



BEYOND COMPLIANCE: CHALLENGES OF TEACHERS IN ACQUIRING SCHOOL HEADS' SUPPORT TO ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS

Marian F. Mangubat

Master of Arts in Educational Management, Rizal Memorial Colleges, Inc.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of teachers in acquiring school heads' support to address their professional and instructional needs. A phenomenological approach was employed, and data were gathered through in-depth interviews with nine teacher-informants from small, medium, and big schools. The findings revealed that teachers encountered multiple and interconnected challenges, including time and workload constraints, resource and budget limitations, policy, communication, and system barriers, and organizational culture and leadership issues. Despite these difficulties, teachers managed to cope through proactive communication and problem-solving, peer collaboration and mentorship, and adaptation and resourcefulness. The study further found that improving school heads' support requires stronger communication and collaboration, adequate provision of resources, and meaningful engagement of teachers in school management processes. Based on these results, it is recommended that school heads strengthen responsive and participatory leadership practices through structured communication systems, regular consultations, collaborative decision-making, equitable workload distribution, and targeted capacity-building programs. Teachers may continue sustaining collaborative practices, professional learning communities, and continuous professional development while enhancing their communication and adaptability skills to better advocate for their needs. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the study using larger samples and diverse contexts and to employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches to further examine the relationship between school heads' support, teacher performance, and student outcomes, as well as to explore possible intervention programs and leadership frameworks that may strengthen school-based support systems.

KEYWORDS: *Beyond compliance, teachers' perspective, school management*

INTRODUCTION

Effective support from school heads is essential to strengthening teaching and learning processes, yet in practice, teachers often encounter constraints that shape how this support is accessed and experienced. In many school contexts, leadership practices are not always consistently implemented, communication structures may lack clarity, and administrative responses are sometimes delayed, which can limit teachers' ability to obtain timely assistance for instructional concerns. In addition, limited mentoring opportunities, insufficient feedback systems, and restricted access to professional development further constrain teachers' capacity to plan and deliver instruction effectively. These realities suggest that the relationship between school leadership support and teachers' instructional needs is not always straightforward, as organizational processes, leadership responsiveness, and institutional priorities within the school environment shape it.

Teachers in different countries continue to experience persistent challenges in acquiring adequate support from school leadership, which directly affects their instructional effectiveness and professional growth. In the United States, Ingersoll (2023) highlights that teacher attrition and workload pressures are closely linked to insufficient administrative support and limited leadership responsiveness, making it difficult for teachers to access timely guidance. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, Worth and Van den Brande (2023) emphasize that high workloads, stress, and inconsistent school leadership practices reduce opportunities for meaningful teacher-leader interaction and support. In Australia, Sullivan, Johnson, and Simons (2024) report that teachers face increasing administrative demands and fragmented communication systems, which limit their access to school heads' assistance for instructional and classroom-related concerns. These studies collectively show that difficulties in acquiring school heads' support are evident even in well-resourced education systems.

In addition, broader international research further reinforces these concerns by identifying systemic problems in leadership support structures across schools. OECD (2023) reports that across member countries, teachers often experience weak collaboration mechanisms and limited feedback systems, which hinder effective communication between teachers and school leaders. Furthermore, UNESCO (2023) notes that inadequate mentoring programs and inconsistent engagement by school leadership contribute to teachers' reliance on self-directed coping strategies rather than structured institutional support. These findings suggest that the difficulty in accessing school heads' support is not an isolated issue but a recurring global concern rooted in organizational structures, communication systems, and leadership practices within schools.



In the Philippine context, teachers likewise experience challenges in obtaining adequate support from school heads due to heavy workloads and overlapping responsibilities. Rapatan (2022) explains that public school teachers are often assigned multiple teaching loads and ancillary tasks, which limit their time to seek guidance and support from school administrators. This situation affects the immediacy and quality of instructional assistance that teachers receive. In addition, Magno and Llego (2023) emphasize that although school-based management is implemented in Philippine basic education, inconsistencies in leadership practices and communication systems often result in delayed or uneven support from school heads. These findings suggest that despite existing policies, teachers still encounter barriers in accessing responsive and timely leadership support in their schools.

Furthermore, studies show that structural and administrative constraints affect school heads' ability to provide consistent support to teachers. Bautista and Bernardo (2024) note that school heads in public schools are often burdened with administrative and managerial tasks, which reduce their availability to address teacher concerns promptly and effectively. Similarly, David and Albert (2023) highlight that limited resources and funding constraints in the Philippine education system contribute to delays in addressing teachers' instructional and operational needs. These conditions indicate that the difficulty in acquiring school heads' support is influenced not only by leadership behavior but also by systemic limitations within the educational structure.

In the context of the Tagum City Division, particularly in the Tagum North District, teachers likewise encounter challenges in acquiring timely and responsive support from school heads, which may affect their instructional delivery and professional development. Abad and Villanueva (2023) found that teachers in selected public schools in the division experience workload pressures and multiple ancillary assignments, which limit their opportunity to seek administrative assistance and follow up on instructional concerns. In addition, Garcia and Dizon (2024) emphasized that differences in school leadership practices and communication processes across district schools contribute to inconsistencies in how teacher concerns are addressed, resulting in delayed feedback and support. These findings suggest that even within localized educational settings such as the Tagum North District, access to effective support from school heads remains a persistent concern requiring systematic attention.

Existing literature reveals gaps in contextual, methodological, and substantive areas. Contextually, few studies focus on teachers' experiences in securing school heads' support in localized settings such as the Tagum City Division, particularly the Tagum North District. Methodologically, most research uses quantitative approaches that measure levels of support but fail to capture teachers' lived experiences and challenges. Substantively, there is limited understanding of how these challenges affect classroom practice and how teachers cope with gaps in leadership support. These gaps highlight the need for a qualitative study that explores, in depth, teachers' experiences of how school heads' support is accessed and negotiated in real school contexts.

The urgency of this study lies in the persistent challenges teachers face in obtaining timely and effective support from school heads, which directly affect instructional delivery, teacher well-being, and overall school performance. Addressing these concerns is essential to strengthening school leadership responsiveness and ensuring that teachers' needs are systematically and equitably addressed rather than managed through individual coping strategies. The findings of this study are disseminated through research presentations at school- and division-level forums, particularly during Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, where school heads, teachers, and education program supervisors directly engage with the results. In addition, a copy of the study is submitted to the Schools Division Office of Tagum City and the participating schools to serve as a reference for possible policy enhancement and leadership development initiatives.

THE STUDY'S OBJECTIVES

Based on the statement of the problem and the phenomenological design of the study, the following objectives were derived:

1. To explore the challenges of teachers in acquiring school heads' support to address their needs.
2. To describe how teachers cope with the challenges of acquiring school heads' support to address their needs.
3. To determine how school policies and administrative support systems may be integrated or improved to effectively address the challenges experienced by teachers in acquiring school heads' support for their needs.

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the study's methodological framework, which explores teachers' challenges in securing school heads' support, their coping strategies, and the development of policy integration for administrative improvement. It outlines the qualitative phenomenological design, data sources, sampling technique, data gathering instruments, and procedures for data collection and analysis. It also discusses the ethical considerations observed to protect participants. Finally, it highlights the measures used to establish the credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of the findings.

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical assumptions of this study are grounded in the qualitative research paradigm, particularly constructivism and interpretivism, which are appropriate in exploring the lived experiences of teachers regarding the challenges they



encounter in acquiring school heads' support, their coping strategies, and the need for policy integration. These assumptions recognize that teachers' experiences are complex, context-dependent, and socially constructed within school environments. In this study, meaning is derived from teachers' interpretations of their interactions with school leaders and how these experiences influence their professional practices and access to support.

Ontology. Ontology refers to the nature of reality and what exists within the study (Blakely, 2023). In this research, reality is viewed as multiple and subjective, meaning that the challenges experienced by teachers in securing school heads' support vary with workload demands, leadership responsiveness, communication systems, resource availability, and school culture. Some teachers may experience delays in accessing assistance due to bureaucratic processes, while others may struggle with leadership inaccessibility or unclear policies. Likewise, coping experiences differ as teachers develop varied strategies in response to these challenges. Thus, the study acknowledges that there is no single reality of teacher-school head support experiences, but multiple lived realities expressed through participants' narratives.

Epistemology. Epistemology explains how knowledge is created and the relationship between the researcher and participants (Sol & Heng, 2022). In this study, knowledge is co-constructed through in-depth interviews with teachers, in which meaning is derived from their lived experiences of accessing school heads' support. Understanding is not generated by measurement but by the interpretation of teachers' narratives about leadership support, communication barriers, and administrative systems. The researcher serves as the primary instrument in interpreting these meanings while ensuring that findings remain grounded in participants' actual experiences. This approach allows a deeper understanding of how teachers perceive and respond to support-related challenges in their schools.

Axiology. Axiology focuses on values, ethics, and the researcher's role in the research process (Deane, 2018). In this study, the researcher acknowledges the importance of fairness, empathy, and ethical responsibility in representing teachers' experiences. The lived realities of teachers regarding limited support from school heads are treated with respect and confidentiality. Reflexivity is observed to minimize bias and ensure that interpretations remain faithful to participants' perspectives. Their experiences are presented as valuable insights for improving school leadership practices and administrative support systems. Ethical standards guide the entire research process to protect participants' dignity and trust.

Methodological Assumption. The methodological assumption of this study aligns with qualitative phenomenology, which focuses on understanding participants' lived experiences from their perspective (Moroi, 2020). In this study, phenomenology is used to explore how teachers describe their challenges in acquiring school heads' support and how they respond to these challenges through coping mechanisms. Instead of quantifying experiences, the study emphasizes rich, detailed narratives that reflect real school conditions such as workload pressures, communication gaps, and leadership responsiveness. This approach allows themes to emerge naturally from participants' accounts, providing an in-depth understanding of their experiences.

Rhetorical Assumption. The rhetorical assumption refers to how findings are presented through language and narrative structure (Damamisau et al., 2020). In this study, the results are presented through a descriptive, thematic narrative supported by direct quotations from teachers. This ensures that participants' voices are authentically represented in describing their challenges and coping strategies. Narrative presentation allows readers to clearly understand the realities of teacher experiences in relation to school heads' support. It also emphasizes clarity, depth, and meaning rather than numerical interpretation.

Qualitative Assumption. Qualitative research in this study is used to explore the complex realities teachers face in securing school heads' support. It focuses on meaning-making rather than measurement, particularly in understanding challenges such as workload constraints, resource limitations, policy barriers, and leadership issues. It also examines how teachers cope through communication strategies, collaboration, and adaptation. This approach highlights both difficulties and resilience, providing a holistic view of teacher experiences within school systems. Furthermore, phenomenology is applied to capture the essence of teachers' lived experiences regarding their interactions with school heads. It allows participants to describe real-life situations where support is delayed, limited, or difficult to access, as well as how they respond to these conditions. Through their narratives, the study reveals patterns of institutional challenges and adaptive responses. This approach provides deeper insight into how teachers navigate support systems within their schools.

To highlight, the qualitative phenomenological approach provides a meaningful framework for understanding teachers' experiences not as isolated incidents but as interconnected realities shaped by organizational structures, leadership practices, and policy implementation. It highlights the challenges of acquiring school heads' support, the coping strategies teachers employ, and the need for improved policy integration and administrative systems to strengthen teacher support in schools.

Design and Procedure

This study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach, which is appropriate for exploring the lived experiences of teachers in securing school heads' support for their instructional and professional needs. Among



qualitative traditions, phenomenology was selected because it focuses on understanding how individuals experience a phenomenon and how they interpret and give meaning to those experiences (Chang & Wang, 2021). In this study, the phenomenon refers to teachers' experiences in accessing school heads' support, particularly the challenges they encounter, the coping strategies they employ, and the need for improved policy integration within school administrative systems.

Phenomenology is concerned with lived human experience as perceived within its natural context. It allows the researcher to capture teachers' realities, such as workload pressures, limited time for consultation, resource constraints, communication gaps, bureaucratic procedures, and leadership-related challenges in accessing support from school heads. As emphasized by Gordon (2024), phenomenological inquiry enables the exploration of how individuals construct meaning from their lived experiences. In this sense, the approach provides a deeper understanding of teachers' subjective realities rather than reducing their experiences to numerical data.

In this study, a phenomenological design was used to capture the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers regarding their difficulties in securing school heads' support, their coping mechanisms, and their perspectives on improving administrative and policy support systems. The study specifically explored how teachers navigate institutional barriers, respond to leadership limitations, and sustain their instructional responsibilities despite challenges. Through this approach, the researcher aimed to understand both the nature of these challenges and the strategies teachers employ to manage them in real school settings.

In terms of procedure, the study followed a systematic qualitative research process to ensure rigor, ethical compliance, and credibility of findings. First, permission and ethical clearance were secured from the appropriate authorities, including the Schools Division Office and selected school heads in the research locale. After approval, participants were identified through purposive sampling, selecting teachers with direct experience seeking and obtaining support from school heads and willing to share their lived experiences.

Second, informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that they understood the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed throughout the research process. Third, data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to freely describe their experiences regarding challenges in accessing school heads' support and the coping strategies they employed. Interviews were conducted in a comfortable setting to encourage openness and honest responses. With permission, responses were audio-recorded and supported with field notes.

Fourth, the collected data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved repeated reading of transcripts, coding significant statements, clustering similar ideas, and identifying emerging themes related to teachers' challenges and coping strategies in acquiring school heads' support. Through this process, patterns of experiences were systematically generated and organized into meaningful categories.

Finally, the findings were interpreted through a phenomenological lens to capture the essence of teachers' lived experiences regarding school heads' support. This allowed the researcher to present a rich and comprehensive description of how teachers experience administrative challenges, how they cope with these difficulties, and how these findings inform the need for policy integration and improvement of school-based administrative support systems. Overall, the design and procedure enabled a deep and meaningful exploration of teachers' realities, ensuring that their voices were authentically represented and that the findings would strengthen school leadership and support structures.

Research Participants

The data for this study were collected from public elementary school teachers who served as the primary participants. These teachers were selected based on their direct experiences in securing school heads' support to address their instructional and professional needs. They were considered the most appropriate informants, as they regularly interact with school administrators and encounter challenges related to support systems, communication, and access to resources. Data were gathered through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, which enabled participants to provide rich, detailed narratives of their lived experiences, particularly regarding the challenges they encounter and the coping strategies they employ to manage school-based demands.

A total of nine (9) teacher-participants from selected public elementary schools were included in the study. These participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they had relevant experiences with the phenomenon under investigation. The data collected focused solely on participants' responses during interviews, ensuring that the findings reflected their authentic lived experiences without influence from secondary data sources. This approach allowed the study to capture first-hand accounts of teachers' challenges in accessing school heads' support and the coping mechanisms they employ in response to these challenges within their actual school environments.



Data Gathering Instrument

The collection of qualitative data in this study was conducted using methods appropriate for capturing in-depth perspectives on teachers' experiences of acquiring school heads' support. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data gathering technique, as this approach is recognized for generating rich, contextual, and detailed narratives (Tenny et al., 2022). The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to freely share their experiences regarding the challenges they encounter in accessing school heads' support, the coping strategies they employ, and their views on improving administrative support systems. The interview questionnaire used in this study is presented in Appendix A.

In-depth interviews are a central method in qualitative research because they allow participants to provide direct, personal accounts of their lived experiences (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020). In this study, participants were regarded as the primary sources of knowledge regarding their experiences with school heads' support, while the researcher served as the interpreter of their narratives. Follow-up questions and probing were used as needed to clarify responses and elicit deeper insights. This process enabled the researcher to capture meaningful, detailed descriptions of teachers' realities regarding leadership support while ensuring that participants' voices were accurately represented.

To ensure the validity and appropriateness of the research instrument, the interview guide underwent validation. Experts in educational research and school leadership validated the instrument. The Validation Sheet used for expert review is presented in Appendix B. Feedback from validators was carefully considered and incorporated to improve the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the interview questions before data collection.

Moreover, data collection was conducted in a setting that was comfortable, accessible, and conducive to open sharing, such as school premises or other agreed-upon locations, to ensure confidentiality and convenience for participants. A total of nine (9) in-depth interviews were conducted, which provided sufficient data to achieve depth and saturation of responses. All interviews were conducted with due ethical consideration, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation throughout the process.

Additionally, environmental triangulation was applied to strengthen the credibility of the findings. As noted by Santos et al. (2020), environmental triangulation involves collecting data from different contextual settings to ensure consistency and depth of understanding. In this study, this approach helped capture variations in teachers' experiences across different school environments, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings. It also minimized bias that may arise from relying on a single context and provided a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences in acquiring school heads' support.

Sampling Technique

This phenomenological study involved nine (9) teacher-informants who met the inclusion criteria aligned with the objectives of the research. The sample size followed the recommendation of Sarfo et al. (2021), who stated that phenomenological studies typically include between three and fifteen participants to ensure rich, in-depth, and meaningful data. In this study, nine participants were considered sufficient to achieve data saturation, enabling a comprehensive exploration of teachers' lived experiences of school heads' support.

The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability technique in which participants are intentionally selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. According to Nikolopoulou (2023), purposive sampling is appropriate for qualitative research because it ensures that participants have rich, relevant experiences related to the study's focus, rather than being selected at random. In this case, teachers were chosen based on their direct experience with school heads' support in addressing their instructional and professional needs.

To ensure the quality and relevance of data, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. Only teachers with at least five years of teaching experience and direct exposure to school heads' support systems were included in the study, as they were expected to provide substantial and meaningful insights. Teachers who did not meet these criteria were excluded to maintain the focus and rigor of the research.

In addition, participants were categorized according to school size to capture contextual variations in their experiences. Informants 1 to 3 were from small schools, Informants 4 to 6 were from medium-sized schools, and Informants 7 to 9 were from large schools. This grouping allowed the study to examine how school context may influence the availability and quality of school heads' support. Throughout the study, participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, ensuring adherence to ethical standards and the protection of their autonomy.

Data Collection

The process of gathering research data from informants was conducted through several structured stages to ensure rigor, ethical compliance, and credibility. As emphasized by Akyildiz and Ahmed (2021), qualitative data may be collected



through various methods such as interviews, observation, and document analysis. In this study, in-depth semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method to capture teachers' lived experiences of school heads' support.

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was secured from the Ethics Committee on November 11, 2025, as evidenced in Appendix B (Ethics Compliance Certificate). A complete research proposal outlining the study's objectives, methodology, and ethical considerations was submitted and reviewed to ensure the protection of participants' rights, welfare, and confidentiality. After approval, all ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the research process. Following ethical approval, formal institutional permissions were obtained to conduct the study. Endorsement from the Dean of the Graduate School at Rizal Memorial Colleges was secured last December 14, 2025, as shown in Appendix C (Dean's Endorsement). Subsequently, the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) of Tagum City granted authorization on March 3, 2026, as reflected in Appendix D (Approved Letter from SDS). A formal request letter outlining the study's objectives, target informants, and procedures was submitted on March 9, 11, 17, and 18, 2026. This was shared with the selected school heads, as included in Appendix E (Letter to School Heads), to ensure coordination and access to participants.

In preparation for data collection, an interview guide was developed as the primary instrument for gathering data. The guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore teachers' experiences in acquiring school heads' support, including challenges encountered, coping strategies, and suggestions for improving administrative systems. The instrument was reviewed and validated on October 3, 6, and 8, 2025, by field experts to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives, as shown in Appendix F.

Before the interviews, informed consent was obtained from all participants. The purpose of the study, procedures, and their rights as informants were clearly explained. Participation was voluntary, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. Consent was obtained in writing before the interviews.

Individual in-depth interviews were then conducted in safe, private, and convenient locations within the school setting. These sessions allowed teachers to freely express their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies related to school heads' support. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission to ensure accurate documentation and were supplemented with field notes for contextual understanding.

After data collection, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure an accurate representation of participants' responses. When necessary, statements in the local language were translated into English for consistency in analysis. The transcribed data were then subjected to thematic analysis using a phenomenological approach to identify recurring patterns and significant themes reflecting teachers' lived experiences.

To strengthen the credibility of the findings, a qualified data analyst was consulted to review the transcribed data and initial interpretations. Feedback from the analyst was incorporated, and necessary revisions were made to ensure accuracy, coherence, and trustworthiness of the results. This step helped to evaluate that the findings accurately reflected the participants' narratives.

Throughout the entire process, strict confidentiality and data protection measures were observed. All recordings and transcripts were securely stored in password-protected files, and participants' identities were protected using pseudonyms. The data was used solely for research purposes and was properly disposed of after the study's completion to ensure ethical compliance and safeguard participant privacy.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this phenomenological study systematically examined teachers' lived experiences regarding challenges in obtaining school heads' support, their coping strategies, and implications for administrative and policy improvements. The process transformed interview transcripts into meaningful interpretations, ensuring findings emerged inductively from participants' narratives rather than pre-established categories.

Colaizzi's (1978) method, as cited in Praveena and Sasikumar (2021), guided the analysis to capture the essence of teachers' experiences. The steps included:

1. **Familiarization with the Data:** Repeated reading of transcripts allowed the researcher to fully understand teachers' experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and perceptions of administrative support.
2. **Identifying Significant Statements:** Extracted statements highlighted workload difficulties, communication gaps, limited accessibility of school heads, delayed responses, and variations in support.
3. **Formulating Meanings:** Interpretations revealed perceived lack of timely support, unclear communication systems, limited administrative responsiveness, and teachers' reliance on self-initiated strategies.
4. **Clustering Themes:** Meanings were grouped into thematic clusters, including time and workload constraints, resource and budget limitations, policy and communication barriers, and leadership-related issues.



5. **Developing an Exhaustive Description:** Integration of all themes provided a comprehensive account of how institutional and leadership factors influence access to support.
6. **Identifying the Fundamental Structure:** Refined the exhaustive description to show that systemic constraints, leadership responsiveness, and institutional processes shape teachers' instructional performance and support needs.
7. **Validation of Findings:** Expert reviewers evaluated the analysis for credibility, dependability, and confirmability, ensuring that interpretations accurately reflected participants' narratives. Member checking was not conducted, as strong triangulation and expert review were deemed sufficient.

Ethical Consideration

This study emphasized strict adherence to ethical standards to ensure integrity, respect, and transparency throughout the research process, particularly when exploring teachers' experiences in securing school heads' support. Ethical principles were integrated in all stages of the inquiry to safeguard the confidentiality, dignity, and professional well-being of participants. In line with the guidelines of the Rizal Memorial Colleges Ethics Review Committee, the study ensured that informants' rights were protected and that data were responsibly handled, especially as they shared sensitive experiences regarding school leadership and administrative support.

Social Value. The study held significant social value as it highlighted public elementary school teachers' lived experiences in acquiring school heads' support and how these experiences influenced instructional effectiveness. Their narratives provided insights into challenges such as communication gaps, resource limitations, and leadership responsiveness, which are critical in understanding school-based management practices. The findings may guide school heads, policymakers, and education stakeholders in developing more responsive and supportive administrative systems. Ultimately, the study contributes to improving collaboration between teachers and school leaders and strengthening instructional support in public schools.

Informed Consent Form. Informed consent was obtained before data collection by clearly explaining the study's purpose, procedures, and objectives, particularly regarding teachers' experiences of school heads' support. Participants were informed of their rights, including the right to participate voluntarily, the confidentiality and anonymity of their participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. A written informed consent form was provided and thoroughly discussed to ensure full understanding before participation. Only after complete clarification and voluntary agreement did the informants sign the consent form, ensuring that participation was ethical and fully informed.

Vulnerability of Research Participants. The researcher ensured the protection of participants' welfare, recognizing that discussions about school heads' support could involve sensitive professional experiences. Teachers were assured that their identities and school affiliations would remain confidential, with pseudonyms used throughout the study. They were also reminded that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. Careful and respectful interviewing techniques were used to avoid discomfort or pressure during the sharing of experiences.

Benefits, Risks, and Safety. The study provided teachers with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in acquiring school heads' support, which may contribute to professional awareness and institutional improvement. Possible risks, such as discomfort in discussing leadership-related concerns, were minimized through confidentiality measures and respectful handling of responses. Interviews were conducted in safe, private, and convenient settings to ensure participants' comfort. The researcher consistently emphasized voluntary participation and the right to withdraw to ensure emotional and professional safety.

Privacy and Confidentiality of Information. All data related to teachers' experiences with school heads' support were treated with strict confidentiality. Participants were assigned codes or pseudonyms to protect their identities, and no identifying details were included in the final report. Interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. The findings were presented in aggregated form to ensure that individual responses could not be traced back to specific participants.

Justice. The principle of justice was upheld by ensuring fair and equal selection of participants based on clear inclusion criteria. All eligible teachers had an equal opportunity to participate and share their experiences regarding school heads' support, free from bias or favoritism. The researcher ensured that all narratives were represented accurately and respectfully in the analysis. This prevented misrepresentation and ensured fairness in interpreting participants' lived experiences.

Transparency. Transparency was maintained by clearly explaining the purpose, procedures, and use of data before data collection began. Participants were informed how their experiences regarding school heads' support would contribute to the study and potential policy improvement. The researcher remained open to questions and clarifications throughout the process. All interpretations were grounded in participants' actual narratives to ensure honesty and accuracy in reporting findings.



Conflict of Interest. The researcher ensured that no personal, professional, or institutional interests influenced the conduct or interpretation of the study. Objectivity was maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process, particularly in handling sensitive accounts of school heads' support. All participants were treated fairly and without bias. The study strictly adhered to the ethical guidelines set by the Rizal Memorial Colleges Ethics Review Committee to ensure integrity and credibility.

Qualification of the Researcher. The researcher's academic background in educational management and qualitative research provided adequate preparation for conducting this study. Training in phenomenological inquiry enabled the researcher to properly capture and interpret teachers' lived experiences regarding school heads' support. Continuous guidance from academic advisers ensured methodological accuracy and ethical compliance. This preparation strengthened the researcher's ability to conduct the study with rigor and integrity.

Adequacy of Facilities. Appropriate venues, such as quiet classrooms and private school spaces, were used to ensure a comfortable environment for interviews. These settings allowed teachers to freely express their experiences regarding school heads' support without interruption. Necessary materials such as audio recorders, consent forms, and note-taking tools were prepared in advance. Alternative arrangements, including virtual interviews when needed, were also considered to ensure smooth data collection and participant convenience.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Stahl and King (2020) emphasized that the trustworthiness of qualitative research depends on the extent to which its findings are considered credible, reliable, and meaningful by its readers. In this study, trustworthiness was ensured through the four established criteria in qualitative inquiry: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. These criteria were applied to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the lived experiences of public elementary school teachers in securing school heads' support, particularly regarding instructional needs, leadership responsiveness, and administrative assistance.

Credibility. Credibility refers to the truthfulness and accuracy of the findings in representing participants' lived experiences, similar to internal validity in quantitative research. It ensures that the results genuinely reflect the realities of teachers' experiences of school heads' support in their schools. To strengthen credibility, strategies such as prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking were applied (McLeod, 2024).

In this study, credibility was established through in-depth interviews with public elementary school teachers, allowing the researcher to gain a deep understanding of their experiences in acquiring school heads' support. Prolonged engagement helped build rapport and encouraged open sharing of experiences related to leadership support and school-based challenges. Triangulation was achieved by including teachers from different school categories (small, medium, and large schools), which ensures variation in perspectives on school heads' support. Member checking was also conducted, allowing participants to verify the accuracy of interpreted data to ensure that their voices were faithfully represented.

Dependability. Dependability refers to the consistency and stability of research findings over time, ensuring that the study's processes are logical, traceable, and well-documented (Lal, 2025). It ensures that the findings on teachers' experiences in acquiring school heads' support are stable and can be followed by other researchers using similar procedures. In this study, dependability was ensured through systematic documentation of all research procedures, including data collection and analysis processes. A validated interview protocol consistently guided in-depth interviews to ensure uniformity in data gathering. Peer examination was conducted through consultation with the research adviser and panel experts to confirm that the interpretations accurately reflected teachers' experiences. These processes ensured that the findings regarding school heads' support were consistent, reliable, and grounded in the actual data.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which research findings can be applied to other contexts or settings beyond the study area (Kocaman, 2024). In qualitative research, this is achieved by providing thick, detailed descriptions that enable readers to determine whether the findings apply to their own context. In this study, transferability was ensured through comprehensive descriptions of the research setting, which involved public elementary schools with varying classifications, and the participants, who were teachers with at least 5 years of experience, including school heads' support. Detailed explanations of data collection procedures, interview processes, and thematic analysis were provided to ensure transparency. These rich descriptions allow future researchers and school administrators to assess the relevance of the findings to other educational contexts where similar challenges in school heads' support may exist.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings are shaped by participants' experiences rather than by the researcher's biases or assumptions (Lal, 2025). It ensures that conclusions are grounded in teachers' actual narratives of their experiences in securing school heads' support. In this study, confirmability was ensured by maintaining an audit trail documenting all stages of the research process, from data collection to thematic analysis. All interview transcripts, codes, and thematic categories were systematically organized and securely stored to allow verification of the findings. The



use of direct quotations from participants in presenting results further ensured that interpretations remained faithful to teachers' lived experiences. These measures strengthened the objectivity and trustworthiness of the findings on school heads' support in public elementary schools.

Results

The study explored teachers' lived experiences in acquiring support from school heads, their coping strategies, and the implications for administrative and policy improvements. Analysis revealed **four main challenges** affecting teacher access to support: **time and workload constraints, resource and budget limitations, policy, communication, and system barriers, and organizational culture and leadership issues.**

Time and workload constraints limited teachers' engagement with school heads, as heavy teaching responsibilities, administrative tasks, and limited professional engagement time reduced opportunities for consultation. Participants reported prioritizing classroom duties over administrative interaction, consistent with Shen et al. (2025) and OECD (2024), highlighting that workload pressures are systemic across schools of varying sizes.

Resource and budget limitations emerged as a major barrier. Insufficient funding, scarce instructional materials, and competing priorities delayed support provision. Teachers often relied on personal resources or peer collaboration to meet classroom needs. This aligns with Casimiro et al. (2025) and Enyia and Ukaigwe (2025), emphasizing systemic gaps in resource allocation and planning.

Policy, communication, and system barriers further hindered timely support. Unclear procedures, bureaucratic delays, and communication gaps caused frustration and inefficiency, echoing findings from Woltran et al. (2024) and Zuo et al. (2025). Participants indicated that structural and procedural inefficiencies often outweighed individual efforts to seek assistance.

Organizational culture and leadership issues significantly shaped teachers' experiences. Limited administrative availability, lack of approachability, and weak leadership responsiveness reduced engagement and motivation. Teachers reported delays, poor communication, and feelings of discouragement, reinforcing literature emphasizing the role of supportive leadership in enhancing teacher well-being and instructional quality (Akhmad Irfan et al., 2025; Li, 2026; Tosun & Bostancı, 2024).

Despite these challenges, teachers employed **three key coping strategies: proactive communication and problem-solving, peer collaboration and mentorship, and adaptation and resourcefulness.** Through structured communication, persistence in following up concerns, collaborative advocacy, and innovative use of limited resources, teachers maintained instructional effectiveness and professional resilience. These adaptive behaviors demonstrate how individual agency complements formal administrative support in navigating systemic constraints (Patrick et al., 2025; Alonzo et al., 2025; Sonsupap et al., 2024).

The findings suggest that teachers' challenges are **systemic and organizational** rather than individual. While coping strategies sustain instructional practice, there is a clear need for **integrated policy interventions.** Proposed reforms include workload management, responsive resource allocation, streamlined communication and administrative procedures, participatory leadership, and formalized mentoring and collaboration programs. Such measures would reduce reliance on individual coping, strengthen administrative support, and enhance teacher well-being and instructional quality.

Overall, the study highlights the interconnected influence of structural, procedural, and leadership factors on teacher support systems. Strengthening institutional policies, leadership engagement, and collaborative practices can foster a more responsive and sustainable support environment in public elementary schools.

Summary

This chapter presents the synthesis of the key findings of the study and discusses their implications for educational practice, school leadership, and teacher support systems, as well as directions for future research. The study focused on exploring the challenges encountered by public elementary school teachers in acquiring school heads' support to address their instructional and professional needs, their coping mechanisms in managing these challenges, and the proposed policy and administrative support integration to strengthen school-based support systems.

A qualitative phenomenological research design was employed to capture the lived experiences of teachers regarding school heads' support in their actual school contexts. This approach allowed participants to freely share their experiences related to workload demands, resource limitations, policy and communication barriers, and leadership-related challenges, as well as the strategies they use to cope with these difficulties. Through thematic analysis, recurring patterns were identified, highlighting major challenges such as time and workload constraints, resource and budget limitations, policy and system barriers, and organizational culture and leadership issues.

The findings further reveal that teachers cope with these challenges through proactive communication and problem-solving, peer collaboration and mentorship, and adaptation and resourcefulness. These coping mechanisms reflect teachers' resilience, professionalism, and commitment to maintaining instructional effectiveness despite limited institutional support.



However, the persistence of these challenges also indicates the need for stronger and more responsive administrative systems.

The study generally shows that while teachers continuously demonstrate adaptability and dedication, their effectiveness is significantly influenced by the level of support provided by school leadership and the existing school policies. These findings underscore the importance of integrated policy and administrative reforms to improve workload management, resource allocation, communication systems, and leadership engagement. Building on these results, the next section presents the implications of the study and directions for future practice and research.

Implications

The findings of this study on the challenges experienced by public elementary school teachers in acquiring school heads' support to address their instructional and professional needs have significant implications for educational leadership, school management practices, teacher development, and policy integration. Overall, the results suggest that teachers' experiences are influenced not only by individual classroom demands but also by organizational systems, leadership responsiveness, institutional policies, and the availability of administrative support structures. The study further implies that effective instructional quality depends greatly on the extent to which teachers are supported through responsive leadership, accessible communication systems, adequate resources, and collaborative professional environments.

First, the findings on time and workload constraints imply that schools and educational leaders need to revisit workload distribution systems and administrative expectations placed upon teachers. Heavy teaching responsibilities, administrative burdens, and limited opportunities for professional engagement indicate that teachers experience structural workload pressures that limit their ability to seek support and participate in professional growth activities. This suggests the need for institutionalized workload management policies that balance instructional and non-instructional duties. It also implies that school heads should establish structured schedules for teacher consultation, coordination, and support-related activities to ensure that teachers are able to communicate concerns without compromising classroom instruction.

Second, the findings on resource and budget limitations imply the importance of strengthening school resource management and budgeting practices. Insufficient MOOE allocation, limited instructional materials, and competing school priorities suggest that many teacher needs remain unaddressed because of inadequate financial support systems and weak prioritization mechanisms. This implies that schools should adopt more responsive and transparent budgeting procedures that directly consider teachers' instructional needs during school planning and resource allocation processes. Furthermore, the findings suggest that school heads and educational administrators should strengthen mechanisms for equitable resource distribution and ensure that teacher support needs are integrated into school improvement planning and policy implementation. Third, the findings on policy, communication, and system barriers imply the need to improve administrative procedures and communication systems within schools. Unclear policies, bureaucratic delays, and communication gaps indicate that existing support mechanisms may unintentionally create barriers that prevent teachers from efficiently accessing assistance and resources. This suggests the importance of establishing clear, standardized, and transparent systems for processing teacher requests and concerns. It also implies that school leaders should strengthen communication practices by promoting openness, timely feedback, and accessible channels for teacher-administrator interaction to reduce misunderstandings and delays in support delivery.

Fourth, the findings on organizational culture and leadership issues imply that leadership practices significantly shape teachers' professional experiences, morale, and instructional effectiveness. Limited administrative availability, lack of approachability, and weak leadership support systems suggest that teachers require more responsive, collaborative, and relational forms of leadership. This implies that school heads should cultivate supportive organizational cultures grounded in trust, accessibility, shared decision-making, and professional respect. The findings further imply that leadership development programs should emphasize relational leadership, emotional intelligence, and teacher-centered management approaches to strengthen the quality of support provided to teachers.

Fifth, the findings on teachers' coping mechanisms imply that resilience, collaboration, and adaptability are essential professional qualities that enable teachers to function effectively despite institutional challenges. Teachers' use of proactive communication, peer collaboration, mentorship, adaptability, and resourcefulness demonstrates their strong commitment to sustaining instructional quality even in difficult circumstances. However, these findings also imply that schools should not rely solely on teachers' individual coping capacities. Instead, coping strategies should be strengthened through institutionalized support programs such as mentoring systems, collaborative learning communities, wellness initiatives, and continuous professional development opportunities that formally support teachers' emotional well-being and instructional growth.

Finally, the findings imply the necessity of integrating school policies and administrative support systems into a comprehensive teacher support framework. The challenges experienced by teachers reveal the need for coordinated policy integration involving workload management, resource allocation, communication systems, leadership engagement, and professional support mechanisms. This implies that schools should move beyond fragmented and reactive approaches toward more systematic, responsive, and collaborative support systems that address teachers' actual needs. Overall, the



study suggests that strengthening school heads' support through integrated policy and administrative reforms can contribute to improved teacher well-being, stronger professional relationships, enhanced instructional effectiveness, and better educational outcomes in public elementary schools.

Future Directions

Based on the findings of the study, several future directions are recommended to further strengthen school heads' support systems and improve the professional and instructional experiences of public elementary school teachers.

For school heads and educational administrators, the findings suggest the need to strengthen leadership practices that promote responsiveness, accessibility, collaboration, and teacher-centered support systems. School leaders are encouraged to implement administrative policies that address workload distribution, reduce excessive non-teaching responsibilities, and provide protected time for professional engagement and communication with teachers. In addition, school heads may strengthen support mechanisms by improving communication systems, simplifying administrative procedures, and ensuring timely responses to teachers' concerns and requests. The findings also recommend the development of more participatory leadership practices where teachers are actively involved in school planning, decision-making, and policy implementation processes.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of integrating responsive school policies and administrative support systems to address the challenges experienced by teachers in acquiring school heads' support. Educational administrators are encouraged to institutionalize policies on workload management, transparent resource allocation, leadership engagement, communication protocols, and professional support mechanisms. Schools may also establish structured mentoring programs, collaborative support systems, and regular Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions to strengthen peer collaboration, professional guidance, and collective problem-solving among teachers. In addition, the integration of teacher-responsive budgeting systems and clearer support request procedures may help improve transparency, efficiency, and accessibility of school support services.

For teachers, the findings emphasize the importance of continuously strengthening proactive communication, adaptability, collaboration, and professional resilience in managing workplace challenges. Teachers are encouraged to sustain professional and respectful communication with school leaders while actively participating in collaborative activities such as mentoring, peer coaching, and professional learning communities. They may also continue enhancing their instructional adaptability, resourcefulness, and self-directed professional development through participation in trainings, webinars, and reflective learning activities. Moreover, teachers are encouraged to maintain positive coping practices that support emotional well-being, instructional effectiveness, and professional growth despite organizational challenges.

For policymakers and educational stakeholders, the findings suggest the importance of strengthening institutional support systems that directly respond to teachers' professional and instructional needs. Policymakers may consider developing comprehensive teacher support frameworks that integrate leadership development, workload rationalization, equitable resource distribution, and teacher wellness initiatives into school management policies. Greater emphasis may also be placed on strengthening monitoring systems that ensure accountability, responsiveness, and transparency in the delivery of school support services.

For future researchers, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted in other educational divisions and school settings to further examine teachers' experiences with school heads' support across different contexts. Future studies may also employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches to explore the relationships among school leadership practices, teacher well-being, instructional quality, and organizational support systems. In addition, future research may assess the effectiveness of integrated policy frameworks and administrative interventions designed to improve teacher support systems in schools. Researchers may also include the perspectives of school heads, supervisors, parents, and other educational stakeholders to provide a broader understanding of leadership support, organizational culture, and policy implementation in educational settings.

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