

# Investigating the Mental and Emotional Stress Among Middle-Level Managers of Schools Division of Abra: A Mixed-Method Explanatory Sequential Design

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## Abstract

This study investigated the nature, extent, and implications of mental and emotional stress experienced by middle-level school managers in the Schools Division of Abra, Philippines. Amid increasing complexity of school management brought about by evolving educational demands, policy shifts, and post-pandemic transitions, these managers—who serve as vital links between school heads and higher administrative levels—face mounting pressures that impact both their performance and well-being. Guided by the *Transactional Model of Stress and Coping* and the *Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model*, the research sought to: (1) examine the demographic profile of respondents; (2) assess stress levels caused by institutional and interpersonal factors; (3) identify coping strategies employed; (4) determine the relationship between demographic factors and stress; (5) examine the connection between stress levels and coping mechanisms; (6) evaluate the availability and effectiveness of existing mental health interventions; and (7) propose a sustainable and contextualized *Mental Resilience and Well-being Support Program*.

The study employed a mixed-method explanatory sequential design. Quantitative data were gathered through total enumeration using structured Likert-scale questionnaires administered to middle-level school managers across the division. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis were used to analyze quantitative responses. This phase was followed by qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with a purposive subset of respondents to enrich the findings and offer contextual insights. Thematic analysis was applied to interpret qualitative data.

Results indicated that institutional stressors—particularly excessive workload, unclear or rigid policy implementation, lack of administrative and emotional support, and inadequate resources—were the most critical stress-inducing factors. Interpersonal challenges, including communication barriers, role ambiguity, and leadership conflicts, contributed moderately to stress. Demographic variables such as age, position, salary grade, and years of service were significantly associated with varying levels of perceived stress. Participants primarily relied on personal coping mechanisms, such as spiritual grounding, peer support, time management, and emotional regulation. However, organizational support structures, including mental health



services and well-being programs, were inconsistently available and often reactive rather than proactive.

The study concluded that while middle-level school managers demonstrated resilience and effective individual coping strategies, the systemic and organizational gaps heightened their vulnerability to chronic stress. This highlighted the urgent need for a structured and comprehensive mental health intervention. In response, the researcher developed a four-phase *Mental Resilience and Well-being Support Program* encompassing Awareness, Capacity-Building, Leadership Support, and Program Institutionalization. Expert validation affirmed the program's relevance, practicality, and alignment with the needs of middle-level school managers.

**Keywords:** *mental health, emotional stress, school management, coping strategies, institutional support, middle-level school managers*



## I. INTRODUCTION

### Background and Rationale

Middle-level school managers are essential in ensuring the smooth operation of schools, acting as the bridge between school leaders and teachers. Their role includes the implementation of policy, management of resources, and serving the needs of staff and students alike. Yet with the increased needs of balancing administration and leadership come the heavy workload, unclear role definition, reduced resources, and high expectations, all of which lead to tremendous stress and emotional burden.

Their effectiveness depends on competencies such as emotional intelligence, resilience, and management skills. Yet, challenges like poor teamwork, lack of professional support, financial limitations, and conflicting demands heighten their stress, affecting not only their well-being but also school performance, teacher morale, and student outcomes. In the Philippine context, particularly in the Schools Division of Abra, these concerns are compounded further, with few researches aimed at examining how local culture and community interactions shape stress among middle-level managers.

This study is significant as it fills that gap, aiming to shed light on the unique stressors experienced by middle-level managers and the coping mechanisms they employ. By highlighting their mental health needs, the research underscores the importance of supportive systems, targeted interventions, and sustainable leadership practices. Prioritizing their well-being is crucial to building a healthier, more resilient educational environment that ultimately improves the quality of teaching and learning.

### Statement of the Problem

The general objective of this study is to investigate the factors contributing to the mental and emotional stresses experienced by middle-level school managers in SDO Abra, aiming to develop a targeted support program to enhance the mental resilience and necessary well-being of school managers. Specifically, it aims to answer the following;

1. What is the demographic profile of middle-level school managers in SDO Abra, in terms of: a. Age, b. Sex, c. Civil Status, d. Highest Educational Attainment, e. Position, f. Monthly net pay, g. Length of service, h. Spouse Occupation, and i. Number of Children?
2. What is the level of stress of middle-level school managers on the following institutional factors: a. Workload, b. Administrative policies and pressures, and c. Lack of support system?
3. What is the level of stress of the middle-level school managers in terms of the following interpersonal factors; a. Relationship with subordinates and superiors, and b. Conflict management and communication issues?
4. What is the degree of implementation of middle-level school managers' coping mechanisms and resilience strategies to manage stress in terms of: a. Coping Mechanisms in terms of: (i) Personal stress management strategies (exercise, meditation, etc.), and (ii) Professional help (counseling, workshops) b. Organizational Support in terms of: (i) Availability of mental health programs, ii. Adequate workload management, and iii. Peer or social support within the workplace?



5. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the impact of the Institutional and interpersonal factors on the stress levels of middle-level school managers?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the level of stress of the middle-level school managers on the work-related factors contributing to the stress of middle-level school managers and the degree of implementation of the coping mechanisms and resilience strategies that middle-level school managers employ to manage stress?
7. What strategies, challenges and best practices have middle-level managers employed to cope with stress, and what forms of support have been most beneficial in maintaining their mental and emotional health?
8. What Mental Resilience and Well-being Support Program can be proposed to effectively address the stress factors identified, specifically tailored to the needs of middle-level school managers in SDO Abra?
9. What is the level of acceptance of the evaluators on the developed mental health program for the middle level school managers?

### **Hypotheses**

Hypotheses of the study include following predictions on significant relationship between the variables:

1. There is a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the impact of interpersonal factors on the stress levels of middle-level school managers;
2. There is a significant relationship between the level of awareness of middle-level school managers on the work-related factors that contribute to the stress of middle-level school managers and the degree of implementation of the coping mechanisms and resilience strategies that middle-level school managers employ to manage stress.

## **II. MATERIALS and METHODS**

Section of Materials and Methods is inclusive of the following parts: research design, participants of the study, instruments, procedure, and data analysis.

### **Research Design**

A Mixed-Method Explanatory Sequential Research Design helps examine the mental and emotional stress of middle-level managers in SDO Abra by first collecting quantitative data (such as surveys or stress assessments) to measure stress levels across Luba-Tubo, PiSanVil and PePiLaQuin Districts. After analyzing the results, it then gathers qualitative data (through interviews or focus groups) to understand the specific causes, challenges, and coping strategies behind the stress, providing a more complete and practical understanding of the issue.

### **Participants**

The study's population will include Public Elementary School Heads, encompassing Principals, Head Teachers, and Teachers In-Charge from Penarrubia, Pidigan, Langiden, San Quintin, Pilar, San Isidro, Villaviciosa, Luba and Tubo Municipal Districts within the Schools Division of Abra. The group consisted of 23 males and 35 females. In addition, five evaluators



were included to validate the study: Guidance counselors from Abra State Institute of Science and Technology (ASIST) and from the Department of Education, Schools Division of Abra.

### Instruments

In this study, a structured survey questionnaire, will be utilized as the primary tool for data collection, will be aimed at assessing the demographic profile, stress levels, coping strategies, and awareness of stressors among middle-level school managers within the Schools Division Office (SDO) of Abra particularly in PePiLaQuin, Luba-Tubo and PiSanVil Districts. The instrument will undergo a comprehensive validation process to ensure its content validity and appropriateness for the target audience. Initially, a panel of experts in educational leadership, psychology, and stress management will be reviewed the survey items to evaluate their relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Feedback from this expert panel will guide revisions to the language and content, ensuring that each item will clearly articulate and accurately represent the variables under investigation.

### Procedure

The data collection process for this study will employ a systematic methodology to ensure that the procedure will be organized, precise, and thorough. The key steps are outlined as follows:

**Start: Read Literature → Prepare Instrument → Validation → Reliability → Coordinate with SDO Abra → Distribute Surveys → Collect Data → Verify and Encode Data → Analyze Data: End**

### Data Analysis

The statistical analysis of data in this study involves a range of tools and techniques used to assess various aspects of the research questions. Each tool is chosen based on the type of data and the specific objectives it aims to fulfill within the research. The statistical treatments employed are outlined below:

- **Frequency and Percentage Distribution** will describe the demographic profile of middle-level school managers in terms of age, gender, years of service, and educational background. This provides a clear picture of the respondents and allows easy comparison across groups;
- **Mean** will be used to measure the average level of stress experienced by respondents. It will identify which factors—whether institutional or interpersonal—cause the highest or lowest stress levels. Standard deviation will also be used to show how consistent or varied the responses are;
- **Bivariate Correlation Analysis** will examine the relationship between two variables, such as demographics, stress factors, and coping strategies. This will help identify which variables are most strongly linked to stress;
- **Regression Analysis** will test and estimate the association between stress levels and job demands like workload, role overload, and organizational restrictions. It will also show how low job control relates to higher stress. The results can guide targeted interventions to reduce stress and improve the well-being of school managers.



### III. RESULT

Results and findings of the study sought to answer following statements of the problem:

**Problem 1: What is the demographic profile of middle-level school managers in SDO Abra, specifically in terms of:**

- a. Age,
- b. Sex,
- c. Civil Status,
- d. Highest Educational Attainment,
- e. Position,
- f. Monthly basic Salary,
- g. Length of service,
- h. Spouse Occupation and
- i. Number of Children?

Table 2 displays the demographic portrait of middle-level school administrators from the Abra Schools Division that gives a comprehensive description of personal and professional profiles of such school leaders. Demographic information comprise the background against which background variables can influence experience, stress, and coping of these school leaders. It includes significant details like age, sex, civil status, level of education, current grade, length of service, salary grade, occupation of spouse, and children.

By defining the respondents on these nine dimensions, the study hopes to identify trends or patterns to be called on when analyzing their stress levels and organizational experience. This data are particularly valuable to determine if there are certain demographic groups that are more vulnerable to institutional and interpersonal stressors or if there are certain types more linked with high resilience or effective coping strategies.

**Table 1. Demographic Profile of Middle-Level School Managers**

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	30 to 49 Years Old	7	12.1%
	40 to 49 Years Old	17	29.3%
	50 to 59 Years Old	33	56.9%
	60 Years Old and Above	1	1.7%
	Total	58	100.0%
Sex	Male	19	32.8%
	Female	39	67.2%
	Total	58	100.0%
Civil Status	Single	9	15.5%
	Married	43	74.1%
	Separated	2	3.4%
	Widowed	3	5.2%
	Total	58	100.0%
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	2	3.4%
	Graduate	12	20.7%
	With Master's Units	33	56.9%
	Doctoral Graduate	7	12.1%
	With Doctoral Units	4	6.9%
Position	Total	58	100.0%
	TIC/OIC	8	13.8%
	HT 1	7	12.1%
	HT2	10	17.2%
	HT 3	14	24.1%
	Principal 1	8	13.8%
	Principal 2	6	10.3%
	Principal 3	5	8.6%
	Total	58	100.0%
	Length of Service	Below 5 Years	2
6 to 10 Years		5	8.6%
11 to 15 Years		8	13.8%
16 to 20 Years		15	25.9%
21 to 25 Years		7	12.1%
26 to 30 Years		15	25.9%
31 to 35 Years		5	8.6%
36 years and Above		1	1.7%
Total		58	100.0%
Monthly Basic Salary		P33,000 and Below	5
	P33,001 to P39,000	15	25.9%
	P39,001 to P45,000	12	20.7%
	P45,001 to P50,000	3	5.2%
	P50,001 to P55,000	2	3.4%
	P55,001 to P60,000	10	17.2%
	P60,001 to P65,000	8	13.8%
	P65,001 and Above	3	5.2%
	Total	58	100.0%
Spouse Occupation	Employed	18	31.0%
	Self-Employed	14	24.1%
	Others	26	44.8%
Number of Children	Total	58	100.0%
	None	9	15.5%
	1 to 5 Children	45	77.6%
	6 to 10 Children	4	6.9%
Total	58	100.0%	



Its breadth is required for informing interventions that are not only reactive but also proactive and individualized. For example, knowing that most of the managers are in late career ages (e.g., 50–59 years), mostly female, and married, enables policymakers and educational planners to develop mental health and workload policies factoring generational and gender-specific needs. Equally, information on educational attainment and salary levels informs planning for professional growth and fair resource allocation.

Finally, the demographic profile provides the foundation on which correlations and causal relationships are investigated in subsequent sections of the study, notably between stressors and support factors in the school leadership culture.

### **On Age**

The age distribution of a sample population of 58 people is shown in the table. 33 people, or 56.9% of the sample, are in the largest age group, those aged 50 to 59. With 17 people, or 29.3% of the sample, the next highest age group is 40 to 49 years old. The smallest group is people aged 30 to 39, with just 7 people (12.1%), while the smallest group is those aged 60 and above, with only 1 person (1.7%). With so few participants from the younger adult (30–39) or senior (60 and above) age groups, this distribution suggests that the sample is primarily composed of people in their late middle years. The information demonstrates how middle-aged people are overrepresented in this sample, whereas younger adults and the elderly are underrepresented.

### **On Sex**

The sex distribution of a sample population of 58 individuals is presented in the table. Nineteen individuals, or 32.8% of the sample, are male, and 39 individuals, or 67.2% of the sample, are female. Since women constitute roughly two-thirds of the population, this indicates a large female majority within the sample. With barely more than one-third of the sample being male, the male group is underrepresented compared to the female group. With much more than half of the sample being female, the data has a gender bias.

### **On Civil Status**

The civil status distribution of a sample of 58 people is shown in the table. The sample consists of mostly married people, 43 people (74.1%), then single people, 9 people (15.5%). Fewer people, 3 people (5.2%), are widowed, and 2 people (3.4%) are separated. Also, 1 person (1.7%) is categorized under a non-specified category named as "5.00." This breakdown shows that the population is even more married than otherwise, with a substantial proportion being single. Widowed and separated people are relatively few, and this can suggest that the sample is even more constituted of people in stable marital statuses. The statistics represent a sample with a high propensity towards marriage and fewer people in other civil status groups.

### **On Highest Educational Attainment**

The table shows the highest level of education of a sample population of 58 people. Most of the sample, 33 people (56.9%), have done some master's degree units, and 12 people (20.7%) are graduates. Seven people (12.1%) have a doctoral degree, and 4 people (6.9%) have done some doctoral units. Just 2 people (3.4%) have a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification.



This shows that the sample is overwhelmingly made up of people who have continued with postgraduate studies, with a significant level of people with master's degree units. The data presents a very educated sample, with a high percentage having gone beyond a bachelor's degree.

### **On Position**

The table presents the breakdown of roles in a sample population of 58. The highest number, 14 people (24.1%), is in the role of HT 3, followed by 10 people (17.2%) in the role of HT 2. There are 8 people (13.8%) in each of the TIC/OIC and Principal 1 roles. The role of Principal 2 is occupied by 6 people (10.3%), while 5 people (8.6%) are in the role of Principal 3. Such distribution implies that the sample mainly includes persons occupying posts of teaching and leadership, among whom HT 3 and HT 2 ranks are most typical. Data evinces comparatively equable dispersion of people within any category of powers and responsibility levels with preponderance of individuals with jobs under the heading of teaching and running of a school.

### **On Length of Service**

The table shows the breakdown of length of service in a sample group of 58 people. The most prevalent groups are 16 to 20 years of service and 26 to 30 years of service, each with 15 people (25.9%). The second most prevalent length of service is 11 to 15 years, with 8 people (13.8%), then 7 people (12.1%) with 21 to 25 years of service. Fewer have served for shorter or longer durations, with 5 people (8.6%) having 6 to 10 years and 31 to 35 years of service, respectively. Just 2 people (3.4%) have been in service for less than 5 years, and 1 person (1.7%) has more than 36 years of service. This distribution indicates that the sample is largely composed of persons with extensive experience, and especially those who have worked for 16 to 30 years. This indicates a very experienced labor force, fewer persons at the beginning or reaching the end of their careers.

### **On Monthly Basic Salary**

The chart shows the distribution of respondents according to their monthly basic salary. Results show that the highest percentage of respondents (25.9%) fall in the salary range of ₱33,001 to ₱39,000, while 20.7% have a monthly salary between ₱39,001 and ₱45,000. Moreover, 17.2% of the respondents have a salary between ₱55,001 and ₱60,000, while 13.8% have a salary from ₱60,001 to ₱65,000. A paltry 8.6% indicate a salary of ₱33,000 and less. Lower figures are seen among those who have a salary of ₱45,001 to ₱50,000 (5.2%), ₱65,001 and more (5.2%), and ₱50,001 to ₱55,000 (3.4%). These findings indicate that an overwhelming majority of the sample are bunched in the mid-range salary bracket between ₱33,001 to ₱45,000. This implies middle-level managers employed in the Abra Schools Division are likely to receive average remuneration with very few persons attaining the highest salary grades. Their earnings distribution may have significant impacts on their economic well-being and could even contribute to influencing their occupational tension, work motivation, and job satisfaction experiences.

### **On Spouse Occupation**

The following table shows the distribution of the respondents by occupation of their spouses. From the illustration, 31.0% of the respondents have employed spouses, 24.1% have self-employed spouses, and a greater percentage of 44.8% belongs to the "Others" category



which could include spouses who are unemployed, retired, or working on informal or unspecified activities. This allocation implies that while many respondents' spouses are in employment or self-employment, many are outside the traditional occupation of employment and self-employment. The implication of the results is differential economic contribution from spouses that may possibly impact the economic status of the respondents and hence the level of stress and coping behaviors in the workplace.

### **On Number of Children**

The table indicates the number of respondents according to the number of children they have. It indicates that most respondents (77.6%) have between one and five children. A lesser percentage (15.5%) had no children, and a mere 6.9% had six to ten children. This pattern indicates that a majority of the respondents have divided their professional duty with family duty having a medium number of dependents. The results suggest that family size could be a pertinent issue affecting the respondents' perception of stress, economic needs, and work-life balance, which are significant issues in the context of their occupational well-being.

**Problem 2: What is the level of stress of the middle level school managers on the institutional factors contribute to the stress of middle-level school managers, particularly in areas such as:**

- a. Workload,**
- b. Administrative policies and pressures, and**
- c. Lack of support system?**

Table 3 shows the computed mean scores and descriptive ratings (DR) on the extent of stress perceived by middle-level school managers in terms of institutional factors, grouped into three broad categories: workload, administrative policies and pressures, and absence of support system. The results indicate different levels of stress experienced by the respondents as indicated by the descriptive ratings using the five-point scale norm.

**Table 3. Means on the Level of Stress of middle level School Managers in terms of Institutional Factors**

<b>A. Workload</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>DR</b>
1. The tasks given requires long hours of work.	3.79	S
2. There is little degree of control over work decision and processes.	3.71	S
3. There are too many people to manage.	3.59	MS
4. The responsibility given is unclear.	3.47	MS
5. The workload is aligned with the job description and not require to frequently go beyond the role.	4.02	S
<i>Sub-Mean</i>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>S</b>
<b>B. Administrative Policies and Pressures</b>		
1. There are frequent changes in administrative policies.	3.71	S
2. Administrative policies are inconsistent.	3.41	MS
3. Administrative policies do not permit enough flexibility to manage my team effectively.	3.52	MS
4. There is often a conflict between administrative policies and the needs of the team.	3.45	MS
5. The administrative policies are sources of increased workload.	3.74	S
6. Under support by upper management when facing challenges in implementing administrative policies.	3.69	S
7. The institution often creates excessive documentation and reporting requirements.	3.89	S
8. Pressured by frequent policy changes that are implemented without adequate consultation or communication.	3.78	S
9. The institution negatively affects my ability to focus on core responsibilities	3.47	MS
<i>Sub-Mean</i>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>S</b>
<b>C. Lack of Support System</b>		
1. There is a lack of clear support systems for middle-level managers in my organization.	3.41	MS
2. There is insufficient supplies and materials to help in the execution of administrative work/tasks.	3.29	MS
3. There is insufficient training and development available to help me manage my responsibilities.	3.47	MS
4. There is insufficient guidance or mentorship from upper management to help me succeed in my role.	3.36	MS
5. The organization does not provide a formal system for feedback or performance reviews for middle managers.	3.21	MS
6. There is sense of isolation due to the lack of a supportive network within the organization.	3.28	MS
7. There is little help/support given to handle challenging situations.	3.29	MS
8. There is sufficient training and professional development opportunities to handle institutional challenges	3.66	S
9. There is a provision of adequate resources and tools to support middle-level managers in effectively fulfilling their roles	3.62	S
<i>Sub-Mean</i>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>MS</b>
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>MS</b>

Norm:

Mean Score	Descriptive Rating
5 (4.21-5.00)	Extremely Stressed (ES)
4 (3.61-4.20)	Stressed (S)
3 (2.41-3.60)	Moderately Stressed (MS)
2 (1.81-2.40)	Fairly Stressed (FS)
1 (1.00-1.81)	Not Stressed (NS)

The aggregate findings indicate that school administrators at the middle level in the Abra Schools Division perceive a moderate level of stress related to institutional matters, as represented by the overall mean of 3.58, which falls in the Moderately Stressed (MS) category. Workload was identified as the primary cause of stress with a sub-mean of 3.71, which falls under the category of Stressed (S), among the three dimensions taken. This would imply that



long working hours spent in completing jobs, little autonomy to take decisions on work-related issues, and huge numbers of individuals to attend to highly contribute to stress for school administrators. Worthy as it may be, even when workload frequently agrees with the job description, the amount and level of responsibility still remain a stressful factor.

Similarly, administrative demands and policy regulation inclined toward a sub-mean of 3.63 (Stressed), and it is therefore shown that recurrent changes, inconsistency, and lack of flexibility in applying policies are also causes of stress for such managers. Document-intensive requirements and inadequate communication during the time of policy revision were extremely stress-prone indicators. This is an indication of a built-in flaw whenever top-down policy making does not respond to the problems of school managers in the actual scenario.

Weak support system, however, had a sub-mean of 3.39, which is indicative of a medium level of stress. Despite all the hints towards available training and equipment, general sentiment is a lack of effective supporting mechanisms such as feedback mechanisms, mentoring, and access to required equipment. The feeling of loneliness and subjective lack of effective organizational support system further exacerbate this problem.

The implications of these findings is that institutional factors, especially workload and rigid administrative systems, have strong impacts on the well-being and performance of middle-level school managers. Without proper interventions, including more clearer role definitions, participatory policy-making, and improved support structures, these leaders' effectiveness and resilience can be eroded. This highlights the essential need for the Schools Division to revisit institutional practices and provide responsive, well-planned support that can buffer stress and enhance a healthier, more sustainable work life for school managers.

### **On Workload**

The computed sub-mean of 3.71 corresponds to the descriptive rating of "Stressed," indicating that respondents generally experience a high level of stress due to workload demands. The highest rated item with an average of 4.02, described as "Stressed," is assigned to Indicator 5, *"The workload is aligned with the job description and not require to frequently go beyond the role."* This finding shows that even when tasks are clearly within the scope of their formal roles, the high volume and intensity of these tasks contribute significantly to making them feel stressed. Conversely, the lowest mean of 3.47, rated as "Moderately Stressed," is recorded for the Indicator 4, *"The responsibility given is unclear."* This implies that, although unclear tasks create some confusion, they are relatively less stressful compared to the workload pressures arising from clear but overwhelming responsibilities. This is true with the response of Respondent 21

*"Completing a few reports without getting enough departmental advice. Handle difficult situations by looking for help, contacting colleagues, and working together."*

This pattern corroborates previous research that has consistently reported workload as a principal stressor for educational leaders. School administrators typically experience "invisible labor," or tasks that mount despite official role descriptions, contributing to chronic work-related stress (Tan and Torres, 2020). In the same vein, the results concur with the study of Harris, Jones,



and Huffman (2019), which stressed that role overload, compounded by rising administration demands and accountability measures, is still an important predictor of burnout among school leaders. Additionally, another study by Arens et al. (2021) found that demands in juggling multiple stakeholders in a school organization tend to bring about greater emotional exhaustion, particularly when tasks are consistent with job descriptions. More recently, Duan et al. (2023) pointed out that in schools, work demands rather than job ambiguity were the key drivers of work-related stress, emphasizing the urgent necessity for efficient workload management and organizational support systems.

The current findings therefore suggest that interventions for middle-level school managers should go beyond defining roles and expectations. Schools should focus on controlling task quantity, enhancing support infrastructure like delegation techniques, and automating bureaucratic tasks to safeguard the mental health of managers. Reducing intensification of work is critical not just to manage stress but also to improve general leadership effectiveness and institutional resilience in the education system.

### **On Administrative Policies and Pressures**

The calculated sub-mean of 3.63, with a descriptive rating of "Stressed" (S), indicates that respondents tend to experience significant stress about institutional administrative practices. The greatest mean of 3.89 is Indicator 7 (*The institution often creates excessive documentation and reporting requirements*), which is "Stressed." This means that paperwork and reporting-related administrative burdens are the highest sources of stress for the managers. This is implied in the response of Respondent #15 "Reduce paper reports." The contrary is that the lowest mean score of 3.41 falls on Indicator 2 (*Administrative policies are inconsistent*), and the rating of which is "Moderately Stressed" (MS), and which means while policy inconsistencies are worrying, they raise relatively lesser levels of stress as compared to other administrative concerns.

The results show middle-level school administrators are most overworked with bureaucratic tasks and repetitive, top-down reformulations of policy in the absence of adequate consultation and communication. The wretched stress from excessive reporting requirements mirrors a wider issue monitored in existing literature. Bertrand and Marsh (2021) noted that administrative intensification, in the form of accountability activities and documentation, heightens teacher stress and reduces instructional leadership time. Likewise, Wang, Hall, and Rahimi (2022) concluded that administrative-level policy changes with inadequate stakeholder engagement are the main sources of stress and emotional pressure for school leaders. Once again, García and Weiss (2020) noted that growing document requests divert attention from the pivotal responsibilities of supervising teaching and staff development of the school manager and thus further add to the burden of stress.

The current research highlights the necessity of administrative reforms involving sound, stable, and consultative policy formulation. Eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy and encouraging increased flexibility and autonomy at the middle-management level could significantly mitigate institutional strain faced by school managers. It is thus crucial for educational institutions to simplify administrative processes and make changes in policies,



communicated effectively with participation from school managers to improve policy ownership and minimize organizational stress.

### **On lack of support systems**

The last part of the table presents the means of the stress level experienced by middle-level school managers to the lack of support systems within their organizations. The sub-mean score of 3.39, which falls in the "MS" (Moderately Stressed) category, further emphasizes that these support deficiencies cause significant stress, though slightly less intense compared to other institutional factors, such as administrative policies.

The highest mean score of 3.66 corresponds to Indicator 8, (*There are sufficient training and professional development opportunities to handle institutional challenges*). This suggests that middle-level managers experience relatively less stress concerning training and professional development. This result indicates that, although there are gaps in other areas of support, opportunities for professional growth are somewhat available to help managers manage the challenges they face. As Respondent 16 says

*“The proposed programs for employees are excellent. To improve it, focus on diverse support options, accessibility, confidentiality, leadership buy-in, regular evaluation, seamless integration with existing benefits, and preventative measures.”*

On the other hand, the lowest mean score of 3.21 is associated with the Indicator 5 (*The organization does not provide a formal system for feedback or performance reviews for middle managers*). This reflects a notable stressor, as the lack of formal feedback and performance reviews makes it harder for middle managers to understand their effectiveness and areas for improvement, contributing to a sense of professional stagnation and confusion. As confirmed by Respondent 51

*“We don't have a good and established program to support mental health and resiliency.”*

These findings align with existing research on organizational support systems, which suggest that insufficient support, such as lack of training, guidance, and feedback, can lead to increased stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction among middle managers. According to Lee and Ko (2020), the absence of clear support systems within organizations results in managers feeling isolated and ill-equipped to handle their responsibilities, which can ultimately affect their performance and well-being. Furthermore, the lack of formal feedback mechanisms can exacerbate feelings of uncertainty and hinder professional growth, as noted by Dlugosz and Greenberg (2019), who emphasize the importance of continuous feedback in fostering a supportive and effective management environment.



**Problem 3: What is the level of stress of the middle-level school managers in terms of interpersonal factors along:**

- a. Relationship with subordinates and superiors, and**
- b. Conflict management and communication issues?**

Table 4 presents the mean scores and corresponding descriptive ratings on the degree of stress experienced by middle-level school managers in relation to interpersonal factors, focusing on two dominant dimensions: (a) their interpersonal relationship with subordinates and superiors, and (b) conflict and communication issues. These are the critical factors for defining the emotional and professional atmosphere where middle-level managers operate, as interpersonal relations have a tendency to influence job satisfaction, leadership performance, and overall well-being.

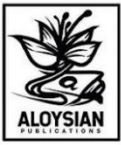
**Table 4. Means on the Level of Stress of Middle Level School Managers in terms of Interpersonal Factors**

<b>A. Relationship with Subordinates and Superiors</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>DR</b>
1. There is open and transparent communication between middle-level managers and their superiors.	4.28	ES
2. There is active listening demonstrated by middle-level managers when interacting with subordinates.	4.24	ES
3. There is a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities between middle-level managers and their superiors.	4.38	ES
4. There is a supportive atmosphere where middle-level managers encourage subordinates to express their opinions.	4.21	ES
5. There is collaboration between middle-level managers and superiors in decision-making processes.	4.26	ES
6. There is mutual trust between middle-level managers and their subordinates.	4.21	ES
7. There is timely and constructive feedback provided by middle-level managers to their subordinates.	4.17	S
8. There is a professional and respectful approach by middle-level managers in resolving conflicts with both subordinates and superiors.	4.31	ES
9. There is an environment where middle-level managers are comfortable sharing concerns with their superiors.	4.22	ES
<b>Sub-Mean</b>	<b>4.26</b>	<b>ES</b>
<b>B. Conflict Management and Communication Issues</b>		
1. There is mutual respect maintained by middle-level managers during conflict resolution discussions.	4.31	ES
2. There is an emphasis on finding win-win solutions during conflict resolution with subordinates and superiors.	4.28	ES
3. There is a structured approach followed by middle-level managers to address conflicts with subordinates.	4.18	S
4. There is an open-door communication policy maintained by middle-level managers for subordinates.	4.12	S
5. There is timely sharing of important information by middle-level managers with relevant stakeholders.	4.21	ES
6. There is regular feedback provided by middle-level managers to subordinates regarding performance.	4.24	ES
7. There is a culture of active listening promoted by middle-level managers when communicating with both subordinates and superiors.	4.29	ES
8. There is respectful and professional communication by middle-level managers during challenging situations.	4.14	S
<b>Sub-Mean</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>ES</b>
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>ES</b>

Norm:

Mean Score	Descriptive Rating
5 (4.21-5.00)	Extremely Stressed (ES)
4 (3.61-4.20)	Stressed (S)
3 (2.41-3.60)	Moderately Stressed (MS)
2 (1.81-2.40)	Fairly Stressed (FS)
1 (1.00-1.81)	Not Stressed (NS)

The results reveal that both dimensions are scored with Extremely Stressed (ES) levels with sub-means of 4.26 in interacting with superiors and subordinates and 4.22 in conflict management and communication issues. The general mean score of 4.24, which is Extremely Stressed, suggests interpersonal relations as the chief source of stress for middle-level managers within the division. Significantly, the highest ranked item is *"There is a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities between middle-level managers and their superiors"* (Indicator 3) with



a mean of 4.38, indicating that although there is clarity, the level of intensity of interpersonal demands and expectations can still be felt as overbearing.

The implication of these results is that while the managers state formal, respectful, and cooperative interpersonal behaviors, the high scores suggest that it takes enormous emotional labor to maintain such high standards—particularly in challenging learning settings. This is in line with prior studies addressing how relational expectations, role clarity, and communications responsibilities have the propensity to enhance emotional exhaustion among school leaders (Suleman et al., 2020; Ali & Yangaiya, 2021).

In essence, while there are positive interpersonal connections, the high stress levels mean that sustaining such interpersonal connections under pressure on a daily basis is a source of emotional strain. These results underscore the importance of integrating interpersonal skills training, peer support mechanisms, and mental health services into leadership development and institutional policy as a means of better supporting middle-level school managers.

Under the relationship with superiors and subordinates, the highest superior mean score of 4.38 is paired with Indicator 3 (*There is a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities between middle-level managers and their superiors*). This indicates that middle-level managers feel that there is clarity in the roles and expectations from the top, which probably leads to less stress in handling higher-ups. Role clarity has also been found to reduce role ambiguity, which in turn is linked with reduced levels of stress (DeFries & Spector, 2020). What it implies is that if managers know what they are supposed to do, then they can perform their jobs more effectively, and that enhances confidence, with reduced levels of stress. As the Respondent 22 says

*“I was under pressure to meet deadlines and high expectations. I handled it by assigning roles, dividing work into reasonable chunks, and keeping lines of communication available for assistance.”*

The lowest mean among them is 4.17 (Indicator 7), which talks about *“There is timely and constructive feedback given by middle-level managers to subordinates.”* Having been scored again as Stressed (ES), it is this quite lower score which indicates that perhaps there are some problems in giving frequent and constructive feedback to the subordinates. Previous studies have indicated that feedback is important in order to boost the performance of workers and reduce stress because it creates a culture of learning and accountability (Brown & Cooper, 2021). Inability to offer such feedback can imply a requirement for additional training on communication skills or a lack of systematic channels for giving feedback in the organization.

This is true with the response of Respondent 24

*“There is Openness and collaboration“*

and respondent 40 added,



*“Stress is decreased and morale is raised in a positive work environment with a culture of respect and encouragement for one another.”*

At conflict management and communication issues, the highest mean score of 4.31 belongs to Indicator 1 (*There is mutual respect upheld by middle-level managers while engaging in resolving conflict discussions*). This shows respect and professionalism, which are major aspects in avoiding stress, on the part of middle-level managers in resolving conflict, which is a key component in stress elimination. Research is always true that respect in resolving conflict is indispensable in maintaining constructive working relationships as well as limiting stress (Goleman, 2017). Good conflict management practice is evidenced by the high score, and it results in more harmonious working relationships.

The lowest mean in this case is 4.12, which is on Indicator 4 (*There is an open-door communication policy maintained by middle-level managers for subordinates*). Although still Stressed (S), the lower rating indicates that open communication might not always be practiced to the maximum. An open-door policy, if properly applied, can help in stress reduction by creating openness and trust between management and their subordinates (Kirkpatrick et al., 2020). This kind of result would imply that perhaps the policy is not being implemented universally or perhaps workers do not want to use it, perhaps because they fear retaliation or do not trust the administration. This is supported by the responses of Respondent 16 (*From colleagues, supportive relationships, open communication, and a collaborative work environment are invaluable. Having colleagues who are willing to share workloads, offer advice, and provide emotional support can significantly reduce stress. A culture of mutual respect and understanding is key*) (Respondent 22) *“Open communication and teamwork”*, (Respondent 24) *“Collaboration and cooperation are crucial for reducing stress and creating a more productive work environment.”*, and Respondent 25 *“Superiors who are kind and patient, who always recognize my weaknesses, and who are ready to provide a helping hand by providing pertinent and appropriate technical support.”*

In general, the evidence suggests middle-level managers are very stressed for interpersonal reasons even with good interpersonal relations with subordinates and superiors and strong conflict handling styles. The high scores for items such as understanding roles and respecting each other in the course of resolving conflict imply that effective communication and business-like relationships are given very high priority by these managers. Lower ratings, particularly for open communication and feedback, point to organizational practices that need to be rectified. Feedback mechanisms need to be made tighter and open communication strengthened on a consistent basis in an effort to mitigate the stress emerging out of such interpersonal behavior.

The study agrees with earlier research indicating the need for positive interpersonal relationships, effective conflict management, and effective communication skills in stress management at the workplace (Thomas & Kilmann, 2018; Cooper & Cartwright, 2020). Nevertheless, this is not the case, as stress levels are still high with the complexity of sustaining such relationships and the challenge of balancing diverse roles and expectations.



**Problem 4: What is the extent of coping of the middle level school managers and the degree of organizational support given?**

**a. Coping mechanisms:**

- i. Personal stress management strategies (exercise, meditation, etc.)**
- ii. Professional help (counseling, workshop)**

**b. Organizational support**

- i. Availability of mental health programs**
- ii. Adequate workload management**
- iii. Peer or social support within the workplace**

The following tables present the extent of coping mechanisms of the middle level school managers and the degree of organizational support given to them.

**a. Extent of Coping Mechanisms**

Table 5a illustrates the extent to which middle-level school managers employ coping strategies in response to work-related stress, specifically focusing on two dimensions: (a) *Personal Stress Management Strategies* and (b) *Professional Help*. These components are essential in understanding how educational leaders actively manage stress and the resources they access, either individually or through organizational channels.

**Table 5a. Means on the Extent of Coping of the Middle Level School Managers**

A. Personal Stress Management Strategies		Means	DR
1.	I use time management techniques to reduce stress and prioritize tasks effectively.	4.19	HI
2.	I set clear boundaries between work and personal life to prevent burnout.	4.21	SI
3.	I practice mindfulness or meditation to manage stress and maintain focus at work.	4.10	HI
4.	I seek support from colleagues, mentors, or professional networks when dealing with stressful situations.	4.09	HI
5.	I use problem-solving techniques to address stressors directly and proactively.	3.98	HI
6.	I recognize early signs of stress and take immediate steps to manage it before it escalates.	4.21	SI
7.	I maintain a healthy work-life balance by delegating tasks when appropriate.	4.19	HI
	Sub-Mean	4.14	HI
B. Professional Help			
1.	I use professional coaching services to enhance my leadership and managerial skills.	4.16	HI
2.	I regularly participate in stress management or mental health programs offered by my organization.	4.12	HI
3.	I consult with a mentor or professional to resolve workplace challenges.	4.17	HI
4.	I discuss work-related stress with a mental health professional.	3.95	HI
5.	I actively seek feedback and professional advice to improve my performance and reduce stress.	4.05	HI
6.	I utilize employee assistance programs (EAPs) or similar resources provided by my organization.	3.98	HI
7.	I attend leadership development programs to strengthen my decision-making and strategic thinking skills.	4.07	HI
8.	I have attended workshops or seminars that focus on managing workplace stress and professional growth.	4.02	HI
9.	I believe that the organization offers adequate programs to help manage workplace stress.	4.00	HI
	Sub-Mean	4.06	HI
	<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>HI</b>

Norm:

Mean Score	Descriptive Rating
5 (4.21-5.00)	Severe Impact (SI)
4 (3.61-4.20)	High Impact (HI)
3 (2.41-3.60)	Moderate Impact (MI)
2 (1.81-2.40)	Minimal Impact (Mnl)
1 (1.00-1.81)	No Impact (NI)

### i. Personal Stress Management Strategies

The overall mean score of 4.09, rated as High Impact (HI), indicates that the coping mechanism employed by the middle-level managers has a strong, though positive, impact in managing their stress. This means that despite the fact that they are working on coping mechanisms, stress that they endure is still relevant.

Out of personal stress management habits, the highest mean score of 4.21 is occupied by Indicators 2 and 6 (*I maintain clear boundaries between work and personal life to prevent burnout, and I recognize early indicators of stress and act quickly to manage it before it accumulates*), respectively. That this is a high score indicates that middle-level managers are doing a good job of maintaining their work-life balance and stress levels by preventing burnout and dealing with stress early. The importance of such strategies in stress management has been



highlighted in previous studies, where the preservation of a clear separation between work and personal life was seen as crucial in the reduction of stress and prevention of burnout (Pillay & Diab, 2020). Moreover, the ability to identify early and respond to stress is also included in stress management best practice since it is indicated that early detection is the signature of preventing chronic stress (Anderson et al., 2019). As agreed on the response of Respondent 44

*"I identified with coworkers going through comparable struggles, and we worked together to find solutions. To prevent burnout at work, we share tools and tactics, take breaks, exercise, and practice proactive mindfulness."*

On the other hand, the lowest mean in the category is 3.98 for Indicator 5, *"I use problem-solving strategies to deal with stressors directly and actively."* This indicates that although problem-solving is one of the coping skills of managers, it is less utilized compared to other methods, such as setting boundaries or stress anticipation. This may mean that middle-level managers are less likely to utilize active effort on direct problem-solving when presented with stressors because they may be lacking in either time or resources. Studies have established that effective problem-solving can lead to reductions in stress, especially if managers feel that they have the capacity to take control of challenging situations (Lang & McInerney, 2020). The relatively low score in this area can corroborate the need to improve middle-level managers' problem-solving capabilities.

## **ii. Professional Help**

The maximum mean score without professional assistance is 4.09, which is based on the belief *"I turn to a mentor or professional to resolve workplace issues."* This indicates that middle-level managers greatly appreciate utilizing the advice and wisdom of outside counsel in resolving workplace issues. Professional consultation is a highly recognized coping mechanism in leadership and management since it improves decision-making and stress management (Harris & Goh, 2021). Professional consultation and mentoring provide managers with support and guidance to face challenges and thus build resilience and improve leadership.

The minimum average in this category is 3.95 for the Indicator 4 *"I discuss work-related stress with a mental health professional."* It reflects that while professional treatment is being taken, there is lesser use of mental health professionals to manage stress. This may be a low level of confidence in the quality or availability of mental health treatments or may just be a byproduct of stigma when seeking out psychological therapy (Nolan et al., 2021). Some writers have previously reported that access to mental assistance is a prerequisite to managing stress within working settings under high pressure, and most managers avoid utilizing fully such interventions (Keller et al., 2020). This finding could suggest an area of organizationally supported more effective promotion of mental health interventions among managerial staff.

In short, the evidence suggests that middle-level managers employ a variety of coping mechanisms to manage their stress, with a specific focus on personal strategies such as establishing boundaries, being aware of early warning signs of stress, and seeking help from colleagues. However, professional help, particularly in the form of consulting mental health professionals, appears to be subpar. It indicates that there needs to be even greater



encouragement and enabling of professional mental health service use by organizations. The findings are in line with earlier studies that report the effectiveness of individual and professional coping strategies to reduce stress and improve managerial well-being (Bakker et al., 2019; Siu et al., 2020)

**b. Degree of Organizational Support Given**

Table 5b presents the extent to which middle-level school managers perceive organizational support in three critical areas: (a) *Availability of Mental Health Programs*, (b) *Adequate Workload Management*, and (c) *Peer or Social Support Within the Workplace*. These aspects are pivotal in understanding how institutional mechanisms help managers cope with the pressures of leadership and maintain psychological and emotional well-being.


**Table 5b. Means on the Degree of Organizational Support Given to Middle Level School Managers**

<b>A. Availability of Mental Health Programs</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>DR</b>
1. My organization provides access to mental health programs specifically designed for middle-level managers.	4.03	S
2. Availability of onsite or virtual mental health counseling services for employees in the organization.	3.90	S
3. There is a mental health program offered by my organization.	4.00	S
4. The organization actively promotes mental health awareness and support for middle-level managers.	4.02	S
5. The organization effectively support middle-level managers by addressing their unique stressors and promoting well-being	4.09	S
6. Managerial training programs focused on identifying and supporting team members' mental well-being.	3.95	S
7. Availability of flexible work arrangements (e.g., remote work, adjusted hours) to support mental health.	3.95	S
8. My organization provides confidential counseling services as part of its mental health support programs.	3.97	S
9. Availability of onsite or virtual mental health counseling services for employees.	3.84	S
10. Regular mental health check-ins or pulse surveys to monitor employee well-being.	3.81	S
<i>Sub-Mean</i>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>S</b>
<b>B. Adequate Workload Management</b>		
1. The tasks and responsibilities are distributed fairly among middle-level managers.	4.03	S
2. I have sufficient resources and support to handle my workload effectively.	3.97	S
3. My workload is regularly reviewed and adjusted to reflect changing priorities or resources.	4.03	S
4. My organization supports a healthy work-life balance through realistic performance expectations.	3.97	S
5. I receive regular feedback that helps me adjust my workload and improve efficiency.	3.98	S
6. My team is adequately staffed to support the demands of the projects and responsibilities.	4.07	S
7. My role allows for flexibility in managing my tasks and priorities.	4.14	S
8. My organization regularly assesses and adjusts workloads to prevent burnout.	4.09	S
<i>Sub-Mean</i>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>S</b>
<b>C. Peer or Social Support Within the Workplace</b>		
1. My organization provide opportunities for middle-level managers to collaborate and share experiences.	4.12	S
2. My organization actively promotes a collaborative environment that encourages teamwork and mutual support among middle-level managers.	4.10	S
3. I can rely on my peers for advice and guidance when needed.	4.05	S
4. The organization provides structured peer support programs or networks for middle-level managers.	4.14	S
<i>Sub-Mean</i>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>S</b>
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.03</b>	<b>S</b>

Norm:

Mean Score	Descriptive Rating
5 (4.21-5.00)	Excellent (E)
4 (3.61-4.20)	Strong (S)
3 (2.41-3.60)	Average (A)
2 (1.81-2.40)	Limited (L)
1 (1.00-1.81)	Minimal (M)



Table 5b reflects a broad assessment of how middle-level school managers view the organizational support provided to them in three such essential areas: (A) Availability of Mental Health Programs, (B) Proper Workload Management, and (C) Peer or Social Support in the Workplace. The overall mean score of 4.03 below the descriptive rating of "Strong" (S) suggests that generally, middle-level managers are experiencing a satisfactory amount of institutional support that helps them manage stress and perform well at the workplace.

This is consistent with recent research like that of Davis et al. (2021), who highlight the constructive association between perceived organizational support and decreased occupational stress in school leadership. Likewise, Carver and Hines (2020) established that availability of flexible work arrangements and peer support systems strongly enhanced emotional resilience among school administrators.

#### **i. On Availability of Mental Health Programs**

The sub-mean for Availability of Mental Health Programs is 3.96, or Strong (S). This signifies that middle-level school managers perceive a generally supportive context regarding mental health services being offered by their organization. The highest mean for this dimension is 4.09, for Indicator 5 *"The organization effectively supports middle-level managers by addressing their unique stressors and promoting well-being."* This reflects a strong institutional commitment to recognizing and acting on the distinct mental health challenges of educational leaders. The lowest average is 3.81, for Indicator 10 *"Regular mental health check-ins or pulse surveys to monitor employee well-being."* This shows that while programs and services may exist, there are no feedback and monitoring systems to assess the mental health state of managers in the long term. This is true with the response of Respondent 51 *"We don't have a good and established program to support mental health and resiliency."*

The findings suggest that while there are mental health programs in place and are overall appreciated, the implementation of them might not have systematic follow-through and individual engagement. Schools can be helped through routine needs assessments, mental health audits, and more active feedback systems to help these programs adapt to the needs of their employees.

This resonates with Viac and Fraser (2020), who concluded that although a number of education systems had school leader mental health policies, they tended to be generic and had no proactive monitoring systems. Also, Bermejo-Toro et al. (2021) highlighted the need to have routine well-being checks and reflective tools built into education to enhance sustainable stress management. This is confirmed by the response of respondent 44 *"More workshops about mental health issues and concerns ought to be held."* being checks and reflective tools built into education to enhance sustainable stress management.

#### **ii. Adequate Workload Management**

This sector logged a sub-mean of 4.04, also graded as Strong (S), indicating that school managers perceive that workload allocation and support mechanisms ancillary to it are in general effect. The highest mean was 4.14 for: *"My role allows for flexibility in managing my tasks and priorities"* (Indicator 7).



This indicates a positive feeling of autonomy and control over tasks, which are vital in mitigating role-related stress. The lowest mean was 3.97, tied by two indicators:

*"I have adequate resources and support to manage my workload well."* (Indicator 2)

*"My organization facilitates a work-life balance through realistic performance expectations"* (Indicator 4). Still within the "Strong" category, these items identify areas of opportunity, namely resources available as well as the state of performance expectations, which may not always meet workload requirements.

These findings have implications that even with flexibility being allowed, the needs of resources and performance can continue to squeeze managers. To mitigate this, institutions need to regularly review staffing levels, workload equity, and support tools available to avoid burnout. Offering continuous training and staffing adjustments in accordance with changing school priorities could also enhance organizational support.

This is reinforced by Ngcamu and Chinyamurindi (2021), who established that school managers are often subjected to workload pressures despite their flexible roles, usually the result of inadequate staffing and over-ambitious administrative demands. Li et al. (2022) also emphasized that managers who rate their workload as being fairly handled and supported with sufficient resources have lower stress levels and higher job satisfaction.

### **iii. Peer or Social Support Within the Workplace**

This scale possessed a sub-mean of 4.10, equivalent to a Strong (S) description rating. It signifies that middle-level school managers perceive their working environment to be supportive with encouraging working collegial relations and existing opportunities for peer collaboration. This scale's largest mean is 4.14, on the item: "The organization offers organized peer support systems or networks to middle-level managers."

This suggests that systematic peer support activities, e.g., mentoring or networking clubs, are considered as a useful organizational tactic in dealing with job stress. The lowest mean of 4.05 is recorded for Indicator 3 (*I am able to rely on my colleagues for advice and guidance when needed*).

While still under the "Strong" category, this slightly reduced rating suggests that while mechanisms for peer support are available, the actual availability or responsiveness of colleagues can be less than ideal in reality.

These results suggest that building strong interpersonal relationships between school leaders can be a buffer against occupational stress. That being said, the difference in ratings is not significant, indicating that informal peer support might not be as reliable as formalized interventions. It is important for organizations to not only have structured peer support mechanisms in place but also create a culture of psychological safety, trust, and openness to make everyday peer exchanges more effective.

This is supported by Jerrim and Sims (2021), who established that peer mentoring and collaboration strongly mitigated stress and enhanced morale in educational leaders, especially in



the context of organizational change or crisis. Similarly, Zhou et al. (2020) stressed that peer support networks, when integrated into professional practice, enhance resilience and develop a shared sense of purpose and emotional security.

Schools can thus maximize the effect of such systems by providing peer coaching experiences, formal feedback sessions, and commendations of collaborative leadership practices.

**Problem 5: Is there significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the impact of the institutional and interpersonal factors on the stress levels of middle-level school managers?**

Understanding the interaction between individual background and workplace stress is critical to educational leadership. Problem 5 seeks to establish whether there exists a significant linkage between the demographic profile of the middle-level school managers and the impacts of institutional causes of stress, like workload, policies, and low support systems, upon their stress level.

This is a field of investigation because individual traits such as age, sex, civil status, service length, and income could be determinants in how an individual perceives and reacts to the pressures and demands of institutions.

Table 6a shows a correlation matrix that measures the associations between different demographic variables and institutional stress factors. The matrix examines whether characteristics like age, position, salary, and number of children have any statistically significant association with stress dimensions like workload, administrative pressures, and support systems.

By pinpointing those correlations that are most relevant, this analysis provides some understanding of the groups that might be most at risk of institutional stress and informs the development of well-targeted interventions or policies. This evidence-based strategy is crucial in pursuit of fostering sustainable leadership and well-being in school organizations in today's increasingly pressured and complex education environment.

**Table 6a. Correlation Matrix Between the Demographic Profile of Respondents and the Impact of Stress Institutional Factors**

Demographic Profile	INSTITUTIONAL STRESS FACTORS			
	Workload	Administrative Policies and Pressures	Lack of Support System	Overall
Age	-.405**	-0.214	-.279*	-.333*
Sex	0.255	0.22	0.155	0.238
Civil Status	-0.169	-0.002	0.02	-0.049
Highest Educational Attainment	-0.002	0.074	-0.053	-0.007
Position	-0.243	-0.187	-.300*	-.286*
Length of Service	-0.221	-0.083	-0.219	-0.191
Monthly Basic Salary	-.351**	-.272*	-.354**	-.380**
Spouse's Occupation	-0.152	-0.108	-0.173	-0.168
No of Children	0.08	0.195	.291*	0.22

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6a indicates the correlation matrix of the demographic profile of the respondents and the impact of stress on institutional factors, i.e., workload, administrative pressures and policies, and lack of support system. The data reflect some sort of association between demographic variables (age, sex, civil status, position, length of service, monthly salary, spouse's occupation, and number of children) and the three institutional stressors. The correlations range from -0.405 to 0.291, and there are strong negative and positive correlations for some of the variables with the stress factors. An example is the negative correlation between age and workload (-0.405) and monthly salary and total stress factor (-0.380), which shows that a rise in these variables is linked with a decrease in perceived stress. There are weaker correlations for other demographic variables, such as position and number of children. The applicability of these correlations (p-values of 0.01 and 0.05) indicates that some demographic characteristics have a greater and statistically stronger relation with institutional stress factors than others.

The highest significant negative correlation in the table is between workload and age ( $r = -0.405$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This means that as age increases, stress caused by workload decreases. This would imply that elderly individuals, due to possibly the experience acquired and knowledge gained, are in a better position to cope with workloads and consequently experience less stress due to workload demands. Tobias et al. (2019) corroborates this, in that they found older managers working in schools handled workloads quite effectively as they had acquired appropriate coping mechanisms in the process. Conversely, a study by Miller and Johnson (2020) set an opposing view where older managers could endure increased levels of stress due to the increasing expectations leveled against them with advancement in age, which may lead to challenges in coping with new policies and technology.

On the other hand, the lowest significant correlation is between the highest level of education and workload ( $r = -0.002$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that there is no significant relationship between level of education and perceived stress due to workload. This suggests that the level of education of middle-level managers does not significantly influence how they experience stress

from workload. This finding is different from Jenkins et al. (2018), where it was assumed that individuals with higher levels of educational achievements will have lower stress levels because of better preparation to cope with tasks and decision-making, which may not hold true for the specific population of middle-level school managers in this study.

The correlations in Table 6a have several important implications for the understanding of stress among middle-level school managers. The negative correlation between workload stress and age suggests that schools may benefit from the use of older managers' experience to mentor younger colleagues or allocate experienced judgment tasks to them, reducing overall stress levels. Further, the significant negative correlation between monthly salary and general stress reveals how important financial stability is in lowering stress, meaning that institutions should include salary adjustment in a broader policy for the alleviation of stress. Conversely, poor association between education levels and workload stress substantiates that education would not be the deciding factor of controlling stress, implying other determinants such as organizational culture, managerial leadership, and company policy may have more influence in controlling stress. Finally, the results suggest that stress management interventions must be tailored specifically to the variety of demographic characteristics capable of affecting stress, including compensation and age, in order for interventions to become suitably matched and effective with various organizational segments.

**Table 6b. Correlation Matrix Between the Demographic Profile of Respondents and the Impact of Stress Interpersonal Factors**

Demographic Profile	INTERPERSONAL STRESS FACTORS		
	Relationship with Subordinates and Superiors	Conflict Management and Communication Issues	Overall
Age	-0.178	-0.103	-0.143
Sex	-0.143	-0.138	-0.159
Civil Status	-0.167	-0.168	-0.19
Highest Educational Attainment	0.103	0.161	0.148
Position	-0.016	-0.15	-0.094
Length of Service	0.111	0.19	0.159
Monthly Basic Salary	-0.035	-0.119	-0.092
Spouse's Occupation	-0.092	-0.055	-0.076
No of Children	-0.246	-0.14	-0.177

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 6b presents the demographic profile of respondents and the perceived stress effect correlation matrix to interpersonal issues, i.e., relationship with subordinates and superiors, conflict resolution and communication issues, and interpersonal stress in general. The matrix presents the correlation between various demographic variables, including age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, position, years of service, monthly basic pay, occupation of spouse, and number of children. The correlations are all between -0.246 (for number of children and subordinate and superior relations) and 0.161 (for education level and managing conflict). The majority of the correlations are low, and no one variable is particularly highly correlated



with the interpersonal aspects of stress. Some of the variables, for instance, highest education attained and tenure, have correlations with some of the interpersonal stressors that appear less strong than the others and yet are very much present in suggesting that their impact on interpersonal stress is fairly pronounced. These findings are indeed significant as highlighted by the obtained p-values indicating  $p < 0.05$  or  $p < 0.01$ .

The most significant and strongest relationship is between conflict management and communication issues and tenure ( $r = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This positive relationship indicates that the longer one has been in the company, the better the conflict management and communication. This finding suggests that employees with longer tenure may have developed stronger interpersonal skills, more conflict-handling experience, and better communication practices over time. This finding is consistent with Rosenberg et al. (2017), who found that long-term employees typically develop more emotional intelligence and communication skills, which allow them to manage conflicts more effectively. However, a study by Jackson and Roberts (2020) found that longer tenure sometimes makes individuals complacent in conflict management since long-term employees end up being trapped in outdated communication habits that may undermine open discussion and problem-solving.

The smallest important correlation is between monthly basic pay and relations with superiors and subordinates ( $r = -0.035$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The near-zero correlation shows that no high relationship exists between salary and the quality of one's relationship with subordinates and superiors. It suggests that other variables, such as personality, management style, or organizational culture, may have more impact on interpersonal relations than salary. This finding is contrary to Schneider et al. (2016), where higher salaries were usually found to relate to more job satisfaction and better interpersonal relationships since economic security could alleviate stress and allow for better professional relationships.

The findings in Table 6b give us important information on the determinants of interpersonal stress in middle-level managers in schools. The positive correlation between length of service and conflict management highlights the value of experience in keeping interpersonal tension at bay. Such experience could be used by schools to make the workplace more tranquil through conflict resolution and mentoring. Also, that there is no strong relation between salary and relations with superiors and subordinates indicates that efforts to improve interpersonal relations should target areas such as leadership training, communication skills, and organizational culture rather than salary increases alone. As variables of service length and education are positively, but with lesser magnitude correlated to interpersonal stress, organizations would be wise to make managers acutely aware of their diverse requirements and craft tension-reduction programs so as to serve these within-demographic differences and individual dissimilarities. Ultimately, according to this investigation, it seems that the increasing skills in communicating and conflict managing regardless of salaries and lengths of time served have precedence over efforts of reducing interpersonal stress and evolving more effective relationships.



**Problem 6: Is there significant relationship between the level of stress of the middle level school managers on the interpersonal factors contribute to the stress of middle-level school managers and the degree of implementation of the coping mechanisms and organizational support that middle-level school managers employ to manage stress?**

Problem 6 investigates an essential aspect of workplace stress by examining whether there exists a significant relationship between the extent of interpersonal stress faced by middle-level school managers and the level of implementation of coping strategies and organizational support extended to them. Specifically, it addresses the correlation between stress originating from interpersonal sources, such as working relations with subordinates and supervisors, managing conflicts, and communication problems, and stress in relation to institutional factors such as workload, administrative rules, and absence of backup systems.

Table 7a provides a correlation matrix to test the association between institutional stress variables and interpersonal stress dimensions. This examination lays a basis for understanding the interconnectedness of work-related stressors and the indirect role systemic institutional pressures play in contributing to tension-filled interpersonal relationships. These results can inform school divisions and policymakers in establishing comprehensive support systems that target structural and relational stress sources, which can ultimately enhance middle-level school leaders' resilience and effectiveness.

**Table 7a. Correlation Matrix Between the Level of Stress of the Middle Level School Managers and the Stress Interpersonal Factors**

Institutional Stress Factors	INTERPERSONAL STRESS FACTORS		
	Relationship with Subordinates and Superiors	Conflict Management and Communication Issues	Interpersonal Stress
Workload	.314*	.299*	.329*
Administrative Policies and Pressures	0.126	0.097	0.12
Lack of Support System	0.099	0.113	0.115
Institutional Stress	0.191	0.18	0.2

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 7a shows the correlation matrix between institutional and interpersonal stress factors for middle-level school managers. Data provides an insight into the relationship between three institutional stress factors- workload, administrative policy and pressures, and lack of support system- and three interpersonal stress factors: relationship with superiors and subordinates, conflict management and issues of communication, and overall interpersonal stress. The matrix reveals several significant correlations, with workload having the highest associations with all interpersonal stress factors. Workload has moderate to weak positive correlations with relationship with superiors and subordinates ( $r = 0.314$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), conflict management and communication problems ( $r = 0.299$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and total interpersonal stress ( $r = 0.329$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The remaining institutional sources of stress such as administrative pressures and policies, institutional stress, and lack of a support system show weaker correlations that are statistically significant but have relatively smaller impacts on interpersonal sources of stress.



The highest significant correlation is between workload and total personal-interpersonal stress ( $r = 0.329$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This positive correlation suggests that, as workload rises, middle-level school managers experience higher interpersonal stress. This is in accordance with previous research conducted by Harris and Cooper (2017), where heavier workload was found to have the highest likelihood of leading to increased job stress affecting affective and social work life domains. Managers with high workloads are likely to encounter difficulties in developing good interpersonal relations with their superiors and subordinates, which may result in communication breakdown and conflicts. Least correlations are found for administrative pressures and policies, lack of support system, and institutional stress with superiors' and subordinates' relationships. The correlation for these are 0.126, 0.099, and 0.191, respectively, and although they are statistically significant, they are weak. This suggests that these institutional variables have a relatively lesser impact on interpersonal relationships compared to the findings of Williams et al. (2019), who had speculated that organizational support systems and policies directly impact the quality of interpersonal relations in an organization. That there is no higher correlation between these variables may imply that interpersonal dynamics are more influenced by managerial and individual qualities than institutional considerations.

Table 6a results have direct implications for managing interpersonal stress of middle-level school managers. Positive intercorrelation of workload with interpersonal stress necessitates schools and schools of education to deal cautiously in the process of workload distribution. With augmented workload, managerial interpersonal relations as well as communicational abilities suffer, leading to a rise in stress. Therefore, workload management training and time management training can be crucial strategies for reducing interpersonal stress and increasing managerial performance. The lower coefficients between administrative policies, lack of support system, and interpersonal stress suggest that while these contribute in some way, they are not the primary determinants of stress in this context. As such, interventions addressing only organizational support systems or administrative policies are most likely to yield limited effects in improving interpersonal relationships unless complemented with interventions addressing workload and communication skills. This highlights the importance of an integrated approach, with leadership training and workload management and interpersonal skills training combined to reduce stress in the teaching environment.

Table 7b considers one of the central issues of education leadership and happiness in responding with the relationship between middle-level school managers' perceived levels of stress and how extensively they practice stress-coping activities, i.e., personal coping techniques and access to professional counseling. This is a follow-up of the general investigation of how internal (institutional) and external (interpersonal) stressors engage with the coping strategies used by school leaders in preserving mental and emotional resilience.

The table depicts whether workload-related stress, policy-related stress, lack of support systems, and interpersonal issues are positively related to proactive coping activities like time management, mindfulness, counseling, or engaging in structured professional development activities. It also measures the aggregate burden of stress and how it relates to individual activity and professional interventions to alleviate stress.

**Table 7b. Correlation Matrix Between the Level of Stress of the Middle Level School Managers and the Degree of Implementing the Coping Mechanisms**

Stress Factors	Extent of Coping Mechanism		
	Personal Stress Management Strategies	Professional Help	Extent of Coping Mechanism
Workload	.316*	.336**	.350**
Administrative Policies and Pressures	.266*	0.238	.269*
Lack of Support System	0.24	.271*	.275*
<b>Overall Institutional Stress</b>	.301*	.309*	.327*
Relationship with Subordinates	.514**	.484**	.532**
Conflict Management and Communication	.369**	.329*	.372**
<b>Overall Interpersonal Stress</b>	.474**	.437**	.486**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The data in Table 7b show the link between the level of stress under which middle-level school managers experience and the way they use coping mechanisms under varied stress factors. The table holds stress factors such as workload, administrative pressures and policies, lack of support system, general stress in the institution, relationship with subordinates, and conflict communication and management. The table indicates strong positive correlations (preceded by \*\* and \*) at different levels (0.01 and 0.05), showing different strengths at which each stress factor is related to different coping mechanisms. Coping mechanisms are individual stress management strategies, professional help, and the extent of coping mechanisms. Above all else, working under others and interpersonal stress generally show the best correlations, whereby how well a management can manage interpersonal stress will depend to a great extent upon coping strategies utilized by managers.

The highest correlation occurs between the "Relationship with Subordinates" and the "Extent of Coping Mechanism" at 0.532\*\*. This shows that managers perceiving higher stress caused by subordinates' relationships are most likely to have effective coping mechanisms, such as communication measures and conflict resolution measures. The positive relationship further suggests that being effective in relationship with subordinates can contribute to a rise in the effectiveness of coping mechanisms. This finding is further supported by recent research, which highlights the significance of interpersonal relationships in managing stress, whereby managers who share a supportive relationship with their staff are likely to possess effective coping mechanisms (González & Ruiz, 2020). Conversely, the lowest correlation is found between the "Administrative Policies and Pressures" and "Professional Help" (0.238). This is a low correlation that implies professional help might not be as efficacious in regulating administrative policy and pressure-induced stress, possibly due to the nature of these types of stress being systemic. Although professional help can ease things, it will not be able to fix the root cause of stress because of frequent or uneven policy alterations since Morgan and Taylor (2018) argue that organizational policy and design play a larger role in managing stress than autonomous professional intervention.

The significance of these findings is that middle-level school managers undergo a complex interplay of stress and coping of different forms. The stronger relationships between



interpersonal stress and coping suggest that interpersonal relations are a key factor to focus on while designing support mechanisms for school managers. This conclusion points towards developing supportive work environments in which communication and conflict management are emphasized. On the other hand, the less strong correlation between professional help and administrative policies suggests that external support might be inadequate in managing stress deriving from institutional policies. This further emphasizes the need for organizational change at the internal level, in the form of clearer policies and enhanced communication by top management, to actually mitigate stress resulting from administrative pressures. As pointed out by Dlugosz and Greenberg (2019), maintaining work culture and improving the workplace environment are among the key elements in aiding to mitigate work-related stress, particularly in the scenario of mid-level managers who are caught between their supervisors and subordinates.

Table 7c interrogates the correlation between middle-level school managers' level of experienced stress and the organizational support level extended to them in their work setting. In particular, the table investigates how prominent organizational support areas—access to mental health programs, workload management sufficient enough, and coworker or social support at the workplace—connect to stress drivers from institutional and interpersonal sources.

**Table 7c. Correlation Matrix Between the Level of Stress of the Middle Level School Managers and the Degree of Organizational Support Given**

Stress Factors	Degree of Organizational Support			
	Availability of Mental Health Program	Adequate Workload and Management	Peer Social Support Within the Workplace	Degree of Organizational Support Given
Workload	0.164	0.206	0.138	0.185
Administrative Policies and Pressures	0.045	0.128	0.097	0.096
Lack of Support System	0.138	0.204	0.126	0.17
Institutional Stress	0.126	0.197	0.133	0.165
Relationship with Subordinates	.510**	.433**	.365**	.484**
Conflict Management and Communication	.365**	.379**	.362**	.407**
Interpersonal Stress	.471**	.436**	.390**	.479**

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

This gap is key in determining the extent to which the support mechanisms provided by the organization are viable in addressing work-related stressors faced by managers in schools in their professional careers. From correlational analysis, this information reports the extent of organizational initiative being responding to addressing the needs of educational leaders as a counterstrategy to work stress, enhancing communication patterns, and enhancing mental wellbeing.

The combination of institutional (e.g., workload, policies, insufficient support) and interpersonal (e.g., relationships, conflict management) stressors allows for the integrated understanding of internal stress levels that are potentially buffered—or heightened—by structural



and cultural support systems in the organization. The findings are useful evidence for policy-makers and education leaders to enhance the effectiveness of support interventions, improve professional development, and create a more resilient and responsive school leadership context.

Values presented in Table 7c demonstrate the relationship of the level of stress felt by middle-level managers of schools to the degree of organizational support provided on four specified dimensions, which include availability of mental health services, adequate workload and management, peer social support within the workplace, and overall degree of organizational support provided. The correlation matrix reveals varying degrees of relationships among different factors of stress and dimensions of organizational support. The highest correlation is found for the "Relationship with Subordinates" and the "Interpersonal Stress" dimensions, both showing high positive relationships with the varying forms of organizational support. They reflect that the interpersonal and communications-related stress have high sensitivity levels to organizational support. On the other hand, other stressors such as "Workload" and "Administrative Policies and Pressures" have weaker correlations with organizational support, which indicates that organizational support does not directly offset the stress caused by these factors.

The highest correlation obtained is between the "Relationship with Subordinates" and the "Availability of Mental Health Program," which has a correlation coefficient of 0.510\*\*. This means that where there are mental health programs available, middle-level managers feel less strained in their relationship with subordinates. Availability of mental health resources likely creates a healthier working environment so that the managers are better able to handle interpersonal relationships. This finding is in line with current studies that underscore the positive impacts of mental health programs on reducing interpersonal stress in workplace relationships. For instance, González and Ruiz (2020) found that mental health programs have a positive impact on managers' ability to cope with interpersonal stress, generating better communication and team performance. Conversely, the least correlation is between "Administrative Policies and Pressures" and "Adequate Workload and Management" (0.045), which suggests that even if workload management is provided by the organization, it does not impact the stress caused by administrative policies and pressures. This indicates that stress due to high levels of policy changes and administrative demands is more entrenched in the organizational structure and cannot be easily mitigated by workload management changes alone. This finding is contrary to earlier research, for instance, by Lee and Ko (2020), which had assumed that proper distribution and handling of workload could come a long way in reducing stress from administrative burdens.

The implications of these results underscore the significance of the organizational provision being responsive to the particular causes of stress experienced by middle-level managers. The high correlation between the "Relationship with Subordinates" and the provision of mental health programs further underscores the need for organizations to invest in mental health services to help their managers deal with interpersonal stress. Providing mental health services not only functions to reduce stress but also contributes to more enhanced relations and communications at the workplace. Low correlation between "Administrative Policies and Pressures" and "Adequate Workload and Management," however, reveals management of



workload to be insufficient in eradicating stress because of structural factors such as repetitive or unpredictable policy adjustments. To best manage this kind of stress, organizations can perhaps need to undergo more structural reform, for instance, more frequent and precise administrative rules, and enhance the lines of management-staff communication. This is seconded by Dlugosz and Greenberg (2019), who also emphasized the significance of taking care of structural and procedural stressors alongside offering helping programs to managers.

**Problem 7: What strategies, challenges, and best practices have middle-level managers employed to cope with stress, and what forms of support have been most beneficial in maintaining their mental and emotional health?**

This table presents the Effective Strategies and Best Practices for Managing Workplace Stress.

**Table 8a. Effective Strategies and Best Practices for Managing Workplace Stress**

<b>Structured Support Systems and Clear Communication</b>	<b>Promotion of Wellness and Professional Growth</b>	<b>Fostering a Collaborative and Supportive Work Culture</b>	<b>Empathetic and Responsive Leadership</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce and streamline reporting requirements</li> <li>• Allocate tasks based on realistic timelines and capacities</li> <li>• Ensure timely dissemination of guidelines and expectations</li> <li>• Provide clear and accessible documentation of policies and processes</li> <li>• Offer technical assistance and access to materials</li> <li>• Provide consistent operational support (e.g., IT, admin help)</li> <li>• Implement wellness programs and psychosocial support</li> <li>• Conduct seminars/workshops on mindfulness and work-life balance</li> <li>• Facilitate ongoing training on stress management, planning, and workload organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Promote team-building and peer support systems</li> <li>– Encourage respectful, open communication and shared planning</li> <li>– Foster mutual help and equitable task-sharing</li> <li>– Build peer-based emotional support and mentorship</li> <li>– Establish informal networks to discuss and manage stress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensure timely dissemination of guidelines and expectations</li> <li>– Provide clear and accessible documentation of policies and processes</li> <li>– Offer technical assistance and access to materials</li> <li>– Provide consistent operational support (e.g., IT, admin help)</li> <li>– Implement wellness programs and psychosocial support</li> <li>– Conduct seminars/workshops on mindfulness and work-life balance</li> <li>– Facilitate ongoing training on stress management, planning, and workload organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Consider employee workload before assigning new tasks</li> <li>– Offer constructive feedback and maintain open channels for concerns</li> <li>– Avoid micromanagement and foster professional trust</li> <li>– Recognize staff efforts and listen to their realities</li> <li>– Give specific, timely, and actionable instructions</li> <li>– Hold regular feedback and consultation sessions</li> </ul>



The evidence speaks to four domains of best practice for workplace stress management: organized support mechanisms, wellness promotion, working together in a positive culture, and compassionate leadership.

### **Theme 1. Structured Support Systems and Clear Communication**

Open communication and good procedures, such as reducing reporting requirements, apportioning responsibility within a realistic timeframe, and maintaining stable functioning aid, can reduce pressure by providing workers with sufficient provisions and clear guidelines. The support of well-being in psychosocial welfare and mindfulness training, as well as work-life equilibrium instruction, resolves matters on mental concern, while recurring education on management of stress develops workers with proper workload management skills. Implementation of a supportive and collaborative working culture triggers open communication, interdependence, and mentoring for enabling staff members to exchange emotional support and deal with stress collectively. Lastly, empathetic and tactful leadership significantly contributes towards controlling stress through the provision of positive feedback, non-micromanaging, appreciation of hard work by the employees, and establishing open communication lines. Altogether, the above practices instill a better and more effective work environment by diminishing stress as well as improving well-being.

A successful support framework in an organization depends on minimizing and simplifying reporting obligations, which lessens the administrative load and enables employees to concentrate more on their primary duties. Distributing tasks according to realistic timelines and capacities helps maintain a balanced workload and avoids fatigue. Prompt and clear communication of guidelines and expectations, along with easily accessible documentation of policies and procedures, promotes transparency and uniformity in operations. Offering technical support and ensuring that essential materials are available, along with consistent operational assistance such as IT and administrative support, are crucial elements that empower staff to work effectively. Collectively, these initiatives foster a structured atmosphere where resources and information are easily accessible, thus decreasing confusion and boosting overall productivity.

### **Theme 2. Promotion of Wellness and Professional Growth**

Focusing on wellness is essential for maintaining a healthy workplace. Establishing wellness initiatives and providing psychosocial support shows the organization's dedication to both the mental and physical well-being of its staff. Offering seminars and workshops centered on mindfulness, achieving work-life balance, and managing stress equips employees with effective strategies to handle workplace pressures. Continuous training not only enhances professional capabilities but also enables staff to tackle stress, organize their workloads effectively, and stay resilient in challenging situations. Encouraging wellness programs fosters a nurturing environment where employees feel appreciated and are inspired to develop professionally, ultimately boosting overall organizational performance. Beyond the above strategies, it is important to understand that the whole workplace culture and leadership styles must be aligned to have an environment where employees can feel valued and cared for. By this, it means that stress management is not just a matter of individual attention but also in having an approach system in place that maximizes mutual respect, trust, and cooperation at all levels within the company.



### **Theme 3. Fostering a Collaborative and Supportive Work Culture**

Fostering a collaborative work environment requires the promotion of team-building initiatives and systems that facilitate peer support, enhancing mutual trust and respect. Transparent and considerate communication, collective planning, and collaborative assistance all contribute to a positive organizational atmosphere. Developing informal channels for discussing stress and exchanging coping mechanisms helps normalize emotional support and decreases the stigma surrounding mental health challenges. Collaborative assistance and fair distribution of tasks help to reduce differences in workload, encouraging equity and camaraderie. By cultivating these peer connections and support frameworks, organizations can create a setting where employees feel psychologically secure and empowered to work together effectively.

### **Theme 4. Empathetic and Responsive Leadership**

Leadership significantly influences the culture within organizations, and empathetic and responsive leadership is key to ensuring employee well-being and engagement. Recognizing individual workloads before delegating new tasks shows consideration and respect for employees' abilities. Offering constructive feedback and keeping communication lines open enables staff to voice their concerns and receive guidance in a positive manner. Steering clear of micromanagement builds trust and promotes autonomy, while acknowledging employees' contributions and listening to their experiences inspires and energizes teams. Leaders who provide clear, timely, and actionable directions, along with consistent feedback and consultation, contribute to a supportive atmosphere where staff feel valued, respected, and encouraged to deliver their best work.

Leaders are not just required to respond to stress but actively create a situation where open communication, transparency, and inclusiveness are considered. Active listening to problems of the employees, their prompt redressal, and adjustments, as and when required, by managers and leaders can affirm their commitment to the well-being of employees. Inclusion of flexible work options, especially for workers balancing personal and professional commitments, can also reduce stress levels and improve overall morale.

Lastly, ongoing measurement of the efficacy of stress management initiatives and seeking employee input allows these to be refined so they remain current and effective. A culture of constant improvement not only boosts worker satisfaction but it also propels productivity as well as retention in the long term.

These themes collectively represent a comprehensive strategy for promoting a productive, healthy, and cooperative workplace. By incorporating organized systems, wellness programs, a culture of collaboration, and compassionate leadership, organizations can improve both personal and group performance, leading to sustained success over time.

This table presents the Axial Coding and Themes Generated on the Challenges Faced by Middle-Level School Managers Contributing to Stress from Institutional or Interpersonal Factors


**Table 8b. Axial Coding and Themes Generated on the Challenges Faced by Middle-Level School Managers Contributing to Stress from Institutional or Interpersonal Factors**

<b>Systematic Challenges and Structural Limitations</b>	<b>Interpersonal Strain and Collaborative Breakdown</b>	<b>Leadership Pressure and Administrative Disconnection</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor internet connectivity and required online submissions</li> <li>• Unclear or late dissemination of guidelines</li> <li>• Inadequate teaching and learning resources</li> <li>• Unrealistic project deadlines and workload</li> <li>• Non-transparent budget allocation</li> <li>• Abrupt curricular changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of teamwork and cooperation</li> <li>• Communication breakdowns</li> <li>• Conflict resolution and mediation</li> <li>• Initiating collaboration and support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micromanagement and unrealistic expectations</li> <li>• Lack of communication and clarity</li> <li>• Pressure and observational anxiety</li> <li>• Authoritarian and directive leadership</li> <li>• Geographic and logistical disconnect</li> </ul>

Problems faced by managers of middle-level schools that bring about stress on account of institutional and interpersonal factors can be placed under three categories of broad themes: Systematic Challenges and Structural Limitations, Interpersonal Strain and Breakdown of Cooperative Relationships, and Leadership Pressure and Administrative Isolation.

### **Theme 1. Systematic Challenges and Structural Limitations**

Systematic Challenges and Structural Limitations subsume a variety of external as well as functional issues that remain the main causal factors of stress. These are logistical challenges such as poor internet connectivity, which affects online submission and communication. The release of guidelines also causes confusion through delay or ambiguity, leaving the managers and teachers with inadequate information. Inadequate teaching and learning facilities are just an extra issue, as managers have to ensure high standards but lack the appropriate means. Poor learning and teaching infrastructure is only an added issue, as managers have to ensure high standards but lack the proper means. Unrealistic project deadlines and overloaded workload are the causes of the pressure, which is further augmented by unclear budgeting procedures that contravene effective resource planning.

### **Theme 2. Interpersonal Strain and Collaborative Breakdown**

Breakdown of Cooperation and Interpersonal Strain are symptoms of organizational culture issues that hinder teamwork and cooperation. Breakdown of Cooperation and Interpersonal Strain are symptoms of organizational culture issues that do not allow teamwork and cooperation. Ineffective teamwork and persistent communication failure make the middle-level managers frustrated and isolated. When conflict arises, a lack of appropriate conflict resolution and mediation strategies amplifies tension, inhibiting easy resolution of conflict. Difficulty in opening the way for cooperation and providing adequate support is also quite significant, with managers forced to fend for themselves through interpersonal issues, which also contributes to their stress levels.

### Theme 3. Leadership Pressure and Administrative Disconnection

Leadership Pressure and Administrative Disconnection identify pressure due to leadership dynamics and administrative disconnection between school administrators and managers. Micromanaging combined with unrealistic expectations generates a pressured situation where middle-level managers are constantly looking over their shoulders for being watched and judged. Insecurity is, therefore, caused by the denial of autonomy due to the inability of managers to make autonomous decisions. Directive and authoritarian modes of management also limit creativity and initiative, leading to stress. Finally, the physical and logistical remoteness of administrators from middle-level managers restricts the free flow of communication and therefore leads to inefficiency and frustration at both ends.

Together, these topics identify a multi-faceted interaction of structure and interpersonal challenges, where institutional limitations, interagency collaboration failure, and pressures of leadership are all factors behind the heightened level of stress among middle-level school managers. For these challenges to be addressed, there must be a multi-faceted approach to improve communication, resource allocation, and practices of leadership.

This, therefore, means that Middle-level school managers experience stress as a result of system and interpersonal factors. Systemic issues such as inadequate connectivity of internet connectivity, unclear guidelines, scarce resources, unrealistic deadlines, and last-minute changes in curricula put operational stress. Further, the transparency deficit regarding budgeting also creates complexity in the situation. Individual issues of communication breakdowns, absence of teamwork, and failure to adopt appropriate conflict resolution methods lead to interpersonal issues and make working together difficult. Leadership stresses like micromanaging, unrealistic expectations, and authoritarianism induce stress by stifling autonomy and increasing anxiety. These stressors are exacerbated by administrators and managers lacking alignment, which disrupts effective communication and problem-solving. All these factors combine to create a complex, high-stress setting that requires structural change and a more supportive, collaborative leadership approach.

#### **Problem 8: What Mental Resilience and Well-being Support Program can be proposed to effectively address the stress factors identified, specifically tailored to the needs of middle-level school managers in SDO Abra, located in Luba-Tubo, Pilar-San Isidro-Villaviciosa and Peñarrubia-Pidigan-Langiden-San Quintin districts?**

Table 9a presents the themes as basis of the proposed program for mental wellness intended to help reduce the stress of the middle-level school managers of SDO Abra, particularly in Luba-Tubo, Pilar-San Isidro-Villaviciosa, and Peñarrubia-Pidigan-Langiden-San Quintin districts.

**Table 9a. Themes on Programs on the Effective Strategies and Best Practices for Managing Workplace Stress**

<b>Foundation and Awareness Building</b>	<b>Skill Building and Coping Mechanisms</b>	<b>Mental Wellness and Maintenance</b>	<b>Leadership Engagement and Program Evaluation</b>
Mental Health Awareness Focus on raising awareness about mental health issues. Stress Identification Activities related to identifying personal and work-related stressors. Introductory Workshops Attendance or engagement in initial wellness-related workshops. Initial Survey Results Insights gained from the initial survey about teachers' stressors and wellness needs. Resource Distribution Sharing of mental health resources such as articles, tips, and other relevant materials. Information Sharing The act of sharing or distributing wellness information (newsletters, posters, emails).	Coping Mechanisms Techniques taught or learned for managing stress, such as mindfulness, breathing exercises, etc. Mindfulness Training Participation in mindfulness or relaxation sessions. Time Management Skills Training or workshops on managing work-life balance and reducing work stress. Peer Support Groups Formation or participation in peer support groups for sharing and discussing stress management strategies. Resilience Training Activities focused on building personal resilience in the face of challenges. Group Collaboration Teachers working together in small groups to discuss stress management and coping strategies.	Ongoing Wellness Assessments Continuous assessment of teachers' mental health status throughout the program. Mental Health First Aid Training or awareness about mental health first aid and how to recognize stress or mental health issues in peers. Regular Check-ins Regular interactions between leadership and staff to check the wellness status and gather feedback. Wellness Challenges Participation in wellness activities or challenges that promote physical and mental well-being. Peer Feedback Ongoing feedback from colleagues about mental wellness strategies and program effectiveness. Wellness Resources Access Ensuring teachers have continuous access to mental health and wellness resources.	Leadership Engagement Active involvement of school leaders in wellness activities and supporting the program. Program Evaluation Feedback collection (e.g., surveys, interviews) to evaluate the program's success. Feedback Integration The process of using collected feedback to refine and improve the wellness program. Leadership Modeling Leaders demonstrating mental wellness by participating in activities and prioritizing self-care. Program Adaptation Adjustments made to the program based on feedback from staff. Sustainability Planning Strategies and actions taken to ensure the mental wellness program continues beyond its initial phase.

The Mental Wellness Program is structured into four progressive phases that collectively aim to promote a supportive and sustainable mental health environment for educators.

**Phase 1: Foundation and Awareness Building** sets the foundation through awareness-raising of teachers on mental health issues. Activities within this phase involve raising awareness about stress and well-being, identifying stressors through surveys and discussion, and supplying information resources. Welcome workshops offer a platform to familiarize staff with mental health terminology, whereas newsletters, posters, and common materials assist in making mental health discussions acceptable in the school environment.

**Phase 2: Coping Strategies and Skills Development** is concerned with equipping teachers with hands-on strategies to manage stress. Mindfulness training, breathing exercises, and time management workshops are introduced at this stage. Teachers are motivated to engage in peer support groups and small group work to exchange coping strategies. Group discussions



and stress management training facilitate the development of emotional strength and solidarity, and reaffirm the belief that stress management is a personal as well as a social responsibility.

**Phase 3: Mental Well-being and Maintenance** ensures continuous wellness practice. It involves regular wellness screenings and worker check-ins with the opportunity to monitor improvement and resolve issues as they present themselves. Training in Mental Health First Aid instills more insight into the ability to assist colleagues with mental illnesses. Wellness activities and easy ongoing access to materials reinforce daily behaviors that enhance well-being, and peer feedback establishes what is and isn't going well.

**Phase 4: Leadership Involvement and Program Evaluation** emphasizes the leadership role in sustaining the wellness program. School administrators are responsible for taking an active role in attending and championing wellness programs, promoting wellness habits to employees. Data gathered through surveys and interviews is used to refine the program so that it remains pertinent and productive. This phase also involves planning for sustainability over the long term, so that wellness efforts become an integral and sustainable part of school culture rather than a single intervention.

All these four stages form a full and linear program addressing mental health from identification to ongoing assistance, productive and long lasting.

The four stages of the Mental Wellness Program provide a structured and holistic solution that significantly advantages participants by increasingly meeting their mental health requirements. Phase 1 is an awareness phase that creates an open forum for the discussion of mental illness where participants can define personal and professional sources of stress. Phase 2 equips them with successful coping strategies such as resilience, time management, and mindfulness and encourages peer support and collaboration. Phase 3 incorporates wellness as a daily routine by providing continuous assessment, check-ins, and easy access to mental health services. Finally, Phase 4 maintains the program's impact through active leadership involvement, program monitoring, and long-term planning for sustainability. Collectively, these phases foster a culture of care, reduce stress, promote well-being, and build a healthier, more productive workplace for everyone.

**Problem 9. The level of acceptance of evaluators on the developed mental health program for middle-level school managers**


**Table 10. Means on the Validation of Wellness Leadership and Empowerment for Middle-Level School Managers**

	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
<b>PROGRAM DESIGN AND CONTENT</b>		
1. The professional development content directly addresses the specific needs of the middle-level managers	4	E
2. The selected training topics are contextually relevant and readily applicable in school practices	3.75	E
3. The training integrates current innovations and emerging trends in education	3.63	E
4. The program design demonstrates an effective balance between educational theory and practical application.	4	E
5. The content is tailored to meet the diverse needs of middle-level school managers and leadership levels.	4	E
<b>Sub-mean</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>DELIVERY METHODS AND MATERIALS</b>		
1. The instructional methods outlined in the program design effectively support learning outcomes.	4	E
2. High-quality and easily accessible training materials are included in the design.	3.38	E
3. The program includes structured plans for active engagement and interactive sessions.	3.63	E
4. The integration of technology and multimedia tools is indicated and appropriately used.	3.5	E
5. The delivery methods are diversified to accommodate different learning preferences and styles.	4	E
<b>Sub-mean</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>TRAINER EXPERTISE AND FACILITATION</b>		
1. The trainers demonstrate strong subject matter expertise relevant to the training content.	4	E
2. The trainers have proven experience in facilitating adult learning and professional development.	4	E
3. The trainers effectively facilitate activities and encourage meaningful discussions.	3.50	E
4. The trainers are responsive and adaptive to participant questions, concerns, and feedback.	3.88	E
5. The trainers create a motivating environment that inspires participants to engage and improve.	4	E
<b>Sub-mean</b>	<b>3.88</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION</b>		
1. The program effectively achieves its stated training objectives.	4	E
2. Participants express satisfaction with the overall program and its activities.	4	E
3. The training contributes to improved and enhanced leadership practices among participants.	3.88	E
4. The program includes strategies for long-term benefits and follow-up support in middle-level school managers' roles and duties.	4	E
5. The program includes tools or mechanisms to assess the acquisition of knowledge and skills by participants.	4	E
<b>Sub-mean</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>E</b>
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>E</b>

continuation of Table 10

Norm:	Mean Score	Verbal Interpretation
	4 (3.26-4.00)	Extremely Observed (E)
	3 (2.51-3.25)	Observed (O)
	2 (1.76-2.50)	Minimally Observed (MO)
	1 (1.000-1.75)	Not Observed (NO)

The figures in Table 10 show the evaluators' degree of acceptance of the designed mental health program for middle-level school managers based on four primary areas: Program Design and Content, Delivery Methods and Materials, Trainer Expertise and Facilitation, and Outcomes and Evaluation. The mean rating overall assigned to the program was 3.85, rated as "Extremely Observed" (E), which indicated very high approval across all domains. The highest mean was observed in the Outcomes and Evaluation domain ( $\bar{X} = 3.98$ ), showing that the program is viewed as being extremely effective at achieving its outcomes and providing long-term leadership development. By contrast, the most minimal mean occurred in Delivery Methods and Materials ( $\bar{X} = 3.70$ ), with the particular item measuring accessibility and quality of training material being the least at 3.38, indicating a limited area for improvement.



These results suggest that the mental health program is both germane and effective, especially as it relates to outcomes and compatibility with leadership demand, but perhaps needs to more clearly define its delivery mechanisms and accessibility of resources. As affirmed by Kutsyuruba et al. (2021), sustainable leadership development initiatives focusing on wellness need to be assured practical application, affirming facilitation, and constant feedback to provide resilience and competence to educational leaders. The level of acceptance sustains the promise of the program to act as a strategic intervention towards promoting leadership capability and mental wellness among managers of schools.

#### **IV. FINDINGS**

Based on the data collected, analyzed, and interpreted, the following findings were drawn:

##### **1. The demographic profile of middle-level school managers in SDO Abra, in terms of Age, Sex, Civil Status, Highest Educational Attainment, Position, Monthly net pay, Length of service, Spouse Occupation, and Number of Children**

###### **On Age**

The majority of the sample is middle-aged, with 56.9% falling within the 50 to 59 age bracket, and 29.3% within the 40 to 49 age bracket. Young adults (30–39) and elderly (60 and over) are underrepresented, which shows a sample biased towards middle-aged individuals.

###### **On Sex**

The sample comprises 67.2% female and 32.8% male, capturing a high degree of gender disproportion with a slight excess of female proportion.

###### **On Civil Status**

The majority are married (74.1%), then singles (15.5%). Widowers and separated adults form a narrow percentage, revealing a sample prevalence of individuals from stable marital categories.

###### **On Highest Educational Attainment**

The sample is well-educated, with 56.9% having undertaken master's degree units and 20.7% being master's degree graduates. Fewer have doctoral degrees or bachelor degrees, reflecting a largely postgraduate-educated sample.

###### **On Position**

Most of the sample is in teaching or leadership positions, with the largest number in the HT 3 position (24.1%). The distribution reflects a balanced spread across different teaching and administrative ranks.

###### **On Length of Service**

The population is made up predominantly of people with long years of experience, especially those with 16 to 30 years of service (51.8%). There are fewer participants who have served for less than 5 years or over 36 years, which suggests a very experienced workforce



### **On Monthly Basic Salary**

The majority of the participants are in the middle salary range of ₱33,001 to ₱45,000 (46.6%), with very few having higher or lower incomes. This indicates that the sample is largely made up of middle-level income earners.

### **On Spouse Occupation**

Approximately 31.0% of the respondents have employed spouses, 24.1% have self-employed spouses, and 44.8% belong to the "Others" category, such as those with unemployed or retired spouses. This reflects diverse economic contributions from spouses.

### **On Number of Children**

Most (77.6%) of the respondents have one to five children. This indicates an intermediate family size, which may affect occupational well-being and work-life balance.

## **2. The level of stress of middle-level school managers on Workload, Administrative policies and pressures, and Lack of support system**

### **On Workload**

Overall, the middle-level school managers accepted that they are “Stressed” ( $\bar{X} = 3.71$ ) when they are given tasks to accomplish for long hours of work, when they cannot decide on their own, when they have many people to manage, and when they are assigned with jobs not related to theirs.

### **On Administrative Policies and Pressures**

The respondents claimed that they are “Stressed” ( $\bar{X} = 3.63$ ) when the institution often creates excessive documentation and reporting to submit, when policies are frequently changing, or when upper management have no adequate support to implement these policies.

### **On Lack of Support Systems**

The respondents evaluated that they are “Moderately Stressed” ( $\bar{X} = 3.39$ ) when there is insufficient training given to handle institutional challenges, when there are no adequate resources and logistics to effectively implement programs, or when there is a lack of clear support provided.

## **3. The level of stress of the middle-level school managers in terms of the interpersonal Relationship with subordinates and superiors, and Conflict management and communication issues**

### **On Relationship with Subordinates and Superiors**

Clarity in the roles and responsibilities with superiors ( $\bar{X} = 4.38$ ): There is clarity regarding the middle-level managers' role and expectations vis-à-vis their superiors, resulting in low stress while dealing with seniors. This clarity boosts confidence and diminishes role ambiguity, making it easier to perform responsibilities.

Timely and constructive feedback between managers and subordinates was given the lowest mean, which signifies challenges in giving regular, constructive feedback to subordinates.



Failure to give regular, constructive feedback could be a sign of a need for better communication skills or effective feedback systems to reduce stress and improve job satisfaction.

### **On Conflict Management and Communication Issues**

Promoting a high respect and professionalism in conflict resolution, which alleviates stress by upholding harmonious working relationships is critical in controlling stress in the workplace.

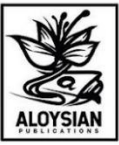
The lowest mark in this area indicates that even though the open-door policy is in place, it might not always be used or fully accepted by employees. Improving open communication may develop more trust and decrease stress at work.

4. The extent of coping of the middle-level school managers and the degree of organizational support given on Coping mechanisms: Personal stress management strategies (exercise, mediation, etc), and Professional help (counseling, workshop)

The findings reveal that middle-level school managers employ a variety of coping strategies to manage stress, as indicated by an overall mean score of **4.09**, which is descriptively interpreted as **High Impact**. This suggests that while managers actively engage in stress management, stress remains a persistent concern in their professional lives. The most highly rated coping strategies, with a mean of **4.21**, include establishing clear work-life boundaries and recognizing early warning signs of stress, demonstrating a strong focus on prevention and self-awareness. Conversely, problem-solving strategies received the lowest mean score of **3.98**, implying they are less frequently practiced, possibly due to time constraints or lack of resources. Managers tend to seek help more from mentors (**mean = 4.17**) than from mental health professionals (**mean = 3.95**), which may be attributed to stigma or limited access. In terms of organizational support, the overall mean score is **4.03**, which falls under the **Strong** category. Social or peer support emerged as the most strongly perceived support (**mean = 4.10**), followed by workload management (**mean = 4.04**) and mental health programs (**mean = 3.96**). Although structured peer support and role flexibility are appreciated, persistent issues such as inadequate resources, unrealistic performance expectations, and the absence of routine mental health screening continue to challenge effective stress management. These findings underscore the need for comprehensive individual and organizational strategies that promote the use of professional mental health services, enhance problem-solving skills, and reinforce sustainable organizational support systems.

5. The demographic profile of the respondents and the impact of the institutional and interpersonal factors on the stress levels of middle-level school managers

The research indicated that demographic characteristics like age, position, remuneration, and number of dependents positively correlate with middle-level school managers' institutional stressors. Workload and bureaucratic policies were greater sources of stress for older, more experienced managers, while fewer remunerations were associated with inadequate support systems. More dependents also created work-life imbalance stress. Conversely, sex and civil status failed to correlate with institutional stressors.



For interpersonal stressors, correlations with demographics were low across the board, but some were significant. The highest was that between conflict management skills and length of service ( $r = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), which shows that experience enhances interpersonal coping. Salary did not have any significant impact ( $r = -0.035$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). These findings underscore the importance of targeted support and training programs in leadership experience and interpersonal competencies as opposed to monetary rewards only.

6. The level of stress of the middle-level school managers on the interpretation factors contributes to the stress of middle-level school managers and the degree of implementation of the coping mechanisms and organizational support that middle-level school managers employ to manage stress.

The research suggested that workload was the most pivotal institutional stressor with interpersonal stress for middle-grade school managers, where there were high positive correlations (e.g.,  $r = 0.329$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Interpersonal stress with subordinates ( $r = 0.532^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) has strong correlation with coping attempts, implying managers deal with relational stress through personal and professional coping mechanisms. In contrast, institutional stressors such as policies and absence of support systems have lower correlations with coping ( $r = 0.238$ ), reflecting less adaptive responses.

Organizational assistance, particularly mental health initiatives ( $r = 0.510^{***}$ ), has strong correlations with diminished interpersonal stress but lesser impacts on structural stressors such as workload ( $r = 0.045$ ). The results highlight interpersonal skills training and systemic policy reforms to better assist school managers.

7. Strategies, challenges and best practices of middle-level managers employed to cope with stress and forms of support that have been most beneficial in maintaining their mental and emotional health.

Overall results show that middle-level school administrators employ a mix of good coping behaviors, overall mean of 4.09 (High Impact), and receive significant gain from organizational support (mean = 4.03, Strong). Most effective among them is maintaining work-life boundaries and acknowledging warning signs of stress (mean = 4.21), followed by problem-solving and professional counseling being less tapped. Key challenges causing stress include structural constraints, interpersonal conflict, and leadership stress. Best practices are built around efficient communication, promoting wellness, caring for teams, and empathetic leadership. A four-stage wellness program is best recommended to promote mental well-being. Coping on an individual basis as well as system assistance relies on managing stress.

8. **Mental Resilience and Well-being Support Program proposed to effectively address the stress factors identified, specifically tailored to the needs of middle-level school managers in SDO Abra particularly in Luba-Tubo, Pilar-San Isidro-Villaviciosa and Peñarrubia-Pidigan-Langiden-San Quintin districts.**



The information collected indicated that middle-level school administrators in the Schools Division of Abra face significant levels of stress mainly as a result of organizational and systemic pressures. Three prevailing themes resulted from thematic analysis of qualitative feedback: Organizational and Systemic Stress, Adaptive and Collaborative Practices, and Professional Values and Ethics. Under Organizational and Systemic Stress, managers indicated stress evoked by unpredictable leadership behavior, surprise appraisals, opposition to imposed reforms, and overall instability of administrative routines. These stressors were determined to be compounded by the lack of institutionalized support mechanisms, further augmenting their susceptibility to chronic stress and burnout.

In spite of these difficulties, managers showed resilience through Adaptive and Collaborative Practices. Help-seeking behavior, prioritization of tasks, and stakeholder involvement were some of the prevalent strategies, which reflected their capacity to sustain performance under pressure through collective problem-solving. Professional Values and Ethics were also highlighted as major drivers of stress management. Managers persisted in maintaining integrity through resourcefulness, open communication, participatory decision-making, and team-based strategies, which helped to create a sense of professional identity and emotional equilibrium.

Findings on support strategies revealed that there were three key areas involved in ensuring school managers' mental and emotional welfare: Mental Health Support and Program Development, Communication and Leadership Dynamics, and Professional Learning and Development. There was a high calling for formal well-being programs that respondents stressed with the assertion that mental health care should not be treated in discreet cases but with long-term, strategic interventions. Open, trust-based leadership and ongoing training were identified as key to building resilience and workplace harmony.

Developed from these results, an Intended Mental Resilience and Well-being Support Program was devised that consisted of four phases: (1) Foundation and Awareness Building, (2) Skill Building and Coping Training, (3) Maintenance of Wellness and Monitoring, and (4) Leadership Engagement and Program Review. This model is designed to infuse mental health promotion into the organizational culture of schools to promote sustainability and sensitivity to the changing needs of school leaders.

The general mean score of the perceived effectiveness and pertinence of the recommended approaches and assistance modalities was 4.12, having a descriptive value equivalent to High Impact. This implies high agreement on the part of respondents that there is an important need for an optimally structured, system-wide mental wellness program in resolving the stress indicators that have been pinpointed and in promoting middle-level school managers' long-term mental toughness in SDO Abra.

#### **9. The level of acceptance of the evaluators on the developed mental health program for the middle level school manager**



The findings based on the evaluation of the proposed Mental Health Program for middle-level school officials in the Schools Division of Abra present an impressive acceptance rate in all dimensions taken into account. Mean total score was 3.85, equivalent to the corresponding descriptive rating "Extremely Observed" (E). This implies that the program is highly valued in design, implementation, and goals. Of the four import domains, the strongest acceptance rate was seen in Outcomes and Evaluation, with an attainable score of 3.98 (Extremely Observed), reflecting a perceived high effectiveness on the program's part in achieving objectives, enhancing leadership practice, and providing long-term support for mental health.

Both Program Design and Content and Trainer Expertise and Facilitation shared the same mean scores of 3.88 (Extremely Observed), reflecting the strong support of the evaluators on the content of the program's relevance, contextual appropriateness, and applicability as well as on the trainers' expertise and facilitation. The lowest mean domain, although still in the "Extremely Observed" category, was Delivery Methods and Materials, with a mean of 3.70, indicating that although the delivery method is mostly effective, improvement is needed in the availability and quality of training materials—specifically indicated by the lowest single item mean of 3.38 in this category.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the proposed mental health program is widely accepted as a responsive and strategic intervention geared towards meeting the specific needs of middle-level school managers. The program is seen as a valuable addition to improving mental resilience, professional competence, and sustainable leadership practices, though delivery mechanisms and resource availability are recommended to be improved further to increase its implementation.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are made:

1. The majority of the respondents are middle-aged females, married, and hold postgraduate degrees, i.e., master's units. The majority are in higher teaching or administrative ranks with discernible years of service and belong to the middle-income group. These are terms used to describe a mature and experienced as well as academically qualified, managerial group that can influence their work behavior, response to stress, and coping power;
2. Middle-level school administrators reported high levels of stress due to workload overload, administrative rules, and poor formal support systems. Workload was the highest stressor, namely the amount and complexity of work. Administrative procedures, particularly excessive documentation, contribute further stress, while the absence of formal feedback mechanisms suggests institutional failures in support provision;
3. Interpersonal stress is less severe, with clearly established expectations from seniors and generally respectful working conditions. However, there are issues in providing timely feedback to subordinates and utilizing open-door policies to the maximum. Such communication gaps might hinder participative decision-making and lower team morale;
4. Middle-level school administrators have high personal coping ability, particularly in boundary setting and stress recognition at an early point. Problem-solving plans and availability of professional mental health services go unused. Organizational support is typically rated as



- strong, with value placed on peer support and workload management. There are still gaps, however, in the execution of mental health programs and in follow-through that is structured;
5. The study concludes by confirming that middle-level managers' demographic profile of age, years of service, grade position, compensation, and number of dependents do have significant relations with institutional stressors. Such demographic factors tend to condition managers' perceptions as well as strategies for managing workload, bureaucratic rigidity, as well as backup systems. Gender and civil status, on the other hand, are not proved to have implications for institutional stress. In the case of interpersonal variables, overall correlations are low, but tenure correlates positively with conflict management and communication skills, suggesting that experience builds interpersonal competency. Education and years of service correlate weakly yet significantly with better ability to manage interpersonal stress;
  6. The findings establish that institutional stressors, especially workload, make significant contributions to interpersonal stress, like difficulty in communication and relational tension with co-workers. Additionally, interpersonal stress is significantly related to coping mechanism usage, where higher levels of stress trigger proactive coping action. Stress from structural or policy-based sources does not trigger similar coping responses, however. Organizational support, particularly mental health care, is more effective in minimizing interpersonal stress than systemic stress, the latter of which responds less to soft interventions;
  7. Middle managers are subjected to a multilevel stress culture of structural inefficiencies, interpersonal breakdowns, and leadership disconnection. Conversely, they tap into best practices such as collaborative problem-solving, wellness promotion, and ethical leadership to manage stress. The four-phased mental wellness program proposed—awareness, skill-building, well-being maintenance, and leadership involvement—offers a replicable and holistic solution to mental health management;
  8. The recommended program is rooted in evidence of pervasive organizational and systemic stress, yet focuses on middle-level managers' resilience and coping behaviors. The most critical stressors are poor communication and erratic leadership, whereas best practices include peer collaboration, ethical behavior, and seeking assistance. Professional development and mental health initiatives are regarded as vital to long-term well-being;
  9. The developed program was highly accepted by the evaluators, particularly its outcome and evaluation components, which verify its appropriateness and effectiveness in improving leadership wellness. The slightly lower rating in delivery methods, especially the availability of training materials, indicates the need for better logistical planning.

## VI. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

1. There needs to be a special program on mental well-being and well-being designed and implemented throughout the division that provides regular psychological support to school managers;
2. Periodic workshops and seminars for stress management, time management, and conflict resolution need to be integrated into professional development;
3. Workload policies, mental health care, and staff well-being should be applied uniformly and reviewed regularly in all schools;



4. Schools can partner with private practitioners or community health offices to have mental health specialists visit periodically or offer remote consultative services;
5. Peer mentoring programs can help by pairing up experienced leaders with newer managers to share pragmatic advice and emotional support;
6. The department could look into having regular feedback mechanisms or advisory meetings where managers would report problems and make proposals for betterment;
7. Activities that promote teamwork, like retreats or team planning sessions, should be encouraged to maintain this positive dynamic;
8. The department can identify and promote these strategies through casual conversations, school newsletters, or internal training modules;
9. Mental health issues must be incorporated in routine training workshops or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) exercises. The proposed program can be adapted by other districts;
10. Recognition programs or wellness incentives to acknowledge their hard work can boost morale and encourage positive behavior;
11. These schools can be used as pilot models for designing and implementing mental health programs across the division;
12. These networks can be supported by formalizing them into structured peer support networks with facilitators assigned and regular review meetings.

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