

# Challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, and administrative performance of school heads in Magsaysay Occidental Mindoro

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## ***Abstract***

This study focused on the challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, and administrative performance of school heads in the Magsaysay district, Occidental Mindoro. The goal was to identify the sources of stress encountered by school heads, study their stress-coping mechanisms, and determine the relationship between stress-coping strategies and administrative performance. The respondents were school heads within the Magsaysay district, and the data were gathered through a validated survey questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale that focused on job stress, self-reported physiological disorders, stress coping mechanisms, and administrative performance, as rated by the IPCRF. The research revealed that school heads use five stress-coping strategies: time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices. Despite challenges such as workload pressure, fatigue, common physical strain, coping mechanisms are high and administrative performance is strong, indicating effective management of professional obligations. Results demonstrated a significant positive relationship between coping mechanisms and administrative performance, with time management, emotional support, and self-care practices showing the most importance. Based on the study, an enhancement program is suggested to improve school heads' stress management, focus on task prioritization, increase bonding networks, promote self-care, and improve socialization to enhance well-being, and maintain high administrative performance.

***Keywords:*** school heads, stress-coping mechanisms, IPCRF, administrative performance, stress

## **Challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, and administrative performance of school heads in Magsaysay Occidental Mindoro**

### **1. Introduction**

School heads play an important role in leading the future and prosperity of educational organizations. They are an important factor within the educational landscape, charged with maintaining high educational standards, managing responsibilities, and creating an inclusive environment that promotes student and professional development (Leithwood et al., 2020). The school heads' leadership is reflected in student achievement, teacher productivity, and the school environment (Sebastian et al., 2019). It is posited that effective school leadership significantly contributes to enhancing educational standards and fostering educational sustainability (Bush, 2023).

School leadership is viewed as a profession burdened by stress, requiring school heads to balance administrative responsibilities and maintain good public relations for the school. School heads are consistently under pressure from accountability systems, teacher evaluations, and student achievement requirements, which provide increased stress. Based on the findings of Becker and Grob (2021), the aspects of school management, including increased workload and emotional labor, place school heads at a higher risk of chronic stress and burnout. The ability to manage stress is important to the performance and wellness of school heads. Coping with stress helps reduce the negative effects of occupational stress and improve leadership effectiveness. According to Jennings et al (2020), effective stress management is related to improved productivity by helping school heads' cognitive and emotional resources. According to Akindola et al. (2023), school heads who consistently practice stress management exhibit greater resilience and better performance under pressure. These findings highlight the importance of stress management, administrative effectiveness, and educational outcomes.

The educational leadership framework in the Philippines is strongly influenced by national guidelines aligned with global standards. The Department of Education (DepEd) has released Memorandum No. 013, s. 2024, which clarifies the duties of school heads in relation to the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSH). This framework highlights the key competencies required of school heads, including supervising teaching, making strategic decisions, and effectively administering educational institutions. Additionally, Division Memorandum No. 475, s. 2023 highlights the essential role of school heads in enhancing teaching quality and student achievement through systematic monitoring and evaluation. The national dedication to instructional leadership, combined with professional development, aims to improve not only the management skills of school heads but also other areas of school leadership.

Magsaysay District, located in Occidental Mindoro, reflects the various challenges and opportunities that school heads in rural areas encounter. The district encompasses 33 elementary schools and 7 high schools, all managed by a small number of school heads who are tasked with numerous duties. According to Ruedas and Ruedas (2020), public school heads in Magsaysay face constraints such as heavy workloads, inadequate training opportunities, and limited resources, which significantly affect their performance and engagement in professional development programs. These conditions not only test the leadership skills of school heads but also enhance the need for effective stress management practices. At the same time, addressing stress-coping mechanisms among school leaders in Magsaysay is essential to promoting administrative performance, ensuring a conducive learning environment, and supporting the broader objectives of educational excellence in the region.

With the growing demands and problems confronting school heads in the Magsaysay district, this research was undertaken to ascertain how physical anguish affects their administrative authority and the coping strategies they use to maintain efficiency and well-being. This will help provide a better understanding and offer insights for school administrators, policymakers, and the Department of Education when creating programs and support

networks that focus on mental health, efficiency, and the production of work in the recreation of school leadership. Finally, this endeavor aims to enhance educational leadership practices and quality education in Magsaysay, Occidental Mindoro. Studies clearly show that school heads under chronic stress often face a range of physical problems—frequent headaches, sleepless nights, constant tiredness, and even stomach issues (DeMatthews et al., 2023; McLean et al., 2022). However, in the Philippines, most research focuses on teachers in cities and their mental strain, rather than on the physical aches and health complaints of school heads in far-off rural areas (Sarabia & Collantes, 2020; Maguate & Capio, 2024). When school heads in Magsaysay were interviewed, only headaches were mentioned. This study steps in to capture the full picture, linking what they feel in their bodies to how well they lead, offering real help for school heads in the Magsaysay district.

**Statement of the Problem** - This study aimed to explore the challenges encountered and the coping mechanisms of school heads and to determine their effects on their administrative performance. Particularly, it seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What are the stress-coping mechanisms of school heads? (2) What is the level of stress-coping mechanisms of school heads in terms of time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices? (3) What is the level of challenges experienced by school heads in terms of job stress and self-reported physiological disorders? (4) What is the level of administrative performance of school heads based on their IPCRF rating? (5) Is there a significant relationship between the level of challenges experienced by the school heads and the level of stress-coping mechanisms in terms of time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices? (6) Is there a significant relationship between the level of stress-coping mechanisms and the level of administrative performance of school heads? (7) What enhancement program can be devised for the school heads to cope with challenges encountered?

**Significance of the Study** - The researcher of this study deems that the results provide a basis for school heads to recognize the relationship among challenges encountered, coping mechanisms, and administrative performance, thus helping them make better choices to maintain effectiveness in leadership and personal wellness. Hence, the following persons and organizations. First, the school heads can gain greater awareness of how stress management practices affect their job performance and personal relationships. Second, the teachers can create better collaboration and communication with school heads. Third, the study benefits students by improving academic achievement, enhancing well-being, and encouraging comprehensive development. Lastly, to serve as a guide or reference for future researchers with similar studies.

**Scope and Delimitation of the Study** - This study focused on the challenges encountered, stress-coping mechanisms, and administrative performance of school heads in Magsaysay District, Occidental Mindoro. It specifically analyzed job-related stress and self-reported physiological disorders, such as hypertension, headaches, and insomnia. The identified coping mechanisms are limited to five areas: time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices. Administrative performance was measured using Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form (IPCRF) ratings for the 2024-2025 school year. The study is limited only to school heads in Magsaysay District, Occidental Mindoro. Therefore, the findings are not generalizable to school heads in other districts in the other province or in nearby or other regions. Despite the research instrument being validated by experts from different districts in Occidental Mindoro, the data were collected only from the Magsaysay District. The study period is from January to November 2025.

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - A mixed-methods approach applying an exploratory sequential design is used in this research. The research started with qualitative data collection by using interviews and was followed by quantitative data collection through a survey questionnaire. Thematic analysis was utilized to understand and report common patterns in the qualitative data. This offered the study a flexible and solid foundation aligned with the purpose of exploratory research. The design allowed the researcher to gain insights into the experiences and contexts regarding their stress-coping strategies. Moreover, the quantitative phase applied a descriptive

correlational design to assess the challenges encountered by the school heads. Specifically, job stress and self-reported physiological disorders, in addition to the levels of stress-coping mechanisms, including time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices. Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design is an important step when researchers look to create insights through qualitative exploration and to validate or expand those insights through quantitative approaches.

**Respondents of the Study** - The respondents of the study are 37 school heads in the Magsaysay district, Occidental Mindoro. This included all school heads from elementary and secondary schools in the Magsaysay East and West districts. The designations were one principal IV, two principal III, eight principal II, five principal I, one assistant principal, nine head teachers III, six head teachers I, and five teachers-in-charge. This study utilized a two-phase sampling approach within an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design. In the qualitative phase, 15 school heads are selected through random sampling to participate in interviews. This led the researcher to discover actual experiences and identify common variables related to stress and coping mechanisms. In the quantitative phase, a survey questionnaire was administered to 37 school heads. Since the total population was small, the researcher invited school heads from other districts to validate the questionnaire. This ensured that biases would be avoided and that accurate data would be collected on the challenges school heads encountered and the coping mechanisms they used.

**Research Instrument** - This study mainly used two instruments. For the qualitative process, the researcher prepared an interview guide with the open-ended question: “What are the stress coping mechanisms of the school heads?” For the quantitative part, the researcher produced a self-made questionnaire based on data gathered from the interviews. The questionnaire served as the initial tool for collecting data on job stress, self-reported physiological disorders, stress coping mechanisms, and administrative performance among 37 school heads in Magsaysay District. The questionnaire was divided into four parts. Part I focuses on job stress; Part II on self-reported physiological disorders; Part III on stress-coping mechanisms, such as time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices; and Part IV on IPCRF ratings. Parts I and III used a five-point Likert scale (5= Very Likely Observed, 4= Highly Observed, 3= Moderately Observed, 2= Least Observed, 1= Least Likely Observed), while Part II used a different five-point Likert scale (5= very Often, 4= Often, 3= Sometimes, 2= Rarely, 1= Never). The questionnaire underwent expert validation and reliability testing. Three graduate school professors from Divine Word College of San Jose validated the instrument for the questionnaire's clarity and accuracy. After revisions incorporating the suggestions, the researcher tested the study's reliability with 30 school heads outside the Magsaysay District. Seven components of the school heads’ assessment of job stress and coping mechanisms, each with eight indicators, were tested for item reliability using the split-half method. The questionnaire was administered once to thirty (30) school heads assigned in schools outside the Magsaysay District. Job stress, self-reported physiological orders, and factors affecting school heads comprised the questionnaire items, with time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices describing these factors. The Spearman-Brown coefficients for equal lengths were computed to provide a quantitative measure of the instrument's internal consistency. The results of the reliability analysis are shown below.

**Table 1**  
*Result of the reliability analysis*

Indicators	Number of Items	Reliability Coefficients*	Interpretation
A. Job Stress	8	0.813	High Reliability
B. Self-reported Physiological Disorders	8	0.972	Very High Reliability
C. Factors Affecting School Heads:			
1. Time Management	8	0.876	High Reliability
2. Emotional Support	8	0.892	High Reliability
3. Stress-relief Routines	8	0.954	Very High Reliability
4. Socialization	8	0.895	High Reliability
5. Self-care Practices	8	0.967	Very High Reliability

\*Spearman-Brown Coefficients of Equal Length

Table 1 presents the survey questionnaire results, indicating high reliability. This confirms the instrument's reliability, as tested using the split-half method and the Spearman-Brown formula with 10 non-respondents, thereby guaranteeing accurate measurement of the study's variables. The results show generally high reliability for the instrument's indicators, with very high reliability in three sections: self-reported physiological orders, stress-relief routines, and self-care practices. The results of the analysis attest to the questionnaire's acceptability for administration to the final group of school head respondents.

**Data Gathering Procedure** - Data collection for this study employed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design. In the qualitative phase, the researcher conducted interviews with 15 randomly selected school heads using an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design. In the qualitative part, the researcher conducted interviews with 15 school heads, utilizing the question: "What are the stress coping mechanisms of the school heads?" The interview was completed over 5 days. All responses are recorded, transcribed, tabulated, and coded. Thematic analysis was used to identify common themes in the study, resulting in the initial thematic map. From these themes, the researcher has constructed the developing and final thematic maps, which guided the development of the quantitative questionnaire. In the quantitative part, the researcher distributed the survey questionnaire to all 37 school heads in the Magsaysay district. Before the instrument was distributed, the researcher explained the study's purpose and significance in detail to the school heads. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, and it was assured that the school heads' answers would remain anonymous and that the data would be confidential.

**Statistical treatment of the Data** - The qualitative data collected from the interviews with the school heads underwent thematic analysis. The researcher transcribed, tabulated, and coded all responses to identify common themes from the interviews with participants. Moreover, the quantitative data are analyzed using SPSS version 26 to address the study's descriptive questions. To test the hypothesis and address the inferential challenges, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used. The results are generated with WarpPLS version 7.0.

**Ethical Considerations** - The researcher asked the public school district supervisor in the Magsaysay district for permission to gather data. Trust in the school heads was given, considering their understanding of the objectives and the research process. The school heads were informed that they could withdraw from participation at any time. The research instrument was thoroughly outlined to provide accurate and accurate results. At the time of the instrument's application, the survey questionnaire was administered and personally served within a specified period. The accuracy of the respondents' data was ensured throughout collection, analysis, and reporting. It was ensured that all data and results gathered were used exclusively for the study. The content of this study is an original paper and is not duplicated from any existing study. The researcher used the American Psychological Association (APA) style to credit the authors of the research studies used as references. Previous studies and resources that formed the basis of this study were also well-received and acknowledged. This study is intended solely to advance education and does not cause any harm to anyone involved in its conduct.

### 3. Results and Discussions

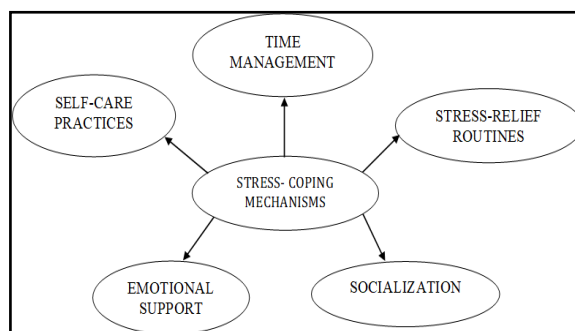


Figure 1. Thematic Map of Stress Coping Mechanisms

The final thematic map on stress coping mechanisms shows an updated version of the original analysis conducted with the school heads in Magsaysay district, Occidental Mindoro. This map emphasizes the five major themes identified in the qualitative data: time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices. These themes present the initial strategies implemented by school heads. Each theme shows the different stress-coping mechanisms school heads apply to navigate the challenges posed by leadership and instructional management. Time management, emotional support, and stress-relief routines show how school heads maintain quality despite heavy workloads, as participants described: using these stress-coping mechanisms prevents work overload and helps maintain focus. Socialization and self-care practices emerge as vital for maintaining well-being and leadership effectiveness, with school heads noting their role in fostering resilience through socialization and self-recovery. The findings strengthen the perception that school heads go beyond administrative performance to demonstrate capacity for stress management and the preservation of well-being. As stated in chapter 2, an effective stress-coping strategy can strengthen resistance to pressure (Akindola et al., 2023), with emotional regulation and adaptive strategies influenced by school heads' leadership and influence. In the context of education, this leadership affects teacher productivity and student outcomes, making stress-coping strategies valuable and aligning with topics on job responsibility and resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The map connects qualitative insights to the broader literature, with a focus on practical implications for Magsaysay's school setting.

**Table 2**

*Mean Level of challenges experienced by school heads in terms of job stress and self-reported physiological disorders*

Indicators (Job Stress)	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I blame myself when things go wrong in school.	3.30*	Moderately Observed
2. I take out my frustrations on the nearest person.	3.54*	Highly Observed
3. I notice negative changes when I am under pressure.	2.92*	Moderately Observed
4. I focus on positive aspects of my life.	4.35	Very Highly Observed
5. I respond positively to personal criticism.	3.89	Highly Observed
6. I am too busy to have lunch with colleagues during break time.	3.49*	Highly Observed
7. I put off resolving difficult situations when they arise.	3.00*	Moderately Observed
8. I avoid delegating tasks to my subordinates.	3.27*	Moderately Observed
Composite Mean	3.47	Highly Observed
Indicators (Self-reported Physiological Disorders)	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I often experience headaches due to work-related stress.	2.84*	Moderately Observed
2. I frequently feel fatigued or lacking in energy after performing my duties.	2.57*	Least Observed
3. I have difficulty sleeping or suffer from insomnia when under stress.	2.65*	Moderately Observed
4. I experience muscle tension or body pain during stressful situations.	2.76*	Moderately Observed
5. I sometimes feel heart palpitations or a rapid heartbeat when pressured by work demands.	2.95*	Moderately Observed
6. I experience stomach aches or digestive problems during high-stress periods.	3.24*	Moderately Observed
7. I become more prone to frequent illness or feel that my immunity is weakened when stressed.	2.95*	Moderately Observed
8. I lose my appetite or develop poor eating habits as a result of stress.	2.95*	Moderately Observed
Composite Mean	2.86	Moderately Observed

Scale: 4.20-5.0 Very Highly Observed; 3.40-4.19 Highly Observed; 2.60-3.39 Moderately Observed; 1.80-2.59 Least Observed; 1.00-1.79 Least Unlikely Observed \*Reversed Coding

Table 2 presents the mean levels of challenges experienced by school heads with respect to job stress and self-reported physiological disorders. The two indicators range from moderately observed to highly observed. The higher mark for job stress indicates that school heads in Magsaysay schools struggle daily with mental and emotional burdens. The lower physical score indicates these strains seldom lead to lasting health problems. This mix keeps leaders active even under pressure. In terms of job stress, this emerges when occupational exigencies outstrip an administrator's adaptive repertoire, eroding both personal equilibrium and institutional output, according to Prinz et al. (2023). The job stress ratings for school heads in Magsaysay District yielded a

composite mean of 3.47, categorized as highly observed on the study’s scale (3.40–4.19). This suggests that stressful encounters are routine and closely monitored (3.47), emphasizing the school heads' leadership despite the challenges. These patterns align with Prinz et al. (2023), who argued that reflective sense-making and resilient meaning-construction enable leaders to maintain efficacy under stress. The pronounced optimism and positive reframing echo Sahin and Cokluk-Bökeoğlu (2021), whose evidence links positive affect and collegial trust to stress attenuation. Conversely, self-blame and reluctance to delegate corroborate Panisoara et al. (2020) 's finding of over-responsibility as a core administrative stressor, while the infrequent deferral of conflict resolution tempers concerns about chronic avoidance (Ravalier et al., 2016). Haghghi and Rahimi (2020) further illuminate the role of emotional intelligence in curbing reactive outbursts—an asset evidently cultivated among these principals despite periodic lapses.

In relation to self-reported physiological disorders, this refers to physical symptoms that emerge when school heads face ongoing job stress (Hulme et al., 2024). These signs show how pressure affects both mind and body. School heads often report headaches, low energy, poor sleep, tight muscles, a fast heartbeat, stomach upset, increased illness, and loss of appetite (Królikowska et al., 2023; Moreira et al., 2022). These patterns align with Peltonen et al. (2023), who report frequent mental strain among administrators facing complex duties. Riley and Ford (2023) add that heavy tasks spark cognitive and emotional wear. However, Sahin and Cokluk-Bökeoğlu (2021) point out that trust and team support often stop stress from harming the body. Still, Hulme et al. (2024) warn that long-term pressure can cause headaches, fatigue, and muscle tightness, which remain common but mild here.

**Table 3**  
*Mean Level of Stress Coping Mechanisms of School Heads in terms of Time Management and Emotional Support*

Indicators (Time Management)	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I set clear priorities in my daily tasks.	4.35	Very Highly Observed
2. I allocate sufficient time for both urgent and long-term responsibilities.	4.08	Highly Observed
3. I use schedules or planners to organize my day.	3.84	Highly Observed
4. I avoid procrastination by managing distractions.	3.62	Highly Observed
5. I meet deadlines efficiently despite workload pressure.	3.89	Highly Observed
6. I break large tasks into smaller steps to stay focused.	3.95	Highly Observed
7. I adjust my schedule regularly to stay on track	3.92	Highly Observed
8. I plan to avoid last-minute stress from deadlines	3.97	Highly Observed
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.95</b>	<b>Highly Observed</b>
<b>Indicators (Emotional Support)</b>		
1. I seek support from colleagues during stressful times	3.54	Highly Observed
2. I openly discuss work concerns with trusted individuals	3.57	Highly Observed
3. I receive encouragement from family and friends	4.05	Highly Observed
4. I feel emotionally supported in my work environment	4.03	Highly Observed
5. I join peer groups or networks for emotional resilience	3.41	Highly Observed
6. I feel comfortable expressing my emotions to trusted colleagues or friends	3.78	Highly Observed
7. I reach out for support when work becomes emotionally overwhelming	3.76	Highly Observed
8. I feel motivated knowing that others care about my well-being	3.89	Highly Observed
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>Highly Observed</b>

Scale: 4.20-5.0 Very Highly Observed; 3.40-4.19 Highly Observed; 2.60-3.39 Moderately Observed; 1.80-2.59 Least Observed; 1.00-1.79 Least Unlikely Observed

Table 3 presents the mean levels of stress-coping mechanisms among school heads, specifically time management and emotional support. For the first indicator, time management means that school heads plan tasks, rank priorities, and allocate time among administrative work, teaching oversight, and community ties while safeguarding personal health (Von der Embse et al., 2020). In addition, the mean score of 3.95 is interpreted as highly observed, indicating that most school heads used time management to meet their demands and responsibilities. This aligns with Raudeliūnienė's (2018) and Claessens et al. (2020) findings on the consistent application of strategies, such as prioritizing tasks and creating schedules, to lessen the burden of administrative tasks. Practicing time management can also reduce role conflicts and improve well-being under pressure, as

found by Embse et al. (2020). Seven more items stay highly observed: allocating time for urgent and long-term duties, mean of 4.08; using schedules or planners, mean of 3.84; avoiding procrastination, mean of 3.62; meeting deadlines efficiently, mean of 3.89; breaking large tasks into smaller steps, mean of 3.95; adjusting schedules regularly, mean of 3.92; and planning to prevent last-minute stress, mean of 3.97. These habits build daily order and steady output. Prinz et al. (2023) note firm routines boost grit under strain. Ravalier et al. (2016) and Sahin and Cokluk-Bökeoğlu (2021) link sharp time use to feelings of calm and job joy.

Moreover, for the second indicator, emotional support refers to the help school heads get from personal ties, work peers, and social circles to ease job stress (Dicke et al., 2022). The overall mean is 3.75, a high score, indicating leaders often turn to others for comfort. This implies that school heads often seek comfort and motivation from family members, colleagues, and peers to relieve job-related or emotional stress. This constant dependence on emotional support improves factors such as receiving encouragement from the family and feeling supported in the work environment. It aligns with the findings of Dicke et al. (2022) on interpersonal demands as stress relievers.

**Table 4**  
*Mean Level of Stress Coping Mechanisms of School Heads in terms of Stress-relief routines, Socialization, and Self-care practices*

Indicators (Stress-relief routines)	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I practice mindfulness or meditation regularly	3.54	Highly Observed
2. I engage in physical activities to relieve stress	3.54	Highly Observed
3. I ensure I get adequate rest or sleep	3.84	Highly Observed
4. I take short breaks during stressful work periods	3.65	Highly Observed
5. I engage in hobbies to maintain balance	3.65	Highly Observed
6. I spend time alone to recharge after stressful days mentally	3.81	Highly Observed
7. I listen to music, watch videos, or do light activities to relieve tension	3.92	Highly Observed
8. I practice breathing exercises or stretching during breaks	3.49	Highly Observed
Composite Mean	3.68	Highly Observed
Indicators (Socialization)		
1. I attend professional development gatherings for interaction	3.59	Highly Observed
2. I communicate openly with fellow educators	3.84	Highly Observed
3. I engage in casual conversations with peers to relieve stress	3.78	Highly Observed
4. I participate in community or school social events	3.78	Highly Observed
5. I feel a strong sense of belonging in my work environment	3.97	Highly Observed
6. I build friendships with colleagues outside of formal work settings	3.97	Highly Observed
7. I initiate social interactions to build rapport with peers.	3.73	Highly Observed
8. I find relief in sharing experiences with people who understand my job	3.86	Highly Observed
Composite Mean	3.82	Highly Observed
Indicators (Self-care practices)		
1. I maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle	3.68	Highly Observed
2. I regularly assess and care for my mental health	3.89	Highly Observed
3. I take time for myself outside of work responsibilities	3.95	Highly Observed
4. I set personal boundaries to prevent burnout	3.84	Highly Observed
5. I reward myself for small achievements	3.70	Highly Observed
6. I regularly take steps to maintain my physical health (e.g., check-ups, exercise)	3.54	Highly Observed
7. I reflect on my needs and adjust to protect my well-being	3.70	Highly Observed
8. I avoid overcommitting myself to maintain a healthy balance	3.65	Highly Observed
Composite Mean	3.74	Highly Observed

Scale: 4.20-5.0 Very Highly Observed; 3.40-4.19 Highly Observed; 2.60-3.39 Moderately Observed; 1.80-2.59 Least Observed; 1.00-1.79 Least Unlikely Observed

Table 4 presents the mean levels of stress-coping mechanisms among school heads across stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices. Stress-relief routines include planned actions that help school heads stay clear-headed, calm, and healthy amid job strain (Roeser et al., 2019). The composite mean is 3.68, indicating that leaders use these routines frequently. The routine of listening to media or doing light activities and spending some time alone helps relieve tensions, as seen to be the highest for self-relief routines, as seen in

Raudeliūnienė (2018), and spending time alone can help the school heads reduce burnout, as stated by Roeser et al. (2019). In terms of socialization, this means school heads join talks and events with others to build ties, cut stress, and lift spirits (Dicke et al., 2022). Table 7 lists mean scores for this coping tool among heads in Magsaysay elementary schools. The overall mean is 3.82, which is high, indicating that leaders often seek the company. Table 7 shows that building friendships with colleagues outside formal work settings and finding relief by sharing experiences with people who understand school heads' struggles indicate efforts to manage stress through relationships. The findings of Dicke et al. (2022) prove that positive socialization minimizes interpersonal stressors. Lastly, self-care practices encompass planned steps that school heads take to protect their bodies, minds, and feelings while managing job-related stress (Rice & Williams, 2022). The composite mean is 3.74, which is high, indicating that leaders often maintain self-care. This indicates that school heads consistently maintain habits, such as setting personal boundaries and prioritizing rest, to protect their well-being from job-related stress. This is evident in strong ratings on variables such as "I take time for myself outside of work responsibilities" and "I regularly assess and care for my mental health," which prioritize the conservation of energy and focus. This aligns with Rice and Williams (2022) on the topic of self-care, avoiding burnout through a balance of lifestyle.

**Table 5**

*Level of Administrative Performance of School Heads Based on IPCRF Rating*

Numerical Rating	Adjectival Rating	Frequency	Percent
2.500 – 3.499	Satisfactory	10	27.0
3.500 – 4.499	Very Satisfactory	20	54.1
4.500 – 5.000	Outstanding	7	18.9
Total		37	100.0

Administrative performance refers to how well school heads lead, manage, and guide teaching to keep schools running and to meet goals (Acera & Tan, 2023). Table 5 shows IPCRF ratings for heads in Magsaysay elementary schools. Most school heads, 20 or 54.1 percent, earn a very satisfactory rating of 3.500–4.499, indicating solid skills in admin, finance, teaching, and staff work. Ten heads, 27.0 percent, rate satisfactory, 2.500–3.499, with room to grow. Seven heads, 18.9 percent, reach outstanding, 4.500–5.000, showing top leadership. The overall high performance demonstrates the effectiveness of school heads despite stressors, aligning with Acera and Tan's (2023) comparison of administrative responsibilities and positive school outcomes. This also aligns with the instructional leadership approach to enhancing teacher engagement by Nogadas and Apostol (2024). These results match studies on strong admin roles. Acera and Tan (2023) link skilled heads to better school wins through smart leads. Virella & Woesch (2023) stress the importance of ongoing training to stay sharp, even in crises. Nogadas & Apostol (2024) tie teaching guidance to teacher drive and school strength. Gueta et al. (2024) note that clear money rules build trust.

Table 6 presents the regression analysis of the relationship between the challenges encountered by school heads and their stress coping mechanisms. Moderate coefficients were obtained from the correlation tests between the challenges encountered by school heads and their stress coping mechanisms, ranging from 0.510 to 0.628. Stress-relief routines are collectively influenced ( $R=0.628$ ,  $R^2=0.359$ ) by negative changes that occur when school heads are put under pressure ( $J_{stress3}$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ) and by their focus on positive aspects of life ( $J_{stress4}$ ,  $p=0.002$ ). Engagement in stress-relief routines was another variable significantly affected by the struggles school heads experienced. The results show that principals use exercise, hobbies, and relaxation methods to deal with overwhelming workloads and administrative demands. In line with findings from Stults-Kolehmainen and Sinha (2021), the results here echo the idea that engaging in physical and recreational pursuits can meaningfully ease stress burdens in educational environments, fostering better focus and resilience for those involved. These activities not only address mental health but also allow them to return to their role with renewed focus and enthusiasm.

**Table 6**

*Regression Analysis of the Relationship Between the Challenges Encountered by School Heads and Their Stress Coping Mechanisms*

Independent Variables (Challenges Encountered)	Dependent Variable (Level of Stress Coping Mechanisms)	Multiple R	Adjusted $R^2$	p-value	Interpretation
Physio2 Jstress5	Time Management	0.511	0.217	0.025 0.038	Significant
Jstress6 Physio4	Emotional Support	0.510	0.217	0.014 0.040	Significant
Jstress3 Jstress4	Stress-relief Routines	0.628	0.359	0.000 0.002	Highly Significant Significant
Jstress4 Physio4	Socialization	0.540	0.250	0.003 0.018	Significant
Jstress3 Jstress4 Physio1	Self-care Practices	0.587	0.286	0.001 0.027 0.035	Significant

Scale:  $p < 0.01$ : Highly Significant,  $p < 0.05$ : Significant,  $p \geq 0.05$ : Not Significant

Moreover, predictors similar to those in stress-relief routines, along with frequent headaches due to work-related stress (Physio1,  $p=0.035$ ), were found to influence the school heads' self-care practices ( $R=0.587$ ,  $R^2=0.286$ ). The self-care practices were significantly connected to the challenges faced by the school heads. The school administrators employ various strategies, such as ensuring sufficient rest, maintaining a balanced diet, and practicing mindfulness, to maintain their well-being. Arena et al. found this to be common among college staff, particularly in the context of maintaining emotional stability. According to Kaluza et al. (2020), personal well-being practices are essential for leaders to maintain their effectiveness and manage stress. This will, in turn, ensure that the heads are physically and emotionally intact to undertake their administrative roles. In terms of socialization ( $R=0.540$ ,  $R^2=0.250$ ), this coping mechanism is significantly predicted by the school heads' positive response to personal criticism (Jstress4,  $p=0.003$ ) and experiencing muscle tension or body pain during stressful situations (Physio4,  $p=0.018$ ). Socialization is also a coping mechanism closely linked to the adversity that schools face. Indeed, these administrators engage in extensive professional networking, peer conversations, collaborations, and other related activities to mitigate stress and gain practical experience. In this regard, Reyes (2018) confirms that teamwork significantly enhances resilience, improves problem-solving skills, and reduces burnout in school administration settings. Socialization helps school heads to learn from one another, acquire coping mechanisms, and strengthen the existing professional networks.

Managing time ( $R=0.511$ )  $R=0.217$ ) as a means of coping with stress is significantly influenced by school heads' frequently feeling fatigued or lacking energy after performing duties (Physio2,  $p=0.025$ ) and responding positively to personal criticism (Jstress5,  $p=0.038$ ). Results demonstrate the relationship between the challenges school heads encounter and their time management. Specifically, school heads with too many administrative and instructional demands cope by keeping a detailed schedule, prioritizing, and allocating their time according to school needs. This finding is consistent with Acera and Tan (2023), who emphasized that time management is crucial for school leaders to manage not only the weight of administrative responsibilities but also instructional ones. Therefore, school heads' critical time-management abilities not only reduced the strain of multifaceted challenges but also improved their capacity to respond to them effectively.

Having emotional support ( $R=0.510$ )  $R=0.217$ ) as a way of coping with stress is significantly contributed to by the school heads' being too busy to have lunch with colleagues during break time. (Jstress6,  $p=0.014$ ) Moreover, experiencing muscle tension or body pain during stressful situations (Physio4,  $p=0.040$ ). Another critical coping strategy is emotional support. The findings imply that administrators depend on peers, colleagues, and family for comfort, motivation, and support when dealing with work-related stress. This remark corresponds with the assertion of Hascher and Waber (2023), who indicated that emotional and social networks are critical for school leaders to buffer occupational stress. Through supportive relationships and emotional networks, school heads can maintain their resilience and effectiveness as leaders despite occupational stressors.

The above regression analysis results provide sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the challenges encountered by school heads and their stress-coping mechanisms. The set of low p-values not exceeding 0.05 implies statistically significant contributions from the challenges school heads encounter in performing their jobs and the varied ways they cope with stress-related tasks at school. The results suggest that the challenges school heads face directly affect their adoption of certain stress-coping strategies. When it comes to time management, the findings show that school heads who handle heavy workloads and numerous administrative tasks tend to create structured schedules and effectively prioritize their tasks. This aligns with Acera and Tan (2023), who highlighted that managing time well improves administrative efficiency and reduces work-related stress.

Regarding emotional support, the data indicate that school heads actively seek encouragement and advice from colleagues, peers, and family members when facing difficulties. This aligns with Hascher and Waber (2023), who found that social and emotional support networks play a crucial role in alleviating occupational stress among educational leaders. These supportive relationships help school leaders maintain their resilience and manage the pressures of their roles. For stress relief, school leaders engage in activities such as exercise, hobbies, and relaxation techniques to cope with the demands of school management. Nguyen-Michel et al. (2021) support this perspective, observing that participation in recreational and physical activities improves mental health and enables school heads to maintain their focus even when confronted with significant stress.

Regarding socialization, the findings show that administrators use peer discussions, professional networks, and teamwork to relieve stress. This echoes Reyes (2018), who emphasized the importance of teamwork in building resilience and reducing burnout. Finally, the analysis indicates that self-care practices, such as getting enough rest, eating well, and practicing mindfulness, are closely tied to the challenges school heads face. Kaluza et al. (2020) argue that personal well-being practices are vital for maintaining effective leadership and overall performance.

**Table 7**

*Regression Analysis of the Relationship Between the Level of School Heads' Stress Coping Mechanisms and Their Administrative Performance*

Independent Variables (Coping Mechanisms)	Dependent Variable (Administrative Performance)	Multiple R	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	p-value	Interpretation
EmoSup3	IPCRF	0.358	0.103	0.030	Significant

Scale: p < 0.01: Highly Significant, p < 0.05: Significant, p ≥ 0.05: Not Significant

Among the five indicators of stress-coping mechanisms used by school heads, only emotional support (EmoSup3) correlates moderately with their level of administrative performance, as expressed through the IPCRF rating. This is reflected in the multiple R value of 0.348 and the p-value of 0.030, indicating a significant relationship. A small percentage of the variation in the IPCRF, 10.3%, (R<sup>2</sup>=0.103), can be accounted for by emotional support through encouragement. The result provides evidence to reject the null hypothesis, excluding emotional support. This suggests support for the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the challenges encountered, specifically emotional support, and the administrative performance of the school heads. The moderate association between emotional support and administrative performance underscores the importance of social ties for school heads in managing work-related stress. Emotional support from family, friends, or colleagues offers encouragement, guidance, and reassurance, helping school heads focus on their tasks. This aligns with Hascher and Waber (2023), who found that emotional and social support networks significantly reduce work stress among school heads. Similarly, Reyes (2018) found that teamwork and mentorship build resilience and improve decision-making in school administrators.

Additionally, the fact that only 10.3% of changes in IPCRF ratings relate to emotional support indicates that this coping method has a notable effect. However, other factors such as personal skills, training opportunities, or intrinsic motivation can also influence administrative performance. Kaluza et al. (2020) assert that personal well-being practices enable leaders to maintain their effectiveness, even in difficult situations.

**Table 8**  
*Stress Coping Enhancement Program*

Stress-Coping Factor	Goal	Strategy/Intervention	Timeline	Focal Persons	Success Indicators
Time Management	Help school heads organize tasks and priorities	Workshops on scheduling, prioritizing, and using planners	4th Quarter, School Year 2024-2025		Most school heads use daily planners; stress feels lower
Emotional Support	Strengthening support from peers, colleagues, and family	Peer counseling, mentoring, support groups	1st Quarter, School Year 2025-2026		School heads attend support meetings and feel less alone
Stress-Relief Routines	Reduce mental and physical strain	Mindfulness, breathing exercises, hobbies, exercise	1st Quarter, School Year 2025-2026	School Heads	School heads do calm habits daily; fewer body pains
Socialization	Promote networking and community engagement	Team-building, professional learning communities, and community events	2nd Quarter, School Year 2025-2026		Events happen; school heads say they feel connected
Self-Care Practices	Maintain physical and mental well-being	Seminars on nutrition, exercise, sleep, mental health, and personal boundaries	2nd Quarter, School Year 2025-2026		School heads sleep better, eat well, and feel more energy

The proposed Stress-Coping Enhancement program seeks to support school heads' ability to manage work stress by focusing on five evidence-based strategies: time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and self-care practices. According to Raudeliūnienė (2018), a structured time-management practice enables school heads to create realistic schedules, efficiently prioritize tasks, and set achievable goals, allowing them to balance administrative burdens, instructional supervision, and community responsibilities without experiencing burnout. In addition, Von der Embse et al. (2020) and Panisoara et al. (2020) noted that consistent use of planners, priority lists, and deliberate goal-setting enhances productivity and helps prevent role conflict and anxiety among school heads. Emotional support is obtained by building strong relationships with family members, peers, and colleagues. According to Alqarni (2023), support groups and mentoring conversations help school heads build resilience and manage emotional strain. In addition, Wilkinson (2022) emphasized that open dialogue and family support are important factors in the psychological health of school heads. Koçak and Öztürk (2021) pointed out that the role of trust-based networks in promoting coping mechanisms.

Stress-relief routines are another important part of the program. Raudeliūnienė (2018) stated that integrating daily routines, such as mindfulness exercises, moderate physical activities, and relaxation techniques, is effective for common stress symptoms, such as headaches, muscle tension, and fatigue. In addition, Silva and Cruz (2019) found that accessible practices help maintain emotional balance and improve decision-making capacity under pressure. Socialization is encouraged by promoting active involvement in professional networks. Based on the findings of Desabayla and Digo (2024), learning communities and mentoring programs create a strong sense of belonging and prevent feelings of isolation among school heads. In addition, Lee and Smith (2022) reported that welcoming professional interaction and shared experiences significantly enhance coping mechanisms and professional well-being. Self-care practices are supported as important daily habits. According to Taylor et al. (2020), sustaining balanced nutrition, setting personal boundaries, and engaging in mental health reflections conserve energy and help prevent burnout. Dadaczynski et al. (2025) and Rice and Williams (2022) added that core behaviors, along with reflective journaling, as noted by Banda and Marumo (2018), provide direct aid in maintaining physical and psychological health and in supporting long-term effectiveness at work among school heads.

#### 4. Conclusions

The study found five main stress-coping mechanisms used by school heads in the Magsaysay District, Occidental Mindoro. These are time management, emotional support, stress-relief routines, socialization, and

self-care practices. The level of coping mechanisms was high across all five factors, indicating that school heads constantly adapt to the demands of their role. The challenges encountered are also evident. Job stress was high due to high levels of workload, while self-reported physiological disorders were moderate. Regardless of the challenges encountered, the administrative performance of the school heads remains outstanding, as shown by the IPCRF rating. This demonstrates strong leadership skills and the ability to persevere under pressure in the workplace. Positive relationships were found involving challenges encountered and stress-coping mechanisms. School heads who underwent higher levels of job stress and self-reported physiological disorders are inclined to utilize five stress-coping strategies more frequently, specifically time management to lessen fatigue, emotional support for relieving emotional burdens, stress-relief routines to prevent fatigue, socialization to prevent isolation, and self-care practices to recover from fatigue experienced at work. In addition, there is a positive relationship between stress-coping mechanisms and administrative performance. Among the five stress-coping mechanisms, emotional support was demonstrated as the strongest factor enhancing leadership quality. Based on the study's findings, an enhancement program is recommended to help school heads manage job stress more efficiently. The program should focus on practical sessions covering the five stress-coping mechanisms to improve job performance and prevent workplace stress.

**Recommendations** - School heads are encouraged to seek additional stress-coping mechanisms beyond the five identified in this study, such as mindfulness and participation in DepEd workshops. To enhance the school heads' stress coping mechanisms, it is recommended that school heads learn more about advanced time management tools, such as digital planners for better task organization; form a support group with peers for information and communication; integrate stress-relief routines, such as meditation and exercise; organize events for socialization to create bonds within the community; and create a self-care checklist to monitor wellness routinely. To lessen job stress and self-reported physiological disorders, it is recommended that school heads distribute administrative tasks, request a workload assessment from DepEd, and manage physiological disorders through wellness programs and health screenings. To sustain effective administrative performance, it is strongly recommended that school heads participate in annual IPCRF training to improve leadership skills and align with the Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (PPSH).

The study found a positive relation involving the challenges encountered and stress-coping mechanisms. Higher job stress and physiological disorders motivate school heads to apply these techniques. Therefore, integrating time management to tackle fatigue, offering emotional support events or programs to prevent personal stress, encouraging stress-relief workshops to improve mood and prevent physiological stress, encouraging socialization activities to ease work-related tension, and developing self-care practices to promote recovery from work demands are suggested. To further the relationship between stress-coping mechanisms and administrative performance, it is recommended that DepEd prioritizes emotional support training and incorporates it into regular development programs. Future studies are encouraged to explore job stress, physiological disorders, coping mechanisms, and IPCRF performance of school heads in private or urban settings. Such work will add depth to the current findings from Magsaysay public elementary schools and allow stronger cross-context comparisons.

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