

Leadership Competencies and Proficiency Levels of Resilient School Heads: Basis for a Leadership Enhancement Program

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the profile, leadership competencies, resilience challenges, and performance of public elementary school heads in Guimba East District, Nueva Ecija, and used the findings as the basis for a leadership enhancement program. A descriptive-correlational design was employed involving 27 school heads and 81 teachers. Total enumeration was used for school heads, while stratified sampling provided three teacher-respondents from each of the 27 schools. Parallel validated questionnaires measured Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading the Organization, together with resilience challenges. Pilot reliability coefficients were $\alpha = .932$ for the 30 leadership-competency items and $\alpha = .922$ for the 10 challenge items. Frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and correlation analyses were used. All school heads received Outstanding OPCRf ratings, and

the majority were female, aged 50 years or older, professionally trained, and academically advanced. Leadership competencies were rated Highly Proficient by both groups: Leading Self (school heads $M = 3.70$; teachers $M = 3.66$), Leading Others ($M = 3.88$; $M = 3.73$), and Leading the Organization ($M = 3.71$; $M = 3.63$). Significant profile-competency relationships were found for age and Leading Self ($r = .824$, $p = .019$), sex and Leading Self ($r = .592$, $p = .047$), administrative experience and Leading Others ($r = .538$, $p = .040$), and trainings attended and Leading the Organization ($r = .646$, $p = .016$). Only Leading Others was significantly related to OPCRf performance ($r = .638$, $p = .042$). Resilience challenges were generally Challenging, with administrative workload stress and limited resources during crises rated highest. The findings support an enhancement program centered on sustained capacity building, adaptive leadership, people-centered leadership, integrated coaching, and workload-resilience support.

Keywords: school leadership, leadership competencies, resilient school heads, leadership proficiency, OPCRf, leadership enhancement program

INTRODUCTION

School heads operate at the intersection of instructional leadership, personnel management, policy compliance, resource allocation, and community engagement. Their responsibilities become especially demanding during organizational disruption, policy change, crises, and periods of limited resources. Contemporary school-leadership literature therefore emphasizes not only technical competence but also the capacity to remain adaptive, relational, and resilient while sustaining school goals (Harris & Jones, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Resilient leadership involves competencies at several levels. Personal resilience requires self-awareness, emotional regulation, ethical judgment, and the capacity to manage pressure. Relational resilience requires communication, empathy, trust-building, collaboration, and support for staff. Organizational resilience involves

strategic planning, resource management, continuity, innovation, and the ability to lead change. These dimensions correspond closely with the Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading the Organization domains used in the Leadership Competency Framework adapted in the thesis.

The Philippine public-school context intensifies these demands. School leaders work within a centralized system characterized by administrative requirements, learning-recovery initiatives, staff development needs, and continuing accountability for school performance. The Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads likewise frames school leadership as a professional practice requiring strategic direction, operational management, instructional leadership, human-resource development, and stakeholder engagement (Department of Education, 2023).

Although school heads frequently attend professional development and may possess advanced academic qualifications, the source thesis identified a practical gap: leadership growth can remain uneven across personal, relational, and organizational domains, while workload stress and resource limitations may undermine resilience. Existing research shows that experience, professional development, coaching, and people-centered leadership can contribute to leadership capacity, but their effects may differ by competency area (Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2016; Rong et al., 2023).

Accordingly, the study profiled public elementary school heads in Guimba East District; assessed their proficiency in Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading the Organization from both self- and teacher perspectives; examined relationships between profile variables, leadership competencies, and OPCRf performance; identified resilience challenges; and developed a Leadership Enhancement Program grounded in the empirical findings.

Literature Review

Resilient School Leadership and Leadership Competencies

Leadership competence refers to the integrated knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behaviors that enable school heads to guide people and organizations toward educational goals. Arambala (2025) synthesized literature on school-head competencies and highlighted the continuing importance of strategic, interpersonal, and managerial capacities. Caasi-Tabbal et al. (2019) likewise presented leadership-competency development as a structured process in which principals' skills can be deliberately strengthened through developmental programs rather than treated as fixed attributes.

Resilience adds an adaptive dimension to leadership competence. Beltman et al. (2018) described resilience as the capacity to sustain effective functioning in the presence of adversity, while Pangandoyon et al. (2024) documented persistence, adaptability, reflection, communication, and stakeholder engagement among resilient school heads. These qualities align with the thesis's distinction between personal, relational, and organizational resilience.

Organizational resilience is particularly relevant when schools face disruption and uncertainty. Zadok et al. (2024) connected organizational resilience with transformational leadership in complex school systems, while Harris and Jones (2020) emphasized the need for adaptive school leadership during disruptive conditions. Together, these studies support examining leadership proficiency across multiple domains rather than relying on a single global assessment.

Leading Self: Personal Resilience and Self-Management

Leading Self includes self-awareness, self-regulation, ethical behavior, continuous growth, wellness, and the capacity to remain effective under pressure. The source thesis treated these competencies as indicators of personal resilience. Coaching can strengthen such capacities by improving self-efficacy, reflection, and coping with workplace pressure (Rong et al., 2023).

Personal resilience is also shaped by workload and well-being. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) showed that job demands and resources are closely related to professional motivation and well-being, while the World Health

Organization (2022) emphasized the need to manage psychosocial risks in the workplace. For school heads, administrative overload, role conflict, and crisis responsibilities can therefore affect the ability to maintain composure and sustain effective leadership.

Professional learning supports self-leadership when it is sustained, relevant, and connected with practice. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized active, collaborative, and ongoing professional development, while Gümüş and Bellibaş (2016) linked principal professional-development activities with perceived instructional-leadership practices. These findings support continuous learning as part of resilient self-leadership.

Leading Others: Relational Resilience and People-Centered Leadership

Leading Others centers on communication, trust, empathy, collaboration, conflict management, accountability, motivation, and stakeholder relationships. Leithwood et al. (2020) emphasized that successful school leadership exerts much of its influence indirectly through people—by developing capacity, improving working conditions, building commitment, and fostering collaborative cultures.

The relational dimension is particularly important in difficult conditions because resilience is often socially supported. Pangandoyon et al. (2024) found that school heads drew on teamwork, communication, and stakeholder engagement when responding to institutional challenges. De Castro and Jiménez (2022) likewise linked school-principal attributes and contemporary leadership skills with teacher performance, reinforcing the practical value of interpersonal leadership.

Because teachers experience school leadership in daily interaction, relational competencies can be directly visible in school climate and staff functioning. This makes teacher assessment an important complement to school-head self-assessment and supports the dual-perspective design used in the thesis.

Leading the Organization, Professional Development, and Resilience

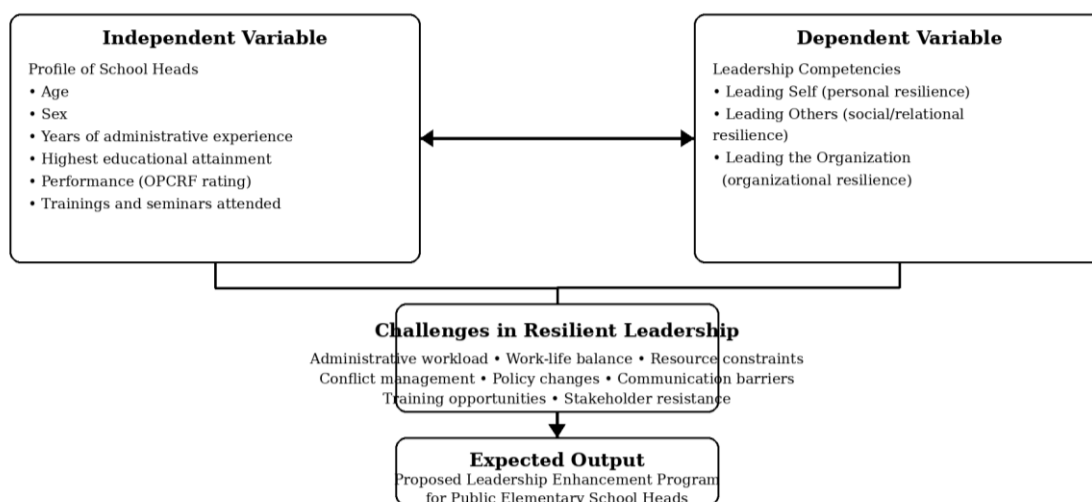
Leading the Organization includes strategic action, resource management, partnerships, innovation, continuity planning, and the capacity to align daily operations with the school's mission and goals. OECD (2020) emphasized the role of school leadership in creating conditions for learning, while the Department of Education's Philippine Professional Standards for School Heads (2023) formalize organizational and instructional leadership expectations within the national system.

Continuous professional development can strengthen organizational leadership, particularly when leaders must respond to changing policy and operational demands. Gümüş and Bellibaş (2016) found that professional development was associated with principals' instructional-leadership practices. Medida and Cabañero (2024) similarly examined resiliency and leadership achievement as a basis for leadership enhancement, supporting data-driven capacity-building for school heads.

Crisis and resource constraints also influence organizational resilience. UNESCO (2020) and the Department of Education (2020) highlighted the need for continuity, adaptive systems, and institutional support during educational disruption. These conditions justify the thesis's attention to workload, resource shortages, sudden policy change, and stress as challenges that may interfere with sustained leadership performance.

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

Conceptual Framework



METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design. Descriptive analysis was used to summarize the school heads' profile, leadership-competency proficiency, and resilience challenges, while correlational analysis was used to determine relationships between profile variables and leadership competencies and between leadership competencies and OPCRf performance.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in all 27 public elementary schools in Guimba East District, Municipality of Guimba, Schools Division of Nueva Ecija, during School Year 2025-2026. The locale provided a district-wide setting in which school heads managed daily administrative, instructional, personnel, and organizational responsibilities.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Participants consisted of 27 public elementary school heads and 81 teachers. Total enumeration was used to include every school head in the district. Stratified sampling was used for teachers, with equal representation from the 27 schools. School heads provided self-assessments of their leadership practices and resilience challenges, while teachers evaluated the leadership competencies of their respective school heads based on daily observations.

Table 1. *Participants of the Study*

District	School Heads	Teacher-Respondents
Guimba East	27	81
Total	27	81

Research Instrument

Parallel structured questionnaires were administered through Google Forms to school heads and teachers. The school-head form contained: Part I, profile variables; Part II, 30 leadership-competency items distributed across Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading the Organization; and Part III, 10 items describing resilience challenges. The teacher version used parallel leadership items phrased in the third person.

Leadership competencies were rated on a four-point scale from Not Proficient to Highly Proficient, while resilience challenges were rated on a four-point challenge scale. The instrument underwent expert content validation and pilot testing. The source thesis reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .932 for the 30 leadership items and .922 for the 10 resilience-challenge items.

Data Gathering Procedure

Formal permission was secured from the Schools Division Office of Nueva Ecija and participating schools. After validation and revision of the research instrument, the researcher coordinated questionnaire administration with school heads and teachers, provided instructions, allowed sufficient response time, checked completed forms for completeness, and organized the data for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Frequency and percentage described the school-head profile. Weighted mean and standard deviation summarized leadership proficiency and resilience challenges. Depending on the measurement level of the variables, the thesis used Pearson r , Spearman ρ , or point-biserial correlation to test relationships between profile characteristics and leadership competencies and between leadership competencies and OPCRf performance. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level.

Ethical Consideration

The study obtained institutional approvals before data collection. Participation was voluntary, respondents could decline or withdraw without penalty, and confidentiality was maintained throughout data collection and analysis. Identifying information was not disclosed, responses were summarized, and survey data were stored securely and deleted after completion of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile and Performance of the School Heads

The school-head group was predominantly experienced and professionally developed. The largest age group was 50-59 years (44.4%), and 55.5% were aged 50 years or older. Females comprised 55.6% of the school heads. The most common administrative-experience category was 6-10 years (37.0%), followed by 21 years or more (29.6%). Doctorate-degree holders comprised 40.7%, while 33.3% had master's units. All 27 school heads received an Outstanding OPCRf rating. In professional development, 66.7% had attended 10 or more trainings during the reported period, and 59.3% identified national-level training as their highest level.

Table 2. Selected Profile Characteristics of the School Heads

Profile Variable	Largest/Key Category	f	%
Age	50-59 years	12	44.4
Sex	Female	15	55.6
Administrative experience	6-10 years	10	37.0
Highest educational attainment	Doctorate degree	11	40.7
OPCRf performance	Outstanding	27	100.0
Trainings attended	10 or more	18	66.7
Highest training level	National	16	59.3

The profile suggests a leadership cohort with substantial experience, advanced academic preparation, and strong exposure to professional development. Such characteristics are consistent with research indicating that leadership capacity grows through experience and sustained learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2016). However, the subsequent correlation results show that qualifications alone did not uniformly predict leadership proficiency, emphasizing the need to distinguish formal credentials from demonstrated competencies.

Leadership Competency Proficiency

Both school heads and teachers rated all three leadership domains as Highly Proficient. Leading Others received the highest overall self-rating ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.33$) and teacher rating ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.46$). Leading the Organization was also Highly Proficient (school heads $M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.46$; teachers $M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.48$), as was Leading Self (school heads $M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.43$; teachers $M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.39$).

Table 3. Summary of Leadership Competency Proficiency

Leadership Domain	School Heads M	SD	Teachers M	SD
Leading Self	3.70	0.43	3.66	0.39
Leading Others	3.88	0.33	3.73	0.46
Leading the Organization	3.71	0.46	3.63	0.48

Within Leading Self, efficient management of time and responsibilities under pressure was the highest-rated competency for both groups, while adapting to unexpected changes was among the lowest. This pattern indicates strong self-management but identifies real-time adaptability as a comparatively weaker area. The result is consistent with resilience literature emphasizing the need for adaptive coping and reflective practice during unpredictable conditions (Beltman et al., 2018; Rong et al., 2023).

Leading Others was the strongest domain overall. School heads emphasized emotional and professional support, while teachers gave high ratings to trust, mutual respect, and empathy. The lowest teacher rating in the domain concerned external partnerships, suggesting that internal relational strength could be extended more deliberately toward parents, community members, and external stakeholders. This finding aligns with people-centered leadership literature emphasizing collaboration and capacity-building (Leithwood et al., 2020; Pangandoyon et al., 2024).

For Leading the Organization, both groups gave high ratings to planning, resilience culture, and resource management. The lowest indicator concerned fostering a safe and supportive learning environment for all stakeholders. The result suggests that strategic and operational leadership was strong, while everyday visibility of inclusive support remained an area for further development.

Profile Variables and Leadership Competencies

The thesis reported selective significant relationships between school-head profile characteristics and leadership competencies. Age was significantly related to Leading Self ($r = .824$, $p = .019$), and sex was also related to Leading Self ($r = .592$, $p = .047$). Administrative experience was significantly related to Leading Others ($r = .538$, $p = .040$), while the number of trainings attended was significantly related to Leading the Organization ($r = .646$, $p = .016$). Educational attainment was not significantly related to any of the three competency domains.

Table 4. Significant Profile-Competency Relationships Reported in the Thesis

Profile Variable	Leadership Domain	r	p
Age	Leading Self	.824	.019
Sex	Leading Self	.592	.047
Years of administrative experience	Leading Others	.538	.040
Trainings attended	Leading the Organization	.646	.016

These results suggest that leadership development is differentiated rather than uniform. Maturity was most strongly associated with self-leadership, experience with relational leadership, and professional training with organizational leadership. The training result is consistent with research showing that professional development can strengthen leadership practice (Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2016), while the absence of significant relationships for educational attainment cautions against assuming that advanced degrees automatically translate into stronger day-to-day resilience or interpersonal leadership.

Leadership Competencies and OPCRf Performance

Among the three leadership domains, only Leading Others showed a statistically significant positive relationship with school-head performance ($r = .638$, $p = .042$). Leading Self ($r = .198$, $p = .323$) and Leading the Organization ($r = .121$, $p = .549$) were not significantly related to OPCRf ratings.

Table 5. Relationship Between Leadership Competencies and OPCRf Performance

Leadership Domain	r	p	Interpretation
Leading Self	.198	.323	Not significant
Leading Others	.638	.042	Significant
Leading the Organization	.121	.549	Not significant

The result places interpersonal leadership at the center of measurable administrative performance. Communication, motivation, support, trust, and collaboration appear to be the competency behaviors most closely aligned with OPCRf outcomes in this sample. This interpretation is consistent with Leithwood et al. (2020), who emphasized that leadership effects frequently operate through people, and with De Castro and Jiménez (2022), who linked principal leadership attributes with teacher performance.

Resilience Challenges

Resilience challenges were rated Challenging overall by both groups, with an overall mean of 3.08 (SD = 0.75) among school heads and 2.94 (SD = 0.75) among teachers. The strongest shared concern was difficulty managing stress due to multiple administrative responsibilities (school heads $M = 3.30$; teachers $M = 3.28$). School heads also rated limited resources during crises as Highly Challenging ($M = 3.30$), while teachers rated the same issue at $M = 3.22$.

Table 6. Selected Resilience Challenges

Challenge	SH M	SH Interpretation	Teacher M	Teacher Interpretation
Stress from multiple administrative responsibilities	3.30	Highly Challenging	3.28	Highly Challenging
Limited resources during crises	3.30	Highly Challenging	3.22	Challenging
Financial/resource constraints	3.19	Challenging	2.88	Challenging
Heavy workload limits instructional leadership	2.89	Challenging	3.10	Challenging
Communication barriers affect collaboration	3.07	Challenging	3.12	Challenging

The challenge results indicate that resilience is constrained less by willingness to lead than by systemic workload and resource conditions. Such findings are consistent with literature linking demanding work conditions with professional well-being (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018) and with policy discussions emphasizing workload reduction, support systems, and organizational capacity. They also reinforce the importance of resilience-building structures rather than relying solely on individual coping.

Proposed Leadership Enhancement Program

The thesis translated the findings into a Leadership Enhancement Program designed to sustain existing strengths while addressing uneven competency growth, relational leadership, adaptability, workload stress, and resource constraints. The program combines professional development, mentoring, coaching, stakeholder engagement, people-centered leadership, and resilience support.

Table 7. *Core Components of the Proposed Leadership Enhancement Program*

Program Component	Primary Focus	Key Strategies
Sustained Leadership Capacity Building	Sustain strong profiles and prepare future leaders	Advanced training, formal mentoring, succession planning
Adaptive Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement	Adaptability and external collaboration	Change-management workshops, emotional-resilience training, partnership forums
Integrated Competency Development	Balanced growth across three domains	Tri-domain training, reflective portfolios, one-on-one coaching
People-Centered Leadership Enhancement	Strengthen Leading Others	Communication and motivation coaching, conflict-resolution simulations, peer learning groups
Resilience and Workload Management Support	Administrative stress and resource limitations	Stress management, time/delegation training, workload distribution, resource-optimization planning

The intervention responds directly to the study's strongest evidence: people-centered leadership was the only competency linked with OPCRF performance, training was associated with organizational leadership, and workload and resources were major resilience challenges. The program therefore prioritizes relational leadership while maintaining balanced development across Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading the Organization.

CONCLUSION

Public elementary school heads in Guimba East District demonstrated strong leadership capacity and were rated Highly Proficient across Leading Self, Leading Others, and Leading the Organization. Their profile reflected substantial experience, advanced education, active professional development, and uniformly Outstanding OPCRF performance. However, leadership development was not uniform across domains: age, administrative experience, and training were associated with different competency areas, while educational attainment did not show significant relationships with the three leadership domains.

Leading Others emerged as the competency most directly associated with OPCRF performance, underscoring the importance of communication, trust, support, motivation, collaboration, and relationship-building. At the same time, administrative workload, stress, and resource limitations remained substantial resilience challenges. The proposed Leadership Enhancement Program therefore provides a findings-based approach that sustains existing strengths while strengthening adaptability, external partnerships, people-centered leadership, coaching, workload management, and organizational support.

Recommendation

The Schools Division Office and district leadership may institutionalize the proposed Leadership Enhancement Program and align its activities with continuing professional development, PPSSH expectations, and local school-improvement priorities. Training should balance all three competency domains while giving particular attention to Leading Others because of its significant relationship with OPCRF performance.

School heads should be provided with sustained coaching, mentoring, reflective practice, and peer-learning opportunities that strengthen communication, motivation, conflict management, stakeholder engagement, adaptability, and crisis leadership.

District and school systems should address resilience structurally through clearer workload distribution, delegation support, resource-sharing mechanisms, wellness and stress-management programs, and stronger administrative assistance so that school heads can devote sufficient attention to instructional and people-centered leadership.

Future studies may replicate the research in other districts, secondary schools, and private-school settings, examine additional leadership and contextual variables, and evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed enhancement program after implementation using longitudinal or mixed-methods designs.

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