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A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF DECISION-MAKING AMONG SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS DURING INSURGENCY CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study was designed to explore and understand the experiences faced by school administrators' decision-making during the insurgency crisis. The study was gleaned through the Decision-Making Theory of Simon (1997). This theory described the steps involved in making any decision, including recognizing that a decision must be made, understanding the goals that one hopes to attain, making a list of options, determining the consequences both positive and negative of each option, determining the desirability of each consequence, evaluating the likelihood of each consequence, and integrating all the information. There were 10 participants from public schools in DepEd-Davao del Norte Division. After thematic analysis, it was found out that school administrators experienced fear and suffering, encountered difficulty in decision-making, struggled in communication, and acquired value from the community. Regarding their coping mechanisms, four themes emerged: facilitating contingency planning, seeking divine providence and intervention, developing positive mindset, and seeking community support. Moreover, the insights of the participants included: intensify linkage with internal and external stakeholders, consider advice of the community, build strong community partnership, and develop presence of mind. The results implied that school administrators had a lot of challenges and difficulties on making decisions during insurgency crisis. They also needed assistance from other professionals, parents, and other people around them. Nevertheless, school administrators were still to adapt some management approaches and changes while managing and leading school

KEYWORDS: *Educational Management, School Administrators, Decision-Making, Insurgency Crisis, Qualitative Phenomenology, Thematic Analysis, Davao Del Norte Division*

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This phenomenological study sought to comprehend how the selected school administrators in the Schools Division of Davao del Norte navigate the intricacies of decision-making during times of insurgency crisis.

For this study, the decision-making process during times of insurgency was considered a vital learning opportunity that enables school administrators to refine their crisis management skills. This also encompasses the cognitive skills of analysis, understanding, and evaluation of diverse and potentially conflicting concepts and approaches to effective decision-making in such contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1
Major Themes and Core Ideas of the Lived Experiences of the School Administrators on Decision-Making during Insurgency Crisis

Themes	Core Ideas
Experienced Anxiety	• Felt Worried and fear because of the war between soldiers and NPAs • Experienced a feeling of uncertainties due to the situations faced. • Suffered from unstable emotions due to fear and worries about war • Felt Afraid because of the trouble between soldiers and NPAs • Suffered from nervousness in making decisions • Felt afraid because of the bad situation
	• Encountered a hard time in making decisions because of the bombing incidents • Faced difficulties to decide for one self and for others because of uncertainties. • Challenged in making decisions during insurgency crisis because of being unprepared

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Encounter Difficulty in Decision-Making	• Encountered difficulty in balancing decisions due to some troubles and incidents between soldiers and NPAs • Took a hard a time to come up with a positive decision because of uncertainties in many things • Experienced trouble in making decisions due to unpreparedness of the war situations
Constraints in Communication	• Faced difficulty in communication due to lack of signal or connection • Encountered problems because of the low access of communication • Had a hard time in communicating to people involved because of the weak connection • Encountered difficulty in communicating people due to signal or connection
Fostering Positive Community Relations	• Had a sense of feeling valued by the community by showing their concerns and appreciations • Had a feeling of being important because of the concern received from the community • Enclosed with good relationship and being valued by the community by showing their concerns to us • Received concern and importance from the people in the community by asking our situations • Acquired appreciations and value within the community by receiving thankful words from the people

Experienced Anxiety

(Personally, I am afraid and worried at first because it was the first time, I encountered this situation. In our times, we were not able to experience war but we heard bombs since soldiers and the other side encountered. The soldiers were roving and we experience that we encountered them and as school leader, you have to u pass by for safety and follow what the advice of the tribal leaders.)

Experiencing anxiety significantly impacts mental and physical health, causing symptoms like rapid heart rate, sleep issues, and digestive problems, while also impairing concentration, productivity, and relationships, often leading to social withdrawal and increased risk for depression, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts if untreated. For the school administrators, it disrupts daily functioning, affects work/school performance, and can become a cycle of avoidance that worsens fear, but effective treatments like therapy and support are available.

In relation to this, Jorge (2022) stated that anxiety impairs decision-making by triggering the brain's threat response, weakening the prefrontal cortex or rational thought and activating the fear, leading to cognitive distortions, over-thinking, decision paralysis, and risk aversion. This can manifest as avoiding choices, amplifying perceived risks, or making impulsive, short-sighted decisions driven by immediate emotional relief rather than long-term outcomes, ultimately affecting memory and logical processing.

Furthermore, feeling overwhelmed by potential negative outcomes and leading to an inability to make any choice at all. It can get hard to maintain a satisfactory quality of life if you continue feeling intense pangs of anxiety each time you need to make decisions. In that context, there are specific steps you can take to overcome anxiety during decision-making processes. So, one cannot think rationally at that moment since their flight-or-fight response becomes active. Such an increased state of alertness can cause cognitive distortions, and that might affect their decision-making process (Smith, 2021).

Encounter Difficulty in Decision-Making

(The first time you have experienced and you have no background about the situation. That was my first time and it is very difficult to decide of what to do which is not only for yourself but you have also to consider you companions like the teachers and learners. So, it is difficult since, instead of making safe of yourself, there are still teachers there as well as the children who possibly feel the fear).

Difficulty in decision-making leads to increased anxiety and stress, decreased productivity, missed opportunities, and strained relationships due to procrastination, avoidance, and indecisiveness. For the participants, it can also manifest as decision paralysis where the sheer number of choices or the complexity of the decision prevents any action, or result in poor choices made out of fatigue or anxiety. This can negatively affect mental health, lead to feelings of helplessness, and impact personal and professional life.

In relation to this, according to Lewis (2023), decision-making difficulties can stymie progress at work or school by delaying or avoiding assignments and projects altogether. Making poor decisions or failing to make decisions on a regular basis can damage self-confidence and a sense of personal competence. Individuals who have decision paralysis may miss out on opportunities because they avoid making decisions or delay taking action. In personal relationships, being unable to make

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decisions or voice preferences can cause irritation and disagreement with others.

Furthermore, James (2021) argued that the desire to avoid or delay decisions might lead to feelings of detachment from others who require timely choices or involvement. Feeling overwhelmed by too many options or hard decisions, preventing you from acting or making a decision. Excessive rumination about choices, even after they have been made, can lead to a cycle of doubt and dissatisfaction. Fatigue caused by making too many decisions can sometimes result in bad, impulsive choices or avoidance behaviors.

Constraints in Communication

> (The most challenging part in this time is the communication because there were really times which is the connection is very poor. You cannot easily communicate or contact the people to ask for help.)

Communication constraints distort messages, causing misunderstandings, confusion, errors, and conflict, and have an impact on relationships, teamwork, and productivity by creating noise, language gaps, emotional interference, fear, stress, cultural differences, or structural issues such as jargon or poor layouts, ultimately impeding clear message transfer and comprehension. To overcome difficulties such as noise, jargon, or emotional states, clear communication, feedback, empathy, and selecting the appropriate time/medium are required.

In relation to this, Boyd (2023) stated that communication networks are essential for the cloud era, enabling individuals and businesses to access and harness the full potential of cloud computing for backup, storage, and other services. Effective communication networks can strengthen relationships, foster deeper connections, build trust, and improve problem-solving skills. The strength of connections within a network influences team performance. While new media offers potential for intercultural dialogue, challenges remain in systematically studying how these technologies impact intercultural communication and conflict resolution.

Moreover, Davis (2020) posited that resisting communication advancements can lead to stagnation, highlighting the need to embrace and use communication innovations ethically and for positive change. The impact of communication networks on the performance of construction project teams, attempting empirical exploration from various social network analysis perspectives. However, there is still a significant gap in understanding the variations in performance and the mechanisms for teams using different communication networks.

Fostering Positive Community Relations

> (No casualty at all. I mean all teachers were safe even though, everyone was crying, shouting, but at least they were all physically stable, no casualty because of the help of the community, since there were clearings and protection of the community especially the advice coming from the soldiers. It is somehow satisfying because there was no casualty and you have no liability on that. Then, despite of being afraid and worried, you were happy after the situation because it feels that you were valuable and important to the people. It seemed that they were also worried with you.)

Having and developing positive relationships with the community is critical in obtaining support. To gain allies for our cause, we must build relationships. To gain support from those outside our organizations, we must develop connections in which they know and trust us. This is particularly important to the participants because the majority of them do not live-in areas where insurgency crises occur on a regular basis. Having a positive relationship with the community is an important step in solving and confronting the problems they have encountered.

In relation to this, Asner (2022) stated that it is always better to build relationships *before* you need them or before a conflict arises. It is not impossible to establish relationships during a crisis, and often a crisis can bring people together. While it may seem unusual, make the most of your organization's crises. Call for help and people will rise to the call. You can build relationships when you are in need, because people often want to help.

Furthermore, Fisher (2020) posited that building and sustaining a good relationship with the community are at the heart of organizing communities. The strength of community lies in the strength of the connections that we have with each other. With strong connections, people have the power to make real change. Building these connections takes time; but it is worth it. Good relationships are the often the source of our greatest joys and greatest challenges. Understanding relationships is no simple task. People are so unique and complex that there is no easy formula.

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Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas of the Coping Mechanisms of the School Administrators on Decision-Making during Insurgency Crisis

Themes	Core Ideas
Facilitating Contingency Planning	• Conducting regular planning and simulation by executing the lessons gained from the experiences • Performing foresight and scenario planning by dramatizing the possible scenarios or events • Conducting and preparing for a contingency planning through anticipating insurgency development • Preparing for a contingency plan by accomplishing the necessary measures • Conducting a contingency planning by conducting DRRM trainings • Accomplishing a contingency plan through feed backing
Seeking Divine Providence and Intervention	• Having faith from God by praying that everything ends well • Asking help from God through prayer • Seeking protection from God by leading a prayer Saying a silent prayer • Asking providence from God by constant prayer • Showing faith from God through prayers
Developing Mindset	• Being positive despite of the situations by setting a positive outlook • Showing positive mindset that everything ends well by developing a positive thinking • Having a positive outlook despite of the circumstances by showing optimism on the situation • Developing mindset by thinking that everyone will be safe • Acquiring a mindset which shows positivism in life
Seeking Community Support	• Asking support from the community by soliciting advice • Seeking help from the people in the community through constant communication • Asking help from the community by seeking advice for a safe place • Seeking help and support from the people in the community in solving the problem through dialogue • Asking assistance from the soldiers and tribal chieftain for the safety of the teachers by inviting them during school forums

Facilitating Contingency Planning

(So, after of what happened, we have already the planning just like simulation like for example what we are going to do if there is an event like this and we have also lessons gained from that experience and we have also planned about the possible scenario that may occur. We execute the lessons that we get us from that situation or event or from our experiences.)

Facilitating a contingency plan in schools is vital for ensuring the continuity of education, protecting student and staff well-being, minimizing disruption during crises, and maintaining the school's reputation. These plans prepare schools for unpredictable events like natural disasters, health emergencies, or system failures by outlining clear procedures for immediate response and long-term recovery, ensuring education continues safely and efficiently. For the participants, it is also important for making them prepared and guided during insurgency crisis.

In relation to this, contingency plans allow for the seamless transition to remote learning or alternate delivery methods, ensuring students' education is not significantly interrupted by disruptions like a school closure due to a natural disaster. In a crisis, a contingency plan helps protect students and staff by providing clear protocols for evacuation, shelter, and emergency response, creating a safe environment and addressing psychosocial need.

Furthermore, Smith (2022) as stated by Fernandez (2021) that contingency planning helps schools identify potential risks and allocate resources effectively, preventing costly downtime, data loss, or system failures and ensuring efficient use of available funds. Schools can also serve as community resources during a disaster, and a contingency plan clarifies how the school might be used as a shelter or emergency facility while maintaining its educational functions. The process of creating a contingency plan involves identifying hazards and vulnerabilities, allowing schools to take preventive measures and build resilience against potential threats before they occur.

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Seeking Divine Providence and Intervention

(So as to my coping mechanism in this situation is just asking guidance and help from God. I know that the situation is really difficult and I do not what would be the possible thing to happen, so what I do is having faith from God. I trust Him that we will be safe and we can go home to our families. Trusting Him by praying that we will be safe.)

Seeking God's providence is important for fostering trust, humility, and strength amidst life's challenges, offering hope that God is actively working for good in all circumstances, and providing spiritual maturity and peace that surpasses understanding. This belief reassures the participants that they are not left to chance but are under God's sovereign care, allowing them to rely wholeheartedly on divine guidance for their security and safety during insurgency crisis.

In relation to this, Hall (2020) posited that people find hope when they understand that God is providentially at work, even in times of suffering, doubt, and fear. When people rely on God's provision, they learn to trust beyond their own abilities or circumstances. This deepens faith, especially during uncertainty, hardship, or important decisions. Thus, seeking intervention from God lies in its capacity to foster a deeper connection with the divine, offer comfort and guidance, express gratitude, and strengthen one's faith and relationship with God. It serves as a primary means of communication for individuals across many faiths, providing a way to present needs, seek strength for challenges, intercede for others, and align personal hopes with spiritual principles.

In addition, Graham (2022) stated that seeking providence and intervention from God provides a way to express thanks for blessings, preventing self-pity and fostering an attitude of gratitude. Seeking providence from God is one of the most important aspects of our lives as believers of God, and it should not be taken lightly. The more we ask intervention and spend time with someone the more we get to know them. The same thing happens when we spend time in prayer connecting with God.

Developing Mindset

(How to overcome? Just think positive for the work because we have no salary if we do not work. Just be positive that we can overcome this situation.)

Developing a mindset fosters resilience, adaptability, and a love for learning, which are vital for achieving goals and navigating life's challenges. Instead of believing abilities are fixed, having a presence of mind views challenges as opportunities, effort as a path to mastery, and failures as valuable lessons, leading to greater success, well-being, and a more positive approach to life. For the participants, developing mindset during insurgency crisis is very vital in order to think properly. Through this, they will be able to come-up with a good decision which makes everyone safe.

In relation to this, Dweck (2023) stated that people with a developed mindset can bounce back from setbacks and failures, viewing them as opportunities to learn and adapt rather than as definitive proof of their limitations. It encourages flexibility in the face of change and challenges, improving problem-solving capabilities and helping individuals navigate new or difficult situations. Research links a growth mindset to greater academic success and overall achievement in various life areas.

Moreover, Richards (2022) posited that by reducing the fear of failure, a developed mindset encourages individuals to take calculated risks and experiment with new ideas. positive mindset influences how people think and behave, contributing to healthier interpersonal relationships. Someone with a developed mindset is likely to believe that they are unable to change or develop their intelligence or character and feel that these are static, innate characteristics. Those with a developed mindset usually have a strong fear of failure, as it might, in their mind, point to a personal, unchangeable defect or shortcoming.

Seeking Community Support

(So, we asked advice especially in the municipal office so that we can continue to work or even in the incoming events on what are the possible things that we can do. So, we still need to tap the personnel and during that time there were also from DSWD together with the AFP to learn on what we are going to do with their help since they have the idea in order to help us on what to do.)

Seeking community support is vital for overall health, providing emotional comfort, practical assistance, a sense of belonging, and enhanced well-being. Strong social networks can improve mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, while also boosting self-esteem and cognitive function. Furthermore, for the participants, seeking support from community is one of their strategies in order to overcome the challenges they have encountered during insurgency crisis in their school. The believe that they overcome the challenges because they constantly seek help and support from the community.

In relation to this, Hood (2022) stated that seeking community support offers opportunities for personal growth, professional development, and a richer, more satisfying life by fostering connections, purpose, and shared experiences. Strong community connections can reduce feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression. They provide a sense of belonging, making people feel understood and valued. Having support from the community is linked to greater overall happiness, while loneliness is associated with increased rates of depression.

In addition, Hockey (2020) mentioned that in essence, building a supportive community helps individuals feel less alone, more secure, and better equipped to navigate life's challenges, ultimately leading to a higher quality of life. Social support helps to reconnect you to the external world while giving you the opportunity to focus on other people and interactions. Sometimes

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this comes in the form of a heart to heart with a friend and seeking out useful advice. Other times, you may find yourself on the giving end of the advice. Everyone is an expert at something.

Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas of the Insights of the School Administrators on Decision-Making during Insurgency Crisis

Themes	Core Idea
One must Intensify Engagement of Stakeholders	• Intensify coordination with the different government agencies through open communication • Foster cooperation among colleagues and other people in the community by sharing ideas • Cultivate strong coordination with the community by inviting them during school forums • Strengthen coordination and linkages within the community by attending sessions • Develop community coordination and involvement by attending meetings • Intensify cooperation through helping the realizations of some projects • Develop coordination with the stakeholders through constant communication
Considering Community Advice	• Follow advice from the people in the community by doing precautionary measures • Listen from the advice of the people by doing the do's and don'ts • Abide and listen from the from the recommendations of the tribal leaders • Follow with the recommendations given by then Barangay Chairman and tribal leader
School Leaders Must Build Strong Community Partnership	• Create a strong partnership with the people in the community through project collaboration • Develop community partnership to have defense during crisis by having strong relationship • Build strong community partnership by enhancing involvement • Strengthen strong partnership with local authorities through collaboration
Value to Develop Presence of Mind	• Hold with a presence of mind all the time by staying positive • Contain presence of mind especially in making decisions by staying relax • Possess with presence of mind always through showing positivism • Have presence of mind during making decisions despite the troubles by avoiding panic
One Should Prioritize Safety of Everyone at School	• Prioritize the safety of the children and the teachers by making right decisions • Hold always with the security and safety of the learners by prioritizing their welfare • Anticipate the safety of the learners as well as the teachers by conducting contingency planning • Adhere to the safety of everyone by anticipating the possible events

One must Intensify Engagement of Stakeholders

(As school admin, partnership from the different agencies in the government with open communication is important so that at least there is someone who can help you as well as for you to become prepared and would not be surprised. They can also give you precautions. And it is very important to have connection with them so that they can contact you if there are awful situations that we do not know.)

Intensifying linkages and engagement with stakeholders ensures operational alignment, while strong connections with external stakeholders build trust, provide diverse perspectives, and open

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new opportunities. When stakeholders are actively involved, they are more likely to support initiatives, share responsibility, and contribute resources or expertise. Strong stakeholder relationships build a foundation for smoother project execution, increased momentum, and ultimate success. For the participants, this aspect is very vital to have a strong support during insurgency crisis in their school.

In relation to this, Uma (2021) as stated by Broom (2021) that with strong linkages with both internal and external stakeholders can lead to shared resources and expertise, supporting project needs and overall organizational growth. Proactive engagement with stakeholders establishes an organization as fair and ethical, building trust and a positive reputation. Involving different groups brings broader perspectives to the organization, leading to more inclusive and well-rounded strategies. Engaging diverse stakeholders brings fresh insights, concepts, and innovative ideas to the table.

In addition, Dubey (2023) posited that one of the most important aspects of contemporary corporate governance is stakeholder engagement. The involvement of stakeholders in school decision-making is crucial. In today's globalized and ever-changing business world, companies encounter complex problems and possibilities that call for different perspectives and teamwork. On the other hand, not only can stakeholder engagement increase credibility and trust, but it also improves decision quality by incorporating different viewpoints and idea (Simps, 2022).

Considering Community Advice

(As school admin, partnership from the different agencies in the government with open communication is important so that at least there is someone who can help you as well as for you to become prepared and would not be surprised. They can also give you precautions. And it is very important to have connection with them so that they can contact you if there are awful situations that we do not know.)

Considering community advice is vital because it offers diverse perspectives, leading to more innovative solutions and a better understanding of complex issues. This process empowers individuals, fosters stronger social connections and trust, and can lead to more informed and effective decision-making that benefits the entire community. Perhaps, for the participants, considering and following advice from the community allows them to navigate with safety. Through this, they were able to overcome the challenges and were able to acquire strong support system during insurgency crisis.

In relation to this, Gupta & Green (2022) posited that considering advice from the community encourages greater participation in decision-making processes, giving people a voice in matters that affect their lives. When organizations and governments listen to community input, they gain a better understanding of issues and can make more informed, context-aware decisions. Organizations can actively solicit input through public forums, feedback mechanisms, and community meetings to understand community needs and concerns. Providing avenues for feedback helps to close the communication loop, demonstrating that community contributions are heard and valued.

Moreover, Woll (2022) stated that when we seek advice from others, we open up about our situation, which can help us feel more positive and hopeful. Additionally, seeking advice can help us gain different perspectives on our situation, which can be very helpful in making decisions. Listening advice from the community is a vital part of any government strategy or consultation. It is essential legislative bodies consult with the public on new initiatives and provide them with a way to air their concerns and feedback on the potential impact on their community.precautionary measures that they shared to us.)

School Leaders Must Build Strong Community Partnership

(As school administrator, what I can say is, it is effective in this situation if there is a strong partnership with the community or with the people in the community. Of course, they are in your favor in times of chaos. So, I am really enhancing in helping or collaborating with the projects in the community. It is like give and take.)

Strong community partnerships are essential because they provide access to unique resources and expertise, improve outcomes for individuals and organizations, and foster a shared sense of responsibility for community well-being and development. For the participants, by pooling strengths, communities can address shared challenges like resource shortages, provide diverse learning experiences for students, improve academic achievement and motivation, and create more comprehensive support systems for families and individuals as well help them in facing insurgency crisis.

In relation to this, Gross (2021) as mentioned by Aaron (2022) that building strong community partnerships provide access to experiences like mentorships, internships, and extracurricular activities that aren't available in traditional settings, improving skills like problem-solving and critical thinking. Students in communities with strong partnerships often show higher grades, better attendance, and increased motivation, with community support helping to mitigate negative environmental factors. Meaningful connections with the community foster a sense of belonging and responsibility in students, leading to greater engagement in their education and personal development.

In addition, Haines & Graham (2020) stated that strong community partnerships can connect people to essential resources such as health services, childcare, and programs that promote physical and mental well-being. By working together, organizations can expand their reach and capacity to address pressing community needs and provide services they couldn't offer alone. Strong community partnerships can lead to better

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funding opportunities and a more stable resource base, which is particularly beneficial for nonprofits and community initiatives

Value to Develop Presence of Mind

(One of my insights is to have a presence of mind in making decisions. You have to elicit fears rather, you have to think on how to solve the problem. You have to think on how you make decisions. You need to be positive always that everything will be safe because if you let your fear control you cannot make good decisions. Presence of mind is really important.)

It is said that developing a mindset is important in fostering resilience, adaptability, and a love for learning, enabling individuals to overcome challenges and achieve greater success and well-being. By viewing challenges as opportunities and understanding that abilities can be developed through effort, individuals with a growth mindset are more likely to innovate, solve problems effectively, and achieve their goals across personal and professional life. Having a positive mindset according to the participant is very important since it allows them to come up with a clear vision in decision-making.

In relation to this, Cherry & Hames (2024) stated that developing a mindset helps you bounce back from setbacks by seeing them as opportunities for growth, rather than as failures that define your abilities. A positive mindset individuals tend to find more silver linings in difficult situations, leading to greater overall satisfaction. By seeing challenges as opportunities, growth-minded individuals develop better adaptability and problem-solving skills. A willingness to take risks and learn from mistakes fosters a more creative and innovative approach to tasks and problems.

Furthermore, Lakhan (2021), as posited by Goods (2022), said that your mindset is a set of beliefs that shape how you make sense of the world and yourself. It influences how you think, feel, and behave in any given situation. It means that what you believe about yourself impacts your success or failure. Developing mindsets can influence how people behave in a wide range of situations in life. For example, as people encounter different situations, their mind triggers a specific mindset that then directly impacts their behavior in that situation

One Should Prioritize Safety of Everyone at School

(Again, safety is non-negotiable. I am repeating that always. We must priorities the safety and well-being of the children and teachers that is it. We need to think properly of what is the best decision. So, that safety will be enhanced if our teachers and students have enough training, that is why we conducted it for them.)

A safe school fosters better focus and concentration, improves mental and emotional well-being, reduces bullying and violence, and cultivates positive relationships, all contributing to overall student success and a more positive school culture. For the participants, it is very crucial to make decisions during insurgency crisis since it has to do with prioritizing the safety of everyone in school. One should always adhere and prioritize the safety of the people in the school.

In relation to this, Aderinto (2022) stated that safety ensures that a school remains a dedicated space for learning, free from violence, bullying, harassment, and other disruptions. A secure environment helps reduce stress and anxiety, allowing students to feel more relaxed, supported, and mentally healthy. Feeling safe contributes to a student's self-esteem and a positive emotional state, which are vital for their overall development.

Similarly, Ephraim (2022) posited that a safe school environment fosters positive relationships among students and between students and staff, building a sense of community and support. Studies consistently highlight that school safety is critical for students' academic success, mental health, and overall development. A safe environment reduces stress, improves concentration, and allows students to learn effectively, while feelings of insecurity can lead to anxiety, lower grades, and absenteeism. Safety encompasses physical well-being, protection from bullying and violence, and a supportive emotional and social climate.

Limitation

This phenomenological study focused on the experiences of ten school administrators in the Schools Division of Davao del Norte in making decisions during an insurgency crisis. It was conducted through in-depth interviews as the main data collection method during the school year 2024–2025, specifically from July to August 2025.

This study relied exclusively on in-depth interviews (IDIs) to explore the experiences of school administrators engaged in decision-making during insurgency crises, with an initial intent to incorporate data triangulation. However, the sample was limited to private school administrators who had directly encountered such situations, thereby excluding teachers, students, and other stakeholders. As a result, the findings represented the perspectives, interpretations, and coping strategies of the school administrators and may not capture the broader experiences within the school community. Furthermore, because the data were drawn from an IDI method, data triangulation was not achieved, limiting the methodological breadth and potentially narrowing the study's overall perspective

CONTRIBUTION: Provides valuable insights into decision-making processes, particularly from the lives of the school administrators. Their firsthand accounts reveal the challenges and strategies involved in decision-making processes during insurgency crisis to accommodate a safe learning environment, ensuring that teachers and students can make proper and right decision during insurgency crisis. These school administrators offer practical decisions on making school environment safe, using adaptive equipment, and fostering a supportive environment that promotes both physical and social development

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for all teachers and students. Their experiences highlight the importance of decision-making processes, adaptability, and confidence in addressing the unique needs of school administrators while maintaining a safe and secured learning environment.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive education policies by emphasizing the need for systematic support, such as professional development programs and resource allocation. School Administrators provides valuable reflections on the evolution of decision-making practices, shedding light on both progresses made and persisting gaps in school environment. Their perspectives can inform future policies, disaster management, and school administrators' preparation programs to better equip educators and students in facing crisis. Ultimately, this research reinforces the significance of decision-making in fostering safe environment,, promoting social integration, and enhancing the overall well- being of school administrators.

NOVELTY: The novelty of this study lies in its unique focus on the lives experiences of school administrators in decision-making processes during insurgency crisis. Unlike, existing research that often emphasizes theoretical frameworks or policy analyses, this study provides firsthand, phenomenological insights into the practical challenges, adaptive strategies, and evolving perceptions of veteran school administrators who have navigated insurgency crisis over decades. Their reflections offer rare historical perspective on how decision-making processes have evolved, highlighting gaps in school administrators' teacher training, resource availability and institutional support. By capturing these rich, experience- based narratives, the study contributes fresh, practice- oriented knowledge that can inform future educational policies, training programs, and school management practices and strategies during insurgency crisis.

KEYWORDS: Education, school administrators, decision-making processes, insurgency crisis, qualitative inquiry, Davao del Norte Division

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