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BEYOND THE WALLS: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL HEADS IN REMOTE SCHOOLS ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT
This study aimed to explore the experiences of school heads on stakeholder engagement in remote schools of Talaingod, Davao del Norte. The research employed a phenomenological approach, utilizing in-depth interviews with eight purposively selected school heads to understand their lived experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights. Results revealed that the lived experiences of school heads in remote schools include facing barriers in communication and stakeholder engagement, as well as dealing with geographic isolation and infrastructure challenges. They cope by cultivating connections through effective communication and harnessing collaborative networks. The insights of the participants include the relevance of recognizing and valuing stakeholders, the provision of training programs and technical assistance for school heads, and the importance of collaborative partnerships for school improvement. This implies that school heads in remote schools need to address stakeholder engagement, build trust, adapt to local needs, foster inclusivity, and pursue leadership training to improve educational outcomes.

KEYWORDS: *Stakeholder Engagement, School Heads, Remote Schools, Qualitative Phenomenological Exploration, Thematic Analysis, Division of Davao Del Norte.*

INTRODUCTION

In today's extremely competitive environment, school heads play a crucial role that evolved beyond traditional administrative tasks to encompass multifaceted responsibilities, including effective stakeholder engagement. Moreover, understanding the experiences of school heads in navigating and fostering relationships with various stakeholders becomes paramount while adapting to changed circumstances and building powerful alliances with all key education stakeholders, particularly those within the local community in remote schools. Thus, in remote schools, school heads encounter significant hurdles such as resource limitations, inadequate infrastructure, and issues with stakeholder trust. The challenges and opportunities presented in remote schooling settings add a layer to these interactions.

In South Africa, weak school management practices, further aggravated in remote schools, challenge student education, creating a nationwide drag on development (Gallego, 2022; Madani, 2019). Indonesian school heads in remote areas contend with challenges like community tensions between traditional shared values and public education's emphasis on competition, inadequate school hours affecting income during harvests, and stakeholders appraising new principals grounded on past leaders' successes and failures (Juharyanto et al., 2020). Similarly, in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander remote schools in Australia, despite a shared need for local teachers, differing priorities between school heads and communities create difficulties in remote education (Guenther & Osborne, 2020).

In the Philippines, the lack of commitment, transparency, and low stakeholder support by the principals are made through the decentralized practices (Iyengar, 2021). With that, the Department of Education issues DepEd Order No. 26, s. 2022 or the Implementation Guidelines of School Governance Council (SGC). This purpose of this policy is to strengthen the role of school stakeholders, Local Government Units (LGUs), school staff, and community members as partners in providing students accessible to quality education, and well-being in the learning environment to ensure quality education.

In Davao Del Norte, alongside in Talaingod, the diversity of human, armed- conflict, and geographic conditions can hinder community engagement, especially in a far-flung school area. It shows that 68.8 percent (68.8 %) poverty index in the municipality (Belirazio et al., 2017). Students have limited access to a quality education because of the insufficient infrastructure, such as school and transportation and it makes it difficult for the students to attend school regularly.

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Based on my readings, limited studies on the engagement of stakeholders in remote schools such as the study of Juharyanto et al. (2020) showed that problems and challenges encountered related to some various aspect such as culture, demography, geography, and historical aspects. Also, the related study of Eslaban et al. (2022) and Gallego (2020) focuses on school leadership and management. However, I have not come across any study that uncovers stakeholder engagement in the remote school of Talaingod, Davao Del Norte. Thus, this urges to conduct this study to address the said gaps by identifying best practices related to stakeholder engagement by the school heads in remote areas in Talaingod.

Further, this study shall be explicitly significant provide valuable insights, and involve stakeholders in decision-making processes to enhance the quality of education and school performance in remote schools. Moreover, it seeks to be useful to the school heads to alleviate the effective strategies for improving stakeholder engagement and collaboration for the understanding of the impact and challenges. Further, the results of this study will be shared with the administrators of Talaingod, Davao del Norte which could aid in improving and leveraging multi-stakeholder collaboration. Further, the findings will also be presented at the multidisciplinary research conference.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore and understand the lived experiences of the school heads and how they cope challenges on stakeholder engagement to the remote area in Talaingod, Davao del Norte. Further, this study aims to address the needs of diverse stakeholders these may include building strong relationships with local communities, collaborative decision making and fostering community support to improve the educational experiences in remote school.

At this stage of research in stakeholder engagement is generally defined as the organization that are affected by decision or influence by the heads of the implementation of its decision and a variety of activities that enable communication between an organization and its stakeholders.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of the school heads on stakeholder engagement in remote schools?
2. How do school heads cope with the challenges related to stakeholder engagement in remote schools?
3. What insights can the school heads draw from their experiences that they can share with others?

Theoretical Lens

This study adopted through the Stakeholder Theory of Freeman (1984). The theory addresses management and ethical considerations within an organization (Phillips, 2003; Phillips et al., 2003), employing a stakeholder approach that integrates goal-oriented, resource-based, and internal process perspectives to assess organizational effectiveness (Daft, 2001, as cited in Parmar et al., 2010).

The study looks at how this theory relates to the roles that school heads play in remote areas, emphasizing how important it is for them to supervise the welfare of a variety of stakeholders, such as teachers, learners, parents, local government, non-profit organizations, and other external stakeholders.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This research study explored the experiences of school heads in stakeholder engagement in Talaingod, Davao del Norte. With this, eight (8) participants were all subjected to in-depth interviews. Moreover, this research study was conducted from June-July, School Year 2024-2025.

The result of the research will be utilized as extravagant information on the stakeholder engagement experienced by the school heads to the remote school and the findings could be highly significant and beneficial to the following:

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Leadership Roles of School Heads in Remote Schools on Stakeholder Engagement

Effective school leadership involves priorities like curriculum focus, strong communication skills, creating a positive school climate, and retaining qualified staff (Daniëls et al., 2019; Day et al., 2020). With excellent leadership and structure, a good principal improves school achievement. It is the principal's responsibility to improve educational activities, and success requires someone knowledgeable in school management (Haryati et al., 2021).

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Conversely, inadequate school management results in poor education, generating a national setback. Education is the fundamental weapon for a country to develop its reputation and achieve its goals (Gallego, 2022; Madani, 2019). As a result, principals or school leaders play an important role in rural places. It is emphasized that education has a transformative potential for global development. This is particularly relevant when considering the problems encountered

Challenges School Heads Face in Engaging Stakeholder

The ever-evolving educational landscape, particularly in the post-pandemic world, underscores the need for transformative and resourceful leaders (Eslaban et al., 2022). This complexity is exemplified in Indigenous Peoples (IP) schools in Tupi South District, South Cotabato, where school heads face persistent challenges. Intensive agricultural work in rural indigenous farming communities limits parents' ability to access their children's modules, increasing resistance to modular training. Consequently, parents experience heightened psychological discomfort, which in turn raises the likelihood of externalizing difficulties in their children. This situation complicates grade computation for teachers (Eslaban et al., 2022).

Strategies in Mobilizing Stakeholder Support

Faced with limited resources, nurturing an ethos of respect and empathy within schools becomes crucial. By prioritizing these values, schools can foster stronger community support and involvement, which may help mitigate resource limitations. Building relationships, fostering friendships, and acknowledging individuals as valuable contributors to the school's success strengthen community ties (Eslaban et al., 2022).

Management Training for Principals Assigned in Remote Schools

Effective remote school management necessitates comprehensive training for school principals prior to their assignments. Many school leaders in outlying areas demonstrate intrinsic motivation, driven by a strong desire to serve their schools. Despite adversity, they emphasize resilience and the importance of fostering a school climate akin to a supportive family, which promotes excellent student outcomes (Gallego, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design specifically applying the phenomenological approach. This explored the lived experiences of school heads in the remote schools on stakeholder engagement. Qualitative research explores the behaviors, opinions, and experiences of individuals through methods of examination. Typically, it requires less participants, but more time with each participant. It gives research participants the opportunity to provide their own opinion on a common topic (Dawson, 2019).

Research Participants

This phenomenological study involved the eight (8) school heads from Talaingod District, Division of Davao del Norte. The representation of the number of participants in this study follows the concept of Creswell (2018) as he revealed that in a qualitative-phenomenological study, at least three (3) to fifteen (15) participants. It is considered that a sample of 8 can represent enough and a fair size to saturate the information of the study since in qualitative research it is important the quality, not the quantity. Therefore, in this study, 8 participants were interviewed.

Moreover, the participants of this research were chosen through the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling was used to achieve comprehensive and extensive information prior to conduct of the study (Kumar et al., 2020).

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is a methodical approach of obtaining measurement or gathering information. It enables the researcher to acquire firsthand knowledge and a range of responses regarding the study's subject (Wolff et al., 2019). The collection of data in qualitative research was conducted in a non-structured and adaptable manner. Thus, since this study is directly related to the natural surroundings of the participants, it will be the primary research instrument used for data collection and analysis (Clark & Veale, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter outlines the results of the study. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with participants who openly shared their experiences related to the phenomenon under investigation. Using a validated interview guide, school principals from remote schools described their experiences with stakeholder engagement. All responses were recorded with consent, then transcribed and translated. The transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis.

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During the analysis, I focused on the emerging themes, which represented the study's findings. Each theme was associated with key ideas, providing detailed descriptions that linked back to the themes. The themes were categorized into three groups: one group discussed the lived experiences of school heads regarding stakeholder engagement in remote schools; another group explored the coping mechanisms school heads used to address the challenges they faced; and the third group offered insights from the participants.

Table 1
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of School Heads on Stakeholder Engagement in Remote Schools

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Facing Barriers in Communication and Stakeholder Engagement	• The main problems faced were language differences, hard-to-reach locations, and a lack of technology, which made communication and outreach difficult. • Engaging stakeholders is challenging due to communication barriers, language, and cultural diversity. • The hesitation to engage with the school stemmed from uncertainty about how parents could contribute or participate. • The problem is the language barrier, especially in IP schools. • The school head faces challenges in stakeholder engagement, poor communication, and needs for better time management and public relations in a remote location.
Dealing with Geographic Isolation and Infrastructure Challenges	• The geographic isolation of the area poses significant challenges in communicating with stakeholders. • The school's remote location and rough, rocky roads create significant challenges for engaging with stakeholders and facilitating visits. • Geographic isolation creates challenges, with delays in government support due to the school's remote location and difficult access. • The new school had no classrooms, water, or electricity, relying on community stakeholders, especially the *Datus*, to build facilities using nipa, bamboo, and round timber. • The hilltop location brings strong winds and rain, while the slippery, rocky road is difficult to navigate, even with rain boots. • The school head faces challenges like tough travel, lack of facilities, limited access to barangay officials, and reliance on available resources for programs.

Facing Barriers in Communication and Stakeholder Engagement

School heads in remote schools face challenges in communicating and engaging with stakeholders for various reasons. IDI-02 brought to light a number of important obstacles, such as technological limitations, remote location, and linguistic hurdles.

"The challenges that I encounter such as their language barriers. It is difficult to communicate with them what you really want and what they want, too. What I did is I called an interpreter who are the students in higher grade in order to have a clear communication.

Also, the geographic location in which private sectors, organizations or individuals cannot easily to reach out both of us. It is inaccessible for communicating letters and asking donations to groups/ individuals and last the technology barrier that can hinder communication with the local and private sector. In our school there is no internet connection and electricity."

(The challenges I encountered include language barriers. It was difficult to clearly communicate what I wanted to convey and understand what they wanted as well. To address this, I sought the help of an interpreter—students from higher grade levels—to facilitate effective communication. Additionally, the geographic location posed a challenge, as private sectors, organizations, or individuals found it difficult to reach us. This made it inaccessible for sending communication letters or requesting donations from groups or individuals. Lastly, the lack of technology hindered communication with both local and private sectors. Our school does not have internet access or electricity.)

Dealing with Geographic Isolation and Infrastructure Challenges

"The geographic location is the most challenges that I encounter because it is difficult to communicate with the stakeholders due to the isolation of the area."

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(The geographic location is the biggest challenge I encounter because it is difficult to communicate with stakeholders due to the isolation of the area.)

Additionally, IDI-04 expresses frustration over the challenge of engaging potential stakeholders, attributing it to the geographical obstacles of the area. The rugged terrain makes travel difficult, which not only hinders stakeholders from visiting the school but also restricts their ability to actively participate.

"The problem was on the school's location relative to potential stakeholders that poses a challenge, as the road leading to them is rough and rocky. Similarly, stakeholders had a hard time to visit our school due to these conditions."

(The problem was the school's location relative to potential stakeholders, which poses a challenge, as the road leading to the school is rough and rocky. Similarly, stakeholders had a hard time visiting our school due to these conditions.)

Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Coping Mechanisms of School Heads on the Challenges Related to Stakeholder Engagement in Remote Schools

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Cultivating Connections through Effective Communication	• Bridging language and cultural gaps through communication, personal interactions, and thoughtful gestures • Conducting regular visits and dialogues with stakeholders • Having collaboration, clear communication, transparency, recognition, impactful services, and addressing barriers • Communicating via radio, mobile messaging, and meetings • Ensuring transparent communication, tailored outreach, feedback, and collaboration • Strengthening communication through regular meetings, active participation, and respect for the community's time
Harnessing Collaborative Networks	• Seeking guidance from peers and leaders • Seeking advice from Division staff, PSDS, experienced leaders, and colleagues • Collaborating with teachers through their local knowledge and support • Asking help from teachers to connect with local leaders and aligning initiatives with educational standards • Involving the community through forums and partnerships • Conducting school activities, events and projects to boost partnerships • Getting support from teachers, PSDS, and other school heads • Engaging with officials, NGOs, other school heads, supervisors, and community leaders • Consulting teachers during decision-making • Engaging the community through consultations with teachers, local leaders, and organizations like the RPSB and soldiers • Asking support from teachers and *Datus* • Strengthening parent-teacher associations

Cultivating Connections through Effective Communication

The coping mechanisms of school heads in stakeholder engagement in remote schools involve fostering effective communication to establish connections. IDI-01 emphasized the importance of addressing and resolving issues effectively.

"Bago ka mohangyo, kinahanglan nimo silang masabtan sa tibuok nila. Mao nga kinahanglan nimo silang ilhon, ug usahay apil na ang paghatag og kape kung moanhi sila sa akong opisina, labi na sa Datu, sa chairman, ug sa PTA President. Pinaagi niini, mahimo nakong masulbad ang gap sa taliwala namo, bisan pa nga dili ko kamao mo-estorya og "Ata Manobo" ug sila mosulti sa akong pinulongan,

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Bisaya. Bisan pa sa gap, nagkasinabot gihapon mi. Ang pag-bridge sa gap pinaagi sa maayo nga komunikasyon ug paghatag og panahon makatabang kaayo. Ako gyud ang maghimo sa unang lakang."

(Before making a request, you need to understand them fully. That's why you need to get to know them, and sometimes it involves offering coffee when they visit my office, especially with the *Datu*, the chairman, and the PTA president. Through this, I can bridge the gap between us, even though I don't speak 'Ata Manobo' and they speak my language, Bisaya. Despite the gap, we still manage to understand each other. Bridging the gap through good communication and giving time is very helpful. I really take the first step.)

Harnessing Collaborative Networks

Another emergent theme in the coping mechanisms of school heads for stakeholder engagement in remote schools is harnessing collaborative networks.

"In my perspective, school heads cope with the challenges of stakeholder engagement in remote schools with the help of colleagues, faculty members, as well as DepEd officials and our PSDS. I address the challenges and issues encountered in stakeholder engagement in remote schools by seeking advice and recommendations from my DepEd family and friends. I also seek advice from school heads who are experienced in engaging stakeholders, especially in remote schools, to learn from their experiences and avoid common issues."

IDI-07 also sought assistance from division personnel and the PSDS, as well as from more experienced school heads, to effectively engage stakeholders and address related challenges.

"Personal nga akong giatubang ang mga hagit nga may kalabutan sa pag-apil sa mga stakeholders pinaagi sa pagpangayo og tambag gikan sa ubang mga school heads, sa Division personnel, ug bisan sa among PSDS, ingon man sa mga karaan nga school heads bahin sa ilang pag-atubang sa mga susamang sitwasyon. Naga-pangayo usab ko og tambag sa mga kauban kung unsa ang labing maayong buhaton aron masulbad ang ingon nga mga hagit. Kini nga mga indibidwal nagtabang nako sa paagi nga ang ilang mga kasinatian ug mga ideya mahimong makaapekto sa desisyon nga akong ginahimo."

(I personally face the challenges related to stakeholder engagement by seeking advice from other school heads, Division personnel, and even our PSDS, as well as from experienced school heads about how they handled similar situations. I also ask my colleagues for advice on the best course of action to address such challenges. These individuals help me by sharing their experiences and ideas, which influence the decisions I make.)

Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Insights of School Heads on Stakeholder Engagement in Remote Schools

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Relevance of Recognizing and Valuing Stakeholders	• Acknowledging stakeholders is crucial as it fosters gratitude and strengthens the school's culture of support. • Recognizing stakeholders for their impact on school programs is key to rewarding their contributions. • Effective school leadership builds trust and values stakeholders through friendliness, openness, and charisma. • Effective stakeholder engagement involves staying connected, meeting needs, and celebrating successes to strengthen relationships. • Involving stakeholders in decision-making fosters strong relationships and gives them a sense of ownership and pride in the school's success. • Promoting collaborative decision-making empowers stakeholders, fostering an inclusive and resilient school community committed to educational excellence.
Provision of Training Programs and Technical Assistance for School Heads	• Strengthening school heads' orientation and providing technical assistance ensures effective stakeholder participation and role recognition. • Prioritizing strategies and professional development enhances school leaders' skills to navigate challenges and dynamic environments. • Professional development in key skills enhances stakeholder engagement and school-community relationships. • Specialized training and targeted technical assistance are needed to help school heads manage remote schools effectively.

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Major Themes	Core Ideas
Importance of Collaborative Partnerships for School Improvement	• Strengthen partnerships with agencies like the LGU and DPWH to address challenges such as road asphalting, easing transportation for stakeholders, teachers, and residents in last-mile schools. • Stakeholder engagement secures resources and builds partnerships to improve school facilities, programs, and development. • Innovation, technology, and collaboration are vital for tackling remote school challenges, with agency and NGO support bridging gaps. • School heads and DepEd officials should strengthen collaboration with LGUs, NGOs, and individuals to address school challenges effectively. • The school benefits from donations, making ongoing support and connections with more foundations essential for improvement.

Relevance of Recognizing and Valuing Stakeholders

School heads in remote schools shared the relevance of recognizing and valuing stakeholders as a key insight on stakeholder engagement. IDI-01 emphasized the importance of acknowledging the contributions of stakeholders involved in the school's development. The school head shared the need to develop a culture of support within the school community.

"Importante kaayo ang pag-recognize sa mga stakeholders. Kinahanglan nato silang tagaan og pag-ila aron maipakita ang atong pagpasalamat. Aduna tay kultura sa pagsuporta sa eskwelahan tungod kay ato silang giila. Kinahanglan nato silang ilhon."

(It is very important to recognize the stakeholders. We need to acknowledge them to show our gratitude. We have a culture of supporting the school because we recognize them. We need to acknowledge them.)

Provision of Training Programs and Technical Assistance for School Heads

The need for comprehensive training and technical assistance in stakeholder engagement emerged as a crucial theme for school heads assigned to remote schools, enabling them to manage effectively and maximize their impact.

IDI-07 recommends regular monitoring to ensure that actions taken are aligned with proper procedures and best practices.

"Palig-ona ang orientation sa mga school heads bahin sa pakig-uban sa mga stakeholders aron mahibal-an nila ang mga proseso, labi na sa pagpili ug pag-organize sa PTA, SGC, ug bisan unsang organisasyon sulod sa eskwelahan, ug pag-ila sa ilang mga katungdanan sa pagpadagan sa eskwelahan. Ang akong pangandoy mao ang pagpalig-on sa pakig-uban sa mga stakeholders ug paghatag ug Monitoring Tool ug Evaluation sa tanang mga eskwelahan (regular nga pag- monitor) aron ma-assess kung giunsa sa school head ang pagpatuman niini. Hatagan usab og teknikal nga tabang ang mga naglisud."

(Strengthen the orientation of school heads on stakeholder engagement so they can understand the processes, especially in selecting and organizing the PTA, SGC, and any other organizations within the school, as well as recognizing their roles in school management. My aspiration is to strengthen stakeholder engagement and provide a Monitoring Tool and Evaluation for all schools (regular monitoring) to assess how the school head implements this. Technical assistance will also be provided to those facing difficulties.)

Importance of Collaborative Partnerships for School Improvement

Another insight from the school heads that emerged from the interviews is the importance of collaborative partnerships for school improvement.

IDI-08 highlighted the importance of strengthening partnerships with government agencies to accelerate the school's development. For example, improving road access to the school could attract more stakeholders and facilitate easier access.

"Kinahanglan nato nga palig-onon ang atong pakig-partner sa uban pang mga ahensya sa gobyerno sama sa LGU ug DPWH aron makita ang atong mga problema, sama sa pag-asphalt sa mga kalsada padulong sa mga last-mile schools. Kini makatabang aron maminusan ang kalisod dili lang sa mga stakeholders nga moadto sa eskwelahan, kundi pati na usab sa mga magtutudlo ug mga residente."

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(We need to strengthen our partnership with other government agencies such as the LGU and DPWH to address our problems, such as asphalting the roads leading to last-mile schools. This will help reduce the difficulties not only for stakeholders going to the school but also for the teachers and residents.)

Lived Experiences of School Heads on Stakeholder Engagement in Remote Schools Facing Barriers in Communication and Stakeholder Engagement

School heads in remote schools face numerous challenges in engaging stakeholders, primarily due to barriers such as language, geography, and technology. Language differences often necessitate the use of interpreters or advanced planning to ensure mutual understanding.

The situation in many remote schools is reflected in the different studies. In fact, school heads often operate without adequate financial support, exacerbating financial and technological limitations, such as the lack of internet access and inadequate technical support (Tejada & Chieng, 2024).

Dealing with Geographic Isolation and Infrastructure Challenges

The challenges faced by school heads in remote areas, particularly in relation to geographical isolation and infrastructure, are indeed significant and multifaceted. In fact, the lack of proper roads, difficult terrain, and the absence of basic utilities make it especially difficult for stakeholders to visit schools and engage in activities.

These findings resonate with those presented by researchers in different contexts. For instance, Fargas-Malet and Bagley (2022) highlight how small schools in rural areas in Norway, Finland, Ireland, and Austria strengthen community ties, but struggle with challenges stemming from geographical isolation and exclusionary dynamics within close-knit communities.

Coping Mechanisms of School Heads on the Challenges Related to Stakeholder Engagement in Remote Schools

Cultivating Connections through Effective Communication

Effective communication is a cornerstone in building strong connections with stakeholders, especially in remote schools where challenges like language barriers and geographical isolation can hinder interactions. School heads often employ strategies like informal meetings and community visits to bridge these gaps, ensuring understanding and fostering trust. Transparent and continuous communication across various platforms strengthens collaboration and encourages participation, which is crucial for the school's progress.

Harnessing Collaborative Networks

Harnessing collaborative networks is a key strategy for school heads in remote areas to overcome challenges in stakeholder engagement. By seeking guidance from experienced colleagues, teachers, and DepEd officials, school heads gain valuable insights and support for effective decision-making.

This aligns with the findings of Uy et al. (2023), which highlighted that school principals, particularly during the pandemic, faced significant challenges in maintaining these collaborative networks, especially while ensuring safety measures were adhered to.

Insights of School Heads on Stakeholder Engagement in Remote Schools Relevance of Recognizing and Valuing Stakeholders

Recognizing and valuing stakeholders is crucial for fostering strong relationships and support within the school community. School heads emphasized the importance of acknowledging contributions, expressing gratitude, and involving stakeholders in decision-making processes to build trust and ownership.

Aligning with these findings, Chebbi et al. (2020) stress the significance of recognizing stakeholders through both monetary and non-monetary rewards, which promote teamwork, collaboration, and shared organizational goals.

Importance of Collaborative Partnerships for School Improvement

Collaborative partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and local businesses are essential for school improvement. These partnerships help secure resources, expertise, and support to address challenges such as infrastructure issues and limited funding

This study corroborates with De Torres (2021) who emphasized that the significance of stakeholders should not be overlooked.

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Implication for the Administrative Practice

The study on the lived experiences of school heads in remote schools offers valuable insights for educational administrators seeking to enhance stakeholder engagement and improve educational outcomes in these challenging contexts. Based on the themes that emerged from the study, the following implications can be drawn:

First, school heads may face significant challenges in effectively communicating with stakeholders, particularly in remote settings. This may require adapting communication strategies to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all parties involved.

Second, geographic isolation and limited infrastructure may hinder access to resources, training, and collaboration opportunities.

Third, effective communication is essential for strengthening connections between the school and the community. Administrative practices may require the development of clear, consistent, and culturally sensitive communication channels that resonate with diverse stakeholders.

Fourth, collaborative networks may provide a powerful way for schools to access resources and expertise from a wide range of stakeholders. Administrative practices may focus on fostering partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and government agencies to create a supportive educational ecosystem.

Recommendation for Further Research

Expanding the scope of participants in future research is essential for gaining a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder engagement in remote schools. While the current study focused on school heads, including teachers, parents, and community members would enrich the findings by providing diverse perspectives.

Additionally, exploring the impact of technology on stakeholder engagement is a vital area for further investigation. The current study could benefit from examining how digital tools, social media platforms, and online communication channels can bridge the gaps created by geographic isolation.

Investigating the role of local government units (LGUs) is another important direction for future research. LGUs play a significant role in providing resources and support to remote schools, and further studies could focus on the specific strategies and initiatives implemented by these entities. This research could shed light on how LGUs can enhance stakeholder engagement and contribute to improving educational outcomes in remote areas.

Cultural sensitivity training is a critical factor that future studies should examine, especially since cultural barriers were identified as a challenge in the current research. Investigating the effectiveness of cultural sensitivity training programs for school heads and teachers could provide valuable insights into fostering understanding and building relationships with diverse stakeholders. This training could enhance the overall effectiveness of engagement efforts in culturally diverse communities.

Lastly, collaborating with policymakers is crucial for translating the findings of this research into actionable strategies. Sharing the insights gained from this study with policymakers could inform the development of targeted policies and programs aimed at improving stakeholder engagement and educational outcomes in remote schools. This collaboration could lead to more effective and equitable education policies that address the unique challenges faced by underserved areas, ultimately benefiting students and communities as a whole.

Concluding Remarks

In reflecting on the experiences of school heads on their stakeholder engagement in remote schools, it is evident that this endeavor is fraught with challenges. As I navigate this complex landscape, it becomes clear that effective leadership in remote education requires not only vision but also the ability to engage with diverse stakeholders. This quote resonates deeply with the findings of this study, highlighting the critical role that school heads play in fostering relationships with stakeholders to promote the educational development of their communities.

The difficulties associated with stakeholder engagement cannot be overstated. School heads often find themselves in a challenging position, attempting to rally support from parents, local organizations, and government entities while facing their unique circumstances. In remote areas, where resources are limited, and connectivity is often a struggle, these challenges are magnified. This study specifically

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focused on the lived experiences of school heads, uncovering the gradations of their efforts to engage stakeholders in ways that can significantly impact their schools and communities.

As a researcher, I have come to appreciate the complexities and pressures that school heads encounter daily. Their roles are not only administrative; they are pivotal in shaping the educational landscape of their communities. The journey to support and educate their students is often arduous, yet the fulfillment that comes from seeing their communities thrive is immensely rewarding. This experience has deepened my respect for their dedication and resilience.

Throughout this research process, I was fortunate to have the guidance and support of my adviser, who helped navigate the complexities of completing this study. Their insights and encouragement were invaluable, especially during the challenging moments of interviewing participants and analyzing the data. Each phase of this research presented hurdles, from securing interviews to synthesizing the vast amounts of information gathered, culminating in the development of this manuscript.

Finally, it is essential for the Department of Education and local government units to recognize the challenges faced by school heads and work together to address these issues. By improving infrastructure and accessibility, they can significantly alleviate some of the burdens these leaders face. The experiences gathered in this study illustrate that those who navigate these challenges become leaders with big hearts for community development, dedicated to enhancing the lives of their students through education. Together, we can build a brighter future for our communities, one stakeholder at a time.

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