

A Phenomenological Exploration of the Professional Burnout of Public Elementary School Heads

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to delve and understand the experiences of public elementary school heads in dealing with professional burnout. The study was seen through the lens of the Burnout Model of Maslach which emphasizes that burnout is a long-term reaction to recurring interpersonal stress at work. The three main aspects of these responses are overpowering exhaustion; sense of cynicism and detachment from work; feeling of helplessness and failure. This is also supported by Karasek's Demand-Control Model of Job Stress which introduced the influence of work characteristics on the stress, health, and wellbeing at work. This study was conducted at Division of Davao del Norte involving 10 public elementary school heads who were selected using purposive sampling. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Results show that with regards to lived experiences of public elementary school heads in dealing with professional burnout, these major themes emerged: viewing experiences as opportunities for learning, feeling of exhaustion due to work demands, experiencing varied feelings and emotions, experiencing reduce of performance, encountering health related concerns and productivity, and taking a break. To manage and address challenges associated with professional burnout, the participants coped through the following themes: prioritizing self-care, having work-life balance, organizing tasks and applying time management, establishing a supportive network, and accepting burnout as part of the job. Furthermore, the insights gained by the participants were summarized into the following themes: imbibe positive attitude, establish self-care, desire for a balanced environment, seek personal and professional growth, and get support from others. The result of this study is beneficial to public elementary school heads, teachers, and DepEd authorities in dealing with professional burnout. These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the realities of professional burnout and suggest strategies to deal with professional burnout effectively through prioritizing self-care, having work-life balance, and establishing supportive network among colleagues.

Keywords: education, educational leadership, public elementary school heads, professional burnout, qualitative phenomenological exploration, thematic analysis, Division of Davao del Norte, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

A school head plays a crucial role in molding the vision and facilitating the success of the school. Being a school principal entails enormous life-long challenges, a bulk of responsibilities, necessitates infinite passion and commitment to the profession throughout their lifetime. The school principal

steers the academe both internally and externally, while serving as an intermediary between the leadership of the school and the district. A school head carries out the execution of all the works related to the school. However, many school principals are experiencing challenges in the profession. They oftentimes find themselves exhausted in terms of dealing and coping with the job requirements of the profession. As specified by Kelly (2023), principals have experienced increasing workloads and longer working hours at a faster working pace while their work is becoming more cognitively and emotionally demanding. They are also struggling to effectively recover from these increased work demands in their non-work time and are overwhelmed and experiencing burnout at a rate almost double that of the educators.

In Israel, school administrators are experiencing burnout. DeMatthews et al. (2021) stated that unreasonable demands and the pressures from parents and the members of the community, overburden from the various meetings and ceaseless scopes of work, mediocre or underachieving teachers, and incompliant or unskilled employees were the most salient factors that contribute to principal burnout. Meanwhile, in Nigeria, a study by Maclean and Ibara, (2020) revealed that principals are constantly facing pressures and it results them to feel stressed and burned out. These includes the demands to meet the target dates quickly, the necessity to carry on the exceptional performance without the needed materials, the hardship of making too many choices and poor service situations. Furthermore, in Malaysia, a study by Ling et al. (2022) showed that principals must attain the expectations of the stakeholders and the community. This challenging and arduous situation will yield in strains both psychologically and physiologically which negatively affects their mental health. These will result to loss of concentration, lack of worth and even the emergence of burnout manifestations.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, particularly in Occidental Mindoro, a study by Ferrer et al. (2023) revealed that school principals are experiencing burnout due to managing schools under challenging conditions. Stressors that are work-related that ranges from tasks that are administrative, evolved school responsibilities and the pressures on how to improve the academic performance of the students. Furthermore, in Davao de Oro, a study by Panibon, (2023) showed that dealing with this burden pushed school administrators to their limits. Dealing with these challenges is difficult to the school administrators thus they find it exhausting in adjusting to new educational trends and sets of responsibilities.

In Kapalong East District, numerous public elementary school heads have been struggling to cope with the responsibilities of being a school head. The nature of work as a public-school head is demanding and rigorous, taking eight to ten hours of their time, from Mondays to Fridays, not to mention the overtime activities, training, and seminars that fall on weekends, to respond to their professional duties. Moreover, in accordance to District Mandate, district coordinators are given to them. School heads have more tasks to do aside from managing the school. With this, school heads are showing signs of burnout such as exhaustion, detachment from work, and feeling of helplessness and failure. This is associated with the stressors in the work environment as well as the job demands of school heads.

While there is a growing body of research on school heads dealing with burnout, there is a scarcity of qualitative studies specifically focused on elementary school heads dealing with professional burnout. However, the study of Wilson (2022) entitled “Stress and Burnout of Principals Who Lead Historically Underperforming Schools” and the study of Angus and Angus (2023), entitled “Job Burnout Affecting Job Performance Among Teaching and Non-Teaching Personnel: Bases for Intervention” are relatively associated to this study. On the other hand, the researcher has not read any research study that focuses on public elementary school heads with professional burnout in Kapalong East District, Division of Davao

del Norte.

This research gap necessitates the urgency to conduct this study. Public elementary school heads facing challenges in addressing professional burnout. The researcher believes that if we understand what they're going through while addressing this problem, they can come up with new strategies to address the problem and learn how to deal with these problems. This study will also help people in education, especially those who make programs and training for school leaders. They can utilize the findings of this study to create programs or interventions that will help school leaders to stay strong when things get hard. This will be a big help to school leaders because they'll learn from the experiences of others and find out what works best in addressing this kind of problems.

Furthermore, this study will serve as a tool to introduce to society the experiences of school heads that may bring complications in their profession. The researcher seeks for this study to be useful to the Department of Education as this study could somehow be of help in addressing issues in teaching that will lead to school heads being burned out. Moreover, the results of this study will be shared to the school heads of Kapalong East District, in the Division of Davao del Norte that could aid them to design rules and create some activities to lessen the burnout experienced by the school heads.

Moreover, the findings will also be presented at a local, national, and international multidisciplinary research conference. In addition, a copy of the study will be given to St. Mary's College of Tagum, Inc. to serve as a source for future researches. Additionally, while working in the public institution, the researcher can also present this research through the school Learning Action Cell Sessions. More so, the researcher will consider applying this research for international journal publications for it to be utilized as reference for future researchers in the same field.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to delve and understand the experiences of public elementary school heads in dealing with professional burnout in the Department of Education in the Division of Davao Del Norte, particularly in Kapalong East District.

At this stage of research, the professional burnout of public elementary school heads was generally defined as the situations wherein public elementary school heads have deal with the challenges of burnout that may bring complications in their profession. This aimed to uncover the various initiatives of school heads managing challenges associated with professional burnout.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of public elementary school heads with professional burnout?
2. How do the public elementary school heads manage and address challenges associated with professional burnout?
3. What valuable lessons and insights have public elementary school heads gained in dealing with professional burnout that is worth sharing with others?

Theoretical Lens

This study was gleaned on Karasek's Demand-Control Model of Job Stress proposed by Karasek (1979), which introduced the influence of work characteristics on the stress, health, and wellbeing at work. It is also known as Job Demands-Control Model. According to the JDC model, highly demanding and low-control jobs are most likely to lead to reduced well-being and stress. These conditions would result in

individuals continually using large cognitive resources to satisfy needs, resulting in increased physiological levels of arousal and increased cardiovascular and neural alertness. Furthermore, if this condition persists, it would result in the individual's body becoming depleted of resources, with subsequent declines in physical functioning and mental well-being.

Karasek's Demand-Control Model of Job Stress was utilized in this study since public elementary school heads may experience burnout when faced with high job demands, such as administrative responsibilities and external pressures, coupled with limited control over decision-making processes. Understanding and addressing this imbalance could be crucial in mitigating professional burnout.

Further, this study was anchored on the Social Support Theory by Cohen and Wills (1985) which proposes that the benefits on the mental health from the recognized social support emerges from daily social interactions that involve evident and intentional support from others in response to certain negative life events, such as stress and burnout. Received support is comprised of various kinds of aid given by others, which includes sharing of own feelings, expression of concern and care, providing comments and offering actual help with a task or assignment. The support received is believed to encourage mental health in part by expanding people's anticipated effectiveness in coping with potentially stressful events.

In the context of this study, Social Support Theory highlights the presence and effectiveness of support systems and how it plays a crucial role in buffering the negative effects of stress and burnout against school leaders. Public elementary school heads dealing with professional burnout may benefit from strong support networks, both within and outside the school environment. Colleague collaboration, mentorship, and organizational support can contribute to resilience and effective coping mechanisms.

Another theory that was utilized is the Burnout Model of Maslach (1982) which emphasizes that burnout is a long-term reaction to recurring interpersonal stress at work. The three main aspects of these responses are overpowering exhaustion; sense of cynicism and detachment from work; feeling of helplessness and failure. That exposure can impair both personal and social functioning. Job burnout of employees results to resignation, while some may stay working but will only perform mediocre instead of doing their best. This decline in work quality and both bodily and intellectual well-being can be ruinous both for the worker and all affected by that person.

Apparently, this theory relates to this study as in this study, as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment are the three factors of burnout. Public elementary school heads may experience emotional exhaustion from the demands of their role, leading to depersonalization—viewing their work and colleagues in a detached manner. To address burnout, interventions should focus on restoring a sense of personal accomplishment, fostering a positive work environment, and promoting self-care strategies.

In this study, the abovementioned theories are deliberately selected and examined to provide more information on the foundation of this study. They serve as the foundational pillars for the research question, offering a clear understanding of the study's focus. School heads need to take the right action by choosing the right strategies and interventions, that will fit to address burnout among school heads.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study was limited to 10 elementary school heads who are currently working in public schools in Kapalong East District, Division of Davao del Norte as the participants of the study. Thus, the data to be gathered is not generalizable to all. Moreover, this research study was conducted for the school year 2023-2024, specifically in the months of March to July 2024.

Furthermore, this study was subjected for in-depth interview with full observance of safety and health protocols. This study focused on the experiences of public elementary school heads dealing with professional burnout, their coping strategies, and insights that they can share with their colleagues and the academic community in general. Thus, other relevant factors that may limit the study includes the potential bias in the selection of participants, the potential for recall bias in the reporting of experiences, and the potential for social desirability bias in the reporting of coping strategies and insights.

Importance of the Study

The findings of this research may be used as valuable information about the experiences of public elementary school heads dealing with professional burnout and the result could be highly significant and beneficial to the following:

This study may be beneficial to **school heads** who are school principals, assistant principals, head teachers, or the school in-charge as this will highlight the struggles of the school heads dealing with professional burnout and their prowess in balancing personal and professional duties. By knowing this, they may express compassion and eventually advocate for school heads welfare and uphold their well-being, at all times as well as make this study as a basis or reference in making programs or activities advocating for their mental health.

In addition, this may be beneficial for **teachers**, as this will showcase the best practices of these school heads in dealing with professional burnout and may serve as an inspiration of determination and resiliency in straddling both worlds. Thus, teachers may learn appropriate accommodations, modifications, and intervention strategies that can best be utilized in ensuring that burnout is dealt well and uphold their well-being, at all times.

Subsequently, the **Department of Education Officials** may find this study beneficial by acknowledging experiences of Filipino school heads who are dealing with professional burnout. They may give free programs and services that advocates on ensuring the mental health of the school heads and alleviate their personal growth and welfare by offering free trainings, seminars as well as extend considerations in their professional development that may lessen these individuals' day-to-day brawls and uncertainties and empower these individuals by acknowledging them and their battles.

Furthermore, the **future researchers** may also benefit on this study as a valuable reference that will help them in the conduct of their related studies. This research work may also serve as a future reference for them as they attempt to investigate other angles of the lived experiences of school heads who are dealing with professional burnout to better decode their situations. Lastly, researchers may also explore the specific concepts presented in this study in greater depth.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Professional Burnout among Educational Administrators

Professional burnout is a significant problem among educational administrators. This is the result of heavy duties and responsibilities, long working hours, irregular and unpredictable practical problems and lack of control and independence. Negative experiences of educational administrators have an impact on their self-esteem and job satisfaction, leading to burnout and a desire to quit (De Matthews, 2019). Moreover, educational administrators who perceive a conflict between their role expectations or role values and those of district administrators, teachers, parents or other stakeholders are more likely to experience burnout (Mahfouz, 2020).

In addition, educational leaders are facing countless challenges leads to stress and burnout. These include restraints in budgeting, inadequacy in infrastructures, and insufficiency in terms of resources. Consequently, when school leaders felt that there is inconsistency between their expectations and the expectations of the stakeholders, they are more apparently to experience professional burnout (DeMatthews et al., 2021). Furthermore, school principals are having a stressful work environment that exposes them to job overload, chronic stresses, and situations that results to burnout, metal fatigue or other poor health conditions (Persson et al., 2021).

The prevalent causes of professional burnout among educational leaders were high workloads, pressure with regards to time, and when their works are not acknowledged (Fabelico & Afalla, 2020). Similarly, the absence of support from their supervisors and the immense nature of their jobs are the reasons why educational leaders are experiencing professional burnout (Kilag et al., 2023).

Consequently, educational leaders must make judgments with great management authority. Together, the decisions and the means of implementing the decisions stresses educational leaders, which accelerates burnout (Kafele, 2018). In addition, burnout is one of the most frequent problems faced by school heads. This can be seen in the digital age, and this process of change yields to increasing outlooks from teachers, parents and students, as well as time pressures and stress, which in turn reveal burnout (Teyfur, 2021).

Additionally, the Immense work demands and inadequate job control among educational leaders lead to burnout and detrimental health effects (Riley et al., 2021). Similarly, burnout is frequently caused by the school principal's responsibilities and external influences. The turnover of principals nationwide is high due to the complexity, responsibility and pressure of the job. Burnout among educational leaders involves not only the leaders but also the stakeholders and the community that they are serving (Korolczuk, 2020). More so, the daily life of managing the school is emotionally demanding, and new challenges and increased responsibility create feelings of exhaustion that can overwhelm even the strongest leaders (Gomez-Leal et al., 2021). These difficulties may cause emotional exhaustion or burnout, as well as reduced effectiveness in leadership, and a more aggressive, financial-minded leadership approach. Educational leaders' physical and emotional resources were depleted due to stress and burnout, resulting in low job satisfaction, reduced self-efficacy, and physical exhaustion (McKay, 2020).

Furthermore, the line of work really requires responsibilities of school leaders, described on the one hand by enormous responsibility and confusion, stress and burnout. (Boyland, 2011 as cited by Tahira & Huma, 2019). Thus, leading a school is therefore a difficult task. Extended working hours, increasing responsibilities, support difficulties and increased responsibility make it a source of stress and burnout for school leaders (Holzer et al., 2021).

More so, among others, the most common causes of stress and burnout among educational leaders in the Philippines were high workloads, time pressure, and lack of recognition for their work (Kilag et al., 2023). Furthermore, school principals work under pressure since they face many demands in administrative and management functions. These unexpected situations and great crises in the workplace were a source of burnout among educational leaders (Leksky et al, 2023).

Compared to all helping professions, school leaders have the greatest levels of stress and burnout. Principals become overwhelmed when pressures from their jobs surpasses their abilities. Job burnout harm both health and work capacity (Mahfouz, 2018). Furthermore, it has been determined that burnout in schools is particularly high compared to other occupations. The school heads feel tired and exhausted. Burnout among principals has been identified as a major source of career discontentment and thus turnover from jobs and careers (Yildirim & Dinc 2019).

Consequently, educational administrators are experiencing unreasonable demands from parents and community members, an overload of too many meetings and endless work expectations, unsatisfactory or inferior teachers, and unwilling or inexperienced administrative assistants (De Matthews et al., 2018). Moreover, a cardinal cause of burnout among principals is the related to the demands for emotional connection and interplay with the stakeholders, particularly the teachers, the students and guardians, and the inefficiency to replenish emotional resources when they are depleted (Silbaugh et al., 2021).

Additionally, the work of a principal is diverse and often very challenging. The responsibilities of school leaders have become more varied and complex in recent decades. The work environment underwent changes due to the rise in local and national orders, leading to increased stress and burnout (Mitani, 2018). Principals are often maintaining heavy workloads, working long hours, wrestling with erratic and unpredictable problems of practice, and lacking autonomy from district supervisors (Dematthews et al., 2021).

Moreover, facing the demands of different stakeholders such as children, teachers, adult staff, peers, parents and supervisors makes the work of a school principal very stressful and causes a very high level of burnout in school principals (Upadyaya et al., 2021). In addition, if left untreated, the long-term work stress will affect physical and mental health, overall job satisfaction, and work productivity and performance of a leader (Wilson, 2022).

More so, if their tasks and responsibilities are not performed at an adequate level, the school head may doubt his leadership ability, which creates a sense of lack of personal and professional achievement (Abdurahman & Jul-Aspi, 2021). Additionally, failure to accomplish tasks and addressing complex issues within the schools results to burnout leading to a decrease in overall job performance of a principal (Fox, 2018).

Furthermore, burnout rates among educational administrators are at its highest when they feel that their way of leading the school is ignored and questioned. Pressures coming from the stakeholders as well as the teachers and from the burden in meeting the demands of the job. (Shkurina, 2018). Likewise, a weakened sense of success and self-confidence may contribute to burnout among school heads (Silbaugh et al., 2021).

In addition, the leadership roles experienced by educational administrators are not only heavy and laborious but are also overwhelming, exhausting and demanding. Dealing with these experiences are associated to emotional exhaustion and burnout among school heads (Skaalvik, 2020). Furthermore, burnout stress among educational administrators is exacerbated by the increase with regards to the responsibilities, local and national directives, drives, staffing and monetary affairs, and overall responsibilities (West, 2018).

Similarly, lack of time and workload related to school management makes it difficult for principals to work efficiently on the tasks assigned to them. Moreover, a study by Denecker (2019) revealed that the job burdens and uncertainties in their work are the reasons why principals are stressed that leads to burnout phenomenon. School heads experiences burnout and exhaustion on their jobs since they are performing various roles. They are dealing with intrinsic and extrinsic cases in their everyday work. Thus, indicating that they often experience fatigue on the job (Aburkayek, 2022).

Professional Burnout among Public Elementary School Administrators

The workload and stress levels of primary school principals are constantly increasing. Thus, exposure to burnout among them is high (Leppäaho & Aatsinki-Hämäläinen, 2020). Their work intricacy, various

workloads, too little time in focusing important task, communication with various stakeholders and the need for social supports and acknowledgements, high demands from work and excessive expectations causes principals to feel burnout (Drago-Severson, 2018).

Furthermore, the rhythm of school works makes elementary school heads depressed. This is the result of lack of communication among members, inadequacy of facilities in school, and insufficiency of funds needed for administration. It is manifested through body pains, constant headache, and hypertension that affects how they perform their duties (Ulfiyah et al., 2022). Consequently, demanding work situations makes school principals prone to work overload, poor health conditions such as stress, burnout, exhaustion disorders and coronary diseases (Persson et al., 2021).

In addition, elementary school principals are the dignitaries in their respective communities and their actions are displayed to all of the stakeholders of the school. Despite learning how to handle certain stressful situations by using hands-on experiences, school heads admit that overwhelming circumstances are unavoidable and they are having hard time to deal with it. They are experiencing burnout when they are feeling unprepared emotionally and socially upon doing their tasks as a school principal (Mahfouz, 2018). Furthermore, elementary school heads perceived doing many administrative works, having additional duties due to absent school personnel, and accommodating the needs of the students who needed special attention to be the most common reasons of stress that leads to burnout (Persson et al., 2021).

Furthermore, professional burnout among elementary school heads is widespread. Elementary schools' principals experience emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization when they get overwhelmed by their tasks as a school administrator (Sibuda, 2018). Burnout among elementary school principals is prominent problem in the sector of education, with extreme results most of the time. Its consequences are a reduce in performance, reduce of initiatives and creativity (Edu-Valsania et al., 2022).

Similarly, having vast number of tasks is the prime cause in the increase of stress and burnout among elementary principals. Dealing with too many tasks to be completed in a specified timespan makes elementary school heads to be more prone to burnout. (Calbert, 2020). Furthermore, elementary school heads do not thrive in their roles. Their capacities and effectivity as leaders are heavily restricted and compromised due to increasing levels of challenge. Frustrations and burnout are their responses in the challenges in their leadership practice (Tobin, 2023).

Strategies Adopted by Educational Leaders to Managing Burnout

Controlling stress from their jobs are important for school principals in order to avert burnout. A balance between life and work is crucial for school heads to preserve their mental health and their self-control. School heads must devise a course of action to mitigate the impacts of burnout on their well-being and efficiency considering that nature of their job itself is stressful (Harper, 2018). Furthermore, school administrators benefit from finding various strategies and tools to help them in managing stress and burnout (Maness, 2021).

In addition, school principals can address burnout by managing their time properly. In order to attain a balance in workload, school heads should designate tasks and draw boundaries. School principals should make use of the school block-time table to be guided on what is to be done (Ogalo et al., 2020). Also, the school head should have schedules on his everyday activities in the school to make sure that every activity is taken care of (DeLaGarza, 2022).

Consequently, school heads can address burnout through proactive self-care strategies. These can assist principals in dealing with these stressors. One is the self-regulation of emotion. Because many principals sacrifice their own health being in a demanding profession, the need for self-care practices such as sleep, hydration, and nutrition should be given priority. Moreover, specific mental health-related self-care includes using mindfulness strategies to counter mental health stressors. Self-care strategies, therefore, help prevent burnout and enable leaders to manage the pressures of their positions Ray et al. (2020)

Furthermore, principals cope on burnout by managing stress and being resilient. Balancing urgency with purposeful action, connecting with other school leaders, deliberately seeking joy in the work, and investing in out-of-school relationships and interests to help manage stress (Farag, 2019). These strategies can assist individuals to emphasize and amplify positive emotions in order to reduce other psychological conditions such as burnout, stress, and anxieties. (Su-Keene & DeMatthews, 2022).

Additionally, school heads can reach out to their fellow principals in order to find ways and develop strategies in addressing burnout especially if their district has not given priority to support them. School principals can also educate themselves by seeking ways to learn more about burnout, addressing stress and finding effective strategies to cope with burnout (DeMatthews et al., 2021). In addition, leadership delegation plan can be utilized wherein principals can either give time and prioritize on addressing burnout and job- stress during working hours or limiting non-business hours interruptions on specific times and dates (DeMatthews, 2019).

Furthermore, principals should see to it that they give time for activities that promotes and boosts their mental, physical and emotional health. These strategies involve doing exercises, meditations, and spending time with their families and friends. These are effective strategies to be developed in order to effectively manage and make practical interventions in addressing burnout (DeLaGarza, 2022). Moreover, school principals can design, implement and evaluate interventions that has the probability to expand their understanding on the connections related to their job. Improving these connections is a big help in preventing and alleviating burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 2018).

Additionally, principals who attend on their own welfare are able overcome the challenges of the profession. They are considered as effective leaders that adapts a positive, proactive lifestyle and were capable to meet the needs of others by utilizing the resources they have. A strategy to address that is by not answering emails during weekends or outside the working hours. If principals fail to attend to their own welfare, their colleague's may also be at risk in experiencing the same negative social, mental, physical and emotional effects of burnout. the same negative effects (Mahfouz & Gordon, 2021).

More so, principals can shape leadership according to their own values, viewpoints, and philosophies about their effectiveness. A principal's overwhelming responsibility is more likely to enable and prioritize duties that best match their own principles and duties they anticipate to be good at while evading tasks that do not match their own principles and interests and tasks, they have little or no expertise in. Working on tasks that fit best with these values and the tasks that are manageable leads to a sense of personal development and reduces burnout (Skaalvik, 2023).

Further, school heads should develop relationships with their colleagues and associates, staff from the central office, and educators who can supply and give encouragements and advices. Having social supports from within and beyond the school opens a chance to work together is a way to counter the effect of burnout among school principals. (Varthana, 2023). Additionally, by being invested in networks and communities of principals, either in actual or virtual, wherein supports can be easily be received. This

provides school principals an avenue to collaborate and receive the needed to support their welfare (Beausaert et al., 2023).

Consequently, school leaders' passion can emerge harmoniously through initiatives that promotes work and life balance, which serves as a safeguard against burnout (Horwood, et al., 2021). Passion can also be strengthened by providing relevant trainings and experiences, resources and support to school leaders through appropriate strategies such as work, attentive training, supporting independence in flexible work practices that promote work valuing, and using distinctive strengths (Ansley et al., 2019).

More so, applying practices that promotes mindfulness is an important alternative that helps school heads in achieving balance both physically and emotionally. These can be accomplished in any place regardless of the diversity of settings. In reinforcing school leadership and avoiding burnout, it is crucial to be aware that every burdensome situation has their own consequences. It is necessary to create a nurturing school atmosphere and commit to developing a healthy, flexible work-life balance and sustainability in educational leaders (Kim, 2022).

Furthermore, when it comes to building individual and collective resilience to manage day-to-day challenges, principals can employ various strategies such coaching staff to match and calibrate workload. Staff need to be supported to systematically delete, delegate and prioritize work in order to improve efficiencies, reduce stress, and prevent burnout. Moreover, establishing leadership trust with staff is critical to re-building psychological safety and allowing peak performance to flourish (Henebery, 2023).

School leaders encounter day to day responsibilities and they need to accept these responsibilities and adapt to them. Principals can cope and manage stress through being resilient and reflecting. By applying healthy and productive strategies to reframe behavior, reflect to enhance stress awareness, recognize stressors, reduce stressors, and respond to stress and burnout (Farag, 2019). Furthermore, burnout in the workplace can be addressed by applying mindfulness through making explicit goals and intentions, active listening, mindfully walking and centering, self-awareness about mental scripts during stressful events, mindful breathing, and engaging in self-compassion (Nunez, 2022).

Additionally, coping mechanisms to deal with and reduce stress in the daily work of school leaders aim to reduce burnout. Two major groups of coping methods such as problem-focused strategies which aims to eliminate the stress from its source while attempting to solve the problems that is the reason of the stress and the emotion-focused strategies which is aiming to reduce emotional stress without interfering with the source of the stress (Aburkajek, 2022). The principal manages the stress, anxiety and burnout by concealing it in order to make a brave face for teachers, students, parents, and the community. Furthermore, channeling the stress and anxiety by doing outdoor activities and collaborating with fellow school heads reduces burnout among school principals (Reid, 2021).

Similarly, principals frequently associate unusual hours of work and exhaustion with the nature of the job. However, a principal's emotional resilience is critical to the development of a positive school climate. Principals must keep focused on their passion for their jobs, particularly during stressful times. (Wilson, 2022). It is imperative for principals to remain focused on their passion for the job especially during stressful times. In addition, to address burnout, principals need to remember their goal and be reminded to recall their "why" while focusing on things over which they have direct control (Becker, 2019).

Success Stories and Effective Coping Approaches

Principals are coping with stressors related to their jobs by coping emotionally, socially, and focusing on the problem by doing different activities, to stop thinking about the job stresses and maintaining a positive

outlook, to spend time with the family, engaging with friends, building communication. Managing work as well as enjoying their free time is an effective strategy to address burnout. (Elomaa et al., 2023). In addition, the school head that prioritizes self-care, balancing work and personal time, and using time for information processing were able to reduce their stress and manage burnout (Hancock et al., 2019).

Moreover, organizing one's work and setting practical goals is an effective strategy to counter burnout and stress among school principals. It has been found out that time management skills corresponds to low job and burnout rates among school leaders (Denecker, 2019). In addition, setting working time limits and balancing free time with work is also an effective way to deal with work stress and burnout (Elomaa, et al., 2023).

Consequently, another effective coping mechanism is to take time away from the workplace, either by spending time with family and friends or engaging in positive relationships with staff, students, and parents. (Mahfouz, 2020). This can be achieved by engaging to regular physical exercises, engagement in less active non-work or play activities and taking care of self mentally and physically (Drago-Severson et al., 2018; Hancock et al., 2019).

In addition, effective school leaders can employ healthy coping mechanisms that enhance their resilience, as well as their capacity to regulate their emotions in stressful situations, particularly when they experience burnout. The ability to interpret real and perceived threats accurately is essential for coping and can enhance one's ability respond to burnout (Deits-Lebehn et al., 2020). Furthermore, school heads are encouraged to continue participating in a variety of public and private activities that address flexible learning opportunities, webinars on leadership and leadership perspectives for leaders in crisis in order to counter stress and burnout thereby becoming an agent for change in the society in general (Jimenez, 2021).

Insights of Public Elementary School Administrators in Dealing with Professional Burnout

In dealing with burnout, elementary principals view their daily experiences as opportunities for learning. A principal can maintain their focus on developing into a successful leader by learning new things (Hancock et al., 2019). Concentrating on improvement that minimizes stress and burnout by focusing to meet the students' need for academics and molding them socially and emotionally and making sure that they are making progress (Drago-Severson et al., 2018).

Consequently, in order to manage burnout, elementary principals learned the importance of peer support. Principals opt and depend on their personal and professional networks who offers a healthy and proactive support (DeMatthews et al., 2019). Having social support from colleagues and supervisors maintain school principals' well-being and increases their chance to counter and avoid burnout (Beausaert et al., 2023).

Moreover, proactive school leaders are likely to be the one who initiates and are anticipated to actively react to tedious work demands and burnout. Therefore, when work demands are still high and causes burden, the principal takes responsibility, avoids unsuitable self-management, and applies adaptive self-management. In particular, they are more likely to proactively monitor their activities and regularly take time off from work to recover from work-related illnesses (Op den Kamp et al., 2018). Additionally, principals with a proactive personality are more likely to be engaged in task design, changing responsibilities, job demands, and resources to make their work more relaxing and meaningful (Bakker & de Vries, 2021).

In addition, a school head who promotes self-care sets an example for those around them for others to emulate. The more a school head promotes and encourages self-care, the more likely they are to reach their fullest potential and efficiently provide those under their care (Mendez Foundation, 2020). Further,

principals should be supporting themselves and be mindful of their own needs first in order to be able to support others. Proper self-care results to reduced stress and burnout and will positively influence the support a principal can be able to provide to others (Lawler, 2021).

The practices worth emulating to counter professional burnout among elementary school principals is to be engaged in developing themselves professionally. These helps them to know themselves better, be more self-aware, successful in managing their emotions and improve their skills to lead effectively (Mahfouz, 2018). More so, principals in public schools need to give time to improve themselves by investing in self-care, give time in reflecting, engaging with their fellow principals that would open opportunities to grow and talk and share about their experiences on the job and how they managed it (Ray et al., 2020).

Similarly, principal training in mindfulness is a needed in order for the principal to be train on how work together with their fellow leaders in order to share self-care practices, setting boundaries, settling into stillness, practicing mindfulness and learning communicative skills in assisting to work without conflict that will help the school heads in supporting to improve their well-being and resiliency that would help in mitigating stress and burnout. Trainings that are focused in communication and promotion of listening mindfully, and practices that contributes greatly on the well-being of school heads in their workplace (Wells & Klocko, 2018).

Consequently, to effectively counter professional burnout, principals should focus on establishing balance in work and their personal lives (Hancock et al., 2019). Effective ways of coping, such as organizing work and setting realistic goals, should be communicated to other colleagues in the workplace. Furthermore, the ability to manage time is linked to reduced baseline job stress and burnout (Denecker, 2019).

In addition, implementing self-care practices provide school heads ways to lessen stress and burnout and ensures that they are at their bests in physical, mental, spiritual and emotional states (Ray et al., 2020). More so, self-care includes doing activities like constant checkups, having healthy eating habits, having time to relax, allotting time to spend with their families and friends and applying activities that promotes mindfulness (Croymans, 2023).

Moreover, receiving social support greatly helps in fostering occupational wellbeing among school principals. It has been studied that social support decreases burnout and stress among school heads (Aizzat Mohd et al., 2018). In addition, principals are finding ways in addressing burnout by themselves and among their colleagues. Creating support groups from their colleagues and getting professional help from their community which is led by a supervisor. Principals are also facilitating healthy discussions having burnout as their focus, sharing difficulties on how to maintain work-life balance and events that are stressful in their works (DeMatthews et al, 2021).

Thus, engaging in emotion-focused and social coping strategies are more utilized especially when principals switch-off and focuses on alternate activities in order to ease burnout (Kaufman, 2019). Principals should be informed that they are responsible in taking care of themselves mentally and emotionally. Similarly, spending time with their families and friends as well as to communicate with their fellow principals are also best strategies to cope socially (Elomaa, 2023).

Learning proactive self-regulatory strategies, such as learning to set limits on work tasks, is an effective way to reduce burnout among principals (Tikkanen et al., 2018). Proactive strategies are shown to decrease the stress levels of teachers and school heads. In addition, decrease in levels of exhaustion and symptoms of burnout is due to the application of proactive self-regulation strategies (Pietarinen et al., 2013 as cited by Bottiani, et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the use of cognitive-behavioral stress management techniques has been demonstrated to reduce stress and burnout among school leaders. School principals have found that techniques such as relaxation training, cognitive restructuring, and problem-solving skills training can effectively manage stress and burnout through cognitive-behavioral stress management (Zadok-Gurman et al., 2021). Similarly, strategies based on mindfulness to reduce stress have been effective in reducing stress and burnout among school leaders (Nagy et al., 2023).

In addition, relying on problem and emotion-focused coping strategies enables a school principal to manage the stress of running a school successfully. School heads were able to cope wherein the challenges brought by burnout did not hinder their abilities to make right decisions and affected their health negatively (Kaufman, 2019).

Furthermore, to minimize burnout, the principal's role should be limited to delivering materials and personal resources, as well as teaching and supervising them and fulfilling leadership duties. Duties related to the budget, teaching, discipline, to name a few areas, could be tasked between teachers or other responsible persons to whom authority would be transferred. In this way, the school head could enjoy reconciling work and family and get the necessary support from his family (Bedi & Kukemelk, 2018). Similarly, delegating tasks is one of the most effective ways to cope with burnout. A big help in dealing with burnout is reducing the workload of school principals and reducing the ratio shared between school personnel and authorized staff (Bodson, 2021).

The aforementioned review of related literature and studies has proven the emergence of the challenges, coping mechanisms and insights of school heads dealing with professional burnout internationally and locally. Also, it was magnified that job stresses and overlapping tasks contribute to burnout experienced by the school heads that greatly affects the attainment of educational goals and objectives of the school which serve as the pivotal role of teaching and learning process. This related literature and studies serve as the lead in use to formulate and back up my themes and how I will philosophically, procedurally, and logically address my study. Given all the theories presented in my study, they are all interrelated since it discusses and focuses on the challenges, coping mechanisms and insights of school heads with professional burnout. Further, this study aims to address the gap by focusing exclusively on the challenges, coping mechanisms and insights of school heads with professional burnout particularly in Kapalong East District, Division of Davao del Norte because of the limited number of qualitative studies that focus on the professional burnout of public elementary school heads.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods that are used in the conduct of this qualitative phenomenological study. This section covers the research design, research participants, role of the researcher, data sources, data collection procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations.

Research Design

Based on the research of Tong et al. (2012) and Pathak et al. (2013), qualitative research investigates people's views, experiences, behaviors, attitudes, and interactions. Additionally, it includes depicting people's opinions and an impression of how people see things in everyday life (Gentles et al., 2015). Moreover, researchers in qualitative studies analyze natural phenomena to gain a deeper understanding of the significance of these phenomena. This involves analyzing their meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Thus, it will involve qualitative data, including participant interviews and records, to better describe and explain social phenomena to turn the world into a collection of representations (Hennink et al., 2020).

This research study utilized the qualitative research design which employed a phenomenological approach for it explore people's daily lives and personal encounters with a concept or phenomenon as well their coping mechanisms in their challenges faced, and insights. In employing qualitative methods, the study delves deeply into the nuances and perspectives of the participants, allowing for a rich and comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

According to Creswell (2014) as cited by Mohajan (2018), a phenomenological study is a method of investigation that examines individuals' lived experiences about a phenomenon as defined by participants. The main objective of this method is to obtain a description of the nature of certain phenomena. In addition, this approach aims to explain the sense of experience and what is perceived and how it is experienced (Tehrani et al., 2020).

Phenomenological design is the most appropriate approach in this research study for it focuses on exploring people's daily lives and personal encounters with a concept or phenomenon. Moreover, the researcher implored this approach in the study such that, this research attempts to understand and describe how public-school heads make sense of their experiences as they deal with professional burnout. Additionally, the design gives light and information in exploring public elementary school head's coping mechanisms in dealing with professional burnout. Thus, this research discovered the lessons and insights of public elementary school head's coping mechanisms in dealing with professional burnout worth sharing with others.

Moreover, this research employed a qualitative-phenomenological approach where the statements of the participants and descriptions of the experiences, coping mechanisms and insights are identified, explored, and understood. Thus, this is the most appropriate design for this inquiry since it narrates and reflects gathered information from the course of interviews. Also, researcher's background and interest are considered in the study.

In consonance with the qualitative research study that will follow phenomenological approach, this study will deal with the entire methodology process. Purposive sampling was used to select the research participants, and relevant data generated through one-on-one interviews. Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the data collected to formulate the major themes based on the participants' experiences. Finally, measures were strictly followed to ensure trustworthiness and to incorporate ethical considerations into the study.

Research Participants

This study involved 10 public elementary school heads in Kapalong East District, Division of Davao del Norte. Total participants involving ten public elementary school heads who are at the time are dealing with professional burnout was involved to participate in the in-depth interview (IDI). In addition, Creswell (2014) advised that investigating a phenomenon involves a group of people who have experienced it. Additionally, Creswell & Creswell (2018) recommended that a qualitative phenomenological study will involve a range of three to 10 participants.

This research utilized the purposive sampling method, considering the limited availability of participants, the researcher made sure that the participants selected was able to provide the necessary information for this study. The researcher selected and identified individuals or group of individuals who are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest and who are available, voluntary to participate as well

as able to convey experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. Purposive sampling is the process of randomly selecting participants based on their characteristics (Brennard, 2006; Lewis & Sheppard, 2006). It involves finding and selecting individuals or groups of people who are highly qualified or skilled in a particular area of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, cited by Palinkas, 2015). Furthermore, Purposive sampling is used to select respondents that are most likely to provide relevant and useful information and is a method for identifying and selecting cases that make effective use of limited research resources (Campbell et al., 2020).

Moreover, the researcher identified and selected the participants using the following inclusion criteria: (a) public elementary school heads (b) those who are assigned in schools within Kapalong East District, Division of Davao del Norte; (c) those who have at least three (3) years of experience in the practice; and (d) those who acknowledged to have experienced professional burnout after knowing the results from taking Maslach's Burnout Inventory. The researcher made sure that participants was selected thoroughly based on the selection criteria with different genders and varying years in service to ensure maximum variation of the study. Further, the exclusion criteria for the participants of this study are the following: (a) school heads coming from the private elementary schools; (b) school leaders who are not from Kapalong East District. (c) school leaders who have less than three (3) years of experience in the practice; and (d) those who have not experienced professional burnout.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, the researcher assumed multiple roles in exploring and understanding the lived experiences of school heads dealing with professional burnout. When interviewing and collecting specific data, it is essential to provide a more profound sense of understanding and a broader sense of obligation (Alase, 2017).

Furthermore, the researcher's role for this qualitative study, was to find answers to the research objectives that will be proposed using field notes and audio recordings to be done during the in-depth interview and the recorded virtual focus group discussion. Moreover, the researcher does not have complete control over the questions, and they were often of a general sort (Lichtman, 2013 as cited by Reeves & Oh, 2017). In particular, the researcher played and took the roles in this study in a logical manner as follows:

First, the researcher ensured the ethical conduct of the study in the measures that was implemented throughout this research work. The researcher adhered to guidelines such as social value, informed consent, the vulnerability of the research participants, risk, benefits, and safety; privacy and confidentiality, justice, transparency, qualification of the researchers, adequacy of facilities, and community involvement. These ethical considerations helped in making the research possible and ensured accurate as well as reliable results. Additionally, adherence to these ethical standards ensures the protection and welfare of the participants who were involved in this study.

Second, as an interviewer, the researcher determined the research participants and communicate with them about this study's conduct to confirm their willingness to share their experiences and insights as school heads dealing with professional burnout. In qualitative research, asking permission is a vital move that a researcher should take (Patton, 2015). The researcher had set a scheduled date and time with the participants for the in-depth interview in agreement with each participant's availability. The research objectives and interview guide questions were given and shown to the participants before the interview for them to have a glimpse on what the interview is all about. All their responses were recorded using a recorder along with the field notes and the informed consent given to the participants.

Third, as a transcriber. The researcher translated and transcribed the participants' responses into written code by using the standard format of the qualitative research transcription to be able to study and analyze the data in detail. Moreover, participants were given copies of the transcribed statements to double-check the accuracy of their statements through the process of checking and the recorded data were carefully put in written text.

Fourth, the researcher made sure to translate participants' responses to standard English format. Ahead of the interview, the participants were informed by the researcher that they can answer in their preferred language or dialect, and then the researcher translated it into written text the recorded data through attentive, repeated, careful listening during the recorded interview to make sure that the content of the data is accurate. Then, the researcher translated their responses during the preparation of the data for the presentation of results.

Fifth, to ensure to properly document and record the entire interview. The researcher made use of tools to record what has been said and done during the individual interviews, such as taking down handwritten notes and recording a video. Furthermore, the entire interview of the study was recorded by the researcher and was able to secure a folder of field notes as counterparts for the recorded interviews. The researcher can use field notes to preserve and comment on impressions, environmental conditions, actions, and nonverbal cues that may not be captured in audio recordings.

Lastly, as a primary data analyst, the researcher interpreted the results, compiled, categorized and analyzed the data collected. The researcher sought guidance and support on drawing interpretations to his adviser, an expert in this field, to create factual information on the phenomenon they experienced. Any revelation, opinions, and views expressed negatively and positively were taken constructively. Lastly, the researcher ensured and upheld that the ethical standards will be held paramount in this study's conduct.

Data Sources

Qualitative studies collect data by conducting interviews with participants. Thus, interviews are the easiest and most transparent way to collect detailed and rich data about a phenomenon (Barret & Twycross, 2018). Similarly, the most commonly used data sources in qualitative research are in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document reviews (Sargeant, 2012). Thus, this research study will utilize interviews as the data sources. Particularly the in-depth interviews (IDI) that will be conducted to ten research participants. In-Depth Interview is a qualitative research technique that allows one-on-one discussion, which reveals more the people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors on important issues. Given the fact that the interview style is unstructured, the researcher might persuade the participant to speak and share deeper about the issue or interest being talked about (Shaiekh, 2015). It considered as one of the most efficient methods of collecting primary data because it is used with the goal of gaining deeper understanding on the participant's perspective and experiences on a particular topic (Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

In this study, the researcher utilized the responses of the participants as the primary sources of data. The data that gathered from the participants of this study are from the public elementary school heads who are working in Kapalong East District and these data were acquired through face-to-face interviews.

More so, this study made use of secondary data. These data are information that had been gathered, studied, and published by previous researchers (Hassan, 2023). These includes published data, research reports, academic journals and other existing data sets. Moreover, these sources provide second-hand information

and commentaries from other researchers who had described, interpreted, or synthesized the primary sources (Streefkerk, 2023).

In the discussion of this study, supplementary readings from internet sources, published materials, refereed journals, articles, newspapers, books and the like were gathered as secondary sources of data and were used to support the data gathered from the informants/participants.

Data Collection Procedure

Creswell and Creswell (2018) mentioned that qualitative researchers typically gather various forms of data through interviewing, observing, documenting, and making use of audio-visual information. These are forms of data in wherein the participants can freely share their ideas, not constrained by predetermined scales or instruments. They have also stressed four aspects as defined by Miles and Huberman (1994) as critical steps that a qualitative researcher must observe during the data collection phase, including intentionally selecting sites or settings, the participants, events, and the process. The researcher undertook rigorous steps in the data collection procedure and was engaged in a sequence of activities in collecting data before arriving to complete the research. In this study, several steps had been followed in the data collection procedure.

First, the manuscript was subjected to ethics review in the Research Ethics Committee (REC) to secure approval to conduct the study. The researcher ensured that the protocol meets suitability, content arrangement, and has accurate methodology that meets ethical rules and health standard protocol. Upon receiving the ethical clearance for the protocol, the researcher ensured that all stages of the research were complied correctly and that all the process and activities that are linked with the protocol were adhered with accountability.

Second, secure the endorsement of the Dean of the Graduate Education of the institution after the thorough review of the research protocols to ensure that research ethics is implemented in order to conduct the research. In addition, the researcher personally constructed and prepared an interview guide which was validated by the instrument validators to ensure that the questions asked during the interviews are vertically aligned with the purpose of the study and specific research questions.

Third is to establish linkages and seek permission. Upon securing the endorsement letter from the Dean of the Graduate Education, a letter was sent to the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent in Davao del Norte, after which a letter seeking permission was also forwarded to the Office of the Schools District Supervisor of Kapalong East District. Then, upon approval, another letter was communicated with the School Principals of this study's pre-selected participants. The communication letters concisely stipulated the purpose of conducting this research.

Fourth, the participants were identified with the use of the purposive sampling method using the following inclusion criteria: (a) public elementary school heads (b) those who are assigned in schools within Kapalong East District, Division of Davao del Norte; (c) those who have at least three (3) years of experience in the practice; and (d) those who acknowledged to have experienced professional burnout after knowing the results from taking Maslach's Burnout Inventory. Further, the exclusion criteria for the participants of this study are the following: (a) school heads coming from the private elementary schools; (b) school leaders who are not from Kapalong East District. (c) school leaders who have less than three (3) years of experience in the practice; and (d) those who have not experienced professional burnout.

Assured that the participants have experienced the phenomenon being studied by knowing them individually through direct observation, referrals, informal dialogues, and verbal agreements, and the

participants meet the pre-inclusion criteria set in this study. Moreover, prior to the interview, the researcher conducted an orientation. The researcher asked permission from the participants to record the orientation. During the orientation, all the participants were carefully informed of their rights, the risks and benefits of their participation and the researcher outlined all the procedures that were done during the data gathering, interpretation and presentation. This orientation was done virtually so to ensure that our health is of paramount importance.

During the interviews, the participants were given letter consents affixing their signatures or just their initials. The consent pertains to their willingness to share their experiences as public elementary school heads dealing with professional burnout and their voluntary participation in this study that serves as proof and verification of their voluntary participation by affixing their signatures. Furthermore, the researcher gave Data Privacy Notice to the research participants for them to be aware that I will access their data, with whom the researcher will disclose or share their data with, and what are their data privacy rights. The researcher allowed them to use their dialect and decline any questions they're not comfortable to answer. The researcher also asked for permission to record their responses during the whole interview duration. Each participant was interviewed individually at their preferred time and venue.

In addition, the individual in-depth interview (IDI) was conducted in a one to two hours individual face-to-face interview per participant, in a silent room far from any form of distractions and upon the participants' discretion and availability. Voice recorder and field notes were utilized to ensure the validity and reliability that are substantial in this study's conduct. Also, for individuals who are pregnant, nursing mothers, LGBTQ, senior citizens, or prefer to conceal their identity, they were allowed to wear a cap or face mask, or the researcher can ensure their safety by blurring the videos and use technology that can change and alter the audio recording voices. Further, since participation is voluntary, if participants feel uncomfortable throughout the interview process, they had the right to ask questions and to withdraw from the study. The recorded interviews were stored in the researcher's personal computer and hard drive, ready for transcription.

Lastly, the recorded data were carefully kept in private. The researcher encoded data using discrete coding, initials, and numerals. Names were kept confidential, and all data obtained were securely stored in a laptop folder safely, which is encrypted with password to ensure that the data is secured and are ready for verbatim and exact transcription and that no personal information will ever be disclosed. Only the researcher, my adviser, and the data analyst had access to the gathered data. More so, interviews were recorded and transcribed word-for-word to reinforce the data accuracy. Thematic analysis proceeded after the transcription, with the help of the data analyst for the exact data analysis. Furthermore, the data collected shall be saved for three (3) years and will be immediately deleted or burned to prevent unauthorized access, disclosures, or use. This is to ensure that the researcher can respond to any verification or validation requests from the Research Ethics Committee or Technical Panel and other regulatory bodies. Thus, everything was done with the participants' proper consent.

Data Analysis

Results gathered in this study served as evidence for the conclusions, implications for practice, and recommendations for future researches. The data analysis of this research study followed the four steps developed by Creswell (2007).

The data processing commenced after compiling and transcribing the data. To keep accurate notes, the recorded data were analyzed, synthesized, and transcribed. After completing the formal period for data

collection, the analysis began. Moreover, to provide a holistic view, the qualitative data was analyzed and scrutinized collectively.

Content analysis in analyzing the collected data were used in this study. Content analysis is a method of research method employed in identifying patterns from the recorded communication. Thus, it offers unobtrusive data collection, transparent and replicable, and is highly flexible. Systematically, the researcher collected data from a group of texts, written, verbal, or visual to characterize communicative phenomena such that it followed a systematic approach to assessing communicative messages' content or context (Allen, 2017).

Moreover, in performing the data analysis, the researcher assumed the roles of analyzing instruments, deciding on the coding, finding themes, decontextualizing, and recontextualizing data (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, to establish core consistencies and meanings from a large volume of qualitative data in this research, data reduction and sense-making effort was carried out (Patton, 2015).

More so, this research utilized thematic analysis to analyze the collected and gathered data. Thematic analysis is a technique to find, evaluate, arrange, explain, and report patterns in collecting data (Clarke & Braun, 2014). Additionally, Braun & Clarke (2013), specified six phases of thematic analysis that were carefully followed in this study; familiarization, where the researcher was familiarized to the data collected thru thorough reading of interview transcripts—generating initial codes, researcher will begin coding the data. Next, was creating initial themes involving coding of data where researcher listed the codes and began to group codes with similar meanings altogether. After, researcher reviewed the initial themes and data, ensuring that the data's valuable meanings are captured. Further, researcher named and defined the themes, utilized the labels created for themes, and write the final result where the researcher will be presenting the findings and interpretations of the data gathered in this phase.

The researcher formulated the core ideas and significant themes that emerged from the individual interviews and focus group discussions, following the interview guide and probing questions that was solicited from the participants which are duly aligned to the study's objectives. The entire transcripts and the transcription references were utilized as basis in formulating and deriving core ideas and identifying the significant themes were grouped with other similar themes will prevail, out from the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of the public elementary school heads dealing with professional burnout.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The results of this research are worthy of attention and are critical by demonstrating the trustworthiness of this study. To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the idea of Lincoln and Guba (1985), as cited by Elo et al. (2014) was observed such that, trustworthiness is an important determinant in analyzing the importance of a research. the trustworthiness is vital in assessing the value of an investigated study (Stahi & King, 2020). Relatively, this research study adhered to four strategies to ensure trustworthiness of the study by Shenton (2004). These include the following: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

Credibility. This refers to the trust that can be placed in the veracity of the findings of the research. This institutes if the research results represent reliable information obtained from the original data of the participants and are a correct interpretation of the original views of the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Furthermore, it serves as a substitute for internal validity and is founded on truth value, which assesses whether the researcher has developed and expressed varying degrees of certainty regarding the phenomenon being examined (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). In this study, the researcher focused on maintaining

credibility by using iterative questioning and member checking during the in-depth interviews which are appropriate and well-known research methods in qualitative research.

In addressing credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested iterative questioning. In this study, this will be used in eliciting accurate data, repetitive questioning is important in which the researcher will elaborately discuss the matters that will be brought up by the participants and extract data related through rephrasing the questions. Additionally, iterative questioning was utilized in order to obtain accurate information as it is crucial and therefore, probing questions will be used concerning the research questions. Member checking, also called as participant validation is a strategy to explore the credibility of the findings. Results will be given to the participants will and they will be checking the accurateness of the data in connection to their experiences (Slettebø, 2021). Transcripts are presented to participants early to ensure that the researcher has will analyze precise data. This process helps in eliminating the possibilities of misrepresentations during the process of data analysis (Candela, 2019). Researchers can use member checking during interviews by reiterating, paraphrasing, and clarifying the participants' responses comments when they are unclear, thus giving the interviewee a chance to verify or rectify the interpretation of the interviewer on their words (Gray 2018, Rutakumwa et al., 2020).

Furthermore, this study adhered to member checking as it is the single most significant arrangement that can be made to solidify the integrity of the study. In line with this, the participants were asked to read the transcribed transcripts, as part of the member checking process. After such, the participants were given certificates affixing their initials or signatures as a shred of evidence, that the transcribed answers are clear and acceptable. This was made to guarantee the truthfulness of the description of data collected, thru reviewing data's accuracy.

Since a tape recorder was used, the articulations themselves will be correctly recorded, and the focus will be on whether the participants believe their words matched what they meant. The participants were granted permission on the data, interpretations, and conclusions. They were able to explain their intentions, correct mistakes, and provide additional information as needed in the result of this study. In doing this, the researchers can confirm the preciseness of their understanding to the participants during the collection process of data (Gray 2018).

Dependability. This refers to the stability of the research findings over the time. Dependability determines whether research results are consistently replicated and whether the study is repeated with the same researcher or with a different one, in the same or a different context (Megheirkouni & Moir 2023). Furthermore, qualitative researchers guarantee dependability by properly documenting data, methods, and making sound decisions about the study (Mandal, 2018).

Thus, to ensure dependability, the researcher ensured to establish procedures to evaluate proper research practices and provide in-depth methodological descriptions for study replications. The researcher also updated the progress regularly, schedules, and deadlines based on the research matrix, diagrams and flowcharts for conducting the study. Moreover, the researcher will provide the readers with adequate details to assess the reliability of both the researcher and the study itself. Analyzing focus group data made it easier to replicate findings and draw correct inferences to their context from the text, all to offer new perspectives, to better understand the phenomenon, detailed, and realistic behavior. Consequently, to address the issues on dependability more clearly, the process of the study was specified, allowing potential researchers to repeat the work, but certainly not having the same results. Likewise, seeking feedback and guidance from his research adviser helped the researcher to provide valuable insights and assistance throughout the research endeavor.

Confirmability. Pertains to the extent to which results can be verified or validated by others (Guba & Lincoln, 1983 as cited by Trochim, 2020). Ensure that the findings are the result of independent research methods and not biased consciously or unconsciously, it is important that other researchers can replicate the results (Devault, 2019). Acceptance of research beliefs and assumptions, identification of research limitations, thorough methodological descriptions that can be used to verify the integrity of research results, and audit trails are also applicable regulations for creating verifiable initiatives. The researcher ensures that the results of the research are the result of the expectations and ideas of the research participants and not the interests and desires of the researcher.

A clear explanation of this research processes was made available to ensure the validity of the research. The research design and execution were explained to gain thorough interpretation on the methods chosen and their efficiency for the readers of the research report. At each point of the research process, the proof of a decision trail was recorded and created. More so, a detailed methodological analysis enables the reader to evaluate the acceptability of the data and constructs that has been derived from it. A transparent overview of these research steps was properly documented from the beginning of this research project to developing and publishing results thru the interview transcripts. Moreover, in forming the basis for themes, samples from the coding process, descriptions on how the individual codes are made into themes by the researcher, and analysis on what specific codes are to be gathered together are included in this study.

To ensure the confirmability of this study, the researcher banked on audit trail. All the raw data, observation notes, interviews, records, and documents collected in the field of study were kept to facilitate the entire process of inquiry. At the same time, this provided the researcher an easier way of tracking and following the participants' responses which in turn made it easier for the data analyst to analyze the data. Consequently, the researcher stored all the documents with regards to what has been done in the study's conduct. This also included other personnel like the research panel and adviser had checked the analysis and results presented extensively and had become directly accessible to authorized sources.

Transferability. It refers to the extent to which qualitative research findings can be generalized or transferred to other contexts. From a qualitative perspective, transferability is prime responsibility of the researcher to generalizer. A qualitative researcher can increase transferability by doing extensive work to describe the context of the research and the fundamental assumptions on the research (Kyngäs et al., 2020). Transferability can be attained through a detailed and thick description of the results of multiple data collection methods (Stahl & King, 2020).

To guarantee transferability of this study, the researcher gave a thorough overview of the investigation and participants chosen were handled with utmost care. Generalization may be accomplished at various levels to achieve a comprehensive realization on the studied phenomenon. Further, in addressing transferability, the researcher made detailed and thick description on the method and the phenomenon being studied to ensure that the data is preserved so that the analysis becomes more reliable and transferable.

Ethical Considerations

Adherence to research ethics promotes research goals, values that are important for collaboration, ensuring accountability of researchers to the public as a consequence misconduct, increasing public support and many other important moral and social values (Resnik, 2020). In view of this, the study adhered to the ten (10) elements of an ethical research, which according to Bhandari (2021) will guide the researcher on the

designs and practices that the study shall undertake and guarantee to protect the rights of the research participants, the research validity is enhanced and the academic integrity is maintained.

To guarantee that this research was ethically conducted, this study had undergone review by the SMCTI-REC before conducting the study. Consequently, this research was subjected to the protocols of the SMCTI-REC. Furthermore, before the conduct of the interview, full approval of the participants shall be. Protection of their privacy was guaranteed and they were given assurance of the confidentiality of their answers.

Social Value. This refers to possible impacts of conducting the study to the members of the school community (van Delden & van der Graaf, 2021). In addition, social value refers to the contribution of the research to an existent social problem so that the results are predicted to improve the understanding of the problems or give contribution in promoting the welfare of individuals, their families and societies. (PHREB, 2022).

This research provided empirical evidence on the professional burnout of public elementary school heads in Kapalong East District. Further, the study will help in providing administrators knowledge on how to deal and overcome burnout and work towards the accomplishment of the school's aims and goals. The officials from the human resource management office will benefit as well by earning a better knowledge of the factors that straightly and obliquely affects the school heads resulting to being burned-out which can be utilized as basis in effectively creating tools that are authentic in ensuring that school heads will not experience professional burnout.

Additionally, this research will help school heads in distinguishing their strengths as well as fields that needs improvement to perform more efficiently as school managers of education and main enforcers of the curriculums' programs. Stakeholders will benefit from the results of this study on the burnout management of principals by using the outcomes of the study as a basis for creating, enhancing, and preserving leadership and programs that relates to managing instructions.

Consent. This refers to the participant's consent in allowing the researcher to conduct the study, ensuring that they have full understanding of all the relevant facts, including risks, available alternatives, benefits as well as methods of the study (Shah et al., 2022). Furthermore, permission should be given voluntarily, participants have to know what is being asked from them, and participants must be capable to give consent. This indicates that participants needed to be briefed about the study sufficiently, understand the information, and given the choice and autonomy to make decisions to partake or refuse (Mohd Arifin, 2018).

Another factor to consider is Consent. Before distributing questionnaires, the researcher thoroughly explained the study's intent and how their responses will be included in this paper. The consent consisted of the participant's freedom to refuse from participating in the research. Moreover, it contained; research methods employed, statements surrounding confidentiality, and the researcher and participant's signature or just their initials if deemed so. Furthermore, the researcher made sure that the participants of the study participates willingly or without compulsion.

With this, consent and approval from the Dean of the Graduate School and the SMCTI-REC was secured by the researcher before conducting the study. Furthermore, the researcher asked for authorization from the Schools Division Superintendent of Davao del Norte and the Public Schools District Supervisor of Kapalong East District. Participants were chosen based on the set of criteria for selecting the participants of the study. Thus, the participants involved participated according to their will, and therefore, the

interview only commenced after they have signed the consent and were guaranteed that their identities were held confidential and will not be disclosed during the presentation and analysis of the results.

Vulnerability of the Research Participants. Potential research participants may be considered vulnerable through being a member of a group, racial minorities, or individual qualities such as people in an inferior position to the researcher. The research procedures itself may impose degrees of vulnerabilities on the research participants. The vulnerability associated with study is determined by the circumstances of the research and the traits of the possible participants. Vulnerability indicates that a person is susceptible to harms and risks related to research, or that further protection is needed to protect the potential participants from research-related risks or harms (Biros, 2018).

The participants of this research were the school heads dealing with burnout. They are considered as non-vulnerable as they are in legal age, professionals, and competent individuals who are rational and achieved level of proficiency in leading and managing schools. The researcher will recruit the participants by communicating with them through in-person interaction or via messenger which will prioritize their well-being. To ensure that the in-depth interview generated meaningful responses, the interview guide were validated by experts. The participants' schedule were considered as they are also having several engagements and appointments being the managers and leaders of their respective schools. Lastly, to safeguard them from vulnerability, their identity were hidden, and coding was used.

Risks, Benefits, and Safety. According to Moller (2019), risk refers to the possible harm and danger that the respondents might encounter during the conduct of the study, benefits is defined as the advantages that a respondent received from participating in the research, while safety pertains to the protection given to the respondents in the course of the study. These possible risks and benefits should specifically appear in the written informed consents and documents utilized in the research (Barrow, 2022).

Terms of risks, benefits, and safety are all factors to be considered. The researcher ensured that the participants were never exposed to danger as they took part in the data collection. Participants in the study were given complete details about the study, including all risks and benefits, if there is any. The participants were free to choose whether to participate or not. Research benefits might forge cordiality between the researcher and the participants, knowledge or education gained from participating, or the opportunities to flourish for the society or receive admiration.

Also, interviews were done during the free time of the informants/participants in order not to cause any economic risks on their works/job and to ensure that their work-related duties and responsibilities are not affected due to their participation in the study. Besides, the possible risk of identifying their responses were avoided by observing utmost confidentiality. In any case, psychological harm like humiliation, dangers of exposure, loss of respect, embarrassment, and the like were avoided by keeping the identities of the informants and participants. This were done by using pseudonyms or alias in the presentation of the results.

Moreover, interview questions utilized in this study were checked by the experts to ensure they won't cause harm. The researcher performed an intensive evaluation of possible risks and benefits, and a safety approach were applied both in acquiring permission and during the research process. Also, possible risks such as discomforts, inconveniences, regret, or worries of being a participant were clarified to the participants. The researcher made sure to employ measures to alleviate these risks. Furthermore, they were made to understand that their participation shall significantly contribute to the generation of new knowledge in the field education which be of great advantage in the development and improvement of its implementation, and such alone outweighs the possible risks and harm that this study may encounter.

Finally, the results and recommendations from this study will be shared with the Department of Education in Davao del Norte to help in the creation of programs, projects, activities, and interventions that may help in addressing burnout among school heads within the division.

Privacy and Confidentiality of Information. As stated by Solomon (2018), Privacy refers to the freedom from intruding into an individuals' personal affairs and information, while confidentiality refers to personal information that can be shared with others and usually cannot be disclosed to third parties without the expression of consent of the individual concerned. Consequently, the researchers should retain any shared information in their utmost confidentiality. Safeguarding privacy typically requires implementing measures such as anonymity or confidentiality procedures (Cassell, 2000 as cited by Barrow, 2022).

Furthermore, any detail in the paper that might contribute to identifying a particular respondent were highly avoided. The privacy and confidentiality of information was upheld throughout the conduct of the study. The report did not mention the names, designations, or any other characteristics of any of the participants involved in the study. In this research, coding was utilized by the researcher in the IDI. Thus, the researcher used field notes to guarantee confidentiality of their responses and their identities through anonymity. Consequently, participants were assured that the data to be gathered will be solely used to answer the study's objectives. The recorded data were carefully kept securely in a location where the researcher only knew, and no personal information will ever be revealed or disclosed. Only research personnel had access to the files, questionnaires, audio recordings, transcripts, and summaries.

Before the completion of this research, findings were presented to the participants. They were guaranteed of their rights of privacy and confidentiality if the participants request to withdraw or keep data hidden. Furthermore, adherence to the mandates of the Implementing Rules and Regulation of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 was ensured by the researcher. The processing of personal data is permitted if the requirements of the law and other laws enabling the publication of data and the principles of transparency, legal purpose and proportionality are followed. Consent is guaranteed if the data were used for purposes other than those mentioned in this study or if confidentiality was waived due to the research design of the study. The findings will only be stored after the study has been completed and will be destroyed thru burning the files and deleting all the digital files or medias including personal information so that the data cannot be retrieved or reconstructed.

Justice. According to the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (2022), the principle of justice requires that all those who benefit from the research and its results have the right to participate and contribute to it, and at the same time share in the burdens and fruits of the research.

One vital principle that was observed in this study is the principle of justice, which was employed through fairness to all the participants involved in the study. All participants will be systematically pre-selected through an inclusion criterion, assured that everyone experienced the phenomenon. The researcher gave equal opportunities to all the participants that they may be able to share their experiences as school heads dealing with professional burnout. The researcher listened to their voices and experiences and surely avoid any form of debasement or any untoward display of behavior that may cause discomfort to the participants. The researcher ensured that their vulnerability and contributions to the study are highly recognized.

In addition, the researcher fully respected and honored their autonomy in giving weight to their thoroughly considered thoughts and decisions while avoiding interfering with their acts, thereby securing their well-being through protecting their identity through utmost anonymity. Furthermore, the needs of the research participants were taken precedence over the study's objectives. Nevertheless, the results of this research were given to the participants so to ensure justice.

Transparency. According to Moravcsik (2019), transparency refers to the ways of sharing and disseminating the research outcomes. It allows the evaluation of the evidence, analysis, and research design behind the knowledge claims made by researchers. In addition, by adhering to the principles of transparency, researchers can help ensure that their work is trustworthy, reliable, and of high quality by making their methods, data, and results openly available for scrutiny by the community (Colaiacono, 2023).

In dealing with transparency, the researcher ensured and protected the proper implementation of the methodologies used in the research. Any possible conflicting interests were resolved and disclosed by the researcher in order to avoid biases. Besides, the researcher made sure that only correct and accurate data were recorded with complete integrity. Moreover, each participant was provided a copy of their transcribed responses so to ensure transparency.

Qualification of the Researcher. As stated by PHREB (2022), this refers to the truthfulness, scientific capabilities, social concerns, cultural awareness, intellectual conduct, responsiveness, and readiness to address issues a person committed in research involving human participants should have. These include standards such as the educational backgrounds, trainings, abilities, and resources to administer the proposed research.

The researcher is competent and qualified to carry this research. As a graduate of Bachelor of Elementary Education -Generalist in one of the Philippines' local colleges, and as a candidate for Master's Degree in Educational Management, the researcher is eligible to assume responsibility for this study's proper conduct and guarantee human research subjects' safety based on his education, training, and experience received over the years. Additionally, the researcher is a teacher for two-very-satisfactory years in the Department of Education in the Division of Davao del Norte. Adequately, the researcher, is professionally accountable for this study's conduct, without any conflict of interest and any form of biases.

Consequently, the researcher asked for guidance and advices from his adviser, from the panel members, and from his colleagues who have exceptional knowledge in this method. They had given guidance to the researcher towards the completion of the research. The researcher sought advice from his adviser time to time and was given advices in relation to the formats and contents of the research. Lastly, suggestions and recommendations of the technical panel were followed and incorporated in the final draft.

Adequacy of Facilities. As defined by Wiggins (2021), it refers to the available and accessible essential materials, equipment, and other resources in the conduct of the study. This includes access to specialized equipment, software, or other materials needed for data collection, analysis, and storage.

The researcher ensured to utilize the available and accessible essential materials in this research. Libraries and online sources were utilized for additional sources to intensify and fortify the data analysis and interpretation. Other materials that are of great reinforcements on the study were made available and obtainable. The research adviser was always available for consultation. Furthermore, constructive feedbacks and recommendations was provided by the group of experts. They were asked and consulted as well to guide the researcher in conducting the study but also in presenting the research findings.

Community Involvement. According to Belter (2023), community involvement in research is often referred to as community engagement and entails sharing the results and findings to one's local community or broader society by conducting related activities or initiatives. In addition, it has the possibility to enhance the distribution, uptake, and execution of the findings of the study (Fregonese, 2018).

This study sought approval from the and from Dean of the Graduate School and the SMCTI-REC before conducting the study. Furthermore, the researcher also asked permission from the Schools Division

Superintendent of Davao del Norte and the Public Schools District Supervisor of Kapalong East District. Informed consents from the participants were ensured to make them fully aware of their involvement in the research. In addition, the results of the research were aimed toward community involvement. Benefits will be offered back by the researcher to the participants included in this research by sharing the outcomes and inferences on the findings of the study. This will be made to increase their consciousness in dealing with burnout experienced by the school heads.

Lastly, this chapter encompasses the research procedures and essential actions to be undertaken. It also outlines the discussions and explanations regarding the study's scope, focus, participants, involved offices, and authorities, and whose approval and consent are the priority before conducting research. In addition, it explains the step-by-step process of collecting data which is the most critical part of doing research up until the data analysis down to its results and findings. It is emphasized that any research will conform to the utmost trustworthiness, which can be attained through taking rigorous steps and employing strategies with care and prudence. Also, it is important to remember that in doing any research adherence to and following ethical considerations will always be observed.

DISCUSSIONS

Lived Experiences of Public Elementary School Heads in Dealing with Professional Burnout

School heads were chosen as participants, and they commonly shared strategies implemented in addressing burnout. From the data gathered, five major themes emerged; a) strain of school leadership and workload management; b) demotivation and frustration in the workplace; c) decline of leadership confidence and effectiveness; d) impact of stress on health and well-being; and e) view experiences as opportunities for learning.

Strain of School Leadership and Workload Management

Public elementary school heads have to deal with everything that goes around the school. The responsibilities they need to perform become too overwhelming for them as there are uncertainties in tasks prioritization. Thus, school heads feel exhausted due to work demands such as getting easily tired in managing the school, pressured in doing multiple workloads while meeting deadlines, and meeting the standards.

Indeed, the results corroborated with the study of Skaalvic (2020), which highlighted that the leadership roles experienced by school heads are not only challenging and stimulating but are also overwhelming, exhausting and demanding. The usual day of a school head consist of dealing with time pressures, and demanding parents. Dealing with these experiences are associated to emotional exhaustion and burnout among school heads. Furthermore, the study of Dematthews et al. (2021) found that demanding work conditions yield to burnout. Principals has to deal with heavy workloads, long working hours, wrestling with occasional and unpredictable problems, and lacking autonomy from district supervisors.

Moreover, in the Philippines, the study of Kilag et al. (2023) found out that school heads are facing various challenges that leads to burnout. These includes constraints in budget, inadequacy in infrastructures, and lacking resources. Pressures in time, tedious tasks, and lack of recognition on their outputs are commonly the causes of burnout among school heads. School heads are working under pressure since they need to face a lot of administrative and management functions. Unexpected situations and great crises in the workplace are also their responsibility. Furthermore, Leksy et al. (2023) stated that the demanding work and new working conditions faced by school heads are the sources of work-related stress and burnout.

In connection, this is consistent with one of the findings of the study conducted by Calbert (2020) that having vast number of tasks is the prime cause in the increase of stress and burnout among elementary principals. Dealing with too many tasks to be completed in a specified timespan makes elementary school heads to be more prone to burnout.

Demotivation and Frustration in the Workplace

For many school heads, being bombarded by tasks and responsibilities creates varied feelings and emotions. The overwhelming tasks results in school heads feeling unhappy and unmotivated. Moreover, school heads feel frustrated and disappointed when the work is not completed and feel always on the edge as well as having negative mindsets towards work. They are experiencing burnout when they are feeling emotionally and socially unprepared upon doing their tasks as a school principal.

This finding supports the study of Toscano and Zappalà (2020) which stated that educational leaders encounter various challenges that leads to stress and burnout, which is manifested by anger, and ultimately affects the leadership quality. Stress and anger lead to burnout, which reduces work productivity and ultimately leads to turnover.

In addition, the study of Mahfouz (2018) revealed that elementary school principals are the dignitaries in their respective communities and their actions are displayed to all of the stakeholders of the school. Despite learning how to handle certain stressful situations by using hands-on experiences, school heads admit that overwhelming circumstances are unavoidable and they are having hard time to deal with it. They are experiencing burnout when they are feeling unprepared emotionally and socially upon doing their tasks as a school principal. Consequently, Persson et al. (2021) revealed that elementary school heads perceived doing many administrative works, having additional responsibilities due to the absence of school personnel, and meeting the needs of students who needed special attention to be the most common reasons of stress that leads to burnout.

Decline of Leadership Confidence and Effectiveness

Upon experiencing professional burnout, public elementary school heads had found out that they are experiencing the reduce of their performance and productivity. When experiencing burnout, the participants in this study revealed that they feel ineffective in performing functions that are previously handled effectively. They are also struggling in terms of decision-making and accomplishing responsibilities as well as encounter a decline of self-esteem and productivity.

In connection to that, this finding supports the idea of Gomez-Leal et al. (2021) that for leaders in education, stress is unavoidable. The daily life of managing the school is emotionally demanding, and new challenges and increased responsibility create feelings of exhaustion that can overwhelm even the strongest leaders. These difficulties may cause emotional exhaustion or burnout, as well as reduced effectiveness in leadership, and a more aggressive, financial-minded leadership approach. Furthermore, McKay (2020) revealed that educational leaders' physical and emotional resources were depleted due to stress and burnout, resulting in low job satisfaction, reduced self-efficacy, and physical exhaustion. Similarly, according to the study of Silbaugh et al. (2021), school heads face many challenges, from disciplining students to meeting legal mandates and supervisory duties. If these tasks and responsibilities are not performed at an adequate level, the school head may doubt his leadership ability, which creates a sense of lack of personal and professional achievement. Additionally, the study of Fox (2018) stated that

failure to accomplish tasks and addressing complex issues within the schools results to burnout leading to a decrease in overall job performance of a principal.

Furthermore, Tobin (2023) stated that elementary school heads do not thrive in their roles. Their capacities and effectivity as leaders are heavily restricted and compromised due to increasing levels of challenge. Frustrations and burnout are their responses in the challenges in their leadership practice.

Impact of Stress on Health and Well-being

As public elementary school heads handle the demand and pressures of the job, manifestations of health-related concerns appear as public elementary school heads experience professional burnout. As stated by the participants, they were able to find out that they are experiencing professional burnout by observing the physical, emotional and mental signs such as frequent headaches, they feel stressed and experience fatigue as well as encounter stress related illnesses.

According to the study conducted by Wilson (2022), compared to all helping professions, school heads have the greatest levels of stress and burnout. Principals become overwhelmed when pressures from their jobs surpasses their abilities. Job burnout has a negative impact on both health and performance at work. School leaders face constant pressure in a stressful environment. Long-term work stress, if not treated, has a negative impact on a leader's physical and mental health, overall job satisfaction, work productivity, and performance.

Furthermore, Ulfiah et al. (2022) revealed that the rhythm of school works makes elementary school heads depressed. This is the result of lack of communication among members, inadequacy of facilities in school, and insufficiency of funds needed for administration. It is manifested through body pains, constant headache, and hypertensions that affects how they perform their duties. In addition, Persson et al. (2021) stated that demanding work situations makes school principals at prone to work overload, poor health conditions such as stress, burnout, exhaustion disorders and coronary diseases.

View Experiences as Opportunities for Learning

During the interviews, the participants shared their lived experiences in dealing with professional burnout particularly in viewing experiences as opportunities for learning. The participants are dealing with heavy responsibilities including overseeing classroom operation and curriculum implementation, attending to documents, liquidation and other matters. Thus, balancing these responsibilities and learning through challenges enables them to adapt to challenges and be resilient. Reminding oneself to use experiences to gain more learning, learning the importance of dealing with burnout effectively, and most importantly, achieving satisfaction in handling stress and burnout effectively.

The result of this study supports the study of Hancock et al. (2019) which states that in dealing with burnout, principals view their daily experiences as opportunities for learning. A principal can maintain their focus on developing into a successful leader by learning new things. Moreover, Drago-Severson et al. (2018) state that focusing on improvement minimizes stress and burnout by focusing on meeting students' needs academically, socially, and emotionally, and ensuring they are making progress.

How Public Elementary School Heads Manage and Address Challenges Associated with Professional Burnout

Different strategies and coping mechanisms were shared by the participants in their ways on managing and addressing the challenges associated with professional burnout. from the responses gathers, five

themes emerged: a) prioritizing self-care and work-life balance; b) applying task prioritization and task-management; c) establishing a supportive network; d) seeking relief and rest; and e) embracing burnout as an inevitable aspect of the job.

Prioritizing Self-Care and Work-Life Balance

Due to overlapping tasks, demanding jobs, and overwhelming responsibilities, professional burnout is taking a toll on the health of public elementary school heads. They face challenges in managing their physical and mental well-being. Fortunately, participants implemented self-care strategies to effectively manage professional burnout. These strategies include timely eating, workload management, relaxation time, sufficient sleep, and rest periods during hectic schedules. Occasional breaks allow school heads to recharge physically and mentally. Having work-life balance is also crucial for managing professional burnout. Participants emphasized the importance of balancing personal time with work responsibilities. Engaging in hobbies and self-care activities helps maintain well-being. Setting clear boundaries between work and personal life reduces stress and prevents overwhelm. Mindfulness strategies contribute to effective burnout management and professional development.

In the Philippines, a study by Novelo and Cabrillas (2024) revealed that school principals primarily use self-care as an intervention approach in reaction to burnout. These leaders actively participate in activities and behaviors to preserve their physical and mental health because they understand the importance of personal well-being.

To support this, Kaufman (2019) found that emotion-focused and social coping strategies, such as switching off and engaging in alternative activities, help alleviate burnout. Elomaa (2023) emphasized the importance of self-care for mental and emotional well-being. Spending time with family and friends, as well as communicating with colleagues, are effective social coping strategies.

In addition, Ray et al. (2020) highlighted the benefits of self-care practices in reducing stress and burnout. These practices contribute to optimal physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being. Croymans (2023) identified specific self-care activities, including regular checkups, healthy eating, relaxation, family time, and mindfulness.

Furthermore, Mendez Foundation (2020) emphasized the importance of school heads as role models for self-care. Promoting self-care can enhance leadership effectiveness and overall well-being. Lawler (2021) underscored the need for self-care as a foundation for supporting others. Prioritizing personal well-being reduces stress and burnout, ultimately improving a principal's ability to support their school community. Likewise, this is consistent with one of the findings of the study conducted by Harper (2018) on the importance of stress management in preventing burnout. Achieving a work-life balance is essential for preserving mental health and self-control. School leaders must develop strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of burnout on their well-being and performance. Hancock et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of establishing a work-life balance to counter professional burnout. Effective coping mechanisms, such as organizing work and setting realistic goals, should be shared with colleagues.

Horwood et al. (2021) explained that work-life balance initiatives can foster a sense of passion and protect against burnout. Ansley et al. (2019) emphasized the role of training, resources, and support in strengthening leadership passion. Flexible work practices and opportunities for professional growth are essential for promoting work-life balance and well-being.

Applying Task Prioritization and Time Management

In terms of addressing and managing professional burnout, managing time and organizing tasks was revealed as an effective strategy to counter burnout. As shared by the participants, urgent tasks were prioritized and they avoided getting overwhelmed by overlapping tasks. Making use of matrix of activities and schedules allowed them to focus on tasks and work on it one at a time. Thus, ensuring the quality of the work while working efficiently.

According to Ogalo et al. (2020), school principals can address burnout by managing their time properly. In order to attain a balance in workload, school heads should designate tasks and draw boundaries. School principals should make use of the school block-time table to be guided on what is to be done. Also, DeLaGarza (2022) stated that the school heads should have schedules on their everyday activities in the school to make sure that every activity is taken care of.

Moreover, Denecker (2019) shared that organizing one's work and setting practical goals is an effective strategy to counter burnout and stress among school principals. It has been found out that time management skills correspond to low job and burnout rates among school leaders. In addition, Elomaa et al., (2023) stated that setting working time limits and balancing free time with work is also an effective way to deal burnout.

Similarly, as expressed by Tikkanen et al., (2018), the proactive self-regulatory strategies of school principals provide a significant defense against the consequences of work stress, particularly burnout. Specifically, in meeting the increased demands of the principal's position appears to call for consistent self-regulation. Learning proactive self-regulatory strategies, such as learning to set limits on work tasks, is an effective way to reduce burnout among principals.

Establishing a Supportive Network

When problems arise, we may look for advice and support from our colleagues, especially when it comes to handling things we cannot solve on our own. Participants of the study clearly revealed that seeking and establishing a supportive network had a significant influence in dealing with professional burnout effectively. Sharing burdens to colleagues lightens up their emotions and they were able to solicit ideas on how to solve certain problems within their schools. Moreover, turning to the people in authority for support enables public elementary school heads to be guided on what to do with regards to addressing and managing burnout.

According to the findings of Aizzat Mohd et al. (2018), receiving social support greatly helps in fostering occupational wellbeing among school principals. It has been studied that social support decreases burnout and stress among school heads. Furthermore, as expressed by DeMatthews et al. (2021), principals are finding ways in addressing burnout by themselves and among their colleagues. Creating support groups from their colleagues and getting professional help from their community which is led by a supervisor. Principals are also facilitating healthy discussions having burnout as their focus, sharing difficulties on how to uphold work-life balance in the stressful events in their works.

Consequently, DeMatthews et al. (2019) expressed that in order to manage principal burnout, principals learned the importance of peer support. Principals opt and depend on their personal and professional networks who offers a healthy and proactive support. Further, Beusaert et al. (2023). Stated that having social support from colleagues and supervisors maintain school principals' well-being and increases their chance to counter and avoid burnout.

Seeking Relief and Rest

The job as a public elementary school head itself is heavy. Hence, it gets even harder when all the tasks come at once and are needed to be done immediately. The participants shared that seeking relief and rest are needed when tasks get too overwhelming. Filing a leave and having time for oneself are the strategies applied in order to recharge. Moreover, participants shared that even doing things at home like sleeping and doing movie marathon eases their minds and relieves their stress.

In line with this, DeMatthews et al. (2021) shared that principals should be engaged proactive coping strategies, and work-life balance planning annually. Annual vacation or respite can lessen the perceived job-related stress for multiple weeks and keep burnout under control. Moreover, Op den Kamp et al., (2018) shared that proactive school leaders are likely to be the one who initiates and are anticipated to actively react to tedious work demands and burnout. Therefore, when work demands are still high and causes burden, the principal takes responsibility, avoids unsuitable self-management, and applies adaptive self-management. In particular, they are more likely to proactively monitor their activities and regularly take time off from work to recover from work-related illnesses.

Consequently, Mahfouz (2020) expressed that another effective coping mechanism is to take time away from the workplace, either by devoting time with families and friends or being engaged in healthy relationships with staff, students, and parents. Furthermore, Hancock et al. (2019). stated that this can be achieved by engaging to regular physical exercises, engagement in stationary non-work or play activities and having to mentally and physically take care of self.

Embracing Burnout as an Inevitable Aspect of the Job

The day-to-day experiences of public elementary school heads are challenging and exhausting. According to the responses of the participants, embracing burnout as an inevitable aspect of the job enables them to the duties and responsibilities and shrugging off stressors in the work as well as make reflections on the things done to accept burnout.

According the study of Farag (2019), school leaders encounter day to day responsibilities and they need to accept these responsibilities and adapt to them. Principals can cope and manage stress through being resilient and reflecting. By applying healthy and productive strategies to reframe behavior, reflect to enhance stress awareness, recognize stressors, reduce stressors, and respond to stress and burnout. Furthermore, Nunez (2022) stated that burnout in the workplace can be addressed by applying mindfulness through making explicit goals and intentions, active listening, mindfully walking and centering, self-awareness about mental scripts during stressful events, mindful breathing, and engaging in self-compassion.

Similarly, the study of Wilson (2022) revealed that principals frequently associate unusual hours of work and exhaustion with the nature of the job. However, a principal's emotional resilience is critical to the development of a positive school climate. Principals must keep focused on their passion for their jobs, particularly during stressful times. In addition, Becker (2019) shared that to address burnout, principals need to remember their goal and be reminded to recall their "why" while focusing on things over which they have direct control.

Valuable Lessons and Insights Gained by Public Elementary School Heads in Dealing with Professional Burnout

The participants shared different insights on the insights they have gained in dealing with professional

burnout. These insights can be shared with others who are dealing with professional burnout. From the responses gathered, five (5) major themes emerged; a) imbibe positive attitudes; b) establish self-care; c) foster a balanced environment; d) seek personal and professional growth; and e) get support from others.

Imbibe Positive Attitudes

Imbibing positive attitudes is one among the strategies in addressing professional burnout among public elementary school heads. According to the responses of the school heads, never losing hope and letting drowned by the problems encountered made them adaptive and resilient. Furthermore, having positive views in the face of challenges and finding joy on what has been achieved helped in effectively managing professional burnout.

According to Elomaa et al., (2023), principals are coping with stressors related to their jobs by coping emotionally, socially, and focusing on the problem by doing different activities, to stop thinking about the job stresses and maintaining a positive outlook, to spend time with the family, engaging with friends, building communication. Managing work as well as enjoying their free time is an effective strategy to address burnout.

Furthermore, this is consistent with one of the findings of the study conducted by Farag (2019) that principals cope on burnout by managing stress and being resilient. Balancing urgency with purposeful action, connecting with other school leaders, deliberately seeking joy in the work, and investing in out-of-school relationships and interests to help manage stress. In relation to this, Su-Keene and DeMatthews (2022) stated that these strategies can assist individuals to emphasize and amplify positive emotions in order to reduce other psychological conditions such as burnout, stress, and anxieties.

Establish Self-Care

The tasks and responsibilities of school heads are not easy. Often making school heads experience burnout. Participants of the study stated that establishing self-care allows them to be self-aware by applying proactive self-care and mindfulness strategies. Not only that, taking care of oneself by having time to relax and spending time with family, school heads were able to do other tasks other than purely doing work. The strategy also enabled them to do outdoor activities to keep them calm.

In relation to this, Lawler (2021) cited that principals should be supporting themselves and be mindful of their own needs first in order to be able to support others. Proper self-care results to reduced stress and burnout and will positively influence the support a principal can be able to provide to others. In addition, Mendez Foundation (2020) cited that a school principal who promotes individual self-care sets an example for those around them for others to emulate. The more a principal promotes and encourages self-care, the more likely they are to reach their fullest potential and efficiently provide those under their care.

In addition, the study of Ray et al., (2020) revealed that implementing self-care practices provide school heads ways to lessen stress and burnout and ensures that they are at their bests in physical, mental, spiritual and emotional states. More so, Croymans (2023) stated that self-care includes doing activities like constant checkups, having healthy eating habits, having time to relax, allotting time to spend with their families and friends and applying activities that promotes mindfulness.

Similarly, the study of Wells and Klocko (2018) stated that principal training in mindfulness is a needed in order for the principal to be train on how work together with their fellow leaders in order to share self-care practices, setting boundaries, settling into stillness, practicing mindfulness and learning

communicative skills in assisting to work without conflict that will help the school heads in supporting to improve their well-being and resiliency that would help in mitigating stress and burnout.

Foster a Balanced Environment

As professional burnout affects the educational leaders, majority of the participants believed that desire for a balanced environment is an effective strategy in addressing professional burnout effectively. The participants firmly believe that overlapping reports and repeated reports should be avoided and they should be given enough time to do and accomplish their task. Moreover, the Department of Education officials should create programs that are geared towards addressing burnout. This could be possible by providing timely and befitting interventions like team-building activities, providing technical assistance and allocating a day for non-teaching personnel to have a physical and mental health day.

In the Philippines, Kilag et al., (2023) emphasized the importance of providing school leaders with effective anger and stress management interventions to enhance their well-being and leadership skills. School districts and educational organizations should consider implementing such interventions as part of their leadership development programs.

In line with this, Pollock et al., (2019) stated that with the knowledge that burnout exists in the principal profession and knowledge about the strategies that can prevent burnout, more professional development is needed in supporting the well-being of school heads. Moreover, (Richardson 2020) noted that districts should provide principal leadership programs and contribute positively to the well-being of principals in the workplace. Systemic proactive and preventative support measures must be implemented to support principals in reducing the chances of exhaustion and burnout.

In addition, Ray et al., (2020) also added that by including support programs before school administrators such as mindfulness and stress reduction strategies for resilience building in leadership training programs, principals who receive job-specific training are more likely to be better equipped to lead their campuses effectively and successfully counter burnout. Furthermore, Mahfouz (2020) also noted that to maintain school effectiveness, principals need to have their own social emotional competence supported. Policy ideas, including programs to develop mindfulness and self-awareness in leaders. Also, creation of professional development programs for school heads particularly in social and emotional skills are needed.

Seek Personal and Professional Growth

Managing professional burnout is no easy task as there are lots of things a school head needs to take into consideration. As shared by the participants, strategies like seeking personal and professional growth helps in effectively managing professional burnout. These include attending seminars and training on stress-management, joining activities that promote work and life balance, and engaging in learning to enhance skills and adaptability.

This is supported by Mahfouz (2018) which states that the practices worth emulating to counter professional burnout among school principals is to be engaged in developing themselves professionally. Professional development, then, could be aimed at training principals on the practices of reflection and mindful awareness for understanding their physiological, cognitive, and behavioral responses. This way, principals develop resilience in responding to emotional situations and helps them to know themselves better, be more self-aware, successful in managing their emotions and improve their skills to lead effectively.

Similarly, Wells and Klocko (2018) shared that principal training in mindfulness is needed in order for the principal to be trained on how to work together with their fellow leaders in order to share self-care practices, setting boundaries, settling into stillness, practicing mindfulness and learning communicative skills in assisting to work without conflict. That will help the school heads in supporting to improve their well-being and resiliency that would help in mitigating stress and burnout. Trainings that are focused in communication and promotion of listening mindfully, and practices that contributes greatly on the well-being of school heads in their workplace.

Furthermore, Jimenez (2021) stated that principals are encouraged to continue participating in a variety of public and private activities that address flexible learning opportunities, webinars on leadership and leadership perspectives for leaders in crisis in order to counter stress and burnout thereby becoming an agent for change in the society in general.

Get Support from Others

Developing strong relationships among school heads lays the groundwork for collaboration and cooperation as well as support and trust. As a result of learning from their colleagues' experiences, school administrators are more capable to anticipate potential solutions to the issues they face. As stated by the participants, communication among colleagues helps in addressing professional burnout.

According to research led by Varthana (2023), school heads should develop relationships with their colleagues and associates, staff from the central office, and educators who can supply and give encouragements and advices. Having social supports from within and beyond the school opens a chance to work together is a way to counter the effect of burnout among school principals. Additionally, Beusaert et al. (2023) stated that by being invested in networks and communities of principals, either in actual or virtual, supports can be easily be received. This provides school principals an avenue to collaborate and receive the needed to support their welfare.

Consequently, DeMatthews et al. (2019) expressed that in order to manage principal burnout, principals learned the importance of peer support. Principals opt and depend on their personal and professional networks who offers a healthy and proactive support. Further, Beusaert et al. (2023). Stated that having social support from colleagues and supervisors maintain school principals' well-being and increases their chance to counter and avoid burnout.

Implications for Leadership Practice

Professional burnout affects all helping professions particularly in the field of educational leadership. The increase of job demands as well as the pressures associated with it, intensified the burnout experienced by the public elementary school heads. In this period of time, public elementary school heads have encountered and experienced challenges and difficulties in dealing with professional burnout. The results of the study revealed that public elementary school heads experiences exhaustion due to the demands of the job as well as in juggling all their responsibilities which led them to experience strain in school leadership and workload management, feel demotivated and frustrated in the workplace, observe decline of leadership confidence and effectiveness, and experience the impact of stress on their health and well-being.

The results of this study may serve as basis for the Department of Education Officials for the creation and implementation of programs and services that advocates on ensuring the mental health of the school heads

and alleviate their personal growth and welfare by offering free trainings, seminars and professional development opportunities focused on addressing professional burnout.

Moreover, the findings of this study may provide public elementary school heads additional strategies and coping mechanisms relevant in dealing with professional burnout. Moreover, the results encourage public elementary school heads to establish strategies that will prioritize their welfare and uphold their well-being at all times, prioritize self-care and work-life balance, to seek personal and professional growth, and establish supportive network among their colleagues in order to effectively address and manage professional burnout.

Likewise, this may also serve as an eye-opener for teachers to be engaged in seminars and trainings in order to be able to integrate various strategies in addressing professional burnout through learning appropriate accommodations, modifications, and intervention strategies that can best be utilized in ensuring that professional burnout will be dealt well.

Furthermore, the results and findings of this study will serve as a helpful resource for future researchers. This study can be a reference point for those exploring the experiences of public elementary school heads dealing with professional burnout, allowing them to delve deeper into the key findings presented in this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study revolves around the experiences of public elementary school heads in dealing with professional burnout. The study was limited only to the experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights of 10 public elementary school heads of Kapalong East District, Division of Davao del Norte. Future researchers may conduct studies beyond greater scope from other districts or divisions to expound the findings of this study. Additionally, comparative research across different schools and regions is essential to identify best practices and common challenges. This analysis can highlight effective strategies and contextual factors that contribute to the successful implementation of various strategies in order to manage and address professional burnout among public elementary school heads as well as be the basis for the creation of programs and activities geared towards promoting the well-being of public elementary school heads. Offering a roadmap for school's heads seeking to improve their approach to effectively manage burnout. Further research should be conducted in a broader scope, such as regional or national level. It is one way to gather more substantial answers to the queries of this study. Moreover, further research is suggested to be done on the professional burnout of public elementary school heads.

Concluding Remarks

This study explores the experiences of public elementary school heads in dealing with professional burnout which also acknowledges how the utilization of various strategies create an impact on ensuring that professional burnout was addressed and managed effectively.

The accomplishment of this research is attributed to rigorous investigation, extensive literature review, countless hours of diligent effort and commitment. As the primary researcher, the most important lesson I gained from this study is the recognition of the resilience and dedication of public elementary school heads that are essential to overcome the challenges in dealing with professional burnout. My empathy on how they handled the difficulties they experienced also grew as a result.

The results of this study aim to contribute significantly to the existing body of knowledge in educational management. By highlighting the experiences and successful strategies employed by public elementary

school heads, this research provides a practical framework that can be utilized by other educational institutions facing similar issues. It emphasizes the importance of prioritizing self-care, having work-life balance, organizing tasks and applying time management, establishing a supportive network, and embracing burnout as an inevitable aspect of the job as vital strategies to manage and address burnout among public elementary school heads. This study's findings can inspire educational policymakers and administrators to create programs geared towards addressing burnout and provide public elementary school heads timely and befitting interventions to effectively manage and address professional burnout. Furthermore, this entire thesis-writing process is no easy feat but it was a noteworthy experience. It was a laborious task that requires patience, cautiousness and commitment. However, this process helped me develop my critical thinking and ability to interpret data accurately. Conducting a study can be demanding and intricate, but it opens the door to opportunities for learning, exploration, and the discovery of my capabilities in research. Moreover, I regard this study as a significant milestone in my personal and professional development which motivates me to advance towards the next phase in my pursuit of another notable achievement.

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