



## LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF SCHOOL HEADS IN A DISTRICT: A SEQUENTIAL EXPLORATORY MIXED-METHODS INQUIRY

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**Abstract:** *This sequential exploratory mixed-methods study examined the relationship between psychological well-being and leadership abilities among school heads in the District of Dinalupihan, Department of Education – Schools Division of Bataan, for the academic year 2023–2024. The study used a two-phase methodology, a qualitative investigation through interviews and a quantitative survey. Understanding school head profiles in terms of age, gender, and management experience. The study sought to offer comprehensive explanations of the leadership abilities demonstrated by principals. The psychological aspects of school heads' well-being were examined. Results showed that school heads had a diversified profile, representing a range of ages, genders, and managerial experiences. Strong proficiency in vision and strategic thinking, interpersonal and communication skills, decision-making and problem-solving, instructional leadership, and ethical leadership were the defining characteristics of leadership abilities. Result of the psychological well-being measures showed that school heads were in an excellent emotional and mental state, had high levels of work engagement and resilience, had an excellent work-life balance, and had strong social support. Meticulous statistical examinations validated noteworthy correlations between leadership abilities and mental health of the school heads. The study's conclusions made clear how crucial it is to fund focused leadership development initiatives to improve principals' wellbeing.*

**Keywords:** *Educational management, leadership skills, sequential exploratory mixed-methods design, Bataan, Philippines*

### INTRODUCTION

When it comes to the overall success of educational institutions, having great leadership and a healthy mental condition are both crucial components that contribute to the overall success. This research concentrated on the connection between leadership skills and psychological well-being among administrators of schools. A global situational analysis of the topic addressed in this research reveals a prevalent fear across various countries. The research focused on the relationship between leadership skills and psychological well-being among school heads. This study investigated the connection between school administrators' leadership abilities and overall psychological well-being. Studies and literature from a range of nations shed light on the universal nature of this issue and provide valuable insights into the prevalence of the problem, the elements that contribute to it, and the potential ramifications of it. Suleman et al. (2018) investigated the link between perceived job stress and the mental health of secondary school heads in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Leadership in educational institutions significantly shapes the work environment, and this study implies that managing occupational stress is essential for good leadership. In a study on the mental health of school principals, Dadaczynski et al. (2022) discovered that things like age and the kind of school they are in charge of can impact their well-being. Understanding these elements can aid in creating leadership support programs that address mental health. Leadership positions in schools come with particular stressors. To determine the demand for mental health resources in schools, Chaudhuri (2022) surveyed school principals. This study emphasizes the significance of providing proper mental health resources and training to assist principals' leadership in tackling issues like violence and staff well-being. Principals play a crucial leadership role in determining the school climate. Additionally, a longitudinal investigation by Marsh et al. (2022) showed that high work demands and burnout may harm school principals' mental health and well-being. Principals must traverse these difficulties to effectively lead in schools, emphasizing the value of leadership development and support. The difficulties of adopting



universal mental health screening in schools and how this can affect school leaders were covered by Wood et al. (2021). This research outlines the challenges and difficulties principals may encounter in their leadership roles in implementing mental health initiatives in schools. Wang et al. (2018) stressed that the increased workload faced by school principals may hurt their job satisfaction and, consequently, their ability to lead effectively. The difficulties with their physical and mental health brought on by the increased workload may limit their capacity to exercise effective leadership in their schools. According to Beusaert et al. (2016), many school principals experience stress-related symptoms, which might impact how they perform in their leadership roles. It is critical to address these problems to sustain outstanding educational leadership since stress and burnout can impair their ability to lead effectively. According to Lien et al. (2023), principals of schools in Norway voiced worry about mental health and the unique requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. Steiner et al. (2022) emphasized the significance of improving teachers' and principals' well-being as a crucial step in reopening schools. The ability of school administrators to guide their institutions toward success and recovery depends on their general well-being. School administrators may be affected by psychosocial risk factors, which could have an impact on their leadership responsibilities, according to Dicke et al. (2018). It is essential to comprehend these aspects to assist school leaders' psychological well-being and, as a result, their ability to lead effectively. In recent years, the intersection of transformational leadership and psychological well-being within educational settings has garnered significant scholarly attention. The study by Meidelina et al. (2023) serves as a notable examination into how transformational leadership impacts followers' psychological wellness in schools, building on established research that identifies the profound effects leadership styles have on staff morale and student outcomes. Their study indicated that school administrators' transformational leadership boosted followers' psychological well-being. In a cross-sectional study, Suleman et al. (2021) examined the relationship between leadership-empowering conduct and workers' psychological wellbeing, particularly secondary school employees. Their research showed that leadership empowerment predicts higher employee psychological well-being, underlining the need for supportive and empowering leadership styles in education. Kolodziejczyk (2015) interviewed school heads regarding leadership and management in schools. The study indicated that school heads had varied opinions on management and leadership and emphasized the importance of competent management in improving academic achievement and school culture. Similarly, the ASEAN situational analysis presents insights from various investigations carried out in Southeast Asian countries. The role of effective leadership in educational institutions is well-documented, with studies emphasizing the positive effects of transformational leadership on teacher well-being and student performance. According to Vateh & Andriani (2021), effective leadership practices in conflict regions, such as Southern Thailand, require school leaders to establish strong relationships within the community. These findings show the importance of good leadership in strengthening both aspects of school life. In his article "Developing Forward-Looking and Innovative School Leaders," Ng (2008) addresses the Singapore Leaders in Education Programme, which promotes leadership excellence and aims to build school leaders who are forward-looking and inventive. In their Singapore educational leadership analysis, Dimmock and Yong Tan (2013) highlight the characteristics contributing to the country's success in tight coupling, sustainability, scalability, and succession. Correspondingly, Ismail, Abdullah, and Abdullah (2019) explore the influence of school leaders' authentic leadership on teachers' job stress in the Eastern part of Peninsular Malaysia. They highlight authentic leadership's relevance in alleviating teacher stress by conducting their research. In his article from 2015, Ibrahim proposes a model of virtual leadership, intra-team communication, and job performance among school leaders in Malaysia. He places a strong emphasis on the significance of successful virtual leadership





in boosting the performance of teams. Likewise, Pau et al. (2022) investigate the mental health and well-being of secondary school teachers in Malaysia. Their findings highlight teachers' difficulties and the factors influencing their mental health. On the other hand, Jawas (2017) investigates the influence of sociocultural elements on leadership practices to enhance the quality of education provided in Indonesian schools. The study emphasizes the role that sociocultural factors play in the formation of successful leadership practices. In their article from 2020, Parry, Ean, Sinclair, and the other authors explore the growth of mental healthcare in Cambodia. They call attention to the country's challenges and opportunities to advance mental healthcare there. During COVID-19, which took place in Cambodia, Heng and Sol (2021) underlined the associated difficulties and suggestions for improving the efficiency of adjustment to the changing educational landscape of school principals, which affects their mental health. Meanwhile, Olofsson and Sebastian (2018) performed a situational analysis of mental health in primary healthcare in a rural district of Cambodia. The study aims to provide insights into the region's prevalence of mental health issues and the factors that affect mental health. Collectively, these studies add to the understanding of leadership, well-being, and mental health within the ASEAN setting.

The global and ASEAN literature on leadership qualities and the psychological wellbeing of school heads provides essential insights into the field of study. These studies primarily concentrate their attention on leadership's influence on student achievement, the well-being of teachers, and the cultivation of innovative school leaders. According to Othman & Wanlabeh (2012), strategic and participatory instructional leadership contributes meaningfully to creating an environment conducive to professional growth and mental health, where teachers feel motivated and supported. Although this study sheds light on the relationship between leadership and well-being in a specific cultural setting, there is a notable lack of research in the Dinalupihan District that compares to this kind of study. It suggests a need for a study to be conducted at the local level to understand the specific characteristics that influence leadership practices and their effect on psychological well-being in a particular environment. In addition, the complexities of school leadership often lead to substantial occupational stress, as indicated in studies like that by Puglisi & Meyerink (2023), which examined administrative stress in South Dakota. This research does not address the particular circumstances surrounding the Dinalupihan District. Therefore, it is necessary to research the local characteristics that influence the stress and overall health experienced by school administrators in this district. Ng (2008) examines how Singaporean leaders in educational programs promote the development of forward-thinking and innovative school leaders. Although this program may provide valuable insights, it is essential to consider the unique requirements and characteristics of the Dinalupihan District to design leadership development programs that are tailored to the district's needs. The local literature and research within the Dinalupihan District were scarce in number and frequently lacked a comprehensive study of the relationship between leadership abilities, psychological well-being, and instructional practice development. It demonstrated the importance of conducting more research relevant to the Dinalupihan District to bridge the gap between the global and ASEAN literature and the local circumstances. The study aimed to contribute to the understanding of leadership abilities and psychological well-being among school heads in the Dinalupihan District by addressing these deficiencies and focusing on how to address them. It provided insights into the distinctive sociocultural aspects impacting leadership practices for enhancing instructional methods in this particular setting. This research addressed the gaps, inconsistencies, and disagreements in the existing literature by offering context-specific findings and recommendations for developing leadership practices and increasing psychological well-being among school heads in the Dinalupihan District. Specifically, this research focused on the Dinalupihan District in the Philippines. The study aimed to fill critical research gaps in educational leadership by



examining the connection between leadership abilities and the psychological well-being of school leaders. A noteworthy lack of research thoroughly examined how these components intersected in a district-level context. Existing literature has generally focused on either leadership qualities or the mental health of school administrators. By carefully analyzing the leadership abilities demonstrated by school leaders and their accompanying psychological well-being within the district, this study aimed to close this gap. By doing this, it sought to offer a comprehensive understanding of the interaction between leadership and school leaders' well-being in the particular educational context, ultimately offering insightful information that could guide district-level policies and practices to support the efficiency and effectiveness of school heads. The study also aimed to offer information on the impact of leadership techniques on instructional development and school leaders' well-being in this context. The study's scope included thoroughly investigating worldwide and ASEAN literature on leadership abilities and psychological well-being and analyzing existing research to identify gaps, contradictions, and disputes. The study provided a more profound knowledge of the subject by examining global and ASEAN views and addressing the specific local context of the Dinalupihan District. The significant findings of this study would provide valuable insights into the relationship between school leaders' leadership skills and psychological well-being. The study would discover successful leadership strategies that contributed to instructional improvement and the wellbeing of school leaders. The literature evaluation might find potential solutions or techniques to improve leadership skills and increase the psychological well-being of Dinalupihan District school leaders. This study was motivated by realizing the crucial role of school leaders in driving instructional progress and fostering a healthy work environment. The well-being of school principals was critical to their performance and long-term viability in their positions. This study intended to give significant insights into the relationship between leadership qualities and psychological well-being to enhance educational policies, professional development programs, and support mechanisms for school leaders in the Dinalupihan District. This study's potentially significant contributions stemmed from its contextualized approach and attention to the Dinalupihan District's local setting. The findings of this study could provide practical and relevant recommendations for developing leadership practices and boosting the well-being of school heads by bridging the gap between global and ASEAN literature and addressing the district's specific needs and concerns.

## FRAMEWORK

This study was related to the concept known as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. Job demands and job resources are the two categories into which work characteristics fall under the JD-R model (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model offered a valuable framework for this research project, which will examine how job demands and job resources interact to affect the mental health of school administrators in Dinalupihan. The connection between effective leadership and the mental health of school administrators has been the subject of various research investigations. These studies discussed leadership abilities and psychological well-being in school principals. This research can show how leadership qualities can create a supportive environment that improves students' and school heads' mental health.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY





The primary objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between leadership skills and the psychological well-being of school heads in the context of the District of Dinalupihan, Department of Education – Schools Division of Bataan, School Year 2023-2024.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study used a sequential exploratory approach to holistically assess the leadership skills and psychological well-being of school leaders in the Dinalupihan District.

### Research Site

The Dinalupihan District was the site of this investigation. Philippines-based Bataan's local government included Dinalupihan as one of its divisions.

### Participants

The participants of this study were principals, assistant principals, and head teachers. There were ten elementary school heads, five junior high heads, and five senior high heads.

### Instrumentation

This study used two main research instruments: a semi-structured interview guide and a survey questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews were the primary tool used in the initial qualitative phase. Through these interviews, the researcher was able to have in-depth, open-ended conversations with school leaders about their own experiences, viewpoints, and insights related to their leadership responsibilities and psychological well-being. In the quantitative phase, the researcher designed a questionnaire to collect data on school heads' psychological well-being and school administrators' leadership abilities. This research aimed to understand better how schools may support their administrative staff. The researcher based the questionnaire on a Likert scale and asked participants to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with statements about leadership qualities and psychological well-being. She used the results of this survey to inform future research.

### Data Collection

The approach for analyzing the data for the study consisted of various steps to investigate the relationship between the different factors. Qualitative Portion. Due to the rich insights from the sequential exploratory design, this study's data analysis included qualitative and quantitative components. Thematic analysis, specifically the deductive process, was used in the qualitative phase to glean patterns, recurrent themes, and complex narratives from the material gathered from semi-structured interviews. With this strategy, the researcher delved deeply into the participants' descriptions of their leadership skills and psychological well-being, producing a comprehensive qualitative understanding. Quantitative Portion. The structured questionnaire responses were methodically gathered, arranged, and evaluated for accuracy and consistency during the quantitative phase. The analysis examined the connection between leadership potential and psychological wellbeing through statistical techniques. It used a non-parametric correlation analysis technique, such as Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, to consider the ordinal data of Likert scale ratings. A bivariate analysis was conducted since this study assessed the relationship between two variables only (leadership skills and psychological well-being). This method identified any potential links by determining the direction and intensity of the relationship between the variables.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There is a significant positive correlation between vision and strategic thinking and all components of psychological well-being (emotional well-being, workplace engagement, resilience, work-life balance, and social support). The correlation coefficients range from 0.21 to 0.59, demonstrating a moderate to strong positive relationship. Communication and interpersonal skills also significantly correlate with all components of psychological well-being. The correlation coefficients range from 0.36 to 0.66, signifying a moderate to strong positive association. It implies that effective communication and interpersonal skills positively contribute to various aspects of well-being. Comparable to previous styles, decision-making and problem-solving skills significantly correlate positively with emotional well-being, workplace engagement, resilience, work-life balance, and social support. The correlation coefficients range from 0.21 to 0.37, representing a moderate positive relationship. Instructional leadership establishes a significant positive correlation with all components of psychological well-being, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.39 to 0.72. It advises that solid instructional leadership is associated with higher emotional well-being, workplace engagement, resilience, work-life balance, and social support. Ethical leadership also presents a significant positive correlation with all psychological wellbeing components, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.23 to 0.67. It suggests that a solid commitment to ethical leadership positively influences the well-being of school heads across various dimensions. The results constantly specify that different dimensions of leadership styles (vision and strategic thinking, communication and interpersonal skills, decision-making and problem-solving, instructional leadership, and ethical leadership) are positively correlated with many features of psychological well-being among school heads, emphasizing the significance of leadership skills in nurturing a positive work environment and personal well-being. The paper "Self-leadership skills on COVID-19 pandemic crisis: Basis for Human Resource Development Strategic Framework" by Dimal (2022) adds much to our knowledge of these abilities about the pandemic. The study looked into how people, especially those in leadership roles, deal with the global health problem's obstacles. Dimal's work clarifies the significance of individual agency, resilience, and adaptive tactics for leaders confronting extraordinary problems by emphasizing self-leadership. The study's conclusions have consequences for creating a strategic framework for HRD, providing information that would help people, groups, and decision-makers cultivate effective leadership in times of crisis.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study's findings, the researcher camped up with the following conclusions aligned to the Statement of the Problem. First, the age distribution of school heads in the Dinalupihan District is balanced and diversified, with a higher percentage of those in the 41–50 age range. The gender distribution of school heads is visible, with 65.63% female and 34.37% male. A considerable proportion of school heads possess between one and five years of management experience, resulting in a unique combination of seasoned leaders and those just beginning their careers in management. Regarding Leadership Skills, the aggregate mean and standard deviation of school heads' leadership skills show a respectable degree of competency. The results show that school heads are considerably above average (SA) in decision-making and problem-solving (overall mean = 3.31, SD = 0.72) and instructional leadership (overall mean = 3.34, SD = 0.74). Above average (A) ratings are given to vision and strategic thinking (overall mean = 3.23, SD = 0.79), communication and interpersonal skills



(overall mean = 3.16, SD = 0.78), and ethical leadership (overall mean = 3.28, SD = 0.75). In terms of Psychological Well-Being, the school heads' good profile is evident in their psychological well-being, which includes emotional well-being, work engagement, resilience, work-life balance, and social support. Three areas show notable strengths that are classified as considerably above average (SA): work engagement (overall mean = 3.28, SD = 0.68), resilience (overall mean = 3.22, SD = 0.68), and social support (overall mean = 3.32, SD = 0.60). The ratings are above average (A) for both work life balance (overall mean = 3.28, SD = 0.64) and emotional well-being (overall mean = 3.18, SD = 0.77). Regarding the relationship between leadership capabilities and psychological well-being, the study finds a strong positive correlation between school heads' psychological well-being and leadership capacities. Significant correlations have been found between psychological well-being and vision and strategic thinking, communication and interpersonal skills, decision-making and problem-solving, instructional leadership, and ethical leadership. These findings highlight the critical role that leadership competencies play in promoting the psychological well-being of school heads. Furthermore, the results highlight how critical it is for school administrators to grow and improve their leadership abilities, especially in ethical, instructional, and decision-making leadership. The psychological health of school administrators is greatly enhanced by these abilities, which suggests the necessity for focused professional development initiatives. Given the connection between resilience, work-life balance, emotional well-being, and social support, educational institutions should consider incorporating these methods to support effective educational management.

## TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Development of useful interventions and support systems requires integrating research from psychology, education, and leadership studies. One way to do this would be to develop training courses covering emotional intelligence, stress management, conflict resolution, and other critical areas of wellbeing and leadership. More measures to assist school leaders' holistic development include putting mentorship programs into place and making counseling services accessible.

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