

Lived Experiences of District 7 Koronadal City Head Teachers in Balancing Administrative and Teaching Tasks: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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Abstract

Understanding different points of view has become crucial for sustainable school leadership as modern educational leaders face growing demands in balancing administrative tasks with classroom teaching. This led the proponent to study the lived experiences of head teachers assigned to District 7, Koronadal City, Philippines. Employing phenomenological study with criterion-based sampling, five head teachers of public elementary schools participated in semi-structured interviews. The research used thematic analysis to draw from several academic frameworks, such as critical pedagogy theory and role conflict theory. Three main themes emerged: (1) the lived experiences of District 7 head teachers with teaching loads; (2) the contexts of lived experiences of District 7 head teachers with teaching loads; and (3) how District 7 head teachers envision their future. Participants expressed satisfaction with their contributions to student learning and teacher development, even though role conflicts and stress are inevitable. The study emphasized the need for comprehensive support systems and legal reforms to address workload management, professional development, and resource allocation in remote educational settings. These insights guide educational stakeholders on the systematic changes required to enhance the effectiveness of leaders and provide head teachers with sustainable working environments.

Keywords: head teachers, teaching tasks, administrative duties, educational leadership, lived experiences, Koronadal City, phenomenological inquiry



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INTRODUCTION

The evolving dynamics of educational leadership in the Philippines present challenges for head teachers, particularly in District 7 of Koronadal City, Philippines, where they must balance administrative responsibilities with classroom teaching. Their combined responsibilities significantly influence their professional performance, well-being, and job satisfaction. Head teachers in the Philippine context face increasing pressure to excel as both instructional leaders and educators, leading to workload strains that affect their effectiveness in both roles (Soroño & Quirap, 2023).

Current research on educational leadership, on a global scale, reveals a notable gap in understanding the lived experiences of head teachers in Koronadal City, Philippines. In the

Philippine educational setting, particularly in smaller schools such as those in District 7 of Koronadal City, head teachers often take on a dual role: as school administrators and classroom teachers. On the administrative side, they are expected to lead the implementation of school programs, oversee teachers' performance, manage school operations, conduct classroom observations, prepare reports, attend division meetings, and ensure that the school complies with Department of Education (DepEd) mandates. These tasks require time, strategic thinking, and coordination with stakeholders, making the role demanding and multifaceted.

At the same time, they are required to perform full teaching loads or at least a significant number of instructional hours. Teaching duties include lesson planning, classroom instruction, assessment of learners, checking outputs, and

engaging in remediation or enrichment activities. These tasks require emotional and mental energy as head teachers strive to maintain high-quality teaching despite their administrative duties. The intersection of these roles creates a unique challenge for head teachers in the Philippines, who must constantly shift between managerial decision-making and direct instructional responsibilities. This study seeks to explore how these responsibilities are experienced and managed by head teachers in Koronadal City, contributing to a deeper understanding of the leadership landscape in the Philippine educational context.

Although global studies are abundant, the Asian educational research scene has not fully addressed the psychological and emotional components of integrated leadership and teaching duties. For instance, Chen (2020) highlights that in several East and Southeast Asian countries, including the Philippines, the emotional labor of school leaders who juggle teaching responsibilities with leadership roles is often underrepresented in policy and academic discourse. This gap in research limits a holistic understanding of the pressures faced by head teachers in the region. Particularly with the recent K-12 reforms, issues of modular learning, and questions of resource allocation, as well as understanding the structural, policy-driven, and sociocultural dynamics of the Philippine education system are crucial. The traditional view that head teachers can effectively supervise administrative and instructional responsibilities often leads to reduced effectiveness in both fields. Recent research emphasizes the practical limitations of this dual burden. In Kenya, head teachers struggle with teacher coaching and curriculum supervision due to administrative obligations (Arusei & Okoth, 2023).

Similarly, Filipino head teachers frequently extend their working hours to fulfill various commitments, resulting in heightened stress levels and work-life imbalances (Abulencia, 2019). Institutional constraints and government mandates further complicate head teachers' responsibilities. Limited financial resources, staffing challenges, and restricted decision-

making authority hinder their leadership and instructional capabilities (Kalane & Rambuda, 2023). The implementation of K-12 reforms in the Philippines has expanded head teachers' roles to include curriculum supervision and professional development (Abulencia, 2019). Additionally, the pandemic introduced new challenges, requiring head teachers to address inconsistent grading practices, assessment difficulties, and instructional delivery issues during the transition to modular remote learning (Arciaga & Astillero, 2021).

Examining the lived experiences of District 7 head teachers as they negotiate teaching duties with leadership responsibilities highlights a major knowledge gap in this study. Human stories are utilized in this work to investigate personal issues, coping mechanisms, and institutional factors affecting daily events. The outcomes aim to direct institutional support systems and policy adjustments intended to enhance leadership effectiveness while promoting environmentally sustainable educational practices. The consequences of this study extend beyond the responsibilities of individual head teachers to encompass the entire educational process. Policy changes may inadvertently raise expectations without appropriate support mechanisms in the absence of an evidence-based understanding of their experiences; therefore, this could lead to fatigue and possibly higher turnover rates among school administrators.

In response to such concerns, the Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016, which institutionalizes a school-based management framework and explicitly encourages the development of support systems that allow school heads to effectively manage instructional and administrative tasks through shared leadership and participatory governance. Moreover, Republic Act No. 11032, also known as the *Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018*, emphasizes streamlining of government procedures and institutional accountability, which includes efforts to reduce bureaucratic workload in schools. These policies aim to mitigate the adverse effects of abrupt policy

shifts and to equip school leaders, including head teachers, with tools and structures that support their multifaceted roles in education.

The focus of this research on human narratives produces thorough, context-specific data that could guide long-term policy changes and immediate practical responses. By examining the unique socio-economic and legislative challenges head teachers in Koronadal City confront, this qualitative study builds on earlier research. While past studies have provided significant new perspectives on modular learning management (Arciaga & Astillero, 2021) and remote school leadership (Gallego, 2022), they have not addressed the unique issues specifically faced by teachers in District 7 of Koronadal City, Philippines. This initiative aims to document lived experiences that could support structural changes, thereby improving an educational environment that fosters positive leadership and maintains teaching quality in Koronadal City and beyond.

LITERATURES

Head teachers' evolving roles entail increased pressure to balance classroom teaching responsibilities with leadership duties. This paper examines current literature by focusing on three related themes from new research: the various experiences of head teachers managing their teaching duties, the factors that impact these experiences, and their thoughts on their professional futures. These themes provide a framework for understanding the complexities head teachers face in their dual roles, particularly in contexts similar to District 7 in Koronadal City, Philippines.

Workload Management and Role Conflicts. Head teachers function simultaneously as instructional leaders and educators, creating significant workload pressures. Research by Soroño and Quirap (2023) identifies that this dual responsibility frequently results in role conflicts, particularly in time management between administrative tasks and classroom teaching. These conflicts manifest as competing priorities that can compromise effectiveness in both domains. Bush (2018) notes that the

combined demands of instructional leadership, resource administration, and curriculum implementation often lead to decreased job satisfaction and burnout among school leaders who struggle to meet expectations across multiple roles.

Professional Time Management. Time constraints significantly impact head teachers' effectiveness in fulfilling their various roles. Arusei and Okoth (2023) documented that Kenyan head teachers struggle to allocate sufficient time for instructional supervision due to administrative overload, limiting their capacity for teacher guidance and curriculum implementation. This finding resonates across different educational contexts, suggesting a universal challenge in educational leadership. Research by Abulencia (2019) shows that principals sometimes extend their working hours to fulfill responsibilities, resulting in work-life imbalance and higher stress levels. Liao, Wang, and Wang (2023) associate these effects with reduced professional effectiveness and personal well-being.

Adaptation and Resilience Strategies. Different approaches are employed by head teachers to manage their responsibilities. Gallego (2022) examined school leaders in remote locations, highlighting their use of physical endurance techniques, emotional resilience strategies, and professional coping mechanisms to maintain their effectiveness in challenging circumstances. Arciaga and Astillero (2021) observed during the COVID-19 outbreak that school leaders preserved effectiveness in modular distance education through community contacts, digital monitoring, and flexible scheduling. These adaptable solutions demonstrate how creatively head teachers can manage complex responsibilities in constrained environments.

Educational Policy and Reform Impact. Educational reforms significantly shape head teachers' daily experiences. The implementation of the Philippine K-12 program introduced new curricular frameworks and administrative requirements, expanding head teachers' responsibilities (Abulencia, 2019).

Often, these legislative changes increase the burden without corresponding improvements in support systems or resource allocation. Frequently lacking the means or expertise to support these additional responsibilities, the OECD (2022) notes that global expectations for school leadership have broadened to encompass inclusive education, student mental health support, and technology integration.

Institutional and Resource Constraints.

Resource limitations exacerbate leadership challenges for head teachers. Kalane and Rambuda (2023) found that South African school leaders face financial constraints, limited parental engagement, and resource scarcity, which affect their leadership and teaching effectiveness. These constraints create additional burdens that compound the inherent challenges of balancing dual responsibilities. Liu and Bellibaş (2018) documented how insufficient financial autonomy and shortages of support staff compel head teachers to manage clerical tasks, thereby reducing their instructional leadership capacity.

In the Philippines, head teachers faced additional challenges during distance learning, including grading inconsistencies, assessment difficulties, and risks associated with home visits (Arciaga & Astillero, 2021). These barriers highlight systemic constraints that affect head teachers' performance and underscore how contextual factors can significantly amplify the difficulty of managing dual administrative and teaching responsibilities.

Stakeholder Engagement in School Leadership Research demonstrates the importance of collaborative decision-making in school leadership effectiveness. Arusei and Okoth (2023) found positive correlations between teacher involvement in school decisions and overall job satisfaction, suggesting that distributed leadership approaches may mitigate some challenges of dual responsibilities. However, Kalane and Rambuda (2023) note that head teachers often lack autonomy in strategic decisions, particularly regarding resource allocation and staffing, which limits their ability

to create optimal conditions for balancing administrative and teaching duties.

Professional Growth and Leadership Advancement.

Head teachers often view their current positions within a broader career trajectory that includes advancement to higher leadership roles. The OECD (2022) reports that educational leaders actively seek professional development opportunities for career advancement, though teaching duties frequently limit their ability to participate in these growth activities. Soroño and Quirap (2023) found that some school leaders aspire to policy-making or higher education leadership positions as natural progressions from their current roles, while others, particularly in remote areas, prioritize long-term community service despite persistent challenges (Gallego, 2022).

Occupational Stress and Retention. The career decisions and tenure in educational leadership of head teachers are strongly influenced by occupational stress. Liao, Wang, and Wang (2023) link high-stress levels with poor well-being and increased turnover among school leaders, therefore highlighting the need for sustainable leadership in which both professional responsibilities and personal health must be considered. Studies frequently show strong relationships between career satisfaction and the presence of mentorship programs, enabling policies, and work-life balance measures acknowledging the complex requirements of educational leadership roles.

Integration and Research Gaps. This study clarifies the difficult problems head teachers have in balancing administrative duties with instructional obligations in different educational environments. Their experiences show how policies, institutional restrictions, and personal aspirations affect their professional effectiveness and welfare.

The study indicates that organized support systems are needed to help head teachers effectively carry out their dual responsibilities while maintaining paths for professional growth and personal well-being. While current studies provide important new perspectives on the

overall experiences of head teachers, little is known about the unique lived experiences of head teachers in rural Philippine settings, including District 7, Koronadal City. This disparity highlights the need for contextually relevant research that reflects the complex reality of educational leadership in specific cultural and institutional environments, as demonstrated by the current study on head teachers' experiences with teaching loads in District 7.

Theoretical Frameworks. This phenomenological study examined the experiences of District 7 Koronadal City head teachers in balancing administrative and teaching tasks through four complementary theoretical lenses: 1) K. Merton's Role Conflict Theory, 2) Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy Theory, 3) Lewis Coser's Work-Life Balance Theory, and, 4) James MacGregor Burns' Transformational Leadership Theory. Altogether, these theories helped the proponent to clarify the problems head teachers face in their dual roles. They provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay of roles, responsibilities, and contexts that shape educational leadership.

Role Conflict Theory clarified the conflicts that emerge from administrative and teaching responsibilities, thereby causing stress and possibly loss of performance. On the other hand, Critical Pedagogy Theory examined how the administrative responsibilities of head teachers of District 7 affect their educational philosophy and practice while Transformational Leadership Theory is distinguished between transactional management and inspirational leadership duties. Work-Life Balance Theory considered the interaction between vocational commitments and personal well-being. These theories provide a coherent framework that captures the complex nature of head teachers' experiences, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the institutional influences and personal experiences that define their professional responsibilities.

Statement of the Problem. This study examined the lived experiences of District 7 head teachers

in Koronadal City, Philippines as they navigate teaching responsibilities alongside leadership duties. Through personal narratives collected via in-depth interviews, this research investigates their specific challenges, coping mechanisms, and the institutional factors that shape their daily experiences. This study was guided by three primary research questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of District 7 head teachers in managing their administrative and teaching tasks?
2. What contextual factors shape the experiences of District 7 head teachers while managing their administrative and teaching tasks?
3. How do District 7 head teachers with teaching loads envision their professional futures?

METHODS

Research Design. This study employs a phenomenological approach to investigate the lived experiences of head teachers in District 7, Koronadal City, Philippines. Phenomenology enables researchers to examine individuals' lived experiences and perceptions in depth (Neubauer et al., 2019). Through descriptive analysis, this method explores participants' sensations and experiences, with a comprehensive phenomenological-psychological examination following data collection (Morley et al., 2017).

A phenomenological approach was particularly appropriate for this investigation because it allows for a deep exploration of how head teachers make meaning of their dual administrative and teaching responsibilities within their specific context. This approach honors the subjective nature of leadership experiences while identifying patterns across individual narratives. The interpretive phenomenological framework facilitated the understanding of not only what these experiences entail but also how head teachers perceive and navigate the complexities of their professional roles.

Population and Sampling. This study was conducted in public elementary schools within District 7, Koronadal City, in South Cotabato, Philippines. Following the acquisition of approval from the Schools Division Superintendent, participants were sought via formal invitation letters addressed to qualified head teachers. Five (5) head teachers participated in the study: three (3) female and two (2) males. Their mean age was 48.6 years, with a range from 42 to 56 years. Every participant had worked for at least ten (10) years at their respective schools, accumulating between fifteen (15) and twenty-eight (28) years of cumulative educational experience.

The selection of participants employed purposive criterion-based sampling to ensure that participants met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives.

Instrumentation. A semi-structured interview questionnaire was the main instrument for the research. The questionnaire focused on three main study questions: one regarding the lived experiences of head teachers concerning administrative and teaching tasks, another on the elements affecting these experiences, and the third on the head teachers' views on their future professional development. Each main research question included five smaller questions meant to provide a thorough analysis of participants' viewpoints and experiences. The rigorous validation process for the instrument included three steps: (1) an initial review by two educational leadership experts with PhDs; (2) modifications based on feedback from the experts; and (3) pilot testing with two head teachers from a different district who were not part of the final study. This approach improved language and sequence to enhance logical consistency and clarity.

Data Analysis. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach served as the foundation for the thematic analysis of the interview data. This method recognizes and examines important trends and creates themes from qualitative data. Within 48 hours after each interview, the researcher transcribed in verbatim the audio recordings. A bilingual colleague confirmed the

translation into English, ensuring accuracy in sections where participants spoke in Filipino or a local dialect. By writing post-interview reflections and noting personal reactions and any biases, the researcher maintained reflexive awareness throughout the study. This method ensured that the researcher's personal experiences as a teacher would not alter the interpretation of the data, even though his knowledge of the school setting helped build relationships and better understand the context.

Ethical Considerations. This study received approval from the University Research Ethics Committee and the Schools Division Office of Koronadal City. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection. The consent process included an explanation of the study's purpose, procedures, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw, and measures to ensure confidentiality. The concept of confidentiality was largely respected as a means to prevent harm to study participants (Baez, 2002).

To protect participants' anonymity, several measures were implemented: every study paper and publication uses pseudonyms. The data is securely stored on devices protected by passwords. Identifying elements were eliminated from reports and transcripts. Participants were interviewed in secluded locations, allowing volunteers to check and approve their interview recordings.

RESULTS

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of District 7 head teachers in Koronadal City, Philippines who balance teaching tasks alongside administrative responsibilities. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, three central themes emerged: (1) head teachers' management of teaching and administrative tasks, (2) the contexts shaping these experiences, and (3) how head teachers envision their future given these dual responsibilities. Below is a detailed breakdown of these themes:

Lived experiences of District 7 head teachers in managing their administrative and teaching tasks. The lived experiences of District 7 head teachers reveal three relevant themes: diverse pathways to becoming a head teacher, the challenging duality of administrative and instructional roles, and the complex interplay of challenges and satisfactions in their work.

Relevant theme 1. Pathways to becoming a head teacher. The participants' narratives revealed various routes to assuming head teacher positions, reflecting both formal and circumstantial pathways. Research indicates that in the Philippines, becoming a head teacher typically involves initial teacher education, post-graduation qualifications, formal induction, and demonstrated competence in instructional supervision and leadership (OECD, 2019).

For some participants, health considerations influenced their career trajectory:

"Due to a mild stroke, as the former head of Manuel Dondiego's school, I was advised not to handle the school, so I applied to the division office for a favor to become an assistant principal at Esperanza Elementary School." (P1)

Others followed more traditional promotion paths:

"Initially assigned as a Teacher 1 in 2006, I was promoted to Head Teacher 1 in 2011 after the previous head teacher was reassigned." (P2)

Alternative routes emerged when desired positions were unavailable:

"I followed a formal application process, initially aiming for a master teacher position, but ultimately became the teacher-in-charge at Emba Elementary School due to the unavailability of my desired position." (P3)

These varied pathways demonstrate the dynamic nature of educational leadership appointments in the Philippine context,

where formal qualifications intersect with institutional needs and personal circumstances to shape career trajectories.

Relevant theme 2. Duality of administrative and instructional roles. Head teachers consistently described the challenge of simultaneously managing administrative responsibilities while fulfilling teaching obligations. Research by Quirap (2023) confirms that head teachers play a vital role in a school's academic progress by coordinating teaching, providing resources, mentoring staff, and fostering an enabling culture. Participants articulated this duality through concrete descriptions of their responsibilities:

"As a head teacher, I have to function as a school head, do administrative work, and also, this school year, we were given a teaching load of, I think, 300 minutes." (P2)

The comprehensive nature of their role extends beyond classroom teaching:

"As a head teacher, I oversee all aspects of the school, provide support to teachers, manage school resources, develop the curriculum, and assist in professional development for teachers—particularly those needing technical assistance—while also managing the school's assets and aligning activities." (P5)

These testimonies highlight how head teachers navigate competing demands that require both educational leadership expertise and classroom teaching proficiency. The significant time allocation (300 minutes) to teaching represents a substantial commitment alongside administrative duties, creating a complex professional identity that spans multiple educational functions.

Relevant theme 3. Complex interplay of challenges and satisfactions. The dual responsibilities of head teachers generate both significant challenges and meaningful satisfaction. Previous research indicates that

school heads face varying challenges across educational contexts, including emotional labor affecting work engagement (Ambreen, 2023) and physical discomfort while teaching in remote areas (Gallego, 2022). Participants described specific difficulties in managing competing priorities:

"I have difficulty focusing on teaching when administrative tasks demand my attention, potentially leading to conflicts in prioritizing." (P1)

"I experience anxiety and challenges with overlapping schedules, such as having to leave class activities to attend seminars or meetings." (P2)

Despite these challenges, participants derived significant satisfaction from their impact on learning outcomes:

"I found fulfillment in contributing to learners' progress and achieving high scores in assessments, even with occasional absences due to administrative duties." (P4)

"I was satisfied to see children learn and provide precise technical assistance to teachers, although balancing both roles remained challenging." (P5)

This theme reveals the tension between administrative burden and instructional fulfillment that characterizes the head teacher experience. While time management and role conflicts create stress, the visible impact on student learning and teacher development provides compensatory satisfaction that sustains their commitment to these dual responsibilities.

Contextual factors that shape the experiences of District 7 head teachers in managing their administrative and teaching tasks. The lived experiences of head teachers are shaped by contextual factors that influence how they navigate their dual responsibilities. This section examines three contextual themes: the school environment, the impact of teaching loads on

administrative effectiveness, and the specific challenges of balancing dual responsibilities.

Relevant theme 1. School Environment. The physical and social characteristics of schools significantly influenced head teachers' experiences. Recent research by Astillero (2023) identified barriers faced by school heads in their daily interactions, including limited classroom engagement, hazards during home visits, and workload issues. Participants described contrasting school environments that shaped their work:

"In our school, there are no problems regarding the environment because the relationships among the teachers are harmonious." (P1)

Geographic location emerged as a significant contextual factor:

"Our school is located in a remote area, specifically in Purok Punta Barrio. As the name suggests, we are indeed in a rural, mountainous area at the far end." (P3)

These accounts demonstrate how school environments—both social and physical—create different conditions for head teachers' work. Harmonious teacher relationships may facilitate administrative functions, while remote locations may present logistical challenges that compound the difficulty of balancing teaching and administrative responsibilities.

Relevant theme 2. Impact of teaching loads on administrative effectiveness. Teaching responsibilities significantly affected participants' ability to fulfill administrative duties effectively. According to Liu and Bellibaş (2018), principals who are heavily involved in teaching often struggle to fulfill their administrative duties effectively. Participants described specific situations where role conflicts emerged:

"If there's a conflict, like when you meet at the division office, you will have to leave your instructional subject behind." (P1)

The impact on administrative effectiveness was explicitly acknowledged:

"The only issue I've had with the teaching load is that it affects my efficiency as a school head. It's not solely about leadership but also about managing my time to cope with the reports that need to be submitted to the division office." (P4)

These accounts reveal how teaching commitments create practical challenges for administrative functions, particularly when external meetings or reporting deadlines conflict with classroom responsibilities. The resulting time pressure diminishes administrative effectiveness and forces difficult prioritization decisions that may compromise either teaching quality or administrative thoroughness.

Relevant theme 3. Challenges of balancing dual responsibilities. Specific administrative tasks presented particular challenges when combined with teaching responsibilities. Research by Kalane and Rambuda (2022) found that head teachers in primary schools face obstacles including lack of administrative support, poor working conditions, and limited resources, which impede academic progress. Participants articulated the practical implications of this balancing act:

"It's difficult because you have to balance and work quickly on administrative tasks to keep up with your teaching load." (P3)

Certain administrative responsibilities were identified as especially time-intensive:

"Creating the SIP requires a lot of time and many days to complete and get approved. So, during the crafting of the SIP, I can't teach my assigned classes." (P5)

These testimonies highlight specific administrative functions that create acute role conflicts for headteachers with teaching loads. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) development process exemplifies how

certain administrative responsibilities demand concentrated attention that temporarily precludes teaching, forcing head teachers to make difficult compromises between their dual responsibilities.

How head teachers envision themselves in the future. The final dimension examines how head teachers conceptualize their professional futures in light of their current experiences with dual responsibilities. Three themes emerged: health and stress, aspirations for career advancement, and commitment to professional development.

Relevant theme 1. Health and stress. Participants expressed concerns about the health implications of maintaining dual responsibilities. Recent research by Liao and Wang (2023) confirmed that work stress negatively affects the well-being of school teachers, with family-work conflict and self-transcendent meaning moderating this relationship. Health considerations influenced future professional preferences:

"If I were assigned teaching loads, I would avoid them because I try to avoid stress. Unlike the job without teaching loads, handling technical assistance and physical facilities, at least the stress wouldn't be heavy for me because my doctor advised me to avoid stress due to my condition." (P1)

This account demonstrates how health concerns directly influence professional decision-making, with stress management becoming a priority that shapes preferences for specific roles and responsibilities. For head teachers with health conditions, the administrative-only role appears less stressful and more sustainable than combined teaching and administrative responsibilities.

Relevant theme 2. Aspirations for Career Advancement. Despite current challenges, participants maintained clear aspirations for career progression. Research by Arusei and Okoth (2022) found that participation in professional advancement and decision-

making positively impacts job satisfaction in public elementary schools. Participants articulated specific career goals:

"Maybe five years from now, I may be reassigned to another school; hopefully, I can have my item as Principal I." (P2). Similarly, Participant 3 said, "Hopefully, by God's grace, I will be a Principal I."

These statements reveal how head teachers maintain focus on upward career mobility despite current challenges, viewing their present dual responsibilities as a transitional phase toward higher administrative positions. The consistent aspiration toward Principal I positions suggests that participants perceive value in their current experiences as preparation for future leadership roles.

Relevant theme 3. Commitment to professional development. Participants emphasized ongoing professional development as essential for future effectiveness. Raagas (2021) noted that schools should provide training opportunities for administrators with general education experience to enhance their leadership capabilities. Participants recognized the continuous nature of professional learning:

"Being a school head doesn't mean you already know everything; there's always a need for further enhancement so that you can share more with your teachers and the children who need your help." (P1)

Specific educational goals shaped future planning:

"My goal is to] finish my course in Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Education and to apply my knowledge among my colleagues for the transfer of learning." (P4)

These accounts demonstrate head teachers' commitment to ongoing professional growth, viewing advanced education as both personally enriching and professionally

beneficial for their school communities. The emphasis on knowledge transfer suggests that participants perceive professional development as extending beyond personal advancement to benefit their educational communities.

DISCUSSION

Examining the lived experiences of head teachers in District 7, Koronadal City, Philippines, as they reconcile administrative responsibilities with instructional duties, this phenomenological study provides a nuanced picture of educational leadership in rural settings. Here, future aspirations, career paths, and job duality combine to impact head teachers' daily experiences and long-term development. Participant experiences illustrate the complex balance required to manage administrative and instructional responsibilities in environments with limited resources. Their stories highlight how contextual factors in schools' location to health issues affect their ability to execute multiple tasks and reveal the intrinsic gratifications that sustain their devotion despite significant challenges.

Based on a thorough examination of educational leadership in rural settings, these insights are likely to apply to similar situations, even though they are specific to District 7, Koronadal City. This study underscores the importance of caution when making broad statements. The qualitative method was particularly effective in capturing the nuanced viewpoints of head teachers involved in this research. Participants discussed both the emotional and practical aspects of their roles during semi-structured interviews. They addressed the stress stemming from role conflicts, the anxiety produced by balancing diverse demands, and the satisfaction derived from witnessing student success. The thematic analysis method helped identify patterns in participants' experiences.

The results revealed common challenges and unique contextual factors that influenced how head teachers managed their teaching loads. However, analyzing this data imposes several

constraints. The limited sample size of five head teachers restricts the generalizability of the findings, despite being suitable for a phenomenological study that prioritizes depth over breadth. The focus on a specific rural district in the Philippines raises concerns that the results may not accurately represent the experiences of head teachers in urban environments or locations with differing educational infrastructures, resource availability, or cultural settings. Relying on self-reported data introduces the risk of social desirability bias, as individuals may portray their experiences to align with established professional standards or norms. The cross-sectional nature of the study captures participants' experiences at a given moment rather than tracking the evolution of their management of multiple responsibilities over time about experience or changes in policy contexts. Despite these limitations, the study makes significant theoretical contributions to our understanding of educational leadership in rural contexts.

The findings extend previous research by Liu and Bellibaş (2018) regarding the impact of teaching responsibilities on administrative effectiveness, providing empirical evidence of specific mechanisms through which this impact occurs. The documentation of role conflicts during particular administrative tasks, such as School Improvement Plan development, offers concrete examples of how competing responsibilities compromise leadership effectiveness. The study also contributes to the literature on rural educational leadership by Kalane and Rambuda (2022), illustrating how geographic isolation exacerbates the challenges of dual responsibilities through limited resources and logistical complexities.

Practically, these findings have substantial implications for educational policy and leadership development. The consistent finding that administrative effectiveness suffers when head teachers maintain significant teaching loads challenges current staffing models in rural schools. The identified tension between professional development aspirations and immediate role demands suggests the need for

more flexible approaches to leadership development that accommodate the realities of rural educational settings. The observed health impacts of sustained role conflicts highlight the potential long-term consequences of current policy approaches to head teacher responsibilities.

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerge for enhancing support for head teachers with teaching loads. Education departments should develop comprehensive support systems that explicitly acknowledge the dual nature of head teachers' responsibilities, particularly in rural schools where resources may be limited. This might include administrative assistants specifically assigned to support head teachers during intensive administrative periods such as School Improvement Plan development or reporting deadlines. Professional development programs should be redesigned to strengthen both administrative and instructional capacities through integrated approaches rather than treating these as separate domains. At the policy level, establishing appropriate limits on teaching commitments for head teachers would create space for more effective strategic planning and instructional leadership without compromising classroom quality.

Methods of resource allocation need to be changed to provide remote schools with more funding, thus enabling a fairer distribution of work among staff members and lessening the load on individual head teachers. Mentoring relationships between seasoned and novice head teachers could improve knowledge sharing regarding effective strategies for handling competing expectations and provide useful assistance while developing a professional network among educational leaders with related challenges.

Future studies should build on this work and correct its shortcomings. Comparative research on the experiences of head teachers in rural and urban environments would reveal how contextual factors affect the challenges of managing administrative and instructional responsibilities. Longitudinal research tracking

head teachers' experiences over time would help to clarify how their coping strategies evolved and how their perspectives changed with experience. Intervention studies could explore specific support mechanisms to identify effective ways to assist head teachers in managing their dual responsibilities. Policy impact studies, on the other hand, could investigate how different ways of organizing head teachers' duties affect their ability to lead and their health.

This study highlights the challenges and resilience faced by rural Philippine educational leaders. Maintaining their commitment to student education and teacher development, head teachers in District 7 navigate significant role conflicts, limited resources, and health issues. Their stories illustrate the importance of schools understanding and supporting the complex dynamics of rural educational leadership through targeted policies, tools, and programs for professional development. By addressing these needs, educational authorities may help head teachers become more effective and welfare-oriented, thereby strengthening educational leadership and improving outcomes for rural students and communities.

Conflict of Interest. The author declares no conflict of interest in the conduct of this research.

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