School Leaders' Crisis Leadership Competencies and their Pandemic Response Strategies: The Case of DEPED Division of Northern Sumar

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ABSTRACT

Based on the Meta-Leadership Model of Marcus et al. (2007), this study assessed the crisis leadership competencies and pandemic response strategies of school leaders in the DepEd Division of Northern Samar. Using a sequential exploratory approach, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. Eight school leaders were interviewed, revealing that meta-leaders exert influence beyond their formal authority, guiding followers through challenges and aligning them with the organization's core purpose. A survey of 130 respondents evaluated school leaders' crisis leadership competencies, indicating "Very High" competence in Team Leadership (AWM=3.25) and "High" in Situational Awareness, Integrative Thinking, Decisiveness, and Emotional Effectiveness. Another survey on pandemic response strategies showed emphasis on Promoting Organizational Resilience, Acting with Integrity, and Exhibiting Learning Orientation. The findings suggest that effective pandemic response strategies should prioritize communication, productivity, technology use, and accessibility. The researcher recommends three key areas for a crisis management plan: (1) guidelines for remote work for faculty and staff, (2) remote work for department heads and master teachers, and (3) inclusive virtual meetings. Adoption of this plan is advised to ensure comprehensive school system management.

RESUMO

Com base no Modelo de Meta-Liderança de Marcus et al. (2007), este estudo avaliou as competências de liderança em crises e as estratégias de resposta à pandemia de líderes escolares na Divisão DepEd de Northern Samar. Usando uma abordagem exploratória sequencial, métodos qualitativos e quantitativos foram empregados. Oito líderes escolares foram entrevistados, revelando que os metalíderes exercem influência além de sua autoridade formal, orientando os seguidores em desafios e alinhando-os com o propósito central da organização. Uma pesquisa com 130 entrevistados avaliou as competências de liderança em crises dos líderes escolares, indicando competência "Muito Alta" em Liderança de Equipe (AWM=3,25) e "Alta" em Consciência Situacional, Pensamento Integrativo, Decisividade e Eficácia Emocional. Outra pesquisa sobre estratégias de resposta à pandemia mostrou ênfase em promover a resiliência organizacional, agir com integridade e exibir orientação para o aprendizado. As descobertas sugerem que estratégias eficazes de resposta à pandemia devem priorizar comunicação, produtividade, uso de tecnologia e acessibilidade. O pesquisador recomenda três áreas principais para um plano de gerenciamento de crise: (1) diretrizes para trabalho remoto para professores e funcionários, (2) trabalho remoto para chefes de departamento e mestres e (3) reuniões virtuais inclusivas. A adoção deste plano é aconselhada para garantir uma gestão abrangente do sistema escolar.

Introduction

Related events worldwide have reshaped public perceptions and discourse. These crises, demanding rapid decisions in uncertain scenarios, challenge leaders to discern situations swiftly, decide with limited information and communicate effectively.

The COVID-19 pandemic epitomized this challenge for school leaders. With schools transitioning to online platforms, institutional administration underwent a seismic shift, altering leaders' roles profoundly. They had to harness their leadership skills innovatively, adapting to a crisis demanding extensive changes. Surprisingly, academic programs on school leadership have historically underemphasized crisis management.

A leader's response to crises can influence perceptions of their competence and trustworthiness. Effective crisis management planning for school leaders should encompass comprehensive risk appraisal, integrating risk assessment with concern assessment. The latter draws from risk perception studies, economic impact evaluations, and scientific analyses of societal risk responses. This information informs the selection of crisis management strategies.

However, solely relying on expert professionals is short-sighted. Collaborative efforts involving school communities, NGOs, and local government units are imperative to anticipate, identify, and address challenges, leveraging superior crisis management practices. The pandemic highlighted the complexities of policy design and crisis management for school leaders, necessitating a comprehensive educational overhaul to fortify both intellectual and infrastructural capacities.

In crisis scenarios, the leadership attributes needed differ from conventional school contexts. Effective leadership not only champions academic excellence but also ensures swift, decisive action during emergencies to safeguard students, faculty, and staff. This research delves into the crisis leadership competencies of school leaders and their pandemic response strategies, aiming to provide a foundational blueprint for future crisis management plans.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study employed a sequential-exploratory mixed-methods approach. Initially, a phenomenological method was utilized for the qualitative component, focusing on human experiences related to a phenomenon. Open-ended interview questions were crafted to extract essential data, leading to the formation of categories and themes. Thematic analysis further enriched the understanding of the subject matter. Following this qualitative exploration, a questionnaire was developed to assess school administrators' pandemic response preparations. Responses were analyzed to identify key themes. Concurrently, a quantitative approach was adopted to determine the relationship between crisis leadership competencies

and the extent of school leaders' pandemic response strategies. This quantitative design, as described by Levy (2017), emphasizes breadth, statistical precision, and generalizability, aiming to explore causal relationships based on deductive designs.

In this study, school leaders were purposively sampled for qualitative interviews based on set criteria, including tenure and internet access. For the quantitative portion, a total sampling technique was employed within the DepEd Division of Northern Samar's first congressional district, but only those with internet access participated in the online survey.

Eight school leaders from the DepEd Division of Northern Samar were interviewed for qualitative insights. Meanwhile, 130 school leaders participated in an online survey assessing their crisis leadership competencies and pandemic response strategies

Research Instrument

For the study's quantitative component, a structured survey was designed based on qualitative analysis, encompassing two sections: Crisis Leadership Competencies and School Leader's Pandemic Response Strategies. These sections evaluated aspects like Team Leadership and Promoting Organizational Resiliency using a four-point Likert scale. The qualitative phase employed a structured interview guide with open-ended questions, allowing participants to elaborate on their pandemic response strategies and related experiences.

For quantitative data validation, the researcher employed Collingridge's six-step method, which included establishing face validity through expert review, running a pilot test with 10% of the population, cleaning data, applying Principal Components Analysis (PCA) to determine survey components, checking internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha, and revising the instrument based on findings. For qualitative data, Castillo-Montoya's four-phase interview protocol refinement was adopted. This involved creating a protocol matrix, formulating clear interview questions, refining the protocol based on feedback, and pilot-testing the interview with a subset of participants before the main study.

Data-Gathering Procedures

The researcher sought permission to conduct the study, informed participants, and obtained their consent, ensuring data confidentiality. Surveys were administered via Google Docs, adhering to COVID-19 protocols, and standard operating procedures for data analysis were followed.

Statistical Treatment

For the quantitative data, the study employed frequency to summarize responses, weighted mean to gauge crisis leadership competencies and pandemic response strategies, and Pearson

Correlation to ascertain variable correlations at a 0.05 significance level. For qualitative data, the researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2018) thematic analysis procedures: immersing in data for familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, refining themes, defining each theme's essence, and presenting a comprehensive report on the analysis to ensure its validity and quality.

Results and Discussion

Specific Problem 1. How do school leaders describe their most significant experiences as regards their pandemic response strategies?

The study, based on the Meta-Leadership Model, highlighted meta-leaders' aim to deeply understand themselves and their situations, emphasizing self-awareness. Interviews revealed that school leaders had a thorough understanding of their surroundings and relationships.

Table 1.
Meta-leadership framework and school leaders' response to the pandemic

Theme	Description
Meta-Leadership Framework and Self-awareness	- Understanding of the Meta-Leadership Model. - School leaders' self-awareness and inquiry into their roles and relationships.
Adaptation to New Roles and Responsibilities	- Emergence of new roles during the pandemic. - The intensification and expansion of core roles. - Rapid adaptation to digitization. - The vision of post-crisis organizational direction.
Communication Strategies	- Importance of open and honest communication. - Utilization of various channels, including social media, for information dissemination. - Engaging parents/guardians through various means.
Response Strategies to Pandemic Challenges	- Engagement with parents/guardians as learning partners. - Ensuring the delivery of learning services to students. - Preparing teachers for various learning delivery modalities. - Ensuring the safety and well-being of faculty and staff. - Preparations for the resumption of face-to-face classes.
Challenges Encountered	- Communication challenges, especially in remote areas. - Delivery of learning services and ensuring their quality. - Adjustments in teaching modalities and schedules. - Issues with online learning and module preparations.
Personal Reflections and Growth	- Personal transformations due to challenges faced. - Emphasis on personal integrity and ethical decision-making. - Realizations about the potential for recovery and change.
Collaboration and Support	- Collaborative efforts with district heads, central school principals, and other stakeholders. - The role of teachers in preparing for limited face-to-face classes. - Regaining trust and confidence of school stakeholders.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped educational landscapes globally, compelling school leaders to adapt, innovate, and lead in unprecedented ways. Table 1 offers a deep dive into these transformative experiences. When juxtaposed with other contemporary research, a comprehensive picture of educational leadership during these trying times emerges.

Central to the study is the Meta-Leadership Framework, which emphasizes the importance of self-awareness and introspection. Leaders, in this context, are not just administrative heads but individuals who introspectively understand their roles and relationships. This is particularly crucial when considering the findings of Barrot et al. (2021), which highlighted the challenges students faced with online learning in the Philippines. A leader's self-awareness can be instrumental in empathizing with and addressing these challenges.

The pandemic necessitated a swift adaptation to new roles and responsibilities for school leaders. This resonates with the findings of Sum (2022), which explored the VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) leadership paradigm faced by Australian school leaders. The rapidity and intensity of changes, from digitization to envisioning a post-crisis direction, underscore the agility demanded of modern educational leaders.

Effective communication emerged as a linchpin in navigating the pandemic's challenges. The study underscores the importance of open, honest communication, leveraging various channels, including the omnipresent social media. This emphasis on clear communication strategies finds echoes in the work of Huck & Zhang (2021), who discussed the overarching effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education.

Benítez-Andrades et al. (2021) highlighted the significance of robust networks in their social network analysis of university student interactions during the pandemic. This aligns with the study's emphasis on engaging parents and guardians as partners in learning, ensuring the continuity of learning services, and preparing for diverse learning modalities.

However, these strategies were not without challenges. From communication barriers in remote areas to the intricacies of ensuring quality in learning services, school leaders faced a plethora of issues. These challenges, especially those related to online learning and module preparations, mirror the concerns raised by Barrot et al. (2021).

Personal growth and reflection emerged as silver linings amidst these challenges. Ansell et al. (2021) emphasized the need for robust governance responses to such turbulent problems. The personal transformations, ethical decision-making, and resilience exhibited by the school leaders in the DEPED Division of Northern Samar can be seen as manifestations of such robust responses.

Collaboration, a cornerstone of effective leadership, was accentuated during the pandemic. The emphasis on collaborative efforts, from district heads to central school principals, resonates with the collaborative leadership paradigms discussed by Sum (2022). The concerted efforts to regain stakeholder trust underscore the intricate dance of leadership and community engagement.

Overall, the experiences of school leaders in the DepEd Division of Northern Samar, as delineated in the study, offer a microcosm of the broader challenges and triumphs of educational leadership during the pandemic. When contextualized with other contemporary research, these experiences underscore the adaptability, resilience, and innovation inherent in educational leadership. The pandemic, with all its challenges, has also been a testament to the indomitable spirit of educators and leaders worldwide.

Specific Problem 2. What themes emerged from the testimonies shared by the school leaders?

Meta-leaders, as revealed from interviews, wield influence beyond their power, guiding followers through challenges and aligning them with the organization's core purpose and objectives. The analysis identified three key themes from their pandemic responses: (1) Promoting Organizational Resiliency; (2) Acting with Integrity; and (3) Exhibiting Learning Orientation, detailed in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2.

Core Ideas of the Emergent Theme, "Promoting Organizational Resiliency"

Theme	Core Ideas
Promoting Organizational Resiliency	postcrisis vision
	leading with resiliency
	capacity to absorb strain
	adaptability and accountability
	functioning in the face of adversity
	crisis as a catalyst for thinking differently
	addressing stakeholder needs and concerns
	positive adjustment under challenging conditions
	ability to bounce back in a new and improved way
	projection of hope, optimism, trust, and common purpose

Table 2 elucidates the essence of the core ideas of the theme "Promoting Organizational Resiliency", painting a holistic picture of how school leaders navigated the tumultuous waters of the pandemic. Central to this is the concept of organizational resilience, which is the ability of an institution to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to both long-term changes and immediate challenges.

Denyer (2017) offers a nuanced perspective on this, suggesting that organizational resilience is twofold: preventing negative outcomes and fostering positive developments. He emphasizes the need for a balanced approach, combining preventative management with adaptive innovation tailored to the specific needs of the institution. This balance is delicate, requiring continuous attention to ensure that organizations don't inadvertently drift into calamity.

Stephenson (2018) further underscores the importance of resilience, suggesting that it enables organizations to respond to disruptions, adapt positively to adversity, and seize opportunities. He advocates for a blend of risk management, physical barriers, redundancy, system backups, and standard procedures to ensure an organization's ability to recover from setbacks and return to stability.

Perrow (2017) and Wildavsky (2018) both emphasize the societal expectations of safety and reliability from institutions. While Perrow focuses on the importance of consistency and predictability in systems, Wildavsky delves into the human aspect, suggesting that resilience is bolstered by enhancing overall competence. This means equipping individuals with the resources and skills to adapt and innovate in the face of unforeseen challenges.

Youssef et al. (2017) introduce the concept of psychological capital, suggesting that traits like self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience collectively enhance organizational resilience. Individuals with a robust sense of competence, they argue, are better equipped to handle unexpected situations and persist through challenges.

Overall, the testimonies of school leaders from the DEPED Division of Northern Samar, as framed within the broader academic discourse, underscore the multifaceted nature of organizational resilience. It is not just about systems and procedures but also about nurturing human capital, fostering a culture of adaptability, and ensuring a proactive approach to challenges. In the face of adversity, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, these principles become the bedrock upon which successful leadership is built.

Table 3.

Core Ideas of the Emergent Theme, "Acting with Integrity"

Theme	Core Ideas
Acting with Integrity	behavior integrity
	empathy with others
	use of prior experience
	excellent relationship skills
	high levels of self-awareness
	regaining trust of stakeholders
	possession of personal integrity
	ability to articulate a shared vision
	ability to engage in ethical behavior
	developing new routines and behaviors
	purposeful and skillful in finding learning opportunities

Table 3 delineates the core ideas that underpin this theme. At its heart, "Acting with Integrity" is not just about doing the right thing when no one is watching, but it's about a deep-rooted commitment to ethical behavior, self-awareness, and the ability to articulate a shared vision. The school leaders of Northern Samar have showcased these traits, emphasizing their unwavering commitment to their roles and responsibilities.

Grant (2020) provides a perspective that aligns with these findings, suggesting that true school leaders possess a profound personal commitment that continually fuels their motivation. Such leaders, with their clarity of purpose, not only communicate the school's objectives more effectively but also inspire trust and perseverance among their staff, even in the face of adversity.

Authentic leadership, as the study suggests, is rooted in self-awareness. Genuine school leaders are not only aware of their strengths but also recognize areas that require growth. This self-awareness, coupled with the ability to be vulnerable and honest, fosters meaningful relationships within the educational community. Robinson (2020) further emphasizes the moral compass that school leaders must possess, suggesting that a clear distinction between right and wrong is paramount. Such leaders often seek guidance from more experienced peers, ensuring that their decisions align with ethical standards.

Lee and Lee (2018) introduce the concept of self-awareness as a tool to prevent selfish decisions. Authentic leaders prioritize the collective good over personal biases, ensuring that their actions resonate with integrity. Such leaders also encourage open communication, allowing their teams to voice concerns and doubts, fostering an environment of trust and mutual respect.

Overall, the testimonies of school leaders from the DEPED Division of Northern Samar, as framed within the broader academic discourse, underscore the importance of integrity in leadership. In times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the principles of honesty, self-awareness, and ethical decision-making become the foundation upon which successful leadership is built.

Table 4.

Core Ideas of the Emergent Theme, "Exhibiting Learning Orientation"

Theme	Core Ideas
Exhibiting Learning Orientation	sharing information
	anticipating change
	doing multiple tasks
	being a team player
	learning from mistakes
	recovering from setbacks
	relying on diverse opinions
	following public health ethics
	dealing with pressure ambiguity
	anticipating emerging conditions
	exemplifying transparent communication
	showing consistency of words and actions
	initiating communication using various channels
	earning the confidence and respect of subordinates
	facilitating collaboration across organizational domains

Table 4 elucidates the core ideas underpinning the theme "Exhibiting Learning Orientation," which signifies the school leaders' proactive approach to assimilating new

information, anticipating changes, and fostering a culture of continuous learning. This theme underscores the leaders' commitment to not only personal growth but also to the holistic development of their educational institutions. They demonstrated a penchant for seeking knowledge, embracing challenges, and leveraging diverse opinions to navigate the complexities of the pandemic.

Brion (2021) offers a perspective that resonates with these findings, suggesting that an organization's learning orientation is its compass, guiding its adaptability and efficiency. Such an orientation is characterized by a commitment to learning, an open-minded approach, and a shared vision. These components collectively enable organizations to stay ahead of the curve, innovate, and respond effectively to evolving challenges.

Ahearne et al. (2018) emphasize the role of managerial commitment in fostering a learning culture. Organizations with a pronounced learning orientation are better equipped to understand customer needs, harness cutting-edge technologies, and outpace competitors in innovation. Such organizations are not just reactive; they are predictive, anticipating market shifts and customer preferences.

Open-mindedness, as defined by Brion (2021), is the linchpin of adaptability. It's about challenging the status quo, embracing new perspectives, and being agile in the face of technological and market evolutions. Coupled with a shared vision, this open-mindedness ensures that all members of an organization are aligned with its long-term objectives, fostering a cohesive approach to challenges.

Swaner (2021) further underscores the benefits of a learning-oriented approach, linking it to enhanced marketing efficacy and customer value delivery. Such an orientation, while well-established in the marketing domain, is now gaining traction in non-profit sectors. Despite inherent challenges, embracing organizational learning can catalyze a shift in values, boost creativity, and enhance competitiveness.

Overall, Vanderwall et al. (2019) encapsulate the essence of a learning orientation by highlighting the importance of hiring individuals with a growth mindset, a receptiveness to feedback, and an understanding of the interconnectedness of learning communities. The testimonies of school leaders from the DEPED Division of Northern Samar, as framed within the broader academic discourse, underscore the importance of a learning orientation in leadership, especially in times of unprecedented challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specific Problem 3. What is the level of crisis leadership competencies of the school leader-respondents in terms of team leadership; situational awareness and integrative thinking; and decisiveness and emotional effectiveness?

In times of crisis, meta-leaders must integrate diverse perspectives to provide clarity. People often become rigid in their thinking during panic, exacerbating the situation. Thus, school leaders should broaden their viewpoint rather than narrowing it. This study examined meta-leader qualities such as team leadership, situational awareness, integrative thinking, decisiveness, and emotional effectiveness, which are crucial for effective leadership across all levels.

Table 5.
School Leaders' Crisis Leadership Competency Levels as to "Team Leadership"

	Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1	Leads, inspires, motivates, and guides emergency response team members in a safe and effective manner	3.21	High
2	Models actions and behaviors that inspire and motivate positive responses from team members during a crisis	3.22	High
3	Takes initiative to identify key cross-functional team personnel needed; obtains required resources and information so team members may effectively respond to the crisis	3.25	Very High
4	Recognizes, acknowledges, and addresses the impact of stress on their team during a crisis and makes themselves available and visible to the team when responding to the event	3.26	Very High
5	Delegates roles, responsibilities, and decisions appropriately; shares responsibility, accountability and recognition; gives guidance, and promotes autonomy for others to make decisions within guidelines during the crisis	3.28	Very High
6	Manages and resolves disputes and disagreements among team members in a positive and constructive manner	3.18	High
7	Demonstrates flexibility when confronted with deviations from standard procedures; monitors changes in the performance of other team members	3.27	Very High
8	Develops, communicates, and monitors expectations for team performance	3.29	Very High
	Average Weighted Mean (AM)	3.25	Very High

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Table 5 delineates the school leaders' crisis leadership competency concerning "Team Leadership." The data reveals that the school leaders excelled, with a "Very High" rating, in areas such as resource identification, stress management, and appropriate delegation during crises. They also demonstrated a "High" competency in leading and motivating emergency response teams and constructively resolving intra-team conflicts. With an overall "Very High" average mean (AM=3.25), this underscores the leaders' adeptness in team management during

crises. Tannenbaum et al. (2021) support this, emphasizing that team leadership resilience is about a team's collective ability to navigate adversity. Effective leaders not only anticipate challenges but also equip their teams to manage and recover from stress, ensuring cohesive functionality even in trying times.

Table 6.

School Leaders' Crisis Leadership Competency Levels as to "Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking"

	Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1	Identifies what is critically important during an emergency and uses the information to strategically lead, balance priorities, and anticipate consequences	3.20	High
2	Synthesizes information into a coherent plan with a clear, yet flexible, strategy and priorities demonstrated through operations, tactics, and logistics	3.12	High
3	Re-adjusts objectives based on changing priorities to align capacity and create desired results	3.20	High
4	Proactively assesses and addresses both day-to-day and long-term problems and opportunities	3.14	High
5	Anticipates probable and possible events; develops innovative and adaptive solutions to current and potential crisis situations	3.18	High
6	Compiles a plausible picture of the situation that is compatible with the known facts and potential outcomes	3.12	High
7	Acquires, represents, interprets, and utilizes relevant information in order to make sense of current events, to anticipate future developments, and to make intelligent decisions	3.17	High
8	Demonstrates awareness of environment and activities; stays abreast of the mission status; continually assesses and reassesses the situation	3.28	Very High
Average Weighted Mean (AWM)		3.18	High

Table 6 elucidates the school leaders' competency in "Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking." Predominantly, they exhibited a "High" proficiency in discerning critical elements during emergencies, formulating coherent strategies, and dynamically adjusting objectives. A standout observation was their "Very High" competency in maintaining environmental awareness and consistently re-evaluating situations, with an overall competency rating of "High" (AWM=3.18). This aligns with Brassey and Kruyt's (2020) assertion on the necessity of integrative awareness for leaders. Such awareness enables leaders to perceive challenges not as impediments but as solvable issues or learning opportunities. By

fostering integrative awareness, leaders can better navigate stress, ensuring more informed decisions and sustained productivity amidst crises.

Table 7.
School Leaders' Crisis Leadership Competency Levels as to "Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness"

	Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1	Gathers facts, solicits input, makes reasonable and appropriate assumptions, consults with critical stakeholders, and weighs the benefits and risks in order to make and execute decisions quickly with incomplete or limited information	3.24	High
2	Applies appropriate decision-making processes – systematic problem-solving verses experience/ intuitively derived – based on the conditions and context of the emergency response situation	3.24	High
3	Perceives and anticipates the impact and implications of decisions	3.22	High
4	Assesses and adjusts decisions and actions in response to changing information	3.23	High
5	Demonstrates self-awareness and responds constructively to problems and difficult interactions	3.23	High
6	Recognizes survival instincts and signs of stress, demonstrates mental discipline, and maintains control	3.20	High
7	Considers and responds to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of team members, stakeholders and individuals impacted by the crisis	3.25	Very High
8	Promotes an environment of safety, connectedness, and hope	3.30	Very High
	Average Weighted Mean (AM)	3.24	High

Table 7 delineates the school leaders' competency in "Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness." Predominantly, they exhibited a "High" proficiency in swiftly making informed decisions with limited data, applying suitable decision-making processes tailored to the emergency's context, and continuously adjusting decisions based on evolving information. Notably, their adeptness in addressing the emotional and practical needs of team members and stakeholders during crises, coupled with fostering an environment of safety and hope, was rated "Very High." On average, their competency in "Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness" stands at a "High" level (AM=3.24). This resonates with Edmondson and Kerrissey's (2020) perspective that effective leaders act promptly, transparently, and adaptively, refraining from attributing blame. The current pandemic underscores the necessity for leaders to maintain a balance between immediate crisis response and long-term organizational goals, ensuring their well-being and serving as resilient role models for their communities.

Specific Problem 4. To what extent are pandemic response strategies implemented by the school leader-respondents in terms of promoting organizational resiliency; acting with integrity; and exhibiting learning orientation?

Table 8.
School Leader's Pandemic Response Strategy Extent as to "Promoting Organizational Resiliency"

	Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1	Possess a postcrisis vision that their organization is to move beyond where it was precrisis	3.12	Large Extent
2	Views crisis as a catalyst for thinking differently about what is possible for the organization	3.20	Large Extent
3	Leads with resiliency, which is defined as the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging conditions	3.23	Large Extent
4	Has the capacity to absorb strain and improve functioning in the face of adversity	3.18	Large Extent
5	Has the ability to bounce back in a new and improved way following a difficult situation	3.22	Large Extent
6	Projects hope, optimism, trust, and common purpose	3.32	Very Large Extent
7	Addresses stakeholder needs and concerns	3.29	Very Large Extent
8	Promotes adaptability and accountability	3.32	Very Large Extent
	Average Mean (AM)	3.24	Large Extent

Table 8 reveals the school leaders' pandemic response strategy in promoting organizational resiliency. The data suggests a "Large Extent" commitment to post-crisis vision, innovative thinking due to the crisis, leading with resilience, and stress management. However, they demonstrated a "Very Large Extent" in fostering hope, optimism, trust, unity, addressing stakeholder needs, and championing adaptability and accountability. On average, their strategy in promoting organizational resiliency was rated as "Large Extent" (AM=3.24). Basile (2021) emphasizes the paramount importance of organizational resilience, especially highlighted by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hartwig et al. (2020) liken organizational resilience to human resilience, emphasizing the importance of preparedness against various threats. Hartmann et al. (2020) further note that factors like teamwork, a learning culture, and clear communication, among others, bolster resilience, with supportive organizations often outperforming others, especially in challenging times.

Table 9.
School Leader's Pandemic Response Strategy Extent as to "Acting with Integrity"

	Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1	Possesses personal integrity and the ability to engage in ethical decision-making and behavior	3.31	Very Large Extent
2	Is capable of regaining trust of stakeholders	3.34	Very Large Extent
3	Demonstrates behavior integrity which is the alignment of their words and actions	3.27	Very Large Extent
4	Has the ability to articulate a shared vision, inspire action, empower others to take initiatives	3.31	Very Large Extent

5	Possesses excellent relationship skills and displays empathy with others	3.28	Very Large Extent
6	Engages in the activities of learning and reflection and displays high levels of self-awareness	3.25	Very Large Extent
7	Uses prior experience, or the experience of others, to develop new routines and behaviors that ultimately change the way the organization operates	3.32	Very Large Extent
8	Is purposeful and skillful in finding the learning opportunities inherent in crisis situations	3.25	Very Large Extent
	Average Mean (AM)	3.29	Very Large Extent

Table 9 highlights the school leaders' pandemic response strategy concerning "Acting with Integrity." The data indicates a "Very Large Extent" commitment in areas such as personal integrity, ethical decision-making, regaining stakeholder trust, aligning words with actions, articulating shared visions, and empowering others. Their strategies also emphasize strong relationship skills, continuous learning, reflection, and leveraging past experiences to innovate organizational operations. The overall rating for their strategy in "Acting with Integrity" stands at a "Very Large Extent" (AM=3.29). Contrarily, Gabler (2020) suggests that rapid governmental responses during crises like COVID-19 can sometimes lead to integrity breaches, including fraud and corruption. Vittori (2020) further identifies public procurement during emergencies as a significant area of integrity concern. As governments transition from immediate crisis management to long-term recovery, it's crucial that public integrity safeguards remain uncompromised to ensure effective recovery and maintain trust.

Table 10.
School Leader's Pandemic Response Strategy Extent as to "Exhibiting Learning Orientation"

	Indicators	Mean	Verbal Description
1	Deals with pressure ambiguity, emerging conditions, and multiple tasks	3.07	Large Extent
2	Recovers from setbacks and anticipates change	2.96	Large Extent
3	Learns from mistakes and relies on diverse opinions	2.98	Large Extent
4	Initiates communication using various channels to keep leadership, peers and subordinates informed	3.02	Large Extent
5	Shows consistency of words and actions to instill trust and confidence	2.77	Large Extent
6	Exemplifies transparent communication by engaging in cross-functional activities, sharing information, and facilitating collaboration across organizational domains	2.76	Large Extent
7	Is a team player and trusts advice from others to earn the confidence and respect of senior leaders, peers, and subordinates	3.07	Large Extent
8	Conscientiously follows public health ethics, public health law, and organizational values for the common good of the organization and its wider community	3.08	Large Extent
	Average Mean (AM)	2.96	Large Extent

Table 10 delineates the school leaders' pandemic response strategy concerning "Exhibiting Learning Orientation." The data suggests a "Large Extent" commitment in handling pressure, ambiguity, and multitasking. They also demonstrate resilience in setbacks, anticipate change, and value diverse opinions. Their strategies further emphasize transparent communication, team collaboration, and strict adherence to public health ethics and laws. The overall rating for their strategy in "Exhibiting Learning Orientation" stands at a "Large Extent" (AM=2.96). This aligns with Brion (2021), who posits that an organization's adaptability and effectiveness are enhanced by its learning orientation, which encompasses a commitment to learning, open-mindedness, and shared vision. Embracing a learning-oriented approach can elevate schools' efficacy, offering greater value to stakeholders. While organizational learning is a relatively new concept for non-profits, its adoption can foster innovation, competitiveness, and a transformative shift in values and capabilities.

Specific Problem 5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of crisis leadership competencies and the extent of pandemic response strategies of the school leader-respondents?

Table 11.

Substantial Association Between the Crisis Leadership Competency Levels and "Promoting Organization Resiliency" (POR) as Pandemic Response Strategy

Category	Pearson r	Degree of Relationship	P-value	α	Decision	Interpretation
Team Leadership vs. POR	-0.11	Negligible Negative Correlation	0.96	0.05	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking vs. POR	0.40	Low Positive Correlation	0.02	0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness vs. POR	0.30	Low Positive Correlation	0.57	0.05	Accept Ho	Not Significant

Table 11 examines the correlation between the Crisis Leadership Competency Levels and the "Promoting Organization Resiliency" (POR) as a Pandemic Response Strategy. The data reveals that the relationship between "Team Leadership" and POR is negligible, with a negative correlation (Pearson r = -0.11) and is not statistically significant (p=0.96 > α=0.05). In contrast, the "Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking" competency shows a low

positive correlation with POR (Pearson r = 0.40) and is statistically significant (p=0.02 < α=0.05). Lastly, the relationship between "Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness" and POR is characterized by a low positive correlation (Pearson r = 0.30), but it is not statistically significant (p=0.57 > α=0.05). In summary, only the "Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking" competency has a significant relationship with the POR pandemic response strategy among the school leadrs in the DEPED Division of Northern Samar.

Table 12.
Substantial Association Between the Crisis Leadership Competency Levels and "Acting with Integrity" (AWI) as Pandemic Response Strategy

Category	Pearson r	Degree of Relationship	P-value	α	Decision	Interpretation
Team Leadership vs. AWI	0.02	Negligible Positive Correlation	0.09	0.05	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking vs. AWI	-0.52	Moderate Negative Correlation	0.00	0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness vs. AWI	-0.03	Negligible Negative Correlation	0.03	0.05	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 12 evaluates the correlation between Crisis Leadership Competency Levels and the "Acting with Integrity" (AWI) pandemic response strategy among school leaders in the DEPED Division of Northern Samar. The findings reveal that the "Team Leadership" competency has a negligible positive correlation with AWI (Pearson r = 0.02) and is not statistically significant (p=0.09 > α=0.05). Conversely, the "Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking" competency exhibits a moderate negative correlation with AWI (Pearson r = -0.52) and is statistically significant (p=0.00 < α=0.05). Similarly, the "Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness" competency shows a negligible negative correlation with AWI (Pearson r = -0.03), but it is statistically significant (p=0.03 < α=0.05). In essence, while "Team Leadership" does not significantly influence the "Acting with Integrity" pandemic response strategy, both "Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking" and "Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness" competencies have a significant relationship with it.

Table 13.
Substantial Association Between the Crisis Leadership Competency Levels and "Exhibiting Learning Orientation" (ELO) as Pandemic Response Strategy

Category	Pearson r	Degree of Relationship	P-value	α	Decision	Interpretation
Team Leadership vs. ELO	0.52	Moderate Positive Correlation	0.00	0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking vs. ELO	0.46	Low Positive Correlation	0.00	0.05	Reject Ho	Significant
Decisiveness and Emotional =Effectiveness vs. ELO	0.69	Moderate Negative Correlation	0.00	0.05	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 13 delves into the correlation between Crisis Leadership Competency Levels and the "Exhibiting Learning Orientation" (ELO) pandemic response strategy among school leaders in the DEPED Division of Northern Samar. The data reveals that the "Team Leadership" competency has a moderate positive correlation with ELO (Pearson r = 0.52) and is statistically significant (p=0.00 < α=0.05). Similarly, the "Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking" competency displays a low positive correlation with ELO (Pearson r = 0.46) and is also statistically significant (p=0.00 < α=0.05). The "Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness" competency, on the other hand, exhibits a moderate negative correlation with ELO (Pearson r = -0.69) and is statistically significant (p=0.00 < α=0.05). In summary, all three crisis leadership competencies— "Team Leadership," "Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking," and "Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness"—demonstrate a significant relationship with the "Exhibiting Learning Orientation" pandemic response strategy.

Specific Problem 6. Based on the results of the study, what crisis management plan may be proposed?

Based on the findings from the study, educational institutions, having already embraced forward-thinking concepts about the future of work, are aptly prepared to address challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. These institutions, equipped with a digital ecosystem, redefine work as an activity rather than a location. This perspective, coupled with advancements in robotics, IoT, and cloud computing, challenges traditional notions of workplace confines and promotes increased automation, freeing up time for innovation and problem-solving. Future academic institutions will prioritize hiring individuals with the

necessary skills and experiences, emphasizing continuous learning and upskilling. With a unified identification system for all stakeholders, institutions will offer personalized experiences, fostering adaptability and agility. Crucially, the role of school leaders in enhancing online communication and collaboration is paramount, and these insights should be central when formulating a crisis management plan for educational settings.

To emphasize, the actions of a school leader are critical to enhancing communication and working efficiently via the internet. The following are some potential elements for school leaders when designing a crisis management plan:

Figure 1:

Elements of a Crisis Management Plan

Figure 3 delineates the essential elements of a crisis management plan for school leaders. These elements include: (1) Communication, emphasizing open dialogue with stakeholders and fostering casual interactions; (2) High Productivity, underscoring the importance of a dedicated workspace and structured daily routines; (3) Technology Use, advocating for the integration of virtual meetings, messaging apps, and the flexibility to switch to phone communication when needed; and (4) Accessibility, which calls for leaders to be readily reachable, proactively engage with their teams, and also recognize the importance of disconnecting at day's end.

Conclusion

The researcher found that school leaders, despite facing additional responsibilities during the pandemic, successfully formulated their response plans. Thematic analysis highlighted their capacity to foster organizational resiliency, maintain integrity, and demonstrate a learning orientation. These themes informed the creation of a quantitative survey instrument, with core ideas serving as survey items. The leaders exhibited "Very High"

competency in Team Leadership, and "High" in both Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking, and Decisiveness and Emotional Effectiveness. Their pandemic response strategies were largely focused on promoting organizational resiliency and exhibiting learning orientation, with a pronounced emphasis on acting with integrity. However, while certain leadership competencies influenced these strategies, "Team Leadership" showed no significant impact on either "Promoting Organizational Resiliency" or "Acting with Integrity." Conversely, competencies like "Situational Awareness and Integrative Thinking" played a pivotal role in shaping the pandemic response, particularly in the realm of integrity.

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