problem I encountered was the budgeting for the entire school year and decision-making.”

Another related answer from Participant 5 was “Decision making ang part na mahirap doon kapag sa pagitan ng empleyado at admin nagkakaroon ng conflict of interest between the admin and employee, usually nagkakaroon ng hindi pagkakaintindihan dahil magkaiba kasi ng mga needs yan diba. Usually, nagkakaroon ng misunderstanding kaya mahirap talaga mag desisyon.” (“Decision making is difficult to part as administrator, you have to cater the conflict of interest between the admin and employee, it usually occurs if there is misunderstanding between them, because everyone has different needs, therefore it’s difficult to make decisions)

Participant 6 also said “Answering and direct phone calls professionally, budgeting and dealing with queries, and also decision making ito ung pinakamahirap na part dahil sa mga desisyon mo may mga taong hindi nila nagugustuhan ang naging desisyon mo, mayroon naman young taong nakasuporta rin sayo pero yun, as a leader kailangan maging firm ka sa desisyon mo. So yun ang nagiging problema na may mga tao na nasasaktan or may naapektuhan sa desisyon mo.” (Answering and direct phone calls professionally, budgeting and dealing with queries, and also decision making, is the difficult part because there are instances that people might support the decision you’ve made, and there are also people that will support you but not as a leader, you must be firm in making your decisions. The problem in making a decision there are people you might hurt and affected by the decisions you’ve made)

Participants 7 said “Preparing lalo na sa start ng school year bilang principal I need to make decisions para magplano minsan nakaka stress yun lalo pag mag isa kang nagpa-plan as a school asministrator. In terms naman sa budgeting isa ito sa kailangang planuhin mo bilang isang school admin paano ba magkakabudget ang school? So dapat magkaroon ng maraming student’s para magkaroon ng budget although hindi naman pera pera ang labanan pero hindi tatakbo ang school pag walang budget lalo sa private schools, organizing and storing

information in proper digital forms.” (As a principal you must prepare for the beginning of the school year, you have to make decisions and plan, which sometimes gives a lot of stress. In terms of school budgeting, you have to carefully plan it. The school must increase the number of students to have a budget, it’s not about the money that matters, but the school will not run properly if there is lack of budget especially for private schools)

Participant 8 responded “Lahat ng nasasakupan ko naka-depend sa decision na gagawin ko. So, I always have to weight things kung ano ang mas nakakabuti sa mas nakakarami. I have to think as a leader instead of a boss. Lahat ng aspect kailangang tingnan if gagawa ng descision.” (Everything depends on my decision. So, I always have to weigh things that get the most out of hand. I have to think as a leader and not as a boss. All aspects must be seen if a decision is made.)

Participant 9 responded, “One of the stressors I encountered is the Discipline of teachers, parents, and student behavior. Minsan isa ito sa mahirap dahil iba-iba ng ugali ang mga teachers ganun din ang mga students and parents. As an school administrator kailangan mong balansehin ang pakikisama dahil kung wala sila wala na mawawalan ng buhay ang school. That’s why I have to make decisions na magiging fair lagi para sa lahat para maiwasan ang misunderstanding.” (One of the stressors I encountered is the Discipline of teachers, parents, and student behavior. Sometimes, this is the hardest part of dealing with the diverse attitudes of teachers, students, and parents. As a school administrator, you have to be fair and balanced when dealing with them because, without them, the school will lose its delightfulness. That is why I have to make a decision that is fair for everyone)

Participant 10 also said, “Isa sa na-e-encounter kong stressors billing administrator mahirap mag discipline ng parents, students and also teachers’ behavior kasi may mga teachers din na unacceptable din ang nga behavior nila and as administrator kailangan natin sila i-correct pero hindi natin alam kung paano ba sila made-discipline without hurting their feelings dahil yun yong nagging reason para I hate nila tayo. Kaya, as principal, I always need to make the right decision to be a good role model to them para i-correct ko man sila, lagi nila akong pakikikingan.” (The stressor that I encounter as a school administrator is the difficulty of imposing discipline among the parents, students, and teachers' behavior because there are instances that there is unacceptable behavior that you have to deal with. Sometimes, imposing penalty will lead to hurt feelings that may cause they to hate you, so as a school principal, I always make sure that I make the right decisions and be a good role model for them to follow so that even if I correct them, they

are willing to listen)

Participant 11's answer is related to decision-making: “As a school admin, I shoulder the overall strategic decisions, most importantly surviving the competition in the long run while meeting all expectations.”

Participants 12 also said “One of the problems sometimes mahirap mag-budget and mag desisyon for allocating the school budget lalo na pag nagkakaroon ng biglaang problema sa facilities ng school nakakapag bigay ng stress yun lalo na kapag kulang ang budget pero kailangan mong ayusin yung facilities dahil kailangan ng mga students.” (One of the problems sometimes are difficult to allocate a certain budget and decision making for school, especially when there are sudden problems that occur with the school facilities, it gives as a lot of stress especially you have to fix it as soon as possible because the students' needs it)

Based on the participants' responses, school administrators play a crucial role in decision-making processes that shape students' educational experiences and outcomes. Effective school administration depends on including many stakeholders in decision-making processes. Shared decision-making improves stakeholders' sense of ownership, trust, and teamwork. Bryk and Schneider (2003) stress the importance of collaborative decision-making in improving schools and the importance of trust and teamwork in making wise choices.

The decision-making process for school principals must take ethics into account. Administrators must prioritize students' welfare and development while also considering the moral and ethical ramifications of their choices. Sergiovanni (2003) underscores the value of ethical leadership in schools and emphasizes the need to make ethical decisions to advance student well-being.

## **Interpersonal Relationship**

The theme identified by the researcher under the interpersonal relationship phase was communication.

### **Communication**

As a school principal, one of their skills must include good communication. In any organization, being a skilled communicator is an essential talent for administrators. Administrators who communicate well with team members may clearly express information, promote collaboration, and create a great working environment.

Participant 1 answered, “Communicating with all sorts of people, understanding different situations.” Another related answer was from Participant 2: “The balancing of personal and administrative problems, the way I communicate with different people, I always make sure that I have balanced and good treatment for everyone.”

Communication as a problem was the response of Participant 3, “The interpersonal communication nagiging stressor ito minsan lalo na kapag nagkaroon ng misunderstanding between you and your subordinates lalo sa desisyon making madalas nagkakaroon ng hindi pagkakaintindihan.” (The interpersonal communication is one of my stressors that sometimes leads to conflict between my subordinates, especially in making a decision that leads to misunderstanding)

Participant 4 answered, “One of the problems I encountered was having good communication to develop effective relationships with students and parents. I should relate to the various backgrounds of the student and parents in different situations, showing understanding and politeness, empathy, and concern in a professional manner.”

Participant 6 was also related to communication. She stated, “Sometimes we have misunderstandings with my subordinates. That is why open communication is essential.”

Participant 7 and 12 stated, “Minsan naencounter ko as school admin, nagkaka problema sa isang institution pag nagkaroon ng miscommunication.” (As an administrator the problem I encounter is miscommunication within the institution) Participant 8 said, “We are honest and transparent with each other. That is the communication we have.”

“As a school admin, I communicate with people and understand different situations. I always remember to weigh things before acting or making decisions.” Participant 11 responded.

Participant 12's answer, "Misunderstanding between teachers," is also connected to the theme of communication.

Participant 5 replied “In terms of relationship with my co-workers, actually mahirap siya kapag pakiramdam ng mga subordinate’s mo ay bossy ka sa kanila diba? Minsan feeling nila dinitiktahan molang sila dahil sa kung anong gusto mong mangyari kumpara doon sa ito yung kailangan nating gawin para sa mga students that’s why we have develop good communication by leading good relationship.” (In terms of relationships with my co-workers, actually difficult for me especially when my subordinates feel that I’m superior. Sometimes feelings may affect what you want and what needs to be done for the students that’s why we have developed good communication by leading good relationships)

Participant 9 stated “I have no problems encountered in terms of interpersonal relationship dahil ginagawa ko ang best ko na magkaroon ng magandang relationship sa kapwa ko instead na mangibabaw po ang galit, mas pinipili ko nalang intindihin.” (I have no problems encountered in terms of interpersonal relationship because I always give my best to build a good relationship with others, I always choose understanding rather than anger to have a good relationship.)

Lack of communication transparency is one typical issue. School administrators may need to educate stakeholders on important information or choices, which fosters distrust and miscommunication. Collaboration may suffer, and a supportive school climate may be hampered. To effectively communicate, one must convey knowledge and actively listen to others' opinions and suggestions. Making sure everyone is heard and fostering genuine discourse may take time for school leaders. Stakeholder engagement may be needed to improve decision-making processes, which may be limited (Hallinger, 2011).

## **Instructional Supervision**

The theme identified under the instructional supervision was technology.

### **Technology**

Schools can provide students with a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment, preparing them for the digital age and enabling them to thrive in an increasingly technology-driven world. One problem that arose from the participants' answers was technology.

Participant 1 answered, “Nahihirapan Silang pag caravan pa yung mga ginagamit na new learning applications and new ways of computation of grades.” (It is difficult to learn new learning applications and new ways of computation of grades)

Participant 2 said, “In terms of technology kailangan ng mga seminars ng mga employee para makasunod sa new way of working natin dahil sa panahon ngayon nagbabago na ang panahon.” (In terms of technology they need to acquire seminars to for them to follow the new way of working, because nowadays it constantly changing)

Then, Participant 3 stated, “The uncertainty of student outcome, technology, design of the curriculum.” Participant 4 responded, “And also in online teaching, we communicate using technology for us to be able to reach the students and deliver the well.”

Part of the answer Participant 5 was, "In terms of technology

naman may mga teachers tayong nag kaka edad na at hindi na makasabay sa mga ginagamit ng mga 21st-century teachers” (In terms of technology, we have many teachers who are getting older and are not able to catch up as the 21st-century teachers)

Participant 6 said, "Minsan mahirap mag reach out sa mga students lalo na sa mga new learning materials ngayong blended learning pag mahina ang signal or mahina ang internet nila." (Sometimes, it is difficult to communicate with the students, especially with poor internet connection and with the new way of learning which is blended learning)

Participants 7 also said “Naging stress sakín minsan yung pagbibigay ng instructions sa mga employee in terms of technology, sapag gamit ng school system lalo na pag hindi techy ung gagamit ng system, eh kailangang matutong gumamit ng online school system para maganda ang flow ng mga transactions.” (One of my stressors is providing instructions to the employees in terms of technology, with the use of the school system, especially if they are not techy, they need to learn how to use the online school system to make the transactions convenient)

Participant 8 answered, “Instructional supervision is characterized by guidance, assistance, sharing of ideas, facilitation, or creation to help teachers improve learning situations and the quality of learning in the school. Moreover, implementing online learning strategies needs to improve the technological aspects in school to adopt the new way of student learning.”

Participant 9 stated “Another one is naransan ko din sa students lalo na noong online way of learning tayo, ang hirap din dahil hindi mo kaharap ang mga bata through online lang kayo nagkikita minsan absent pa kaya anghirap din magbigay ng instruction na hindi naman nila nasusunod and also, we need to keep the internet strong for us to be able to teach properly.” (Another experience that I encounter during online classes is the difficulty of reaching out to the students because you are only communicating with them online, which makes me struggle in giving instructions that they need to follow, and also, we need to keep the internet strong for us to be able to teach correctly.)

Participant 10 said, “Passive employees/coworkers, coworkers that lack action implementing the different program/activities, system upon during the meeting.”

Participant 11 responded, “And another one, by using messenger/FB, we communicate with parents, but suddenly by easily chatting, many parents demand it, which is also a stress for us.”

Participants 12 answered “ICT competencies of aged teachers may mga instances na kailangang gumamit ng technology ang mga

teachers nakaka stress ito sa part na nahihirapan silang intindihin yung mga new applications natin, dahil sa ngayon para mapadali ang gawain more on easy way to compute grades and other school learning materials.” (For the ICT competencies of aged teachers, there are instances that they need to use technology; it gives me stress because there are some instances that they find it challenging to use the new applications to make the work convenient and easy.)

The researcher learned from the participants' responses that the difficulty of successfully integrating and managing technology resources in educational settings is one issue that school administrators frequently encounter. Managing and integrating digital resources in educational environments can be challenging for school administrators. This can involve problems like restricted access to technology, a lack of technical assistance, obsolete infrastructure, and inadequate teacher training on how to use technology in the classroom. Insufficient integration and management of technology can hinder the effective use of technology in classrooms, limit student access to digital resources, and impede the development of essential digital literacy skills necessary for the 21st century. (Zhao et al. 2002)

## Handling Stress-Related Situations

Everyone experiences stress differently, so finding what works best for you is essential. Suppose stress persists and significantly affects your well-being or academic performance. The theme identified in handling stress-related situations was planning.

### Planning

Planning can be a valuable and proactive strategy for dealing with stressful situations. Effective planning helps us build a framework for anticipating and addressing potential stressors, which can improve stress management and general well-being.

Participant 1 said, “As a school principal, hina-handle ko ang mga stress situation by planning on how to prevent the stressors mas magandang plugin na para maiwasan ang stress.” (As a school principal, I handle my stress situation by planning on how to prevent the stress, it is better to plan that to avoid stress)

During our stress situations, madalas na ginagawa namin para ma-handle ito ay maging kalmado para makapag plan kami kung ano ang susunod na step to handle that situation, participant 3 was said.

(During our stress situation we usually keeping ourself calm to plan what will be the next step.)

Participant 4 said, “First, we have to identify the cause of stress. With my planning team bumuo ako ng team para tulong tulong gaming magplano.” (The first thing we have to identify the cause of stress, I constitute planning team that can help me) Think for a moment about what is creating stress. Is it the stress of schoolwork, relationships with others, time management, or something else? Kailangan naming alamin ang pinanggalingan ng problema. (We need to identify the causes of the problem. Then, after that, we make a plan to find a solution.)

Participant 6 said, "If you are stressed, rest, and after that, find a solution by planning."

Participants 9 said, “Bago mag start ang school year bumubuo kami ng planning team para makapag plan na for the entire school year. Kung ano-ano ba ang mga possible problems na maencounter namin sa school. Para dumating man yun makakaya naming harapin. (We constitute a planning team before the beginning of the school year to plan for the activities the whole school year; we plan what would possible problems occur during the school year, and if they may occur, we can solve them)

Then, Participant 2 said “Hindi natin maiiwasan ang stress lalo pag nagsabay sabay ang work, kaya ang ginagawa nalang namin gagawin lahat ng nararapat na gawin and then after that saka kami lumalabas para mag relax or mag unwind, like swimming. (We cannot avoid stress, especially with our workplace, we make sure that all things need to be done before going out to relax and unwind like swimming)

In addition, Participant 5 said, “Seek support from others, if have a stressful time at work at dina natin kaya pwede tayong humingi ng tulong sa ating co-workers. Kahit ako ay isang administrator hindi ko kakakayanin ito kung wala ang aking mga teachers and staffs. I always seek support or suggestions from others para makapag plano ng solution.” (If you have a stressful time at work, seek the help of your coworkers; even though I am an administrator, I cannot make it without my teachers and staff. I always seek support or suggestions from them to plan for solutions)

Then, Participant 7 responded, "If we encounter a situation that can cause stress like lack of budget, miscommunication, and misunderstanding, We do not need to argue; we always plan to seek a solution.

Participants 8 said, “Kapag nasa stress situation kami, ang madalas na ginagawa namin ay kumalma dahil hindi natin maiiwasan ang stress sa ating working field, pag pinairal mo ang init ng ulo hindi

masasagot ang problema mo, but instead magiisip kami ng solution sa problemang kinakaharap namin.” (If I am in a stressful situation, I need to calm myself, because we cannot avoid stress from our working environment. When you are stubborn you cannot find any solutions with your problems, but instead, you have to think about the solutions to the problems that you encounter)

Participants 10 said, “When we are in the stress situation, we will always make sure to find the root of that stressor and humanap ng solution, at gagawin namin itong lesson learned para sa susunod alam na namin ang dapat gawin. There is always a first time sabi nga nila. Hindi natin inaasahan may mga bagong problema tayong nae-encounter. (When we are in a stressful situation, we will always be sure to find the root of that stressor and look for the solutions, and we must learn the lesson from it so that next time we know how to handle it)

Participants 11 said, “Hindi natin maiiwasan ang stress. Madalas tayong na-i-stress lalo na sa ating mga subordinates minsan nagkakaroon ng misunderstanding, akala nila yung desisyon mo ay against sa kanila pero para sayo for the sake of all naman talaga. Dahil as leader ayokong nagtatangi. Kaya naman, when I encounter a problem like that, a solution that I use is to get an open forum for us to understand the reason for every one of us. (We cannot avoid stress. Sometimes, we cannot avoid stress because our subordinates misunderstand; they sometimes think that we make decisions against them, but it is all for their sake; as a leader, I have to be considerate when I encounter a problem like that, and a solution that I use is to get an open forum for us to be able to understand the reason of every one of us.)

In addition, Participants 12 said, we always encounter stressor situations, hindi natin maiiwasan yan. Halimbawa na lamang ng decision making. Minsan yung desisyon ko ayaw ng iba. Pero meron din namang sumusuporta. (We cannot avoid problems example, when we are making decisions, some may not support, but some may support) However, in that situation, I have to be calm, relax, take a break, and make a plan to find a solution. Setting objectives, choosing actions, and allocating resources are all critical cognitive processes that planning involves.

Effective planning improves decision-making processes, which can reduce stress related to uncertainty or indecisiveness. O'Brien (2008) demonstrated that individuals who engaged in planning experienced lower stress levels and performed better on tasks compared to those who did not engage in planning. It has been discovered that planning is linked to lower stress levels and improved well-being. Uncertainty and anxiety can be lessened by anticipating and preparing for future activities or situations. Planning gives people a sense of competence and reduces

stress by making them feel more in control of their situations. Effective planning additionally enables.

## **Strategies to Cope with Stressors at Work Being A School Principal**

Self-care was the theme identified by the researcher to cope with stressors at work as a School Principal.

### **Self-care**

Self-care is an essential coping mechanism for school administrators to manage stress and maintain their well-being.

Participant 2 answered, “Stress is always there, so we should know how to cope; I will always be sure I have time for myself.”

The answer of Participant 4 was, “A time that I can relax. First is to take care of my mental health. Simply thinking “happy thoughts” connecting with my friends, talking to them, making time for unwinding, and most of all, I will always take care of myself and my body.”

Participant 6 stated, “I always do to take care of my body like body massage treat myself halimbawa na lamang ng pagpapalinis ng kuko pag punta sa salon para ma lessen ang aking stress, take deep breaths, take plenty of sleep dahil tayo ang napapagod din and give yourself a break if you felt stressed out.” (I always take care of my body by body massaging myself. An example is pampering myself by going to the salon and getting some pedicures and manicures to lessen the stress, taking deep breaths, and getting plenty of sleep because every one of us may feel stressed. You have to give yourself a break if you feel Stress out)

Participant 7 said, “Lagi kong ginagawa para ma-cope ko ang aking stress ay make time for myself. Taking breaks for myself like going to gym kasi kahit pagod at stress ako sa work maghapon at bago ako umuwi sa bahay naggi-gym parin ako nagre-relax at nag-wo-work out dahil doon nare-release ko agan mga stress”. (The thing I always do to cope with my stress is to make time for myself. Take breaks for me, like going to the gym, even if I am tired and stressed for the whole day; for me to relax, I have to work out and release my stress to work out and release my stress)

Participant 9 answered, “Self-care does not equate to selfishness or self-indulgence.”

Participant 11 said, “I make it a point that I have time for myself and my family during my ‘me time,’ meron akong ‘me time’ eh

hehehehe. (I make sure that I have my own time for myself. I go to the spa to have a full body massage at least once a month, and if the time and budget permit, we usually go out of town with my family).

Participant 1 said, “Unwind and meditate at the end of the day; unwind by traveling and having drinks with family and friends.”

Participant 3 answered, “Recognize and accept all emotions, learn to communicate struggles, and find a few trusted listeners. Moreover, after that, I go out to take self-relaxation, like going to the spa.”

Participants 5 said, “Kapag pagod ka at stressed ka hindi ka makapag isip or makapagplano ng maayos wala ka sa concentration kaya take time to rest.” (If you are tired, it is difficult to make a better plan and concentration, so you have to take time to rest)

Participant 8 said, “For me, ang agandang gawin para maka-cope sa stress kapag negate-take din tayo minsan ng self-relaxation, self-recreation para pagdating sa working field makakapag-isip ka ng maayos, you can create collaborative environments between teachers and faculty making happy lang kayo lessen the negative thoughts more in positive thoughts kasi minsan masarap pumasok sa work dahil masarap kasama ang mga katrabaho mo, (One thing that you can make to cope up stress are making time for self-relaxation, self-recreation for you to think and perform better, you can create a collaborative environment with your teachers and faculty to lessen negative thoughts and more on positive reviews, sometimes it is quickly going to work if you build a good relationship towards your workmates resolve conflicts, create and adhere to a budget, make strategic decisions.)

Participant 10 said, “Hindi talaga natin maiiwasan ang stress, so ang ginagawa ko nalang ay self-control and maturity in handling the situation and to keep our self-calm, keep a positive mind to always look at the cause of the problem, then look for the solutions of the problem mas main na gawin mo ay looking for the solution, not magalit dahil Nandiyan na yung problema or nangyari na, so all you need to do is to find a solution for that particular problem. (We cannot avoid stress; the thing that I can do is have self-control and maturity in handling the situation and to keep calm, keep a positive mind to always look at the cause of the problem, and then look for the solutions to the problem, looking for the answers instead being angry will not change the situations, problems are already present so all you need to do is to find a solution for that particular problem. Moreover, if I am stressed, another one is that I will go out with my family or go to the spa to get a body massage.)

Participant 12 said, “Connecting with the right people, allowing

your subordinates to be heard, prioritizing the wellness of your staff physically and mentally, Giving positive feedback, and Regular Communication. Moreover, during my stressful time, I will also take a break, like unwinding and getting a full body massage.”

It would be best to practice self-care to remain healthy, perform your job, assist and care for others, and complete all the tasks you need and desire to complete in a day (Lawler, 2023).

It would be best to practice self-care to remain healthy, perform your job, assist and care for others, and complete all the tasks you need and desire to complete in a day (Lawler, 2023).

It is essential to have relaxation methods that encourage calm and reduce stress, including deep breathing, gradual muscle relaxation, and guided visualization. These methods, which promote physical and mental relaxation, can be used on your own or under the supervision of a qualified expert. Numerous meditation techniques, including mindfulness-based stress reduction, have been demonstrated to lessen anxiety, despair, and stress. Mindfulness fosters present-moment awareness and encourages a non-judgmental perspective on thoughts and feelings. Regular exercise can lower stress levels and enhance general well-being. Examples of this include aerobic exercises, yoga, or strength training. Exercise lessens the effects of stress by boosting the production of endorphins, which are organic mood boosters. Strong social networks and connections must be created and maintained to manage stress effectively. Emotional support and stress reduction can be achieved by talking about feelings and experiences with trustworthy people, asking for help, and participating in constructive social interactions. Strong social networks and connections must be created and maintained to manage stress effectively. Emotional support and stress reduction can be achieved by talking about feelings and experiences with trustworthy people, asking for help, and participating in constructive social interactions. (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2002).

## CONCLUSIONS

The study's results, which included principals of private schools, allow for drawing several essential conclusions. First, interpersonal relationship pressures and difficulties were noted, particularly those about budgeting and decision-making. It has been shown that clear communication between supervisors and employees is essential to avoiding misconceptions that can cause tension. The constantly changing landscape of technology presented a significant challenge for principals in instructional supervision.

The study emphasized that planning was the most commonly used stress-reduction technique among these school administrators. Principals understood that organized planning was essential to successfully navigating the difficulties of their roles. Furthermore, the study discovered that participants' compromised immune systems resulted from the adverse effects of stress on their physical and emotional well-being. This emphasizes how stress has a significant negative impact on general well-being.

The study found that private school principals primarily use self-care as an intervention approach in reaction to stress. These leaders actively participate in activities and behaviors to preserve their physical and mental health because they understand the importance of personal well-being.

Regarding suggestions, the investigator suggested implementing a program called Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) to assist principals in managing their stress. Incorporating components such as yoga, body awareness, and mindfulness meditation, MBSR is a well-researched and validated practice. The objective is for participants to become more resilient and peaceful. Stress reduction, better emotional regulation, sharper attention, and stronger relationships are the advantages of the suggested eight-week program. Crucially, the knowledge and abilities participants gain from the MBSR program are intended to last long after it ends, encouraging a lasting sense of camaraderie and support.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

With the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are offered:

1. To lessen stress, principals should focus on budgeting and decision-making regarding Administrative Responsibility. In interpersonal relationships, stress can be minimized with good communication. Regarding instructional supervision, principals must focus on improving and sustaining ICT technology to lessen anxiety.
2. Planning is valuable for reducing stress and promoting overall well-being. Planning can help you manage stress, but balancing rigidity and adaptability is essential. Plan according to your unique requirements and preferences, and be willing to adjust your tactics as you discover what works best for you.
3. Avoiding stress is impossible. Stress can weaken the immune system. Managing stress effectively and adopting stress

reduction techniques can help support a healthier immune system.

4. Giving time for self-care is important. Self-care is essential for managing stress and preserving general well-being. Self-care is a lifelong discipline, and prioritizing your health is crucial.
5. The researcher would strongly advise considering mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) as a beneficial strategy for reducing stress. MBSR is a structured program that includes mindful awareness, gentle yoga, and mindfulness meditation techniques. It is effective at lowering tension, encouraging relaxation, and improving general well-being, according to numerous studies.
6. For future researchers, understanding how people experience and react to stress and figuring out practical ways to lessen its detrimental effects on physical and mental health are the two critical components of the importance of stressors and coping mechanisms. Future studies can offer a thorough understanding of the stress experience and help create focused interventions and assistance programs that boost people's resilience in the face of stress.

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