Emerging Issues in Implementing Limited Face to Face Classes: Narratives of School Administrators

Rowell B. Flores[1]; Dr. Remigilda D. Gallardo[2]

Abstract: This qualitative study aimed to explore the lived experiences, coping strategies, and insights of public-school administrators as they navigated the complex task of implementing limited in-person instruction in compliance with national health and safety policies. Guided by a phenomenological approach, the study gathered data through in-depth interviews (IDI) with five school heads and a focus group discussion (FGD) with another group of five administrators. Thematic analysis of the data revealed six core challenges: inadequate learning resources and classroom facilities, overwhelming demands of health and safety compliance, excessive administrative and instructional workload, persistent resistance and anxiety among stakeholders, limited institutional and government support, and widening gaps in technology access and communication. Despite these difficulties, participants demonstrated resilience through strategies such as improvised and community-supported resource solutions, collaborative implementation of safety protocols, strategic task delegation, empathetic stakeholder communication, proactive networking, and flexible communication systems. From these experiences, three key insights emerged: the importance of adaptability and creativity during crises, the value of strong communication in building stakeholder trust, and the role of collaborative and compassionate leadership. Findings may inform future policies and professional development programs for school leaders tasked with crisis-sensitive education delivery.

How to Cite: Rowell B. Flores; Dr. Remigilda D. Gallardo (2025) Emerging Issues in Implementing Limited Face to Face Classes: Narratives of School Administrators. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(7), 3647-3652. https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25jul1685

I. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has introduced new challenges for school leaders due to shifts in teaching methods and rapid societal changes. Educators are under pressure to adapt quickly and find innovative solutions to support student learning. Administrators play a key role in a school's success by managing staff, budgets, and community relations, as well as setting school policies and academic expectations. In primary schools, they also serve as instructional leaders, providing guidance to teachers on effective teaching strategies. Their leadership significantly influences the overall learning environment, school culture, and student outcomes.

Since the pandemic began, teachers have had to rethink and redesign how instruction is delivered in classrooms. School leadership has also become increasingly challenging, with fewer individuals willing to take on administrative roles due to low pay, high stress, and demanding time commitments. Many educators feel overwhelmed by the pressures of the job, including handling parental expectations and broader societal issues that impact teaching. A recent survey of school principals revealed that their top concerns include motivating students, increasing parental involvement, accommodating the growing number of students in special

education, and keeping up with advances in educational technology.

During the pandemic, introducing new teaching strategies and learning tools required great effort and sacrifice from school administrators in Talaingod. Despite numerous difficulties, they were able to uplift and support teachers while ensuring students continued to receive focused attention and meaningful learning experiences. Their dedication was crucial in sustaining education through uncertain times, demonstrating their flexibility, determination, and strong leadership. This inspired the conduct of a qualitative study aimed at examining how these administrators managed the implementation of limited face-to-face classes and the methods they used to handle the challenges they faced.

The role of school leaders had rapidly evolved, becoming more complex and demanding, especially over the past two years. Principals were required to manage both organizational responsibilities and provide effective leadership across various areas, with an increasing emphasis on student achievement. This study aimed to explore the challenges school administrators faced and the coping strategies they used during the implementation of limited face-to-face classes. The research also sought to gain deeper

insight into their experiences to help inform the development of long-term programs that supported both teachers and students.

Changes in the educational system directly affect teachers and school administrators, as they are responsible for implementing them. With the return of face-to-face instruction, administrators' insights are crucial in evaluating its success or failure. As key decision-makers, they play a central role in addressing the challenges related to the resumption of in-person classes, guided by specific research questions:

- What are the experiences of school administrators in implementing limited face-to-face classes?

- What are the coping strategies of the school administrators with the difficulties encountered?

- What educational insights can be drawn from the findings of the study?

This study was based on Cowan's Complexity Theory, which explained how school administrators were able to develop coping strategies despite the challenges they encountered. Originating from natural sciences, the theory described how systems respond and adapt to changing environments. Applied to education, it illustrated how school leaders adjusted to reforms like limited face to face learning by reacting proactively and flexibly. Despite uncertainties, administrators found ways to guide their schools effectively through change.

The research also focused on identifying the challenges and coping mechanisms used by selected school administrators. Prior studies showed that situational stress, caused by heavy workloads, unclear roles, lack of recognition, and interpersonal conflicts, was a major contributor to burnout. Many principals reported high stress levels, with conflicts among staff being a primary cause.

II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of selected school administrators in Talaingod during the implementation of limited face to face classes. Phenomenology focuses on gaining deep insights into human experiences by immersing in participants' thoughts through interviews or in-depth discussions. Since the administrators directly experienced the challenges of conducting face to face classes during the pandemic, this approach allowed for meaningful interpretation of their perspectives.

This study is guided by key philosophical assumptions essential in qualitative research, particularly ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives. Ontologically, it assumes that the world under investigation is socially constructed and filled with individual meanings shaped by human experiences. Epistemologically, the study adopts a constructionist stance, recognizing that knowledge is formed through interactions between people and their environment, rather than being objectively discovered. Axiologically, it considers the values, ethics, and cultural contexts that influence the behaviors and relationships of school administrators with their environment. Methodologically, the study follows a phenomenological approach, using interviews and focus group discussions to deeply explore and interpret the lived experiences of school administrators during the implementation of limited face to face classes.

Phenomenological research focuses on accurately describing a phenomenon as experienced by individuals, without relying on predetermined frameworks. The primary goal is to understand social and psychological experiences from the perspectives of those directly involved. As a researcher using this approach, the emphasis is on capturing the lived experiences of participants related to the issue being studied. While phenomenology avoids rigid procedures to preserve the authenticity of the phenomenon, it still recognizes the value of general guidelines, particularly for novice researchers, to ensure clarity and depth in the research process.

This study will use purposive sampling to select public elementary school administrators in Talaingod who have at least three years of experience and have implemented limited face to face classes. Around ten participants will be chosen, as this is sufficient in qualitative research to explore diverse perspectives. Open-ended, essay-style interview questions, based on a literature review, will be used to gather insights on the challenges administrators faced, their coping strategies, and key lessons from their experiences. Participants must be leading either central or small schools as identified by the division.

To explore school administrators' experiences with limited face to face instruction, the researcher will secure approval from the Graduate School and school authorities. Data will be collected through validated interview guides via focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Participants will be informed of the study's purpose and asked for consent to record the sessions. Data will be analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, and results will be shared with participants for validation. Ethical standards will be upheld throughout the research process.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first theme talked about the experiences of School Administrators, where the implementation of limited face-to-face classes presented school administrators with a complex set of challenges, including inadequate learning resources, insufficient classroom space, and poor infrastructure that hindered both instructional delivery and adherence to health protocols. They faced overwhelming demands managing safety compliance, handling both administrative and teaching responsibilities, and addressing stakeholder resistance from anxious parents and hesitant teachers.

These difficulties were intensified by limited government guidance, insufficient funding, and a lack of manpower and training. Furthermore, persistent gaps in technology access and communication, especially in rural areas like Talaingod, disrupted coordination and instructional continuity.
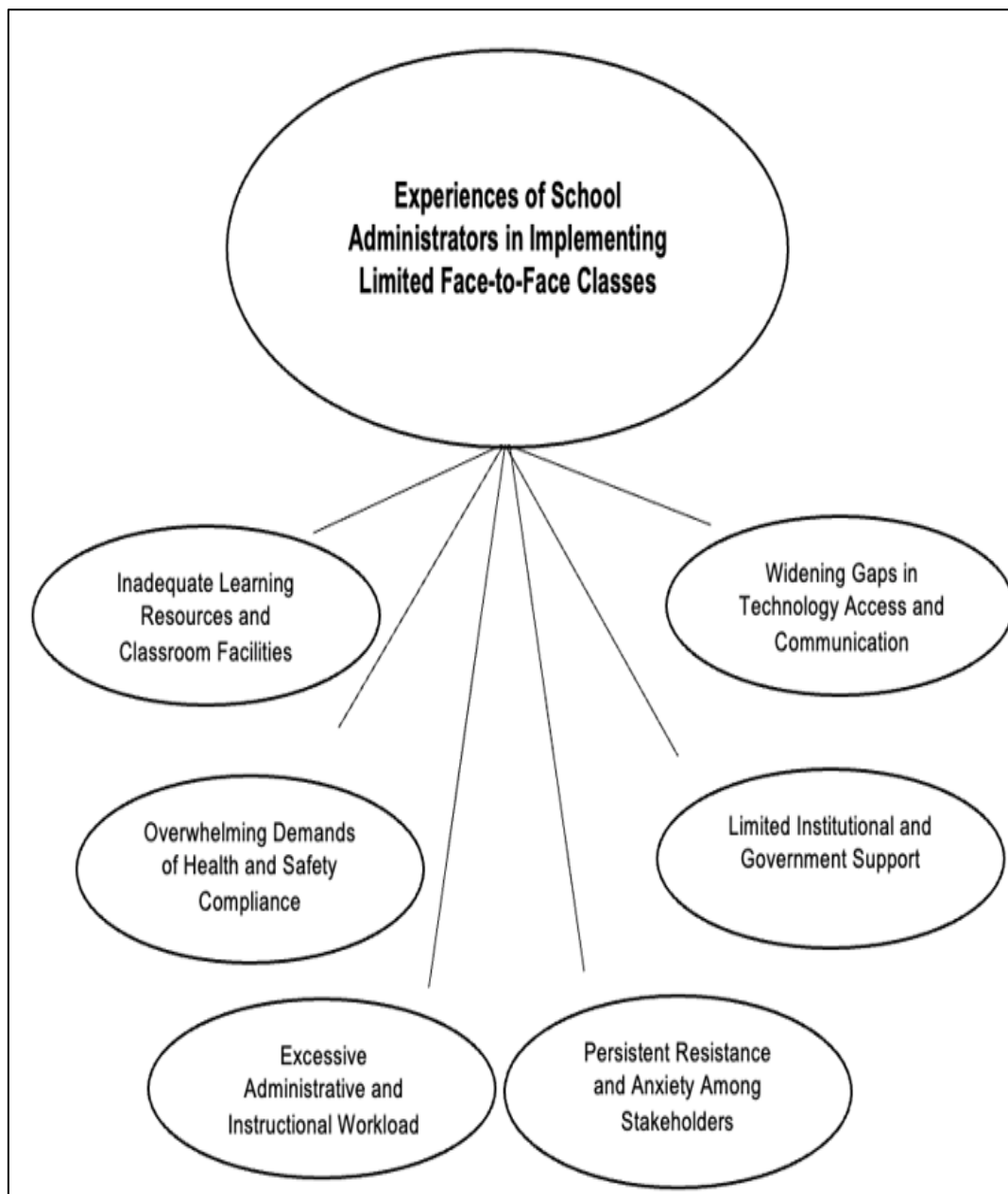

Fig 1 Experiences of School Administrators in Implementing Limited Face-to-Face Classes

The second theme mentioned the coping strategies of the School Administrators with the difficulties encountered, and discussed that despite numerous challenges during the implementation of limited face-to-face classes—such as lack of resources, heavy workloads, stakeholder anxiety, and poor connectivity—school administrators demonstrated resilience through adaptive coping strategies. They addressed resource shortages by mobilizing community support and improvising with available materials. Health protocols were enforced through collaborative efforts with staff and parents, while strategic delegation and time management helped manage overwhelming responsibilities. Empathetic communication was used to ease stakeholder concerns, and proactive networking with LGUs, NGOs, and private donors filled institutional gaps. To overcome technological barriers, administrators used low-tech and flexible communication methods, ensuring inclusive and continuous coordination.
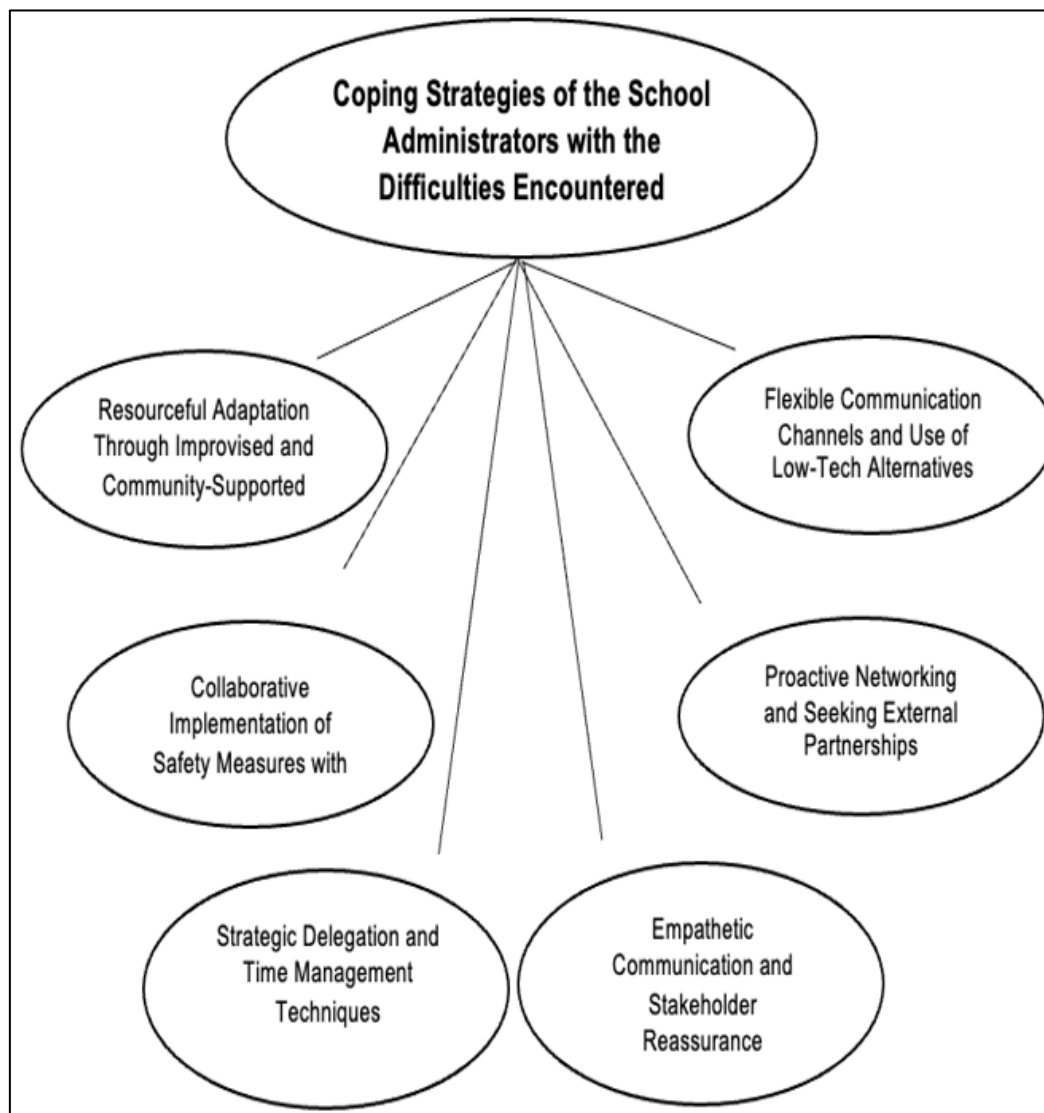
Fig 2 Coping Strategies of the School Administrators with the Difficulties Encountered

The third theme discussed the educational insights drawn from the findings of the study and revealed that effective school leadership during crises hinges on adaptability, communication, and collaboration. School administrators demonstrated creativity in addressing resource gaps, using local solutions to sustain learning despite limitations. Their ability to communicate openly and empathetically with stakeholders helped ease fear, build trust, and foster cooperation. Moreover, their collaborative and resilient leadership, rooted in shared responsibility and emotional strength, enabled schools to navigate challenges effectively. These insights emphasize that in times of uncertainty, strong relationships, creative problem-solving, and empathetic leadership are essential to sustaining education.
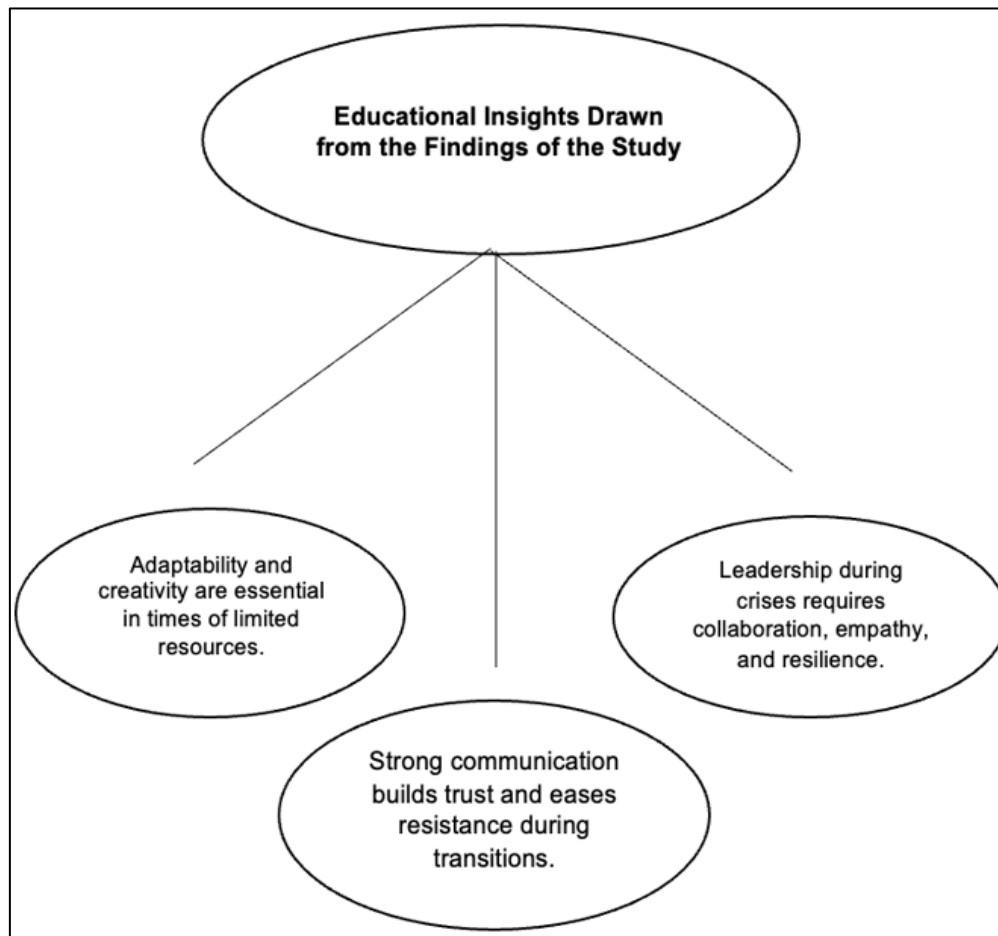
Fig 3 Educational insights Drawn from the Findings of the Study

School administrators encountered multiple challenges during the implementation of limited face-to-face classes. These included insufficient learning materials and poor classroom conditions, strict health and safety requirements, and an overwhelming combination of administrative and teaching duties. They also faced resistance and anxiety from stakeholders, lack of strong institutional or government backing, and difficulties in communication due to limited access to technology.

To cope, administrators applied practical and adaptive strategies. They used creative, improvised solutions to address resource shortages and worked collaboratively to enforce safety protocols. Time management and delegation helped ease their workload, while open, empathetic communication eased concerns among parents and teachers. They also leveraged external partnerships and adopted flexible, low-tech methods to maintain communication.

From these responses, three major insights emerged: adaptability and creativity are vital for school leadership, effective communication builds trust, and resilient, collaborative leadership is crucial for managing systemic challenges.

School administrators faced numerous challenges during the implementation of limited face to face classes, highlighting the need for stronger support systems from both institutions and the government. These systems should help leaders manage scarce resources, enforce safety measures, and improve communication during crises. The coping strategies used, such as improvisation, teamwork, and empathy, show the value of training school heads in crisis leadership, collaboration, and community engagement to better handle uncertain situations.

The study's findings reflect Complexity Theory, which explains how individuals and systems adapt in changing environments. School leaders encountered unpredictable problems, like limited resources, resistance, and tech gaps, requiring constant adjustment in their approaches. Their flexible and collaborative responses reveal that effective leadership evolves through learning, adaptation, and teamwork.

Future efforts should focus on enhancing the preparedness of school administrators, teachers, and learners through continuous training, stronger community support, and learner-centered approaches. School leaders need professional development in crisis leadership and resource management, while teachers require support in adapting to various learning environments and greater involvement in school planning. Learners should be guided to build resilience and adaptability through flexible, inclusive strategies. The Department of Education must design responsive policies based on real school experiences, ensure adequate resources,

and strengthen support systems. Future researchers are encouraged to study the long-term effects of limited face to face learning and explore differences across contexts to deepen insights into educational resilience during crises.

REFERENCES

[1]. Ahmad, I. Rehman, K. Ali, A. Khan, I & Khan, F. A. (2014). Critical Analysis of the Problems of Education in Pakistan: Possible Solutions. University of Malakand. International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education 3 (2) 79-84

[2]. Aydin, H. Ozfidan, B & Carothers, D. (2017). Meeting the Challenges of Curriculum and Instruction in School Setting in the United States. Journal of Social Studies Education Research 8 (3) 76-92.

[3]. Bridges, E., & Searle, D. (2021). *School Leadership Under Pressure: Managing Workload in the Midst of Reform. Journal of Educational Change*, 22(1), 89–102.

[4]. Brunell Thomas L. & Dave Chetan & Morgan Nicholas C., 2009. "Factors Affecting the Length of Time a Jury Deliberates: Case Characteristics and Jury Composition," Review of Law & Economics, De Gruyter, vol. 5(1), pages 555-578, October.

[5]. Campbell, P. and Langrall, C., (2011). Making equity a reality in classrooms.The

[6]. Colina, A. (2022). Davao City allows resumption of face-to-face classes. *SunStar Davao*.

[7]. Creswell, J.W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among fiveapproaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

[8]. Creswell, J.W. (2009). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

[9]. Derrington, M. L., & Campbell, J. W. (2021). Principals Navigating Workload Intensification During COVID-19. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 49(4), 580–597.

[10]. Education for All. (2014). *Teaching and Learning: Achieving Quality for All*. UNESCO.

[11]. Fink, R. (2014). District-led Instructional Improvement in a Remote Town (Doctoral dissertation, The George Washington University).

[12]. Giorgi, A. (2012). The descriptive phenomenological psychological method. Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 43(1), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.1163/156916212X632934.

[13]. Glass, T., & Franchesni, L. (2007). The state of the American superintendency: A mid-decade study. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

[14]. Kvale, S. (1996). Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[15]. Lashway, L. (2003). Inducting school leaders. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED479074

[16]. Lazarus, R. (1999). A new synthesis: Stress and emotion. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.

[17]. Lincoln, S. Y., Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[18]. Lindberg, E. (2014). Principals with and without performance measures means no change? Journal of Organizational Change Management, 27(3), 520-531. Retrievedfromhttps://search.proquest.com/docview/1660767932?accountid=3774

[19]. Lingam, G., Lingam, N., & Sharma, A. (2021). School Leadership in Times of Crisis: Balancing Workloads and Well-being. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 9(1), 41–60.

[20]. Maslach, C. & Jackson, S.E., (1979). Burned-out cops and their families. Psychology Today. 12(12), 59-62.

[21]. Mayer, J. D. (2002). MSCEIT: Mayer-Salovey-Caruso emotional intelligence test. Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems.

[22]. Oplatka, I. (2002). Women principals and the concept of burnout: An alternative voice? International Journal of Leadership and Education: Theory and Practice, 5(3), 211-226.

[23]. Ozer, E. (2021). Building Trust in Schools During Uncertain Times: Lessons from the COVID-19 Transition. *Journal of School Leadership*, 31(3), 287–303.

[24]. Pepper, K. (2010). Effective Principal skillfully Balance Leadership Styles to Facilitate Student Success: A Focus for the Reauthorization of ESEA. Planning and Changing, 41(1), 42-56. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/909493024?accountid=37714.

[25]. Wax, A. & Hales, L. (1984, April). The development of an instrument for measuring burnout in public school administrators. Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Lecture conducted from American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.