PUBLIC SCHOOL LEADERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES ON 21ST CENTURY LEADERSHIP: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The twenty-first century has brought about new innovations and challenges in the field of education. The major goal of this study is to investigate the experiences, problems, coping techniques, and insights of Pantukan South District public-school educational leaders leading in the twenty-first century. It employs the qualitative phenomenological research method and relies on in-depth interviews to collect data. Six educational leaders from Pantukan South District were chosen as research participants using a purposive sample technique. This study indicated that educational administrators confront numerous obstacles in dealing with their staff, fiscal matters, stakeholders, and learners. They were shown, however, developing coping mechanisms to alleviate their predicament. This study also emphasized the hard effort and strong commitment of public-school educational leaders to their jobs. As a result, it was found that, despite all of the obstacles that educational leaders in the twenty-first century face, they can always find ways to cope and adapt. As a recommendation, educational leaders should continue to improve themselves, both personally and professionally, by attending trainings and seminars with the assistance of the department of education. The findings of this study would serve as a springboard for future research into the experiences of other school administrators, instructors, and students who had also witnessed changes in 21st-century education.

KEYWORDS: *Twenty-first century education, public school administrators, Phenomenology*

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has brought about a new revolution in education (Ayiro and Sang, 2010). With the fourth industrial revolution's major social, political, and economic upheavals, education systems all over the world were obliged to undergo educational reforms, modifying their curriculum to fit the needs and demands of this era.

As school managers, school leaders are directly responsible for problems and implementation concerns related to educational reforms, which causes some leaders to be hesitant to adapt to these changes, despite Lingard (2018) viewing this change as both a response to and articulation of globalization. According to Apsorn, Sisan, and Tungkunanan (2019), administrators in Thai education are having difficulties with educational technology, which is one of the primary characteristics of 21st century education, since they lack preparation in learning technology itself.

Every country in the world is struggling to maintain their education systems up to date with contemporary educational advancements, and the Philippines is no exception. Indeed, it has already begun educational reforms, transforming its 10-year basic education into a K-12 curriculum, with a goal of preparing Filipino students to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century (Adarlo et al., 2017). However, it is definitely not exempt from all of the new curriculum implementation challenges.

As an example, Blasabas and Sumaljag (2020) claimed that the lack of training and orientation in adjusting to new educational trends and low budget allocations as a result of their being unprepared for the task at hand were two of the most frequent challenges faced by school administrators in Davao del Sur. It is evident that implementing educational changes in response to the world's constant change has produced a new set of leadership criteria that must be met and difficulties that school leaders must face.

In Davao de Oro, particularly in Pantukan, there were school administrators who had difficulty dealing with the challenges posed by educational shifts brought about by 21st century advancements, primarily because they were having difficulty adjusting to new educational and social trends, as well as learning how to use technology itself.

Multiple studies have shown that principals' leadership and skills are critical to the success of educational institutions. However, research have revealed that school principals are having difficulty transitioning to this new era of education. As a result, the researcher was compelled to investigate the experiences of public-

school administrators, their coping techniques in the face of adversities, and the insights they obtained as leaders in this new. Exploring their experiences would provide them with the attention they need from the Department of Education, as the quality of our nation's education is likewise heavily reliant on them.

THEORETICAL LENS
This study was anchored on the lens of Transformational Leadership Theory which was first introduced by James V. Downton in 1973 and was expanded by James MacGregor Burns in 1978. This theory encourages leaders to demonstrate authentic, strong leadership with the idea that employees will be inspired to follow suit.

Transformational leadership is leadership theory where a leader works with followers to identify the changes needed, create a vision through inspiration, and execute the change with a group of highly committed followers. In this study, this theory explained that during reforms or changes in the educational system, school leaders must tap the potential and motives of his followers to make it easier to reach the goals of the organization. Additionally, during tough times, leaders must not easily feel discouraged. Instead, they must find innovative solutions to problems and create new and dynamic paths for their teams to follow.

OBJECTIVES
This phenomenological qualitative study aimed to explore public school leaders' experiences in dealing with 21st century education. This further investigates the challenges they have encountered, strategies they have used in order to cope with it, and the insights they have gained from it.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. What are the experiences of public-school administrators as a 21st century leader?
2. What are the challenges experienced by the public-school administrators as a 21st century leader?
3. What are the coping strategies of public-school administrators in dealing with the challenges encountered as a 21st century leader?
4. What insights did the public-school administrators gained from their experiences as 21st century leaders?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
When changes occur in educational processes, school leaders are directly affected because they are one of the people actively involved in the execution of the changes. Several works of literature were studied and deemed to be relevant to the current study. The relevant literatures for this study focused on studies of 21st century leadership, the obstacles they faced, and their coping mechanisms as 21st century leaders.

21st Century Leadership
The twenty-first century leadership is concerned with how managers and leaders adopt and acquire a modern mindset in order to be prepared to deal with the century's distinctive difficulties. The evolution of human connection with their surroundings has an impact on the field of leadership, in particular. As we face and address several issues in the twenty-first century, leadership faces a completely new set of management challenges. Denning (2020) claims that twenty-first-century leadership is more than just a slight improvement over traditional management.

Historically, effective school principals merely required to be well-versed in management and politics (Kinney, 2009). These abilities, however, will no longer suffice. A school administrator in the twenty-first century must have sophisticated work skills (Vaillant & Garcia, 2009), since the job becomes more demanding as a result of new expectations, changes in governmental regulations, and more responsibility (West et al., 2014).

Educators and educational leaders have a social and ethical responsibility to assist individuals in developing the ability to (re)construct this problematic worldview in favor of one that is more supportive of social justice and sustainability (Lupinacci, 2017). Prandini et al. (2012), on the other hand, noted that leaders in the twenty-first century consider normative and strategic sustainability while making decisions. Dealing with a real experience necessitates harsh learning environments that encourage problem-based, action-oriented learning toward long-term corporate accountability.

Challenges of School Administrators
Due to differences, school administrators faced challenges in professional development, scheduling, workloads, lack of support, cultural diversity, and financial responsibility.

Continuing professional development is one of the issues that educational leaders encounter. School systems anticipated principals to have exceptional credentials, experience, and dispositions in order to modernize visions, facilitate transformative change, and engage in instructional leadership (Richardson, Watts, Hollis, & McLeod, 2016). The incapacity to deal with people was identified as a primary factor for principal failure in curriculum implementation in studies of effective principals (Lunenberg, Muse, & Abrams, 2011). They were unsure whether they possessed the appropriate knowledge and abilities for the new position (Phillips, 2018).

As educational leaders' roles get more complex over time, and as their duties increase, most educational leaders find it challenging to schedule their workloads. Principals were frustrated as curriculum revisions to address the needs of today's world were implemented. Bridges and Searle (2011) and Cheung et al. (2012)

concluded in their studies that principals' expectations of having a stabilized, reduced, and more manageable workload during educational reforms were unrealistic because they were working 55 hours per week, a 10% increase from before the reform was implemented. Phillips (2018) noticed the similar problem in Iowa after seven years, when principals were frustrated because there was not even enough time to do their duties in a day. Principals reported greater responsibilities and accountability (Ng & Pun, 2013). These demands were inappropriate because they contributed to their school time and took time away from them (Bridges & Searle, 2016). Time management and balancing the administrator's responsibilities were important aspects in successfully implementing a curriculum overhaul.

According to studies, one of the most difficult challenges they have faced is a lack of support. Support from the government and the reforming agency was critical for school administrators, and most of them agreed that they did not receive enough (Cheung & Man Wong, 2012; Durban & Catalan, 2012; Phillips 2018). The majority of the support needs mentioned were in resolving teachers' allegations to their school administrators. Scarcity of resources, heavy workloads, and learner diversity were among the everyday demands that agencies should consider in addressing (Cabili, Sequete, & Capilitan, 2015; Cheung et al., 2012; Nahal, 2010).

Coping Strategies of School Administrators

These were just few among all of the issues and challenges faced by educational leaders from their day-to-day living. However, despite these challenges, they found strategies that somehow alleviated their situations. They changed their previous and usual practices in several ways (Husband & Hunt, 2015). Mokhele (2012) concluded in his study that principals motivated the teachers and engaged the society in fulfilling their educational goals. These coping strategies geared the school administrators to the well-being of the entire school and served as their weapon on strengthening the implementation of 21st century education (Blasabas & Sumaljag, 2020).

Communication is essential in any organization, and educational organizations are no exception. Sharing and exchanging information was critical in developing and maintaining connections, especially during major changes such as educational reforms. Principals conveyed to teachers that the new reform standards were fair and attainable provided their attitudes and needs were taken into account in addition to the externally imposed directives (Brezicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015). Communication was utilized to generate common meanings, construct visions, and guide an organization through periods of change.

Educational leaders are truly resilient and are positive thinkers. As a matter of fact, most of them have developed their own personal coping strategies when faced with different challenges, be it personal or professional problems. Individuals adopted various coping strategies on their own (Xiao & Cooke, 2012) when stoked with challenges. Helitzer, Graeber, Lanoue, and Newbill (2015) stated that they involved generating, implementing, and evaluating personal actions to solve the problem.

School principals demonstrated a sound understanding of the necessity to change first and assess the entire school's needs to lead the change (Ibrahim & Al-mashhadany, 2012). Such positive attitude in manifesting individual coping had a significant impact on person's well-being and Somech & Drach-Zahavy (2012) proved that is a better approach to mitigating work-family conflicts.

As their responsibilities become more wider and heavier, educational leaders have discovered the importance of responsibility delegation. Delegation is assigning responsibility or chunking work and giving authority how to do the task (Huang et al., 2016). Research has shown that leaders who delegate had higher rates of effectiveness (Drescher, 2017). Rogers (2018) also added that influential leaders delegate works, allowing themselves to have more time to strategize and plan while providing new avenuesq to develop their skills and confidence. When done successfully, this would be beneficial to both parties.

As a result, the literatures described above, such as the need for professional development, irritation with task distribution, a lack of assistance, dealing with varied learners, and financial responsibility limits, indicated the school administrator's huge obligation. Going through the difficulties of implementing the new curriculum, in particular, put their leadership in directing the school toward transformation to the test. School administrators must be aware of how to accept their responsibilities, handle their demands, and be aware of numerous areas and places for improvement when dealing with such challenges. Principals' expected responsibilities demanded fast response and attention. In exchange, they may successfully implement the desired curriculum adjustments as specified by our educational system.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative research approach, especially a phenomenological design, to analyze the participants' leadership experiences, leadership obstacles, and coping strategies. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method used to describe how people react to a specific phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019). Phenomenological study attempts to set aside preconceived beliefs and prejudices regarding human perceptions, emotions, and reactions to a circumstance. It allows the researcher to delve into the observations,

understandings, and feelings of individuals who have witnessed or lived through the event or circumstance of interest.

Through this design, the researcher was able to collect and gather data that were essential to this study. Moreover, participants were identified using purposive sampling. There were six participants all coming from the Pantukan South District.

The researcher's goal was to uncover the actual experiences of the school leaders as they perform their duties in this new era of education.

The researcher used interview guide questions in his interview with the participants. Through the interview guide questions, there will be unity of the questions used by all the interviewees. In addition, this instrument is essential so that the researcher will not forget in the interview.

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with six (6) participants to determine their experiences as 21st century leaders. Before the interview was conducted, consent letters were shown to inform them of the purpose of the research.

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2014), thematic analysis is a foundational method of analysis that uses interpretation and description to examine the relevance of the cohesive learning and the theme that can be applied to the data.

RESULTS
Based from this study's purpose, thorough data analysis from the participants' responses from the Key Informant Interview were repeatedly conducted. The following results presented herewith are placed into four clusters based on the four research questions of the study. The first part centered on educational leaders' experiences on twenty-first century leadership. The second part focused on the challenges encountered by the participants as twenty-first century leaders. The third cluster deals with the coping strategies of the informants in dealing with problems as twenty-first century leaders. And the last part focused on the insights gained by the informants from their experiences as twenty-first century leaders.

Positive Experiences as 21st Century Leaders
When asked about their positive experiences leading in this new era of education, three themes have emerged from the informants' responses; (1) learned to use technology and digital apps, (2)opportunities for self and professional development, (3)transmission of information becoming fast.

Learned to Use Technology and Other Digital Apps.
Because of the increased labor and reporting

required of them by the DepEd, school administrators learnt the technology. The circumstance has undeniably forced school administrators to investigate the usage of technology in order to submit mandatory reports and execute other activities demanded of them. Because technology is prevalent and rapidly evolving in today's world, the necessity for principals to adapt and implement technological innovations is critical. In this regard, principals are encouraged to strengthen their technological leadership in order to satisfy the demands of the new world order (Hacifazlioglu, Karadeniz, & Dalgic, 2011).
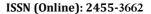
Opportunities for Self and Professional Development Opened. The interviews with the participants also revealed a plethora of options for their personal and professional development. As a response to the ever-changing demands of the world, the Department of Education invites school leaders to participate in trainings and seminars that will help them develop their personal and professional needs. Professional development (PD), continuous professional development (CPD), and in-service training (INSET) are all types of professional learning that principals pursue after completing their first training (Craft, 2000). As evidence of the department's efforts to meet the professional needs of school leaders, they chose to form relationships with international and local training managers and offer all-expense-paid trainings and seminars for the participants, which benefited them the most.

Fast Transmission of Information. Aside from the aforementioned beneficial experiences, the school leaders were also able to benefit from the fast transfer of information via the internet of things (IOT), which resulted in a faster and larger communication system. Communication is an important aspect in educational organizations because it serves as the foundation for educational practice and is part of the process that leads to the attainment of its goals (Mercouri & Stamatis, 2009). Pasiardi (2001) agreed, stating that educational organizations, like any other, rely on good communication, which is one of their essential characteristics, to ensure their purposes and goals are met.

Negative Experiences as 21st Century Leaders
Participating school heads also have unpleasant experiences as leaders in the 21st century; (1) hard time dealing with new breed of teachers, (2) filtering and distinguishing information, (3) problem with work-life balance, (4) cynical stakeholders, (5) inadequate and low-quality educational materials.

Dealing With New Breed of Teachers Is Hard. The new generation of instructors frequently has different perspectives and mindsets than the school authorities. The new generation of instructors, who are products of a highly digitalized environment, are techno-savvy and may offer unique perspectives on various topics that can

be leveraged to benefit the school. However, because of the generation gap, others, particularly seasoned teachers, may have difficulty dealing with children due to their distinctiveness in the way they react and interpret things. According to Subramanian (2017), one of the issues of today's population is the existence of a gap in the thinking, opinions, and outlooks of younger generations.

It Is Difficult to Filter Information. One of the informants' bad experiences is filtering large amounts of information from the internet. While having free and easy access to information via the internet of things is beneficial to everyone, the accuracy of all information is not guaranteed, and deciphering too much information can be time consuming and unpleasant. According to Quaglio and Millar (2020), having too much knowledge can make it harder to comprehend a problem or make effective and sound decisions. Furthermore, they stated that information overload is linked to loss of control, emotions of overwhelm, decreased intellectual performance, and decreased job satisfaction, none of which are healthy for anyone, even school leaders.

Work-Life Imbalance. School leaders frequently struggle to reconcile their personal and professional lives due to the huge workload and demands placed on them. Because time is limited, balancing principals' workloads and home responsibilities can be stressful (Yang, 2020). Kochan, Spencer, and Mathews (2000) agreed, stating that managing principals' work and time, as well as coping with stress, tasks, and responsibilities of the job, was the key challenge for both men and women principals. The sheer volume of work has overburdened twenty-first-century principals. When not handled properly, stress generated by work-life imbalances can have a negative impact on their performance and effectiveness as school leaders.

Some Stakeholders are Cynical. Dealing with skeptical and closed-minded stakeholders was another negative experience the informants had. However, their significance for the school's development and success cannot be overstated. Partnership is at the heart of effective initiatives that engage families and communities. This is significant since the responsibility for students' educational development is shared by parents, school staff, and community members (Henderson & Map, 2002). As a result, their opinions, whether positive or negative, should be heard and weighed for the benefit of the school as a whole.

Educational Materials are Inadequate and Low Quality. While it is evident that proper support in terms of providing resources is required to equip students with 21st century capabilities. However, according to the findings of this study, many of the interviewees reported to have received insufficient and sub-standard learning resources such as computers, books, and even LMs. Inadequate learning materials can lead to a slew of additional issues during the teaching and learning process. According to Taboh (2015) in her article, a shortage of classroom materials hampers student progress.

Challenges Encountered in Handling Relationship with Staff

When asked about the challenges they have encountered dealing with school staff, three emerging themes emerged: (1) dealing with individual differences and attitude problems, (2) technology integration among senior teachers, (3) and establishing and maintaining trust.

Individual Differences and Attitude Problems. Dealing with the different variations of their employees is one of the most prevalent issues that informants encounter. Organizations are made up of unique individuals who work in a collaborative environment (Fred Luthans, 2003). It is a fundamental truth that all persons are distinct in their abilities, skills, and knowledge; also, they differ in their perceptions and attitudes toward their profession. Because this growing issue is inherent in any institution, failing to address it may result in pandemonium. This can lead to misconceptions and misinterpretations, which can have a negative impact on productivity (Colquitt & Wesson, 2009). However, when these variations are handled with appropriately, incalculable effects can occur, as indicated by Batey and Furnham (2006), who noted that creativity and work intelligence are effective outcomes of lined individual differences.

Technology Integration Among Senior Teachers. It is an undeniable fact that school principals are primarily responsible for the educational needs of students. As a result, they urge their employees to go with the flow and adapt to the ever-changing educational trends. One of the key characteristics of 21st century education is the widespread use and integration of technology in teaching-learning processes; nonetheless, this study found that there are still instructors, particularly "seasoned ones," who are resistant to change. According to Abdul Rahim, Lokman Mohd Tahir, Siti Anis, and Mohd Ali (2020), one of the most significant challenges that principals encounter is teacher resistance to change and growth in instructional competence and professional development.

Establishing and Maintaining Trust. Trust is important. Employees who work in high-trust workplaces have lower stress, burnout, and sick days than those who work in low-trust ones. These benefits are related with increased productivity, higher involvement, and more vitality. According to research, teachers' trust in the principal influences their trust in their colleagues, which is related to student accomplishment (Handford, 2013). Given its

significance, this study reveals that some school administrators struggle to create and maintain trust among school workers. Leaders consider retaining trust to be more difficult than gaining trust. In fact, they regard it as one of the most difficult aspects of leadership (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). This was supported by Robinson (2007) who said that in order to effectively maintain and build trust, one must practice collaborative problem-solving by dropping their pre judgements about the issue, and many find it to be difficult.

Challenges Encountered in Maintaining Good Rapport with Stakeholders

Three emerging themes educed from this; (1) problem with miscommunication, (2) low participation and cooperation, (3) and unpleasant treatment by stakeholders.

Miscommunication. Clear and frequent communication is essential for both sides to ensure understanding, harmony, and cooperation. Failure to establish excellent communication can have major effects and cost you a lot of money in the long run. Poor communication creates expectation issues with stakeholders, as well as confusion and misconceptions regarding what is expected of both sides. According to Trujilo (2020), miscommunication caused by poor communication can impair relationships between team members, stakeholders, and clients. It has an impact on their trust and degree of support for the organization.

Low Level of Participation and Cooperation. A school, as an educational institution, cannot exist on its own. A project is considered successful when it meets or exceeds its objectives and meets or exceeds the expectations of stakeholders (Watt & Baron, 2020). However, research reveal that some stakholders provide little to no cooperation in school activities. For example, Dr. Rico Jaboya (2018) discovered difficulties in the participation of external stakeholders in his study on the implementation of school-based management (SBM) in CAMANAVA. This is a sad fact because cooperation and initiative among stakeholders is always considered as crucial for the success of any educational program.

Unpleasant Treatment of Stakeholders. The informants were also challenged by the stakeholders' evident changes in treatment with school staff. The treatment of stakeholders toward school workers, particularly teachers, has changed recently, and some of it may be seen on social media sites. Parents, for example, have utilized the Zoom chat feature to publicly criticize teachers and reprimand teachers when they make a mistake (Maloy, 2021). Hawk (2022), despite the fact that teachers had worked extensively to master new digital platforms, resolve technological issues from afar, and overcome Zoom

fatigue, all while feeling the same isolation as many of the pupils, some parents were dismissive. Stakeholders must also learn to respect school personnel in the same way that school personnel respect them. The shift in teacher attitude is a social justice issue since mistreatment by school stakeholders has a direct impact on teachers' social-emotional competence and well-being (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). They must empathize with teachers because their mental health may impair their effectiveness at work, influencing their children's education.

Challenges Encountered in Handling Fiscal Matters

Participants also encountered challenges pertaining to fiscal matters; (1) insufficient funds and (2) sourcing out of funds.
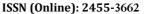
Insufficient Funds. The school, like any other institution, cannot function successfully without finances. This has long been a problem for school administrators. Despite the government funds received, the informants believe that they are insufficient. Among the financial obstacles were the fact that they had to reduce their own budgetary requirements and even shift funds for far more critical and urgent matters (Caldararu, Szekeres, & Paunica, 2022). Furthermore, they stated that the poor quality of education was a direct result of the financial crisis.

Sourcing Out Funds is Difficult. When funds from the government become insufficient, school administrators try to discover ways to raise funds from its stakeholders in order to keep school projects running. However, this is not something that everyone can do. Due to a lack of resources, school officials must seek alternative sources. As a result, while the endeavor to generate revenue within the administrative operations of the school is very important, this situation has a negative impact on the administrators and results in them not spending enough time on primary duties (Sipahioglu, 2023). Similar research showed that the difficulty in locating financial resources has a negative impact on pupils, instructors, and administrators (Altunay, 2017; and Korkmarz, 2005).

Challenges Encountered in Managing Learners

This structured theme elicited two emerging themes; (1) dealing with learners' diversity, and (2) molding learners for high moral values.

Learners' Diversity. The interviewees stated to have encountered difficulties dealing with the diversity of learners. Individual uniqueness can result in a surprisingly greater culture of innovation and creativity, but dealing with it personally can be a time-consuming process. Because of differences in ethnicity, culture, or ethnic orientation, students may fail to identify and respect one another (Rogers, 2023). Such disparities can have an impact on communication and teamwork among

students.

Molding Learners' High Moral Values. Over time, society's moral and social standards have deteriorated, particularly among youth. Today's students appear to have forgotten that sustaining high moral principles is just as vital as achieving good scores in school. According to Farmer, Reinke, and Brooks (2014), learners' habits have altered dramatically over the last several decades, including teachers in educational centers in a considerable behavioral change. This has been a difficulty for the informants because they are one of the people in charge of shaping intellectual but ethically upright learners. Taneri, Gao, and Johnson (2016) state that parents, principals, and instructors all play crucial roles in the lives of kids since they function as influencing variables.

Coping Strategies with Issues Affecting Relationship with Staff

While it is true that school leaders faced numerous challenges and problems along the way, this did not deter them from continuing to develop as leaders by implementing strategies that they believe will benefit them, such as (1) bonding with staff, (2) practicing empathy and sympathy, (3) practicing fairness, and (4) emphasizing the importance of Emotional Quotient.

Bonding with Staff. Developing a strong good relationship with your staff is critical to the success of your institution. Principals must get an in-depth knowledge of each staff member in order to form the relationships that create teams (Rieg, & Marcoline, 2008). One method is to spend time with them and talk about matters unrelated to their profession. Bonding and spending quality time with them allows for mutual understanding and a terrific opportunity for individual evaluation. This method enables them to create a tailored educational system in which all staff members work in unison.

Practice Empathy and Sympathy. Developing a strong feeling of understanding and rapport with your employees is one method of establishing and maintaining organizational trust. Empathy and sympathy are both necessary for fostering a healthy work atmosphere. When school leaders can put themselves in the shoes of their employees, they can better comprehend and respond to their demands (Yussif, 2022). School administrators can better engage with their staff and develop a positive relationship with everyone in the school this way.

Practice Fairness. Trust between management and employees is essential in any firm (Callaway, 2006). Individual staff being treated fairly and equally fosters a strong sense of trust and contributes to the establishment's healthy relationships. As a result, mutual trust among organizational members fosters

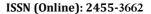communication and exceptional organizational achievement.

Emphasize Importance of Emotional Quotient. The development of emotional intelligence abilities provides sufficient leadership qualities for the organization to advance and achieve its goals. The emotionally intelligent leader principal, in particular, is capable of inspiring and facilitating a self-conscious and organizational culture by embracing the values of understanding, trust, prospect, achievement, and effectiveness, as well as combining emotions, beliefs, vision, and values in a flexible manner (Brinia, Zimianiti, Panagiotopolous, 2014). The ability to recognize and control one's own emotions in constructive ways to reduce stress, conquer problems, and diffuse disputes is referred to as emotional quotient. Intelligence Quotient (IQ) will no longer suffice for today's school leaders. To be successful in his industry, a leader must be aware of his own and others' emotions. Principals who understand their employees' emotional needs typically create a pleasant environment in which instructors are effective and kids thrive academically (Brackett, Rivers, Lerner, Salovey, & Shiffman, 2006; Mills, 2003).

Coping Strategies with Issues Pertaining to Stakeholders

Two emerging themes were elicited from this structured theme; (1) practicing honesty and transparency, and (2) keeping communication line open.

Practicing Honesty and Transparency. Honesty and transparency are not only ethical values, but also effective instruments for establishing relationships and influencing stakeholders. When educational leaders are concerned about the reputation of their school, transparency and communication take the lead (Leedy, 2018). In today's digitally linked society, trust is more crucial than ever. Creating a culture of transparency is a major contributor to trust. Being sincere, genuine, and respectful in your words and deeds is what it means to be honest. Transparency, on the other hand, necessitates being open, clear, and accountable for your actions and decisions. Schools that are transparent and honest are educational institutions where information is presented in a clear, understandable, and accessible manner (Ergun, 2020).

Keeping Communication Line Open. According to the responses of the research informants, one method of managing with stakeholder concerns was to ensure adequate communication on both sides. Effective communication management is an important aspect of leadership. Regular and open communication allow stakeholders to share their problems, new ideas, and unique viewpoints. Tyler (2016) stated that "effective communication promotes motivation and builds staff culture." This is critical to remember, as he also stated that poor communication leads to discontent.

Coping Strategies with Fiscal Matters

This structured theme resulted to have two emerging themes in this research; (1) practice transparency, and (2) implementation of plans.

Practice Transparency. Transparency is a basic yet powerful technique for preventing organizational corruption. It guarantees that resources are used responsibly and efficiently. Transparency, as previously said, fosters confidence among both internal and external stakeholders. According to Gayon (2015), some administrators believe that transparency will assist boost teacher, student, and community morale. Others, she continued, believe that keeping public financial data out of the public eye will help their schools/office run smoothly.

Implement Plans Properly. Every school has developed an Annual Implementation Plan (AIP) that demonstrates the careful planning of the government's budget. Essentially, it is a draft or a recommendation on what to buy for the entire school year. Setting goals is a vital ability for a school leader to have, especially when money is involved. Setting crucial goals, according to Winston and Poorman (2021), should come before needs and wants because it will direct your financial decisions and focus on what's vital.

Coping Strategies Pertaining to Learners.

There are three themes emerged from this structured theme; (1) develop empathy, (2) being firm and flexible, and (3) recognizing efforts and achievements.

Develop Empathy. Empathy is undeniably important in properly running schools. It is a fearsome confidante who enables educational leaders to create collaborative groups that influence, innovate, and improve student results. Empathy allows school administrators to comprehend kids' views, needs, and intentions, which adds to building positive relationships with them. According to Richardson et al. (2012), learners are more likely to engage in school and classroom situations if they have a favorable and intimate relationship with their teachers and other school personnel. Empathy is a great tool for better understanding what motivates learners' behavior and developing solutions to assist them. This is significant because students who learn and think differently need to feel understood and supported.

Be Firm Yet Flexible. Another coping method for learners' issues is to be firm while remaining flexible. One of the many qualities a principal should have is the ability to be stern with students while maintaining a positive relationship with them. When it comes to implementing school policies and applying school punishment, a principal should be forceful in his decisions and comments. Discipline is very important

in all educational institutions since it encourages students to create responsible behavior, which leads to a self-disciplined person. It teaches pupils the art of self-control, and social disorder can only be prevented if constraints are ingrained in students' personalities (Were 2006). Furthermore, an administrator must be adaptable, particularly when it comes to curriculum implementation and student learning. Recognizing that students are unique individuals with varying learning styles and capacities, catering to their specific needs is achievable when the school and its staff, particularly the principal, are adaptable. Huzefa (2020) agreed, stating that flexible curriculum implementation is an indicator of an effective and challenging curriculum that allows educators to support students in fulfilling their particular requirements and facilitating the development of life skills.
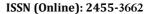
Recognize Student Effort and Achievement. Another significant finding from this study was the significance of rewarding students' efforts and accomplishments. Celebrating students' accomplishments can help keep pupils motivated and committed to continuing effort and hard work. Celebrations are not just a form of encouragement; they also encourage students to stay on track and motivated in their studies. When kids are reassured and supported by parents and role models who recognize their accomplishment, they are more likely to work hard to achieve their personal goals. Recognizing pupils for other attributes such as effort, improvement, and cooperation can boost self-esteem, provide a sense of success, and promote respect among peers (Olinger, 2018).

Insights Gained From Experiences as 21st Century Leaders

Failure and defeat do not matter as long as you have something to learn out of it. In this study, the informants have learned; (1) technology, new bread and butter in education, (2) learned to be resilient, (3) learned to be proactive, and (4) learned to be innovative and adaptable.

Technology; New Bread and Butter of Education. As clear as it is, technology has already surpassed the most crucial component of today's educational requirements. It serves as the foundation for students' modern development and advancement. Reading C., (2008), for example, explored the efficacy of ICT in generating a productive teaching-learning environment by categorizing and engaging learners based on behavior, emotion, and cognitive engagement in his study. This is why, in order to keep up with 21st century education approaches, an increasing number of schools are upgrading. As a result, school leaders are also putting pressure on themselves to get acquainted with and, if feasible, understand emerging trends in educational technology.

Resiliency is an Important Keys. Being resilient is

really important in this world when the only constant is change. Resilience refers to the ability to tolerate or recover swiftly from adversity and is more usually associated with a positive outlook. Being resilient does not mean avoiding problems and hardship; rather, it means learning how to face and deal with them. Adopting a positive, resilient mindset helps leaders keep their cool while seeking the best answers to issues. This, in turn, increases others' trust in you as a leader. This study reveals that resiliency is a key realization for school leaders, allowing them to overcome challenging circumstances and implement activities that resulted in gains. Similarly, research show that resilience permits. This study demonstrates that resiliency is one of the important realizations of school leadership which allowed them to face difficult challenges and implement actions that led to improvements. Similar studies also demonstrate that resilience enables the positive transformation of schools (Day & Quing, 2015; Pinskaya et al., 2019; Shirley et al., 2020).

Learned to be Proactive. School administrators learnt to be proactive. This means they were able to move ahead of time to deal with anticipated issues and prepare steps before the situation even arose. The proactive principal is supposed to anticipate problems in the educational setting. Simply said, it is how companies plan for potential future challenges. Furthermore, Fidan and Balci (2016) claimed that principal proactivity is one of the primary predictors of school effectiveness in complicated and anarchic situations. Individuals' proactive behaviors in dealing with opportunities and difficulties in the organization's internal and external contexts have therefore become a major determinant of organizational effectiveness (Crant, 2000; Russell & Russell, 1992; Frese & Fay, 2001).

Learned to Be Innovative and Adaptive. Another significant lesson gained by school leaders was to develop new ways to experiment with fresh ideas in their different roles. They also learned to adapt to new situations and can modify specific conditions to make them more usable. Being adaptable is essential for a school leader to manage the innovative and changing situations that arise in this ever-changing environment. According to Huwaidi (2004), creative and adaptable education management has become necessary in order to keep up with the process of evolution in the educational sphere.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY
Based on the findings, the following implications are offered.

Although everyone can see school leaders enjoy good experiences as a leader of 21st century, they should be valued by the department of education by giving appreciation gestures in which they will feel their

value in the education of the country. The provision of incentives and resources of materials necessary for them to perform their duties properly are just some of the steps in motivating good performance from the school leaders.

There must be a support system for school leaders especially in ensuring students' learning. The training schedules should also be planned thoroughly because it is no longer effective if done at the same time, it will just make them confused as to what they should do first. The department's time and resources will only be wasted if the proper scheduling of trainings and seminars is not taken into account.
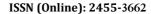
Even though school leaders already know from the very beginning that problems arising from conflicts with staff are inevitable in their field of work, they must not be left to deal with it alone. This study suggests that school heads must continuously undergo trainings and refresher courses in effectively handling conflicts and diversity in the school, especially with his staff.

The realizations of the school leaders are proof of their strong commitment and dedication to their profession. Therefore, it is appropriate to honor their sacrifices and give emphasis to their contribution to the overall good of the school. Conducting a forum at the end of every academic year will allow systematic processing of the learnings gained by each school head. Their views based from their experiences will serve as input to each other for them to better perform their duties and responsibilities.

Since This study only focused on the lived experiences of public-school leaders of Pantukan South District, results of this study were not meant to be generalized but rather to bridge future researches. It is interesting to conduct future research that investigates the same phenomenon among private elementary schools to see if there is any differences and similarities in their experiences.

CONCLUSION
This study focuses on the experiences, problems, coping techniques, and lessons learned of school leaders as 21st-century leaders. It is common known that school leaders face numerous challenges and tasks as a result of the digital transformation brought about by the twenty-first century. It is already a tremendous load for school directors to source the essential cash in order to patch the budget's inadequacy and dealing with their own emotions only to secure and preserve harmonious relationships among their personnel; changes in educational system produced by evolution in the twenty-first century added, anyone can really tell how hard the challenges they faced just to ensure the wellbeing of the students, school staff, stakeholders, and the school as a whole. They will undoubtedly appreciate having a buddy, a support system in the accomplishment of these chores. Because their job appears to be limitless, technical support should always be available. If there are enough resources and supplies, the department can ensure that school leaders

are more motivated to complete their obligations.

It is obvious that school administrators in the Department of Education work more than eight hours a day, if required, just to complete their tasks. They are even willing to spend money out of their own pockets to complete school tasks. They deserve all the help they can receive from DepEd, and more. The hard effort and strong devotion of the school leaders were highlighted in this study by how many changes the world may go through and how many changes our educational system would go through.

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